

THE OT IN 10 MINUTES

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The Bible describes how God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ. The Old Testament provides foundation for this kingdom message, and the New Testament details the fulfillment. Jesus' Bible was the Old Testament, which highlights through narrative and commentary how the Mosaic old covenant was established in the Law, enforced in the Prophets, and enjoyed in the Writings.

The Bible opens with the five narrative books of Moses, which together are called the Law. Here the old covenant is *established*. **Genesis** introduces God's universal kingdom program by highlighting the need for and provision of universal blessing. It also supplies the context for Israel's global mission. Sin has resulted in world-wide curse, and Abraham and his offspring climaxing in a single, male, royal descendant in the line of Judah would be the means for the curse to be overcome by blessing. The remaining four books of the Law then clarify how the promise of offspring and the hope of the promised land find initial fruition in the Mosaic old covenant, all in the anticipation of the royal redeemer. **Exodus** highlights King Yahweh's global purposes through Israel, stressing the centrality and necessity of his presence and detailing both Israel's salvation and mission—they are to serve as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in the context of the world. In **Leviticus**, holy Yahweh calls his people to be holy and clarifies how their pursuit of God will be empowered by his sanctifying presence and promises of blessing and curse. **Numbers** contrasts faithful Yahweh with unfaithful Israel and describes an extended season of discipline in the wilderness where Israel was supposed to learn to wait on and follow God. **Deuteronomy** is Israel's constitution and calls for lasting covenant relationship. It also clarifies, however, that God would not overcome Israel's stubborn rebellion and enable love until the latter days after Israel would enter, lose, and be restored to the land. Then he would circumcise their hearts, enabling them to love God with all.

Next is the Prophets, which are to be read in light of the law of Moses and the hope of the coming royal deliverer. Here the old covenant is *enforced*, and the material is divided into two parts. The Former Prophets provide a narrative history of what happened to Israel from the conquest of the promised land, through the rise of the united and divided monarchies, to the exile from the land. The grouping begins with **Joshua**, which highlights Yahweh's covenant faithfulness in giving the land and calls for Israel's covenant faithfulness. Will the people meditate on the law day and night, or will they go their own way? **Judges** answers by detailing Israel's covenant faithlessness and highlights that their chaotic, sinful existence was partly due to the fact that there was no king in Israel. **1–2 Samuel** then overviews the rise of kingship, stresses the Davidic kingdom hope, and clarifies the importance of honoring Yahweh above all else. The narrative portion of Former Prophets ends with **1–2 Kings**, which outlines Israel's covenant failure and the kingdom's division and destruction and also retains hope in a Davidic king whose throne would last forever.

At this point the Old Testament narrative pauses, and the Latter Prophets offer prophetic commentary on why Israel's history resulted in exile. **Jeremiah** stresses Israel's lack of covenant loyalty and the eschatological promise of covenant loyalty in the age of the new covenant when the law would be written on the heart. **Ezekiel** focuses on Israel's loss of God's presence from Jerusalem and the eschatological promise of his Spirit in the age of resurrection. **Isaiah** unpacks Israel's rejection of God's kingship and the eschatological promise of his universal kingdom through

the peace-establishing, justice-working Servant king, who would reign over transformed ethnic Israelites and Gentiles in the new creation. **The Twelve** minor prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi—are united into a single volume in Jesus' Bible. Through the themes of sin, judgment, and restoration, they detail Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness and the eschatological promise of divine faithfulness. At this, the Prophets come to a close, and the focus on Israel's sin now shifts to a focus on kingdom hope.

In the Writings, the old covenant is *enjoyed*. The Former Writings are principally poetic commentary on how the loyal remnant of Yahweh was to live in a context of darkness, maintaining their belief that Yahweh was still on the throne and would one day right all wrongs through his royal redeemer. This commentary portion opens with **Ruth**, a narrative prelude that affirms the kingdom hope of Yahweh's redeeming grace through the line of David. Just as God used Boaz of Bethlehem to redeem king David's ancestors, so also God would raise up another kinsman redeemer of Bethlehem to restore David's descendants. Exile was not the final word, and this messianic hope provides the lens for reading Psalms and beyond. The rest of the Former Writings detail specifically the type of lifestyle by which one gains real kingdom hope. **Psalms** stresses that there is hope for those delighting in and submitting to God's kingship by walking, waiting, and worshipping in light of the Messiah. Through the five books of the Psalter, the messianic music moves from lament to praise and from kingdom crisis to kingdom consummation. **Job** gives hope for those fearing God for who he is and not for what he gives or takes away. **Proverbs** then provides kingdom hope for those acting wisely, who fear God, turn from evil, and live in light of the future; in the process it details how the future royal deliverer would live. **Ecclesiastes** details hope for those fearing and following God in pleasure and pain despite life's enigmas. And **Song of Songs** gives hope for those celebrating human sexuality in the context of marriage; only those who fan the flame of Yahweh in the proper context will enjoy the ultimate union of the groom of heaven with his bride. **Lamentations** supplies hope for those remaining confident in God's reign and faithfulness to his own. With the promise of fresh mercies at dawn, the laments of Lamentations end the commentary portion of the Old Testament and provide a bridge for the reader back into the context of exile, which is picked up in the four final narrative books.

In the Latter Writings, we gain tangible signs of kingdom hope. **Daniel** reiterates the promise of God's universal kingdom: God reigns over every kingdom of the earth and will establish his kingdom over all through one like a son of man. **Esther** details the preservation of God's kingdom people through whom the Messiah would come; God would not let his kingdom promises die. **Ezra–Nehemiah** stand as one book in Jesus' Bible and together foreshadow the restoration of God's kingdom people and land that was still to come. Then, with a focus on the Davidic covenant, **1–2 Chronicles** recaps in positive terms the purposes of God from Adam to Cyrus' call for the Jews to return to Jerusalem, thus affirming Yahweh's universal kingship and kingdom promises.

The Old Testament closes without all the promises having reached fulfillment and therefore the end demands a sequel—a sequel that ultimately comes in the New Testament. God's reign over God's people in God's land. God will see his kingdom purposes accomplished. The old covenant is established in the Law, enforced in the Prophets, and enjoyed in the Writings. While the old covenant bore a ministry of condemnation, the Old Testament itself ends in hope and provides a foundation for the fulfillment found in Christ and the New Testament. In the whole, God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ.