



Introducing the Old Testament

Week 8

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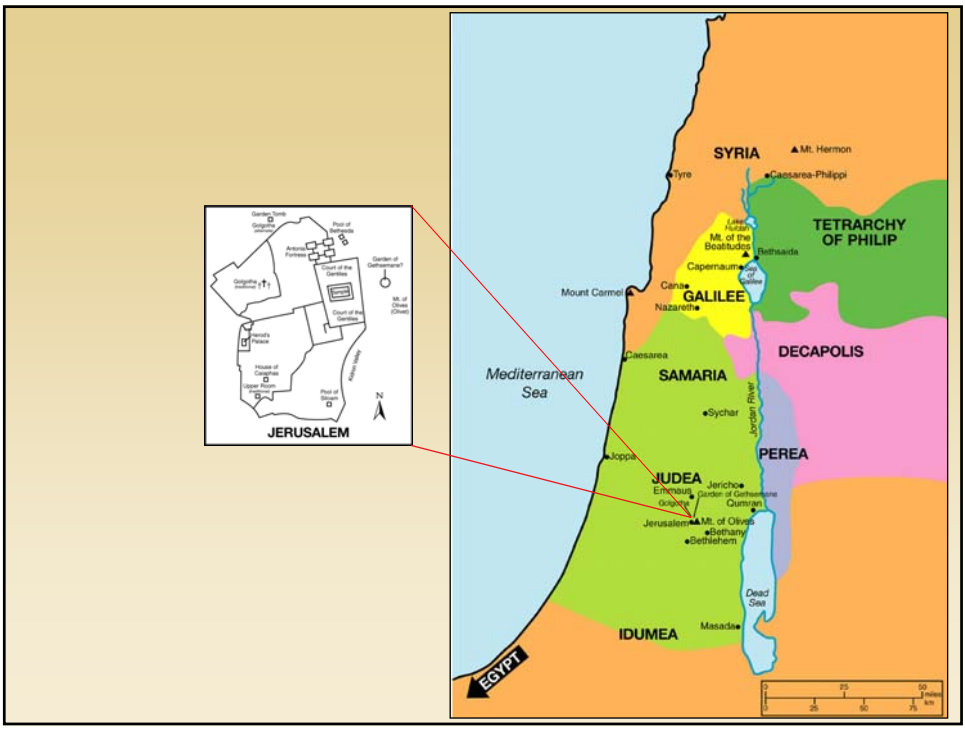
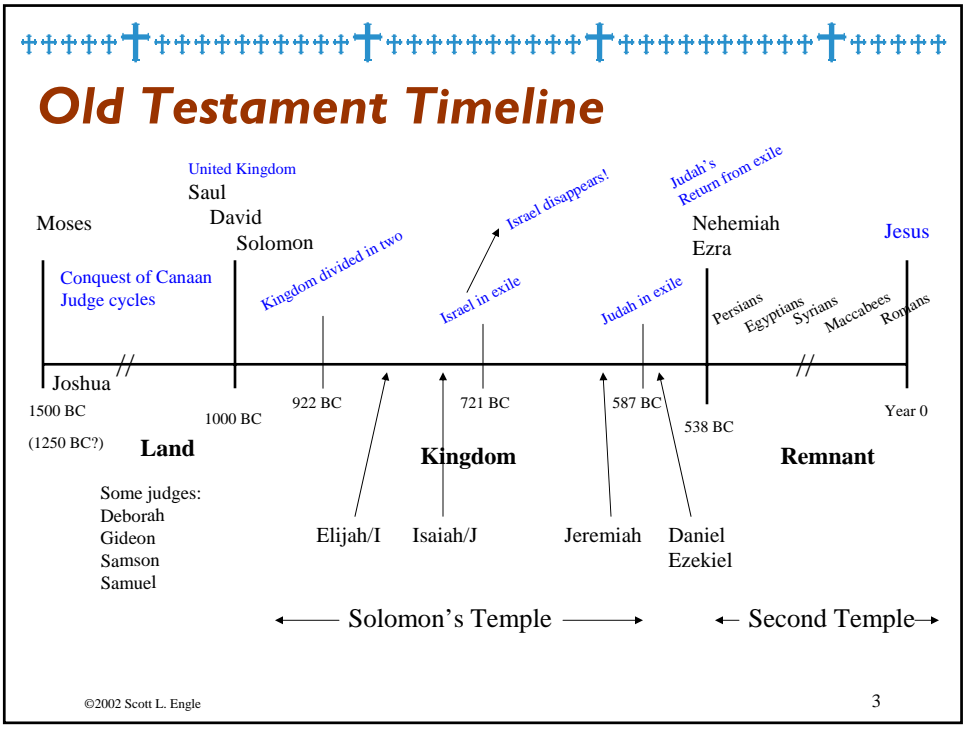


Overview of this week

- ❖ The period between the Testaments
- ❖ Approaching Jesus
- ❖ Key Old Testament themes
- ❖ Applying the Old Testament in our lives

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Between the Testaments – The Apocrypha

- ❖ 14 or 15 books that appear in the Greek OT (the Septuagint) but not the Hebrew Bible
- ❖ A wide variety of books: historical, devotional, prophetic, teaching
- ❖ Valuable – but never quoted as Scripture, not even by Greek writers
 - The NT writers used the Septuagint, but never quoted from the apocryphal books
- ❖ Became books of the church, but not of the canon
- ❖ The historical books provide us information about the events between the Testaments, particularly the time of the Maccabees.



Between the Testaments – the History

- ❖ A period of 450 years or so when the Jews traded one oppressor for another
 - A story of tension and tragedy
 - On-going pressure for the Jews to assimilate into the larger culture – Greek, after Alexander the Great
- ❖ Antiochus Epiphanes
 - Trying to control the Jews, he took over the Temple on Dec 25, 167BC, desecrating it and making it a place where he would be worshipped.
 - The Jewish reaction – see the story of Daniel!



The Maccabees

- ❖ The desecrations by Antiochus Epiphanies prompted a successful Jewish revolt led by a family called the Maccabees, “the hammerer” (their proper name was Hasmonean). Their story is recorded in the historical books of the apocrypha. This family ruled Judea for about 100 years, until the arrival of Rome.
- ❖ The successful revolt (the Temple was restored in 164BC and Hanukkah celebrates it) brought a sense of vindication to the Jews, but they soon came to question whether this was really the keeping of the covenant.
 - Though Jewish, the Maccabeans were not of the house of David and combined the offices of high priest and king.
 - They also embraced the Hellenistic influences, threatening the distinctiveness of the Jews.



Herod the Great

- ❖ His family had risen to power under the Maccabees and had aligned themselves with the Romans. With Mark Antony (yes, Cleopatra’s Antony!), he defeated the last of the Hasmonean rulers and took Jerusalem in 37BC.
- ❖ Herod became “king” under the Romans, but never achieved the devotion or respect of the Jewish people, despite his efforts.
 - Married into the Hasmonean family
 - Rebuilt the temple into a huge, grand building
- ❖ Herod the Great ruled from 37BC to 4BC.
- ❖ His son, Herod Antipas, got control of Galilee after Dad’s death and is the most-mentioned Herod in the Bible.



Approaching Jesus – a few things to keep in mind

- ❖ The unresolved tension in the story
 - The one true God, who chose Israel to be the means by which he would renew all creation, made a covenant with Israel – but it sure didn't look much like it! What could Israel do to bring the story to its long-awaited climax?
- ❖ Key Symbols of Judaism – still!
 - Torah
 - Temple
 - The land
 - Their racial identity



Key Themes of the Old Testament

- ❖ The full portrait of God

Creator	Wise
Holy	Transcendent
Righteous & just	Compassionate and gracious
Savior & deliverer	Loyal

- ❖ The covenant
- ❖ The Old Testament as a basis for social action
- ❖ The hope of Israel and our own hope
- ❖ The Bible makes sense!
 - Each part of the Bible needs to be read in the context of the the entire Bible!



Applying the Old Testament in Our Lives

- ❖ There is a God! And this God is not an absentee landlord! Instead, he is active and caring in the world at every moment, relentlessly pursuing us . . . you!
- ❖ We are part of the people of God. It is a mistake to think that we can, or should, separate our lives as God's people from our lives in the "real world." We are called, as the people of God, to be the light to the world!
 - Deuteronomy – living a life in covenant with God
 - Looking ahead to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount
- ❖ When we are tempted to make simplistic judgments about people and their relationship with God, remember David. Could a man after God's own heart murder his lover's husband? Yes.



Applying the Old Testament in our Lives

- ❖ We can be completely honest in our relationship with God, as he is with us.
- ❖ When we are confronted by events in life that seem impossible to understand, we need to remember Job and trust in the character of God.
 - The OT is foundational to the Christian worldview. The OT is about the relationship between God and his people – God and you – and not so much about providing answers to life. We need to let the OT (all the Bible!) help us to ask the right questions, rather than use it as some sort of magic answer book.
- ❖ We are called to hear God's word – to live our own journey of the heart, while we strive for social justice.
 - Micah – love kindness, do justice, and walk humbly with God!