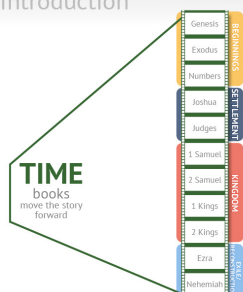


Color Books, Wisdom/Poetry Books, and Prophetic Books



Dr. Sid Buzzell
Experience: Dean of
Christian University GlobalNet

Introduction



Introduction

In lesson 2 we looked at the Old Testament's main story line and focused on the eleven books from Genesis to Nehemiah that tell the Old Testament story. In doing so, we got the big picture of Old Testament history. But we also left out a lot of detail. In this lesson we're going to add some of that detail into the story, and we do that by plugging in what we call the color books. You will recall that the color books stop the forward movement of the story and provide still shots that add more details to the story told in the time books.

We're also going to see where Israel's poetry and wisdom books fit into the story. It's important to know what books are included and when they were written. And then we'll plug in the prophets and see when they lived and ministered. We need that historical background so we can more clearly understand their prophetic messages. Because we went through the Old Testament's story books in our previous lesson, we can now place the rest of the books into the narrative and see how they contribute to the story.

Introduction



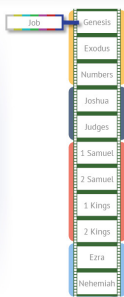
The Old Testament "Color" Books

We will survey the color books first. We begin with the book of Job because Job was a contemporary of Abraham and chronologically is the first of the color books. So when you think of Abraham's story in Genesis 12, that's where Job fits into the time line. But since Job doesn't move the biblical story forward in time, we include it with the color books. Job's book wrestles with the difficult question of why good people suffer. He didn't have the Old Testament Law to guide him because he lived hundreds of years before Moses' time. That's important to understand when you read his story, because Job's view of God was not based on the kind of knowledge people had after God gave Moses the Law. Yet he worshiped God faithfully. His book gives us additional insight into life in Abraham's time,

The Old Testament "Color" Books

Job

- Takes place during Abraham's time (Genesis 12).
- Addresses the question, "Why do good people suffer?"
- Gives additional information about life in Abraham's time.



The Old Testament “Color” Books

Leviticus

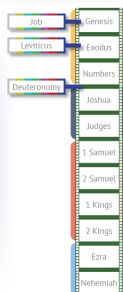
The tribe of Levi was appointed by God to serve as priests in the tabernacle.



The Old Testament “Color” Books

Deuteronomy

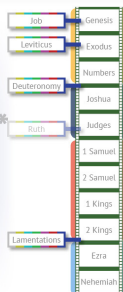
- Fits between Israel's wandering in the wilderness (Numbers) and their conquest of Canaan (Joshua).
- Moses reissued the Law of God given at Sinai for the new generation of Israelites.



The Old Testament “Color” Books

Lamentations

- After Jerusalem is destroyed (2 Kings), Jeremiah laments over his people's disobedience and its consequences.

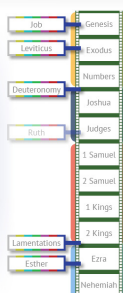


Ruth is also a color book, though it is not discussed in this lesson. See lesson 5 for a detailed description of the book of Ruth.

The Old Testament “Color” Books

Esther

- Occurs during the time of reconstruction recorded in Ezra.
- Tells what life was like for the Jews who did not return to Israel.
- Teaches us that God cares for His people wherever they are.



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and we integrate his story with Abraham's.

The second color book is Leviticus. Notice the first four letters in the book's name, and you get a clue about its content. Levi was the tribe God appointed to serve the priestly functions in the tabernacle, and so this book that outlines all of Israel's religious practices is appropriately named “Leviticus.” The book explains in detail how the priests conducted Israel's religious life at the tabernacle. So we place Leviticus next to the book of Exodus. When you think of Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments and God's Law, that's where the book of Leviticus belongs.

Deuteronomy is the third color book. Like Job and Leviticus, it doesn't move history forward, but it brings great insight into a particular period in Israel's story. Deuteronomy fits between the book of Numbers, which records Israel's wandering in the wilderness, and the book of Joshua, which tells us about Israel's conquest of Canaan. In Deuteronomy, Moses reissued the Law that God gave Israel at Sinai. Remember that the people who were going *into* Canaan were not the same people who came *out* of Egypt. There was a forty-year gap between the end of Exodus and the beginning of Joshua. Moses made sure this generation knew their lives were to be governed by God's Law. So Deuteronomy fits into the narrative between Numbers and Joshua.

The next color book occurs almost a century after Deuteronomy. The book of Lamentations fits into the story at the end of 2 Kings. Jerusalem had been destroyed and Jeremiah's “lament” over his people's disobedience and its consequences are recorded in this book. Jerusalem's destruction was a tragic reality, and this book records the lament of a brokenhearted prophet. So when you read Lamentations, envision a destroyed Jerusalem. And when you read the end of 2 Kings, envision Lamentations.

Esther's story occurred during the time recorded in Ezra and adds an important dimension to the period of Israel's reconstruction era. Seventy years after the Babylonians conquered Judah, the Persians released the Jews from exile and many of them returned to Jerusalem. Ezra's book tells us what life was like in Jerusalem when the Jews rebuilt the temple. But Esther tells us the story of the people who chose to stay in Persia. Her story tells us what life was like for the Jews who didn't return and teaches us that God cares for His people wherever they are.

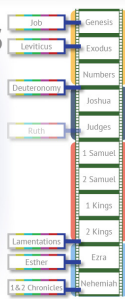
First and Second Chronicles fit, historically, with Ezra and

The Old Testament "Color" Books

1 & 2 Chronicles

- Written *during* Ezra & Nehemiah's time.
- Written *about* King David's dynasty and Solomon's temple.
- Assures Judah's people that God had not abandoned them.

Ruth is also a color book, though it is not discussed in this lesson. See lesson 5 for a detailed description of the book of Ruth.



Nehemiah at the end of the Old Testament era. They focus on the kings in David's dynasty and on Solomon's temple. But the books' purpose is to show Judah's situation six hundred years after David and Solomon lived. After seventy years of enslavement by the Babylonians, Judah's people were back in their land. But they were still ruled by the Persians. Their reconstructed temple was a poor replica of Solomon's magnificent structure. Local enemies plagued them and the sins that had led to their destruction were creeping back into their daily life.

The chronicler wrote his books to assure Judah's people that in spite of appearances God had not abandoned them. His covenants with Abraham, Moses, and especially David were still valid and they should not abandon their messianic hope. Their true leader was not a Persian emperor; it was God. He was the King of Kings. But God's words reminded them that His blessing was not automatic: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV). God had not abandoned Israel. But their entire history as recorded in the Chronicles reminded them that their wellbeing was based on obedience to what God had taught them in the Law and the Prophets.

So those are the color books, and we plug them into their historical setting to give us additional insight into Israel's history as it is recorded in the time books. Now we look at two more categories of books: Israel's poetry and wisdom literature and her prophetic books.

Poetry and Wisdom Books

Israel's poetry and wisdom literature was created over many centuries by various authors. Moses wrote Psalm 90, the earliest psalm. The latest psalm was Psalm 137, composed during the Babylonian captivity. We will study these books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes in lesson 8. Our purpose in this lesson is to see how these books contribute to the Old Testament story. This literature made an enormous contribution to Israel's worship and education throughout her history and doesn't belong to any specific era. Because most of it is associated with David and Solomon, we usually integrate these books into their historical period.

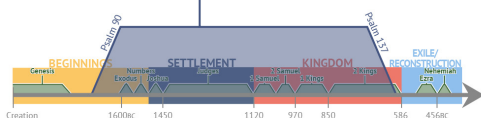
Prophetic Books

2 Chronicles 7:14

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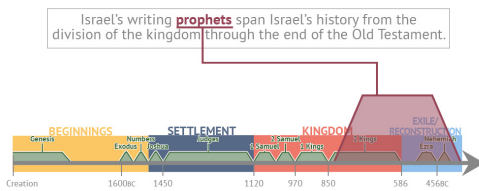
Poetry and Wisdom Books

Israel's **poetry and wisdom literature** covers many centuries.



The **Poetry and Wisdom** books are discussed in depth in lessons 8 and 9.

Prophetic Books



The sixteen writing prophets span Israel's history from the division of the kingdom recorded in 1 Kings 12 through the end of the Old Testament recorded in Nehemiah. These sixteen represent many other prophets who ministered in Israel, but their prophetic declarations were not collected into separate books. Elijah and Elisha, for instance, were two of Israel's most famous prophets, but there are no prophetic books named for them.

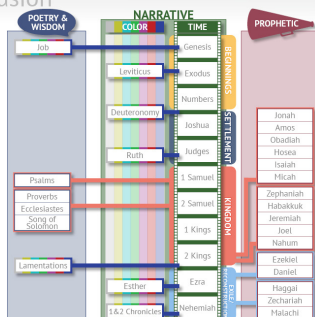
Twelve of the prophets ministered during the divided kingdom recorded in 1 Kings 12 through the end of 2 Kings. One of these twelve, Ezekiel, continued his ministry into the exile period. Daniel's prophetic ministry also occurred during the exile; and three of them—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—prophesied during the reconstruction period. We will study the prophets in detail in lesson 10. Their efforts to encourage Israel and Judah to follow God's teachings met with mixed results; but as the tragic story of their times unfold, we see that the prophets were most often ignored while Israel and Judah moved toward their disastrous destruction.

Conclusion

So that is the Old Testament. The eleven chronology books tell the story. We plug in the color books to give us an expanded view of what was going on during some of those historical periods. Israel's poetry and wisdom was written and preserved throughout her history and is part of her cultural and religious practice. The prophets began ministering when Israel's kingdom split into the two nations of Israel and Judah and continued through the end of the Old Testament.

When you put all these books together, what do you have? As a unit, what are they all about? The Old Testament is about the fact that God created us in His own image so we can enjoy an intimate relationship with Him. Tragically the sin that was introduced in Genesis 3 plagued God's people all the way through the Old Testament story, and it still plagues us today.

Conclusion



Conclusion



But human failure is not the main theme of the story. What God tells us in the Old Testament is that even though we fail, we serve a gracious God who says, “Come back to Me and I will forgive you. I will welcome you. I did not create you for hostility, but for love and for a relationship.” If we don’t learn that when we read the Old Testament, then we’ve really missed the point of it all.