

20221030 The Structure of the Old Testament

Life built by God's manual (Part 2, Psalm 19:7-11)

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

The divisions of the Old Testament

The Old Testament has three big sections: 17 History books (from Genesis to Esther); 5 Poetry books (from Job to Song of songs); and 17 books of prophets (from Isaiah to Malachi)

"From the creation, the birth of the nation Israel, their journey to Egypt, out of it, into the promised land, from the tribal state to a united kingdom, and then to the divided kingdoms of Southern Judah and Northern Israel, the captivity of the Northern kingdom to Assyria first, then the captivity of the

Southern kingdom to Babylon. Then finally, return from the captivity and rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem."

When it comes to the other two sections, the poetry and the prophets, we need to know where to put them in the history section.

- Job goes with Genesis chapter 12.
- Psalm goes with 1 and 2 Samuel (the history of David).
- Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and song of songs correspond to 1 Kings (the history of Solomon).
- Among 17 prophets, 5 books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi go with the captivity history books, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
- The other 12 prophets are related to the 2 Kings, the history of the kings both Southern kingdom, Judah, and Northern kingdom, Israel.

One thing to point out:

The 1 and 2 Chronicles in the Old Testament, they were written during the Babylon captivity. These two books of Chronicles were written for these returning people of Judah. That's why there is no history of the Northern kingdom of Israel included in these two books.

The Old Testament arrangement

There was no one person or a group of people who defined what books were the Jewish holy writings. It happened that among the Jewish people, those special books were automatically recognized and received by the people of God.

The Septuagint (LXX)

Total 72 elders, 6 elders from each of the 12 tribes of the nation Israel, who were experts on Hebrew and Greek languages with a great insight on Hebrew writings were sent to the city for this work. They finished the work in 72 days.

The canonization of the Old Testament in Jamnia conference

(The official declaration of the Hebrew Scriptures by the Hebrew scholars and teachers)

They confirmed the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures of 24 books.

The 24 books that were confirmed to be the Holy Scriptures were:

The Five Books of Moses

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

The Eight Books of the Prophets

Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, The Twelve (minor prophets)

The Eleven Books of the Writings

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

Later, the New Testament Church divided some of these 24 books: such as Samuel, Kings, Chronicles to 1 and 2; the Twelve to twelve minor prophets, and Ezra/Nehemiah to Ezra and Nehemiah – total 39 books.

The structure and basic content of the Old Testament

Genesis

From chapter 1 to chapter 11, the creation and the origin of humanity: The creation of the universe, the beginning of human beings and family, The birth of civilization, nations, and tribes.

From chapter 12, Abraham and the beginning of the Hebrew history. Abraham, Isaac, and through Jacob, the descendants of them went to Egypt by the invitation of Joseph and settled there.

Exodus

430 years later after Joseph, the people of Israel, the Hebrew descendants escaped from the Egyptian tyranny. Through God's powerful manifestation, they got out of Egypt, experiencing God's salvation in the red sea, arrived at the Horeb mountain, and establishing a covenant with God.

Leviticus:

God's promises and commandments given to the nation Israel.

- The ministry and roles of the tribe of Levi and priests
- Offerings and feasts of the Lord
- Social laws and regulations

Numbers:

The people of Israel are entering the promised land. The name numbers came from the fact that they numbered the people of Israel for the war and battle against these Canaanites.

Deuteronomy

No faith, no promised land. So, God reestablishes His covenant with the 2nd generation people of Israel in the eastern side of Jordan river through Moses.

Joshua

The people of Israel crossed the Jordan river. First, they conquered the Jericho. Under the leadership of Joshua, they also conquered the central section, southern part, and northern part of the land in turn.

Judges

God used the left Canaanites to call His people back to Himself. When they repented, then God saved them through judges. But soon after being saved, they rejected their God again.

Ruth

It shows how the line of David became the line of faith along with a gentile woman becoming a woman of faith. What's important is not a human line but the faith in the kingdom of God.

1 and 2 Samuel

Samuel anointed the second king, the king David, who was a man after God's own heart. Most of the content was about the story of David in these two books.

1 and 2 Kings

The story of Solomon who became the king of Israel after David is in the 1 Kings.

From 2 Kings, the nation Israel became divided into two kingdoms.

There were 12 books of prophets written during the period of the 2 Kings:

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.

Chronicles were written from Southern kingdom perspective. The book of 1 Chronicles is like a commentary to the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. And the book of 2 Chronicles is like a commentary to the books of 1 and 2 Kings.

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther

THE 1ST RETURN (BC 537)

The prophets, Haggai and Zechariah
Completion of the 2nd temple in BC 516
Conspiracy against the Jewish people by Haman
God used Esther to save the Jewish people.

THE 2ND RETURN (BC 458)

Under the leadership of Ezra
Ezra began religious education which led to the spiritual restoration for the people of Jerusalem.

THE 3RD RETURN (BC 444)

Under the leadership of Nehemiah
The restoration of the Jerusalem wall was finished in 52 days.

Psalm 19:7-8

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.