

Old Testament Summary Chart

When I was first saved, one of the most instructive sessions in church that I had was a guest speaker who summarized the Old Testament for us in about 45 minutes. The general information which he gave is below, which I have expanded upon ever so slightly. I do not recall this person's name, but the overview was very helpful.

The dates given herein are not precise dates, but simply approximate time frames for you to hang your hat on.

The Torah (the Law of Moses) + Job

Approximately 6000–1400 B.C.

Genesis

The book of beginnings: the earth, mankind, the Jews. All of this took place prior to Moses. At the end of the book, the family of Jacob moves to Egypt because of a famine. They will live in Egypt for about 400 years, which is the chronological gap between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus.

Job

A book of poetry about a man named Job who was tested by Satan, which God allowed. This probably took place prior to the life of Moses. This is an extremely tough book to exegete, as it is essentially a theological discussion between Job and 3 friends. God does enter into the picture at the end of the book to straighten everything out.

Exodus

The book of redemption and deliverance. The Jews living in Egypt had become enslaved by the Egyptians. God raises up Moses, a Jew raised up to be a ruler in Egypt; but who leaves Egypt and later returns to lead the Jews out of Egypt. Circa 1520–1440 B.C.

Leviticus

The book of worship. The sacrifices and the ceremonial days are covered.

Numbers

The book of wanderings. After receiving the Law of God, the Jews go to Land of Promise, but back away in fear of those in the land. God keeps these Jews in the desert wilderness until the adult generation (Gen X) dies off. This leaves those who were children at the time of the exodus or who were born after the exodus. This is the Generation of Promise. Circa 1440–1400 B.C.

Deuteronomy

Summary of the Law. Moses, who is not allowed to go into the Land of Promise, speaks to the Jews, reminding them of the Law of God and what is expected of them once they enter into the land of Canaan. There are several lengthy sermons of Moses herein, and this book probably takes place over a month or so. What is particularly remarkable about Deuteronomy is, in previous books, Moses is very careful to distinguish between the events which took place and the words of God. Deuteronomy are primarily the words of Moses, but they are given with the authority of God the Holy Spirit.

The Jews Enter the Land of Promise

1400–1100 B.C.

Joshua	A book of success. Joshua leads the Jews into the Land of Promise and they conquer the land and the peoples in it. One key verse: “This book of the law will not depart from your mouth, but you will study it day and night so that you may be careful to do all that is written in it, so that when you make your way, you will be prosperous and enjoy success” (Joshua 1:8). Circa 1400–1390 B.C.
Judges	A book of failures. The cyclical nature of the Jews. They had freedom, they would worship idols, God would discipline them, they would call out for a deliverer; and God would send them a deliverer who would free them. Key verse: there was no king in Israel in those days, and every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). Circa 1390–1100 B.C.
Ruth	A book of faith and redemption. A Gentile woman (Ruth, a Moabite) goes to Israel with her mother-in-law after their husbands have died, and their misery and hardship is turned to blessing and prosperity through the Kinsman-Redeemer, Boaz (a type of Christ).

Although Boaz is a type of Christ, so was Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Joshua before him.

The United Kingdom

1100–930 B.C.

1Samuel	Preparation. Samuel’s ministry; Saul’s reign; the life of David.
2Samuel	Establishment. David’s reign.
1Kings 1–11	The kingdom achieved. Solomon’s reign.

Literature of the Kingdom

Psalms	These are poetry written primarily by David, but at least one was written by Moses; and many were written even a century or two after the time of David.
Proverbs	Solomon wrote this set of couplets about wisdom.
Ecclesiastes	Solomon delves into philosophy.
Song of Solomon	Solomon, despite having 1000 wives and mistresses, chases after this Shulamite woman, who rejects him.

The Kingdom Divided

930–586 B.C.

1Kings 12–22	Division. The history of Israel (the 10 tribes in the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the 2 tribes in the Southern Kingdom) is followed side-by-side in 1Kings 12–2Kings 17. Elijah is a prophet during the end of 1Kings. Major events and the kings of both kingdoms are covered.
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The Kingdom Divided

930–586 B.C.

2Kings 1–17

Division. Elijah continues as a prophet at the beginning of 2Kings, then being replaced by Elisha. Major events and the kings of both kingdoms are covered. Israel undergoes the 5th Cycle of Discipline circa 721 B.C.

2Kings 18–25

The Southern Kingdom's history and kings and prophets are recorded and we are taken from the fall of the Northern Kingdom down to the 5th Cycle of Discipline of Judah, circa 586 B.C.

1Chronicles

The Chronicles is God's Post Mortem. Chronicles, like Samuel and Kings, is actually one book. However, Chronicles is written after long the fact; from the dawn of man in the genealogies to the proclamation to return the Jews to the land after the dispersion of both kingdoms. The first 9 or so chapters of 1Chronicles are genealogies; 1Chron. 10 picks up with the death of Saul and parallels the history of the last couple chapters of 1Samuel, and all of 2Samuel and 1 and 2Kings.

2Chronicles

Prophets to the Northern Kingdom

Joel (850–700 B.C.)

A great locust invasion of the land is the basis for Joel's warning to Israel, that their land would be invaded. His ministry appeared to be successful.

Jonah (800 B.C.)

Jonah is really more of a prophet to Nineveh in Assyria, although he was not that interested in that particular assignment. Jonah is one of the best known of the prophets, simply because God prepared a great fish which swallowed him for 3 days. However, few know much about Jonah apart from the

Amos (780–755 B.C.)

Amos is one of the easiest prophets to place into time, as in the first verse, he identifies the kings of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms during his ministry. Amos warned both Israel and Judah of judgment to come.

Hosea (760–710 B.C.)

Hosea's life with Gomer, the woman he loves, parallel's God's relationship to Israel. Hosea's love was powerfully strong and could not be destroyed; Gomer's unfaithfulness was wicked, hurtful, and resulted in her own undoing. We often wonder, why do we, as faithful believers in Jesus Christ, face incredible difficulties at time; an examination of this book may help to explain how God uses our personal pain and how He is able to comfort us.

Prophets to the Southern Kingdom

Micah (740 B.C.)

Micah makes predictions concerning the destruction of Israel and Judah; however, southern kingdom kings are mentioned in the text. He warns of an attack by Assyria. Micah tells us that the Eternal Ruler will come out of Bethlehem.

Isaiah (740–680 B.C.)

Isaiah had a long public ministry to several kings in Judah. His presentation of the gospel is clear and unmistakable in Isa. 53. He also presents the Trinity in Isa. 48:16. Isaiah is one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

Prophets to the Southern Kingdom

Obadiah (685 B.C.)	Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, and some place him during the captivity and others prior to. This deals with Edom and the Day of the Lord. The date here is only a wild guess.
Nahum (666–615 B.C.)	Nahum warns of the eventual destruction of Nineveh. This should be taken as a parallel book to Jonah.
Zephaniah (630–620 B.C.)	Zephaniah warned of the upcoming judgment against Judah.
Habakkuk (627–586 B.C.)	Habakkuk is a contemporary of Jeremiah. Whereas Jeremiah seemed to be concerned that God's people would not turn from their evil ways, Habakkuk seemed to be more concerned that God was not judging Judah more quickly.
Jeremiah (626–580 B.C.) and Lamentations	<p>Jeremiah was one of the last prophets to warn Judah of its imminent discipline. He had a long public ministry. His book may be difficult for some, as it is not in chronological order. Interestingly enough, Jeremiah did not encourage the Jewish people to resist their Babylonian captivity, when it became clear that they would not refrain from their evil.</p> <p>Jeremiah also wrote the book of Lamentations, his sad elegies about Israel being conquered.</p> <p>Like Isaiah, his ministry cannot be summed up in a few words.</p>

70 Years in Captivity

586–516 B.C.

Only the Prophets listed below wrote during the time that Judah was in captivity. However, even though some Jews did return to the land under the edict of Cyrus, many remained outside the land, having been born and raised there. The book of Esther deals with those who remained in the land.

Prophets While in Captivity

Daniel (604–535 B.C.)	Daniel is well known for his prophecies concerning the coming kingdoms, as well as giving us a time line for future events. Daniel's 70 th Week is equivalent to the 7-year Tribulation.
Ezekiel (593–570 B.C.)	<p>Ezekiel was a prophet to the people during their Exile. God continued to speak to His people through Ezekiel, despite the fact that they were under the 5th Cycle of Discipline.</p> <p>Interestingly enough, we find many of the same Hebrew words in Leviticus and in Ezekiel.</p>

The Jews Return to the Land

516–400 B.C.

Esther	The Book of Esther, like the book of Haggai below, is dated according to the reign of Ahasuerus, the Persian king. Esther is one of the best known books among Jews, and rarely studied by Church Age believers. God is clearly involved in the lives of the Jews, but He acts in the background. I believe that this book, almost more than any other, will evangelize the Jews at the beginning of the Tribulation. They will recognize the similarities between the Jews of this book and those Jews who are scatted throughout the world. Circa 483–479 B.C.
Ezra	We have the history of the Jews, from the time that Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon, and then allowed Ezra to return to the land and to build the Temple of God there. Circa 538–457 B.C.
Nehemiah	Nehemiah was a high ranking official in Persia, and he chose to return to Jerusalem to build walls about the city. Circa 445–444 B.C.

Prophets During the Return to the Land

Haggai (520 B.C.)	Haggai was involved with the building of the Temple.
Zechariah (520–518 B.C.)	Although Zechariah was a prophet to Judah when the remnant returned to the land, what stands out in my mind is Zech. 12:10: I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they will look to me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and will grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for his firstborn.
Malachi (450–400 B.C.)	Malachi was the final prophet to Judah, both in time, and in the Bible.