

BIBLE OVERVIEW

4. Kings and Prophets (The Kingdom set up and held accountable)

What books?

The biblical books in view:

The 'Former Prophets' (Joshua to 2 Kings (Ruth is among the 'Writings'))

The 'Latter Prophets' (Isaiah to Malachi)

Major – Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Daniel is among the 'Writings')

Minor – Hosea to Malachi

Although in the Hebrew Bible Ruth, Chronicles, Daniel and Esther are placed in 'The Writings' they will be included in today's overview since they relate directly to the prophetic interpretation of the history of Israel.

What story-line?

Conquest-judges-united kingdom-divided kingdom-exile-return-rebuilding.

From Joshua to Nehemiah

From 1240 (or earlier) to 445 BC

What key people?

Kings: Saul – David – Solomon – Rehoboam / Jeroboam–Omri–Ahab–Hoshea
Athaliah–Hezekiah–Josiah–Jehoiachin

Prophets: Samuel – Nathan / Elijah – Amos - Hosea
Isaiah – Jeremiah – Ezekiel – Haggai - Zechariah

What perspective?

Former prophets – in narrative prose (mainly)

Latter prophets – in poetry (mainly):

Former prophets sometimes described as the 'Deuteronomist' history < they reflect the perspective of Deuteronomy: obedience to God's laws brings blessings and disobedience brings judgment.

In 1 & 2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Kings – a twin focus on king and temple:

King: 1 Sam. 8.10-18. cf Deut. 17.14-20 ('Law of the King'); and 2 Kings 11.17 (coronation of Joash).

Temple: Worship - the key criteria for kingly appraisal.

By what authority?

Answer in writings of the 'Latter Prophets'

While the 'Former Prophets' communicated the Word of God as *storytellers* providing a divinely inspired interpretation of the history of the nation, the 'Latter Prophets' were *forthtellers* of the Word bringing its claims directly on king and people. Political watchdogs and court advisers.

The Word of God determines the course of history!

Quick review of the most influential prophets:

THE 'PREMIER LEAGUE'

Samuel 11th C
Elijah 9th C

Isaiah 8th C

Jeremiah 7th C/6th C
Ezekiel early 6th C

THE 'FIRST DIVISION'

Joel 8^{th?} C
Amos 8th C
Hosea 8th C
Jonah 8th C
Micah 8th C
Nahum 7th C
Zephaniah 7th C
Habbakuk 7th C
Obadiah early 6th C
Daniel 6th C
Haggai 6th C
Zechariah 6th C
Malachi 5th C

To what purpose?

See the 'Deuteronomistic History' and the work of the Chronicler.

1 & 2 Kings – for a disoriented people to explain disaster and encourage repentance.

1 & 2 Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah – for a disillusioned people to dispel apathy and encourage renewal.

Focus of Kings – public morality.

Focus of Chronicles – religious purity.

What relevance?

Three horizons:

- Of the narrative
- Of the writer(s) and first recipients
- Of later recipients (including us!)

Both the 'Deuteronomist' and the Chronicler have had an enormous influence.

- Development of democratic reform.
- Stimulus to religious revival and renewal.