



Ezekiel

Ezekiel opens with a commission vision (chapters 1-3), followed by many chapters detailing God’s anger with Judah and the judgment He will pour out for their disobedience (chapters 4-24). False prophets, both in Judah and among the exiles, are assuring the Jews that soon Nebuchadnezzar’s power will be broken and they will be able to return home. Ezekiel assures the people this is not so—they are going to spend many years in captivity. The turning point of the entire book is Ezekiel 33:21—the final capture and destruction of Jerusalem by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar. At this point, the tone of Ezekiel’s prophecies changes and becomes hopeful and encouraging. God is not casting off His people. He has great promises to fulfill in and through them yet. After their captivity they will emerge a purified people and permitted to return to their homes in Judah, as God “resurrects” the Jewish nation (Ezek. 38). This hopeful section of future blessedness in fellowship with God is the burden of chapters 33-48. This section assures the Jews they will return from exile, but more importantly, it foretells the ultimate liberation of God’s people accomplished in the advent of the gospel dispensation.

Proverbs is an inspired guide to wisdom. Like Psalms, it is not a continuous narrative, but a collection of works. The book is divided into five sections. Chapters 1-9 are a father’s instruction to his son, exhorting him to pursue wisdom. In this section, wisdom is personified as a woman worthy of one’s love and devotion. Chapters 10-22:16 are collections of Solomon’s Proverbs, and they cover many topics such as diligence, morality, money, slothfulness, wisdom, and righteousness. Proverbs 22:17—24 are collections of “sayings of the wise” which are similar to the other Proverbs. Chapters 25-29 are proverbs of Solomon that were collected and used by Hezekiah’s servants during his reign. Proverbs provides counsel to leaders and rulers, so this shows Hezekiah’s wisdom in seeking such counsel! The final two chapters are sayings of a man named Agur and a king named Lemuel. Collectively, the book of Proverbs provides beneficial counsel to all who seek godly wisdom. While suitable for all ages, Proverbs is directed towards and especially useful to young people who need to learn the way of wisdom!



Proverbs



Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians

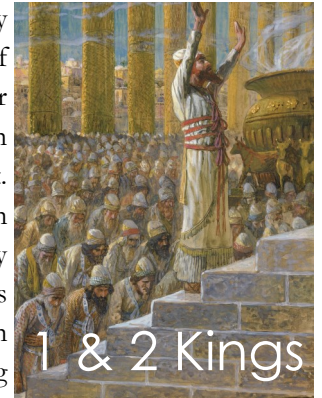
The shortest of Paul’s congregational letters are Philippians, Colossians, and First and Second Thessalonians. Philippians and Colossians are part of Paul’s “prison epistles”—letters written during one of Paul’s incarcerations. Despite Paul’s circumstances, Philippians is a letter of thankfulness, joy and hope as it calls believers to unity and loving service. Colossians is a beautiful treatise on the “Christ of the Church” and the “head of the body”—Jesus. It reminds Christians that Jesus is preeminent and sufficient, thus nothing should be added to His gospel. First Thessalonians was written to a newer group of Christians whom Paul hadn’t been able to stay with for long. They were zealous and faithful, yet there was more they needed to learn. Confusion about the Lord’s return had led to questions, doubts, false teachings, and even improper behavior. Thus, Paul penned a letter to encourage them and provide further teaching. A second letter was required to further solidify these important lessons. These four letters remind us that even when things are basically well in a congregation, there is still exhortation needed and knowledge to be learned!

Sixth Quarter Review

You are three-fourths of the way through this Bible reading plan! You’ve now read 33 of the Bible’s 66 books. If you’re worried that you’re only halfway through by number of books, remember that you’ve completed most of the longer books in the Bible. Over the next six months, you’ll cover many of the shorter writings in the Bible.

Over the last 12 weeks, you returned to the story of Israel’s history in First and Second Kings. You tackled the prophetic book of Ezekiel, and the great book of wisdom—Proverbs. Lastly, you read through four of Paul’s shorter congregational letters: Philippians, Colossians, and 1-2 Thessalonians. This week is designed to be a review week. This will give you a chance to catch up on any reading you missed or fell behind on, and it will give you a chance to re-read and review any sections you might like to revisit. Below and on the back are brief recaps of the books you’ve read this quarter.

First Kings picks up the story of Israel’s history during the kingdom era. It begins with the story of Solomon’s ascension to the throne, and the splendor of his God-given wisdom. Sadly, just because men possess wisdom doesn’t mean they always use it. Solomon was led astray by the many foreign women he married, and for this God promised to take away part of the kingdom. Under the reign of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, this happened. The ten northern tribes rebelled and became the nation of Israel, setting up Jeroboam as their king. While Jeroboam had a promising start, he led the people into idolatry. No righteous king ever sat on the throne in Israel, and ultimately the nation was destroyed and captivated by the Assyrians as a punishment for her rebellion. The southern kingdom of Judah fared slightly better, with at least a few righteous kings providing course-corrections along the way. In time, however, Judah also gave way to apostasy and was captured by the nation of Babylon. The story wasn’t over for God’s people though—the king was still living, and Messianic hopes, bleak as they may have seemed, were still alive!



1 & 2 Kings



Ezekiel

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Proverbs



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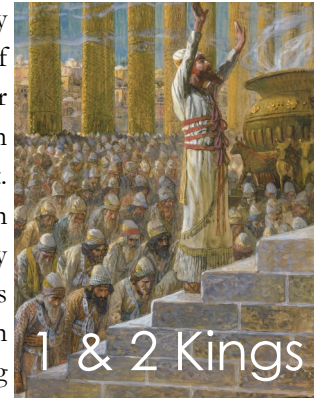
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