THE EQUIP INSTITUTE Theme: Christian Story Topic: Old Testament Survey: The Historical Books Fall 2023	
Introduction	
The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. This fall, we are spending twelve weeks studying the Christian Story. Last week, we began a four-week survey of the Old Testament with a study of the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy). This week, we will survey the Historical Books.	
An Introduction to the Historical Books	
The Historical Books tell a unified story, though they are not a single literary unit like the Pentateuch. Rather, they are a collection of books written by several authors covering a period of approximately 1000 years.	
According to the ESV Study Bible, the Historical Books tell the story of (1) Israel's entry into Canaan under Joshua's leadership; (2) Israel's life in the promised land under the judges and the transition to kingship; (3) the division of the nation into two rival kingdoms (Israel and Judah) and life in both; (4) the downfall and exile of each kingdom; (5) life during the exile; and (6) Judah's return from exile.	
There are twelve Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. They are theological interpretations of the past that are meant to demonstrate God's sovereignty over all nations and His ongoing presence among His chosen nation as He remains faithful to His promises and His covenants, despite Israel's continual drifting into sin.	
The Historical Books	
<u>Joshua</u>	
The name <i>Joshua</i> comes from the main figure in the book. The authorship is anonymous. It was likely written	



focus upon the conquest of Canaan and chapters 13–24 focus upon the division of the land among Israel's tribes.

Key Themes:

- God's fulfillment of His land promise to Abraham and later generations
- God as the Divine Warrior who conquers His idolatrous enemies
- God giving His people "rest" from their wilderness wanderings and their enemies
- God's grace is available even to non-Jews

<u>Judges</u>

The name *Judges* comes from the emphasis on individual judges whom the Lord raised up to deliver Israel from their enemies. The author is anonymous. Judges could have been written as early as the mid-1300s and no later than the mid-1000s BC. Chapters 1–3:6 focus upon Israel's drifting into unfaithfulness after Joshua's death. Chapters 3:7–16:31 focus upon Israel's ongoing and escalating cycle of unfaithfulness during this period. Chapters 17–21 focus upon the lowest depths of Israel's unfaithfulness.

Key Themes:

- Israel was trapped in a cycle of sin because everyone did what was right in their own eyes rather than submitting to God as their King
- Despite their sin, God remained faithful and raised up judges to deliver Israel
- Deliverance was temporary—Israel needed a faithful king who could rule of God's behalf

Ruth

The name *Ruth* comes from the main character in the book. The authorship is anonymous. Ruth was written after 1000 BC. Chapter 1 focuses upon Ruth and Naomi's tragic backstory. Chapters 2–3 focus upon Ruth gleaning in Boaz's field, his favor toward Ruth, and his desire to marry her. Chapter 4 focuses upon Boaz's redemption of Ruth through marriage and the multi-generational blessings that resulted.

Key Themes:

• God's love for people from all nations

- The beauty of family faithfulness to God
- The kinsman-redeemer who, because of grace, loves the unloved and thereby brings blessing to the cursed

1-2 Samuel

The name Samuel comes from the main character of the books. The authorship is anonymous. It was written over a couple of centuries, but there is no consensus on the date. 1 Samuel 1–8 focus on the story of Samuel, the last of the judges. 1 Samuel 9–31 focus upon the rule of King Saul, his downfall, and the rise of King David. 2 Samuel focuses upon the reign of King David.

Key Themes:

- Israel needed a faithful king who could rule on God's behalf
- Saul was not faithful, so David was chosen by God
- David was a man after God's own heart, but he was still a sinner who needed God's grace
- God's forever Kingdom will be fully realized through a descendant of David
- Jerusalem was set apart as the center of the Davidic kingdom and the Temple would become the place where God was uniquely present among His people

1-2 Kings

The name *Kings* comes from the emphasis on Israel's monarchy from 970–586 BC. The authorship is anonymous. 1–2 Kings were written sometime after the recorded events and likely no later than 330 BC. 1 Kings 1–11 focus upon the reign of Solomon. 1 Kings 12–22 focus upon the various kings after the nation was upon the ministry of Elisha. 2 Kings 11–25 focus upon the final days of both Israel and Judah before each is exiled.

Key Themes:

- The Lord is sovereign over all nations, but has a special relationship with Israel and especially Judah
- The Lord is the only God and all other gods are idols
- The Lord alone is worthy of worship, on His terms
- Sin (especially idolatry) divides God's people
- God keeps His covenant promises
- Repentance leads to forgiveness and possibly wider renewal

1-2 Chronicles

The name *Chronicles* simply refers to the work the author(s) did in recounting much of the same stories as 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings, but from a complementary perspective that gives greater emphasis to the Davidic covenant. The authorship is anonymous. Chronicles was possibly written later than 1–2 Kings, though would have also been completed by 330 BC. 1 Chronicles 1–9 focus upon a genealogical account of Israel's tribes. 1 Chronicles 10–29 focus upon the unified kingdom under David and Solomon. 2 Chronicles focuses upon Judah's history from the divided kingdom, to exile, to the restoration to the land under the Persian King Cyrus.

Key Themes:

- The uniqueness of Israel as a people in God's redemptive purposes
- The importance of the David covenant for Israel and eventually all nations
- The centrality of the Temple to Israel's identity, worship, and monarchy

Ezra

The name *Ezra* refers to the main character in the book. The authorship is anonymous. The latest events covered in the book date to 433 BC, so the book was likely completed shortly after that. Chapters 1–2 focus upon Cyrus's decree and the return of Judah from Babylon. Chapters 3–6 focus upon rebuilding the Temple. Chapters 7–8 focus upon reinstituting God's Torah. Chapters 9–10 focus upon Ezra's response to the problem of Jews intermarrying with pagan peoples.

Key Themes:

- God is working providentially to bring about His purposes, sometimes even through pagan nations
- God keeps his covenant promises to Israel, though final fulfillment is still in the future
- God's people demonstrate their loyalty to Him by right worship and faithful observance of Torah

Nehemiah

The name *Nehemiah* refers to the main character of the book. The authorship is anonymous. The latest events covered in the book date to 433 BC, so the book was

likely completed shortly after that. Chapters 1–2 focuses upon Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem to build its walls. Chapters 3–7 focuses upon the difficulties encountered in rebuilding the wall. Chapters 8–10 focus upon reinstituting God's Torah. Chapters 11–13 focus upon misc. issues with administering the post-exilic nation.

Key Themes:

- God answers the prayers of His people
- God is working providentially to bring about His purposes, sometimes even through pagan nations
- God keeps his covenant promises to Israel, though final fulfillment is still in the future
- God's people demonstrate their loyalty to Him by right worship and faithful observance of Torah

Esther

The name *Esther* refers to the main character in the book. The authorship is anonymous. Ahasuerus reigned from 485–464 BC, so the book was probably written shortly after that. Chapters 1–2 focus upon the circumstances of Esther's rise. Chapters 3–10 focus upon Haman's plot against the Jews and their deliverance through Mordecai and Esther.

Key Themes:

- God's providential preservation of His people
- God uses the lowly to bring low the haughty
- God's judgment upon the wicked, especially those who hate His people

Recommended Resources

Christopher J.H. Wright, The Old Testament in Seven Sentences: A Small Introduction to a Vast Topic (InterVarsity, 2019).

Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, A Survey of the Old Testament, 2nd ed. (Zondervan, 2000).

Eugene H. Merrill, Mark Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament (B&H Academic, 2011).

Charles Swindoll, *David: A Man of Passion & Destiny* (Thomas Nelson, 1997).
