

**Persian Connections**  
Writings from the Exile  
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Slide 1

1. This is the third presentation looking at the books of the Bible to determine the times and contexts in which they were written and, to the extent possible, to determine who did or did not write them.
2. Last week, we looked at the books of the Christian Old Testament that Jews call the Nevi'im, which includes books describing the history of Israel from the time of Joshua to the exile in 587 B.C. after Babylon had conquered the southern Kingdom of Judah and destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem.
3. Scholars believe many of these books were written during the reign of King Josiah, who ruled the Kingdom of Judah until he was killed in 609 B.C.
4. These books, which scholars call the Deuteronomistic History, were then supplemented to take the exile into account.
5. Today, we will look at the books that Jews call Ketuvim, meaning "Writings."
6. No single narrative connects all the Writings, which were written over a period of almost 400 years.
7. But many of them reflect the influence of Persian control of Israel after the return from the Babylonian exile.

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1. Before we turn to the Writings, we need to take an additional look at Chapters 40 to 55 of the Book of Isaiah that we looked at briefly last week.
2. The Prophet Isaiah lived and wrote in the eighth century B.C. and much of the Book of Isaiah is about that period.
3. However, Chapters 40 to 55 describe the period 200 years later when the Jews were allowed to return from their exile in Babylon in 539 B.C.
4. As a result, most scholars believe those chapters could not have been written by the Prophet Isaiah, who is usually called "First Isaiah," and attribute those chapters to an unknown author who lived at the time of the exile and is known as "Second Isaiah" or "Deutero Isaiah."
5. The writings of Second Isaiah are distinguished by the new and unprecedented view of God those writings articulate, a view that is shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims today.

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1. Before the exile, the God of Israel was not seen as the only god in the universe.
2. Instead, as one author writes: “[**Other gods**] **do exist, and they may even make things happen in the world, but you are not to worship them before, or along with, Me.**” Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 243.
3. For example, after escaping the Egyptians, Moses and the Israelites sang: “**Who among the gods is like you, O LORD?**” *Exodus* 15:11.
4. In Psalm 82, “**God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the gods.**” *Psalms* 82:1.

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1. Second Isaiah writes: “**I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.**” *Isaiah* 45:5.
2. Accordingly, “**Yahweh was not just the god of Israel (both as land and people), but of all lands and nations.**” Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* at 179.
3. This stirring proclamation of monotheism is included in a statement that Yahweh made to “**his anointed, to Cyrus**” the Great of Persia, who had conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews in exile to return home. *Isaiah* 45:1.
4. By calling Cyrus “**anointed,**” God was literally calling him a messiah, which God calls a “**title of honor.**” *Isaiah* 45:4.

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1. Second Isaiah was explaining to his Jewish readers how the God of Israel was also the God of even Cyrus the Great because Yahweh had been able to cause Cyrus, a Persian, to “**rebuild my city and set my exiles free.**” *Isaiah* 45:13.
2. Because Yahweh was the only God in the universe, Second Isaiah quotes Yahweh as saying to Cyrus: “**I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster. I, the LORD, do all these things.**” *Isaiah* 45:7.

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1. The conclusion that God is the source of both good and evil is the subject of the Book of Job, one of the books of the Ketuvim.
2. The Prophet Ezekiel, who wrote during the exile, identified Job as a man of righteousness, suggesting that the story of Job has an ancient origin. *Ezekiel* 14:14.
3. As a result, the Book of Job has traditionally been attributed to Moses.

4. Scholars have identified similarities between Job and the writings of Second Isaiah that many believe show the works are related to each other.
5. The most important theme of Second Isaiah is that Yahweh's power extends to everyone, whether or not they live in Israel.
6. In Job, Yahweh has the power to affect Job, even though he lives in the far off **"land of Uz,"** whose precise location has never been determined. *Job* 1:1.

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1. Another important theme of Second Isaiah is that **"I [the LORD] form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster."** *Isaiah* 45:7.
2. In Job, Satan carries out the misery that God orders. *Job* 1:12-19.
3. As Job asks his wife after the suffering that he had experienced: **"Shall we accept good from God, and not troubles?"** *Job* 2:10.
4. Reflecting the idea that God brings troubles for reasons known only to him, Second Isaiah points to the futility of questioning God when he has created human disasters. *Isaiah* 45:9.
5. Job similarly points to the futility of asking God, **"What are you doing,"** when he causes misery. *Job* 9:12.

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1. Scholars have also identified a number of phrases found in both Job and Second Isaiah but nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. For example, both use the phrase **"that the hand of the LORD has done this."** *Job* 12:9; *Isaiah* 41:20.
3. Both use the phrase that God **"alone stretche[s] out the heavens."** *Job* 9:8; *Isaiah* 44:24.
4. Both use the Hebrew phrase that God is **"mighty in power."** *Job* 9:4; *Isaiah* 40:26.
5. Many scholars have concluded that either Job borrows from Second Isaiah or Second Isaiah borrows from Job.
6. The similarities between Job and Second Isaiah and their differences from earlier works have led most scholars to conclude that Job's **"true genesis was in the time of the Babylonian exile or shortly thereafter."** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 642.

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1. Job is an example of what scholars consider “wisdom literature” that was popular throughout the Middle East.
2. The Book of Psalms, a collection of 150 poems that follows Job in the Christian Old Testament, is another example of wisdom literature.
3. The Gospel of Luke quotes Jesus as saying Psalm 110 includes words that **“David himself declares.”** *Luke 20:42-43.*
4. The Book of Acts quotes from Psalms 16 and 110 as words that **“David said.”** *Acts 2:25-28; 34-35.*
5. In his letter to the Romans, Paul quotes Psalms 32 and 69 as something **“David says.”** *Romans 4:6-8; 11:9-10.*
6. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says that **“God spoke through David”** in Psalm 95. *Hebrews 3:7-11; 4:3, 7.*
7. As a result, Christians and Jews have long believed, and many continue to believe, that David wrote the Psalms and was inspired by God to do so.

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1. Bible scholars have long been skeptical of the claims that David wrote the Psalms.
2. Among the most persuasive evidence that David did not write all the Psalms are those reciting events that happened long after his death.
3. For example, Psalm 65, which includes “of David” in its title, reports: **“We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.”** *Psalms 65:4.*
4. Psalm 79 cries out to God because **“the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.”** *Psalms 79:1.*
5. During the life of David, there was no Temple in Jerusalem, which was built by his son Solomon, and Jerusalem certainly had not been reduced to rubble.
6. Psalm 137 reports from **“the rivers of Babylon,”** lamenting **“the day Jerusalem fell”** and asking that **“our captors”** be punished **“according to what you have done to us.”** *Psalms 137:1-8.*
7. At the time of King David, Babylon was an insignificant town in Mesopotamia that is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible in connection with time of David.
8. The capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the exile to the rivers of Babylon were 400 years after the time of David.

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1. Some have argued that David was a prophet and could have foretold the Babylonian conquest, the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile with precision hundreds of years before they happened.
2. But other evidence has convinced most scholars that David did not write all of the Psalms attributed to him and may well not have written any of them.
3. The Hebrew words of some of the Psalms were not in use at the time of David, as reflected in known writings from that period.
4. In addition, many of the Psalms use words associated with the northern Kingdom of Israel and not with the Kingdom of Judah of which David was a part.
5. As one author writes: **“In short, the great chronological and geographical span indicated by the Psalms’ language ruled out a single author or even a single period: the Psalms were written in different places and over a long span of time.”** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 462.

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1. The titles of seventy-three Psalms include the Hebrew phrase *le dawid*, usually translated as “of David.”
2. This phrase has been considered proof that David wrote at least those Psalms.
3. *Le dawid* can also be translated “for David,” which is probably closer to its original meaning.
4. That seems clear from Psalms 72, which contains a similar Hebrew phrase that has been translated **“of Solomon.”**
5. Psalm 72 says it constitutes **“the prayers of David son of Jesse.”** *Psalms* 72:20.
6. Consequently, the title **“of Solomon”** in Psalm 72 cannot mean that Solomon was the author, which is expressly said to have been David.
7. On its face, Psalm 72 appears to be a prayer made on behalf of Solomon, David’s son, including, for example, requests that **“gold from Sheba be given him”** and that **“kings of distant shores . . . bring tribute to him.”** *Psalms* 72:10, 15.
8. Many scholars believe Psalms titled “of David” were composed about him or in his honor and not by him.

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1. Most scholars today believe that the Psalms **“were originally composed for and used in public worship.”** Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament* at 290

2. It therefore **“seemed most likely that the authors of most of the Psalms were people directly connected with the temple setting—priests or Levites who worked there.”** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 465.
3. But, as we need to repeat, whoever wrote the Psalms could have been inspired by God in the same that any human author of the Bible was inspired.
4. Even if David didn’t write the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, whoever did powerfully communicated the protective nature of God.

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1. Proverbs is another example of wisdom literature from the Ketuvim.
2. Claiming that Solomon’s wisdom was **“greater than all the wisdom in Egypt,”** 1 Kings credits Solomon with speaking **“three thousand proverbs.”** *1 Kings* 4:30, 32.
3. As a result, the Book of Proverbs has traditionally been attributed to Solomon.
4. In three places, Proverbs says that what follows are the **“proverbs of Solomon.”** *Proverbs* 1:1; 10:1; 25:1.
5. Most scholars today **“believe these three verses are later, editorial additions”** and that **“Proverbs is actually a collection of smaller collections.”** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 508-09.
6. **“Most scholars agree that these texts were committed to writing much later than the days of Solomon.”** Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book* at 75.
7. One verse says that some of the proverbs were **“copied by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah.”** *Proverbs* 25:1.
8. Because Proverbs includes sayings from a variety of times and places, some of its sayings flatly contradict each other.
9. For example, *Proverbs* 26:4 states: **“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.”**
10. The very next verse says: **“Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.”** *Proverbs* 26:5.

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1. Even though Proverbs and Job are both part of the Ketuvim, they contain dramatically different teachings.
2. Job, who **“was blameless and upright,”** was nonetheless cursed with extraordinary misfortune at the hands of God, whose motives are beyond human understanding. *Job* 1:1; 42:1-6.

3. Proverbs repeatedly maintains that the righteous are rewarded.
4. For example, one verse says: **“The Lord’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous.”** *Proverbs* 3:33.
5. Another says: **“Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.”** *Proverbs* 10:6.
6. Still another says: **“The righteous person is rescued from trouble, and it falls on the wicked instead.”** *Proverbs* 11:8.

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1. Proverbs is probably best known by Christians for its personification of “Wisdom” as **“the craftsman at his side”** as God **“marked out the foundations of the earth.”** *Proverbs* 8:29-30.
2. Christians later saw this as indicating that Jesus had been with God **“in the beginning.”** *John* 1:2.
3. Both Job and Second Isaiah quote God as having **“laid the earth’s foundations,”** but say nothing about Wisdom having been involved. *Job* 38:4; *Isaiah* 48:13.
4. Many scholars believe that the first nine chapters of Proverbs, which teach the personification of Wisdom, were written last and were based on Persian or Babylonian concepts learned after the exile.
5. Some scholars have noted similarities in form and substance between those chapters and a cuneiform fragment from Mesopotamia. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* at 175-79.

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1. The Book of Ecclesiastes is also traditionally attributed to Solomon, which explains why it is included in the Jewish canon.
2. However, if Solomon wrote both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, he changed his mind on a lot of important issues from one book to the other.
3. As we noted earlier, a key teaching of Proverbs is that **“[t]he righteous person is rescued from trouble, and it falls on the wicked instead.”** *Proverbs* 11:8.
4. Ecclesiastes rejects this idea: **“In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: the righteous perishing in their righteousness and the wicked living long in their wickedness. Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise – why destroy yourself?”** *Ecclesiastes* 7:15-17.

5. Ecclesiastes paints a bleak picture of death: **“For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten.”** *Ecclesiastes* 9:5.

6. As one author notes, Ecclesiastes recognizes that **“reality rarely seems to match wisdom’s claims”** as set out in Proverbs. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 512.

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1. The first verse of Ecclesiastes attributes its teachings to **“the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem.”** *Ecclesiastes* 1:1.

2. This Teacher later claims: **“I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.”** *Ecclesiastes* 1:12.

3. Because Solomon was king of Israel in Jerusalem and was the son of David, readers have long believed that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes in the tenth century B.C.

4. But Bart Ehrman flatly states: **“This book could not have been written until six hundred years after Solomon’s death, as critical biblical scholars today agree.”** Ehrman, *Forged* at 117.

5. One clue that Solomon did not write Ecclesiastes is the writer’s claim that he **“was king.”** *Ecclesiastes* 1:12.

6. Solomon reigned as king until he died, so there never was a time during his life when he would have said he “was king.” *1 Kings* 11:43.

7. Supporters of Solomon’s writing of Ecclesiastes suggest that he wrote so late in life that he forgot that he was king, which is not a terribly persuasive argument.

8. Ecclesiastes includes Persian words that entered Hebrew writings only after the sixth century B.C., when Persia controlled Israel after Cyrus the Great defeated Babylon.

9. It is not likely that Solomon used words that his readers had never heard.

10. As one writer says: **“One could of course say that Solomon, being the wisest of kings, had studied Persian on his own. But why would he use a word that no one else in his kingdom would understand for the next four hundred years?”** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 513.

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1. Ecclesiastes reflects the influence of the Greeks, who took control of the areas of the Middle East from Persia in 323 B.C.

2. The Greeks believed, based largely on the teachings of Socrates and his pupil Plato, that each individual is made up of an imperfect and perishable body and a perfect and immortal soul that will be returned to the gods upon that person's death.
3. Ecclesiastes articulates this idea not found in other Jewish writings: “[T]he dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” *Ecclesiastes* 9:5; 12:7.
4. So most scholars believe that Ecclesiastes was written, perhaps by a person claiming to be a descendant of David, sometime after 323 B.C.

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1. The third book of wisdom traditionally associated with Solomon is Song of Songs, sometimes called Song of Solomon.
2. The Song of Songs is probably the most unusual book in the entire Bible.
3. In the first place, it makes no mention of God or any other spiritual being.
4. In addition, it is filled with graphic sexual imagery.
5. Rabbis once required “**that a person had to be thirty years old before reading or hearing this book.**” Trickler, *Who Wrote the Books of the Bible* at 131.
6. This passage from Song of Songs, reflected in this painting, is typical: “**Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense.**” *Song of Songs* 4:5-6.
7. Another passage says: “**Your stature is like that of the palm, and your breasts are like clusters of fruit. I said, ‘I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit.’**” *Song of Songs* 7:7-8.

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1. Jews and Christians have long been embarrassed by the Song of Songs and have advanced a variety of interpretations to try to explain why Song of Songs is in the Bible.
2. Some say that it is a tribute to marriage, but there is nothing in the book about marriage or even engagement, which repeatedly refers only to “**my lover**” or “**my beloved.**” *Song of Songs* 1:14, 16.
3. Others say the Song of Songs shows the love of God for Israel, which is a stretch for a book that never mentions God.

4. Others say it shows the love of Jesus for his church, which is more of a stretch.
5. Most **“scholars see the Song as part of the great ancient Near Eastern tradition of love poetry, with its conventional descriptions of the lovers’ physical beauty and its frank exaltation of eroticism.”** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 515.
6. It became part of the Bible because its title – **“Solomon’s Song of Songs”** – suggests that Solomon wrote it or that it was written for him, both of which suggestions are probably not true.
7. In the first place, the Song twice refers to Solomon in the third person. *Song of Songs* 3:7-11; 8:12.
8. More important, the language in the Song of Songs, like that of Ecclesiastes, comes from the Persian and Greek periods of Israel’s history.

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1. Like the Song of Songs, the Book of Esther, another book of the Ketuvim, contains no mention of God.
2. There is no doubt that the Book of Esther has a connection to the Persian period of Israel’s history – the entire story is set in Persia during the reign of Xerxes the Great, who ruled from 486 to 465 B.C.
3. According to the story, Xerxes had banished his wife from the palace because she had refused to come to his room when he summoned her.
4. Xerxes wanted to assure that **“all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.”** *Esther* 1:20.
5. Esther was a young Jewish woman living in Persia who had been adopted by her cousin Mordecai, a descendant of a man **“who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.”** *Esther* 2:5-6.
6. Through a series of events, the beautiful Esther becomes Xerxes’ queen and eventually saves the Jewish people from destruction at the hands of their enemy, a man named Haman.

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1. In some places, the stories of palace intrigue in the Book of Esther suggest a classic farce, but with Draconian consequences.
2. In one scene, a drunken Haman falls against Esther reclining on her couch just as Xerxes comes in from his garden. *Esther* 7:8.

3. Thinking Haman was making improper advances on his queen while he was still in the house, Xerxes has Haman hung on “[a] **gallows seventy-five feet high**” that had been intended for Mordecai, who later becomes “**second in rank to Xerxes.**” *Esther* 7:9; 10:3.
4. Why is the Book of Esther, which not only does not mention God but makes no reference to supernatural forces, in the Bible?
5. Esther was apparently included because it explains the origins of the Jewish festival of Purim, which celebrates the death of Haman, thereby thwarting “**the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews.**” *Esther* 9:25-26.

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1. The Book of Ruth is another book of the Ketuvim that has a female subject.
2. Ruth is placed near the end of the Hebrew Scriptures, along with other post-exilic Writings.
3. Because the story of Ruth is set “[i]n the days when the judges ruled,” the Christian Old Testament places Ruth between the Book of Judges and 1 Samuel. *Ruth* 1:1.
4. The book itself suggests that it was written long after the fact, explaining one legal transaction in the story as reflecting how it was done “**in earlier times in Israel.**” *Ruth* 4:7.

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1. The Book of Ruth tells the story of Ruth, a Moabite widow who was seeking a new husband after going to Israel with Naomi, her Jewish mother-in-law.
2. After Ruth had accepted Yahweh as her God, Naomi advised Ruth to “**wash and perfume yourself and put on your best clothes**” and go to the threshing room floor to find Boaz, a Bethlehem landowner, sleeping after he had finished eating and drinking. *Ruth* 3:3.
3. Naomi told Ruth: “**Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.**” *Ruth* 3:4.
4. Ruth did as Naomi told her and during the night “**uncovered [Boaz’s] feet,**” which many scholars believe is a euphemism for another part of his body. *Ruth* 3:7.
5. When Boaz awoke and found Ruth “**lying at his feet,**” she asked him to “[s]pread the cover of your garment over me.” *Ruth* 3:8-9.

6. The next morning, Boaz sent Ruth away early, saying: **“Don’t let it be known that a woman came to the threshing room floor.”** *Ruth* 3:14.

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1. The story does not detail what happened over night, but Boaz married Ruth and the two had a son named Obed, who was the grandfather of King David. *Ruth* 4:13-22.

2. Many scholars believe that the Book of Ruth was written in response to the teachings of Ezra, a Jewish priest who wrote in the fifth century B.C.

3. In the Book of Ezra, the author rails against Jewish men marrying foreign women, including Moabites, a practice he warned would lead to God’s vengeance. *Ezra* 9:1-15.

4. By writing that David was himself the product of a marriage to a Moabite woman, the Book of Ruth showed that mixed marriages were fine if the woman first accepted Yahweh as her God.

5. As one author writes: **“[T]he polemical purpose of the story would appear unmistakable: mixed marriages, it says, are perfectly acceptable.”** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 403.

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1. Daniel is another book of the Ketuvim.

2. Daniel is among the most important books of the Old Testament for many Christians because of what are seen to be its teachings about the end of time and the return of Jesus.

3. When asked by his disciples for signs of **“the end of the age,”** Jesus replied: **“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”** *Matthew* 24:3, 15-17.

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1. Jesus was referring to what appears to be a prophetic passage in Daniel: **“His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.”** *Daniel* 11:31.

2. Daniel then says: **“From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.”** *Daniel* 12:11.

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1. Daniel's predictions closely match events beginning in 167 B.C., when Greeks led by Antiochus IV rededicated the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem to the Greek god Zeus and barred the Jews from sacrificing in their Temple, leading to the revolt of the Maccabees.
2. About 1,290 days later Antiochus IV died and the Maccabees gained control of the Temple and rededicated it to God.
3. Most scholars today believe that the Book of Daniel accurately predicts the events beginning in 167 B.C. because **"this is mostly prophecy after the fact."** *Oxford Companion to the Bible* at 151.
4. In other words, the Book of Daniel was written after the events it describes, claiming to foresee those events four hundred years in the future.
5. Most scholars believe Daniel was written in about 164 B.C., making it **"probably the latest book in the Hebrew Bible."** Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 652.
6. Among the large amount of evidence that supports this idea is Daniel's use of Persian and Greek words that were not in use in Israel at the time Daniel was said to have made his predictions.
7. Daniel is said to have had one vision in which he imagined himself in the Persian **"citadel of Susa."** *Daniel* 8:2.
8. This is the same setting as in the Book of Esther, written after the exile. *Esther* 1:5.
9. In addition, scholars have noted that the first six chapters, which tell such familiar stories as Daniel in the lion's den, are written in the third person.
10. Chapters seven to twelve, including the prophetic visions, are written in the first person.
11. Finally, the times and places for the exilic period in which the story is set include a number of errors that would not have occurred if the author was actually writing in that period.
12. As a result, as one author writes, Daniel was constructed by **"an unknown Jewish author"** who appended after-the-act "predictions" to a **"collection of separate courtier tales about Daniel and his friends."** *Id.*
13. The apparent intent of this effort was to convince the Maccabees, who were still fighting, that God was on their side while concealing the identity of the author.

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1. Chronicles is the final book of the Ketuvim, reflecting its post-exilic origins.
2. The Christian Old Testament divides Chronicles into two segments and places them after 2 Kings.
3. Chronicles summarizes Jewish history from Adam to the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon and therefore must have been written after the return.
4. Much of Chronicles duplicates, often word-for-word, passages and stories found in other books of the Hebrew Scriptures.
5. But Chronicles makes subtle, but sometimes fundamental, changes to some of those stories, reflecting changing views about the power of God and the source of evil that likely resulted from Persian influences.

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1. One apparent objective of Chronicles is to improve the image of David.
2. Gone from Chronicles are the stories of David and Bathsheba, which led to the death of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband.
3. Chronicles repeats the story, first appearing in Ruth, that David was the grandson of Boaz. *1 Chronicles 2:12*.
4. Chronicles also tries to correct an inconsistency about David in the books of Samuel.
5. As most people know, 1 Samuel says that David killed Goliath, whose **“spear shaft was like a weaver's rod.”** *1 Samuel 17:4-51*.
6. But 2 Samuel says: **“In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.”** *2 Samuel 21:19*.
7. Chronicles revises the sentence in 2 Samuel: **“In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.”** *1 Chronicles 20:5*.

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1. Chronicles also introduces into the Hebrew Scriptures a powerful new idea about God's forgiveness.

2. As we discussed last week, King Josiah, who ruled the Kingdom of Judah from about 640 to 609 B.C., instituted a number of religious reforms he hoped would save his kingdom from foreign domination.
3. According 2 Kings, the reforms were intended to counter the actions of King Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, whose worship of foreign gods caused **“more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.”** *2 Kings* 21:9.
4. Josiah's reforms did not prevent the Babylonians from capturing Jerusalem in 586 B.C., destroying its Temple and exiling the people of the Kingdom of Judah to Babylon.
5. 2 Kings describes the reasons for this disaster: **“Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.”** *2 Kings* 24:3-4.
6. In other words, the exile resulted from Manasseh's worship of foreign gods, which Yahweh, the God of Israel, was not willing to forgive.

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1. Chronicles fundamentally changes this account.
2. Repeating the language of *2 Kings* 21:1-6, 2 Chronicles recites the sins of Manasseh, who **“did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.”** *2 Chronicles* 33:1-6.
3. After reciting these sins, 2 Chronicles includes a section not found in 2 Kings.
4. According to this new section, God sent an army of Assyrians to Jerusalem, **“who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.”** *2 Chronicles* 33:11.
5. While in captivity, Manasseh accepted Yahweh as his God and was allowed to return to Jerusalem, where he **“got rid of all the foreign gods.”** *2 Chronicles* 33:15.
6. 2 Chronicles then repeats the claims from 2 Kings that Amon, the son of Manasseh and father of Josiah, had **“worshipped and offered sacrifices to all the idols Manasseh had made,”** but adds the following words not found in 2 Kings: **“But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the LORD.”** *2 Chronicles* 33:22-23.
7. In 2 Kings, written during the exile, King Manasseh was guilty of such unforgivable sins that God destroyed Judah and sent its citizens into exile despite the religious reforms of King Josiah.
8. By the time of 2 Chronicles, written after the return from exile, King Manasseh had become a model of repentance and the exile was no longer attributed to his sins.

## Slide 34

1. The importance of repentance and forgiveness is reflected in another difference between 2 Chronicles and its source.
2. 1 Kings tells of a visit by God to Solomon after he had dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem, during which God says that if the people of Israel turn to foreign gods he will destroy Israel and the Temple. *1 Kings* 9:1-9.
3. Scholars believe these words were written during the exile as an explanation for the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians.
4. Nothing in God's words to Solomon suggests the possibility of forgiveness for turning to foreign gods, which was the unforgivable sin of Manasseh described in 2 Kings that led to the exile.
5. 2 Chronicles describes the same visit and includes most of the words of God reported in 1 Kings. *2 Chronicles* 7:11-22.
6. But 2 Chronicles includes the following words not found in 1 Kings: **“[I]f my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”** *2 Chronicles* 7:14.
7. By the time 2 Chronicles was written, the Jews had been allowed to return from the exile, which they had assumed would be permanent because of their sins.
8. As a result, it had become apparent that God would forgive sins even as great as those of Manasseh if one repents and is humble before God.
9. Chronicles' express recognition of God's power to forgive even the most egregious sins, occurring very late in the development of the Hebrew Scriptures, is an important link between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.
10. That link is often overlooked because of where the Christians place the book of Chronicles in their Bibles.

## Slide 35

1. It is possible that Chronicles' new attitude toward forgiveness was also tied to a fundamental change in ideas about the source of evil between Jewish writings before the exile and those after it.
2. The best example of that change can be seen in a story in 2 Samuel, in which **“the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, ‘Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.’”** *2 Samuel* 24:1.
3. Conducting a census except under certain circumstances was against Jewish law. *Exodus* 30:11-16.

4. So when David actually conducted the census that God had requested, God got angry and sent a plague that killed 70 thousand people. *2 Samuel 24:15*.
5. 1 Chronicles repeats the story of the ill-fated census conducted by David, resulting in the same plague and the same 70 thousand dead. *1 Chronicles 21*.
6. However, in the 1 Chronicles version, **“Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, ‘Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan.’”** *1 Chronicles 21:1*.

Slide 36

1. As we saw earlier, Second Isaiah wrote: **“I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster. I, the LORD, do all these things.”** *Isaiah 45:7*.
2. In the Book of Job, Satan acts as the agent of God. *Job 1:12-19*.
3. However, in 1 Chronicles, Satan acts independently of God, causing David to sin.
4. Many scholars believe that the conclusion that Satan and not God is the source of evil entered Jewish thought after the exile as a result of the influence of Persian beliefs derived from Zoroastrianism.
5. The Apocryphal Book of Tobit, written at the same time as Chronicles, describes a wicked demon named **“Asmodeus,”** who opposes God and his angels, *Tobit 3:8, 17*.
6. Asmodeus is the same as Aeshma-daeva, the demon of Zoroastrianism who opposed God and his angels.
7. Whatever the source of the idea that evil comes from Satan and not from God, that idea may be related to the additions in 2 Chronicles indicating that even the gravest sins can be forgiven by repentance – if Satan is the cause of sin, God can forgive it.

Slide 37

1. The last chapter of 2 Chronicles includes the words of the decree by Cyrus the Great letting the Jews return from their exile in Babylon. *2 Chronicles 36:22-23*.
2. A nearly identical passage is at the beginning of the Book of Ezra. *Ezra 1:1-4*.
3. As a result, Ezra has long been associated with the writing of Chronicles and is sometimes called the Chronicler.
4. Scholars today are not sure who wrote Chronicles,
5. Most believe it was written in Jerusalem between 350 and 250 B.C.

Slide 38

1. This timeline reflects the discussions we have had during the last three presentations about the writing of the books of the Old Testament.
2. As we end this discussion, it is important to keep in mind how we began this series.
3. The fact that human authors of the books of the Old Testament may not be who we thought they were or that the different writers may have reported events and ideas differently does not mean that the Bible does not contain the words of God.
4. God's word may be perfect – man's ability to hear and translate it correctly is not.

Slide 39

1. Next week, we will talk about the New Testament, which is all about Jesus.
2. We will try to determine when and by whom the books were written and their historical and theological contexts.
3. We will pay particular attention to the Gospels and their evolving views of Jesus.
4. We will end by looking at the Book of Revelation and trying to make sense of it.

**Resources:**

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Trickler, C. Jack, *Who Wrote the Books of the Bible?* (Author House 2006)

## Hebrew Bible Timeline

