



JOSHUA: What a book! And what a man! Here's the divine record: *"There was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel"* (10:14). Yes, by simple trust and obedience, Israel could live in victory. We today don't have a promised land, but we do have a promised life. A careful look at this book will both instruct and inspire you to "possess your possession." Let's go!

JUDGES: Just as Joshua gives us strategies for united victory, so Judges gives us the secrets to individual victory in days of moral collapse. When everything seems to be going under, we can still be overcomers.

RUTH: In this sweet little book of Ruth, we discover that, where sin abounds, grace super-abounds. The Moabite was not to be received, as God told His people, *"because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt"* (Deut 23:4). Then check out the first thing Boaz did for Ruth, and you catch a glimpse of God's amazing grace.

1 SAMUEL: Talk about drama! This book is full of it: dramatic irony, character development, love and hate relationships — you name it. But on every riveting page, you start to see some very long shadows cast. You get the sense that behind the stories told are the Untold Story of two kings vying over one kingdom, and the crisis of loyalty that everyone eventually must face.

2 SAMUEL: In 2 Samuel, the scene changes. Saul is gone, and David now ascends the throne. In spite of David's well-documented failures, we can't help but see a remarkable foreshadowing: **a shepherd born in Bethlehem who becomes a king in Jerusalem.** In between these events, he is despised by his brothers though

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

O Book of wondrous depths and heights,
and glories ever new,
which in ten thousand various lights
brings JESUS into view.

— Wm Blane —

anointed by God, a champion of the common people but treated as a criminal by the authorities, and lost to the Gentiles before finally being accepted by his own people. And to top it off, his own songs describe the links between the two!

1 KINGS: From the heights of Solomon's glory in one united kingdom to its tragic division and sin, there are many lessons for us to learn here about surrendering the throne of our hearts to the King after God's own heart. Encouraging!

2 KINGS: Here is Part Two of the Book of Kings (called 2 Kings). Sadly, the story gets darker and darker until the chastening hand of God allows both the northern and southern kingdoms to be carried away into captivity. First goes the northern, then, about 135 years later, the southern. The lessons contained here are powerful and practical. Yes, sin has real consequences. But whom the Lord loves, He disciplines. All throughout this book, God sent prophet after prophet to draw His people back to Him. May we heed the lessons

found here and respond positively to God's gracious appeals, His warnings, and, when necessary, His discipline.

1 CHRONICLES: Since 1 Chronicles covers much of the same material as the books of Samuel (as 2 Chronicles covers largely the same period as the books of the Kings), what is its purpose? The books of Samuel and Kings are real-time recording of history. But the Chronicles look back, and give God's edited version of these times. As with our lives from the divine perspective, the sins of the saints are removed! History, as it always does, highlights God's grace overriding our failures. But more, God's grace also showcases the worship of His grateful people.

2 CHRONICLES: 2 Chronicles is the objective, unflinching record of a people who forsook the Lord and fell from the golden days of Solomon's rule to captivity in Babylon, and this in less than 400 years. But our faithful God is sure to end the book on a high note!

EZRA, NEHEMIAH & ESTHER: We often hear the excuse, "What can one person do?" But these books recount the stories of heroic individuals whom God used to change the course of history. Jeremiah wrote a book no one liked — except Daniel 70 years later! He prayed, and God moved the heart of pagan Cyrus to restore Israel to their land. Then God used Jeshua to call the people to rebuild the temple, and they did — but not without encouragement from Haggai to keep at it. When it was done, however, no one knew how to use it. Enter Ezra, an expert on the subject. But Jerusalem's walls were still broken and its gates burned, so Nehemiah came to spur on the reconstruction. So it goes. Even back in Babylon, God used Mordecai to inspire Esther, and she saved God's people from a world-wide holocaust. What can one person do? Plenty — when harnessed with God to do His will!

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