

Sort It Out Discussion Guide

Open up your Bibles to the Table of Contents and let's look at the order of the books in the Old Testament. In your Student Guides, you will see a list of the books of the Bible. Notice that the books are divided into four basic categories: Historical, Wisdom, Major Prophets, Minor Prophets.

Now, this division into these four parts is based on the arrangement of our modern Bibles, not for any divine reason. And some would further divide the historical books into the Pentateuch or Law—the first five books of Moses—and the Historical Narratives. However, the books of Moses do present historical narratives.

Looking at the list of books in the historical section, 1 Kings actually records events that happened after 1 Chronicles, even though Kings is placed before Chronicles in our Bibles. In the original Jewish structure, Kings, Chronicles, and Samuel are not divided into two parts.

As we have been studying through the books of the Old Testament, things have gone in a fairly chronological order. But from here on out in our lessons, things are going to get a little bit messy. Today, we are going to set the stage for those lessons so that you can better understand the flow of history and where events fit in the Bible.

To understand how the books all fit together, we are going to use this timeline worksheet. You will see that it is divided into the four divisions. The names of the historical books are missing, so we will fill those in by examining the opening and closing passages of these books. You may want to mark a few notes on these sheets as we look at the passages.

Have the students identify and label each segment of the historical timeline by examining the opening and closing passages of each of the historical books.

Judges 21:25

The top line ending at 1117 BC is the book of Judges. In Judges 21:25, we learn that “there was no king in Israel” and that “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Ruth 1:1

- ? You will see the book of Ruth already labeled around 1150 BC. How does the book of Ruth begin? *“Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled . . .”*

1 Samuel 1:12

- ? We come next to 1 Samuel. What person is identified in 1 Samuel 1:12? *Eli.*

Eli was the priest and judge who trained Samuel. As the book progresses, we meet Saul and David. Flip to the end of 1 Samuel.

- ? How does 1 Samuel close? *With the death of Saul.*
If you turn to 2 Samuel, it picks up immediately with Saul's death and David's anointing in chapter two.

2 Samuel 24

- ? What event closes 2 Samuel? *David is still king and has just taken a census.*
- ? Now, Saul died in 1055 BC, so which lines represent 1 and 2 Samuel? *The second row from 1150 to 1017.*

1 Kings 1:1

- ? What is happening in the beginning of 1 Kings? *David is old and about to die.*

1 Kings 22:41, 22:51

? Now turn to the end of 1 Kings and look at 22:41 and 22:51. Who is in power? *Jehoshaphat was ruling in the South (Judah) and Ahaziah was ruling in the North (Israel).*

So that means that the kingdom had been divided, even though we haven't talked about that yet.

? The kingdom was divided in 975 BC, so which line represents 1 and 2 Kings? *It must be the line from 1015 to 562 since the divided kingdom happens in 1 Kings, so 2 Kings begins at 897 while Ahaziah was still king.*

2 Kings 25

Flip to the end of 2 Kings. In chapter 25, we learn about the destruction of Jerusalem and the events that followed. Those same events are also recorded in 2 Chronicles. Let's look at what Chronicles covers.

1 Chronicles 1-9

? Look at the headings in the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles. What is being presented in these chapters? *There is a review of the major genealogies from Saul back to Adam.*

? What event is recorded in the beginning of 1 Chronicles 10? *The death of Saul: this is the same event at the end of 1 Samuel.*

1 Chronicles 29:26

? Turning to the end of 1 Chronicles, what event do we learn about in 1 Chronicles 29:26 and following? *The end of David's reign and his death.*

2 Chronicles 1

As you look at 2 Chronicles 1, we see the account of Solomon requesting wisdom from God, but that is not the same passage we examined last week.

? What passages, based on your timeline, are probably parallel to this account? *2 Chronicles records the same time period as 1 Kings, so it is likely early in 1 Kings. Indeed, 1 Kings 3 presents the same account as 2 Chronicles 1.*

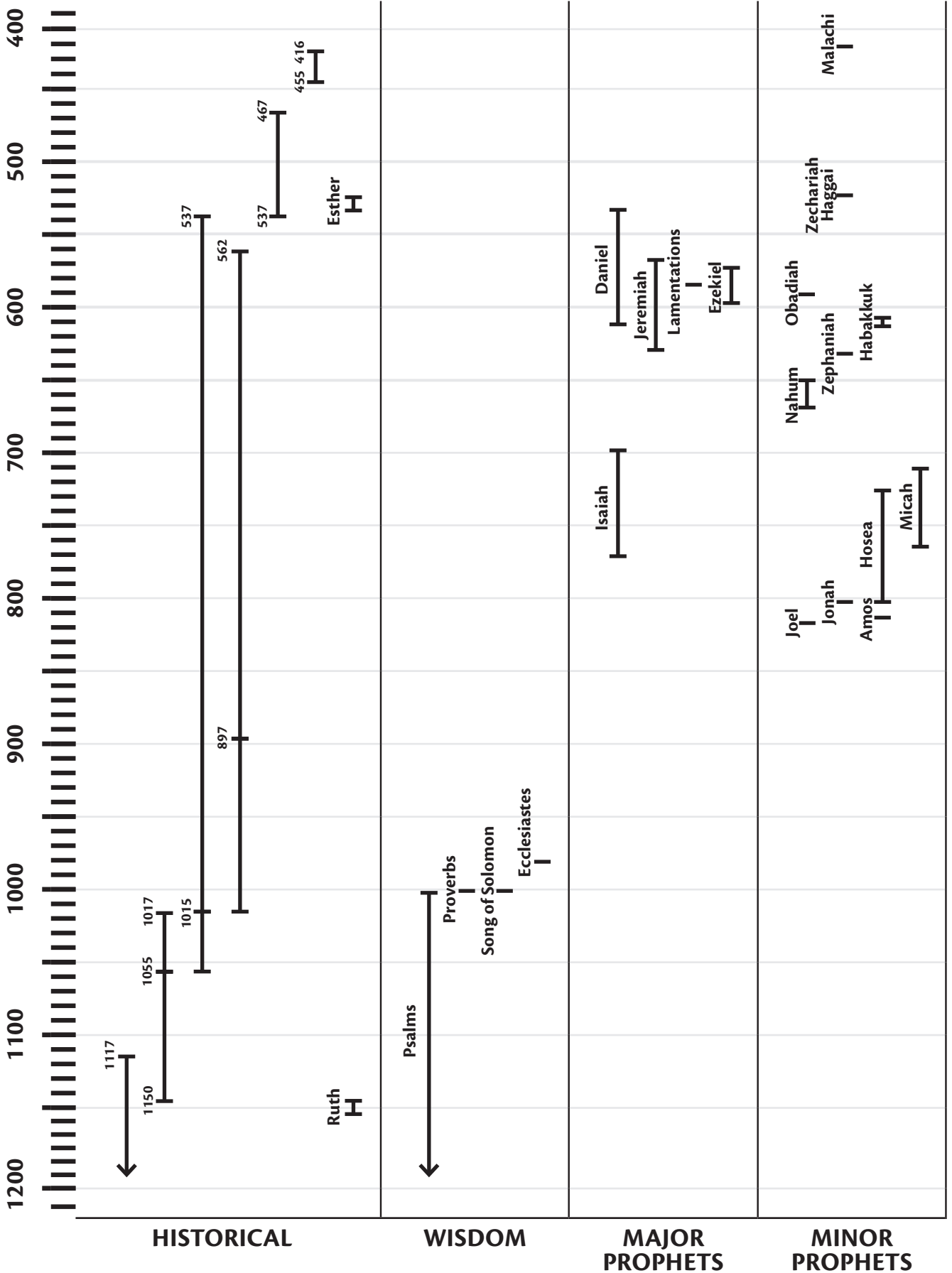
2 Chronicles 36:22

As you look at the end of 2 Chronicles, you can see a decree from King Cyrus, beginning in 2 Chronicles 36:22. That decree came in 537 BC and is the same event that opens the book of Ezra. Ezra continues until 467, and then there is a small gap of 12 years until the opening of the book of Nehemiah in 455.

So, now you know everything about the structure of the historical books of the Old Testament! Well, almost. But I hope that gives you a big-picture view of the organization of the books. We will be studying through many of these books through the rest of this year, so having this overview should be helpful as we do so.

Also, you will notice the timing of the prophetic books of the Bible in the timeline as well. This worksheet will be a great asset for you as we work through the lessons, and it may come in handy as you are studying the Bible on your own.

Sort It Out Timeline



Sort It Out Timeline Answer Key

