

# HOW TO READ THE BIBLE



## RECAP

- ▶ If we superficially read the Bible through 21st century lenses, we will come to **conclusions** that are incorrect.
- ▶ Remember, **context** is key.
- ▶ Our goal should be to answer every question in light of the whole counsel of God's Word, unveiling what He has been doing throughout history & continues to do today.

## ESTHER

*Genre: History • Written by ??? prior to 464-435 BC*

- ▶ God is the God of the **Gallows**
- ▶ God had a **purpose** for His people in their exile >> Jeremiah 29:4-7 | "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
- ▶ The book of Esther is the story about how God providentially uses two exiled Israelites to rescue His people from certain doom – all without any mention of **God** or His activity.
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Esther 4:14 | For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"
- ▶ As the main character of the book, a young, beautiful Hebrew woman is chosen as the wife of the king. Her Hebrew name is Hadassah, which means "myrtle." Her Persian name, Esther which means "star," is what she is called the most.
- ▶ The name of God does not appear at all in the book of Esther, but the **providence** of God working behind the scenes is abundant throughout the book.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS

- ▶ Two sections of prophetic books in the Old Testament: **Major** & **Minor**. Remember, this has nothing to do with the importance of their message, but simply the volume of their writing.
- ▶ The Prophets & the Prophetic office existed in Israel to apply the Law to the people and to correct them when they strayed.
- ▶ Two Kinds of Prophecy:
  - ▶ Foretelling >> Predicting **future** events (see Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

- ▶ Forthtelling >> Pointing to the inherent **consequences** of a certain action or course of action. This kind of prophecy applies the Law & is rooted in the Law of the **Harvest**.
- ▶ In the Old Testament, prophets are individuals sent to declare a specific message to a specific group of people at a specific time.

## JONAH

**Genre: Prophetic History • 5th Minor Prophet • Written by ??? between 793-753BC**

- ▶ God is the God of **Compassion**
- ▶ We put Jonah first because 2 Kings 14:25 tells us that he was a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II in the **Northern** Kingdom of Israel.
- ▶ J.D. Greear >> You are never **farther** from God than when you are near to Him & say "No."
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Jonah 2:9 | But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. **Salvation** belongs to the LORD!"
- ▶ Jonah is the only book in the OT to exclusively revolve around non-Jewish people. While Israel was rejecting God's mercy & grace, God wanted to show that He is still committed to the Genesis 12 promise that He would restore His blessing to the **nations**.

## AMOS

**Genre: Prophecy • 3rd Minor Prophet • Written by Amos around 755BC**

- ▶ God is the God of **the Oppressed**
- ▶ In his book, Amos **accuses** Israel of breaking their covenant with God & highlights how their idolatry has led to **injustice** &, specifically, the neglect of the poor.
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Amos 5:14, 24 | Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said...But let **justice** roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
- ▶ Amos was a farmer from the **Southern** Kingdom of Israel (known as Judah) that went to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- ▶ Amos answers the question: How much does God care that His people take care of the **poor**? Through Amos, God accuses Israel of empty ritualism in religion, arrogance, oppression of the poor by the rich, greed, materialism, deceit, callousness, & self-righteousness. For all of these, seven times God says, "I will send fire."



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