



Unit Two

*Historical Books*

# Introduction to the Historical Books

At the end of unit 1 (the Pentateuch) we heard of God's people, now known as the 12 tribes of Israel, traveling in the wilderness on route to the promised land. In our readings within the historical books of the Old Testament we fast forward to the time when these people are now settled in the land that God promised to give them

A look through the books that we will skip over on the way to our first lesson in this unit:

**Joshua**- tells the story of the entrance into the promised land and the establishment of each of the 12 tribes on their own piece of land.

**Judges**- the story of the leaders (called judges) that God raised up among the people to help lead them with wisdom and defend them from the enemies they faced.

**Ruth**- tells a story of faithfulness during this time period.

The book of **1st Samuel**, where we begin our readings in this unit, comes at the end of this time period of the judges. Here we meet a woman named Hannah who longs for a child. God answers her prayer and the son that she is given becomes an important figure in Israel's history. Hannah's son, Samuel, grows up to be a judge and prophet through whom God speaks and who speaks to God on behalf of the people.

Though the Israelites have up to this time been guided by judges, the people want a king so they can be like other nations. If there were flashing neon signs in the Bible that trouble is ahead, this would be one. Asking for a king was a declaration that the people no longer saw God as their king. Nevertheless, God grants their request and tells Samuel to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. When Saul doesn't listen to God's will, God gives instruction to Samuel and he anoints David as king.

David is revered as the greatest king of Israel, though he had more than a few character flaws of his own (such as committing adultery and then murder). God forgave him and called David a man after his own heart. In the second lesson in this unit, David realizes that though he has a comfortable palace for himself,

God's dwelling among the people is still the mobile tabernacle that was the home of the ark of the covenant during the time that they were moving from place to place in the wilderness on the way to the promised land. Now that things are looking good for David and the kingdom is well established and at peace, David suggests that he will build a residence for God... a permanent structure... a temple.

God has different ideas, though. Rather than allowing David to build God a house, God gives David the promise that God will build David a house- a kingdom that will last forever. (This should sound familiar! The promise given to David is very similar to the promise God made to his ancestor, Abraham. Remember all those stars?!?!) For those of us with the benefit of knowing what happens generations later, we see this promise of an everlasting kingdom fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, who the Gospels proclaim is a descendant of David.

In our third lesson in this unit, God does in fact allow a temple to be built, not by David (though David had made many preparations for the eventual building of the temple) but by his son Solomon. Solomon's temple, built in the tenth century B.C. was a huge project that took 7 years to complete and became a place where the people of God came to worship, to pray, and to make sacrifices to God for their sins.

But after Solomon died, trouble arose. The problem with having kings as rulers is that they are human with human failings and sin. Solomon's son proved to be a proud and arrogant leader, unable to listen to the wisdom of elders. In 1 Kings 12:16 we read of the division that this caused. The Northern 10 tribes get fed up and declare to the south, "What share do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look to your own house, O David."

Those 10 tribes to the North went off on their own to form their own kingdom. The land belonging to those 10 tribes in the North became known as Israel. The land to the South belonging to the remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin became known as Judah.

The history of both Israel and Judah is a tug of war of kings who were faithful to God and those who were unfaithful, even to the point of setting up idols to foreign gods within the temple itself.

Our final lesson in this unit, Elijah and the Widow, takes place in the northern kingdom during this time period shortly after the split between kingdoms. Elijah's story shows the growing divide between God's prophets and the leaders of the day.

The historical books of the Bible tell this whole story of Israel's rise and fall, the division between tribes and the split into the northern and southern kingdoms. They list good kings and bad. Ultimately they show how both kingdoms look to political alliances rather than to God for their salvation. The result is that they are conquered by foreign enemies. The beautiful temple built by Solomon was completely destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Ark of the Covenant was captured. The people themselves were also captured, forced to leave their homeland, and had to figure out how to find/keep their faith in exile. This is where we will pick up the story when we enter into the next unit on the prophets.

The theme of God's faithfulness in spite of human unfaithfulness takes on an added dimension in the historical books. Behind the stories in this unit is the growing realization that God keeps his promise to bless and save the world in spite of his people's lack of faithfulness, but that God does expect his people to live lives that honor God. Where they don't, God will redirect. Faith in this unit is revealed in unlikely places, not so much in priests or kings but in women like Hannah (who the priest thinks is drunk) and the widow of Zarephath (a woman living deep in territory where Baal not God was worshipped). Mostly, God is revealed as being at work in surprising places and circumstances. God even works through enemies to bring the people back into relationship with God.

The "Great Big Words" for this unit are:

**Praise-** Saying or singing nice and wonderful things about someone or something.

**Covenant-** A very strong pact or promise.

**Worship-** Singing, praying, reading God's holy word, and participating in anything that honors God.

**Cooperate-** Working together toward a common goal.

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## Unit Overview

	<b>Suggested Song to Sing in Church</b>	<b>Great Big Word</b>
6. October 14, 2012	“As It Is In Heaven” and/or “Cares Chorus”	<b>Praise-</b> Saying or singing nice and wondrous things about someone or something.
7. October 21, 2012	“The Lord Looks at The Heart”	<b>Covenant-</b> A very strong pact or promise.
8. October 28, 2012	“All His Promises”	<b>Worship-</b> Singing, praying, reading God’s holy word, and participating in anything that honors God
9. November 4, 2012	“One True God”	<b>Cooperate-</b> Working together toward a common goal.