

## **Chronology of the Old Testament: From Creation to Christ**

Did you ever wonder which biblical stories came first? What came first - Noah's Ark or the Tower of Babel? Knowing the order helps us understand what we are reading. Did you ever ask yourself what was happening "outside" a Bible story? Context helps us better understand what we are reading, too. Why, for example, did Jacob find himself living in Egypt? Why were the Jews living in Babylon, far from their homeland, and lamenting their lot? Who was Ezekiel and why was he "connecting them dry bones?" And not just context within the Scriptures. What was happening in the Near East when Moses led his people out of Egypt or when Joshua led his people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land? And did you ever wonder when the books of the Old Testament were written, who wrote them, or why they were written? Did you ever question the historicity of the events of the Old Testament? Did Joshua really fight "the Battle of Jericho?" These are some of the questions we will be trying to answer in this series.

We will be putting in order the main stories and narratives of the Old Testament from the dawn of time, circa 4114 BCE, through to the birth of Jesus Christ, circa 4 BCE. We will be looking at the "big picture" and seeing where so many of our favorite biblical stories (David and Goliath, Jacob and Esau, the Tower of Babel, and Daniel and the Lion's Den, to name a few) fit into this big picture. Also, we will be following the narrative of Abraham's descendants' journey to the Promised Land (from Canaan to the Jordan River), their settlement of the hill country, and the eventual establishment of one then two Israeli kingdoms. We will look at some of the Israelis' conflicts with other groups during this time, the diaspora of the Jews (including the exile to Babylon), and the return to and rebuilding of Jerusalem under the rule of King Cyrus of Persia, and how all these events fit into this big picture.

We will be taking this study one step further and will look at where all these biblical events fit into the larger picture of what was happening in that part of the world during this approximately 4,100-year period. And we will reflect on the historicity of the biblical events based on actual history and archeological evidence.

It is my hope that the participants will, by the end of this study, have a better understanding of the geography and history of the Near East during this period of time, the chronology of events written about in the Old Testament, and which of these events may or may not be historically accurate. And, most importantly, I hope that the next time you pick up the Bible and read a passage from the Old Testament, it will make better sense to you!