

Message Statements for OT Historical Books

The following is the message of each Old Testament historical book in order. Many commentaries on the Bible provide only the themes of the biblical books. That is, they give only the *subject* of that book, or *what* the book says. This list seeks to go a step further in stating the *purpose*, or *why* the subject is addressed to the readers in the first place. For example, it is incomplete to say that Moses wrote Genesis to record the history from creation to Joseph (the subject). The purpose answers *why* he wanted to share this: because the nation needed to see how it was unconditionally elected by God and thus unique from the other heathen nations. Therefore, each of the following subject/purpose statements shows the fuller message of each book in this twofold way:

Subject	+	Purpose	=	Message
<i>What the book says</i> (Theme)		<i>Why it says it</i> (Reason)		<i>Main (Big) Idea</i> (Summary Statement)

The subject and purpose together help us better grasp each book by learning not only its content but the reason it *was* relevant to its original audience and *is* relevant for us as believers today. Each statement also has the keyword in ***bold italics***, the theme in parentheses, and the sermon title beginning with “Be...”

Genesis: Be Faithful (Origin in Election and Promise)

The narrow lineage of Israel from Creation to Joseph informs Israel it began by God's ***election*** for rule and unconditional promise for blessings through Abraham in contrast to the Canaanites.

Exodus: Be Formed (Formation into a Nation Begun)

Israel's ***formation*** as a nation begins under God as King by a miraculous redemption from Egypt and the revelation of the Mosaic Law to provide a kingdom over which a descendant of Judah could rule and to promote holiness and trust in God.

Leviticus: Be Holy (Sanctification through Sacrifice and Separation)

Leviticus teaches ***sanctification*** through sacrifice and separation that Israel might obey the laws demanded by God for his presence to remain with the nation.

Numbers: Be Prepared (Preparation to Occupy the Land)

God's faithful ***preparation*** of his people to enter Canaan contrasts with Israel's unbelieving rebelliousness in the wilderness to teach the nation his unconditional commitment to fulfill his Abrahamic Covenant but only through a believing generation.

Deuteronomy: Be Renewed (Renewal of the Mosaic Covenant)

Moses preaches and records sermons which expound the Law in order to encourage Israel's new generation in ***renewal*** of the covenant at Sinai, resulting in blessing in Canaan for obedience, not cursing for disobedience.

Joshua: Be Courageous (Partial Occupation of Canaan)

Joshua records Israel's ***occupation*** of most of Canaan in fulfillment of God's faithfulness to his promise through Joshua's faith to instruct the nation that obedient faith based upon God's promises brings blessing.

Judges: Be Victorious (Failure Under the Theocracy)

Israel's ***failure*** under the theocracy due to faithless disobedience is contrasted with God's merciful care in disciplining and delivering Israel through judges to exhort submission to its new, divinely appointed kings in a righteous monarchy.

Ruth: Be Devoted (God Rewards the Selfless)

Ruth's **devotion** to Naomi benefits both of them by God's provision of food, a home, and participation in the Davidic and messianic line to demonstrate how God blesses those who help others.

1 Samuel: Be Changed (Degenerate Theocracy to Davidic Monarchy)

The **transition** from a degenerate theocracy under Eli and Samuel to a monarchy under Saul and David is recorded to show how God's sovereignty is delegated to the divinely elected Davidic kings who were to rule justly.

2 Samuel: Be Kind (Covenant Kindness Towards the Davidic Dynasty)

God **establishes** David as king and protects his dynasty despite punishing David's sin and the rivals to the throne to show his justice and faithfulness to fulfill his purposes through his **covenant** kindness shown to David and his seed.

1 Kings: Be United (Division of the Kingdom)

Solomon's prosperity from loyalty to the Law ends in disobedience, which causes the **division** of the kingdom with mostly evil kings in Israel and Judah to remind Judah of God's loyalty to the Davidic Covenant and its own need to obey the Law.

2 Kings: Be Warned (Downfall of the Kingdoms)

The covenant disobedience and resultant **downfalls** of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah are contrasted with God's loyalty to the Davidic Covenant to remind Israel of the need to obey the Law, not repeat past mistakes.

1 Chronicles: Be Established (David's Line Established)

The spiritual perspective on the kingdom period in David's life is given to encourage the remnant with God's sovereign **establishment** of the Davidic line and to admonish proper temple worship, not the idolatry of the past.

2 Chronicles: Be Preserved (David's Line Preserved)

The spiritual perspective on the **preservation** of David's line despite the fall and exile of Judah is given to admonish the remnant to *proper temple worship*, not the idolatry of the past.

Ezra: Be Worshipful (Restoring the Temple and People)

The restorations of the **temple** and people to the land under Zerubbabel and Ezra record God's faithfulness and mercy in fulfilling his promise of restoration to encourage the remnant in true temple worship and covenant obedience.

Nehemiah: Be Diligent (Restoring the Walls and People)

The restorations of the **walls** and people in the land under Nehemiah record God's faithfulness to his promise of restoration to encourage the remnant in covenant obedience rooted in temple worship at Jerusalem.

Esther: Be Available (Extermination Plot Foiled)

An extermination of the Jewish nation plotted by Haman reverts upon his head through God's **providence** through Mordecai and Esther to encourage postexilic Israel of God's continued commitment to the Abrahamic Covenant.

Messages of the Poetical and Prophetical Books

The following is the message of each Old Testament poetic and prophetic book in order. Many commentaries on the Bible provide only the themes of the biblical books. That is, they give only the *subject* of that book, or *what* the book says. This list seeks to go a step further in stating the *purpose*, or *why* the subject is addressed to the readers in the first place. Thus, each of the following subject/purpose statements shows the fuller message of each book in this twofold way:

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(Theme)		(Reason)		(Summary Statement)

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Job: Be Accepting (God's Incomprehensibility Explains Righteous Suffering)

Job's suffering, dialogue with others and God, and restoration reveal that the reason for suffering should not be asked because of the ***incomprehensibility*** and sovereignty of God.

Psalms: Be Praising (Praising and Petitioning God)

Man should ***praise*** and petition God for who He is and what He has done in providing wisdom, protection, Messianic fulfillment, and His Word so man might humble himself before Him in trust and thanksgiving.

Proverbs: Be Wise (Value and Path of Wisdom)

The proverbs of Solomon and various sages are quoted in order to instruct youth in the value of ***wisdom*** over folly that they may live obediently before God in every area of life.

Ecclesiastes: Be Intentional (Fleeting Nature of Human Achievement and Wisdom)

Solomon proves the ***fleeting*** nature of human achievement and wisdom and recommends the joyous enjoyment of life and fear of God to warn others not to follow his empty path.

Song of Solomon: Be Loving (Dialogue of Marital Love)

The ***love*** story of Solomon and his Shulammitte wife from courtship to a strong marital love shows the need for premarital sexual restraint and the effort required for growth in marital love.

Isaiah: Be Complete (Restoration of the Created Order)

Isaiah writes to encourage Judah that while God will judge for breaking His Law, He will also provide ***restoration*** through a godly remnant, a return to the land, and salvation through the future Messiah, who will bring universal blessing.

Jeremiah: Be Comforted (Deserved Captivity & Undeserved Restoration)

The deserved fall of Jerusalem, 70-year exile, judgment of Gentiles, and restoration under a new covenant give hope and exhort Judah to accept God's inevitable discipline by yielding to Babylon.

Lamentations: Be Repentant (Emotions of & Reasons for the Fall)

Jeremiah expresses in deeply emotional terms the siege conditions and reasons God caused the fall of Jerusalem as a model of national ***confession*** that the remnant would repent and trust God for His restoration.

Ezekiel: Be Expectant (Sovereign Departing and Return of God's Glory)

Ezekiel prophesies two messages of judgment and one of blessing to encourage the exiles that God would sovereignly judge His people, destroy their adversaries, and restore the ***glory*** of the LORD which had departed before the destruction of the temple.

Daniel: Be Submissive (Universal Sovereignty in Times of the Gentiles)

Daniel writes to encourage Judean exiles of God's ***sovereign*** control over all nations to preserve Israel between Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Jerusalem (605 BC) and the establishment of the Kingdom blessings under the Messiah-Ruler.

Hosea: Be Loyal (God's Loyalty to Repentant Israel)

Hosea experiences a personal marriage tragedy which illustrates God's faithful reception of His unfaithful people who show lack of knowledge of God, rejection of ***loyal*** love, and faithlessness to His covenant, to motivate them to repentance.

Joel: Be Disciplined (Day of the LORD)

A recent judgment of Judah by **locusts** should cause the people to repent as a more dreadful day of the LORD will come in a Babylonian invasion, yet God promises forgiveness, deliverance, and restoration by judging the nations.

Amos: Be Just (Judgment for Social Injustice)

Amos' message of judgment upon social **injustice** of Israel and the surrounding nations warns of the coming exile and declares God's promise to restore a remnant in faithfulness to the Davidic Covenant to urge the nation to repent.

Obadiah: Be Humble (Edom's Destruction for Opposing Judah)

Destructions of both **Edom** in the near future and all nations in the day of the LORD will come as God's judgment for their opposing Israel, but Judah can be comforted with a promise of blessing due to God's protection in the Land Covenant.

Jonah: Be Caring (God's Compassion on Gentiles)

Jonah's disobedience and indifference towards Nineveh symbolizes these sins in Israel and depicts God's sovereignty and **compassion** for responsive Gentiles to remind Israel of its missionary purpose to the nations.

Micah: Be Generous (Judgment on Israel and Judah for Exploitation)

God indicts Israel and Judah for wickedness and **exploitation** of the poor and declares a judgment in exile to motivate them to repent, but promises vindication and kingdom blessing under Messiah in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Nahum: Be Patient (Nineveh's Destruction)

Nahum prophesies certain destruction upon Nineveh for its scheming against God and cruelty against man to comfort Judah that God will powerfully protect it by destroying **Nineveh** in accordance with His justice.

Habakkuk: Be Amazed (Faith in Nineveh's Destruction)

Habakkuk questions God's discipline of Judah by **Babylon**, whom He promises to punish, to which Habakkuk responds by praising His sovereign, faithful workings in the past to encourage Judah to trust Him in the future despite the circumstances.

Zephaniah: Be Hopeful (Day of the LORD)

Zephaniah prophesies the **day** of the LORD judgment upon Judah, the surrounding nations, and the entire earth to exhort Judah to repent due to God's righteousness and His promise of a remnant in a national restoration.

Haggai: Be Restored (Drought for Neglected Temple Rebuilding)

Haggai rebukes the remnant to correct its wrong **priorities** judged in a drought to encourage the rebuilding of the temple that God might bless the nation with crops and Zerubbabel with authority, foreshadowing Messiah's authority in the kingdom.

Zechariah: Be Encouraged (Rebuild Temple for Messiah)

Zechariah prepares Judah for the **Messiah** by encouraging the nation to respond to its privileged covenant position among the nations by rebuilding the temple in light of future blessings when the Messiah rules in the kingdom.

Malachi: Be Responsible (Warning of Judgment for Hypocrisy)

The LORD rebukes postexilic Judah for their **hypocrisy** by answering their defensive questions in order to encourage them to leave their sinful lifestyle and return to Him in preparation for the coming day of judgment and blessing.