

3 FACTS TO GET A GRIP ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

Occasionally find yourself LOST while reading the Old Testament of the Bible? If so, grab a pencil for three simple facts to help you get a grip on the Old Testament! Skeptical? No problem. Write them down and check them out for yourself!

1. REMEMBER ONE CONCEPT: Israel for most of its history was a divided nation. Though starting out as a united kingdom of 12 tribes, after the reign of Solomon, Israel (not unlike the United States during the Civil War) becomes a divided nation. The 10 Northern Tribes are referred to as Israel. The 2 Southern Tribes are referred to as Judah.

2. REMEMBER TWO DATES: Really. If you get these two dates down, you will have the basic framework for Old Testament history. The earlier date is 722 BC. The later date (remember that BC numbers get smaller as they approach the birth of Christ) is 586 BC. Why these dates? So glad you asked!

3. REMEMBER THREE COUNTRIES: How easy is this, only three countries to remember?! Here they are: Israel . . . Assyria . . . and . . . Babylon. Israel is God's chosen people through whom He brings salvation to the nations. The entire Old Testament revolves around God's interaction with Israel. So why remember Assyria and Babylon? Understanding the interaction of these countries with Israel helps ENORMOUSLY in setting a historical framework. Assyria, whose capital is Nineveh (remember Jonah?), conquers the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. Babylon, where Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, takes the Southern Kingdom of Judah into captivity in 586 BC. When you read the prophets, ask: Is this written to Israel or Judah (or someone else)? Is it written before or after they have been conquered?

Understanding these concepts and dates will give you some beginning context for reading much of the history and prophecy of the Old Testament. You'll be amazed at how much fog will clear when you remember these three simple facts.

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"Pam Gillaspie is the author of *Ablaze: Igniting Spiritual Passion for Life through Reading God's Word*. *Ablaze* is endorsed by Kay Arthur, Jan Silvious, Becky Pippert, and Liz Curtis Higgs. You can download 'Three Facts to Get a Grip on the Old Testament' at www.deepandwide.org."