

Week 2

The Bible: Old Testament Survey

Key Verse

Luke 24:27 - "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

+ Introduction

Last week we learned that the Bible is our source of absolute truth (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is a small library made up of 66 books separated into two sections; the Old Testament and the New Testament. God inspired the authors in the writing of the Bible, and we use the Bible as our standard for living. Today we are going to do a brief survey of the Old Testament, and next week we will survey the New Testament.

+ Setting the Stage

There is a natural separation in the Bible between the Old Testament and New Testament. In fact, there is a period of 400 years of silence (no prophecy or writing) between the two testaments in the Bible. However, the separation does mean that there is not unity in the message.

The Old Testament brings forth history, teachings, poetry, and prophecy. It is an unveiling of God not only as the creator of the universe, but as One who is righteous and holy. From the beginning, God desired to have a personal relationship with man created in His image. The Old Testament shows God's consistent and determined pursuit of this relationship with His people over the course of centuries. Throughout the Old Testament pages, we see a common thread that is ultimately revealed and fulfilled in the New Testament.

The close connection between the Old and New Testament is shown by the number of times the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament. George F. Pentecost gives the number at 885.

Every book of the Old Testament is quoted except Obadiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Esther.¹ There are 22 out of 27 books of the New Testament that quote or allude to the Old Testament.

✦ The Types of Literature in the Old Testament

The Old Testament is made up of 39 books, divided into five different sections:

- The Books of Law
- The Books of History
- Poetry & Wisdom
- Major Prophets
- Minor Prophets

These sections show that there are several literary types of writings found in the Old Testament, but they are all written to point to the redemption plan that will come through the Christ.

The Books of the Law

The first five books of the Old Testament are referred to as the Law, or the Pentateuch, or the Torah. The traditional evangelical view is that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. The Law contains stories about the creation of the world (Genesis 1 & 2), the flood (Genesis 6-9), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (his coat is found in Genesis 37) the children of Israel in Egypt, the Exodus, and the time the children of Israel spent in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses. The burning bush story is found in Exodus 3. The Books of the Law also recorded the Law God gave to the people on Mt. Sinai, which laid down the regulations for sacrifice, worship, and daily living.²

The Christ is predicted all throughout the pages of the Pentateuch. Genesis 3:14-15 records the first prediction of the Christ when God tells the serpent that the anointed one will be coming to destroy Satan and his plan. The entire sacrificial system found in the Pentateuch points towards the Christ, the perfect lamb, who will be sacrificed to provide the way for our sins to be redeemed. Moses is the great prophet, and Aaron is the high priest, but they serve as forerunners to the perfect prophet and priest who will be fulfilled through the Christ.

How does the book of Law teach us to love God and to love other people? This is a fair question, but remember that Jesus made the statement that the entire Law can be summed up by loving God and loving others. Take a look at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:

Then God spoke all these words, saying,

² "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ "You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing favor to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

⁷ "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ For six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male slave or your female slave, or your cattle, or your resident who stays with you. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; for that reason the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged on the land which the Lord your God gives you.

¹³ "You shall not murder.

¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ "You shall not steal.

¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male slave, or his female slave, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The first four commandments have to do with our relationship with God, and the last six commandments deal with our relationship with one another.

The book of Leviticus demonstrates the same truth as the Ten Commandments. The first nine chapters are filled with rules regarding the relationship between God and the people of Israel. Then chapter 10 contains a story about two of Aaron's sons. His sons mishandled their relationship with God (they disobeyed the first nine chapters of the book) and were punished by death. After this story, the second half begins with rules regarding the Israelites relationship with other people. As you read through them you may be asking, "How does removing mold from my house show that I love others (Leviticus 14:33-57)?" If you do not remove the mold, it will move over to your neighbor's house as well. So the loving thing to do is to remove the mold so that your neighbor is not affected. Jesus, of course, was right when He said that the Law could be summed up through loving God and loving others; sometimes, we just have to dig a little deeper to see that truth contained in the Pentateuch.

The five books are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Books of History

The 12 History books continue with the story of the people of Israel and the conquest of the Promised Land in the book of Joshua (Battle of Jericho), the continuous cycle of disobedience

in the book of Judges, the first kings and the United Kingdom, Divided Kingdom, the Assyrian invasion, Babylonian invasion, the years in exile, and the return from exile during the Persian rule.³

The book of Judges can be summarized by the phrase, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6)." Judges portrays story after story of people living in total opposition of why God created them to live. We were created to love God and love others, but in Judges, people were so sinful that they did whatever they pleased with no regard to God or to other people. When the sin got so grotesque, God would bring a judge to free the people from their captors. There would be a short time of peace over the land, but the people would fall back into their sin as soon as the judge passed away.

1st and 2nd Samuel teaches us that God establishes King David, a man after God's own heart, to lead the people. The story of David and Goliath is found in 1 Samuel 17. David is known for his incredible leadership, but he too had his major moral failures. David was a great king, but he was not the perfect king. David's life pointed towards Christ, who would serve as the perfect King over the people of God.

The 12 History books are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

Poetry and Wisdom

The five Poetry and Wisdom books include hymns, proverbs, poems, and dramas. They illustrate the creative ways the people of Israel expressed themselves to God and to each other.

The Book of Psalms is the songbook of the Bible. King David is the author of a large portion of the songs. The songs serve as a way to worship God by expressing your emotions to Him. There is also a selection of Psalms that are referred to as the Messianic Psalms. The Messianic Psalms serve as a means of worship, but they also serve as prophetic materials that predict the coming of the Christ. There are numerous prophecies contained in the book of Psalms that have been fulfilled through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Psalm 22 is an excellent example of a Messianic Psalm. Jesus lived out this song through His death and resurrection. The 23rd Psalm, which many people have heard, is in the top ten most searched passages of the Bible.⁴

The five books are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Major Prophets

The five Major Prophets are not called "major" because of their message or quality, but rather because of the books' length. The prophets brought God's Word, which included a warning of judgment, warnings and hope for the immediate future and for the distant future, and hope in the coming Messiah.

A prophet in the Old Testament served as a mouthpiece for God. A prophet would proclaim the word of God by both forth-telling and foretelling. Forth-telling is proclaiming the truth of God. "God wants you to quit sinning and live for Him" is an example of a forth-telling statement. However, foretelling is when a prophet proclaims a word from God that will be fulfilled in the future. The book

of Isaiah contains many examples of foretelling prophecies regarding the Christ. (Isaiah 48:2-5, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 11:1-5 etc.)

The five books are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Minor Prophets

The 12 Minor Prophets are just as important as the Major Prophets. They are called “minor” because of the shorter length of the books. The Minor Prophets also brought God’s Word to the people regarding judgment and hope, and they contain both prophecies of forth-telling and foretelling.

God’s desire and purpose for us are for us to love Him and love other people. He hates sin, but He loves a repentant heart. God teaches us in Jeremiah 18:7-9 that if a sinful nation repents, God will forgive the nation and hold back His punishment. The teaching of Jeremiah 18 is portrayed beautifully through the book of Jonah. Jonah is commissioned to proclaim destruction on the evil city of Nineveh. Jonah does not want to go to the city of Nineveh, but after an adventure with a large fish, God changes Jonah’s mind. When the people of Nineveh heard that the judgment of God was upon them, they repented of their sins. God, being true to His word, forgave them and did not destroy them. God’s desire is for us to love Him and to love other people, and He spared the people of Nineveh when they repented of their sinful ways.

Those 12 books are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

+ The Ultimate Purpose of the Old Testament

Through studying the Bible, we learn the answers to many popular questions, like “What is the purpose of my life?” I am sure that all of us have asked or heard this important question. Jesus was also asked a version of this question phrased like this “What is the greatest commandment?” Let’s look at Matthew 22:35-40 to see how Jesus answered.

MATTHEW 22:35-40 *And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ Upon these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.”*

Jesus teaches that life's purpose is to love God with every part of your life and love other people. He goes on to say that these two commandments sum up the entire “Law and Prophets.” What does Jesus mean by this statement? When Jesus was walking the earth, the New Testament had not yet been written; so, the Bible, or the Scriptures in their entirety are what we now refer to as the Old Testament. Jesus referred to the Old Testament as the Law and the Prophets.

God created us to have a loving relationship with Him and with others. However, in the third chapter of the book of Genesis, Adam and Eve disobey God. God is holy, and He cannot tolerate sin, so the sin of Adam and Eve caused separation from God. Since we are all descendants of Adam and Eve, and because we have all sinned (Romans 3:23) we have been separated from God, and we cannot fulfill our purpose of loving God and loving other people. But God does not leave us to fend for ourselves.

Because God loved the world so much, He provided the only way for our sins to be forgiven so that we can fulfill our purpose in life of loving God and loving others. God demonstrates the ultimate act of love by promising to send the Christ, who will live a sinless life and will sacrifice His life to provide the only way to redeem us from our sins. The New Testament tells the story of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, the story of the Church and of what is to come.

✦ The Old Testament Points Us Toward the Coming Christ

The Old Testament points us towards the coming of Christ. The word "Christ" is not the last name of Jesus; rather, it is a title that means the "anointed One." God was sending the Christ, the Messiah, to provide the only way for our sins to be forgiven, allowing us to enter into a relationship with God.

What does the Old Testament teach us? In essence, the Old Testament teaches two main points: (1) God created us to love Him, but our sin has separated us from Him (2) Because of God's great love for us, He will send the Christ who will provide the only way for our sins to be forgiven so that we can fulfill our purpose in life. Jesus, Himself says the Old Testament points to Him. Let's take a look at Luke 24:13-27.

LUKE 24:13-27 *And behold, on that very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, which was sixty stadia from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they came to a stop, looking sad. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You possibly the only one living near Jerusalem who does not know about the things that happened here in these days?" ¹⁹ And He said to them, "What sort of things?" And they said to Him, "Those about Jesus the Nazarene, who proved to be a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² But also some women among us left us bewildered. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. ²⁴ And so some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just exactly as the women also had*

said; but Him they did not see.”²⁵ And then He said to them, “You foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to come into His glory?”²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures.

Jesus is on the journey to Emmaus with some of His confused followers. Jesus uses the Scriptures, again the Scriptures in this context refer to the Old Testament, to explain that the Christ would be crucified, buried, and would rise again. Jesus uses the Old Testament to teach that He is the long-awaited Christ and that through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we have the only way for our sins to be forgiven.

+ Conclusion

The Old Testament answers the question of the purpose of life, and it points to the coming Christ who will enable us to fulfill our reason for living. The Old Testament predicts the coming Christ, but it is not until the New Testament that we realize that the Christ is Jesus of Nazareth.

We are sometimes tempted to spend all of our quiet time in the New Testament because we do not feel that the Old Testament applies to us today. This is an incorrect understanding of the Old Testament. God has inspired all Scripture, and all of the Bible is applicable to our lives to grow in our walk with the Lord. We need to challenge ourselves to view the Old Testament as inspired Scripture that points to Christ and spend more time studying the Old Testament books.

1 PETER 2:1-3 “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”(NASB)

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¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/pnt/pnt08.cfm>

² *Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps and Time Lines.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/december/bible-app-most-popular-youversion-bible-gateway-2019-worry.html>