

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

This lesson kicks off a study that I've never attempted to accomplish before: leading an Old Testament Survey study. During my time at seminary, this was one of the two things I prayed about and desired the most when I was accepted to Trinity Southwest. I told my advisor, Dr. Collins, when he asked me what I wanted to study most, that I knew that I would never get this opportunity again; and the two things that I had never had a good understanding of were: (1) Greek and (2) the Old Testament. Based on this, he laid out a Masters in Theology program for me with an emphasis in Old Testament theology that took care of both things over the two years that I was there.

It is difficult to explain just how much your walk with Christ and your understanding of the Bible will be impacted by having a solid understanding of the Old Testament. It's also one of those things that once someone teaches you some of the keys to understanding it, God will then open up whole new worlds of understanding to you.

As I mentioned in the heading page for this study, I realize that there is no way through this study on the website that I can do justice to an Old Testament study, especially when compared with a six month long seminary course -- complete with a professor, text books, and a ton of reading and written assignments. But I'm praying even with our resource limitations that God will greatly bless each of you as study this very important area with us.

Let's get started!

1. One of the initial things that I came to appreciate about the Bible early in my studies is that it is the Word of God -- and it is His only Word. This means that every single word is important, every single sentence, paragraph, verse - all of it comes from God and is sent from Him with very specific purposes in mind. To that end then, if we consider the entire Bible, how many total books are there?
 - a. ANSWER: 66.
2. Of the total number of books in the Bible, how many are found in the Old Testament?
 - a. ANSWER: 39.
3. What percentage then, by number of books, is the Old Testament of the entire Bible?
 - a. ANSWER: 59%
4. With such a high percentage of God's Holy Word being found in the Old Testament, this in and of itself indicates the importance of these words that continue to speak to us today. If we wanted to learn a lot about Christ, we could easily turn to the New Testament. Similarly, to learn a lot about God, we would look in the Old Testament. Can you think of some of other major differences between the Old and New Testaments?
 - a. ANSWER 1: The Old Testament looked towards the future salvation of God's people through the Messiah; the New Testament looks towards the future return of the Messiah.
 - b. ANSWER 2: God's chosen people are featured in the Old Testament; Christ's Church is featured in the New Testament.
 - c. ANSWER 3: The Law - and keeping it - are a focal point in the Old Testament; forgiveness and God's great grace are a focus in the New Testament.
 - d. ANSWER 4: All of the Old Testament writings were completed before the birth of Christ; all of the New Testament writings were completed after Christ's death and resurrection.

5. How can internal references help us determine that 39 books comprise the complete Old Testament? (Luke 24:44) (Dating of the Apocryphal books) (Luke 11:51) (II Chronicles 24:20-23 - written in 800 B.C., and Jeremiah 26:20-23 the described events of which occurred in 600 B.C.)
 - a. ANSWER 1: Christ refers to three major divisions of Jewish Scripture: The Law, The Prophets and the Psalms (or writings).
 - b. ANSWER 2: Christ's references to the blood shed from Abel to Zacharias are referring to the first and last word in Jewish scripture. We can see from the scripture references in Jeremiah and the dating of events in Chronicles that what Christ is actually referring to is Jewish scripture, which ends with the book of Chronicles. It is His way of saying from "A to Z", from Genesis to Chronicles - the complete Jewish scripture, or what we refer to as the Old Testament - there are no additional books.
6. Where did the concept of a "New Testament" come from? (Jeremiah 31:31, Luke 22:20, Hebrews 9:15)
 - a. ANSWER: All are references are to the New Covenant we have with God in Christ; made possible by the blood Christ shed for us. Just as the Old Covenant required sacrifice and the shedding of blood, so does the New. But now Christ is the perfect sacrifice, "The Lamb of God" who takes away our sins, dying once for all.
7. Why is having a good knowledge of the "chronology" of the Old Testament important? What does the word "chronology" mean?
 - a. ANSWER: Chronology is a form of time keeping. It measures time in a particular order through particular events. Knowing the major events in the Bible in their "chronological" order adds a great deal of insight in biblical prophecies. Also, a proper chronology provides apologetic evidence which supports biblical claims.
8. What is the importance of the Assyrian Eponym List?
 - a. ANSWER: The Jews referred to kings, other world leaders, and catastrophic events such as earthquakes to help establish dates of biblical events. Using these same names and events, we can establish our chronology and our defense of the accuracy of the Old Testament. To do this, the Assyrian Eponym List becomes a key and critical document. This document lists every solar year from 892 B.C. to 648 B.C., and each year is named after a king. By knowing the king's name, then we can correctly correlate a specific year with a portion of scripture. In addition to the Eponym list, other extra-biblical sources are also available to validate the Old Testament chronology.
9. What is significant about our biblical chronology and 1 Kings 6:1?
 - a. ANSWER: This date is significant because we can back into four important "anchor" dates in the Old Testament. We can back from here into the years for Saul's, David's, and Solomon's reigns. In addition, it provides an anchor for dates and events still to come.
10. Using all we've learned so far, how does this help our understanding of the period when the Old Testament Patriarchs lived? For example, starting with Genesis 12:4, and the knowledge that Abram was 75 years old when he left the land of Ur, we can deduce through careful study that the year was 2091 B.C. From this We can also determine many other important dates
 - a. For example - what year was Abram born?
 - i. ANSWER: 2166 B.C. (2091+75)
 - b. If the Jews began their sojourn in Egypt in 1876 B.C.; how old is Jacob, and when was he born? (read Gen 47:9)
 - i. ANSWER: 130 years old, born in 2006 B.C., 160 years after Abram
 - c. Isaac was how old when Jacob was born? (see Gen. 25:26) Based on this knowledge, we can determine that he was born in which year?
 - i. ANSWER: 2066 B.C. (Isaac was 60 years old, so it was 2006 B.C. + 60 yrs)
 - d. We also can find Abram's birth date by knowing that Abram was how old when Isaac was born? (read Gen. 21:5)
 - i. ANSWER: Since we thus know that Abram was 100 years old when Isaac was born, and we previously calculated that Isaac was born in 2066 B.C., then Abram was born in 2166 B.C.

Knowing the dates of Abram's birth and his travels and also using archaeology will help us deepen our understanding of the scriptures. We know for instance from archaeology that in the 22nd century B.C. the land of Ur was a thriving metropolis full of idol worship and populated with cultured and well educated people. It was from this environment that the Lord led Abram to follow Him. And we know that Lot also came from this environment and would continue to seek it out first in Egypt and later in the doomed city of Sodom.

I encourage you in the days ahead to look for resources that will better help you in our study of the Old Testament. For starters, if you don't have one already, a good Bible Handbook is good start. If you've never used one, you'll find them a very handy reference. I have two: one from Holman Press called the "Holman Bible Handbook" and one titled "Richard's Complete Bible Handbook" by Lawrence O. Richards. Both are excellent resources and easy to understand. Links to online sellers of these and other Bible Study texts are provided under [Reference Materials](#) in the "Study Aids" portion of my website.

I continue to pray that the Lord will bless you as you begin this study with us. I encourage you to begin developing in your notes a Biblical chronology of events as we move through the Old Testament. Having a solid understanding of the Old Testament and the chronology of events leading up to Christ, will deepen your faith and prepare you to help others come to a life changing faith in Jesus our only Lord and Savior.

Have a great week everyone and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

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