

Old Testament Survey—Introduction

Think about it: To discard the Old Testament is to tear Christianity from its roots.

Why is that so? The New Testament writers (with the exception of Luke?) were Jewish, and wrote from an Old Testament world and life view. They assume we know the Old Testament. For instance, the disciples (and Jesus Himself) quote the Old Testament to validate their message.

Where would you turn in the Bible to develop the doctrine of God? Great texts like Genesis 1-3, the Psalms (8, 89, 90), Isaiah 40-48, and other Old Testament passages. The doctrine of God is not stated per se in the New Testament. The New Testament assumes we know it from the Old Testament.

How well do you know the Old Testament? Let's take a little quiz:

1. What is the Pentateuch?
2. Who wrote the first five books of the Bible?
3. What was the setting for the writing of Deuteronomy? Why was it written? When?
4. Why did God preserve the book of Esther, a book which doesn't even mention the Name of God?
5. Why does 1 & 2 Chronicles repeat so much of the material found in 1 & 2 Kings?

Why should we study the Old Testament? To what extent is the Old Testament relevant for authority today? This has been a problem throughout the history of the church. There are various views of the Old Testament.

1. The Old Testament is useless (Marcion, 150 A.D.). The God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament.

2. The Old Testament is important, but is inferior to the New Testament (for instance, in ethical issues like polygamy, vengeance, etc.).

3. We must allegorize and typologize the Old Testament (for instance, the blue, purple, and scarlet linen in the tabernacle typified the character and glories of Jesus Christ).

4. We must let the Old Testament speak for itself, and see it as the foundation of the revelation given in the New Testament.

New Series--Old Testament Survey:

There is more than one way to appreciate the beauty of a farm. As I've shared before I grew up on a 120 acre farm. There are lots of ways to appreciate it. One is to walk out to the barn and go exploring (climb into the hay loft, look for racoons or mice in the grain room, see the horse in the barn). Then to walk down the isles in the corn field,

looking for arrow heads and Indian relics. Or to check out the chicken coop and climb the white board fence and climb the Maple tree by the back porch.

But there's another way to appreciate the farm, which I've done many times. I can run up to the highest point on the property, a towering hill we called "Bald Knob," and stand there, gazing as far as the eye can see across the farm. I can see the red barn, the corn field, the woods, the tiny white board fence, and the matchbox looking house. When I do that I'm getting the "big picture" perspective.

Quite often in Bible study, we do detailed, closeup work (like when we devote 6 months to the study of Ephesians, moving through the text word by word). That's important. It's also vital at times to make sure we have a clear "big picture" perspective. We need to know how the details of Ephesians fit into the overall message of the Bible. We may know that Genesis 1-2 is about creation, but how do they relate to the rest of Genesis? And how does Genesis relate to 1 Samuel or to Ruth?

What is the message of the Old Testament books? Our aim, in the next 3 or 4 months is to survey the Old Testament, book by book (we'll aim to go through Song of Songs, then take a break).

Guidelines for our Survey of the Old Testament:

1. As a general rule, we will devote one week to one book.
2. Read (or scan) the book prior to our study, looking for the big picture.
2. Our aim is to discover and remember the following details about each book:

Who wrote the book?

When was the book written?

Why was the book written?

What is the outline of the book?

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?

Genesis

Where did the book get its name? The name "Genesis" is a transliteration of the Greek word meaning, "source, origin," the name given to the book by the LXX. The Hebrew is "beresit" which means "In the beginning," the first words of the book (LaSor, 68).

Discuss (write down on transparency): As you scan through Genesis, what are the major events of the book? Creation, Fall, Cain & Abel, Noah, Babel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

Note: The book is divided by subject matter into two main parts.

Q: Where is the break? Between chapters 11 and 12

Q: What are chapters 1-11 about? The history of the human race from Adam to Abram.

Q: What are chapters 12-50 about? The history of Israel 's background, namely, the record of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his 12 sons.

So the book answers two critical questions, essential to understanding the rest of the Bible. One, how did the world get here? Two, how did the nation of Israel get here?

Who wrote the book? Moses

Authorship Debate: Some scholars reject Mosaic authorship. One common approach is the "Documentary Hypothesis," or Wellhausenian view, or the "JEDP" theory. This view says Moses did not write the Pentateuch. They suggest the book was written much later than Moses, and had several writers (unknown to us, and identified by the letters JEDP). Their objections to Moses authorship include: the duplication of stories means there was more than one author (e.g.--two creation accounts); the use of more than one name of God indicates multiple authorship ("J" wrote the material where "Jehovah" is used; "E" wrote the text where "Elohim" appears; "D" wrote sections in Deuteronomy; and "P" represents a priestly source).

Key: Our young people on secular college campuses will be taught this as accepted fact in religion classes.

Q: How do we know that Moses wrote Genesis? (and the Pentateuch)

--Ex 17:14 God orders Moses to write down on a scroll

--Num 33:2 Moses is seen logging the journeys of Israel

--Josh 1:7-8 Joshua ascribes the "law" to Moses

--Jn 1:17 John states that the Law came by Moses

--Jn 5:45-47 Jesus said Moses wrote of Christ.

--Rom 10:5 Paul quotes Dt 25:4 and says Moses wrote it.

When was the book written?

Remember, Genesis was not designed to be a separate, stand alone "book" as we think of a book, but was part of the Pentateuch (a word which comes from the Greek term meaning "five volumed book," LaSor, 54). The Jews called it the Torah.

When did Moses write the Torah? After Israel left Egypt and prior to entering the Promised Land (15th century B.C.)

Why was the book written?

The Pentateuch was written to prepare God's people to enter the Promised Land.

Q: What special problems would the Israelites encounter when they reached the Land?

Paganism, polytheism, moral decadence.

Q: What truths does Genesis teach that would be essential for the Israelites in the 15th century B.C.?

--There may be other "gods," but there is only one GOD.

--This one God is the Creator of all (see Gen 1)

--This God has entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 15).

--The true God is an exclusive God, and will not play second fiddle to other gods (see the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19).

--God does not want His chosen people to lose their identity by mixing with the pagans of the world (see choice of bride for Isaac in Gen 24).

--How did Israel get to Egypt anyway? (see story of Joseph, Gen 37-50)

Key: Genesis prepares us for the story of redemption which will unfold in Exodus.

Next week:

What is the outline of the book?

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?