

Bible Survey, part 1 – The Old Testament (The Pentateuch & Historical Books)

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

- **WHAT** each book is about
- **WHEN** each one was written
- **HOW** they are all interconnected

“Why is the Bible **divided** into the ‘Old’ Testament and the ‘New’ Testament?”

“Testament” = “Covenant”

“Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when I will make a **new covenant** with the House of Israel and Judah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers when I brought them out of Egypt . . .”
Jeremiah 31:31

“And this is the covenant I will make with them: [1] I will put My law within them and write it on their hearts; [2] I will be their God and they shall be My people; [3] they shall all know Me personally; [4] for I shall forgive their iniquities and their sins I will remember no more.” Jeremiah 31:33

The Lord Jesus established this “**New Covenant**” by His work on the cross.

The purpose of the “**New Testament**” is to explain to us the details of this “**New Covenant.**”

“I will make a **new covenant** with the House of Israel and Judah, *not like the covenant I made with their fathers when I brought them out of Egypt . . .*” Jeremiah 31:31

The “**Old Covenant**” is the “**Mosaic Covenant**” that God gave to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai [Jeremiah 31:31] “when He brought them out of Egypt.”

The “**Old Covenant**” includes (1) animal sacrifices; (2) the operation of the Tabernacle [later the Temple in Jerusalem]; (3) various other offerings; (4) the Sabbath; (5) the feasts and festivals of Israel; (6) the dietary [Kosher] laws.

When the “**New Covenant**” came, the “**Old Covenant**” was **superseded** and became **obsolete**.

“He [Jesus] is the mediator of the better covenant which has been enacted on better promises.”
Hebrews 8:6

“For if there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant [Sinai], there would have been no need for a second one.” Hebrews 8:7

“But God said [Jeremiah 31:31], ‘Behold the days are coming when I will make a **new covenant** with the House of Israel and Judah, not like the one I made with their fathers when I brought them out of Egypt.’”
Hebrews 8:8

“By calling this covenant ‘new,’ God has declared the first one obsolete.” Hebrews 8:13

The “**Old [Mosaic/Mt. Sinai] Covenant**” was **decommissioned** when Jesus inaugurated the “**New Covenant**” on the cross.

But the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament deal with far more than just the “Mosaic Covenant.” The books of the Old Testament are all divinely inspired Scripture that have enormous value for our lives today.

“For what was written in earlier times [Old Testament], was written for our learning, that through the encouragement of the [Old Testament] Scriptures, we might have hope.” Romans 15:4

The Old Testament is divided into three broad sections:

- The **HISTORICAL** books
- The **PROPHETIC** books
- The **POETICAL** books

The **HISTORICAL** books fall into **four major categories**.

Category #1 – The Pentateuch

The Pentateuch consists of the first five books of the Bible [Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy] **all of which** were written by Moses.

“*Penta*” = “five”

“*Teuchos*” = “book”

The Jewish people call it “The **Torah**” [literally: “The **Law**”].

The Pentateuch begins with Creation and ends with the solidly-established nation of Israel on the verge of conquering the Promised Land [**1400 B.C.**].

The Pentateuch is like a big “funnel” – that begins by talking about all of mankind and ends by focusing on one specific group of people: the Jewish people.

The Bible is **not meant** to be a comprehensive history of all mankind.

The Bible is meant to be the history of God’s **plan of salvation** for the human race through the Jewish Messiah

- From the “Fall” of Adam and Eve . . .
- To the finished work of Christ on the cross

This is why the Bible is basically a history of the Jewish people – because that’s where the Messiah was coming from.

It is also here in the Pentateuch that we find the **details** of the “**Old [Mosaic/Mount Sinai] Covenant**” laid out – especially in the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

Category #2 – Pre-Monarchial Historical Books

“**Pre-monarchial**” = “before a monarch [king]”

“**Pre-Monarchial books**” = books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth covering the years **1400 B.C. – 1050 B.C.**

Book of Joshua

- Records the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites after the Exodus and forty years of wandering in the Sinai
- Covers fifty years (1400 B.C. – 1350 B.C.)
- By the end of Joshua, the Israelites have basically conquered the Promised Land (Canaan)

Book of Judges

Records the **300 year period** (1350-1050 B.C.) after the death of Joshua and until Saul became Israel’s first king

“At that time, there was no king in Israel; and every man did what was right in his own eyes.” Judges 17:6

“They forsook the LORD . . . and in His anger, the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them . . .” Judges 2:12

“Then the LORD raised up judges to deliver them . . . for the LORD felt compassion for them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But as soon as the judge died, the people would turn back to their corrupt ways.” Judges 2:18-19

Book of Ruth

- Story of godly Boaz and Ruth
- To show us that people who loved the Lord still lived in Israel during the period of the Judges
- To tell us about the lineage of a very important man in God’s plans – **David** [great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz]

Category #3 – The Monarchial Historical Books

“**Monarchial**” = “when Israel had monarchs [kings]

“**Monarchial books**” = books of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles covering the years **1050-586 B.C.**

Books of 1 & 2 Samuel/1 Chronicles

- Records the 80 year period during the reigns of **Saul** and **David**
- Also records the massively important **Davidic Covenant**

“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant, who will come from your own line, and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever.” 2 Samuel 7:2

Books of 1 & 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles

- Records the 385-year period from **970-586 B.C.**
- Beginning with the reign of David’s son Solomon over all the 12 tribes of Israel

These books go on to tell us of how the nation split in two [**930 B.C.**]:

- **Northern Kingdom** (10 tribes) = “**Israel**”
- **Southern Kingdom** (Judah and Benjamin) = “**Judah**”

“Israel” (930-721 B.C.)

- Zero godly kings
- Conquered by **Assyrian Empire** (Sargon II)
- Almost all Jews exported and new people (Gentile) imported
- Intermarriage produced the “**Samaritans**”

“Judah” (930-586 B.C.)

- Eight godly Kings
- Conquered by **Babylonian Empire** (Nebuchadnezzar)
- Destroyed Jerusalem and its walls
- Burned down Solomon’s (1st) Temple
- Carried Jews captive to Babylon

Category #4 – Post-Exilic Historical Books

“**Post-exilic**” = “after the Babylonian exile [**586 B.C.**]

“**Post-exilic**” books = books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther covering the years **538-400 B.C.**

The Babylonian Empire has now collapsed and the **Persian Empire** now rules the Middle East

Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (538-400 B.C.)

Record the return of the Jewish people from Babylon to Jerusalem in “**Three Waves**”

Wave #1 – 538 B.C. – 42,360 people led by “Zerubbabel”

- Recounted in Ezra 1-6
- Succeeded in rebuilding the Temple (2nd Temple) but much smaller and less glorious

Wave #2 – 458 B.C. – Ezra the priest led a 2nd group of Jews back

- Great spiritual revival among the returnees in Jerusalem
- Recounted in Ezra 7-10

Wave #3 – 445 B.C. – Nehemiah was made governor over Judah by Persian king Artaxerxes

- Rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem
- Recounted in Nehemiah 1-13

Book of Esther (c. 475 B.C.)

Records God’s wonderful deliverance of the Jewish people in the Persian Empire from Haman

“**Intertestamental Period**” = 400 years between the Old and New Testaments when God gave no divine revelation [Scripture].

So What?

“... instruction and encouragement and hope for us.” Romans 15:4

So What? = the “**faithfulness**” that God showed to His people Israel throughout the Old Testament in spite of their repeated “**unfaithfulness**” to Him.

“For the LORD your God chose you out of all the peoples on the earth to be a people for His own possession.” Deuteronomy 7:6

“The LORD did not set His love on you or choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples of the earth, for you are the fewest of all peoples. But because the LORD loved you and was **faithful** to the oath that He swore to your forefathers [Abraham, Isaac & Jacob].” Deuteronomy 7:7-8

“Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is the **faithful** God who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness to the thousandth generation.” Deuteronomy 7:9

Even after the Jewish people provoked God to anger time after time in the Old Testament – resulting in His discipline by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians – He **still** remained “**faithful**” to them.

“By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.” Psalm 137:1

“For there our captors demanded that we sing songs of joy for them; they said, ‘Sing us the songs of Zion.’ How can we sing the LORD’S songs while in a foreign land?” Psalm 137:3-4

“When the LORD **brought back** the captives to Zion [under Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah], we were like those who dream.” Psalm 126:1

“Our mouths were filled with laughter and our tongues with songs of joy ... The LORD has done great things for us, for which we are glad.” Psalm 126:2a, 3

“These things were written for our learning ... encouragement ... hope.” Romans 15:4

“Even if we are faithless, God remains **faithful**; He cannot deny who He is.” 2 Timothy 2:13

“He is the faithful God who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness to the thousandth generation.” Deuteronomy 7:9

He is the God who has **kept on forgiving and restoring Israel and keeping His promises to Israel** – in spite of their unfaithfulness – because this is **part of His innate character** – which the Bible says **He can never deny or violate!**

How great is it to have a God who “**remains faithful**”?!

“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” Psalm 23:6