

Survey of the Old Testament

Part 1

Genesis to Judges

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Introduction

Many Christians shy away from the Old Testament, or look only at a few well known passages. Much of the OT seems obscure, and difficult to place into a historical and theological context. The result of such neglect is that much of the richness of the New Testament is lost.

This Survey is designed to ease Christians into the Old Testament. It covers most of the OT books in a roughly chronological order so as to give the historical context, and where possible points forward to the New Testament.

However, it is not a heavy study. I want to encourage the participants to find treasures, not to frighten them away.

The Survey is divided into three parts, each containing several studies.

1. Genesis to Judges
2. Kings & Prophets
3. Exile & Return; The Inter-Testamental Period

I have planned each part to be studied in about fifteen weeks, with two studies each week. Each study should take about twenty minutes, so two studies can be completed in a one hour Adult Sunday School or Bible Class. However, each group may feel free to use the material as they like.

The purpose of each study is two-fold.

The participants' weekly reading and the introductory comments at the beginning of each class are intended to help participants to gain an overview of the Old Testament in its historical context. The summaries should also guide the participants to see relevance to the New Testament.

However, such study on its own could prove academic and sterile. God's Word should touch our lives and draw us closer to Him. The studies themselves, therefore, in a gentle way, draw out theology and principals, and seek to encourage application.

How to use these study guides

You may use these guides in any way you find will encourage Christians to dig into the Old Testament. Below I outline how I use them as you may find it profitable to follow a similar approach.

I recognise that many Christians are fairly busy, so the studies are designed so as not to require a lot of preparation. For each study I give the participants several chapters to skim during the week, and a few chapters to read. Then during the class I give a brief talk (usually no more than three minutes) to put the study into context. After this I hand out the study questions and give each group of about five persons around ten minutes to discuss and answer them. Finally I draw the groups back together for about five minutes of summary and to highlight important points.

This approach requires minimal preparation from the participants, and I have found my class attendees very faithful in at least reading the required chapters. Many have read all of the suggested chapters, and some have done a fair bit of research each week as well. Such responsiveness has been very rewarding.

However, the approach does require a fair bit of work from the class presenter. The introduction I have provided for each study is about the right amount to present to the class, but the person leading the class must have a much better grasp of the material than is presented here. There are many good aids available, including Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and books surveying both Old Testament history, and the OT books themselves. I would recommend that the presenter spend at least 30 minutes preparing for each study in addition to reading all of the suggested chapters.

Most of the material below is organised so that two lessons are printed on one A4 sized sheet. If the lessons are then printed or photocopied onto both sides of A4 sheets, they may be cut into A5 sized sheets, each containing one lesson on each side of the sheet. Some of the introductory material is organised to fill two sides of an A4 sheet which may then be folded in half.

The Pentateuch (Five Books)

Genesis - Book of Origins

- 1,2 Origin of the Universe
- Origin of Sin
- 3,4 Individual
- 6-11 Universal
- Origin of Israel
- 12-36 Chosen Individuals: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel)
- 37-50 Chosen Family: Beginnings of the nation of Israel

Exodus - Going Out

- 1-14 Escape from Egypt
- 15-18 Travelling in the desert
- 19-40 The Sinai Covenant

Leviticus - Various Laws

- 1-7 Legislation - The Offerings
- 8-10 Narration - Aaron & Sons
- 11-27 Legislation - Food, Atonement, Holiness, Feasts, etc

Numbers - Census Taking

- 1-25 The first Generation - Census; Exclusion
- 26-36 The second Generation - Census; Advance

Deuteronomy - The Law (A Second Time)

- 1-26 Review of History & the Law
- 27-30 Moses' Last Exhortations
- 30-34 The end of Moses' Life

Old Testament Survey

Objectives

Course Outline (Semester 1)

Overview of OT Literature
The Pentateuch

Gen 1,2,3

Gen 11-25

Gen 25-35

Exodus 1-12

Exodus 19-30

Lev 16,23

Numbers 13,14

Deut 8,30

Overview of Historical Books

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

Books of the Old Testament (Jewish Perspective)

The Law (Torah)

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

The Prophets

Former Prophets

Joshua; Judges; I,II Samuel; I,II Kings

Latter Prophets

Isaiah; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Book of the Twelve

The Writings

The Five Rolls

Song of Songs; Ruth; Lamentations; Ecclesiastes; Esther

Wisdom Literature

Proverbs; Job; Song of Songs; Ecclesiastes

Poetry

Psalms; Proverbs; Job

Other

I,II Chronicles; Ezra/Nehemiah; Daniel

Books of the Old Testament (Christian Perspective)

The Pentateuch (Five Books)

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Historical Books

Joshua; Judges; Ruth; I,II Samuel; I,II Kings; I,II Chronicles;
Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther

Poetic Books

Job; Psalms; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Song of Songs;
Lamentations

Prophetic Books

Major Prophets

Isaiah; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel

Minor Prophets

Hosea; Joel; Amos; Obadiah; Jonah; Micah; Nahum;
Habakkuk; Zephaniah; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi

Genesis 3 - Creation Tarnished by Sin

1. How accurate was Eve's understanding of God's requirements?
2. Trace the steps of temptation.
3. How did Eve and Adam react when caught?
4. In what sense did the threatened punishment come true?
5. Contrast Man's environment before & after the fall.
6. Can you find a reference to Christ in this chapter?

Homework: Read Gen 11:27 - 25:11

Old Testament Chronology

< 6000 BC	Creation Adam & Eve Cain & Abel
between 6000 & 4000 BC	Noah World-wide Flood
between 2300 & 2000 BC	Abraham Isaac Jacob & Esau 12 Sons of Israel 400 years in Egypt
between 1400 & 1290 BC	Moses Exodus from Egypt Judges
1020 BC	King Saul
1000 BC	King David
961 BC	King Solomon Temple constructed
925 BC	Kingdom Divided
722 BC	Northern Kingdom to Assyria
605, 597, 589 BC	Southern Kingdom to Babylon Temple destroyed
538 BC	Persian defeat Babylon Exiles begin to return
520 BC	Temple rebuilt
458 BC	Ezra - Teacher of the Law
445 BC	Nehemiah Rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls
332 BC	Conquest by Alexander the Great
63 BC	Conquest by Rome

Genesis 1 - Creation (Chronological - Man final)

1. Who? (Gen 1:1; Col 1:16; Gen 1:2)
2. What? What from? (Gen 1; Heb 11:3 - refer different versions)

3. What each day?

1	4
2	5
3	6

Can you distinguish some relationship above?

4. When? How long?
5. How? (Gen 1; Col 1:16; Heb 11:3)
6. Why? Does this tell us anything about God's relationship to His creation?

Genesis 2 - Creation (Thematic - Man focal)

1. Describe the environment into which Man was created.
2. What features make Man distinct from other creatures?
3. Examine Man's relationship to God.
4. Examine Man's relationship to other creatures.
5. Examine Man's relationship to Woman.

Refs.: Is 40:26,28; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12,18; Je 10:12-16; Am 4:13;
Ps 33:6,9; 90:2; 102:25; Jb 26:13; 38:4ff; Ne 9:6
Jn 1:1-3,10; Acts 17:24; Rom 1:20,25; 11:36; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; 11:3;
Rev 4:11; 10:6

Melchizedek, a 'Type' of Christ (Gen 14:18-20)

Note: 'Type' means a person, thing, or event that has some characteristics of another that will appear later, and hence gives some indication of what the 'real' will be like.

In the following questions, note characteristics of Melchizedek which prefigure the characteristics of Christ.

1. Read Gen 14; Ps 110; Heb 7.
2. What 2 positions did Melchizedek hold?
3. What did Melchizedek's name mean?
What was his kingdom, and what was the meaning of its name?
4. What was Melchizedek's origin?
5. How did the tithe show Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham and to the Levitical priests?
6. How did the blessing show Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham and to the Levitical priests?
7. In what ways is the New Covenant in Christ superior to the Old?

The Land of the Old Testament

The Exodus - Preparation

1. How long did Moses take before he was ready to serve God?
How long was his service?
(Acts 7:23, 30; Deut 34:7)
2. Note the four excuses Moses made for not obeying God.
(Can we come up with some better ones?)
In each case, what was God's response?

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3. What is the significance of God's name, YHWH, as revealed for the first time
in Ex 3:14?
4. Note the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.
Ex 7:13,14,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35
Ex 4:21; 7:23; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17
Rom 9:17,18
What inference can we draw?

The Exodus - Passover

1. What do you understand by the term 'passover'?

In the light of 12:23, what other meaning could 'passover' have?
2. What parallels are there in the NT with Passover?

12:5

12:6

12:7

12:17

12:24

12:26

12:27; 15:13

Homework: Read Exodus 19-30

Exodus 19, 20, 24 - The Mosaic Covenant

1. What characteristics of God are revealed in these passages?
2. What was the purpose of the Law?
3. What three reminders did the people have?
4. What is the relevance of the Law to Christians?

Exodus 25-30 - The Tabernacle

1. Do and describe (appearance & function) to the class one of the following:
 - Sketch the floor plan of the Tabernacle & Courtyard.
On the floor of the class room, mark out the outline of the Tabernacle.
 - Sketch and describe the articles in the inner sanctuary.
 - Sketch and describe the articles in the outer sanctuary.
 - Sketch and describe the articles in the courtyard.
2. What did the Tabernacle symbolize to the Hebrews?
3. What is the Christian's counter-part to the Tabernacle?

Homework - Skim Leviticus; Read Lev 16, 23

Leviticus 16 - Yom Kippur - The Day of Covering (Atonement)

Yom Kippur was (and still is) the most solemn day of the Jewish calendar.

It was the day on which God, in His grace and love, covered over the people's sin.
It was a day in which the people became again, at-one with God.

1. Why was there (is there) a need for atonement?

Rom 3:23

Hab 1:13

Prov 20:9

2. How was atonement effected? (see Heb 9:22)

3. What do the following tell us about atonement for the Christian?

Rom 5:8

Rom 4:25

John 1:29

2 Cor 5:14

Mk 10:45

4. Compare and Contrast Atonement in the OT & NT
(Compare Lev 16 with Heb 9 & 10)

OT

NT

How effected

Characteristics of sacrifice

Purpose of High Priest

Frequency

Effect

Benefit

Other

Homework - Skim Numbers; Read Numbers 13, 14, 19.

Numbers

The book of Numbers describes the beginning and the end of a forty year period of wandering in the wilderness.

The Title of the book refers to the numbering of the people (or censuses) which took place both at the beginning and the end of this period.

The first census was taken 13 months after leaving Egypt, and only fighting men over 20 years old were counted. Levites were excluded.

If the numbers are taken at face value, then there were over 600,000 fighting men, and probably over 2,000,000 persons in all, along with their flocks and herds.

Many scholars think that there are many practical difficulties in accepting such a large number, and have looked for other interpretations. The interpretation most acceptable to evangelicals is that the word which has been translated as 'thousand' should be translated as family unit, or tent grouping. This would put the number of fighting men at around 36,000 and the total population under 100,000.

As in Exodus 15 - 18, the people continued to grumble and to question why God brought them out of a land where they had plenty to eat (11:4,5).

Finally God brought them to the edge of the Promised Land and ordered Moses to send 12 spies to explore the land. Although all said it was a land flowing with milk and honey (i.e. very good for grazing and agriculture), ten of the spies reported that they would be slaughtered by giants if they tried to enter. Only Joshua and Caleb encouraged the people to trust God and to advance.

When the people rebelled, God punished them by forcing them to wander in the wilderness for forty years, until all of the rebellious generation had died off. Only Joshua and Caleb would be allowed to enter the land.

Numbers 26 gives the details of the second census at the end of the forty years, and the following chapters show the preparation to enter the Promised Land.

Numbers 13, 14

1. What can we learn about prayer from 14:10-19?
2. What lesson did the writer to the Hebrews draw from the rebellion? (Heb 3:7 - 4:11)

Numbers 19

1. What was to be used for cleansing, and what was the symbolism?
2. Compare and contrast cleansing in the New Testament. (Heb 9:13,14)

Homework: Skim Deuteronomy; Read Deut 6, 8, 30.

Deuteronomy

As we saw in our study of Numbers, because the Israelites refused to obey God and to enter the Promised Land when He led them there, they were punished by being forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all of the rebellious generation had died off.

Now, at the end of that 40 year period, the people are again on the edge of the Promised Land and are about to enter. Before they do, however, Moses reiterates the Law to them (Deuteronomy = second giving of the Law). He also encourages them to look to God for blessings of obedience, and warns them of the perils of disobeying.

Deut 6

Deut 6:4, 5 (called the 'SHEMAH' = hear) is a creed and a commandment repeated daily by devout Jews.

How should Christians regard this commandment?

According to this chapter, how should our faith in God be communicated to our children?

Compared to this, what is the relative importance of Sunday School & Religious Education in schools?

Deut 8

For the Israelites, what was the purpose of the various trials they went through in their wanderings?

How should we regard difficulties that beset us? (See Heb 12:5-11)

Deut 30

What are the essential requirements for experiencing God's blessings?

Homework: Skim Joshua; Read Josh 1, 2, 3, 6, 7

Joshua

After Moses' death, Joshua rallied the people, encouraged them to walk close to the LORD, and then led them across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

The task ahead of them was to annihilate the evil and idolatrous inhabitants before settling in the land themselves. With the LORD's help they gained an easy victory over the fortified city of Jericho, and expected similar success throughout the land.

However, the sin of one man, Achan, caused God to deprive them of victory at the much smaller town of Ai. It was only after the sin was discovered and dealt with that God again gave the Israelites victory in battle.

After many years they had conquered most of the land and had rest from the enemies around them (23:1). However there was still much land yet to be possessed, but because of the rest, the people decided it was time to settle down, and to deal with the remaining enemies later. This was a big mistake, as often the other inhabitants of the land dragged Israel into idolatry during the next few centuries.

The land was divided up among the 12 tribes and the people settled down. At the end of the book, Joshua, old and about to die, challenged the people not to forsake the LORD, and bound them by covenant to honour Him.

Joshua 2, 7

1. Rahab is remembered for concealing the Israelite spies when they came to reconnoitre Jericho. Why else is she remembered? (Mt 1)
2. Why was Achan's sin dealt with so severely? Compare Acts 5:1-11.

Joshua 13 - 19

3. Roughly place on the following map the areas allocated to each of the 12 tribes.

Homework: Read Judges 2:6 - 3:11; 6:1 - 7:25

Judges

The period of the Judges spans about 200 years (some say as many as 400 years) up to 1020 BC when the people of Israel chose a king for themselves.

After the Israelites had settled in the Promised Land they lost a great deal of their national identity, and became influenced by the other peoples that they had allowed to remain in the land. They began to forget God's provision for them, and to turn to the worship of idols.

Without God's protection, they became easy prey for the enemies round about them. Finally when the burden became too difficult for them to bear, they remembered God, and cried to Him for help. He would then raise up a 'judge', or deliverer who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, led the people to victory.

It appears that the judge's influence was over a small area, perhaps over one tribe, rather than over the whole nation of Israel.

There are 12 judges portrayed in the book, with 6 portrayed only in minor detail:

	Major Judges	Minor Judges
3:7	Othniel	
3:12	Ehud	
3:31		Shamgar
4:1	Deborah	
6:1	Gideon	
10:1		Tola
10:3		Jair
10:6	Jephthah	
12:7		Ibzan
12:11		Elon
12:13		Abdon
13:1	Samson	

The Judges Cycle - Judges 2 & 3

1. From 2:10 - 19 & 3:7 - 11 pick out the steps of the 'Judges Cycle' (about 8 steps).

Gideon - Judges 6 & 7

2. What evidence is there that some of the people remained faithful to God?
3. Was Gideon right in asking for a sign to confirm God's command to him?
4. To what extent should Christians expect signs to confirm guidance?
5. Note how God's way of working is contrary to normal human expectations. Can you think of other examples?

Homework (for next part) Read Samuel & Kings