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How to Read and Study the Bible

Lesson Two: What is the Old Testament

Lesson Two Topics

- Reflection Questions
- Key Terms and Definitions
- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Divisions of the Old Testament
- Contents of the Old Testament
- Check for Understanding Questions

Reflection Questions

A. What are some reasons for studying the Old Testament?

B. What would you say to another Christian who says that we are under grace, and therefore Old Testament principles have no authority over us regarding standards for living, giving, and receiving?

Key Terms

Classifications
Divisions
English Bible
Foundation
Fulfillment
Genre
Hebrew Bible

History
Law
Major Prophets
Minor Prophets
Morality
Pentateuch

Prophecies
Righteousness
Sacred Writings
Spiritual Growth
Spiritual Guidance
Torah

Lesson Introduction

The argument that Christians are not under the Law, but under grace is one that has been distorted by many Christians.

Note--there has never been any disagreement between the Old Testament and the New Testament regarding the standards for living, giving, and receiving.

The Law served as the basis for many of the teachings of Jesus, the early church, and the apostle Paul, all of whom never dismissed the importance and primacy of the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 7:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Timothy 1:3-11).

Important Emphasis: Creation, Covenant, Commandments

What is the Old Testament For Jews?

It is that body of _____ that contains the _____. It is God's unique and special _____ to His people called Israel.

What is The Old Testament For Christians?

It is the first part of the _____ Bible.

It is the _____ foreshadowing the coming of the Jewish Messiah and our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is an important book for Christians' personal study and _____.

The Old Testament is God's word that undergirds our FAITH. Following are six examples—

1. It _____ cherished stories of FAITH [Just a few illustrations: Creation (Gen. 1 & 2); Adam and Eve (Gen. 3); Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 12:1-3 and 22:16-18); Moses—Exodus, Red Sea (Exodus 14), Giving of the Law (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers); David & Goliath (1 Samuel 17); the various prophets, etc.]
2. It _____ our FAITH (Jeremiah 22:3; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:8)
3. It _____ the object of our FAITH (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; 8:4; Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 9:6-7; 53:1; Zechariah 9:9; Malachi 3:1)

4. It is the _____ of the early church’s FAITH (Psalm 2:7; 40:6-8; 2 Sam. 7:14; Hosea 11:1; Isaiah 40:3-5; 53:4; Jeremiah 31:15; Malachi 4:5-6)
5. It is the _____ for the apostles’ FAITH (Rom. 3:1-4, 10:14-21; 9:25-29; 10:13, 19; Gal. 3:16-29)
6. It is _____ to our New Testament FAITH [Paul’s appeal for Israel’s salvation (Rom. 9-11); Background knowledge to understand (Genesis 12; Jeremiah 31)]

Checking Your Progress—

1. What is the Old Testament for Jews?

2. What is the Old Testament for Christians?

3. What are some reasons the Old Testament is an important source of doctrine for Christians today?

The books of the Old Testament are arranged differently in the Hebrew Bible than they are in the English Bible.

The English Bible (OT) books are arranged according to type of *genre*. *Genre* is a technical word, and it is used to refer to a particular type of biblical writing or literature —i.e., prophecy or poetry.

The primary Divisions or Classifications of the Standard English Bible are: **The Law, History, Poetry/Wisdom, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets.**

The Divisions or Classifications of the Hebrew Bible are arranged according to how they were collected and assembled: **The Law, The Former Prophets, The Latter Prophets, and The Writings.**

In ancient Hebrew worship, the _____ is the most important religious writing. It is the basis upon which the unique and special relationship between God and Israel is established.

The Pentateuch is made up of the first five books of the Old Testament Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Jews call these books *Torah* which means instruction, often rendered in English as Law.

The word _____ is a Greek word, and it means “five rolls.”

The books of the Law in both the English and Hebrew Bibles are **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.**

Building blocks of the Pentateuch, then are promise, election, deliverance, covenant law, and land.

Checking Your Progress—

5. What are the primary Divisions/Classifications of the Old Testament in the English Bible?

6. What are the primary Divisions/Classifications of the Old Testament in the Hebrew Bible?

7. What are the books of the Law?

Contents of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is a book of history as well as faith.

Following is a brief synopsis of nine major moments in history that tell of the historical pilgrimage of the people of Israel:

Pre-History (Genesis 1:1 – 11:24)

Creation to the beginning of the history of Abraham.

The Patriarchal Period (Genesis 11:27 – 50:26)

The history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Chief Fathers) and the beginning of their _____ with God. This period ends with the life and death of Joseph.

The Exodus (The Book of Exodus)

During this period, Israel was formed as a people, the development of their _____ life, and the giving of the Law by God to Moses.

The Wilderness Wandering (The Book of Numbers)

This is the sacred history of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness following the departure from Sinai and before their occupation of Canaan, the _____.

Settlement in Canaan (The Book of Joshua)

Moses dies and leaves Joshua as the Leader of the Israelites who enter the _____ and dividing the land among the 12 tribes.

The Period of the Judges (The Book of Judges)

This period was a time of growth and development for the new nation of Israel. They were challenged with _____ and forgot the Lord and all that He had done for them. When they were moved to repent, the Lord would raise up a spiritual leader who would lead them to deliverance and victory over their enemies.

The Hebrew Monarchy (1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings)

The rise and fall of the Hebrew monarchy is told in these books. It is the story of the end of Samuel's role as a _____, and the rise of Israel's first _____, Saul. It also tells of a split into two separate nations after the death of King Solomon.

The Babylonian Exile (Prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zephaniah) During this period, large numbers of Hebrew people were carried away from _____ to live in _____ by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. The City of Jerusalem was virtually destroyed. Only the poorest people were left in the land of Judah.

Restoration and Return (Ezra and Nehemiah)

The Jews began returning to Palestine around 538 BC under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and eventually Nehemiah. Those that returned were _____ of those who had been carried away into captivity.

Checking Your Progress—

8. What are the major time periods in Israel’s history?

9. What was the relationship like between the Lord and the Hebrew people in the Old Testament times?

10. How can more believers be led to develop an interest in studying the books of the Old Testament?
