

Survey of the Old Testament 1

History: Genesis–Esther

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MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

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Description

To see the Scriptures as a whole is not only crucial to a good understanding of the Bible; it can also be an exciting experience. This lesson material is based in part on a former course by Dr. James M. Gray. Exams, maps, and charts were prepared by John Phillips. This lesson material is the first in a series of three, designed to take you completely through the Bible.

- Survey of the Old Testament I: Genesis—Esther
- Survey of the Old Testament II: Job—Malachi
- Survey of the New Testament: Matthew—Revelation

Course Components

Your course consists of two components – this study guide and an envelope containing four color-coded answer sheets.

The Study Guide

- The study guide contains all of the lessons and exams for this course. There is a self-check quiz after every lesson (true and false questions and/or multiple choice). An exam follows Lesson 3, 6, 9, and 12.

The Scantron Answer Sheets

- The color-coded Scantron answer sheets come with your course. These correspond to the exams in your study guide. Please use these sheets to mark your answers for each exam. **Use only a #2 lead pencil** to mark your answers. (Because these tests are electronically graded, ink or harder leads are not acceptable.)

Requirements and Procedures

Requirements

In order to receive credit, the four exams must be completed with an overall average grade of 70% or better. A Grade Record Sheet is provided at the beginning of your study guide to help you keep track of your standing in this course.

Procedures

Please follow the procedures listed for completing the lessons and exams in this course. As you complete each exam, mail the answer sheet to Moody Distance Learning, 820 N. LaSalle Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60610-3284, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of your graded answer sheet. If you prefer, you may send multiple exams in one envelope. We request that you use the envelopes provided for this purpose.

The Lessons

- Read the study guide at a time when you can concentrate. Pick a time of the day you are most likely to be alert and relatively uninterrupted.
- Read with a pencil or pen in hand. You will want to underline words or phrases, even sentences, for later reference.

The Exams

- When you have completed all of the lessons that an exam covers, go back and review the material in the study guide. You may want to prepare by writing out your own outline of the material covered. The outlines will help you focus on the major truths discussed in each lesson.
- All exams are objective in nature and utilize the special answer sheets, or Scantron forms, provided with this course.

When taking the exam, please follow these instructions:

- It is important that you select the proper answer sheet for each exam. The answer sheet are as follows:
 - Exam 1 is blue
 - Exam 2 is green
 - Exam 3 is red
 - Exam 4 is tan
- Fill in the blanks at the top of your answer sheet. Please write legibly.
- We encourage you not to refer to your textbook or notes of any kind while taking the exam.
- Please use a #2 lead pencil to mark your answers. Fill in the spaces darkly and completely – be sure to erase any mistakes thoroughly.
- Mail your answer sheet to Moody Distance Learning along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of your graded answer sheet. If you prefer, you may send multiple exams of the same course in the same envelope. Please use the envelope provided with the course, for this purpose. Please do not send the pages of the exam from the study guide.
- When you receive your graded answer sheet from Moody Distance Learning, record your grade in the appropriate box on the Grade Record Sheet. Please mail in the Grade Record Card with your last exam(s). Keep your exams for future reference.

What and Why

It is very important to have a clear picture of the Bible in its entirety before attempting a detailed study of its various parts. In this lesson, we will consider the aim of our study and the scope of the lessons that follow.

The Bible is the Word of God. Consequently, it is essential that we learn what is in it and what it means. We must know the content of the book before we can know its interpretation. In other words, we have to know what the Bible says before we can understand what the Bible means. Our aim should be at least fourfold.

- To get a mastery of the factual content of the Bible
- To recognize the unity of the Bible, noting the relationships of the various books to one another and to the Bible as a whole
- To see the Lord Jesus Christ in all the Scriptures
- To make practical application to our own lives

The Theme and Purpose of the Bible

The Bible does not claim to be the complete history of the universe or even of the human race. Rather, it is the history of redemption, illustrating the outworking of God's purpose in saving humanity through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, we should expect to see the Lord Jesus in all parts of the Bible—in the Old Testament as well as in the New. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus said to His disciples, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44).

The Structure of the Bible

It is easy to see that the Bible falls into two main divisions—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word *testament*, as it is used

here, means a covenant or an agreement. The Old Testament is God's covenant with humanity before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. The New Testament is God's covenant with humanity *through* Jesus Christ.

Interestingly, the Old Testament is three times as long as the New. Since God has given this large amount of material in the Old Testament, we can rightly infer that He must want His people to study it. It is impossible to understand many of the doctrinal references in the New Testament without knowing a good deal about the Old.

The Old Testament contains 39 books written over a period of many hundreds of years, from the time of Moses (approximately 1500 B.C.) to the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi (approximately 400 B.C.). We usually speak of these books as falling into four categories: books of the Law, books of history, books of poetry, and books of prophecy. The books of prophecy are often further divided into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. A convenient memory device is the use of the figures 5, 12, 5, 5, 12—that is, five books of the Law, twelve books of history, five of poetry, five of the Major Prophets, and twelve of the Minor Prophets.

The New Testament can be divided into books of history, books of teaching (the Epistles), and one book of prophecy; that is, five books of history (the four Gospels and the book of Acts), twenty-one epistles (from Romans to Jude), and the single book of prophecy (Revelation).

This survey is divided into three volumes, two of which will focus on the Old Testament and one on the New. In this first volume we study the books of the Law and the books of history—seventeen books in all.

The entire Old Testament, lengthy as it is, is anticipatory. It looks forward to the coming of the promised Redeemer into the world. We could write over the whole of it, "He is coming; He is coming; He is coming!" From the very first prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ in Genesis 3:15, and on through the entire Old Testament, the definite line that is followed is the line of this promised Redeemer.

We need to understand the unity of the Word of God, a unity in spite of variety. Here are 66 books, produced by about forty different writers over a period of many hundreds of years, and yet manifesting incredible harmony, centering around one person—the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible declares itself to be from God. "All Scripture is God-

breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). The men who wrote the Bible were spokesmen for God, as the Bible itself tells us: “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

As we begin the study of this lesson material, it is important that we know what it is we are studying. The word *Bible* comes from a Greek word which originally meant “book.” Through usage, this came to be regarded as a plural form, translated “books.” Of course, either the singular or the plural is appropriate. Undeniably, the Bible is a single book, distinct from all other books; at the same time, it is a collection of books, numerous writings forming one unified whole.

The most common term the Bible uses for itself is the *Scriptures*. This means “writings.” Sometimes the adjective *holy* is joined with this word; the Holy Scriptures are the writings that are set apart, distinct from all other writings—the writings that came from God.

The study of the Bible is both like and unlike the study of other literature. It is like other studies in that it requires personal diligence and application. It is unlike the study of human literature in that it includes a spiritual as well as an intellectual element. The Holy Spirit is the author of this Book and He must be its interpreter as well. An unsaved person can read and study the Bible but cannot actually understand its spiritual content because he or she does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit. “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Therefore, the first qualification for real Bible study is that the student be born again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:3, 7, 16).

Even believers, however, can be hindered in their understanding of the Bible if they are not living in right relationship to the Holy Spirit. So, a second qualification is a surrendered life. Paul told the believers at Corinth that humanity is divided into three groups as to their understanding of the Word of God. The first is the natural man, who is unsaved and cannot receive the things of God. In contrast, there is the spiritual man, a believer who is correctly related to the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to discern all things. In between is the carnal

man, a believer who is not yielded to the Holy Spirit and, therefore, a babe in Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14–3:4).

Yielded Christians, even though they may not have much formal education and may have only a limited intellectual capacity can, nevertheless, make great progress in their understanding of the Word of God because they know the Teacher and have daily fellowship with Him.

The Theme of the Bible

The general theme of the Bible, as we have noted, is redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. After His resurrection from the dead, on the walk to Emmaus with two disciples, Jesus began “with Moses and all the prophets” and “explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Of course, this is true of the New Testament as well. That the message of the Bible is indeed Christ in His person and work is also shown in the words of our Lord to the Pharisees. “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39, 40). It is possible to know the factual content of the Scriptures without ever knowing the person to whom the Scriptures point.

The Incompleteness of the Old Testament

Every part of the Word of God is perfect because it is the Word of God. But the Old Testament by itself, as long as it is, is incomplete. We have seen that it is anticipatory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the New Testament speaks of the fulfillment of that expectation. “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5). If we had only the Old Testament, we would feel that the story is far from complete. From beginning to end, it is a book of promise, looking forward to something not yet fulfilled.

How the Story Unfolds

God is the God of history, and much of the Bible story grows out of His dealings in history with His chosen people. Beginning with a

brief review of early human history, the story line of the Bible soon focuses on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the founding fathers of the Hebrew race. The descendants of Jacob, known as the children of Israel, grew to nationhood in Egypt, eventually settled in the promised land of Canaan, and there became a powerful people. Their early history in the land, however, was marked by constant apostasy. God had given them the Law, the tabernacle, the Aaronic priesthood, and a rich heritage through the ministry of Moses. But the Israelites stubbornly ignored God’s warnings against idolatry and soon became involved in the vile religious orgies of their heathen neighbors. For the purpose of judgment, God allowed them to be delivered again and again into the hands of their foes, and these oppressions were only temporarily relieved by the occasional appearance of godly judges.

The nation finally became a monarchy. Saul’s disastrous reign was followed by the founding of the royal house of David, the “man after God’s own heart,” who greatly extended Israel’s borders and brought peace to the land. David and his son Solomon made an important contribution to the poetical sections of the Old Testament. After a brief period of prosperity and power, however, the united kingdom fell apart, mainly because Solomon’s indulgences reintroduced idolatry to the nation. The kingdom was split in two after Solomon’s death (931 B.C.). Two of the tribes remained true to the throne of David, but the other ten set up a rival monarchy in the north, with Samaria eventually becoming its capital. The southern kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital, was known as Judah. (In Matthew 1 the human ancestry of the Lord Jesus is traced through the line of the kings of Judah, right back to David.) The northern kingdom was known as Israel, or sometimes as “Ephraim,” its dominant tribe.

The history of the divided kingdom was turbulent. Not a single good king sat on the throne of Israel. Eventually the northern kingdom fell to the evil Assyrians, and its people were carried away into captivity (722 B.C.). The kingdom of Judah outlasted Israel for about 135 years. Some of Judah’s kings were good and some bad, but apostasy and idolatry ultimately prevailed, and the Babylonians became God’s instrument to punish Judah. Jerusalem was sacked, the magnificent temple of Solomon was destroyed, and the people were deported to Babylon (586 B.C.).

Eventually the Babylonian Empire was replaced on the stage of history by the Persian Empire, and the Jews were given permission to return to Palestine. Under great difficulties, the small remnant returned (539 B.C.) and rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple. The entire period of the divided kingdom, the Captivity, and the return from captivity gave rise to the prophets, whose books form a large part of the Old Testament.

The New Testament opens on Israel with an intensely nationalistic remnant in the land but with a large Jewish population dispersed in all parts of the world. Christ was born in the zenith of Roman power. He was crucified by the Romans at the insistence of the Jews, who had rejected Him and His claims to be their King and Messiah. His resurrection and ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost introduced a new era—the era of the church. Peter and Paul dominated the early history of the church, taking the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. Peter concentrated mainly on Jerusalem and Palestine, and Paul, after his spectacular conversion, became the Apostle to the Gentiles and the most famous missionary of the church. Much of the New Testament is comprised of letters written by the apostles to churches and converts throughout the Roman Empire—letters intended to encourage, instruct, and reprove. The Bible closes on a note of prophecy, anticipating the second coming of Christ, the final fulfillment of all outstanding prophecies, and the consummation of all God's purposes with man.

One good way of fixing in your mind the history of the Bible is to think of it in terms of patriarchs, great leaders, kings, foreign rulers, Christ, and the church.

Self-Check Quiz 1

This self-check test will help you evaluate what you have learned in the preceding lesson and will also help you prepare for upcoming exam. Indicate your answer to each of the following questions.

1. True or False: We must know the content of a book before we can know its interpretation.
2. True or False: The Bible is a complete history of the universe.
3. True or False: It is possible to know the factual content of the Scriptures and still remain a stranger to Christ.
4. True or False: The Old Testament is of little value, now that we have the New Testament.
5. True or False: The entire Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit
6. Which of the following Scripture references can be used to prove that the Bible is inspired by God?
 - a. 2 Timothy 3:16
 - b. Titus 2:15
 - c. James 1:22
 - d. John 3:36
7. Which of the following names or events came first, according to the historical order given in the lesson material?
 - a. King David
 - b. Abraham
 - c. Judah goes into captivity
 - d. Israel goes into captivity
8. The first qualification essential to real Bible study is:
 - a. A good education
 - b. Ability to name the books of the Bible from memory
 - c. A careful reading of the Bible from cover to cover
 - d. New birth through faith in the LORD Jesus Christ

continued on next page

9. The second qualification essential to real Bible study is:
 - a. A taste for good literature
 - b. A teachable spirit
 - c. A life surrendered to the Spirit of God
 - d. An alert mental attitude

10. Which figure gives the correct number of books in each of the following main divisions of the Bible?
 - a. Old Testament history: 21
 - b. New Testament history: 5
 - c. Old Testament Law: 4
 - d. New Testament prophecy: 2

Refer to the answer key at the end of this study guide. Please do not send your answers to Moody Distance Learning.