



UNDERSTANDING THE
OLD TESTAMENT
by
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PART I: THE LAW

Lesson 1 ■ Introduction

LESSON OVERVIEW

One purpose of this class is to give you an appreciation for the unity of the Old Testament by helping you understand the characters, plot, structure, themes, and historical settings. The Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture and He uses men to write down these words. These words carry the authority of God. The purpose is to help us know God, be saved through Him and live in relationship with Him. We need to find out what the Bible says and conform our lives to it. The question is not “does the Bible apply to my life,” but, “does my life conform to the Bible?” The unifying purpose of the Old Testament is to show how God saves human beings from sin, for His glory and for His service.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 1-14.

INTRODUCTION

The Unity of the Old Testament

What is the Old Testament and Why Should We Study It?

- Origins of the Old Testament
- Authority of the Old Testament
- Purpose of the Bible
- Sufficiency of Scripture

- Structure of the Old Testament

1. Law

2. Prophets

3. Writings

- Unity of the Old Testament

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, explain why studying the Old Testament is important. How should this affect the way that you read the Old Testament? What is something that you can do this week to help someone else understand why the Old Testament is important?
2. How do you see the Old Testament's relationship to the New Testament? How do both Testaments have the same purpose? Where do you see Christ in the Old Testament? How is the New Testament the fulfillment of the Old?
3. What are the implications of the sufficiency of Scripture, particularly the Old Testament? How should the words of Scripture guide our lives? What are some appropriate ways to use Scripture? What are some inappropriate ways?
4. How does the structure of the Old Testament affect the way we interpret it? What is different about the way we should interpret a portion of the Law versus a book in the Writings?

Lesson 2 ■ Genesis

LESSON OVERVIEW

Torah means “teaching” and refers to the first five books of the Bible. Genesis emphasizes that God creates, God judges sin, and God redeems His people. In the Bible’s account of creation, there is only one God, which is different from the other polytheistic religions of nearby cultures. God brings order out of chaos and gives humans a special role as stewards of creation. When Adam and Eve first sinned, they suffered the consequences, but God also showed grace by promising that there was coming one who would defeat the serpent. The effects of sin result in pain, sorrow and death.

The world becomes filled with corruption and violence, so God punishes sin, but extends grace to Noah and his family. Sin increases again, resulting in the rebellion of the tower of Babel. God’s solution for sin in the world is to call Abram and his family to be His special people. From Genesis 11:10 – 25:18, God is calling out the family of Abraham who will take His message to the nations. Abraham is a man of faith and God’s friend, even though he is flawed. Isaac is born and continues to follow God. Jacob takes leadership of the clan. Joseph’s brothers sell Joseph into slavery. He becomes Prime Minister of Egypt. When his brothers come to escape famine in Canaan, he welcomes them and they live there.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 15-44.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LAW

- Almost every significant Old Testament theme is introduced in the Law.

- Torah - Hebrew for “instruction,” also called the Pentateuch

- Two Types of Law
 1. Command

2. Case

- Different kind of instruction: Genesis 1 – Exodus 19
- The Author of the Law: Moses
- The Audience of the Law

GENESIS

Emphasis

- God creates.
- God judges sin.
- God redeems his people.

Outline

Genesis 1:1 – 11:9

Genesis 11:10 – 25:18

Genesis 25:19 – 36:43

Genesis 37 – 50

CONTENTS OF GENESIS

The Creation of the World (1 – 2)

The Fall into Sin (3)

Effects of Sin on the Human Race (4 – 6)

New Beginning with Noah and His Family (6 – 9)

Covenant (9:11)

Rebellion at the Tower of Babel (11:1-9)

The Call of Abraham (11:10 – 12:9)

Abraham's Struggle for Faith (12:10 – 25:18)

Isaac: The Promise Continues (25:19 – 26:35)

Jacob: The Reluctant Heir of Faith (27 – 36)

Joseph: The Completion of the Promise (37 – 50)

Summary and Looking Ahead

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In Creation, God set an example by setting aside a day of rest. What do you do on a weekly basis to pursue your relationship with God? What did God communicate to you this past week?
2. Satan's question to Eve was, "did God really say..." In what situations have you sensed Satan asking that question? How did you respond? How does Satan try to defame God's character and make you doubt Him?
3. What were the consequences of Adam and Eve disobeying? How did God continue His relationship with them even after they disobeyed? What consequences for sin have you experienced in your life? What are some specific ways that God has shown His love to you as you face those consequences? How should we respond to people who have sinned against us?
4. God's covenant with Abraham was that He would bless Abraham so Abraham and his family would be a blessing to the world. How has God blessed you? How are you being a blessing to the world?
5. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, what did Abraham do? When we think that God is asking us to do something hard, how do we know it's God? What is an example in your life when God has asked you to do something difficult and He "showed up" in a miraculous way?
6. Jacob learned from his mom how to trick his dad and cheat his brother. In what ways did he continue similar behaviors throughout his life? In what ways did he change and overcome destructive patterns? What destructive patterns of behavior do you exhibit in your life? How does God want you to change them?
7. Joseph forgives his brothers and tells them that what they meant for evil, God meant for good. Think of one person that has mistreated you. How do you genuinely forgive that person and still maintain healthy boundaries? What is the difference in the process of forgiveness between someone who has damaged your reputation and someone who has physically and/or sexually abused you?

Lesson 3 ■ Exodus

LESSON OVERVIEW

Exodus begins with Israel living securely in Egypt because of Joseph's favor with Pharaoh. By the end of Exodus, Moses is Israel's leader and they are living outside of Egypt. God redeems his people from physical and spiritual bondage. God preserves Moses' life and prepares and calls him to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt. Pharaoh will not let the people go, so God sends plagues to persuade him. The tenth one is the death of every firstborn, from which Israel is protected.

The Jews remember this event annually when they celebrate the Passover. God saves His people and drowns the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Their covenant with God is based on faith and the standards of living out the covenant are Ten Commandments. God sets aside Aaron and his sons as priests. God will judge sin, but his first impulse is to forgive. The tabernacle is a portable worship center.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 45-64.

INTRODUCTION

Setting

Time Period

Historical Context

THE THEME OF EXODUS: GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE

God Delivers Israel Out of Egypt (1–18)

1. Israel's enslavement and Moses' call (1-4)

2. God leads the people out (5-18)
 - a. Miracle and 10 plagues

 - b. Passover

 - c. Manna and water

 - d. Purpose in calling the people out?

God delivers Israel so they can be a holy people (19–24)

1. Standards of the covenant - Ten Commandments

2. Case laws

Priests that will serve God and lead in keeping the covenant (25–31)

Covenant breaking and covenant renewal (32–34)

Building the tabernacle (Chapters 35-40)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In Exodus, God delivers the people of Israel from spiritual and physical oppression and bondage. Give an example of how God has done that for you personally.
2. God delivered the people of Israel so they would be a holy people, a kingdom of priests, a people for God's special possession. Christ came to do the same for us (see 1 Peter 2). How does that affect the way you live and the choices you make?
3. God calls Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses gives God excuses about why he is not qualified or able to do it. What is God calling you to do now that you are resisting by giving excuses?
4. God established the feast of Passover for His people to remember their plight in Egypt and how God delivered them. What do you do on a regular basis to remember and celebrate how God has protected and provided for you?
5. What do the Ten Commandments reveal about God's character? When we obey them, how does that affect our relationship with God? With others? Are there any that you ignore? If so, why?
6. In Exodus 34:5-8, God describes His own nature. What is He like? What is Moses' response? What is your response? Describe situations where you have displayed these character traits toward others. Are there people you have not treated in that way to whom you need to apologize and be reconciled?

Lesson 4 ■ Leviticus

LESSON OVERVIEW

Leviticus emphasizes God's holiness and that His people are to be holy. Holiness means unique, set apart. Leviticus describes what the ideal society would be like if everyone loved and followed God. Israel must offer five different kinds of sacrifices. God knows people will sin, so he designed a system to prevent sin from standing in the way of their relationship with God. Priests were set aside for covenant worship. The Day of Atonement symbolizes the way God forgives sin. God wants the people of Israel to move toward moral excellence, not just avoid sin. God expands the Sabbath concept to include Sabbath years and years of Jubilee.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 64-70.

INTRODUCTION

Definition of *holy*

Setting

Time Period

SECTIONS

1–7: Sacrifices

8–10: Holy Priests

11–15: Clean and Unclean

16: The Day of Atonement

17–27: Holy Society

CONTENTS

Sacrifices (1–7)

Five Types

1) Burnt

2) Sin

3) Guilt

4) Grain

5) Peace

Set Ritual

1)

2)

3)

4)

Theological Truths

1)

2)

3)

4)

Priests are set aside for covenant worship (8–10)

Clean and unclean (11–15)

Day of Atonement (16)

Four Stages of the Ceremony

1)

2)

3)

4)

Symbolic Significance

1)

2)

3)

Israel as a holy people (17–27)

CONCLUSION

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean when we say, “God is holy?” What does it mean for Israel to be holy? How did God want Israel to be a blessing to other nations through their holiness? If God wants the same for us, how should this affect the way we spend our time and treat other people?
2. God shows that sin is serious because the animals required for sacrifice are costly. When you take sin seriously, how does it make a difference in your life and your relationship with God?
3. Part of the process of bringing a guilt offering was to make restitution for a sin that caused harm to someone else. Give an example of a sin you committed that harmed someone else and what you did to make restitution.
4. God set up the sacrificial system to demonstrate His mercy by providing a way for people to be forgiven of their sin. People were forgiven as a result of their faith, which motivated them to follow God’s instructions. How does God forgive us of our sin today? Describe a recent occasion when you have asked God to forgive you. Describe a specific instance when you showed someone mercy because you were motivated by how God has shown mercy to you.

Lesson 5 ■ Numbers and Deuteronomy

LESSON OVERVIEW

Numbers begins with Israel ready to take the Land that God promised to Abraham. God is faithful to His people and he expects faithfulness from them. The people enter the promised land but Moses and Aaron do not.

Deuteronomy emphasizes the fact that God renews His covenant with His people. Deuteronomy is written in the form of a covenant that nations would use. There are six parts to the covenant. Moses gives 3 speeches. Deuteronomy chapter 34 is the conclusion of the first five books of the Bible and includes an account of Moses' death. Passages like Deuteronomy chapter 8 indicate that the love of God is the most important motivation for their service. Many of the specific rules are a restatement of material in Leviticus and Numbers to serve as a reminder to a new generation. Moses ends by telling the people that the words of the covenant are their lives, not just idle words.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 71-88.

INTRODUCTION

NUMBERS

Departure from Sinai (1:1 – 10:10)

Israelites lose their opportunity to gain the Promised Land (10:11 – 21)

A new generation enters the Promised Land (22–36)

DEUTERONOMY

COVENANT STRUCTURE

Preamble (1:1-5)

Historical prologue (1:6-4:49)

General stipulations (5–11)

Specific stipulations (12–26)

Blessings and consequences (27–28)

Witnesses and ratification (29–33)

Chapter 34

SECTIONS

God renews his covenant with His people by reminding them of the past (1–4)

Basic rules for possessing the land (5–11)

Specific rules for possessing the land (12–26)

Blessings and consequences of obedience or disobedience to God's law (27–28)

The people gather to hear the last words of Moses and affirm the covenant (29–33)

Moses dies (34)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses because of who he married. Who have you unjustly criticized or gossiped about lately? What people is God bringing to your mind that He wants you to be in relationship with so you can demonstrate love to them and allow God to bless them through you?
2. Is there something God has told you to do? Are you willing to take a risk and trust Him to give you the strength and wisdom to accomplish it?
3. Balaam was faithful to say what God told him even though he knew the king wanted him to say something different. Describe a time when you have said something God told you to say even though you knew it wouldn't be popular. What was the result?
4. Deuteronomy is a book that shows how God keeps His promises and renews His covenant with His people. God showed His mercy by giving them another chance. Describe a time when you kept a promise to be faithful to someone even though it was difficult. Describe a time in your life when God has given you a second chance. How should that affect the way we treat others?
5. How have your parents and mentors obeyed God and set a good example for you? How have they fallen short? How are you living your life to carry on with what they have done well and do better in areas in which they fell short?
6. Deuteronomy chapters 6 and 8 emphasize the importance of the love of God as the primary motivation for obedience to Him. How does God's love for you motivate you to love God? How do God's love for you and your love for Him motivate you to love others? How does the love of God motivate you to listen to His voice and obey?

PART II: THE FORMER PROPHETS

Lesson 6 ■ Joshua

LESSON OVERVIEW

The books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings give the history of Israel by recording what happened and state the theological factors. The kings and people are judged by the standard of the Law in Deuteronomy. They are referred to in the Hebrew Canon as the former prophets.

The main theme in Joshua is that God gives the land of Canaan to Israel just as he promised Abraham. Joshua leads the people as they go into the land. Joshua divides up the land for the twelve tribes and then leads the people in a covenant renew ceremony. The land symbolizes the permanence of God's love for Israel and Israel's role as a holy nation to be a testimony to other nations in the middle of the earth.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 89-101.

REVIEW OF THE LAW

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS

JOSHUA

God gives His people the ability to conquer the land (1–12)

How the Israelites divided the land (13–22)

Renewing the covenant with Yahweh (23–24)

Authorship of Joshua

Question of fairness when God gives Israel the land at the expense of the other nations that are living there.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Joshua focuses on Yahweh's faithfulness in offering Canaan and Israel the challenge to respond faithfully. What has God promised the Body of Christ? What has He promised you personally? What are you doing, both as part of the Body and personally, to respond in faithfulness?
2. In Joshua chapter 1, God tells Joshua three times to be strong and courageous. What reasons does God give him? Since God told Joshua three times, what does that indicate about Joshua's attitude at the time? Has God told you to do something that you are afraid to try? How do God's promises to Joshua apply to you?
3. In Joshua 24, Joshua challenges the people to renew their commitment to God and choose to serve the Lord. When is the last time you set aside time to renew your commitment to God personally and corporately?
4. What are the three main sections in the book of Joshua? What is one event or teaching that stands out in each section? How has meditating on that event or teaching affected your relationship with God?

Lesson 7 ■ Judges and 1 Samuel

LESSON OVERVIEW

God disciplines and delivers His people. There are gruesome stories, but it stresses single-minded worship of the Lord. When everyone does what is right in their own eyes, terrible things happen. (17:6; 21:25) The nations near Israel influenced them to forsake God. The “sin cycle” in Judges happens when the people forsake God by worshipping foreign gods, God sends nations to defeat Israel to encourage them to change, Israel cries out for God’s help, God sends a judge to defeat the other nation, the people serve God while the judge lives, but start the cycle again by rebelling when the judge dies. Baal worship was fundamentally the worship of sex, money, and power. Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Jephthah, and Sampson are a few of the judges. Turning away from God results in all sorts of chaos and suffering.

1 and 2 Samuel emphasize that God will provide a kingdom and a king with whom he will make a covenant to establish an eternal kingdom through his descendants. Samuel is the last judge and Saul is the first king. Samuel is a prophet, priest and judge and encourages the people to honor their covenant with God. Even though Samuel is a good leader, the people ask for a king. Saul is chosen as the first king. He starts out well, but disobeys God twice in areas of worship, so God removes Saul and his family from being king. God treated Saul and Moses similarly.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 102-132.

JUDGES

The Theme of Judges: Everyone does what is right in their own eyes, terrible things happen (17:6; 21:25)

Setting and Dating for the Book of Judges

Sociological Factors

Outline of Judges

1. The Roots of Chaos (1:1–2:5)
2. Living in Chaos (2:6–16:31)
3. The Consequences of Living in Chaos (17–21)

The Roots of Chaos (1:1–2:5)

Living in Chaos (2:6–16:31)

- The Sin Cycle

- Othniel
- Ehud
- Deborah
- Gideon
- Jephthah
- Samson

Consequences of Living in Chaos (17–21)

Concluding Thoughts

3. David Becomes King (16–31)

Concluding Thoughts on Saul’s Life and Work

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When people ignore God’s covenant and do “what is right in their own eyes,” terrible things happen. What is an example in your church and in your life where you have experienced a natural consequence of disobeying God’s covenant? What did you do to restore your relationship with God and others? How are you different as a result of experiencing that process?
2. The essence of Baal and Asherah religions focused on worshipping money, sex, and power. In what ways do you put money, sex, and /or power before God? How does God want you to change your relationship with Him so He is most important?
3. How do you become a leader who starts out and continues to serve God wholeheartedly? How do you train and identify people like that?
4. How do you as an individual and as a group of believers keep God’s covenant in a way that draws other people to want to do the same thing? In what ways do you fall short? What can you do to continue in what you do well and improve in areas in which you are weak?
5. God’s purpose in giving Saul a “bad spirit” was with the goal of bringing Saul back to Himself. Give an example in your life of how God allowed you to experience the consequences of your sin, resulting in repentance and restoration of your relationship with Him.

Lesson 8 ■ 2 Samuel and Kings (Part 1)

LESSON OVERVIEW

2 Samuel begins by describing how God enables David to build a kingdom. Next is a narrative describing David's sin and its consequences for himself, his family and the nation. The last chapters in 2 Samuel recount God's faithfulness to David during his last years. David becomes king and wants to build God a "house of worship." Instead, God tells David that He will build David a "house" consisting of royal descendants, culminating in the birth of the Messiah who will establish an everlasting kingdom. David sins by committing adultery and murder. David repents and God forgives him, but there are consequences.

1 Kings begins by recounting David's death and Solomon's ascendance to be king of the nation. God granted Solomon wisdom, for which Solomon was famous. Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem that was remarkable because of its interior and furnishings.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 132-149.

2 SAMUEL

Outline of 2 Samuel

1. David builds a kingdom (1–10)
2. David's sin and its consequences (11–19)
3. God's faithfulness to David during his last years (20–24)

David Builds a Kingdom (1–10)

David's Sin and Its Consequences (11–19)

David's Last Years (20–24)

Conclusion

1 & 2 KINGS (PART 1)

The Setting of 1 & 2 Kings

Outline of 1 & 2 Kings

The Rise and Fall of Solomon's Family (1 Kings 1–12)

The Temple

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In 2 Samuel 7:1-17, God promises that a descendant of David will always rule and the Messiah will come from his family. How do you act differently each day knowing that God is in control of history and that your choices can cause Him to do things that He would not otherwise do?
2. David's involvement with Bathsheba began when he was at home instead of at war where he was supposed to be. What choices are you making in your actions and/or thought life that are putting you in places that make you vulnerable to temptation? Who do you meet with regularly that knows you well enough and loves you enough to ask you questions to help keep you accountable?
3. Dr. House says that "David's failings do not negate God's faithfulness." Give an example in your life of how you failed and God has turned it into something that glorifies Him.
4. David's life is an example of how difficult it is to make good choices in the areas of faith in God, family, politics and power. In what areas of your life is it difficult to make good choices? In what areas has God been speaking to you about making changes? Give a specific example of how you have been obedient and one example of how you will be obedient.
5. Contrast the prayer of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:22ff when he dedicates the temple with the end of his life in chapter 11. Why doesn't he finish well? What are some ways in which you have started well with the Lord? How are you staying in relationship with Him so you can finish well? In what areas do you need to make changes to get back on course?

Lesson 9 ■ 1 & 2 Kings (part 2)

LESSON OVERVIEW

After Solomon's death, Jeroboam becomes king of the northern ten tribes (Israel) and Rehoboam becomes king of the southern two tribes (Judah). Jeroboam sets up an alternative religion to try and keep the loyalty of the people. After Jeroboam's death, Omri becomes king of the northern ten tribes. Omri's son Ahab succeeds him. Ahab marries Jezebel, who encourages Baal worship. Elijah is God's prophet during this time, who encourages people to worship Yahweh. After Ahab dies in battle, Elijah is taken up into heaven and Elisha succeeds him.

The story of Naaman shows us that God saves Gentiles. Elijah and Elisha speak the word of God accurately and uphold the covenant fully. Jehu kills Omri's family and the priests of Baal. When the people of Israel rebel against God, he disciplines them through wars and famines to encourage them to come back. He also sends prophets to warn them. When these don't work, God promised in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that He would drive them from the land. In 722 BC, Assyria conquers Northern Israel. In the Southern kingdom, Hezekiah worships Yahweh, but his son Manasseh worships idols. Josiah tries to lead Israel back to Yahweh, but they resist.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 150-171.

OUTLINE OF 1 & 2 KINGS (CONTINUED)

Rise and fall of Jeroboam's family (1 Kings 12–15)

Rise and fall of Omri's family (1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 10)

The decline and fall of Northern Israel (2 Kings 11–17)

The decline and fall of Southern Israel (2 Kings 18–25)

All is not lost (Deuteronomy 30)

Conclusion to the Former Prophets

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. God requires Israel to worship Him in specific ways. Christ said we are to worship God in spirit and in truth. How do you worship God in the way He wants to be worshipped? In what ways do you follow traditions that are not biblical?
2. After Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal and God defeated them, Elijah was depressed because Jezebel still wanted to kill him, and he felt like he was the only one following God. Have you ever felt alone? How has God comforted you? Who do you know that may feel alone? How does God want you to encourage them?
3. In 722 BC, Assyria conquered the northern 10 tribes. They took captives away and sent some Assyrians to live in Samaria, where they intermarried. The Jews in Jesus' day were prejudiced against the Samaritans because of their heritage. Who would you refuse or be reluctant to have a meal with because of their heritage (i.e., religion, nationality, lifestyle)? Would Jesus eat a meal with them?
4. Hezekiah followed God and listened to Isaiah and other prophets. His son Manasseh worshipped other gods. How do you pass your faith on to your children? How do you pursue children who are walking away from God? How do you support parents of children who are walking away from God?
5. 2 Kings ends with Babylon taking the people into captivity. What difficulty in your life are you struggling with that seems hopeless? What attitudes and motivations does God want you to change in your life so you can love Him and serve others?

PART III: LATTER PROPHETS

Lesson 10 ■ Isaiah

LESSON OVERVIEW

In the prophetic books, poetic speeches replace narrative as the main type of writing. Seven themes that are common in prophetic books are word and symbol, election and covenant, rebellion, judgment, God's compassion, redemption and consummation. These themes can be compressed into the ideas of sin, judgment and renewal. Books of prophecy stress how to live for God.

Isaiah lived during a time when Assyria exerted its influence on Israel. Isaiah warns people about the folly of idolatry and treating each other unfairly. He also looks into the future and describes the Messiah, and a time when God will judge sin and create a new earth. He moves from creation to new creation.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 173-195.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LATTER PROPHETS

How to Read the Prophetic Books

B. D. Napier's Seven Themes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Three Main Emphases

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Books of Prophecy Stress How to Live for God

ISAIAH

Historical Background

Isaiah's Message

The Structure of Isaiah – Seven Cycles

1. **First cycle:** Isaiah calls heaven and earth as witnesses of the sin of the people of Israel, describes the day of judgment, and tells how God will shield his people in Zion (1–4).
2. **Second cycle:** Israel won't repent, so Isaiah sees judgment coming, but beyond that he sees the Messiah coming who will be the perfect king. The Messiah will be God with us and bring righteousness and peace (5–12).
3. **Third cycle:** Yahweh is described as the maker of humanity and plans human history (13–27).
4. **Fourth cycle:** Yahweh causes the earth to mourn because of judgment and rejoice when it ends (28–35).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. The three main themes of the prophets are sin, judgment, and renewal. Give an example in your life of a situation involving these three elements. How did going through this process affect you in your relationship with God and how you serve others?
2. The prophets stress how we are to live for God now. What is one area that the prophets speak to Israel about that you need to change in your life? What attitudes toward God and others need to be different? How will those changes result in different behavior?
3. Isaiah 9:2-9 is a prediction of the coming Messiah. How does Christ fulfill that prophecy? Does it increase your faith in God to know that God is powerful enough to accomplish His plan in the world? How does that make a difference in your relationship with Him and how you serve others?
4. Isaiah describes God as the Planner and Maker of their history. Does that mean that we are free to make choices? Why or why not? How does your answer affect your relationship with God and how you live your daily life?
5. Isaiah 56 describes how the Messiah will gather people from all nations. What is God calling you to do to be a light to the nations?
6. Describe how looking forward to the time of renewal when God makes the new heavens and the New Earth affects your relationship with Him and your willingness to serve others.
7. Isaiah 66:18ff says that God will call priests from all nations. First Peter talks about the priesthood of believers. What does it mean that, as fully devoted followers of Christ, God has made us priests? How does that affect your relationship with Him and your willingness to serve others?

Lesson 11 ■ Jeremiah

LESSON OVERVIEW

Jeremiah lived near Jerusalem and had a message for the nations from God during difficult times. God tells Jeremiah that because he is calling people to repent and return to worshipping Yahweh, he will face opposition, but that God will be with him. Jeremiah learns of the peoples' sin and preaches to them from the temple of their need for repentance and of the coming Messiah. Only one or two people respond positively to his message, so he is lonely, but faithful. God also tells Jeremiah that he will renew His covenant with Israel and restore them. God is faithful to keep his promises.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 196-219.

OUTLINE OF JEREMIAH

Introduction to the prophecy (1)

Israel's sins and the sins of the nations (2–29)

Renewal through the New Covenant (30–33)

Israel and the nations' punishment (34–51)

Conclusion to the prophecy (52)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Jeremiah is a prophet when Jerusalem is destroyed and he is taken as a refugee to Babylon, away from everything familiar. Yet, he is still faithful to listen to God's voice and proclaim His message. When times are difficult for you, do you blame God and curse Him, or do you trust Him and continue to hope in Him? Give an example.
2. God says He called Jeremiah and gave him a mission even before he was born. What has God called you to do? Are you doing it?
3. Jeremiah's message to the people was to repent, quit worshipping idols and to love God and their neighbor. What idols do you need to quit worshipping? What is getting in the way of loving God? When you love God and experience His love for you, how will that change the way you treat others? Give one example of a person to whom God wants you to show His love.
4. How does Jesus fit the description of the Messiah in Jeremiah 23:1-8?
5. In Jeremiah 31:33, God says that He will "put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts." What does that mean? How does it affect your relationship with God?
6. What is a situation in your life that has shaken you to the core? Do you trust God and hope in Him or have you become bitter? Have you become more compassionate to others as a result of experiencing God's comfort and mercy in your own life? Give an example.
7. Jeremiah is a man who faithfully does a difficult task over a long period of time and continues to believe that God will bring the New Covenant. How will people remember you when you are gone?

Lesson 12 ■ Ezekiel

LESSON OVERVIEW

Ezekiel is a prophet of restoration and hope. He offers hope to the exiles that God will make the future brighter than the past and has a vision of a restored and renewed Jerusalem. God explains to Ezekiel why Jerusalem falls, then promises to restore the people, the monarchy, and Jerusalem.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 220-230.

INTRODUCTION

SECTIONS OF EZEKIEL

The prophet's call (1–3)

Sermons about Judah (4–24)

Doom for Israel's enemies (25–32)

What happens after the fall of Jerusalem (33–39)

Vision of restored and renewed Jerusalem (40–48)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. God calls Ezekiel to eat the scroll of His Word. How do we do that so it becomes more than just information?
2. God says that if Ezekiel preaches His message, God is responsible for the results. How do we preach God's Word in a way that the hearers understand? How are the lives of individual people in our church changing as a result of the message we are preaching? How is my relationship with them encouraging them to pursue their relationship with God and others, and serve God and others in the process?
3. How am I called to be a Watchman? How is each follower of Christ called to be a Watchman? How do we encourage others to be Watchmen without motivating them by guilt and shame?
4. In Ezekiel 36:26-27, God promises to give the people of Israel a heart of flesh and cause His Spirit to dwell within them. Does that apply to us today? How does having a heart of flesh make a difference in how we relate to and serve God and others? How do we hear and respond to the voice of the Spirit who lives in us?
5. Ezekiel preaches about the themes of sin, judgment and renewal. Are those appropriate themes to preach today? How do we preach them authentically without trying to motivate people by guilt and shame? In what ways is God speaking to me in these areas? How will it change how I relate to and serve Him and others? Who is there in my life that God wants me to interact with regarding these themes?

Lessons 13 ■ The Book of the Twelve (Part 1)

LESSON OVERVIEW

In the Hebrew Bible the Book of the Twelve is considered one book. In the Christian Bible, these are split up into twelve books known as the minor prophets. The major themes are the description of the sins of Israel and the nations, punishment of sin of the “day of the Lord” and restoration of Israel and the nations. This lesson covers the books of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 231-249.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

Structure of the Book

1. The first 6 prophecies describe the sins of Israel and the nations.
2. The next three emphasize the punishment of sin on the day of the Lord.
3. The last three emphasize the restoration of Israel and their neighbors.

Characters

Historical Details and Theological Themes

Overview of the Structure

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

Hosea

1. Israel's adultery dramatized (1–3)
2. Israel's adultery detailed (4–14)

Joel

Amos

1. Worldwide lack of justice and love (1-2)
2. The injustice in Israel (3-6)
3. Visions of the coming destruction (7:1-9:10)
4. Statement of restoration (9:11-15)

Obadiah

Jonah

1. God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh (1-2)
2. Jonah preaches repentance in Nineveh (3)
3. God is concerned about all nations (4)

Micah

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Hosea shows God's willingness to pursue and forgive Israel even when they have turned against Him. He does the same for us. How does that affect our relationship with God? Are we willing to forgive others, even when they don't deserve it? How do we maintain healthy boundaries in relationships and still forgive people? Have you asked God specifically for wisdom and strength to restore a broken relationship?
2. Acts 2 quotes Joel 2. In what ways was Joel's prophecy fulfilled in Acts? What caused it to happen? How is it being fulfilled in your life and your small group today? What is causing it to happen and what does it look like? If it's not happening, what needs to change?
3. In Amos, God says He will judge Israel and the nations because of their unjust practices. In what ways did they practice injustice? How do we as individuals and as a group practice injustice? What should we do to repent and turn from treating people unfairly?
4. Jonah 4 shows God's compassion for the city of Nineveh. Explain how you as an individual and a group demonstrate compassion toward people who are not seeking the Lord. Would you say you are more judgmental or more compassionate? Why? How can you improve in this area?
5. Israel's calling is to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, showing God's glory to all the people around them. That is the same calling that we have as disciples of Christ (see 1 Peter). In what ways are you doing this well? In what ways are you failing to do this? How can you improve on what you are doing poorly and expand in the areas in which you are doing well? What will you do to accomplish this?

Lessons 14 ■ The Book of the Twelve (Part 2)

LESSON OVERVIEW

In the Hebrew Bible the Book of the Twelve is considered one book. In the Christian Bible, these are split up into twelve books known as the minor prophets. The major themes are the description of the sins of Israel and the nations, punishment of sin of the “day of the Lord” and restoration of Israel and the nations. This lesson covers the books of Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 249-266.

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE, CONTINUED

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

Conclusion

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Nahum says that God showed grace to the nation of Assyria, but he would not let the guilty go unpunished. Does God have this same kind of relationship with nations today, or does he work only through individuals? How do we see him offering grace to those who have not yet believed? Do we see him punishing nations, or is that only to happen on the Last Day?
2. Habakkuk had trouble with the fact that the wicked were prospering in his day. What was God's promise to him? How do we remain faithful in our day, even though it appears that the wicked seem to prosper? What is the importance of the statement, "The righteous shall live by faith" for living in our day?
3. When sharing with others about the holiness and mercy of God, how can you use the message of the Book of the Twelve to show that God punishes sin, but also is patient and long-suffering with those who sin?
4. Review the message of each book of the Book of the Twelve to sin how they fit into the theme of sin, punishment, and restoration. How especially do the last three emphasize the message of restoration. How can we use these books to point people to the fulfillment of this in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

PART IV: THE WRITINGS

Lesson 15 ■ Psalms

LESSON OVERVIEW

This is the most diverse section in the Old Testament in terms of types of literature. We learn a lot from these books about how the people of Israel lived as they related to God and one another. The Psalms represent the best prayers, hymns and calls to worship that Israel produced. Psalms teaches us what true worship is.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 267-279.

PSALMS

Three ways to interpret the Psalms

1. Individual expressions of spirituality

2. Interpreted and applied according to their literary type: hymns of praise, royal psalms, individual thanksgiving, individual laments, community laments.
 - a. Hymn of praise: Call to praise, reasons given for praising God, concluding praise. Usually praising something about God's character.

 - b. Royal Psalms: comment on the lives and actions of Israel's kings and often refer to the Messiah, the coming king.

 - c. Individual thanksgiving psalms: statement of praise, describes past trouble, note how God helped in that situation, concludes with a statement of gratitude.

- d. Individual laments: most common, mourn personal sin, mourn presence of enemies, mourn sickness and disease: general prayer for deliverance, describes the problem, asks for help, pledges to serve God when forgiveness is granted.

 - e. Community laments: a group of people mourning about a disaster that is afflicting Israel. Community calls on God, complains about a situation, reviews Yahweh's help in the past, petition for help in the current situation, vow to serve God when the trouble passes.
3. Reading the Psalms as a whole book: 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150. – Proclaiming the covenant, passing on of the covenant to the next generation, the covenant has not been kept, how an exiled Israel should repent, hope for those who ask the Lord to forgive them.

OUTLINE OF PSALMS

Psalms 1–41: Worshipping God in times of trouble

Psalms 42–72: Teaching worship to the next generation

Psalms 73–89: The consequences of rejecting a godly heritage

Psalms 90–106: Israel must exercise worship while being patient

Psalms 107–150: Worship and restoration

Conclusion of Psalms

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In looking at Psalms as a whole book, Wilson notes that each section ends with a doxology. What does that indicate about the overall emphasis of the book of Psalms? Does our prayer and worship have the same emphasis? What difference will it make in our individual lives and in our local body?
2. Psalms says that those who are wicked should be warned to turn away from their sins and come to God. Name someone you have a relationship with that does not have a relationship with God. How will you warn them in a way that will encourage them to turn to Him?
3. Psalm 8 describes how kind God has been to make humans in His image and cause them to rule over the world. God is concerned about humans because His love and kindness endure forever. Give examples of how God shows kindness to you. How does that motivate you to show kindness to others? Give an example of something you have done in the past week to show kindness to someone.
4. Psalms 95, 96, 99 and 100 emphasize God as the sovereign Creator of all things. We should worship Him and not harden our hearts. What are five specific ways that you see God in creation? How does that motivate you to worship Him and serve others?
5. How does reading God's Word and meditating on it help you to hear God's voice in your life? Give a specific example from the past week.
6. Psalms 146-150 tell us that praising, honoring, and glorifying God in our lives and with our lips will help us to live for God as we wait for the Messiah and faithfully proclaim His name to the nations. How do you praise, honor and glorify God with your life and your lips? Give an example of how someone has been drawn to God because of something you said or did.

Lesson 16 ■ Job and Proverbs

LESSON OVERVIEW

Job teaches us how to struggle with doubt, pain and suffering, and even with our faith. The message of Job is that we should trust the providence of God. The message of the book of Proverbs is how to develop wisdom.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 280-303.

JOB

Description of Wisdom Literature

Background of Job

Testing of Job (1–2)

Job’s dialogue with his three friends (3–31)

Fourth friend (32–37)

Yahweh confronts Job (38:1–42:6)

Healing and Restoration (42:7-17)

Conclusion

PROVERBS

Description of Wisdom Literature

Themes in Proverbs (headings 1:1, 10:1, 22:17, 25:1, 30:1, 31:1)

Choosing wisdom and avoiding foolishness (1–9)

How to become a righteous child (10:1–22:16)

Sustaining righteousness (22:17–24:34)

Becoming a righteous leader (25–29)

Dealing with pride (30)

Importance of choosing a faithful life partner (31)

Concluding thoughts

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Is God obligated to give us what we want if we are diligent about living according to the teachings of the Bible? How do you respond to God when you get what you want? How do you respond to God when you don't get what you want and the rules don't seem to work?
2. Have you ever thought you were doing what God wanted you to do and experienced great difficulty and/or pain? Have you ever doubted God's sovereignty as a result? Do you believe God is sovereign? What do you say to people you know who are facing a similar situation? Do you want to be like Job's friends? Why or why not?
3. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Do you teach this as an absolute promise? How does that affect your perspective as you disciple children? How does that affect your view of parents whose children were raised in the church but are seemingly not following the Lord?
4. Proverbs 26 and 27 remind us of the importance of choosing good companions. Do you or your friends practice gossip or flattery? How do you choose good friends? Do you have friends that encourage you spiritually? Do you have friends that can tell you what you need to hear, even if it isn't what you want to hear?

Lesson 17 ■ Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes & Lamentations

LESSON OVERVIEW

In the Hebrew Bible, Ruth follows immediately after the description of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31. The book as a whole tells how to survive personal difficulties and emphasizes God's mercy. The theme of Song of Solomon is enjoying love. Ecclesiastes describes how to search for meaning in life. Lamentations is about how to mourn national tragedy.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 304-324.

THE CONTENTS OF THE WRITINGS, CONTINUED

Ruth

Song of Solomon

Ecclesiastes

Lamentations

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Boaz made it easy for Ruth to “glean” in his fields. Are we aware of the needs of people around us? Who do you know in your family or community that needs your help? How does God want you to assist them in a way that is helpful to them?
2. Ruth is humble enough to follow Naomi’s advice and Boaz is humble enough to accept Ruth’s offer of marriage. Who has God placed in your life to give you wise counsel and direction? Are you listening carefully to hear it and are you humble enough to respond?
3. Ecclesiastes starts out by giving examples of how life on earth is vanity and death is inevitable. The conclusion is to fear God and keep His commandments. How do we live each day in order to accomplish this? If we really believe that earthly pursuits are vain, that death is inevitable, and that fearing God and keeping His commandments have eternal benefits, how will that change where we choose to spend our time and money? How will it change how we relate to other people?

Lesson 18 ■ Esther, Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah & Chronicles

LESSON OVERVIEW

Esther survived in exile by the grace and providence of God. Daniel shows us how to maintain distinctive faith in exile. Ezra and Nehemiah talk about how to rebuild a nation. 1 and 2 Chronicles talk about how to view the past.

See also, *Old Testament Survey, 2nd Edition*, by Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, pp. 325-355.

THE CONTENTS OF THE WRITINGS, CONTINUED

Esther

Daniel

Ezra and Nehemiah

1 & 2 Chronicles

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Esther risked her life to come before the king and then had a creative plan to make her request. Can you give an example of a time when you took a risk for God and He came through? Is there a situation in your life where you sense God wants you to take a risk? Have you taken the time to wait on Him and ask for His plan to accomplish it?
2. Ezra 7:10 says, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach His statutes and rules in Israel.” Is your heart set to study God’s word, to do it, and to teach it to others? Is that your desire? In what ways are you doing it now? In what ways is this not true of you now? How will it affect your life and your relationship with others if this is true of you?
3. According to 1 Chronicles, David is the main character in the history of Israel. In what ways did he live up to the title “a man after God’s own heart?” In what ways did he fall short? In what ways are you like David? Are you willing to be as honest and transparent with God as David was? How do you notice your relationship with God and others changing as you seek Him?
4. God is still moving from Creation to New Creation by fulfilling His promises to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and, through the Scriptures, promises to us. Give an example in your life of how seeing God fulfill His promises in the past has motivated you to step out in faith to obey Him.