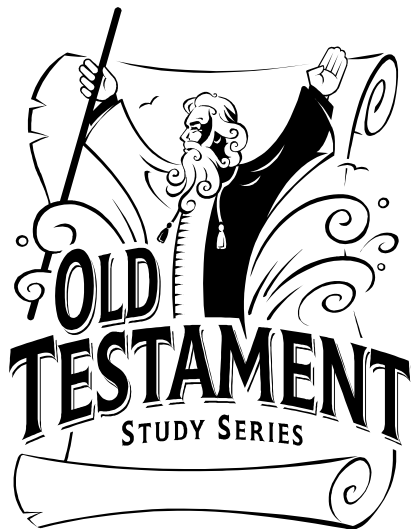


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 2



WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT IS

Scripture Texts: Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Exodus 19:5-6; Ezekiel 18:4; Isaiah 55:7

The history of the Bible is interpreted from the religious standpoint. Although the Prophets predicted certain events in the future, they were particularly preachers of righteousness and disclosers of God's purpose. From beginning to end, the Bible shows itself to be God's Book, our spiritual guide. The only thing greater than the Word of God is the Word made flesh. The whole testimony of the Bible points toward the coming of Jesus and fulfilling of His saving ministry among men.

The Bible is supernatural in nature. It is God's message to His children. The Old Testament is for our example and teaching. It tells of the curse of sin, the promise of a Redeemer, and the choosing of a people for His name. The Old Testament is thirty-nine Books, divided into five groups.

MEMORY VERSE: *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. —2 Peter 1:21*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Exodus 12:1-14, 40-51** The Lord delivers Israel.

Tue.—**Nehemiah 2:1-9** Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem.

Wed.—**Psalms 16** A song of trust and praise.

Thu.—**Isaiah 53** The atonement of Christ foretold.

Fri.—**Joel 2:12-32** Promise of forgiveness and the Spirit.

Devotional Reading: **Psalms 119:1-16** Blessing of Word on a life.

Purpose of the Old Testament

Romans 15:4 In the preceding verse Paul speaks of Christ and His voluntary taking of suffering upon Himself for others. He applies **Psalms 69:9** to Christ. Then—**whatsoever things were written aforetime**—former writings, or the Old Testament—all **were written for our learning**. These Scriptures are for us. They are not out-of-date, useless books. Learn from them. Feed on the **patience** and **comfort** found there. Believe the promises. **Hope** in them.

2 Peter 1:19-21 The **prophecy**—the message from God—**in old time**. This is the Old Testament. It **came not . . . by the will of man**—was not human thought. It originated with God. **The Holy Ghost . . . moved . . . holy men of God** to speak or to write these words. The Old Testament came from God that it might be as a lamp shining in a dark place, **until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts**.

1 Corinthians 10:11 All these things—incidents of the journey of Israel to Canaan—**happened . . . for ensamples** to us. Us **upon whom the ends of the world are come**—the last dispensation—before the end of time. The Old Testament is for us. Study it, not to observe the forms of the Law, but to learn God's way.

It Tells of a People of God

Exodus 19:5-6 Ye shall be a **peculiar treasure unto me . . . a kingdom of priests . . . an holy nation**. This, God spoke to old Israel. But there were terms to be met if they were to be this people. **If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant**. Upon these same terms, we now can be God's special, peculiar people,

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 2

His church (**1 Peter 2:4-10**). Only we have a different covenant now, not to keep the Law, but to repent and believe on Jesus Christ.

It Tells of God's Forgiveness

Ezekiel 18:4 **The soul that sinneth, it shall die.** This is the unchanging Law of God. When Adam sinned, he let death into the world, death to both soul and body. The only escape is through Jesus Christ (**John 1:29**).

Isaiah 55:7 Escape from sin is by way of repentance—**Let the wicked forsake his way—turn to Christ—return unto the Lord—gain the forgiveness of God—He will have mercy . . . he will abundantly pardon.** This is God's wonderful plan of salvation always existing in His purpose, promised and begun in the Old Testament, fulfilled in the New. His plan is always the same in principle. Only the outward forms of it differ under different covenants.

The Old Testament begins a continuous story of the Bible. It is of a contest between Satan and God for possession of man whom God created. Ancient Bibles were written by hand on parchment of goatskins or sheepskins, and then rolled into scrolls. Our Old Testament is thirty-nine Books, divided into five groups. The Jews had the same material but combined them in different order, and in three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings or Psalms (**Luke 24:44**). We have glimpsed a few leading points in the Old Testament. Let us now look at the Books.

The Five Books of the Law

Genesis opens with the account of Creation. God looked at what He had made and found it very good. But the devil came and tempted man to sin and thus brought spiritual and physical death to all mankind. Sin increased until God punished by destroying mankind with a flood, saving only Noah and his family. Man's pride led him to plan the city and Tower of Babel. God again punished by confusing the language and scattering the people. Now God began to build a nation through whom to send a Savior and to give His Word to man. The Israelites became slaves in Egypt, a type of sin's bondage.

Exodus tells of God's miraculous deliverance from that slavery and the giving of the Law. He delivered by means of the ten plagues. At Mt. Sinai God gave the Law (writing with His own finger), and the tabernacle was built to God's specifications. All the provisions of God for Israel were types of God's later provisions for the church.

Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy continues recounting the Law and the journey to Canaan, Israel's homeland. The Law required holiness. It forbade making or serving idols. It taught there is but one God, the Supreme and living One. The Law made provision for animal blood sacrifices for atonement for sin, pointing forward in type to the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Christ.

The Books of History

These continue the history of Israel after Moses' death. **Joshua** led them into Canaan and governed until his death, being followed by **Judges** and **Kings**. It is a sad story of Israel's sins and of God's love and wrath. The nation became split into Judah and Israel. Finally, God allowed Judah to be overcome and carried away captive to Babylon. The Books of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** are accounts of the return of some of the Jews to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple.

Books of Poetry

Job teaches trust in God through affliction and discouragement. The **Psalms** are songs of praise and worship. The **Proverbs** are wise sayings of Solomon, teaching obedience to God. **Ecclesiastes** is a look at life to

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 2

discover the ultimate good. The **Song of Solomon** is a beautiful song of the love of a man and a maiden. It is a type of the love of Christ and the church for each other.

Books of Prophecy

Both Major and Minor Prophets were written by Prophets, men who spoke to men for God. These messages from God are warnings and judgment upon certain groups, encouragement, comfort, instruction, and predictions. These predictions rise to their greatest height in foretelling the coming of Christ. We must look to the New Testament for the fulfillment of this.

Although the Old Testament has so much sin to tell, still scattered through every age were great men who obeyed God, such as Enoch, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, Elijah, Elisha, and Jeremiah. The Law was given to show man his inability to keep it in his own strength and his need of a Savior.

JUST A THOUGHT

You will never know the Bible until you know its Author.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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