

OLD TESTAMENT
SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The Old Testament, also known as the Hebrew Bible, is a foundational collection of religious texts central to both Judaism and Christianity. It encompasses a diverse range of literary genres including history, law, poetry, prophecy, and wisdom literature. The

Old Testament traces the origins of the world, humanity, and the Israelite people, chronicling their covenant relationship with God. Major themes include creation and fall, covenant and promise, law and obedience, justice and mercy, and the hope for redemption and restoration.

The purpose of the Old Testament is multifaceted: it serves as a record of God's dealings with His people, providing moral and spiritual guidance, and revealing His character and plan for salvation. Through its narratives and teachings, it establishes the foundation for understanding human nature, divine justice, and the unfolding of God's redemptive plan that ultimately culminates in the New Testament. Its enduring influence shapes religious faith, ethics, and cultural identity across centuries.



OLD TESTAMENT SECTIONS



- The Old Testament is broken up into 5 Main Sections
- It is not written chronologically, understanding each section, in context, may help you understand better what you are studying, its people, and its purpose.
- These sections include:
 - The Law
 - Historical Books
 - Wisdom Literature
 - Major Prophets
 - Minor Prophets

THE LAW

Main Themes:

- Genesis- The Book of Beginnings
- Exodus- God Delivers his People from Egypt
- Leviticus- Holiness and Worship according to the Law
- Numbers- Wilderness Wonderings
- Deuteronomy- Moses' Final Sermons and the Renewal of The Covenant Law

- Also called The Torah or The Pentateuch
- First five books of the Bible:
 - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- Author: Moses
- Time of writing: 1446-1200 B.C.



HISTORICAL BOOKS

Time of Writing: 1350 B.C. - 400 B.C.

God's faithfulness to His covenant despite Israel's unfaithfulness.

These books—Joshua through Esther—tell the story of Israel's journey as a nation: conquering the Promised Land, establishing a kingdom, experiencing division, exile, and return. Through all of this, one central thread is clear:

God remains faithful to His promises and continues working out His redemptive plan, even when His people rebel, forget Him, or suffer the consequences of their sin.



1. **Covenant Fulfillment** – In Joshua, God fulfills His promise to give Israel the land.
2. **Cycles of Sin and Redemption** – In Judges, the people repeatedly fall into sin, but God raises up deliverers.
3. **Kings and Kingdoms** – In Samuel and Kings, the monarchy rises and falls based on obedience to God.
4. **Exile and Return** – Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther show God preserving a remnant and restoring His people.

Authors: Many Different Writers. Most are named for the Author or Main Character

WISDOM LITERATURE



Books:

- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon

Authors: Many different authors, most authored by the name of the Book.

Time Of Writing: Ranges from the Time of Moses (1400 B.C.) to Solomon (970 B.C. depending on who wrote it)

Main Theme: The Wisdom Literature can be difficult to understand. Try to keep these main themes in mind.

- Job is a true story, told to teach us a lesson in God's Sovereignty and our need for Him.
- Psalms is a collection of poems that can be for worship, dealing with struggle and depression, and joys of life.
- Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon are all for wisdom and growth. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes more about wisdom for life, and Song of Solomon is more for wisdom in love and relationships.

MAJOR PROPHETS

Books:

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

Authors:

Named for their Authors, other than
Lamentations (Written by Jeremiah)

Time of writing: 740 B.C.-535 B.C.

Main Themes:

1. Judgment for Sin and Idolatry

- These books are comprised of prophecies that warned Israel of coming destruction if they did not turn from Idols to God.
 - Fall of the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.)
 - Fall of the Southern Kingdom (586 B.C.)

2. Hope, Restoration, and the Coming Messiah

- After the exile of the Southern Kingdom, many prophets would give hope and encouragement to the Israelites held in captivity of their return to their lands
- And also of the coming Messiah who is Jesus.



3. God's Sovereignty Over Nations and History

- God is not just the God of Israel- He rules over all nations and all of history.
 - Daniel 2:21- "And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding"

MINOR PROPHETS

Books:

- Hosea, Joel, Amos,
Obadiah, Jonah, Micah,
Nahum, Habakkuk,
Zephaniah, Haggai,
Zechariah, and Malachi

Authors: Named for their Authors

Time of Writing: Between 850 B.C.- 430 B.C.



Main Themes:

- Hosea – God’s unfailing love for His unfaithful people
- Joel – The Day of the Lord and a call to repentance
- Amos – Justice and righteousness over empty religion
- Obadiah – Judgment on Edom for pride and violence
- Jonah – God’s mercy for the repentant, even outsiders
- Micah – Judgment and hope; a ruler from Bethlehem
- Nahum – The fall of Nineveh and God’s justice
- Habakkuk – Questioning God’s justice; living by faith
- Zephaniah – The Day of the Lord and restoration
- Haggai – A call to rebuild God’s temple
- Zechariah – Visions of hope and the coming Messiah
- Malachi – A call to faithfulness; the forerunner of Christ

CONCLUSION

The Old Testament can be extremely difficult to understand but at the end remember the context of the Old Testament is to teach us:

1. About our beginning
2. About our sin
3. About an All Powerful, Loving, and Sovereign God
4. About our need for the Savior of the New Testament

