



“What’s In It For Me?”

An overview of the entire Old Testament



Many people today do not include the Old Testament in their Bible reading. They are thinking, “What’s in it for me in this fast paced modern world?” But believing that only the New Testament is relevant for today is like trying to walk on one leg . . . there will be no balance in understanding God.



Learning the five major divisions of the O.T. will help you when you are looking for a chapter and verse for reference, and by reading the following brief description of the teaching of each O.T. book, you will begin to see a very clear picture of the character and love of God. These descriptions are like snapshots of Him in a Bible photo album.

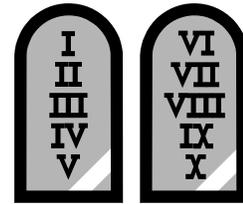
1. Law

- Genesis: the beginning of the world; the creation, the flood, the Hebrew nation begun in Israel through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, & Joseph who went to Egypt.
God creates man in His own image with a body, a soul, a spirit, and a free will to make decisions for or against God. In spite of our failures, God loves us and sees our value and worth. He has a plan for every life.
- Exodus: from 400 years in Egypt to the departure of the Hebrew nation for the promised land led by Moses, a type of Jesus Christ.
God’s protection and provision are given to His people in time of need. Obedience to God’s Word brings prosperity and blessings . . . disobedience brings failure and suffering. God’s promises can be totally trusted.
- Leviticus: describes the role of sacrifice to take away sin and gives instructions for priests (Levites) while camped at Mt. Sinai.
All sin must be atoned by the offering of sacrificial blood (as fulfilled in Christ’s death on the cross for us). Faithfulness to God’s instruction fills our lives with His peace.
- Numbers: the forty years traveling in the wilderness toward the Promised Land and counting the number of people in the Hebrew nation making the trip (over 2 million).
God’s discipline is sometimes stern, but rewards follow obedience. We never have to live in the wilderness, but we may have to walk through it. Murmuring and complaining are offensive to the God we serve.
- Deuteronomy: the end of Moses’s leadership, the new generation is preparing to enter the Promised Land under Joshua.
There is only one true God. Our love for God is shown by holy living and love for others. God’s power and faithfulness can be depended on during our times of need. We must teach our children to fear (reverence) the Lord and keep His commandments.

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2. History

- Joshua:** Joshua leads the Israelites across the Jordan in conquest of the Promised Land. God made the sun stand still to win a battle. Victory comes through faith in God and obedience. Sin must be dealt with at once because it brings severe consequences. God punishes sinful nations as well as sinful individuals.
- Judges:** the first 300 years in the Promised Land when judges ruled Israel because they rejected God. There is always a price to be paid for rejecting God. God in His mercy will deliver us through Jesus when we repent sincerely of our sins. Doing right in our own eyes may not be doing right in God's eyes.
- Ruth:** the story of Ruth's devotion which earned her a place in the lineage of Jesus Christ as the Great Grandmother of David. Genuine love at times requires great sacrifice. No matter what is our lot in life, we can live according to the ways of God. Obedience brings blessings, and love and kindness will be rewarded.
- I Samuel:** Israel's first prophet, Samuel; first king, Saul; and the anointing of David as second king. God is bigger than any problem we will ever have. With God's help our emotions can be kept under His control. Sin in our lives may cause God to take away our blessings until repentance and obedience begin. Obedience is more important to God than sacrifice later for sin.
- II Samuel:** the story of King David's 40 year reign over Israel. God can do extraordinary things through the lives of ordinary people. God will forgive us and use us if we will repent and put our faith in Him. There is no sin so great that God will not forgive us if we forsake the sin and turn to Him.
- I Kings:** the story of the reign of David's son King Solomon; the building of the temple in Jerusalem; the division of Judah & Israel; Elijah's miracles. God uses history to show us examples of both successful and defeated lives. We must follow godly leaders and be godly leaders for others. God is more concerned about our heart than about our accomplishments. The company we keep can have a positive or a negative effect on us.
- II Kings:** a history of the kings who ruled Israel and Judah, their captivity, and Elisha's miracles. God won't allow sin to continue indefinitely. God disciplines us because He loves us so much. He gives us warning before His judgement. We can have total confidence that God will never leave us or forsake us.



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- **I Chronicles**: a review and evaluation of Jewish religious history (the first 12 books of the O.T.)
God is always working in our lives even when we don't understand His ways or see His hand. People and nations fail but God never fails.
- **II Chronicles**: continues I Chronicles ending with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
Disobedience brings defeat. God forgives and heals those who will humbly pray and repent. No worthy project can be done without the help of Almighty God. Our personal efforts are worthless if they are done outside the will of God.
- **Ezra**: the return of the remnant of God's people from Babylon captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.
God watches over and protects His children. Pure love includes correction. In return for God's love we ought to obey His Word. Our goals should be worthy in God's eyes as well as our own. Our sorrows of yesterday can be our successes of today.
- **Nehemiah**: he leads the people to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and return to true worship.
We must have genuine compassion for others who have spiritual or physical hurts. Sometimes we have to give up our own comfort to minister to others. When God ministers through us, even unbelievers know it's God's work.
- **Esther**: she was a Jewish queen in Persia who risked her life to save the Jewish nation.
God has bigger plans for us than we have for ourselves. By prayer and fasting God enables us to overcome human obstacles.



3. Poetry

- **Job**: a man who humbles himself in suffering and wins under God's trials to purify his life.
God will set the limits of Satan's influence in our lives. In our human ability we cannot understand the sorrows of the world. Suffering sometimes shows us that when we have lost all and only God remains . . . God is enough.
- **Psalms**: written by several authors covering every area of human experience & emotion.
Sin is always rebellion against God. God is concerned for every area of our lives. We can approach God, just as we are, with all our concerns. A life of praise is a life of victory during times of sorrow as well as times of joy.
- **Proverbs**: wise sayings mostly by Solomon of practical, timeless wisdom and instruction in spiritual truth and common sense.
True wisdom cannot be gained apart from God. Even in insignificant areas of our life, God will direct our paths. God desires for us to be happy. God has made happiness available to us if we will only trust and obey Him.

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- Ecclesiastes: the vanity of worldly life. Solomon's full life of pleasure, wealth, power and prestige did not bring happiness.

Earthly goals apart from God will not bring us happiness. Money, fame, power, accomplishments or human wisdom will not bring us happiness. Only a life devoted to God will bring happiness. We ought to enjoy life even though we have troubles. Today could be our last on this earth . . . we should view it as a precious gift from God no matter what it holds.

- Song of Solomon: the glorification of wedded love. A love song about the marriage of Solomon and his bride.

Sex in marriage is ordained by God. God's love for His people is greater than any human love. A person may be poor financially but rich knowing that God loves him unconditionally.

4. Major Prophets

- Isaiah: used by God to save Jerusalem and give powerful messages to the Jews, including birth of Jesus.

God is our eternal Comforter, Redeemer and Savior. Deliverance is of God, not of man. Success is being obedient to God.



- Jeremiah: lived 100 years after Isaiah. Proclaims God's judgement upon the unrepentant nation of Judah.

It grieves God's heart to have to discipline us. Nations that reject God pay the price for their disobedience.

- Lamentations: Jeremiah tells his sorrow about the destruction of Jerusalem and exile of the Jews to Babylon.

Suffering may sometimes be the result of sin in our lives. It may help us repent. A forgiven sin may still have consequences that we have to deal with. God will always strengthen and comfort us if we will let Him. The sorrow we experience enables us to comfort another hurting soul. The judgement of God is certain . . . the time is not.

- Ezekiel: while captive in Babylon he gives prophecies of correction and future hope.

Together we are accountable for the sins of our nation. God's promises of restoration for His people will be fulfilled.

- Daniel: a Jewish teenager grows up in Babylon and becomes a high official. God uses Him in a mighty way to preserve Israel.

God does His work through people. Kingdoms rise and fall but God and His Word last forever. God knows all, sees all and hears all and is concerned about every area of our lives . . . even our diets and eating habits.

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5. Minor Prophets

- Hosea: a story of infidelity to God ending in restoration and a new covenant.
God's love is unconditional, eternal, and transforming. God hates spiritual and physical adultery. Absolutely nothing can separate us from God's compassion and love.
- Joel: uses a locust plague to warn Jews about God's judgement.
Our trust should not be in our possessions that can be taken from us, but in the Lord our God. God can use nature, sorrow, or common occurrences to draw us closer to Him. The outpouring of God's Holy Spirit gives power to believers.
- Amos: warns God's people that judgement is near but repentance will save the remnant.
Gods often selects people for His work that the world would reject.
- Obadiah: reveals sin of pride in Edom ending in possession of their land by Israel.
Pride is sin. Loving all mankind can be easy, but we may need God's help to love our next door neighbors.
- Jonah: in belly of a whale 3 days before obeying God and being corrected by Him.
We can never successfully hide from God . . . He sees our every move. What we consider impossible, God may consider a great opportunity for us. God can use any part of His Creation to bring us into closer union with Him.
- Micah: gives warning to avoid God's wrath in the final fall of Israel.
God gives warnings so we won't have to suffer His wrath. Judgement is certain if His warnings are not heeded.
- Nahum: predicts destruction of evil Nineveh because vengeance belongs to God.
God is patient and slow to anger. The praise from our lips and the works from our hands together enable us to worship God. Revenge is a right reserved for God alone.
- Habakkuk: through questioning God's judgement he learns to trust and praise God always.
A life lived by faith will be a life filled with God's joy. If we will get to know Him better, we will better understand His plans for His Creation.
- Zephaniah: all nations will be judged for their sins but God will bless the true remnant.
Renewed fellowship with Him is available to all who have truly repentant hearts.
- Haggai: exhorts people to commit to rebuild the Temple by giving vision of what they lost.
In order to complete a project, it must first be started. Sometimes we settle for good when we could have had the best.

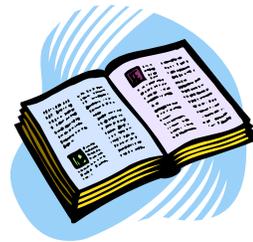


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- Zechariah: night visions of comfort to those rebuilding Temple. Visions of coming Messiah.
God's ways are not just best for God, they are best for us also. A person in love with the Lord will have love and compassion for others. God established His plan of redemption (through Jesus Christ) from the time sin first entered the world.
- Malachi: final O.T. message to a disobedient nation. Dialogue with God ending in judgement of mankind's lack of spiritual progress.
Remembering past victories that God gave us will help during our times of need today. Giving to God and His work is a privilege, not a punishment. We can never out give the Lord.

God closes the Old Testament with the promise that the wicked who do not love and obey His commandments will be eternally punished, but those who obediently fear Him and love Him will be His jewels. (Mal. 3:17,18)

Total books in Old Testament: 39



Rather than questions and answers, have a discussion about what you have learned about the character and personality of God; both as a Father who loves His children, and as a God of mercy and justice.

MEMORY VERSE:

(Proverbs 15:29) *“The Lord is far from the wicked, but He always hears the prayers of the righteous.”*