



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

Old Testament Survey Lesson 1 – Introduction

The purpose of this course is to get better acquainted with the Old Testament and how it leads up to the coming of Christ, for Jesus said of the Old Testament: “**The Scriptures...are they which testify of Me**” (John 5:39). After His resurrection Jesus said to His disciples: “**All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me**” (Luke 24:44). By speaking of the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, Jesus was referring to the three parts in which the Hebrew Old Testament was divided at that time. This includes all the books we recognize as part of the Old Testament today.

Before we take a look at the individual books themselves, we present here an overview of Old Testament history and indicate how the various books fit into the history. The books of the Old Testament are written in **bold face** with **CAPITAL LETTERS** so it will be easy to see where they fit in with the history. Those persons who are direct ancestors of our Lord Jesus are underlined.

In order to get the most out of this course, it is important that you read and study the Bible itself – chapter by chapter, verse by verse. As we get into some of the books of the Old Testament, it may not be possible to read all of the chapters word for word, but we pray eventually you will read every chapter of the Bible carefully, for that is why God has given us this revelation.

This is our prayer as we begin this study of the Bible: “Blessed Lord, You have given us Your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart, that being strengthened and comforted by Your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen” (*Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 25).

1. In the Beginning

Eternity – In the beginning there was only God.

Paradise – A perfect world inhabited by perfect creatures – Adam and Eve.

The Fall – Satan, a fallen angel, succeeded in making unholy that which was holy.

The Promise – By this Promise God created new spiritual life. From this point on all those who believed this Promise were the children of God and the enemies of Satan.

2. From Adam to Abraham

From Adam to Noah – The Promise was preserved despite the increase of wickedness.

(1 Adam; 2 Seth; 7 Enoch; 8 Methuselah; 10 Noah)

The Flood – God’s judgment on man’s sin. Nevertheless, God kept His Promise to Noah and his son Shem. He also made a special promise to all mankind with a rainbow as its sign.

The United World – Man became earth-centered. God’s judgment at Babel scattered men.

(1 Noah; 2 Shem; 6 Peleg)

The World of Idolatry – Men were divided into tribes, then into nations, each with their own language and their own religion.

(1 Peleg; 5 Terah; 6 Abram/Abraham)

3. The Ups and Downs of God's Chosen People

The Age of the Great Patriarchs – God made and renewed His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He chose the children of Jacob (Israel) as His own people and gave them the land of Canaan (Palestine, the Promised Land, the Holy Land) as their inheritance.

Up: The Growth of the Twelve Tribes in Egypt – God's Promise went to Judah, but all of Jacob's sons shared the inheritance.

The twelve: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Levi, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, Benjamin. Joseph's two sons: Manasseh, Ephraim.

[All of this history is recorded in the book of **GENESIS**, written by Moses.]

Down: Slavery in Egypt – God's book is silent.

From Joseph's death in 1806 BC until Moses' birth in 1527 BC there were 279 silent years.

Up: The Exodus under Moses – The exodus is a picture of God's future deliverance through Christ. After the exodus, God gave His chosen people His Law on Mt. Sinai for three chief purposes: as a mirror, as a hedge, as a guide.

Down: The Forty Years of Wilderness Wandering – This was the result of Israel's unbelief.

[This history and these laws are recorded in the four other books of Moses: **EXODUS**, **LEVITICUS**, **NUMBERS**, **DEUTERONOMY**.]

Up: The Conquest of Canaan under Joshua (which means "savior") – This triumphant war is a picture of Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies. The conquest was followed by the apportioning of the land to the twelve tribes.

[The story of the war and the division of the land is recorded in **JOSHUA**.]

Down: The Period of the Judges – Israel's disobedience brought about enemy victories. But there were also ups through God-sent deliverers or judges, such as Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, later Eli and Samuel.

[The stories of the six earlier judges and their times are recorded in **JUDGES**. The stories of Eli and Samuel are recorded in **1 SAMUEL**. The story of Boaz and Ruth, King David's ancestors who lived in the time of the judges, is recorded in **RUTH**.]

Up: Samuel and the First Days of King Saul – Victory over the enemies and a united kingdom.

Down: The Rejection of Saul – Two acts of disobedience brought about God's judgment.

[The story of Samuel and the reign of King Saul is recorded in **1 SAMUEL**, also in the first part of **1 CHRONICLES**.]

Up: The Golden Age of Israel under David and Solomon – A united kingdom, a Jerusalem Temple, great activity of prophets, poets, and philosophers. This kingdom is a picture of the greater kingdom of Christ, David's greater Son.

[This history is recorded in **2 SAMUEL** and the first part of **1 KINGS**, as well as in the last part of **1 CHRONICLES** and the first part of **2 CHRONICLES**.]

[During this Golden Age the poetical books of **JOB**, **PSALMS**, **PROVERBS**, **ECCLESIASTES**, **SONG OF SOLOMON** were written, at least the greater portion of them.]

Down: The Divided Kingdom: Israel, the Ten Northern Tribes – God judged their idolatry.

Israel set up idol worship at Bethel and Dan.

Israel's great prophets could not stem the tide of sin.

(Elijah, Elisha, **JONAH**, **AMOS**, **HOSEA**, **MICAH**, **NAHUM**, **OBADIAH**)

Israel's kings were wicked without exception (including Jeroboam I, Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Jeroboam II)

God's judgment struck in 722 BC; the Assyrians took Israel into captivity.

[The history of Israel is recorded in the last part of **1 KINGS** and in **2 KINGS**.]

Up: The Divided Kingdom: Judah, the Two Southern Tribes – God was longsuffering in mercy. Judah retained true worship at the Jerusalem Temple. [Many **PSALMS** and **PROVERBS**] God’s prophets strengthened the people’s faith.

(JOEL, HOSEA, ISAIAH, MICAH)

God gave Judah some God-fearing kings (such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah)

God’s angel delivered Judah from the Assyrians and preserved the kingdom.

Down: The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah

Josiah was the only God-fearing king in these last days of wickedness.

God’s prophets prophesied God’s judgment on Judah’s sins.

(such as **ISAIAH, MICAH, ZEPHANIAH, HABAKKUK, JEREMIAH - LAMENTATIONS**)

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked and carried off the Jews in three installments:

1. In 606 BC Daniel was one of those taken.
2. In 597 BC Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin were among those taken.
3. In 586 BC Jerusalem was destroyed, and Jeremiah left the city.

[The history of Judah is recorded in **1 KINGS, 2 KINGS, 2 CHRONICLES**.]

Down: The Babylonian Captivity of Seventy Years (606-536 BC)

During this time the old prophecies of **ISAIAH** and **JEREMIAH** and the new prophecies of **DANIEL** and **EZEKIEL** comforted the people and gave them new hope.

Up: The Jewish Return to Jerusalem

The first return under Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar) and Jeshua in 536 BC

The rebuilding of the Temple under **HAGGAI** and **ZECHARIAH** in 520 BC

(Interlude in Persia: the story of **ESTHER**)

Ezra led a group of Jews to Jerusalem in 457 BC

Nehemiah rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem in 445 BC and afterwards.

The return of these exiles to Jerusalem showed that God had not forgotten His people or His Promise.

[The story of the return of the exiles is recorded in **EZRA** and **NEHEMIAH**.]

God gave His people one last prophet, **MALACHI**, with the Promise: **“Behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts”** (Malachi 3:1).

The Silent Years of Waiting for Christ

Some round numbers to remember:

Abraham (2000 BC)

Moses (1500 BC)

David (1000 BC)

the Assyrian Captivity of Israel (722 BC)

the Babylonian Captivity of Judah (606-536 BC)

Malachi, the last of God's prophets (420 BC)

The order of the great world empires:

Egypt (Thutmose III – 1450 BC?)

Assyria (Sennacherib – 700 BC)

Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar – 600 BC)

Persia (Darius I – 500 BC)

Greece (Alexander – 330 BC)

Rome (Caesar Augustus – 0 BC)

Questions

1. Why can we say that the Old Testament is a book about Jesus?
2. List five events that are recorded in the book of Genesis.
3. Why can we call the time period between Genesis and Exodus "silent years"?
4. What do the first five books of the Old Testament have in common?
5. What is meant by an "up" period and a "down" period in Israelite history?
6. Why can we call the days of David and Solomon a golden age?
7. What is the nature of the books from Job to the Song of Solomon?
8. List some differences between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.
9. What is meant by the Babylonian Captivity?
10. Name some of the leaders of the people who returned from captivity.