

Survey of the Old Testament

- This year we are going to take a walk through the whole of the Old Testament – a survey of the OT
- We are going to try to cover 1 book of the Bible every week
- We will be moving fast and not going into the depth you may have become used to in the NT
In the NT we study words, verses and phrases and try to do the same in the OT – but not this season!
- We are going to see the overall structure of the OT – the forest as it were
- *We often do not see the forest for the trees: taken up with the detail in the bark but miss the setting*
- Seeing the Old Testament setting as a whole and how God's purposes are worked out is vital to Bible study
- We will be looking at who wrote each book and why the book was written
- We will cover the purpose of each book and how it fits into God's overall purpose and plan in the OT
- We might look at some of the difficulties that skeptics have found in the books.

At the end of the season, you will have a good grasp and hopefully a better appreciation and understanding of your Bible, and in particular of the Old Testament.

I have a folder for each of you and I plan each week to give you a printed outline of each book for your folder
So, at the end of the season, you will have an overview of every book in the OT to keep as a reference

We are not going to have a lot of time for discussion, if we discuss each book, we will not get the material covered
So, I propose that every so often, certainly at major sections, we will spend some time with questions you may have
If you don't have a notebook, there is one in your folder. As we go along, I suggest you write down any questions or comments that come into your mind so you will have them to refer to for the discussion times rather than memory.

I hope to follow a very similar pattern each week covering the writer, the purpose, the content and perhaps some of the problems with each book so you will know what to expect.

Although I would not force anyone, if there is a particular book in the OT that some of you brethren have studied and would like to cover, I would be very open to that. I have templates covering books with 3,4,5 or 6 blank sections available for you if you wanted to consolidate your notes in the same simple way that you will see that I do.

Show the template:

We are not going to have time each week to read the book we are considering but as you will know each week which book we will be covering the next week, you will definitely get 100% more out of the study if you take time during the week to have a scan through the book to familiarize yourself with what is in the book. I would suggest at least read the first chapter as often it gives the setting for the book but if you have more time, perhaps take all your daily readings from the book we are going to study for it will greatly help.

If you are not a reader, and not everyone is, even reading the headings at the top of each page would be helpful to familiarize yourself with the content but ***if you are a fast reader, read the whole book!***

Read in Genesis as an example:

Alternatively, if you want to listen to a clear reading of the Bible on MP3: Click the QR Code that's in your folder and save the link.

Today, to start this is just an introduction, next week we will start proper with the book of Genesis, so that's your reading for this week. There are 39 weeks before the end of May - we will have a few weeks off for holidays etc. so I may group a couple of related books together some weeks – but then again if we don't get through every book and you want to spend more time discussing your questions, that's fine. Even if we don't get to the end of the OT, it might be a good incentive to come back again next year just to finish the OT before perhaps going on to the NT.

Select a folder, take out the label and write your name on it:

Are there any questions or comments before we start?

BIBLE CABINET

Let us have a look at our Bible cabinet:

This is a chart we will keep referring to in order to locate just what section of the OT we are in.

The cabinet contains the 66 books in the Bible divided into 2 main parts:

39 books in the Old Testament which relate to the old covenant

and 27 books in the New Testaments relating to the new covenant

Both of these parts of the Bible can further be divided into 4 main sections in each.

In the OT we have 4 sections: The Law, History, Poetry and the books of the prophets:

The books of the **Law** comprise the 5 books at the beginning of the Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy

The **History** books are the 12 books starting with Joshua and ending with the book of Esther

So that is 17 books in these sections

The **Poetry** books comprise the 5 books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon

There are 17 books of the **Prophets** divided into 5 major and 12 minor prophets

Note how the numbers 12 and 5 occur in these sections:

Show the numbers slide in powerpoint:

It is a very interesting study looking at how numbers are used in the Bible. They are used consistently to convey certain truths: Significant ones are 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 40 and 70.

The meaning of the number 12 in the Bible is that it symbolizes God's power and authority seen in perfect government. It is found in the completeness of the nation of Israel as a whole representing God's authority.

The number 12 is often found where God passes his authority to rule on his behalf!

The meaning of the number 5 in the Bible symbolizes God's grace, goodness and favour.

The number 5 is often found when God's grace is being promoted or relied upon!

The use of the number 12 represents God's perfect way of governing.

The use of the number 5 represents God's grace, goodness and favour.

Show the Bible cabinet in powerpoint:

In the NT we also have 4 sections: The Gospels, History, Letters and Prophecy

The **Gospels** are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

The **History** book in the NT is the book of Acts

There are 21 **letters** written in the NT

There is 1 book of **Prophecy**, Revelation

This is a basic overview of the whole Bible:

The OT is dealing with BC (before Christ came) the NT with AD (after he came)

The OT deals with the old covenant:

Made by God with men like Abraham, Moses, David etc. relating mainly to the promised land with Israel ruling.

The NT deals with the new covenant:

Made by Christ through his work on the cross, providing salvation and redemption for all men, Jew or Gentile

TIMELINE

Let us have a look at our OT timeline:

This is a chart we will keep referring to in order to locate just where we are timewise in the OT

You can see it ends with the birth of Christ and goes back in time to Genesis in the year 4004 BC

I am taking this from calculations made in 1658 by Archbishop Ussher – a very learned believer

Ussher based most of his calculation on Scripture, adding up the genealogies listed in the Bible ending in 4004 BC

He published his calculations in a book called 'The Annals of the World'

Let's read Genesis 1:9-10

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. ¹⁰ And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas:

It is gathered from this that the original Earth was one land mass called '**Pangaea**' meaning '**all of the world**'

The name **Pangaea** was coined in 1915 by Alfred Wegener, a German meteorologist and geophysicist. He used the term in his book *The Origin of Continents and Oceans*, where he first proposed the theory of continental drift. (They call it continental drift – supposedly taking place slowly over 100-200 million years – but it is more likely that the earth was divided at the flood or shortly after in the days of Peleg (**Gen 10v25**) This could be the nations being divided by language or that God separated them out into the nations and continents we know today.

There are roughly 4000 years of history covered in the OT

You can see where the different sections of the OT fit into this timescale

- The Law section covers 2500 years from creation to the death of Moses
- The History section stretches another 1000 years with a short period before the NT
- The Poetry and the Prophets fit within the 1000-year history section
- The Prophets don't begin properly until after Samuel who was the 1st Prophet and the last Judge (Samuel started the school of the prophets as well as anointing the first 2 Kings of Israel)
- The last Prophet and the final book of the OT is Malachi – written some 400 years before the birth of Christ

So, the whole OT covers about 4000 years of history.

Languages

[Show the original language slide:](#)

We have to consider what language the OT was originally written in and why copies and translations were made.

I am going to ignore the sections which are written in Aramaic but be aware that there are some:

A total of 268 verses in the Old Testament were originally written in Aramaic.

Aramaic is a sister language to Hebrew and uses the same alphabet however if you knew Hebrew you didn't necessarily know Aramaic and vice versa. Our Lord spoke Aramaic and the Hebrew speaking Jews misunderstood him Daniel 2v4–7v28 and Ezra 4v8–6v18 and Ezra 7v12–26, plus a single verse in Jeremiah 10v11 and a single place name in Genesis 31v47 (which is one of the reasons Moses authorship of Genesis is questioned by learned, liberal scholars)

Originally the OT was written in Hebrew using script characters and this is called Paleo-Hebrew

This was used for 1000 years but eventually was changed into Block-Hebrew characters: [Show the character slide](#)

The key reasons for the change in the characters are: [Show the key reasons slide](#)

1. The Babylonian Exile (6th Century BC):

When the Jews were exiled to Babylon, they encountered these Block characters used in Aramaic, which has the same character set as Hebrew. This was the dominant language of commerce, government, and daily life.

2. Efficiency:

The Block script was honed by Mesopotamian administrators to be clean, compact, and standardized, allowing more information to fit neatly onto parchment.

3. Practicality in Writing:

Unlike Paleo-Hebrew, which was rugged and angled, the block script worked exceptionally well with reed pens on soft parchment or papyrus.

[Show example of the texts and use Google translate!](#)

[Show the important translations slide:](#)

Ezra the scribe is credited with translating the Paleo-Hebrew text into Block-Hebrew text after the return from exile. Ezra is one of the most important and influential characters in the OT along with Samuel as we shall discover when we come to their writings.

The first section we will look at next week is the Law – starting with the book of Genesis.

[Questions and comments.](#)