

Christ in the Old Testament

Summer - Fall 2020

Prepared by Dan Hager

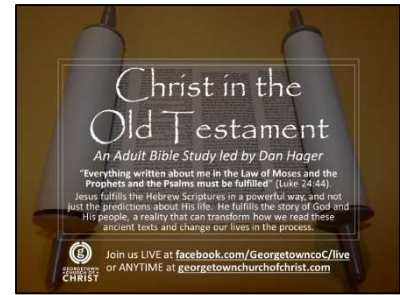
Class Objective: Build students' faith in Jesus by revealing Christ's supreme role in the Bible's overall story. Equip students to study the Old Testament in ways that are productive, enjoyable, and fruitful.

The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms

Key New Testament Passage: **Luke 24:13-49**

Focus Statement: Jesus fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures in a powerful way. As we start to understand these ancient texts, we will start to understand Jesus better.

Function Statement: Introduce the structure of the Old Testament and demonstrate how it relates to Jesus.



- In a few words, how would you personally describe the Old Testament?

When we talk about the Old Testament, we're talking about those **39 books** from **Genesis to Malachi**. It was primarily written in **Hebrew**, though portions of **Daniel** and **Ezra** were in **Aramaic**. In our **English Bibles**, we organize the Old Testament into the following categories:

The Old Testament in English			
Law	History		Poetry
Genesis	Joshua	II Kings	Job
Exodus	Judges	I Chronicles	Psalms
Leviticus	Ruth	II Chronicles	Proverbs
Numbers	I Samuel	Ezra	Ecclesiastes
Deuteronomy	II Samuel	Nehemiah	Song of Solomon
	I Kings	Esther	
Major Prophets		Minor Prophets	
Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum	• 39 books in English • Composed over 1,000+ years • Primarily written in Hebrew
Jeremiah	Joel	Habakkuk	
Lamentations	Amos	Zephaniah	
Ezekiel	Obadiah	Haggai	
Daniel	Jonah	Zechariah	
	Micah	Malachi	

- **Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
Moses wrote this. It starts as **narrative**, telling the story from **creation** to the **exodus of the people of Israel from Egyptian slavery**. It then includes **over 600 laws** and even some **census information**, with additional **narrative** and **songs** throughout.
- **History:** Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
As we have them organized, these narratives essentially tell the story of **Israel from settling the Promised Land to returning from exile in chronological order**. (Except for I & II Chronicles, which retells a David and Judah-specific version of I Samuel – II Kings from the perspective of **after the exile**.) Many of these **authors never specifically identify themselves**, except for parts of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** written in the **first person**.
- **Poetry:** Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon
These books are distinguished by their **form**, relying on **rhythm and rhyme** or on the application of **wisdom** to life. Much of this seems to have originated at the time of **David and Solomon's reigns**, though some is much earlier and later.

While we tend associate “**prophet**” with predicting the future, it more specifically refers to being **God’s spokesperson**. That may include foretelling future events, but it was primarily about **communicating God’s judgment by applying His law to current events**.

- **Major Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel
These encompass God’s messages to **Judah** from **700-500 B.C.**, before (**Isaiah**), during

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(Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel), and after (Daniel) their fall to Babylon. "Major" = longer, except for Lamentations, which tradition attributed to Jeremiah.

- **Minor Prophets:** Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

These encompass God's messages to both Israel (Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum) and Judah (Obadiah, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) roughly following chronological order, spanning 800 to 400 B.C. "Minor" = shorter.

The Old Testament was written over an 800-1,000 year period, from Moses and the exodus around 1400/1200 B.C. to over a century after the Babylonian exile ended around 400 B.C. We think of our founding documents like the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution as being old, and they aren't even 250 years old yet. In Jesus' day, the latest Old Testament writings were already twice as old as our founding documents are now! Even during Bible times, the Old Testament writings were ancient!

- Who likes reading really old books, and why? Who doesn't, and why not?

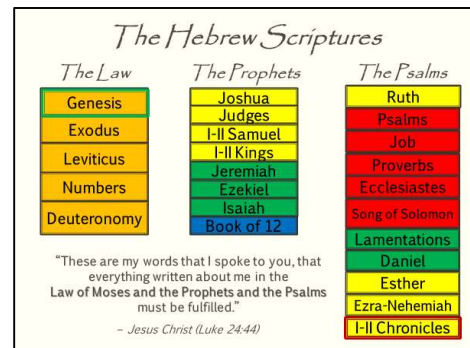
Depending on our inclination, it can mean we either love reading the Old Testament or we wonder if we really have to. After all, it takes nearly 57 hours for the average reader to read the Old Testament: that's a commitment! Do we want to spend that much time on something that Jesus isn't in? On the other hand, is it okay to just skip over nearly 80% of the Bible?

Let's look to Jesus for some direction. Read Luke 24:13-49.

- How did Jesus help His followers understand His death, burial, and resurrection?

In Jesus' day, the 39 books we refer to as "the Old Testament" were organized differently as "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms". This included:

- **Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- **Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, "The Book of Twelve" (Hosea – Malachi)
- **Psalms:** Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles



We see Jesus refer to the Hebrew Scriptures like this in different ways. Read Matthew 23:34-35.

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- **Where do we read the story of Abel's murder?**
Genesis 4.

- **Where do we read the story of Zechariah's murder?**
Read II Chronicles 24:20-22.

- **What were the first and last books of the "Law, Prophets, and Psalms"?**

When Jesus gives the examples of **Abel** and **Zechariah**, He is literally covering the **Hebrew Scriptures** from **beginning to end** in showing how the people **rejected God's messengers!** In fact, whenever we frequently (and famously) hear Jesus say, "**Law and Prophets**", we might think "**Old Testament**" or "**Hebrew Scriptures**" in our terms.

- **Matthew 5:17:** "Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."
- **Matthew 7:12:** "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the **Prophets.**"
- **Matthew 11:12-14:** "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For **all the Prophets and the Law** prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come."
- **Matthew 22:37-40:** "And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend **all the Law and the Prophets.**"

Now let's go back to what **Jesus said to His disciples** in **Luke 24:13-49**.

- **What did the risen Jesus say these "Law, Prophets, and Psalms" were about?**

There are **things written about Jesus** in the whole Old Testament, if our **minds are open** to it.

- **Think back to our Old Testament descriptions: did we mention Jesus?**

According to Jesus, we should! I worry when we **teach, preach, Bible bowl, or annually read the Old Testament** but **don't come back to Jesus**.

In fact, when the **apostles and evangelists preached Jesus in Acts**, the **only Scripture** they had to **preach from** was our **Old Testament!**

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- When **Peter** preached in **Acts 2**, he directly quoted **the Prophets with Joel 2** and **the Psalms with Psalm 16 and 110**. When he preached in **Acts 3**, he quoted **the Law with Deuteronomy 18** and **Genesis 22**. Law. Prophets. Psalms.
- When **Philip** preached to the **Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40**, he **started from Isaiah 53** and **"told him the good news about Jesus"**.
- When **Paul** preached to the **synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13:16-41**, he referenced **the story of Israel** from the **Law** and quoted from **Psalm 89:20, I Samuel 13:14, Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3, Psalm 16:10, and Habakkuk 1:5**.

Consider the example of **Apollos**. Read **Acts 17:24-28**.

- What does it mean that **Apollos** was **"competent in the Scriptures"**?
- What else had he been taught? What else did he need to understand?

Once you knew the complete story of Jesus, you had everything you needed in the Old Testament to preach the gospel without anything else written! Read **II Timothy 3:14-17**.

- What were the **"sacred writings"** Timothy knew since childhood?

When you add the testimony of Jesus to the Hebrew Scriptures, you **believe**. So, they are **worth our time** to get to know; but, there's a right way to go about it on this side of the cross.

- If we approach them like **law**, it won't be helpful: it would be like an **American citizen** reading **Canada's law**. It isn't the law that you are under!
- If we approach them like **history**, it will be interesting for **some of us**, but it will **leave out others**. We might learn **people, places, events**, but we might have a **hard time applying it**.
- Yet, if we approach them just as **moralistic stories**, we'll have a **tough time**. The **good guys** did some **really sketchy things**. Does the fact that **Abraham** and **Rahab lied** or **David** had **multiple wives** make those things **"okay"**?

Yet, if we **position the Hebrew Scriptures** where **Jesus** put them, **we will see the story**. N.T. Wright proposes this outline to present the story of the Bible as a five-act play in his book *Scripture and the Authority of God* (Wright 121).

- Act 1: The Creation (Genesis 1-2)
- Act 2: The Fall (Genesis 3)

N. T. Wright's "Five-Act Model"

Act 1: Creation (Genesis 1-2)

Act 2: Fall (Genesis 3)

Act 3: Israel (Genesis 4 – Malachi)

Act 4: Jesus (Matthew – John)

Act 5: The Church (Acts – Revelation)

"[W]e are currently living in the fifth act, the time of the church...We must act in the appropriate manner for *this* moment in the story...We must be ferociously loyal to what has gone before and cheerfully open about what comes next" (Wright 123).

Source: Wright, N.T. *Scripture and the Authority of God*

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- Act 3: Israel (Genesis 4 – Malachi)
- Act 4: Jesus (Matthew – John)
- Act 5: The Church (Acts – Revelation)

Approached this way, we can see the New Testament **not as a replacement** for the Old Testament but **a culmination of it:** exactly like Jesus said it would be. We read the Old Testament not to be **told what to do** but to **understand how we got here.**

Wright says, "When we read Genesis 1-2, we read it as the first act in a play of which we live in the fifth. When we read Genesis 3-11, we read it as the second act in a play of which we live in the fifth. When we read the entire story of Israel from Abraham to the Messiah (as Paul sketches it in Galatians 3 or Romans 4), we read it as the third act. When we read the story of Jesus, we are confronted with the decisive and climactic fourth act, which is not where we ourselves live – we are not following Jesus around Palestine, watching him heal, preach, and feast with the outcasts, and puzzling over his plans for a final trip to Jerusalem – but which, of course, remains the foundation upon which our present (fifth) act is based. Indeed, telling the story of Jesus as the climax of the story of Israel and the focal point of the story of the creator's redemptive drama with his world is itself a major task of the fifth act, which is why both the oral tradition of storytelling about Jesus and the eventual writing of the canonical gospels in precisely that narrative mode was, and remains, one of the great founding moments of this act.

"To live in the fifth act is thus to presuppose all of the above, and to be conscious of living as people through whom the narrative in question is now moving toward its final destination...This means...that our relationship to the New Testament is not the same as our relationship to the Old, and that we can say this with no diminution of our commitment to the Old Testament as a crucial and non-negotiable part of "holy scripture." The New Testament is the foundation charter of the fifth act...

"We who call ourselves Christians must be totally committed to telling the story of Jesus both as the climax of Israel's story and as the foundation of our own. We recognize ourselves as the direct successors of the churches of Corinth, Ephesus, and the rest, and we need to pay attention to what was said to them as though it was said to us. We cannot relativize the epistles by pointing out the length of time that has passed between them and us, or by suggesting any intervening seismic cultural shifts which would render them irrelevant or even misleading. It is an essential part of authentic Christian discipleship both to see the New Testament as the foundation for the ongoing (and still open-ended) fifth act and to recognize that it cannot be supplanted or supplemented. The fifth act goes on, but its first scene is non-negotiable, and remains the standard by which the various improvisations of subsequent scenes are to be judged. This is what it means for the church to live under the authority of scripture..." (Wright 124-126).

- **In a few words, how would you personally describe the Old Testament?**