

# KNOWING GOD THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

Every person who truly wants to know God must read the Old Testament. Its 39 books introduce the reader to a world of fascinating people, amazing history, lofty poetry, and profound prophecy. The center of it all is not a system of laws and ideals but an infinite, personal God—a God we can know.

This booklet has been written to help you know this God as He has made Himself known through the Old Testament. We encourage you to read this publication, written by David Egner, with your Bible open and pencil in hand. Our prayer is that as you work through these pages your knowledge of God will grow and flourish like a young tree planted beside a sparkling brook.

*Martin R. De Haan II*

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# DISCOVERING THE OLD TESTAMENT

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The Old Testament story begins before time began. It begins:

- before there was man.
- before there were animals, trees, or flowers.
- before there were planets and stars.
- before there was water and air.
- before there was sound.
- before there was light.

It begins with God.

The Old Testament story emerges like a tiny shaft of light way off in the distance, races toward us through the darkness, and bursts over us in a crescendo of light, color, and sound. It fills our minds, our emotions and our spirits with the majesty and presence of Almighty God Himself.

It's a marvelous story as it unfolds. It's Adam's story. It's Noah's story. It's Israel's story. It's our story. But most of all, it's God's story. It's the opening of His book, the explanation of His character, and the record of His mighty deeds among men from the beginning of time.

The Old Testament is a book of great spiritual and personal value. This is because:

- it tells us about God.
- it answers questions about how life began.
- it tells how evil came into our world.
- it prophesies of the Messiah-Redeemer.
- it inspires us to holy living.
- it fills our hearts with gratitude and praise.

Even so, the Old Testament has been undiscovered

ered by many people. To them its wealth lies hidden, like a vast vein of gold under someone's backyard.

Except for a few familiar passages cherished by millions—Genesis 1, Psalm 23, Isaiah 53—it remains a closed book even to many Christians. Comments like these may be heard:

*“The Old Testament is not relevant to today’s world. Its ideas are old-fashioned and its language is obscure. Who needs to know about old Jewish kings and outdated laws? We need a book for today.”*

*“The Old Testament is filled with things that sound more like myths and legends than realities—serpents that talk and fish that swallow people whole. I’d rather read about things that can be proven scientifically.”*

*“I’ve tried to read the Old Testament but I find it boring. My mind wanders and I just can’t get interested. It’s pretty dull reading.”*

*“Frankly, the Old Testament scares me. It’s too big. Besides, there’s so much killing and war. And God seems so mean. The New Testament is more full of love.”*

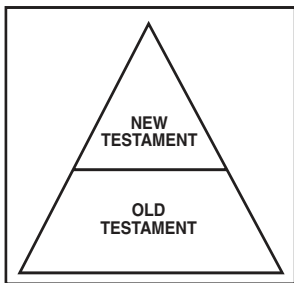
Admittedly, to a new reader the Old Testament does seem overwhelming. It does have sections that are hard to read. And it does contain violence. But once a person grasps some basic facts about it, the Old Testament is not nearly as imposing or old-fashioned as it may seem. It’s exciting. It’s dramatic. It’s realistic. It tells us things we need to know about ourselves and our world. And most of all, the Old Testament tells us about God!

# THE RICHES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Once you discover the Old Testament and begin to read and study it, you will find that it is filled with great riches. Here are some of the reasons it is a treasure-house of wealth to its reader.

**1. The Old Testament Provides The Foundation For The Whole Bible.** The Bible is made up of two Testaments—Old and New. Both are equally part of the Bible. Both tell us about God. Both inform us about basic truths we need to know. But without a grasp of the Old Testament, the New Testament cannot be fully understood or appreciated; without the New, the Old is left incomplete. The Old Testament establishes the foundation of truth, the New Testament then builds the superstructure.



**2. The Old Testament Tells Us About Jesus Christ.** We cannot fully know about Christ and His purpose for coming into our world without studying the Old Testament. It tells us about Him in word pictures and types. It predicts His coming. It puts His ministry into focus. It gives graphic previews of His sacrifice for sin. It goes beyond today to tell us of His judgment of the world and His coming kingdom of peace. In fact, the Old Testament tells us so much about Jesus that some Bible teachers have said Christ can be seen on every page.

**3. The Old Testament Provides The Foundation For Faith In Christ.** The Christian faith is built on the Old Testament, Erich Sauer, in his book *The Dawn Of World Redemption*, said this:

The Old Testament is promise and expectation, the New is fulfillment and completion. The Old is the marshaling of the hosts to the battle of God, the New is the triumph of the crucified One. The Old is the dawn of morning, the New is the rising sun and the light of eternal day.

If Christianity, the “religion of Christ,” may be likened to a magnificent cathedral, the Old Testament is its unshakable foundation.

**4. The Old Testament Helps Us To Know God.** More than anything, the Old Testament tells us about God. It makes Him known in these ways:

- ***Factual Knowledge.*** To know God, we must first know about Him. The Old Testament reveals His character in its record of His mighty deeds.
- ***Personal Knowledge.*** The Old Testament brings us past the information stage and brings us to the place where we can know God personally through the experiences and relationships of others who walked with Him.
- ***Practical Knowledge.*** Building on a personal knowledge of God, the Old Testament also tells us how to live. It reveals His will and spells out the kind of person He wants us to be. By obeying its commands, thinking as it tells us to think, and accepting the Savior it presents, we can know how to live in our complex world.

# KNOWING GOD THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

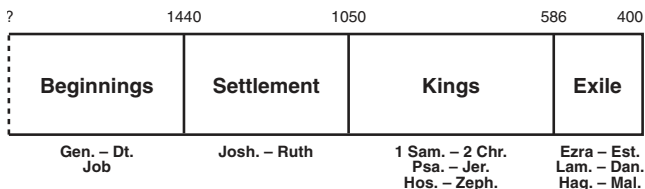
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The story of the Old Testament begins at creation and ends about 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Its primary setting is Palestine, but its events take place in a variety of locations—the palaces of Egypt and Babylon, the deserts of Sinai and Arabia the mountains of Ararat, Nebo, and Carmel. Although its primary emphasis is on the Jews, its story involves many peoples of the world: Egyptians, Hittites, Babylonians, Canaanites, Syrians, and a host of smaller groups. It tells of migration, military campaigns, political intrigue, and romance. It has heroes and villains; servant girls and queens; prophets and poets; judges, priests, and kings.

The Old Testament was written over a period of 1000 years (1400–400 BC) by about 30 different authors. Its historical record extends from creation to the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon. It is made up of 39 books, which may be divided into three major sections: history, poetry, and prophecy. The following chart shows you how the numbers 12 and 5 will help you remember the main segments of the Old Testament:

HISTORY		POETRY	PROPHECY	
5	12	5	5	12
Pentateuch	History	Poetry	Major Prophets	Minor Prophets
Gen. – Dt.	Josh. – Est.	Job – Song	Isa. – Dan.	Hos. – Mal.
Story		Reflection	Preaching And Prediction	

In this booklet we would like to open the door of the Old Testament to you. We will do so by simply walking through the pages of its history. We will use the four major stages indicated in the diagram below. As we do, we will stop along the way to see how the 39 books of



the Old Testament fit into this historical pattern. We will also pause to consider two vital factors that relate to us today. First, we will see how God is made known through the four phases of Old Testament history by looking at representative incidents from each phase. As we see how God worked directly in the lives of the people in a supernatural and life changing way, we will learn more about His nature and character.

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**“The Old Testament is mainly history, but it is *sacred* history. That is, it reveals especially how God works in and through the lives of people and the courses of nations.”** —Irving L. Jensen

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Second, we will show you how you can see yourself in the Old Testament. God has not changed, and neither has man. Therefore, what happened in Old Testament days is representative of what happens with us today as well. In that sense, the Old Testament is neither old-

fashioned nor outmoded. Rather, it is a book with a great deal to say about God to contemporary man.

In today's world of stunning scientific advances and tense world conditions, we need to know all we can about God as He is made known in the Old Testament. We need to know a God who is bigger than our world and more powerful than any ruler in it, a God who keeps His Word, a God who rescues the lost, a God who meets the deepest needs of the mankind He brought into existence.

## 1. BEGINNINGS (?–1440 BC)

?	1440	1050	586	400
<b>Beginnings</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Kings</b>	<b>Exile</b>	
Gen. – Dt. Job	Josh. – Ruth	1 Sam. – 2 Chr. Psa. – Jer. Hos. – Zeph.	Ezra – Est. Lam. – Dan. Hag. – Mal.	

The Bible opens with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>1</sup> The first two chapters of Genesis tell how God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh.

The crown of creation is man. Adam, the first man, was placed in a garden paradise called Eden, where he was to care for the garden.<sup>2</sup> The animals were created in pairs, but Adam was alone.<sup>3</sup> So God made him a woman<sup>4</sup> and told them to have children and to populate the earth.<sup>5</sup>

The Garden of Eden was theirs to enjoy—with one exception. They were told not to eat of one tree called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”<sup>6</sup> But Eve gave in to the temptation of Satan, God’s adversary, and ate of the forbidden fruit.<sup>7</sup> So did Adam, and they

fell. They were driven from the garden:<sup>8</sup> Eve to have sorrow and pain in childbirth,<sup>9</sup> Adam to a life of hard toil to produce food from the earth.<sup>10</sup>

Sin had entered the race and would be part of all mankind.<sup>11</sup> Yet God promised salvation through the seed of woman<sup>12</sup> and pictured that salvation through the provision of coats of skins.<sup>13</sup>

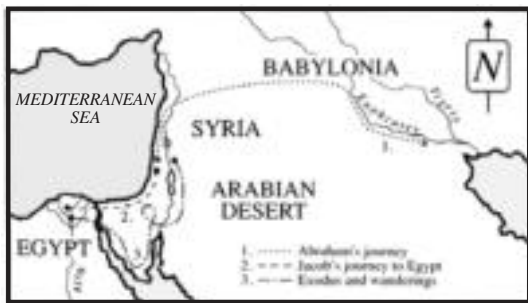
So man began to live outside the garden. The tragedy of the fall was demonstrated early when one of Adam and Eve's sons, Cain, killed his brother Abel.<sup>14</sup> As the race increased in number, it became more and more wicked.<sup>15</sup> Finally, God destroyed it in a great flood.<sup>16</sup> Only Noah found grace in God's eyes,<sup>17</sup> and through the building of an ark he and his family were spared.<sup>18</sup>

From those eight people, the race again multiplied.<sup>19</sup> At Babel, man sought to defy God by building a tower to heaven, but God scattered them and gave them different languages.<sup>20</sup>

Genesis 12 marks a change in God's dealings with mankind. The Lord singled out one man, Abram, who lived in the city of Ur in Chaldea, and designated him and his offspring as His special people.<sup>21</sup> God would make Himself known through them.<sup>22</sup> Abram's name was changed to Abraham,<sup>23</sup> and he was instructed to journey to a land God would later reveal to him. That land was Palestine, and God gave it to Abraham and his children forever.<sup>24</sup>

Abraham and his descendants—Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—lived as nomads, much as the bedouins of today. Their homes were tents. They raised cattle and sheep. The sense of family was strong, with the oldest living male member serving as patriarchal leader and family priest.

For a long time it seemed that Abraham would die without a son—in spite of God’s promise. But in their old age, Abraham and Sarah miraculously had a son—Isaac.<sup>25</sup> Isaac’s son Jacob continued the family with 12 sons, men who became the heads of the tribes of Israel. The family stayed in Palestine until a famine drove them to Egypt. One of the 12 sons, Joseph, had risen to prominence in Egypt, and he became their protector and benefactor.<sup>26</sup>



**Migrations Of The Pentateuch**

The family stayed in Egypt 430 years and multiplied rapidly. Gradually, however, they became enslaved. The future of the family, now a sizable nation, was threatened by a royal order for all male children to be killed.<sup>27</sup> God called a man named Moses, who had been raised in Pharaoh’s court, to lead Israel to freedom.<sup>28</sup> After a bitter contest with Pharaoh, they marched across the Red Sea (which God parted miraculously) and into the wilderness, heading for Canaan, the Land of Promise.<sup>29</sup>

On the journey, Moses received the Law of God on Mount Sinai,<sup>30</sup> as well as instructions for building a tent of worship.<sup>31</sup> They arrived at the edge of Canaan and

sent in spies.<sup>32</sup> But the courage they had when they confronted Pharaoh left them, and the people refused to undertake the conquest of the Promised Land.<sup>33</sup> Because of their unbelief, God sentenced them to wander 40 years in the desert wilderness until the entire generation had died.<sup>34</sup>

As the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) conclude, Israel is assembled on the banks of the Jordan River. Moses, their great leader, is dead; but a new leader, Joshua, is ready to lead the march into Canaan.<sup>35</sup>

**Seeing God.** Now that we have reviewed the history recorded in the Pentateuch, let's go back for another look. Remember, our goal is not merely to know the story of the Bible but to know the God behind the story—and to see ourselves in relationship with Him. The first five books are packed with information that helps us know God, so let's look at one representative incident: the story of Noah in Genesis 6–8. As you read the account of Noah's rescue from the flood, you will see these truths about God:

- He is a God to be feared.
- He is able to create and to destroy.
- He is patient with sinners, but His patience has limits.
- He is not just loving and kind; He is also a God of righteousness, justice, and anger.
- He is concerned about what is happening in His world.
- He has complete control over His creation.
- He has the power to interrupt history.
- He is the God of new beginnings.
- He rescues those who trust in Him.
- He makes and keeps promises.

*For Further Thought.* Look up the following passages from the Old Testament. Using the example we just gave as a pattern, ask yourself what the following incidents reveal about God.

- The coats of skin for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21)
- The tower of Babel (Gen. 11)
- The call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-7)
- The offering of Isaac (Gen. 22)
- The parting of the Red Sea (Ex. 14)
- The provision of manna (Ex. 16)
- The giving of the Law (Ex. 20)
- The serpent of bronze (Num. 21)
- The abundance of Job's restoration (Job 42)

**Seeing Ourselves.** In the early chapters of Genesis we are told of Adam and Eve's decision to disobey God. In that act we see our own willfulness and our readiness to break His commandments. Here are several other ways we may see ourselves in the first five books of the Old Testament and Job:

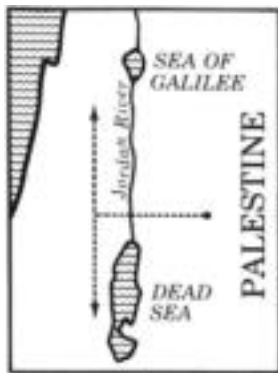
- In Cain's jealousy, we see our own sense of competition (Gen. 4:5).
- In Noah's need for an ark of salvation, we see our own need of rescue from God's judgment (Gen. 6-8).
- In Abraham's faith in following God, we see our own potential for belief (Gen. 12).
- In Jacob's scheming, we see our own inclination to trust in ourselves (Gen. 25,27).
- In Joseph's kindness to his brothers, we see our own responsibility to forgive (Gen. 42-45).
- In Israel's unwillingness to enter Canaan, we see our own weakness of faith (Ex. 14).
- In Job's response to suffering, we see our own feelings when things turn against us (Job 3).

## 2. SETTLEMENT (1440–1050 BC)

?	1440	1050	586	400
<b>Beginnings</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Kings</b>		<b>Exile</b>
Gen. – Dt. Job	Josh. – Ruth	1 Sam. – 2 Chr. Psa. – Jer. Hos. – Zeph.		Ezra – Est. Lam. – Dan. Hag. – Mal.

When the section of “Beginnings” ended, Israel was positioned on the bank of the Jordan River, ready to invade Palestine. Israel’s leader, Moses, was dead; but God had raised up Joshua, a new leader, to take the people into Canaan.<sup>1</sup> Their first obstacle was the Jordan River.<sup>2</sup> Walking behind the Ark of the Covenant, the entire nation moved forward. When the feet of the priests carrying the Ark touched the river, the waters “piled up” and the people crossed into the land promised to Abraham.<sup>3</sup>

Directly in their path was Jericho, a walled and fortified city. By a miracle, the walls fell flat and the city was conquered.<sup>4</sup> After a brief delay at Ai because of Achan’s sin, the armies marched into Canaan.<sup>5</sup> In a brilliant military campaign, they conquered most



of the Promised Land.<sup>6</sup> The tribes settled in the regions allotted them by God, and tribal leaders ruled the people. Conquered cities became tribal strongholds and the people became craftsmen, farmers, and shepherds

After Joshua died, the tribes became more and more independent. There was little central government. Judges arose to give regional leadership—men like Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson<sup>7</sup>—but conditions generally deteriorated until Israel was in a state of anarchy. We are told that “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”<sup>8</sup>

A beautiful little love story is told about Ruth, a Moabitess widow of an Israelite, who was rescued from poverty by Boaz.<sup>9</sup> Because he was a relative through her mother-in-law Naomi, he could marry her and thus buy back her husband’s land for her inheritance.

As the 10th century opened, the tribes of Israel were threatened by the Philistines. Samson held them back for a while, but after his death the danger increased. The need for the tribes to combine their strength became evident.

**Seeing God.** As we look back on the period of Israel’s settlement, we can see God in a way that will help us know Him better. For an example, read the account of Israel’s crossing of the Jordan River (Josh. 3–4) and observe these truths about God:

- He keeps His promises.
- He gives His people directions (3:8).
- He promises to be with those who move forward with Him (3:7).
- He supports His appointed leaders (3:7).
- He has the power to turn formidable obstacles into safe pathways (3:15).
- He makes His presence known (3:15-16).
- He has the power to control nature (3:15-16).
- He wants His mighty works remembered and recounted to our children (4:1-7).
- He wants nations to know of His might (4:21-24).

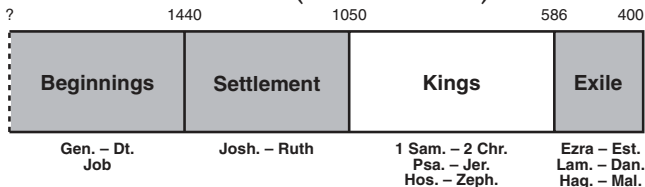
*For Further Thought.* Using the approach we used above, read these incidents from Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, and ask yourself what those passages tell us about God:

- The fall of Jericho (Josh. 6)
- The sin and punishment of Achan (Josh. 7)
- The sun standing still (Josh. 10)
- The victory of Gideon's 300 (Jud. 7)
- The last days of Samson (Jud. 16:21-31)
- Boaz' redemption of Ruth (Ruth 4)

**Seeing Ourselves.** The people of ancient days were very much like us. Consider, for example, the following:

- In the confirmation of Joshua's call, we see our own need for assurance (Josh. 1-2).
- In Achan's sin of coveting wealth, we see our own greed (Josh. 7).
- In Gideon's fleece, we see our own desire for a visible communication from God (Jud. 6).
- In Jephthah's vow, we see our own rash bargaining with God (Jud. 11).
- In Ruth's plight, we see our own need for a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 4).
- In Israel's constant relapses into sin, we trace our own spiritual experience.

### 3. KINGS (1050-586 BC)



At the end of the previous section, we saw that Israel was at a spiritual low, in a state of anarchy, and in a

weak military condition. The Philistines had risen in power and were threatening to swallow up the Jews, one city at a time. A clamor went up for a king to unite Israel and organize it for battle.<sup>1</sup> So the prophet-judge Samuel anointed Saul as Israel's first king.<sup>2</sup>

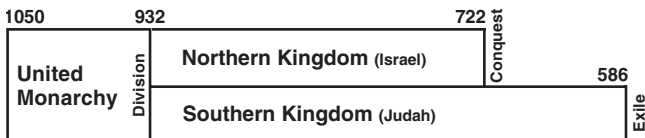
Saul's 40-year rule was turbulent and generally ineffective. He commanded people's respect because of his size,<sup>3</sup> but he was hardly qualified to rule a nation. He had in his kingdom, however, a young man of tremendous abilities named David. Even before David ascended the throne, he captured the hearts of the people by killing the Philistine giant Goliath and by brilliant military and personal exploits.<sup>4</sup> Gradually Saul lost his grip on himself and his kingdom, and when he died in battle<sup>5</sup> David became king.<sup>6</sup>

David quickly subdued the Philistines and began to annex surrounding nations. Israel grew in wealth, military power, and influence. David succeeded in uniting the north and south,<sup>7</sup> captured Jerusalem and made it his capital,<sup>8</sup> and encouraged the worship of God throughout the land. He was Israel's greatest king.

One privilege was denied him, though. God did not allow him to build the temple.<sup>9</sup> That was accomplished by Solomon, his son and heir to the throne.<sup>10</sup> Israel reached its zenith at the dedication of the magnificent temple he had built. Through Solomon, however, the nation began to deteriorate. He brought in wives and concubines from many lands, and they carried their false religions with them.<sup>11</sup> He lived luxuriously, wasting the nation's wealth.<sup>12</sup> He did not prepare for the future. So when he died, the north seceded under his servant Jeroboam, and formed an independent nation.<sup>13</sup> When Solomon died, the people came to Rehoboam, the crown prince, with the plea:

*Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you (1 Ki. 12:4).*

But Rehoboam refused, and the nation divided.<sup>14</sup> The Northern Kingdom, whose first king was Jeroboam, went its own way. Its rulers and many of its people



### The Days Of The Kings

served the pagan gods of the land. There were some good kings in Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Interestingly, the two nations later formed a political alliance to combat Syria and later Assyria.<sup>15</sup> There was royal intermarriage, and wicked people ruled both lands: in Israel, the house of Omri;<sup>16</sup> in Judah, the wicked Athaliah.<sup>17</sup> The time of the kings was also the time of the prophets. These men fulfilled a twofold purpose:

- *Forthtelling*—They pointed out the sin in the land and called for repentance.
- *Foretelling*—They looked beyond the days of Israel's failure to the coming of her Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom.

In the days that followed, God raised up a number of prophets to proclaim His truths and call the nation to return to them. Some of these men spoke to Israel, some spoke to Judah, and others spoke to foreign powers.

The day of God's judgment finally came. The two nations decayed from within, and each was defeated

by a powerful outside force. The Northern Kingdom fell to the cruel Assyrians in 722 BC.<sup>18</sup> Its people were forced to intermarry with other captives, and it soon lost its ethnic, political, and religious identity.

The Southern Kingdom lasted another 150 years, with flashes of glory such as during the reign of Azariah<sup>19</sup> and Josiah.<sup>20</sup> It finally fell to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in 586 BC.<sup>21</sup>

**Seeing God.** As we look at the period of Israel's kings, we see God at work in ways that help us know Him better. An example is the anointing of David as king and his activities before he ascended the throne (1 Sam. 16-31). We learn that:

- God sometimes uses intermediaries to call people to special places of service (16:1-13).
- God's choices are not always based on appearances (16:7).
- God is able to make the last become first (16:11).
- God uses His anointed to topple those who are mighty in man's eyes (ch. 17).
- God values life over ritual (ch. 21).
- God gives us the grace to be merciful to our enemies (chs. 24, 26).
- God sometimes uses the bad to accomplish His purposes (ch. 31).

*For Further Thought.* Using the approach just followed, see how God is made known in these incidents from the times of the kings:

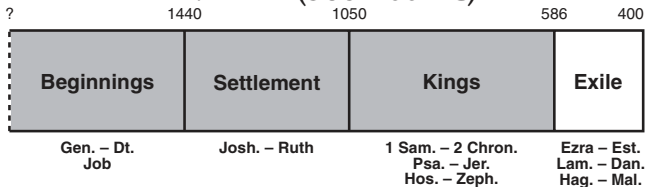
- His gift of wisdom to Solomon (1 Ki. 4:29).
- His sending fire on Mount Carmel to consume Elijah's offering (1 Ki. 18).
- The hiding of the infant Joash (2 Ki. 11:1-2).
- The finding of the Book of the Law during Josiah's reign (2 Ki. 22-23).

- The prediction of the prophets that God would judge Israel (Ezek. 18:30), the nations (Isa. 2:4; Joel 3:12), and all mankind (Jer. 25:31).

**Seeing Ourselves.** The times of Israel's kings also show us ourselves. Observe how these incidents echo God's work in our own times.

- In Saul's jealous anger, we see our own envy of those who replace us (1 Sam. 18–19).
- In Hannah's earnest prayer for a son, we see our own desire for God's blessing (1 Sam. 1–2).
- In the words of Psalm 1, we see our own path to blessing.
- In Psalm 32, we hear our own cry for forgiveness.
- In Psalm 100, we find words for our own feelings of praise to the Lord.
- In Ecclesiastes, we find expression for our own struggle with a sense of futility (1:2).
- In Elijah's flight from Jezebel, we see our own faltering faith before a powerful foe (1 Ki. 19).
- In the healing of Hezekiah, we see our own need for the healing that God alone can give (2 Ki. 20).
- In Zedekiah's disregard of the prophets, we see our own refusal to heed God's Word (2 Chr. 36:11-14).

#### 4. EXILE (586–400 BC)



Happily, the story of the Old Testament does not end with Jerusalem in ruins and her people exiled in Baby-

lon. Rather, it concludes with the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the walls, and the restoration of the temple. It also tells of the spiritual rebirth of the people and their willingness to trust in the leading of God.

This portion, which we have labeled “Exile” on the graphic, actually covers two subjects: (1) the exile in Babylon, and (2) the return to Jerusalem. Two different nations ruled Judah in exile. Babylonia was crumbling and in 536 BC (50 years after the Jews were deported) the kingdom of Medo-Persia succeeded in conquering her. The new ruler, Cyrus, allowed the Hebrews to return to their land.<sup>1</sup> Under Zerubbabel, 42,360 Jews made the long journey back to Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> and immediately began work on the temple.<sup>3</sup>

Opposed in their project by the Samaritans, the people became discouraged.<sup>4</sup> Work on the temple ceased for about 10 years, and the people slid back into spiritual complacency. But the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, as well as the spiritual leadership of Ezra, caused them to take up the work again.<sup>5</sup> They completed the temple in 515 BC.<sup>6</sup>

About 50 years later, Nehemiah, still in Babylon, felt a great concern for the Jews of Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> As one of King Artaxerxes’ important servants, he was able to approach the monarch for permission to lead a procession back to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city.<sup>8</sup> Permission was granted and funding supplied.<sup>9</sup> In record time the walls were rebuilt.<sup>10</sup>

After 12 years,<sup>11</sup> Nehemiah returned to the court of Babylon.<sup>12</sup> In his absence, the people and priests took up their evil ways once again.<sup>13</sup> The prophet Malachi was raised up to point out their sins<sup>14</sup> and warn them about the judgment of God.<sup>15</sup>

**Seeing God.** Read about the decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1. And as you do, observe the following truths about God that can be seen:

- In Babylon's practice of letting a nation maintain its ethnic and religious identity, we see God at work protecting His people.
- In the captivity, we see God's ability to move a whole nation to accomplish His purposes.
- In the decree of Cyrus, we see His power to direct the thinking of a powerful ruler.
- In the provision of material to build, we see His power to supply.
- In the return of the Jews, we see God's commitment to His covenants and prophecies.
- In the return of Israel, we see His exaltation among the nations.

*For Further Thought.* Using the same line of thinking demonstrated above, consider how God is made known through these incidents from the days of Israel's exile and return:

- Daniel's high position in Nebuchadnezzar's court (Dan. 1)
- The protection of the three young Hebrew men in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3)
- The strategic placing of Esther in Xerxes' court (Est. 1)
- Messianic preaching by the prophets of the exile and return (Dan. 7, 10–12; Zech. 12–14)
- The plot and fall of Haman (Est. 7)
- The building of the wall (Neh. 6)

**Seeing Ourselves.** We can see ourselves in the era of exile and return in the following representative ways:

- In Israel's exile, we see our own sense of estrangement from God because of sin.

- In the Jews' return to faith, we see our own flight to God in times of chastisement.
- In the decrees of Cyrus and Darius, we recognize the hand of God directing our affairs.
- In Esther's courage, we see our own potential for stalwart deeds of faith (Est. 8).
- In the returned exiles' fear of opposition, we see our own trembling before God's foes (Ezra 4).
- In their stopping the building of the temple, we see our own lack of determination (Ezra 4).
- In Daniel's courage, we see our own potential to stand up for our convictions (Dan. 1,6).
- In Israel's hope of the Messiah, we see our own expectation of His return.

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## BEGINNINGS

1. Gen. 1:1; 2. Gen. 2:15; 3. Gen. 2:18; 4. Gen. 2:18-24; 5. Gen. 1:28; 6. Gen. 2:15-17; 7. Gen. 3:1-6; 8. Gen. 3:21-24; 9. Gen. 3:16; 10. Gen. 3:17-19; 11. Rom. 3:23; 12. Gen. 3:15; 13. Gen. 3:21; 14. Gen. 4:1-15; 15. Gen. 6:5-7; 16. Gen. 6-9; 17. Gen. 6:8; 18. Gen. 8:15-18; 19. Gen. 9:18-19; 20. Gen. 11:1-9; 21. Gen. 12:1-3; 22. Gen. 15,17; 23. Gen. 17:5; 24. Gen. 15:18-21; 25. Gen. 21; 26. Gen. 41:37-47:12; 27. Ex. 1:15-16; 28. Ex. 3; 29. Ex. 12:31-14:31; 30. Ex. 20; 31. Ex. 26; 32. Num. 13:1-25; 33. Num. 13:26-14:4; 34. Num. 14:26-38; 35. Josh. 1:1-2.

## **SETTLEMENT**

**1.** Josh. 1:1-9; **2.** Josh. 2:10-11; **3.** Josh. 3-4; **4.** Josh. 6; **5.** Josh. 7-8; **6.** Josh. 10-11; **7.** Jud. 3-16; **8.** Jud. 21:25; **9.** Ruth 4.

## **KINGS**

**1.** 1 Sam. 8:4-5; **2.** 1 Sam. 9:15-27; **3.** 1 Sam. 9:2; **4.** 1 Sam. 17,23; **5.** 1 Sam. 31; **6.** 2 Sam. 2; **7.** 2 Sam. 5; **8.** 2 Sam. 6; **9.** 1 Ki. 5:1-3; **10.** 2 Chr. 2-6; **11.** 1 Ki. 11:1-4; **12.** 2 Chr. 9:13-28; **13.** 2 Chr. 10; **14.** 1 Ki. 12:6-16; **15.** 2 Chr. 18; **16.** 1 Ki. 16:21; **17.** 2 Ki. 11; **18.** 2 Ki. 17; **19.** 2 Ki. 15:1-7; **20.** 2 Ki. 22-23; **21.** 2 Ki. 25.

## **EXILE**

**1.** Ezra 1; **2.** Ezra 2; **3.** Ezra 3:8; **4.** Ezra 4; **5.** Ezra 5:1-2; **6.** Ezra 6:13-18; **7.** Neh. 1; **8.** Neh. 2:1-5; **9.** Neh. 2:6-8; **10.** Neh. 6:15; **11.** Neh. 5:14; **12.** Neh. 13:6; **13.** Neh. 13:7-30; **14.** Mal. 1-2; **15.** Mal. 4

## BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Book	Theme	People	Places	Major Events
<b>PENTATEUCH</b>				
Genesis	Beginnings	Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph	Eden, Canaan	Creation, Fall, Flood
Exodus	Redemption	Moses, Pharaoh, Joshua	Egypt Egypt, Sinai, Wilderness	Call Of Abraham Contest With Pharaoh Wilderness Wanderings
Leviticus	Holiness	Moses, Priests	Sinai	Day Of Atonement
Numbers	Journey	Moses, Joshua, Caleb	Sinai, Wilderness	Census, Spies, Failure
Deuteronomy	Remembrance	Moses	Wilderness, Moab	Commands Given
<b>HISTORY</b>				
Joshua	Conquest	Joshua, Achan, Caleb	Jericho, Ai	Conquest Of Canaan
Judges	Anarchy	Gideon, Jephthah, Samson	Canaan	Conflict With Enemies
Ruth	Kinsman-Redeemer	Ruth, Naomi, Boaz	Moab, Bethlehem	Ruth Marries Boaz
1 Samuel	Israel's First King	Samuel, Saul, David, Jonathan	Canaan, Philistia	Saul Anointed, Goliath Slain
2 Samuel	Israel's Second King	David, Joab, Absalom	Hebron, Jerusalem	David's Sin, Absalom's Rebellion
1 Kings	Kingdom Divided	Solomon, Jeroboam, Elijah	Jerusalem, Samaria	Temple Dedicated, Kingdom Divided
2 Kings	Kingdoms Fall	Elisha, Jehu, Hezekiah	Israel, Judah	Invasions
1 Chronicles	David's Reign	David, Nathan	Judah	David's Rule
2 Chronicles	Collapse	Solomon, Ahab, Hezekiah	Judah	Decline, Exile
Ezra	Restoration	Cyrus, Ezra, Zerubbabel	Babylon, Jerusalem	Return, Temple Rebuilt
Nehemiah	Building	Nehemiah, Ezra	Jerusalem	Walls Rebuilt
Esther	God's Care	Esther, Mordecai, Xerxes	Babylon	Israel Rescued

<b>Book</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Places</b>	<b>Major Events</b>
<b>POETRY</b>				
Job	Suffering	Job, Job's Friends	Uz	Job Afflicted
Psalms	Songs	David, Asaph, Others	Jerusalem	Worship, Praise
Proverbs	Wise Walk	Solomon	Jerusalem	Wise Sayings
Ecclesiastes	Futility	Solomon	"Under The Sun"	Musings
Song Of Solomon	Love Song	Husband, Bride	Vineyard, Palace	Lover Returns
Isaiah	Judgment, Salvation	Isaiah, Hezekiah, Sennacherib	Judah, Jerusalem, All Nations	Prophecies Of Judgment And Hope
Jeremiah	Judgment	Jeremiah, Baruch	Judah	Conflict With Enemies
Lamentations	Mourning	Jeremiah	Jerusalem	Desolation Predicted
Ezekiel	God's Glory	Ezekiel	Babylon	Prophetic Statements
Daniel	God's Rule	Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar	Babylon	Lion's Den, Fiery Furnace
Hosea	God's Love	Hosea, Gomer	Israel	Gomer's Unfaithfulness
Joel	"Day Of The Lord"	Joel	Judah	Locust Plague
Amos	Judgments	Amos	Israel	Preaching Of Judgment
Obadiah	Edom Condemned	Obadiah	Edom, Petra	Destruction Of Edom
Jonah	Missionary Outreach	Jonah, King Of Nineveh	Nineveh	Jonah Flees, Nineveh's Revival
Micah	God's Pardon	Micah	Judah, Israel	Prophecies: Indictment, Judgment, And Hope
Nahum	Woe To Nineveh	Nahum	Nineveh	Nineveh's Fall Predicted
Habakkuk	Live By Faith	Habakkuk	Judah	Judah's Fall
Zephaniah	Desolation, Deliverance	Zephaniah	Judah, Israel	Judgment, Restoration
Haggai	Building Resumed	Haggai, Zerubbabel	Jerusalem	Temple Finished
Zechariah	God The King	Zechariah	Jerusalem	Messiah's Return Predicted
Malachi	Sin, Grace	Malachi ("My Messenger")	Jerusalem	Judgment, Christ's Return

## PROPHETRY

# THE NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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People in Old Testament times believed that the most intimate knowledge of a person comes through knowing his name. For that reason, a study of the names of God in the Old Testament is a good way to learn what He is like.

God made Himself known through many names. We will look at the three most common ones in the Old Testament: Elohim, Jehovah, and Adonai.

## Elohim

This name for God appears 2,570 times in the Old Testament and 35 times between Genesis 1:1 and 2:4. The name “Elohim” speaks of God’s mighty power and strength. We would expect it to appear often in the opening verses of Genesis because God’s power as Creator is depicted there.

The name “Elohim” tells us that there is no greater power than God in heaven or on earth. It also tells us of His self-sufficiency; that is, that His power comes exclusively from Himself and is not bestowed on Him by anyone else.

## Jehovah

This is God’s personal name. It is what He calls Himself (see Ex. 3:15). It is composed of a four-letter Hebrew construct roughly equivalent to our YHWH. The name “Jehovah” occurs 6,823 times in the Old Testament.

The ancient Hebrews regarded this name as being so sacred that they even refused to pronounce it, substituting the word “Adonai” whenever it appeared.

The Masoretes, the 8th-century AD Jewish scholars who copied the Hebrew Bible, carried this same deep respect for the name “Jehovah.” Before a scribe would copy it, he would go to his chambers, bathe, and put on a clean robe. In some chapters, such as Deuteronomy 28, he would have to go through this cleansing ritual 40 times!

The name “Jehovah” is more personal than the name “Elohim.” It describes God in His relationship with His people—His presence with us and His interaction with us. “Jehovah” expresses the love of God, His concern for the sins of His people, His pledge to keep His covenants, and His promise to redeem.

### **Adonai**

This name, which is used for God some 300 times in the Old Testament, is made up of two parts: *adon*, which means “Lord” or “Master,” and the ending *ai*, which means “my.” Thus the name “Adonai” could be translated “my Lord” or “my Master.” It suggests the relationship between the Sovereign Master and a submissive servant (see Gen. 15:2,8).

To summarize: “Elohim” speaks of God’s unlimited power, “Jehovah” speaks of His love and holiness, and “Adonai” speaks of His right to rule over us. These names and their compounds give us a clear picture of what God is like and how He wants to be known. When we acknowledge His unlimited power at work in our lives and in the world around us, when we come to grips with His untainted holiness and experience for ourselves His overwhelming love, and when we establish a servant-Master relationship with Him, we are truly on the way to knowing God.

# JESUS CHRIST AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

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If we are to know God through the Old Testament, we must spend some time looking at its relationship to His Son, Jesus Christ. That relationship goes two ways: (1) the Old Testament teaching about Christ, and (2) Christ's use of the Old Testament.

## 1. The Old Testament Teaching About Christ.

From the opening pages of Genesis through the Prophets, the Old Testament predicts the coming of a Redeemer-King, Jesus Christ, and tells us of His work among men and before God. That teaching takes two major forms: prophecy and types.

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**“There is one central theme which, like a golden thread, runs through all the stories of the Old Testament—the coming of Jesus Christ.”** —William Hendriksen

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*Prophecy.* The prophecies about Christ touch many aspects of His life and ministry. Here is a brief sample of the more than 300 Old Testament prophecies about Christ.

- Born of woman (Gen. 3:15)
- Descended from Abraham (Gen. 22:18)
- From the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10)
- Crucified and forsaken by God (Ps. 22)
- Ruler in Zion (Ps. 110)
- Virgin-born (Isa. 7:14)
- The God-King (Isa. 9:6)
- Descended from David (Isa. 11:1)

- The Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 42)
- Born in Bethlehem of Judah (Mic. 5:2)
- Humble entry into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9)

**Types.** The work of Christ was also predicted throughout the Old Testament in typology. Here are some primary examples:

- Adam (Gen. 2, Rom. 5:9)
- Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-20; Heb. 7)
- Isaac, offered at Moriah (Gen. 22)
- The Passover lamb (Ex. 12; 1 Cor. 5:7-8)
- The High Priest (Ex. 28; Heb. 4:14-15)
- The burnt offering (Lev. 1; Eph. 5:2)
- The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16; Heb. 9:28)
- The Kinsman-Redeemer (Ruth 4; Acts 20:28)
- The Suffering Servant (Isa. 53; Mk. 10:45)

**2. Christ's Use Of The Old Testament.** The way Christ used the Old Testament showed that He considered it to be the authoritative Word of God.

**He Accepted Its History.** Jesus regarded the Old Testament record as a straightforward presentation of fact. In teaching or in conversation, He referred to the following people, confirming their existence:

- Abel (Lk. 11:51)
- Noah (Mt. 24:37-39)
- Abraham (Jn. 8:56)
- Lot (Lk. 17:28-32)
- Elijah (Lk. 4:25)
- Elisha (Lk. 4:27)
- Jonah (Mt. 12:39-41)

**He Accepted Its Authority.** When in controversy with the religious leaders of Israel—the Pharisees (Mt. 23:2-3) and the Sadducees (Mt. 22:29)—Christ turned to the Old Testament as His final court of appeal.

*He Used It As An Ethical Guide.* Jesus used the Old Testament as authoritative in telling people how to live. Examples are the rich young ruler (Mt. 19:16-22) and the lawyer who asked about the greatest commandment (Mt. 22:35-40).

*He Used It In His Teaching.* The following verses are examples of Jesus' use of the Old Testament in His teaching:

- “Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears do you not hear?” (Mk. 8:18; Jer. 5:21).
- “Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mk. 9:48; Isa. 66:24).
- “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8; Ps. 73:1).
- “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt. 5:5; Ps. 37:11).

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**“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”** —Jesus (Mt. 5:17)

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Sometimes the critics of the Old Testament claim that Christ actually refuted it during His ministry. They point to those occasions when He referred to Old Testament passages dealing with the Sabbath rules (Mt. 9:13; 12:7; Mk. 2:28) or the cleansing of foods (Mt. 15:1-20). The “you have heard . . . but I say to you” section of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:21-48) is another example. On close examination, it becomes clear that Christ was not repudiating the Old Testament. Rather, He was explaining or clarifying it. This is especially true of the Law, which He said He did not come to destroy but to fulfill (Mt. 5:17-20).

# THE MESSAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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What, then, was the Old Testament written to tell us? What did its writers from long ago have to say that relates to our contemporary world?

They told us about God. They said that He is not like the pagan gods. He is not carved from wood or hewn out of stone as a crude extension of man himself. The God of the Old Testament is a living God of tremendous complexity and awesome power—a God who is vitally interested in and concerned for every man, woman, and child.

God made Himself known in the Old Testament as the eternal, self-existent One. He created our world and all that is in it. He made us to be independent people with minds to think, wills to make moral choices, and emotions to feel the heartthrob of life. And He made us with a deep thirst for a satisfying relationship with Him.

When, in Adam, we made the wrong moral choice and disobeyed God, He would have been just in destroying us. But in mercy He began to reveal, with unfolding clarity throughout the Old Testament, a way of rescue. He promised the coming of a Messiah-King who would pay our penalty for sin and open the door to a restored relationship with Him.

The message of the Old Testament, then, is that we can satisfy our thirst for peace with the true and living God. And the way to that peace is through faith in the Messiah-King He sent to redeem us from our sin.

# THE OLD TESTAMENT AND YOU

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In this booklet, we have been trying to make the Old Testament come alive to you and to help you know God. So now, what is your response to Him?

If you are a Christian, you should be more eager than ever to know God as revealed in the Old Testament. You have seen that the Old Testament is not a book to be afraid of but a book that brings you face to face with God. He has made Himself known in the power of creation, the goodness of salvation, the grace of His covenants, and the righteousness of His judgments. The challenge before you now is to know Him better through digging deeper into the Old Testament, and to respond to Him by submitting to His will as revealed through the Scriptures.

If you are not a Christian, what is your response to God as made known in the Old Testament? True, it shows Him to be a holy God who hates sin. But it also shows Him to be a loving God who accepts the sacrifices offered to Him. Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, came to be our sacrifice for sin. He died for us, paying the penalty we should have paid.

Friend, He died for you. Will you now receive Him by faith, trusting Him and Him alone as your personal Savior? The Old Testament prophet said:

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on [Jesus] the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).*

Trust Christ as your Savior today. It's the first and most important step in knowing God.

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