

## Understanding the Old Testament 1

As we begin our study of the Old Testament, let us consider its source. The Bible is a collection of 66 books by 40 different authors from all walks of life. It was written over a period of 1500 years, but covers 4000 years of history. Why would we believe this creation story over any other? 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 2:20-21. Jesus spoke of events from the book of Genesis as actual events. Mark 10:6 It's prophetic predictions are numerous and have come to pass with 100% accuracy in details. No other book can make those claims. Many of the locations and even some of the characters have been verified archeologically. One of the factors that carry weight with me is its wide circulation. If it is a book that conveys the truth of a Supreme Being and His relationship with people, you would expect for Him to arrange that to be the case. Bible translators are working on the last few remaining language groups in our day. Another reason is that it is honest about the shortcomings of its heroes.

Ultimately you believe it is by faith or you do not. Your faith may be a reasonable faith, that is a faith substantiated by evidence, but it is still faith. We cannot prove without a doubt that it is or is not God's revelation to man. Your perception of the Old Testament is going to depend on whether or not you believe the New Testament claim that it is God breathed. This study assumes that you have by faith accepted the New Testament claims. If you do not, I would encourage you to compare the God of the Bible with the God of any other faith. I believe you will find Him to be not only more believable but infinitely more desirable.

### The Old Testament (Covenant)

#### Genesis

The Bible has one dramatic theme throughout. It begins with the creation of man in the image of God. That is quickly followed by the fall of man, the marring of that image. The rest of the Bible is about restoring the image of God in man.

God began to prepare mankind for restoration by entering into a covenant with Abraham. The covenant promised that through the Jewish people the entire world would be blessed. God promised his descendents the land of Canaan. That covenant promise was renewed to his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel and thus the promise was passed on to the children of Israel. Israel and his twelve sons ended up in Egypt. There they became a great nation.

#### Exodus through Deuteronomy

After 400 years in Egypt, the descendents of Israel had become a great nation, but were used as slave labor. Moses led them out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. On the journey there, God gave Moses laws and ritual worship for the people to live by.

#### Joshua, Judges, Ruth

Moses died before going into the Promised Land. His general, Joshua, led them to victory over the people of the land of Canaan. For the next 400 years, Israel was ruled by judges. The surrounding nations often invaded Israel. It was a constant tug of war for the land.

#### 1 Samuel to 2 Chronicles

The last judge was named Samuel. The nation wanted a king. Samuel anointed Saul as the first king. The second king was the greatest king of Israel, King David. During his reign and that of his son, Solomon, Israel reached its peak. David had a special relationship with God. God promised that there would come one from his lineage that would reign forever. After Solomon, the nation was divided into the northern 10 tribes, called Israel, and the southern two called Judah. The northern tribes were conquered and amalgamated with foreign nations. The southern two went into captivity a hundred years later but returned to Israel after 70 years of captivity. This was a period of approximately 500 years.

#### Job – Song of Songs

Job is a story of suffering from the period of Genesis. The other books are songs and words of wisdom, mostly composed by David and Solomon.

#### Isaiah – Malachi

The prophets spoke to the kings and to the exiles and to some foreign powers during the times of the kings. The prophets could be subgrouped into two categories, those who spoke to the kings, and those who prophesied to the captive nation of Judah. They sometimes prophesied to other nations as well. It is in these prophesies that we see many predictions of the king that was to rule forever. The last prophet of the old covenant was Malachi. There was a 400 year period in which God did not speak through a prophet.

#### Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Esther was a Jewish queen, married to a heathen king. Her story is during the captivity. Ezra and Nehemiah were leaders of the effort to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

Moses wrote the first five books, called the Torah, or Law. Until that time, the story of history was passed down orally. The Torah contains the pre-diluvial period, that is, the time before the worldwide flood, the patriarchal period, the exodus from Egypt, receiving the Law, and wilderness wanderings.

Today we will focus on creation. In the first three chapters we have the basis for all the main threads of that take us to the New Testament. Without an understanding of these chapters, the Bible makes no sense whatsoever. This was recorded around 1500 BC. Think of it! Three and a half millenniums ago! Historians did not believe the Hebrew language could be that old, but a primitive form of

Hebrew is found in the wilderness rocks and caves between Egypt and Jericho. Gee, wonder who would have etched those glyphs?

We are not going to debate creation. You can visit Crying Rocks Ministry for that. We are skimming the highlights. First, the Bible declares that God created all things, including men and women who were uniquely made in His image. This is a source of conflict politically in our society today. In these opening chapters, God gives basic instructions to man, assigns him responsibilities, makes woman and speaks of her role, communes freely with the first couple.

The picture turns dark when a sinister being shows up to tempt Eve to disobey God. We are not told where he is from, but the prophets call him Lucifer (lights). They tell us he is a fallen angel, who tried to usurp God's throne. Eve succumbs to the temptation and leads Adam to do the same. God's warning of death takes place spiritually. A number of curses come upon their lives and the earth because of their rebellion. But a promise is given that sets the stage for the fall to be turned around and order and harmony with God restored. Genesis 3:15

Now we have the basis for the three threads I will be following through the Old Testament. The first is the thread of the Seed. In this promise from God, a seed (singular) will be born. We will follow the lineage of Jesus who is the ultimate fulfillment of the Seed and the promise of Genesis 3:15. The Seed is the only one who could restore man from the fall. In the New Testament, Jesus is called the Second Adam. This seed is one of the major themes of the Old Testament.

The second thread we will follow is that of the Lamb. Adam and Eve felt ashamed that they were naked. They tried to cloth themselves with leaves. God provided a covering of skins. An animal had to die to provide the covering (atonement). We see the good son Abel sacrifice a lamb, accepted by God. All through the Old Testament, we will see this theme of a covering or atonement lamb, until we reach the One that they were all merely a shadow of.

The third thread is that of the covenants. Though there is no covenant here in Genesis, the need for a covenant is set forth. The covenant is to bring back into relationship God with man. We will see some conditional and some un-conditional covenants. The main covenant is that of the Law that Moses received on Sinai. When we use the term Old Testament, what we are really referring to is the Old Covenant. From now on we will use that term. The Old Covenant will take us up to the New Covenant or New Testament. The first covenant is the demonstration to man that no one can keep God's rules. The entire Old Covenant is a repeated demonstration of the need for a new covenant. We will follow each of these threads in future studies.

Through Genesis 5 we see Adam's lineage and the incredible damage that sin inflicts upon man. One of his sons killed the other. Eventually the world became so wicked that it became necessary to cleanse the earth with a flood. This was about 1800 years into man's history. Sin had caused so much pain that it became best to end it with a flood. The bright spot in this sad story is that Noah walked with God. Genesis 6:5-9 Homework: Read Genesis, a dramatic set of stories.