

Old Testament Survey

INTRODUCTION

We know we should learn the teachings of the Bible concerning morals and life. But what does that have to do with History? Couldn't we just skip all of that? Here are some reasons for the study of Bible History.

I. WHY STUDY BIBLE HISTORY?

A. BECAUSE THE BIBLE IS THE BEST KNOWN BOOK THERE IS.

B. BECAUSE IT IS THE LEAST KNOWN BOOK THERE IS.

"Men read more about the Bible than they read the Bible itself." Students studying philosophy, geography, and even science or math are compelled to study some history, enriching their appreciation and understanding of those subjects.

C. BECAUSE THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION IS HISTORICAL.

"Redemption is historically unfolded in the pages of the Bible." We could learn God's law by lifting his commands and edicts out of their historical connections, but could we really? Could we appreciate a great painting by cutting it into small pieces and examining the various parts individually without comprehending their relationship to one another?

D. TO REALIZE ITS UNITY.

The Bible is not one book, but many, written by many authors, of various backgrounds, over a long period of time, often unaware of one another. "With real, though unconscious, unity of the spirit and purpose of the 40 authors wrote. The unbroken thread of divine purpose, the scarlet thread of human redemption by divine sacrifice runs through the 66 booklets, binding them into one. Little by little, age after age, that purpose unfolds."

E. AS A BOOK OF HUMAN HISTORY.

"The Bible traces with remarkable fullness the origin and fortunes of one of the earth's most remarkable races, the Hebrews. The thread of their history is interwoven with the fortunes of every great nation of antiquity."

F. TO PRESERVE ONE'S FAITH IN THE BIBLE.

"Our danger lies in our real ignorance of it; the remedy, in a better more comprehensive knowledge of it."

II. THE OBJECT OF BIBLE HISTORY.

The primary object is religious. Religion is important in all history, though it may be ignored or treated as secondary. In Bible history, the religious purpose predominates. General history is incidental. The primary purpose is to trace the origin and historic development of true religion in its three great stages - Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. Even if a man disbelieves a great historic religion, he cannot afford to be without an intelligent conception of it.

III. INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Bible history can be divided into 3 distinct dispensations. A dispensation is "the system by which anything is administered" (Webster). In this case we are talking about 3 distinct systems by which God administered his law. The first was known as the Patriarchal Dispensation. During this period of time God dealt with people through the patriarch, or the family father, although not exclusively through him. This period began with the creation of the world and ended with the giving of the Law of Moses around 1400 B.C. The second dispensation is called the Mosaic. In this period of time God dealt with the human race through the Law of Moses. This period ended with the crucifixion of Christ and the delivering of the New Testament in the year 33 A.D. The last period of time lasts until the end of the world.

Each one of these dispensations may be divided into specific periods. We want to concern ourselves mainly with the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, so we will be concerned with the periods of these. Each period is made distinct from the others by some significant condition of historical events or trends and by their treatment in the Bible. When one becomes familiar with these events and conditions, he will most naturally make these divisions in his mind without them being suggested. But our purpose in these outlines is to suggest them. First by outlining them in a very general way:

THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION ? - 1400 B. C.

1. Creation _____ ? B. C.

2. Ante Diluvian _____ ? B. C. - 2400 B. C.

3. Post Diluvian _____ 2400 - 2000 B. C.

4. Patriarchal _____ 2000 - 1800 B. C.
5. Egyptian Bondage _____ 1800 - 1400 B. C.
- THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION 1400 B. C. - 33 A. D.
6. Wilderness Wanderings _____ 1400 B. C. - 1360 B. C.
7. Conquest of Canaan _____ 1360 B. C. - 1300 B. C.
8. Judges _____ 1300 B. C. - 1075 B. C.
9. United Kingdom _____ 1075 B. C. - 955 B. C.
10. Divided Kingdom _____ 955 B. C. - 720 B. C.
11. Judah Alone _____ 720 B. C. - 586 B. C.
12. Babylonian Captivity _____ 586 B. C. - 516 B. C.
13. Restoration of Israel _____ 516 B. C. - 400 B. C.
- 14 Between the Testaments _____ 400 B. C. - 4 B. C.

It would be a mistake to assume that the books of the Old Testament are presented to us in an order that helps us to establish their order. They are arranged according to their subject matter. There are 4 main groups: Law, History, Poetry, and Prophetic. Naturally the books of law and history would be studied first so that the student might understand the circumstances under which the other books were written and connect these with thoughts of other books. I believe that this is essential if we are to understand the books of prophecy or appreciate the books of poetry. There are 5 law books, 12 history, 5 poetry, and 17 prophetic books. The history of the Old Testament can be followed generally and without repetition by reading the following books: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Daniel, and Ezra. Following are the books divided into their categories and a general look at each period.

IV. DIVISION OF BOOKS.

A. LAW - HISTORY BOOKS _____ PROPHETIC BOOKS

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| 1. Genesis _____ | 23. Isaiah |
| 2. Exodus _____ | 24. Jeremiah |
| 3. Leviticus _____ | 25. Lamentations |
| 4. Numbers _____ | 26. Ezekial |
| 5. Deuteronomy _____ | 27. Daniel |

B. HISTORY _____ 28. Hosea

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| 6. Joshua _____ | 29. Joel |
| 7. Judges _____ | 30. Amos |
| 8. Ruth _____ | 31. Obadiah |
| 9. 1st Samuel _____ | 32. Jonah |
| 10. 2nd Samuel _____ | 33. Micah |
| 11. 1st Kings _____ | 34. Nahum |
| 12. 2nd Kings _____ | 35. Habakkuk |
| 13. 1st Chronicles _____ | 36. Zephaniah |
| 14. 2nd Chronicles _____ | 37. Haggai |
| 15. Ezra _____ | 38. Zechariah |
| 16. Nehemiah _____ | 39. Malachi |

17. Esther

C. POETIC

18. Job

19. Psalms

20. Proverbs

21. Ecclesiastes

22. Song of Solomon

It would be good to memorize the 14 periods of Old Testament history, the books of the Bible, and be able to tell which of the 4 classifications that each book falls into.