

Old Testament survey - part one

7.9.2016

I am using voice recognition software to type this. Occasionally it replaces what I have said with another similar sounding word, like profit instead of prophet. I usually notice and correct it, but please tell me you notice any glitches of this sort.

As this was written up after the event it will differ in some details from the spoken survey. E.A.P.

Introduction

Some have said -

“The Old Testament is a closed book to me.”

“I don’t think we need read the Old Testament now we’ve got the New Testament.”

“The God of the Old Testament is a different God from the God of the New Testament.”

“All that stuff about battles and wars and plagues and sacrifices, and all those lists of names, we surely don’t need to bother about the Old Testament?”

But what the New Testament says about the Old Testament -

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15.4)

“You have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3.15-17)

“What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew ... Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.” (Romans 3.1-2)

Jesus and the Old Testament -

The Lord Jesus lived his life in fulfilment of the Old Testament, and was constantly quoting from it, for example about his messiahship, his healing ministry, his death, and his resurrection.

Not only his life, but also his teaching, is rooted in the Old Testament. He had soaked himself in the Old Testament, and he framed his life and his teaching in accordance with it.

He regarded it as inspired by God. As he once said of a psalm, “As David said by the Holy Spirit”. He called the law given through Moses “The word of God”. He referred to words written by the author of Genesis, but not ascribed in the text to God, as words spoken by God - “‘Haven’t you read, that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said,’ for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?” (Matt.19.4-5)

Not only that, but he regarded the words of the Old Testament as carrying absolute authority. When debating with the Pharisees he constantly went back to Old Testament Scriptures to settle a matter. When he said “It is written” that was final.

Page after page of the New Testament is studded with quotations from the Old Testament.

It has been well said, “The New is in the Old concealed. The Old is in the New revealed.”

Aids to Bible study - Versions – Bible Gateway website

- Concordances
- Commentaries. On whole Bible and on individual books
- New Bible Dictionary
- Cross-reference NIV Bible
- Bible Hub website

Two introductory subjects before we begin the survey of the Old Testament.

Firstly - What does Testament as in “Old Testament” mean?

Testament means covenant – a covenant is made by God and includes promises from God, and obligations for men. Here are some examples:

- Noahic covenant - “I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heaven, every creature that has the breath of life everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.” Gen. 6.17-18; “Then the Lord said to Noah and to his sons with him: ‘I now establish my covenant with and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with – every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood: never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds I will see and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.’ So God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth’.” Gen. 9.8-17.

- Abrahamic covenant - “When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers. ‘ Abram fell face down, and God said to him, ‘As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and Kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generation to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession and your descendants after you; and I will be

their God. Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.'" Gen. 17.1-9

- Mosaic covenant – "Then he took the book of the covenant and read it to the people. They responded, 'we will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey' ". Exod. 24.7; "The Lord said to Moses, 'Chisel out to stone tablets like the first ones and I will write on them the words that were on the first, which you wrote. ... Then the Lord said: 'I am making a covenant with. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord will do. Obey what I command you today. I would drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.'" Exod. 34.1, 10-11

- New Covenant - "' The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, 'declares the Lord. 'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time', declares the Lord, 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, ' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'" Jer. 31.31-34

- There are 260 references to "Covenant" in the O.T.

The second introductory subject – Progressive revelation - God revealed himself progressively

It is like getting to know a person a bit more each time you meet them.

Here are some examples -

Gen. 1.1 – "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God created - but man was not created until verse 26, so how do we know? – The past was revealed to a man like a prophecy.

Gen. 6.13-14 – God spoke to Noah about his judgement on sin - "So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of their. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of Cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out'".

Gen. 17.1 – God revealed himself further than before to Abraham saying "I am God Almighty"

Exod. 3.13-14 – God revealed his name to Moses - "I AM WHO I AM". "Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they ask me 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'."

1 Sam. 16.4-7 – "The Lord looks at the heart". "Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met. They asked, 'do you come in peace?' Samuel replied, 'yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with the.' Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed stand here before the Lord.' But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected.

The law does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” The Lord then led Samuel to his choice of David to be king.

Job 38. 1-4 – God’s answer to Job - “Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: ‘Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earths foundation? Tell me, if you understand”. And then throughout chapters 38-41 God shows his greatness to Job, and how little he, Job, knows.

Isaiah 6.1-5 – God shows his holiness to Isaiah - “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty: the whole earth is full of his glory’. At the sound of their voices the doorposts and the thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among the people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ “

John 15.15 - God revealed himself much more in and through Jesus Christ. “Jesus said ‘I no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.’”

Many other examples could be given, indeed the whole Bible is Progressive revelation.

Old Testament survey

I am assuming that you have some basic knowledge of the Old Testament, so I will be focusing on the parts of it that are less well-known.

I have included some passages from those less well-known parts, to give you a sample of what is in those parts.

Contents – pause to look through Old Testament Contents page in the Bible. There are 39 books.

They fall into four divisions – Law (5 books), History (12 books), Poetry (also called Wisdom - 5 books), Prophets (17 books). In this Part One we will look at Law and History.

Look at separate O.T. Dates 1 sheet on web

The book titles are in bold print below.

Genesis 1-11 – includes Creation, The Fall, the Flood, Tower of Babel

12-50 - the lives of the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

Exodus 1-20 – the call of Moses, plagues, Passover, Exodus, 10 Commandments

21-40 – laws, making of Tabernacle and contents of it, Golden Calf. For example of some laws -23.1-9 “Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness. Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favouritism to a poor man in his lawsuit. If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it. Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. Have nothing to do with a false

charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous. Do not oppress an alien, because you yourselves know it feels to be an alien, because you were aliens in Egypt.”

Leviticus – chapters 1-10 Sacrifices, 11-15 health laws, 16 Day of Atonement, 17-27 other laws. For example 25.1-7 “The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your field or prune your vineyard. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you – for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.”

Numbers – lists, laws, events in the Wilderness, rebellion, approach to Promised Land. For example 10.1-7 “The Lord said to Moses: ‘Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before at the entrance to the tent of meeting. If only one is sounded the leaders – the heads of the clans of Israel – are to assemble before you. When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. At the sounding of the second blast, the camps on the south are to set out. The blast will be the signal for setting out. To gather the assembly, blow the trumpets, but not with the same signal.”

Deutero-nomy - second (deutero) giving of the law (nomos), 40 years later, concluding with the death of Moses. For example 6.1-9 Moses said_“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to process, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you. Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.”

Joshua - the Promised Land, the conquest and the allocation of it.

Judges for over 300 years – men, and one woman, who not only acted as judges but as leaders – Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson. There were cycles of disobedience, repentance and restoration. For example 3.7-11. “The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the law; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs. The anger of the Lord burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years. But when they cried out to the Lord, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othneil son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, who saved them. The Spirit of the Lord came upon, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war. The

Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othneil, who overpowered him. So the land had peace of 40 years, until Othneil son of Kenaz died.”

Ruth – a beautiful story of self-sacrifice rewarded, and a Gentile ancestor of Jesus.

1 Samuel - history from the birth of the prophet and priest Samuel to King Saul and David.

2 Samuel - David as king.

1 Kings - Solomon as king, the building of the Temple, the division into two kingdoms, Israel (10 tribes) and Judah (2 tribes), the prophet Elijah.

Bad kings of the northern kingdom, especially Jeroboam 1, Ahab, for example Omri 1 Kings 16.23-28; “In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned for 12 years, six of them in Tirzah. He bought the Hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and build a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill. But Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before. He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit, so that they provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols. As for the other events of Omri’s reign, what he did and the things he achieved, are they not written in the book of the annals of the king of Israel? Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king.”

Some largely good kings, Asa, Jehoshaphat, of the southern kingdom.

2 Kings – The prophet Elisha; more bad kings of the northern kingdom, especially Jeroboam II; some largely good kings of the southern kingdom, especially Joash, Ahaziah (aka Uzziah), Hezekiah, and Josiah, for example 2 Kings 23.1-3, “Then the king (Josiah) called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the Lord with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets – all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord - to follow the Lord and keep his commandments, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.”

And some bad kings of the southern kingdom, especially Ahaz, Manasseh; the Exile of the kings and peoples, first of Israel to Assyria, then of Judah to Egypt and Babylon.

1&2 Chronicles covers the same time as 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, but in the latter part it is history from the southern kingdom, Judah’s, point of view, whereas the books of Kings history from the northern kingdom, Israel’s, point of view. There are several websites which compare these books.

Examples - (1) King Asa of Judah - his reign is described in 1 Kings 15 verses 9 to 24 – total 16 verses; but compare his reign described in 2 Chronicles 15 verse 2 to 16 verse 14 – total 32 verses, including most of the details of Asa’s reform in chapter 15.

(2) There is almost nothing about the prophets Elijah and Elisha in Chronicles, because they ministered in the Northern Kingdom, Israel.

Ezra – Zerubbabel leads the return from exile; the rebuilding of the temple; later Ezra and others return.

Nehemiah returns and supervises the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Revival - for example Neh. 8.5-6, 9-11 – “Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded ‘Amen! Amen!’ Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground ... Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, ‘This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the law.”

Esther- an account of courage and salvation.

The 17 books of the **Apocrypha** – are not part of the Word of God - the Jewish people chose not to include them in the Old Testament. In line with that the Church of England Article VI (1562) says “The church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine”.

EAP