

LESSON

1 God's Ways and God's Words

The Old Testament was the first part of the Bible to be written. In its pages is the history of many people who lived over two thousand years ago. Often they faced similar problems that you and I face today, and they reacted in the same way we do. They trusted God, but doubted Him sometimes. They saw His mighty miracles, but needed the assurance of His presence. They were His chosen people, but they often endured severe trials and hardships.

The Old Testament is more than this, though. It was written not only to tell us the stories of these men and women but also to help us understand the nature of God himself. As we study it we will discover how God revealed himself to us in two basic ways: 1) through His mighty works, and 2) through His prophetic messages.

The Old Testament contains many different kinds of writings. Some of these give the history of the nation Israel; some are collections of wise sayings; some are songs of devotion and praise; and others are prophetic messages of great power. Yet in all of them God speaks to us today. As you study this lesson you will learn many facts about the Old Testament and discover that it is a personal message to you.

lesson outline

God Gave Us the Bible

God Speaks Through the Old Testament

Our Approach to the Study of the Old Testament

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- List the three ways God speaks to humans.
- Give evidence to support that the Bible was verbally inspired by God.
- List some facts showing the value, worth, and influence of the Bible.
- State why we should accept the Old Testament as God's Word.
- Explain how the Old Testament was passed on to us.
- Identify the three main divisions of books or writings in the Old Testament.
- State the characteristics of a chronological study of the Old Testament.

learning activities

1. Before starting this lesson, get a notebook. You will use this notebook to write the answers to study questions and exercises when you are told to do so. It can also be used for other notes you desire to make as you study this course.
2. Read the introductory pages in this independent-study textbook carefully. Especially notice the section "How to Answer Questions."
3. Read this opening section including the introductory page, outline, objectives, and learning activities. Find in the glossary at the end of this textbook the definition to any key words that you do not know. Words are valuable and useful.

They help you express your ideas and understand the ideas of others.

4. Carefully read the lesson development, answering each study question as you come to it. As soon as you have answered a question, compare your answer with the one given at the end of the lesson. Then correct your own answer if necessary.
5. Find and read each Scripture referred to in the lesson development as soon as you come to it.
6. When you have completed the lesson, review it. Then answer the questions in the self-test. Check your answers carefully. Review any items you answered incorrectly and learn the correct answers.

key words

A.D.	literature	theme
Aramaic	manuscript	translation
chronological	Masoretes	ultimate
Greek	poetry	vellum
Hebrew	prophecy	verbal
history	revelation	
inspiration	Septuagint	

lesson development

GOD GAVE US THE BIBLE

There are many important things about ourselves that others must tell us. The answers to the questions “Who am I?”, “Who are my parents?”, and “Where was I born?” cannot just be imagined! In the same way the Bible, God’s message to us, deals with the important, ultimate questions about God: What is God like? What has God done in the past and why? And above all, what relationship is there between God and humans? The Bible answers these questions since it is the words and revelation of God himself, the Creator and Redeemer.

The Bible Is God’s Message to Us

Objective 1. *List the three ways God speaks to humans.*

God created humans for fellowship with himself. He speaks to us in distinct ways through the voice of nature or creation, and that voice is heard plainly every day (Psalm 19). The apostle Paul affirms that God’s eternal power and divine nature are plainly seen in creation (Romans 1:20).

The second way by which God speaks to us is through the Bible, His written Word. The written word has only one theme: the history of God’s plan for the redemption of humanity from sin through His son, Jesus Christ.

In the Bible, Jesus Christ is often referred to as the living word of God (John 1:1–18). Therefore, Jesus is the third distinct way in which God has spoken to us (Hebrews 1:2).

Application

1 Read John 1:1–2, 14 and Revelation 19:13. By what name is Jesus Christ revealed and identified in these verses?

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2 In your notebook, list the three different ways God speaks to us.



The Bible Was Inspired by God

Objective 2. *Give evidence to support that the Bible was verbally inspired by God.*

The name Bible comes from the Greek word *biblia* which means “many books.” The Bible was written by more than 40 authors in many lands over a period of 1400 to 1600 years. The 66 books contained in the Bible were written in several languages and under widely differing circumstances. Yet the Bible is one great book with one great theme. The fact that all these different writings have only one main message is proof that the Bible has its source in God, not in man. Its very existence testifies to this fact. It is a book distinct from all others.

According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, the Bible was inspired by God. In the language in which they were first written, the words inspired by God actually mean “breathed by God”—His very life. When believers speak of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, they mean that every word of it is God-breathed and is not merely a man’s effort to express important truths.

It is true that God miraculously allowed the individual nature of each writer to shine through his writings. Moses, Isaiah, and Samuel, who wrote several of the Old Testament books, were not simply secretaries to whom God dictated His message. Their own personalities are revealed in their writings.

But overall, a sovereign God directed each word in the Scripture. Thus the Bible gives us God’s own inspired message. The Bible not only contains the word of God; it is the Word of God. More than 2,000 times in the Old Testament the words the Lord says or similar ones are used (see Exodus 10:3, 11:4, Joshua 24:2, and 2 Samuel 24:12). No other book makes such claims.

Application

- 3** Circle the letter in front of each statement which is in harmony with the verbal inspiration of the Bible.
- a)** Though all of the words of the Bible were inspired by God, He allowed the writers to use their own style.
 - b)** Some parts of the Bible were written under more inspiration than others.
 - c)** God chose the thoughts for the Bible writers to express but He did not inspire the words they used.
 - d)** The Bible contains the best thoughts of man expressed in a beautiful and inspiring way.
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The Bible Has Great Value and Worth

Objective 3. *List some facts showing the value, worth, and influence of the Bible.*

The first part of the Bible was written more than 3,000 years ago and the last part over 2,000 years ago. Although it was not the first book to be written, it was the first book to be printed when the printing press was invented in 1450 A.D. Now millions of copies are printed each year. Some parts of the Bible have been translated into 2,300 languages, and the whole Bible has been translated into over 300 languages.

The Bible has influenced writers, artists, musicians, and politicians all over the world. They have painted pictures of the events it describes. They have written songs and poems on its themes. They have made laws and changed their societies to conform to the ideals it presents. A great university president once said, "I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible."

William Tyndale gave his life so that people in his country of England could read the Bible in their own language. He began to translate the Bible into English in the year 1525. In 1536, with his task incomplete, he was condemned to die for

translating the Bible. As he was being burned to death in flames of fire he prayed aloud: “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.” What a price Tyndale paid to give the Bible to others!

Application

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- 4** In your notebook, list three facts which show the value, worth, and influence of the Bible.
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GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament Is God’s Word

Objective 4. *State why we should accept the Old Testament as God’s Word.*

You might ask, “Do we have good reason for accepting the Old Testament as the Word of God? One simple way of answering that question with a yes is to point out that Jesus Christ, our Lord and ultimate authority, quoted extensively from it, even validating the use of individual words. Jesus also spoke of and believed in famous Old Testament figures like Adam and Eve, Noah, and Jonah who are routinely dismissed by liberal scholars as mythical. The apostles and other New Testament writers quoted widely from the Old Testament too.

These facts show us that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament valued the Old Testament and recognized its authority. In the Bible, the Old Testament is often referred to as “the Scriptures” and “the Law”—meaning the commandments that God gave to His people. When we find these terms in the New Testament, then, we can usually take them to mean what we call the Old Testament. Today we use the term “Scriptures” also, but our meaning includes the whole Bible or specific verses or portions of it. It is important to keep these different usages in mind when studying and reading the Bible.

Application

5 In your notebook, write a short description of what each Scripture listed below tells about the Old Testament or how it was used.

- a)** Matthew 22:29, 43–45
 - b)** Luke 24:25–27
 - c)** John 10:34–35
 - d)** 2 Timothy 3:16
 - e)** 2 Peter 1:20–21
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The Old Testament tells many historical facts about the Jewish nation. But it is more than just history. It is a sacred history that tells of God's revealing himself to us. The Old Testament shows how God worked with the nation of Israel. However, God is not only the God of Israel but also the supreme ruler of all people everywhere. The following truth is very important: The basic theme of the Old Testament is God revealing His nature to humankind through mighty acts and prophetic words.

The written record of the Old Testament as it was received by Jews and Christians was considered to be a divine-human product, free of error. What is more, it contains truth for the entire human race.

Application

6 Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Notice that Paul gives thanks to God for the Thessalonians because they accepted the message as God's message, not man's. What attitude does this suggest that we should have towards the Old Testament?

7 Circle the letter of each statement that gives a reason why we should accept the Old Testament as God's message. (Note: all of the statements are true, but not all of them give reasons.)

- a)** It tells us many historical facts.
 - b)** The writings of many different men are contained in it.
 - c)** Jesus said that its words are true forever.
 - d)** None of it came simply by the will of man.
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We Can Rely on the Old Testament

Objective 5. *Explain how the Old Testament was passed on to us.*

From earliest times God has caused men to keep a written account of His words and revelations. The kings of Israel were to have a copy of His law (Deuteronomy 17:18–19). Most of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, the language spoken by the people of Israel until about 500 years before Christ. At that time Aramaic became the common language of Palestine and the surrounding countries. A small portion of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic (Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–20; Jeremiah 10:11; and Daniel 2:4–7:28).

The material on which the Old Testament was written was called vellum. Skins of animals were used to prepare this substance. A piece of vellum on which the Scriptures were written usually measured about 10 inches in width and 30 feet in length. These strips were rolled up to form what is called a scroll. When a scroll became worn out through use, a particular group of scholars called Masoretes copied the texts onto a new scroll with great care. The old scroll usually was destroyed. We have manuscripts of this type from around 900 A.D.

However, the discovery of some much earlier manuscripts from around 70 A.D. was made in 1947 at a place called Qumran near the Dead Sea. These manuscripts are called the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” They show that the Old Testament which we have received has been faithfully passed on to us. It deserves our wholehearted trust and acceptance!

Many translations of the Old Testament have been made. In the last centuries before Christ, Jewish scholars made a translation into Greek. Tradition says there were 72 translators. Thus the title *Septuagint*, a Greek word meaning seventy, was given to this translation. This made it possible for many more people to read the Old Testament. Along with the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint was used during the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

In the latter part of the 4th century A.D. a translation was made into Latin by a scholar named Jerome. Then in the

14th and 15th centuries several other translations appeared in German, French, Italian, and English. After the time of William Tyndale, the famous “authorized” or King James Version appeared in 1611. In our day, many other translations have been made. The Bible is now available in the languages of people who live all over the world.

Application

- 8** Which sentences correctly describe how the Old Testament was passed on to us?
- a)** The first translation of the Old Testament into a language other than Hebrew was made in the 4th century A.D. English versions today are copies of this translation.
 - b)** The Old Testament was first written on vellum scrolls in the days of Jesus’ earthly ministry. The copies that we have today were made from the Septuagint, a Greek version.
 - c)** From earliest times God’s words and revelations were recorded in writing. These writings were faithfully preserved, copied, and passed down to us by faithful scholars.
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The Old Testament Is a Personal Message to Us

Abraham was the great man of faith who was the father of the nation of Israel. But he was the father of not just that nation. According to Romans 4:11, 16, and 24, believers today are his spiritual descendants. It is this fact which gives the Old Testament meaning to us. It is not only the revelation of God’s ways and words, but also the story of our spiritual ancestors and forefathers. Although our circumstances today are different, the spiritual lessons they learned apply to our lives as well.

Hebrews 4:12 notes, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Because the Old

Testament is the Word of God it gives us insight not only into His nature but also into ours. As we study the events it records we can discover many things about our own lives. Often we find ourselves in situations similar to the ones encountered by the men and women of the Old Testament. God can speak to us today through our study of their lives and the messages He had for them.

Application

9 In your notebook, describe two ways in which the Old Testament is a personal message to us.

OUR APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Writings in the Old Testament

Objective 6. *Identify the three main divisions of books or writings in the Old Testament.*

Of the 66 books of the Bible, 39 make up the Old Testament. Further, the 39 books of the Old Testament can be divided into three groups. The first 17 books, Genesis through Esther, account for Israel's historical development as a nation until about 500 years before Christ came to earth. These are called the books of history.

The first five books of history were closely associated with the life and ministry of Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egypt: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This group of books is often referred to as the Pentateuch, a Greek name meaning "five vessels."

Five books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon—are called the books of poetry. They express the feelings, thoughts, and emotions of various people who lived during Israel's history. But they are not closely tied to particular events of it.

The remaining 17 books are called the books of prophecy. God raised up prophets from time to time to declare His word. They had a message for their own generation, but they often spoke of future events also. Details in the historical books are the keys to a proper understanding of the message of the prophets. On the other hand, the words of the prophets help the reader to understand what is in the books of history. Chart 1 on the following page shows the arrangement of the Old Testament books in each of these three divisions.

Application

10 Match each verse (left side) to the division of the Old Testament whose type of content it best represents (right side).

- ... **a** "I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy" (Psalm 116:1).
- ... **b** "Afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on
all people. Your sons and your daughters
will prophesy" (Joel 2:28).
- ... **c** "Josiah removed . . . all the shrines at the
high places that the kings of Israel had
built" (2 Kings 23:19).
- ... **d** "On the tenth day of the first month,
the people went up from the Jordan and
camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of
Jericho" (Joshua 4:19).
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CHART 1: THE DIVISIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

History	Poetry	Prophecy
Genesis	Job	Isaiah
Exodus	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Proverbs	Lamentations
Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel
Deuteronomy	Song of Solomon	Daniel
Joshua		Hosea
Judges		Joel
Ruth		Amos
1 Samuel		Obadiah
2 Samuel		Jonah
1 Kings		Micah
2 Kings		Nahum
1 Chronicles		Habakkuk
2 Chronicles		Zephaniah
Ezra		Haggai
Nehemiah		Zechariah
Esther		Malachi

Chronological Study of the Old Testament

Objective 7. *State the characteristics of a chronological study of the Old Testament.*

For the purpose of this Old Testament survey course we will study the books of history, poetry, and prophecy in what is called a chronological order. That is, the order of our study will follow the actual period of time each book is about. We will begin with the book that tells about the first or earliest events, and end with the book that tells about the last or latest events.

We have seen that the basic theme of the Old Testament is God's revelation of His nature through historical events. But these events, though they were guided by God, could not give us a revelation of His nature by themselves. So God raised up men not only to see those events but also to explain what they revealed about God. These men were the prophets. The seeing and telling of the revelation of God was the task of the prophet. For this course we will study the prophets along with the events they saw and spoke about. We will study the books of poetry along with the period of time during which they were probably

written. Chart 2 shows the chronological order that we will follow in our study of the Old Testament.

CHART 2: CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER FOR OUR STUDY	
UNIT 1; Lessons 2–4: History of the Beginnings	
HISTORY	
Genesis (the Pentateuch)	
Exodus	
Leviticus	
Numbers	
Deuteronomy	
UNIT 2; Lessons 5–8: Living in the Land	
HISTORY	POETRY
Joshua	Job
Judges	
Ruth	
1 Samuel	
<i>United Kingdom:</i>	
1 and 2 Samuel	Psalms
1 and 2 Kings	Proverbs
1 and 2 Chronicles	Ecclesiastes
	Song of Solomon
HISTORY	PROPHECY
<i>Divided Kingdom:</i>	
1 Kings 11–12	Jonah
	Isaiah
	Jeremiah
2 Kings	Hosea
	Micah
	Lamentations
2 Chronicles	Amos
	Nahum
	Habakkuk
	Joel
	Zephaniah
	Obadiah
UNIT 3; Lessons 9–10: Destruction and Rebuilding	
<i>Captivity:</i>	Ezekiel
2 Kings 17:4–18	Daniel
Psalms 137	
Esther	
<i>Restoration:</i>	Haggai
Ezra	Zechariah
Nehemiah	Malachi

Application

11 Circle the letter in front of each statement which is TRUE about a chronological study of the Old Testament.

- a)** All the books of prophecy are studied as a group before the books of history are studied.
 - b)** It is the time period which a book covers that is important in a chronological study.
 - c)** The book of Amos is studied before the book of Daniel.
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The words of Micah 4:2 provides a beautiful theme as we begin our study of the Old Testament: “Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.”

As you study the Old Testament, expect God to speak to you through it. It is a personal message for you!

self-test

After you have reviewed this lesson, take the self-test. Then check your answers with those given in the back of the study guide. Review any questions answered incorrectly.

1 An example of God speaking to us through the written word is the

- a)** miracle Jesus performed when raising Lazarus from the dead.
- b)** existence of many forms of life which show God's power.
- c)** book of Psalms in the Bible.

2 When we say that the Bible was inspired by God we mean that it was

- a)** breathed by God.
- b)** written by dynamic men.
- c)** dictated word by word.

3 Because the Bible was verbally inspired by God

- a)** all of the writers had the same style.
- b)** human personalities are not seen in it.
- c)** it is trustworthy and true throughout.

4 Circle the letter of each TRUE statement below.

- a)** Because the Old Testament tells about the nation of Israel, it is of little interest to believers today.
- b)** The men who wrote the Old Testament books of history were not as fully inspired as those who wrote the books of prophecy.
- c)** Jesus and the writers of the New Testament accepted and relied on the Old Testament as God's Word.
- d)** In the New Testament, the word "Scripture" usually has reference to the Old Testament.

5 The writings of the Old Testament which are called the books of poetry have as their main subject the

- a)** story of the sequence of events in the history of God's people.
- b)** message God gave concerning present and future events.
- c)** record of the emotions and feelings of God's people.

6 Suppose there are three books called Book A, Book B, and Book C. Read their descriptions given below and choose the one which would be studied first in a chronological study.

- a)** Book A, which was written before books B and C
- b)** Book B, which tells about events that happened before those described in both Book A and Book C
- c)** Book C, which tells about events that happened after those described in Book B

7 Circle the letter in front of each fact which shows that the Old Testament was faithfully passed on to us.

- a)** The Masoretes were careful scholars who made accurate copies of the Scriptures.
- b)** The Septuagint was a Greek version used during the days when Jesus was on earth.
- c)** The Dead Sea Scrolls from 70 A.D. agree with the Old Testament manuscripts from 900 A.D.
- d)** Hebrew was spoken in Palestine until about 500 years before Christ.

8 Circle the letter in front of each statement which indicates that the Old Testament is a personal message to us.

- a)** The Old Testament was written over a period of 1400–1600 years.
- b)** Romans 4:11, 16, and 24 say that we are the spiritual descendants of Abraham.
- c)** The Old Testament contains 37 books divided into the three divisions of history, poetry, and prophecy.
- d)** The entire Bible, including the Old Testament, is the Word of God.

Answers To Study Questions

Note: The answers to questions have been given in mixed order. This is done so that you will not see the answer to your next question until you have answered that question.

1 He is called the “Word” and the “Word of God.”

7 c) Jesus said that its words are true forever.

d) None of it came simply by the will of man.

2 God speaks to us through a) nature or creation, b) His written word the Bible, and c) Jesus Christ.

8 c) From earliest times God’s words and revelations were recorded in writing. These writings were faithfully preserved, copied, and passed down to us by careful scholars.

3 a) Though all of the words of the Bible were inspired by God, He allowed the writers to use their own style.

9 The Old Testament is a personal message to us because:

1) It is the record of our own spiritual forefathers since we are Abraham’s spiritual descendants; and 2) it is God’s word and as such it gives us insight into our own hearts. (Your answer should be similar.)

4 Your answer could list any of the facts given in the section, such as: it was the first book to be printed, parts of it have been translated into over 2,300 languages, it has had great influence on people’s lives, and so forth.

10 a 2) Poetry (Psalm 116:1)

b 3) Prophecy (Joel 2:28)

c 1) History (2 Kings 23:19)

d 1) History (Joshua 4:19)

- 5 a** Jesus said the Sadducees were wrong because they did not know the Scriptures. Jesus used the Scriptures in talking with the Pharisees.
- b** The Scriptures speak about Christ, for He explained what they said about Him.
- c** What the Scriptures say is true forever.
- d** All Scripture is inspired by God.
- e** Scripture did not come just from man's will but from God by His Spirit.

(Your answers should be similar.)

11 b) and c) are true

6 We should treat it with respect as God's message, not man's.

For Your Notes
