

# How to Study the Old Testament

## INTRODUCTION

**Preached by:** Matthew S. Black

**Text:** Luke 24:13-49

**Series:** Old Testament Survey

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**Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL**

**Introduction:** Open your Bible to the book of **Luke 24:13-49**. We are beginning a three week series today about How to Study the Old Testament. We are going to see that the Old Testament is divided into four parts, and each of those parts tells us about Christ, and lays

### The Real Problem

The real problem with those on the road to Emmaus was not with a dead Master, but with themselves. They didn't understand the Old Testament, so the Stranger helped them to understand. **Luke 24:27** (ESV), "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

What did He tell them on that road? We can't know for sure, but the summary of what he said is found in verse 26: **Luke 24:26** (ESV), "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" So the essence of the message of the Old Testament is two fold:

- The substitutionary atonement of Christ
- The glory of Christ

### A Remarkable Transformation

Even before Jesus was done speaking, a remarkable transformation began to take place in the hearts of Jesus' hearers. **Luke 24:32** (ESV), "They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"" As the Old Testament Scriptures were opened up, they were awed, amazed, and overwhelmed all at once!

### The Disciples, the Apostles, and Jesus

These disciples shortly after met with the Apostles and Jesus appeared to them to further open up the Old Testament to them.

**Luke 24:33-49** (ESV), "And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. 36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ....

Verse 44, "Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the **Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations,

beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

### **The Message of the Old Testament: The Gospel**

Christ enabled them to understand not just a few implications from a few verses here and there from the Old Testament, but He opened up the entire Old Testament “Scriptures” to them. He promises to give them the meat of what the Old Testament says. And Jesus explains the message of the Old Testament in **verses 46-47**, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

The whole Old Testament finds its focus in Jesus Christ, His death, resurrection, and proclamation to all the nations. This proclamation comes through the Jews, this is why Paul always says, “to the Jew first, and then to the Greek”. God used the Jews as His promised people to proclaim the Gospel to all nations.

Tonight we are going to answer four questions:

- 1. What was the Bible at the time of Jesus & the Apostles?**
- 2. Why Study the Old Testament?**
- 3. What are the Basic Rules for Understanding the Old Testament?**
- 4. How do we see Christ in the Old Testament?**

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### **1. What was the Bible at the time of Jesus & the Apostles?**

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The division of the Hebrew Canon in the day of Jesus and the Apostles was in three sections: Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings (referred to sometimes as simply “the Psalms”)

- The **Torah** (Pentateuch or 5 books of Moses)
  - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- The **Prophets** (Historical books and Prophecy, 29 books)
  - Historical Books** - 12 books
  - Prophetic books**- 17 books
    - **Historical Books**: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.
    - **Major Prophets** - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
    - **Minor Prophets** - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
- The **Writings** or simply “Psalms” (The Poetical books, 5 books)
  - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Today’s Divisions are the Same except we divide the Historical books from the Prophets

## Today's Division of the Old Testament

Like the New Testament, the Old Testament is divided into four parts.

| Old Testament<br>(four-fold division)  |                                 |   |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Law—the <i>Foundation</i> for Christ<br>History— <i>Preparation</i> for Christ<br>Poetry— <i>Aspiration</i> for Christ<br>Prophecy— <i>Expectation</i> of Christ | Preparation<br>&<br>Foundation  | The Old Testament in its four-fold division lays the foundation for the coming of the Messiah Savior anticipating Him as Prophet, Priest, and King and as the suffering Savior who must die for man's sin before He reigns. |
| New Testament<br>(four-fold division)  |                                 |   |
| Gospels  | Manifestation                   | Tells the story of the coming of the long-anticipated Savior and His person and work.   |
| Acts   | Propagation                     | Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Acts proclaims the message of the Savior who has come.   |
| Epistles   | Explanation<br>&<br>Application | Develops the full significance of the person and work of Christ and how this should impact the walk of the Christian as Christ's ambassador in the world.   |
| Revelation   | Consummation                    | Anticipates the end time events and the return of the Lord, His end time reign, and the eternal state.  |

Let's Look a Little Closer

## Law—the *Foundation* for Christ

The Law is the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

| The Law—the <i>Foundation</i> for Christ |   |                                      |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Genesis                                  | Beginnings –promise of the Seed                               | Election of an unworthy people       |
| Exodus                                   | Redemption – redemption of the Seed                           | Redemption of an unworthy people     |
| Leviticus                                | Holiness – holy standard of the Seed                          | Sanctification of an unworthy people |
| Numbers                                  | Wandering – the number of those who would not accept the Seed | Direction of an unworthy people      |
| Deuteronomy                              | Review & Reiteration of the Promised Seed                     | Instruction to an unworthy people    |

## History—*Preparation* for Christ

Interesting fact: The books of 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings used to be all one book. It used to be called Kingdoms. In the LXX it was divided up into four books: 1,2,3,4<sup>th</sup> Kingdoms.

- Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

## Poetry—*Aspiration* for Christ

The Poetic and Wisdom writings include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Interesting facts:

- The Psalms of Asaph are not all by one man. They are penned by Asaph and his family over a period from the time of David to the return from the Exile (almost 500 years).
- David wrote about half (73) of the Psalms and maybe more. 73 are attributed to him!
- Many of the Davidic Psalms are what we call “imprecatory Psalms”. This is where we see David praying for his enemies to “go down to the pit”.

Major Imprecatory Psalms include Psalm 69 and Psalm 109, while Psalms 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 56, 58, 79, 83, 137, 139, and 143 are also considered imprecatory

We have to realize that God does not want us to pray for our enemies to “go down into the pit”. These prayers point to the true king David in Scripture, Jesus the Christ. He is the one who will put all of his enemies “under his feet”. He will “dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel”.

- The five books of the Psalms is to mirror the Torah or Pentateuch.

So we could say the Psalms are really five books in one. Each of the following book divisions concludes with a doxology while Psalm 150 occupies the place of the doxology and forms an appropriate conclusion to the entire collection.

Epiphanius said, “The Hebrews divided the Psalter into five books so that it would be another Pentateuch.” The Midrash of Psa. 1:1 states, “Moses gave the Israelites the five books of the Law, and to correspond to these David gave to them the Book of the Psalms in five books.”<sup>1</sup>

This correspondence to the Pentateuch may be seen in the following outline:<sup>2</sup>

1. Psalms about man and creation (1-41)—corresponds to **Genesis**.
2. Psalms about Israel and redemption (42-72)—corresponds to **Exodus**.
3. Psalms about worship and the Temple (73-89)—corresponds to **Leviticus**.
4. Psalms about our sojourn on the earth (90-106)—corresponds to **Numbers**.
5. Psalms about praise and the Word of God (107-150)—corresponds to **Deuteronomy**.

## Prophecy—*Expectation* of Christ

- Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor Prophets - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

<sup>1</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, *Class Notes*, Dallas Theological Seminary, p. 3, 1960’s. Feinberg pointed out this quote was very ancient. The *Midrash* is a Rabbinical Commentary.

<sup>2</sup> Geisler, pp. 195-196.

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## 2. Why Study the Old Testament?

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- It is the only Bible that Jesus knew and the Apostles knew for most of their ministry.
- Jesus based His office of Messiah upon it.
- The Apostles went everywhere proving from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Christ.

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### JESUS AND THE APOSTLES PREACHING FROM MOSES AND THE PROPHETS

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#### Jesus Ministry

- To the Rich Man: Luke 16:31**, “He [Abraham] said to him [the rich man in hell], ‘If they do not hear **Moses and the Prophets**, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”
- On the Road to Emmaus: Luke 24:27**, “And beginning with **Moses and all the Prophets**, he [Jesus] interpreted to them [the two disciples] in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”
- To the Jews in John 5:39, 46-47**, “You search the **Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,... 46 If you believed **Moses**, you would believe me; for **he wrote of me**. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

#### Paul’s Ministry

- Paul’s ministry to Thessalonians in Acts 17:1-2** (ESV), “they [Paul and his companions] came to Thessalonica, where there was a **synagogue of the Jews**. 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned with them from the Scriptures**, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead,”
- Paul’s Ministry to King Agrippa in Acts 26:22** (ESV), “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what **the prophets and Moses** said would come to pass.”
- Paul’s Ministry to the Roman soldiers and to various guests in Acts 28:23** (ESV). Paul was under house arrest, yet he was allowed to have many visitors: We read about it in Acts 28:23-“When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from **the Law of Moses and from the Prophets**.”

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### 3. What are the Basic Rules for Understanding the Old Testament?

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- The Bible was written for the common man—for all men. God wants us to understand it. Peter tells that we can become born again through the Old Testament promises. 2 Peter 1:3-4, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”
- The Old Testament must be interpreted in light of the New Testament. 1 Peter 1:10–12 (ESV), “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” Jesus and the Apostles guide our interpretation. For example, Mal. 4 gives the promise of Elijah, but Jesus says in Matthew 11:13–14 (ESV), “For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.”
- We must always interpret in light of the Context
  - Historical Context – The time, date, place, and events of world and local history as well as the person writing and the recipients must be considered.
  - Literary Context – each verse must be considered with each surrounding chapter, the chapter in light of the book, and the book in light of the entire Bible.
- The Clear interprets the Unclear
- The Bible interprets the Bible
- The Gospel is the Centerpiece of the Old Testament

#### **The Gospel Preached to the People in the Old Testament**

The writer of Hebrews tells us of God’s people who wandered in the wilderness in the book of Numbers, and that the Gospel was preached to them.

- **Hebrews 4:2** (ESV), “For **good news** came to us just as to them [God’s people in the wilderness], but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.”
- **Hebrews 4:6** (ESV), “Since therefore it remains for some to enter it [God’s rest], and those who formerly **received the good news** failed to enter because of disobedience”.

#### **What was the Gospel in the Old Testament?**

That God would multiply a seed in order to bless all nations. This was the preaching of Christ!

How do we know this?

- **Galatians 3:8**, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.””

Through Abraham’s seed Christ would enter into the world!

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#### 4. How do we see Christ in the Old Testament?

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- **Promises & Prophecies**

There are hundreds of Promises and Prophecies of Christ, but here is a small listing.

Genesis 3:15

12:3

49:10 .....The Promise

Exodus 12:40-50 .....The Passover Lamb

Numbers 24:17.....The Scepter of Judah’s Seed (Christ)

Deuteronomy 18:17-19.....The Coming Prophet

Job 19:25-27.....The Resurrection

Psalms:

2:1-12 .....The World Order to be Destroyed

8:1-9 .....Brought low for the suffering of death

16:7-11.....Will not see decay

22:1-31 .....The Crucifixion Foretold (1,000 B.C.)

45:1-9 .....The King and his Bride

110:1-7 .....The Coming Priest

Proverbs 30:4 .....The Son

Isaiah:

7:14 .....To be Born of a Virgin

9:6-7 .....The Man who is God

11:1-5 .....The Righteous Judge

42:1-9.....The Judge of the Nations

49:5-7 .....The Light of the Gentiles

52:13-15 .....The Suffering Servant

53:1-12 .....The Lamb of God...Raised from the Dead

Jeremiah 31:31-34 .....The New Covenant

Daniel:

7:13-14.....His Kingdom is Forever

9:26.....He is to be "cut off" (initially)

Amos 8:9-10.....Sun to go down at Noon

Micah 5:2 .....The Christ to be born in Bethlehem

Zechariah:

9:9 .....The King to enter Jerusalem riding a donkey (First Coming)

11:10-13 .....He is to be sold for 30 pieces of silver

12:9-10 .....The Repentance of the Jews (Second Coming)

14:1-9 .....The Second Coming

Malachi 3:1-5.....The Messenger prepares the way

- **Shadows**

- i. Christophanies, i.e. the Angel of Yahweh, the Angel of God
- ii. The Passover of Exodus – Christ as the Passover Lamb
- iii. The Red Sea Crossing – Picture of Redemption
- iv. The Tabernacle / Temple
- v. The Sacrifices: 5 OT Sacrifices that picture specific aspects of Christ's atonement
- vi. The Day of Atonement – prefigure of Calvary
- vii. Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs a shadow of Christ
- viii. Circumcision – a picture of regeneration
- ix. The Festivals – various aspects of our salvation
- x. Song of Solomon – Picture of Christ and the Church

- **Types**

- i. Adam – Jesus is the “**Second Adam**” who is without sin. Under Him is a **New Humanity** (Eph. 2).
- ii. Noah's Ark – Jesus is the **True Ark** that saves His people from judgment
- iii. Melchizedek – Jesus is the **True Priest** who has no beginning and no end
- iv. Isaac – Jesus is the **True Promised Son** of a miraculous birth; See Gen. 22 and Abraham offering His Son, a picture of Christ's Sacrifice.
- v. Moses – Jesus is the **New Moses** who gives the true sense of the Law (Matt. 5-7)
- vi. Joshua – Jesus is the **True Deliverer**. Jesus is Ἰησοῦς or the greek translation of the Hebrew: YESHUA
- vii. David: Jesus is the **True King** that would come
- viii. All the Prophets: Jesus is the **True Prophet**, the Messenger of the Lord, the Word who became flesh who perfectly exegetes the Father (John 1:18).
- ix. Manna – a type of Christ
- x. The Rock in the wilderness – type of Christ
- xi. The snake lifted up in the wilderness

- **Law & Regulations**

- i. Jesus is the only perfect man that can fulfill all of God's perfect standards of righteousness
- ii. Many of the laws are to show an example of holiness verses unholiness
  1. No mixed fabrics
  2. No beards or clothing like the heathen (separation from the world)
  3. No eating of unclean animals that chew the cud but do not part the hoof (picture of hypocrisy – they chew the word but walk in a double minded way).