

Kingdom, Covenants & Canon of the Old Testament

Lesson 1

Why Study the Old
Testament?

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

Old Testament authors drew upon their beliefs in God's kingdom and covenants as they addressed specific situations in the books of the Old Testament canon.

II. Distance (3:00)

When we study the Old Testament, we find that many portions present outlooks that are unfamiliar, and it feels like we're exploring an ancient, distant land.

A. Causes (5:10)

At least two factors often cause us to feel distant from the Old Testament.

1. Organic Inspiration (5:48)

The Holy Spirit employed the personalities, experiences and intentions of the original human authors in composing the Bible.

God controlled the content of Scripture so that it is without error and may rightly be called the word of God.

Paul's letters resulted from a process involving both God and his human writer (2 Peter 3:15-16).

2. Divine Accommodation (10:25)

Accommodation: Every time God reveals himself to humanity, he speaks to us in finite human terms.

Without divine accommodation, we wouldn't understand God at all (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God designed the Old Testament Scriptures to be understood in the first place by ancient Israelites.

B. Kinds (14:00)

When we know the kinds of distance that we often encounter in the Old Testament, we'll be equipped to handle them more fruitfully.

1. Theological (14:54)

There are differences between the revelation that Old Testament authors received and the fuller revelation that we've received in Christ.

2. Cultural (18:21)

Cultural distance exists because human cultures are constantly changing.

So many differences exist between the ancient Near East and our modern world, that many things in the Old Testament are unfamiliar and puzzling to us.

3. Personal (22:15)

People who lived in the days of the Old Testament were different from modern people in many ways.

III. Relevance (25:04)

The Old Testament was not simply God's authoritative Word for ancient Israel, but it was God's Word for Christians as well.

The Old Testament is crucial for faithful Christian living.

A. Teachings of Jesus (26:14))

1. Negative Comments (27:04)

Some of the teachings of Jesus appear, at first glance, to present a negative view of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:21-44).

Jesus did not contradict the Old Testament; rather, he affirmed its authority by refuting common misunderstandings of its teachings.

Jesus contrasted his teachings with what had been “said” or “heard” and always spoke of what was “written” or “read.”

- Murder (Matthew 5:21-22; Psalm 133:1)
- Adultery (Matthew 5:27-28; Exodus 20:17)
- Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Malachi 2:16)
- Oaths (Matthew 5:33-34, 37; Proverbs 6:16-17)
- Revenge (Matthew 5:38-39; Leviticus 19:18)
- Love for enemies (Matthew 5:43-44; Exodus 23:4)

2. Positive Affirmations (40:35)

Jesus stood in complete harmony with the teachings of the Old Testament and came to fulfill them all (Matthew 5:17-18).

Every detail of the Old Testament will remain in force until the end of all things (Matthew 5:19).

Jesus insisted that his disciples affirm and follow every detail of the entire Old Testament, not just some parts of it (Matthew 5:20).

B. Teachings of Paul (45:05)

Like Jesus, Paul opposed the ways many in his day mishandled Scriptures.

1. Negative Comments (46:05)

Paul appears to have made negative comments about the Old Testament when he contrasted works of the law and faith (Galatians 3:1-5).

Paul opposed the misuse of the Old Testament as a guide for meritorious legalistic religion (Galatians 3:10-13).

Paul appealed to the Old Testament to prove the New Testament principle that justification is by faith alone (Galatians 3:11; Romans 4:1-12; Habakkuk 2:4).

2. Positive Affirmations (52:28)

Paul strongly affirmed the Old Testament's authority and relevance for followers of Christ (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

IV. Application (56:48)

We must study the Old Testament as deeply as we can so that we can apply it rightly to our lives today (2 Timothy 2:15).

A. Challenges (58:27)

There's a large gap between us and the Old Testament that we must take into view as we apply the Old Testament to our world (1 Corinthians 10:11).

1. Ancient World (1:01:39)

One of our principal tasks is to interpret the Old Testament as much as we can in terms of the ancient world to which it was first given.

Original meaning: The impact that God and his inspired writers jointly designed the text to have on its first audience

2. Historical Developments (1:04:03)

The theological teachings of the Old Testament developed over time.

When we apply an Old Testament passage, we must consider the historical developments that took place between the Old Testament world and our modern world.

3. Our World (1:07:37)

God inspired the Old Testament to be written with our world in mind (1 Corinthians 10:11).

B. Connections (1:08:58)

We must always be mindful of the commonalities that span the distance from the Old Testament into our own day.

1. Same God (1:10:00)

Faithful Christians today worship and serve the same God that faithful ancient Israelites served in the Old Testament.

God is immutable; the same today as he was in ancient times.

Three main ways in which God is the same immutable God:

- eternal counsel — God's unchanging plan for the universe (Isaiah 46:10).

God's eternal plan teaches us that his Old Testament purposes align with his New Testament purposes.

- divine attributes — the unchanging qualities of God's essence (Hebrews 1:10-12; James 1:17).

God's actions and revelations in Old Testament times, New Testament times, and today, consistently reflect his eternal nature.

- covenant promises

God will fulfill everything he has sworn to do in covenant with his people (Hebrews 6:17).

All the teachings of the Old and New Testaments hold together because God fulfills his kingdom purposes through covenants.

2. **Same World (1:20:25)**

The world of the Old Testament was the same world in which you and I live today.

Two kinds of connections between our New Testament faith and the faith of the Old Testament:

- **Historical Backgrounds**

The Old Testament provides background to events and teachings in the New Testament and in our world today.

- **Parallel Situations**

We live in circumstances that are very similar to those of Old Testament writers and their audiences.

Parallels exist in large part because we still live in the same world as God's people in the Old Testament.

3. **Same People (1:25:18)**

We are connected by crucial continuities that underlie our differences and unite us, even across time and culture.

Three ways in which we are the same kind of people as the people in the Old Testament:

- **Image of God**

All human beings are the image of God (Genesis 1:27; 9:6; James 3:9; 1 Corinthians 11:7).

The rational, linguistic and moral qualities that characterized Old Testament people also characterize us.

- **Sinful**

We are like the people of the Old Testament because all human beings are sinful (Romans 3:12; 1 Kings 8:46).

Because we are fallen images of God, we can understand why Old Testament writers focused on sin and redemption.

- **Covenant**

All people throughout history have been bound to God by covenant:

- universal covenants (Adam, Noah)
- national covenants (Abraham, Moses, David)
- new covenant (Christ)

C. **Developments (1:33:42)**

The Old Testament and New Testament represent one religion and one faith, but we must acknowledge the developments that have taken place.

1. **Epochal (1:34:28)**

God disclosed himself to his people progressively in major periods or epochs that correspond to God's covenants.

Faithful Christians have different ways of applying the Old Testament's message to our age:

- **Segmented View**

Assumes we should only apply to modern believers Old Testament teachings that are explicitly reaffirmed in the New Testament.

- **Flattened View**

If the New Testament doesn't explicitly reject or modify a teaching, Christians are obligated to follow it like those who lived before Christ.

- **Developmental View**

All Old Testament teachings apply to Christians, but always in the light of the New Testament.

Faithful followers of Christ must submit to the authority of the Old Testament, but as those upon whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

2. Cultural (1:41:22)

We must take into account the similarities and differences between cultural patterns in the Old Testament and those of our own world.

3. Personal (1:42:45)

We must account for both the similarities and differences between the people of the Old Testament and people today.

V. Conclusion (1:43:54)

3. Explain the relationship between Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the Old Testament.

4. How does Paul's teaching affirm the ongoing value of the Old Testament?

5. What should we learn from the teachings of Jesus and Paul about the relevance of the Old Testament in the modern world?

6. What significant challenges do we face as we try to understand and apply the Old Testament to our lives?

Application Questions

1. Think of a time when the Old Testament was perplexing to you. What contributed to your initial confusion?
2. How would you respond to someone who said, “Jesus’ teaching on such things as murder, adultery and love for enemies contradicts the teachings of the Old Testament”?
3. In the Sermon on the Mount, why did Jesus keep contrasting what was *said* versus what was *written*? In what ways might modern Christians be tempted to make errors like those that Jesus refuted?
4. What benefits come from acknowledging God’s unchanging nature as you study the Old Testament?
5. Why is it helpful to recall that people in both the Old Testament and the New Testament lived in the same world?
6. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

Glossary

accommodation – Term used to explain how an infinite God speaks to us in finite terms by adapting his communication so that we can understand it

canon – Authoritative standard; the exclusive collection of documents in the Judeo-Christian tradition recognized as Scripture

covenant – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

developmental view – View that looks at the continuity and changes between the Old and New Testaments and asserts that the whole Old Testament is relevant, but must be applied in the light of the New Testament

divine attributes – The perfections of God’s essence revealed through a variety of historical manifestations; attributes that only God can possess

ergates – Greek term (transliteration) meaning “a worker” or “a laborer”

eternal counsel – God’s eternal plan for the universe, established before his work of creation

flattened view – View that looks at the continuity and changes between the Old and New Testaments and asserts that if the New Testament does not mention a change, we should follow the Old Testament as closely as possible

immutable – Term meaning “unchanging”; used to express the unchanging nature of God’s character and perfections

mechanical inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts that the Holy Spirit essentially dictated the Bible, and human writers passively recorded what he said

national covenant – A covenant made with an individual who represented the nation of Israel (Abraham, Moses, and David)

new covenant – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

organic inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts that the Holy Spirit used the personalities, experiences, outlooks, and intentions of human authors as he authoritatively and infallibly guided their writing

original meaning – The impact and meaning that God and his inspired writers jointly intended the text to communicate to its first audience

romantic inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts that the Holy Spirit inspired biblical authors to write but did not superintend their writings

segmented view – View that looks at the continuity and changes between the Old and New Testaments and asserts that if the New Testament does not mention something, we do not need to apply it

typology – The study of how significant persons, institutions and events throughout biblical history prefigure later persons, institutions and events in Scripture

universal covenant – A covenant made with an individual who represented all of mankind (Adam and Noah)