

# Old Testament Introduction and Survey

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## I. The New Testament's estimate of the value of the Old Testament

- A. *The OT was the only Bible Jesus and the early Christians had or used*
- B. *It is able to make one wise unto salvation (2 Tim.3:15)*
- C. *It is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim.3:16)*
- D. *The whole OT is about Christ (Luke 24:44/ John 5:39/ Acts 10:43/ Hebrews 10:7)*
- E. *Jesus did not come to abolish or destroy, but to fulfill the OT (Matthew 5:17)—though not destroyed, fulfillment didn't leave the Old Order unchanged (Hebrews 7:12).*
  - 1. Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets by His complete obedience (John 8:29/17:4)
  - 2. He introduced the full (spiritual, inward) meaning of the law and the prophets (Colossians 2:16-17)
  - 3. He inaugurated the new age anticipated in the law and the prophets (Acts 3:24/Romans 1:1-2; 3:21/ Hebrews 6:5)
- F. *The OT was (and is) obscure in meaning apart from the revelation of Christ and the apostles, and requires their insights for its correct interpretation (Luke 24:45/ 2 Corinthians 3:14/ 1 Peter 3:10-12)*

## II. The Canon of the Old Testament

### **A. Its formation and recognition**

1. Jews came to recognize three divisions (total: 24 books):
  - a. The Law [*Torah*] (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
  - b. The Prophets
    - I. Four "Former Prophets" (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings)
    - II. Four "Latter Prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, "the Twelve" [our "minor prophets"])
  - c. The sacred Writings (Heb. *Kethubhim*; Gr. *hagiographa*)
    - I. Songs and Laments: Psalms (five collections combined), Song of Solomon, Lamentations
    - II. Wisdom literature: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
    - III. Historical: Ruth, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, Esther
2. Possibly collected in the time of Ezra or Nehemiah; the Torah was treated as canonical from the time of its writing (1400 BC), but is first documented as a "canon" in the Samaritan Bible, 432 BC. Judging from Dan.9:2, at least some of the prophetic writings were recognized in Daniel's time (535 BC). No documentation of the exact canon of the Old Testament exists until New Testament times.
3. Septuagint—translated 285-150 BC, included all the present canon, plus other books (e.g. Apocrypha)
4. Jesus ben Sira knew of the canon by 190 BC, but didn't necessarily consider it closed
5. His grandson (in the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus, 130 BC) was the first to mention the 3-fold division (the Law, the Prophets, "and the other writings"); confirmed by Philo (AD 40)
6. Josephus (AD 100)—mentioned 22 books: 5 of Moses, 4 of "hymns and practical precepts" (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon), and 13 of prophets (Joshua through Malachi, combining into one book each Judges-Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations, and The Twelve).
7. Jesus—The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms [writings?] (Luke 24:44)

- a. When only two divisions are mentioned [e.g., Matthew 5:17/ Luke 16:16], the “Writings” are considered as among the “Prophets,” a common convention among Talmudic teachers.
- b. The statement in Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51 might imply that Chronicles was viewed as the last canonical book in the arrangement known to Jesus.

***B. The Apocrypha (deuterocanonical books)***

1. *The books:* 1 & 2 Esdras, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, additions to Esther, the Prayer of Manasseh, the Song of the Three, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon (the last are additions to Daniel)
2. *Their history:* Written in the inter-testamental period (400-100 BC), not part of Palestinian Canon; Included in the Septuagint (at least from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD onward), but not recognized by Philo (1<sup>st</sup> century AD)—both of Alexandria;
3. *The question of their inclusion/exclusion in Christian Bibles:*
  - a. Jesus seemed to accept the Palestinian canon, and none of the apocryphal books are cited as scripture or authoritative by New Testament writers.
  - b. The books first came to light in modern times, as a collection, in the Christian Bibles of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD—Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus;
  - c. Though excluded in from the Hebrew Bible at least from 90 AD on, the church fathers retained them (at least from the 4<sup>th</sup> century forward), for reasons not known—with the one known exception of Melito of Sardis (190 AD). Augustine declared them to be inspired.
  - d. After the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Western Church accepted them, but the Eastern Church was undecided.
  - e. Reformers accepted only the Hebrew canon and rejected the inspiration of the Apocrypha. Luther included them in the back of his translation, calling them “useful and good to read.” Calvin and the Westminster Confession rejected them from inclusion in any Bibles.
  - f. In Counter-reformation, the Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent (1546) declared all the Apocrypha (except 1 & 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manessah) to be inspired Scripture.

**III. The Authors of the Old Testament Books**

***Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy:*** written by Moses (1400 BC)

***Joshua:*** probably written by Joshua, Moses’ divinely-appointed successor (1350 BC)

***Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel:*** compiled by some prophet or editor after David’s time, probably partially from documents written by Samuel, Nathan and Gad [1 Chron.29:29]. 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book (1000-900 BC)

***1 & 2 Kings:*** originally one book, traditionally written by Jeremiah (600 BC)

***1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra & Nehemiah:*** originally one continuous work, written by an anonymous “Chronicler” — often suggested to be Ezra, but probably a later writer using autobiographical writings of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as earlier books written by various prophets, including Samuel, Nathan, Gad [1 Chron. 29:29], Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer [2 Chron.12:15] (last historical reference is to Jaddua, the high priest, whom Josephus places in the time of Alexander the Great—330 BC)

*Esther*: probably written by Mordecai (400 BC)

*Job*: author unknown, possibly Moses or Job (1400 BC?)

*Psalms*: written by David and others (1000 BC and later)

*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*: written by Solomon (900 BC)

*Major and Minor Prophets*: written by the men whose names they bear (750—400 BC)

*Lamentations*: traditionally, written by Jeremiah (after 586 BC)

#### **IV. The parts of the Old Testament (in the Christian Bible's arrangement)**

##### **A. Books of History**

*The Pentateuch*: Genesis through Deuteronomy (5 books)

*The historical books*: Joshua through Esther (total: 12 — 9 pre-exilic/ 3 post-exilic)

##### **B. Books of Poetry and Wisdom Literature**: Job through Song of Solomon (5 books)

##### **C. Books of Prophecy**

*Major Prophets*: Isaiah through Daniel (5 books)

*Minor Prophets*: Hosea through Malachi (total: 12 — 9 pre-exilic/ 3 post-exilic)

#### **V. The story of the Old Testament**

##### **A. Pre-Abrahamic period** (Genesis 1-11) [ approx. 2000 years]

Creation

Fall [approx. 4000 BC]

Antediluvian (pre-flood) society

Flood [approx. 2400 BC]

Rise of Nations

##### **B. Patriarchal period** (Genesis 12-50) [approx. 300 years<sup>1</sup>]

Call of Abraham

From Abraham to Migration into Egypt

##### **C. Captivity in Egypt (or, possibly, the whole time of sojourning from Abraham's migration to Canaan to the Exodus<sup>2</sup>)** (Exodus 1-11) [430 years—Exodus 12:40f]

##### **D. Establishment of the nation of Israel** (Exodus 12-40) [1 year]

The Exodus [either 15<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century BC]

The giving of the Law

Institution of the priesthood and tabernacle ritual

##### **E. The wilderness wandering** (Numbers/ Deuteronomy ) [38-39 years]

##### **F. The period of conquest and settlement** (Joshua) [20 years<sup>3</sup>]

<sup>1</sup> From the 75<sup>th</sup> year of Abraham to the death of Joseph= 286 years

<sup>2</sup> If the latter, then from the death of Joseph to birth of Moses = 64 years

<sup>3</sup> From Death of Moses to first oppression in Canaan = 20 years. Wars of conquest = 6 years

**G. *The period of Judges*** (Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel 1-8 ) [possibly 450 years (Acts 13:18-20)<sup>4</sup>]

**H. *United monarchy period*** (1 & 2 Samuel/ 1 Chronicles ) [80 years]

The origin of the monarchy: Saul

The establishment of the Davidic Dynasty [approx. 1000 BC]

**I. *Period of the divided kingdom*** (1 & 2 Kings/ 2 Chronicles ) [approx.400 years]

The division of Israel and Judah

The career of the Northern Kingdom [approx. 263 years; 19 kings—all bad]

The career of the Southern Kingdom [ approx. 396 years; 20 kings, mostly bad]

The pre-exilic prophets

The rise of Assyria and the fall of the Northern Kingdom [722-21 BC]

The rise of Babylon and captivity of Daniel [605 BC]

The captivity of King Jehoiachin and Ezekiel [597 BC]

The fall of the Southern Kingdom [587-86 BC]

The Exile and the synagogue

**J. *Post-exilic period*** (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther ) [140 years]

The rise of Media-Persia and the return of the remnant with Zerubbabel [539-38 BC]

Discouragement of the returned exiles

Haggai & Zechariah [520 BC]

The rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple

Esther [ 480 BC]

Spiritual decline of the returned exiles

Ezra [457 BC]

Nehemiah [445 BC]

Malachi [ fifth century BC]

**K. *The Inter-testamental period*** (no canonical books, only Apocrypha) [400 years]

The rise of the Grecian Empire under Alexander [334 BC]

The division of the Grecian Empire [323 to 313 BC]

Ptolemies Vs. Seleucids

Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) [175-168 BC]

The Macabbean revolt [167-164 BC]

Judean independence [160 BC]

The Hasmonean dynasty and the development of Jewish parties [ 128-65 BC]

The rise of the Roman Empire and conquest of Palestine [200-63 BC]

Herod the Great [37 BC]

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<sup>4</sup> Solomon (1 Kings 6:1) says the time from the exodus to the building of the temple was 480 years, which seems to be 114 years too short. The total number of years oppression in the period of the judges was just 114 years. Solomon may be speaking of years of Israel's independence as a nation.