

The Old Testament in 20 Minutes Background

1/2 Bible in 20 Minutes

Psalm 1

11 08 2009 Sam Jones Memorial United Methodist Church

PP1 MASTER SLIDE**PP2 PSALM 1:3****Introduction****PP3 HOLY BIBLE**

During childhood, I learned this song at church:

*The B*I*B*L*E, that's the book for me.
I stand alone on the Word of God, the B*I*B*L*E!*

The song teaches an important truth. As Christians, we are “*a people of the Book.*” We believe that the Bible is the living Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says: “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction and training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

We don't just read the Bible like we do any other book; instead, we enter into a conversation with God. We interpret the Bible, but the Bible also interprets us. For those with ears to hear, the Holy Spirit speaks to us as God's Word.

I. The Bible in 20 Minutes Series**PP4 THE BIBLE IN 20 MINUTES**

Today we are beginning a two week series entitled *The Bible in Twenty Minutes*. Today we are focusing on the Old Testament and next week the New Testament. The sermon is actually divided into TWO stages.

The first part is an **overview** of the Old Testament. For those keeping time, this does NOT count towards my twenty minutes! An insert with background material is included in your bulletin. I encourage you to keep it in your Bible.

During the second part of the sermon, we will rehearse the **Scriptural story**. The Old Testament in particular emerged from the oral tradition of the Jewish faith. These stories were passed down from generation to generation.

II. The Importance of the Old Testament**PP5 THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Let's begin with a basic question: Is the Old Testament important to Christians? The adjective "**Old**" appears to give it a lesser status in the Christian faith. Certainly some church leaders have thought so in the past.

During the second century AD, a church teacher named **Marcion** lived in Rome. He believed that Jesus Christ was the savior of the world sent by God, and Paul was his chief apostle. BUT he taught that Christianity and Judaism were radically different religions. He rejected the Old Testament and its portrayal of God. In fact, his edited Bible included only ten chapters of *The Gospel according to Luke* and ten of Paul's letters.

The church rejected Marcion's teachings and declared him a heretic. But Marcionism is still alive and well today. Many of us own Bibles that only include the New Testament and perhaps the Psalms. Most sermons, Sunday School lessons, and Bible studies focus on New Testament passages.

But God IS the God of all ages. His nature and character do not change with the passing of time. History is God's story, and it spans time from Genesis to Revelation. Remember that Jesus himself was Jewish. The first disciples and apostles along with the early church were entirely Jewish. The only Scripture they knew was what we now call the Old Testament. In fact, the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 stating that "*All Scripture is God-breathed*" refers to the Old Testament—the New Testament had yet to be compiled!

The answer to the question is: "Yes, the Old Testament is essential to the Christian faith." It is an integral and important part of God's Word to us.

III. The Old Testament

PP6 TESTAMENT OR COVENANT

The Christian Bible is divided into two parts: the Old and New Testament. The word "*testament*" can also be translated as "*covenant*" or "*relationship*." The Old Testament describes God's covenant of law with Israel. The New Testament describes God's covenant of grace through Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament is also called the **Hebrew Bible**. It actually makes up the majority of the Christian Bible. There are 66 books in the Protestant Bible—the Old Testament contains 39 books and the New Testament 27. Jewish theologians divide the Hebrew Scriptures into three parts:

PP7-9 THE LAW, THE PROPHETS, THE WRITINGS (AS GET TO EACH)

The Law

The first section is called **The Law** or **The Torah**—which literally means "*teaching*." It includes the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Although we normally think of the Law as The Ten Commandments, it actually includes all of God's ordinances and laws.

The Prophets

The second section is called **The Prophets**. These books cover Israel's history from the time the Jews entered the Promised Land until the Babylonian captivity of

Judah. The prophets themselves were not overly concerned with predicting the future. Instead, they called Israel to repentance and holiness in the present.

The Writings

The third section goes under the general title of **The Writings**. They contain history, hymns, poetry, and stories. Some of the more familiar books include the Psalms, Proverbs, and Job.

Conclusion

PP10 BIBLE WITH CANDLE

We are a people of BOTH the Old and New Testament. In fact, one cannot truly appreciate the New Testament without understanding the Old Testament. ALL Scripture is God-breathed and waits to speak to us.

Psalm 1 compares the person who studies God's Word to a tree planted by streams of water. Its roots sink deep into the ground. The tree grows strong and tall. Its leaves do not wither, and it yields fruit in season. Blessed is the one whose delight is in the Word of the Lord.

"God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." (Psalm 119:105)