

OLD TESTAMENT EXPERT

Books of the Old Testament

Lesson #1

Welcome to the “Old Testament Expert” class! This class is designed to help you become familiar with the Old Testament, its structure, books, chronology, general content, and other important historical tidbits and truths. If you apply yourself in this class, you will become an “Old Testament Expert.” Now you may be thinking that I am exaggerating when I use the term “expert,” but I am not. There are, to be sure, Old Testament scholars and seminary trained men and women who know a great deal about the Old Testament. Yet most people in the world, know little or nothing about the Old Testament.

Even among Bible believing Christians there is a huge amount of ignorance about the Old Testament. Most people cannot name the books of the Old Testament, the chronology of the Old Testament books, the themes of any Old Testament books, or even the names of the first and last books of the Old Testament. They are “Old Testament challenged.” When you take these facts into consideration, this class will allow any diligent student to become an Old Testament expert.

As you can imagine, the field of Old Testament studies is huge. The challenge is trying to decide what to focus on first. This class will be designed to lay the foundation for future and more in-depth Old Testament studies. Sorry, but we will not be learning Hebrew and Aramaic. Neither will we be able to comment on all the Old Testament or do detailed studies of specific passages. Instead, we will be looking at the largest and most general facts of the Old Testament.

Each class will contain verbal instruction, opportunities to ask questions, quizzes, and possibly some group interaction and competition. The most important things you need to know about Old Testament studies are that 1) studying the Old Testament is fun, 2) learning the Old Testament has practical application for your life, 3) studying the Old Testament will help you understand the New Testament better, and 4) studying the Old Testament will help you know God better.

Each class we will probably have a quiz on some aspect of the Old Testament to test your knowledge in that area. Don't feel bad or embarrassed if you don't get a single answer right. I don't expect you to be an expert yet! Later, you will take the same quiz again to show you how much you have learned.

As for homework, this class has some. It will not be too difficult, but you must not wait until the last minute to rush through it. You will remember things better if you work on your homework a little bit each day.

First, homework will be in the form of memorization. Everyone memorizes lots of facts every day. We often don't realize it but we talk to people, read the paper, hear things on the radio and we remember lots of details. It is true that the older we get, the harder it is to remember things, but we all can learn a great deal if we apply ourselves. So be ready to memorize some information.

Secondly, be ready to do some Bible reading. Every week, you will be assigned about 10 to 15 chapters of the Old Testament. This is only about two chapters a day, very easy. The assigned chapters will help you become familiar with some of the key portions of the Old Testament.

Finally, there will be optional reading that extra diligent students can do if they finish their other homework. A bibliography of books you might want to consider getting will be provided later in this study.

I. DISCOVERING YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

A. It is helpful before learning something to clearly see where you are in your understanding of that particular subject. You see what you need to learn and afterwards you see what you have learned. So here is your first survey. Write down the books of the Old Testament in the order they appear, as best you can, filling out the chart below.

Write down the names of the Old Testament books in the order they appear in the Old Testament			
1		21	
2		22	
3		23	
4		24	
5		25	
6		26	
7		27	
8		28	
9		29	
10		30	
11		31	
12		32	
13		33	
14		34	
15		35	
16		36	
17		37	
18		38	
19		39	
20			

1. How many did you get right?
2. How many did you spell correctly?

- B. Memorize the Old Testament books in the groups as listed below
1. **Group one:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
 2. **Group two:** Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
 3. **Group three:** Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
 4. **Group four:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
 5. **Group five:** Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah
 6. **Group six:** Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
-
7. **First three groups together:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
-
8. **Last three groups together:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
-
9. **All the books together:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
 10. If you have trouble memorizing, try these tricks:
 - a. Write down the books several times
 - b. Put the names of the books to a tune
 - c. Make flash cards with the different groups on one side and the books on the other and flip through them

II. HOMEWORK

- A. If you need the accountability, get one or more partners to hold you accountable during the week. Have them call you or email you to see how you are doing with your memorization. **Whatever you do, make sure you have the names of the Old Testament books memorized by next week. YOU CAN DO IT!**
- B. Don't leave without filling out the class roster and resource questionnaire
- C. **Read Genesis chapters 1-3, 6-9, 11:1-9; 12:1-3; 15-19, 22, 37, 45, 49-50**

III. BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING IN OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

- A. ***Talk through the Bible***, by Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa. (Easy to read) This book is not just for Old Testament studies. It gives a brief overview of each book of the Bible and includes: 1) a visual chart showing how each book of the Bible is constructed; 2) a introduction to the book; 3) background on the author; 4) date and setting; 5) theme and purpose; 6) key chapters and verses; 7) how Christ fits into the book; 8) overall contribution to the Bible; 9) survey of the book; 10) detailed outline of the book. There are also some very helpful charts and graphs included in the book.
- B. ***A Survey of the Old Testament***, by Gleason Archer. (College level reading) This book starts out with a survey of textual issues related to the Old Testament, and liberal attacks on the reliability of the Old Testament text. The second part gives general introduction material to each book of the Old Testament such as key dates, key issues, general survey, themes, and content. Be warned, Archer believes in the "day age theory" which tries to merge the Bible with evolution. In other words, he rejects the six literal days of creation though he has strongly defended the inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God.
- C. ***Towards Rediscovering the Old Testament***, by Walt Kaiser. (Easy reading with a few big words to sort through) This book discusses: 1) reasons some Christians do not study the Old Testament and why these reasons are faulty; 2) how the Old Testament applies to Christians today; 3) common criticisms of the Old Testament explained; 4) the message of Old Testament promise; 5) how the Old Testament helps you understand Christ better; 6) how the Old Testament helps you understand salvation better; 7) how Christians can derive practical truth from the Old Testament; 8) how we can teach and preach from the Old Testament; and 9) the Old Testament as part of the Christian's Scripture.
- D. ***A History of Israel***, by Walt Kaiser. (Easy reading – some big words but a good glossary of definitions in the back) This book discusses the history of Israel, the meaning of key terms, dates, and important events that relate to Israel and the nations surrounding them in the Old Testament era. This history is more focused on biblical content than Merrill's book below.

- E. ***A Kingdom of Priests***, by Eugene Merrill. (College level reading) This book discusses the history of Israel, the meaning of key terms, dates, and important events that relate to Israel and the nations surrounding them in the Old Testament era. This book focuses a bit more on what is going on around Israel than Kaiser's book above.
- F. ***Prophets of Israel***, by Leon Wood. (College Level) This is a great survey of the prophets of the Old Testament. Wood starts out by defining and discussing the purpose and ministry of the prophets. Then he discusses the prophets during different era's in Israel's history giving the date, background, historical setting, personal ministry, personal characteristics, and outline of each prophet's work.
- G. ***A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament***, by Roy B. Zuck general editor. (College Level) This book focuses on theological issues in the Old Testament. The books of the Old Testament are broken up into groups, then major theological themes and surveyed and discussed for each group of books. A good book to consult before studying a book of the Old Testament.
- H. ***Old Testament Theology***, by Paul House. (College level reading). A more thorough and somewhat more detailed theology of the Old Testament than *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, mentioned above. House moves through the Old Testament addressing the key theological issues book by book.
- I. ***Chronological Background Charts of the Old Testament***, by John H. Walton. (Easy to read) This book is full of charts which organize important Old Testament issues. It is helpful in that many complicated issues are organized visually on the page. Key interpretive issues, archeological issues, and a host of other issues are compared and visually presented.