

“GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT”

SESSION #1

Welcome to “Getting Acquainted with the Old Testament”!

Many Christians are familiar with the NEW Testament. But what about the OLD Testament? Lots of Christians rarely crack open this larger part of the Bible. “*It’s just old history. It’s boring. It’s too difficult.*” But as we’ll discover in this course, the Old Testament is anything but boring and is not just a set of dusty old historical documents.

This is the Bible *Jesus* knew and used in His ministry on earth. And these books contain many foundational truths which help us better understand the *New* Testament.

So, whether you’ve never read the Old Testament before, or you just need a refresher on this major part of the Bible, this course is for you.

Hi, I’m Brian Cummins and I’m excited to share this journey of exploration together through the most amazing collection of books in the world! The OT is a library of 39 books, a wonderful library of magnificent messages from our faithful Heavenly Father. Just because the OT is old doesn’t mean it’s not relevant and not special. It’s very special, and as we will discover, very relevant to us in the 21st century.

This course is not going to be a scholarly or an academic approach to the OT, but rather a devotional overview of the 39 books of the OT.

Think of it first of all as a helicopter journey. We will get high enough over the landscape of these 39 books so that we get the big picture of how they fit together, and what they’re all about. From this ALTITUDE viewpoint we will trace a lot of the basic themes and developments across this wonderful landscape of some of the most fascinating books you could ever imagine. But it’s not only an altitude viewpoint we want to get.

We want to get an PERSONAL viewpoint as well by zeroing in on specific characters and some of their specific experiences and events along the way. Getting “up close and personal” will help us pick up some spiritual principles which I trust will make a difference in our own spiritual journeys of faith.

Let’s begin by taking a brief look at the whole Bible to start with in order to get the overall context before we plunge into the book of Genesis.

The Bible, as you know, is made up of 2 main parts, both of them called testaments – the Old Testament and the New. These testaments are agreements between God and his people.

The OT is an agreement between God and Israel especially focused on the Law given at a mountain – the mountain was Mt. Sinai.

The NT is an agreement available between God and all people focussed on another mountain – Mt Calvary – and the death of Jesus at that mountain. But a testament is more than just an agreement.

A biblical testament is a clear statement of God’s purposes – purposes which He expresses in terms that bind God to do what he said by a solemn oath to perform what he promised.

We still use the word “testament” today – specifically, the “last will & testament” of someone. It is what that person desires to be done. And God makes a testament with us – it is what he is going to perform for us, on our behalf, as part of that agreement. Such testaments in the Bible are confirmed by blood – the death of an innocent substitute. They only become effective after death. It’s still true, isn’t it?

Someone's last will & testament only comes into effect after the death of the one making the testament. So the OT is God's solemn oath to do what he promises to do. And to make that oath binding there is going to be a death, the death which will make that testament come into effect.

In the *OT* the death was the death of animals, most often lambs. These were substitute sacrifices on behalf of man.

In the *NT* God's agreement, his covenant with mankind, is made possible by the death of the Lamb of God, the blood shed by Jesus Christ. This is one of the strong, vital connections between the OT and the NT.

The Old is looking forward especially to the reality, the fulfillment, of what will take place in that agreement God makes with us recorded in the NT, and made possible in Jesus.

So both of the testaments, old and new, are centered in Jesus Christ. The OT **predicts** that he's coming; the NT in a sense **produces** him. The OT **begins** the whole story of why Jesus has to come as the Lamb of God. The NT **completes** that story and the whole story of what God plans to do on behalf of humanity. The OT **anticipates** Jesus Christ; the NT **realizes** that he is here and shows us what he has done for us.

Philip Jensen, who was the principal of a Bible college in Australia, wrote that the Bible is like a mystery book in which Jesus is the final chapter. How does a mystery story work?

The writer plants clues along the way until the mystery is solved in the end. Well if you look at the Bible as a kind of mystery book the mystery gets clues tucked in all the way as you move from Genesis all the way through the rest of the books of the Bible. But really the final chapter of God's mystery book is Jesus Christ himself. He's the answer, he's what makes the whole mystery become clear and we see the reality that God has intended all along.

So as we look at the OT keep in mind that this is not just some kind of historical record about the OT people of Israel. It's much more than that. Yes, it's history and many other things, but they're all pointing – all 39 books – pointing toward what God has anticipated in those books: the coming of the Lamb of God – Jesus Christ as that final completion of God's agreement with humanity, the new covenant.

Gordon Liddy, who was probably the most colorful & controversial character in the Watergate Affair of American political infamy, became a Christian after his release from prison. As a result of a question on the David Letterman TV show, Liddy started thinking about God.

“By definition, God is infinite, and by definition we are finite,” he reasoned. “It is contrary to the rules of logic for a finite being to be able to apprehend the infinite. So...there has to be some communication. That infinite being is going to have to tell me. I am never going to be able to apprehend that myself.” The next step in Liddy's reasoning was to wonder if there *was* any communication.

Then, he says, *“a light went on in my head. **That's** what this Bible is all about!”*

Yes, it's not merely a historical record, but God's means of communicating with finite man. His means of communicating with YOU! So keep your heart open to Him as we move through these studies. And stay with us for the next session as we get into Genesis, the story of creation, and all that is packed into the very first verse in the Bible!
