

## Lesson 1 - Cover

### INTRODUCTION

Everybody has one. If not it is readily attainable. It is after all the top selling book of all time.

- It's a handy place to store the family records and press flowers
- It makes an especially attractive centerpiece.
- It's just another good Book that everyone should read . . . some day.
- But generally, it merely collects dust and is rarely put to use.

Today, we will make a commitment to change.

Our goal in this study is to explore what the Bible says about our God, our homes, our families, our problems, and our future.

Our study will introduce the Bible, certain vital subjects, and themes.

1. We will not discuss the teachings of any church or denomination. Our main concern is, "What does the Bible say?"
2. We will not ask you to join a church.
3. We will not argue about any issue covered in the study.
4. The Bible study is given in homes free of any charge.

John 5:39 - You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,

### Scripture testifies about Jesus

Darkness seems to engulf our world. Oh yes, this generation is acclaimed to be the most enlightened ever. Yet the world is a mess... When pills numbering in tons are required to put Americans to sleep at night, the question looms: where can we find peace?

Faced with insurmountable problems, fears, and loneliness, this world gropes for answers to modern dilemmas. All mankind needs help from a higher power to provide peace of mind, courage, hope, and guidance. All mankind is searching for this... The best place to look is in the Word of God – The Bible.

Y our Bible anticipated the present world situation. It seems to have been written especially for our generation.

Although centuries old, the Bible is amazingly current. It deals with matters of universal interest. It offers hope and solutions for current perplexities. Our Bible also describes a lifestyle totally opposite from the gloomy despair surrounding us.

**John 10:10 I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

**The full life we are looking for is found in Jesus. Remember it is**  
**SCRIPTURE that testifies about Jesus.**

## **LESSON 1 – CHART 1**

### **THE OLD TESTAMENT: WHAT IS IT?**

Why is your Bible labeled “Old” and “New” Testament, when all of it is very old? Ever heard of someone’s “last will and testament?” The word “testament” refers to a document disclosing the will of a departed person. It is a covenant or agreement between two contracting persons.

Thus, the “Old” Testament is the covenant or agreement God made with man about salvation before Christ came. The “New” Testament is God’s covenant with man about salvation after Christ came.

#### **Each Testament is divided in 5 sections.**

The Old Testament begins with the **Law**. This includes the first five books of the Bible written by Moses. These books contain the story of Creation, the Flood, and the origin of the Jewish people. Also included are a detailed list of God’s laws and the Ten Commandments to govern His people.

Next come the twelve books of **History** of the Jewish people, their trials, division, captivity, and finally, restoration to their home in the Promised Land. These books cover eight hundred years from the thirteenth to the fifth century B.C.

Positioned near the heart of the Old Testament are five **Poetry** books. These are not short, rhymed verses, but are written in free verse. Among these are the well-known Psalms, extolling and praising the God of the Jewish people. These five are volumes of praises, promises, prayers, prophecies, and commandments.

Next come the **Major Prophets**. Five books are devoted to events in Israel, both present and future, such as: the coming

Messiah, the church age, the end of time, and kingdom age.

Last are the writings of the twelve **Minor Prophets**. They are termed “minor” not because their work is any less significant but because they are short. Some are less than one full page. The Minor Prophets declared God’s message of warning and instruction.

## **MANY WRITERS, ONE AUTHOR**

The Old Testament was written over a period of 1,400 years by thirty-two writers and covers approximately 3,600 years. Although the writers came from all backgrounds, each perfectly harmonizes with the others. Amos was a country Preacher. Isaiah was a brilliant court preacher. Moses was heir to the Egyptian throne. David was a king and composer. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. Still there are no contradictions in their writings because there was really just one Author of all thirty-nine books—the Holy Ghost:

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:21).

Words were penned in different ages, different countries and by different men—some who never saw each other or knew that others had written on the same subjects. Yet when their writings became one Book, not one contradiction exists.

What do you suppose might happen if forty medical doctors from different countries and ages would write a book on the treatment for a certain disease? How much unity would prevail among their writings?

## **BEFORE THE BIBLE**

How did we get this Book? How did a collection of sixty-six short books emerge as one complete work?

For the first 2,500 years of man’s history, the written Word did not exist.

Just how did man function without a Bible? How could he know God’s will? God spoke orally with a few selected men—Adam, Enoch, Noah,

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses. Since these men lived before Scripture was written, they received verbal information concerning God's will.

However, God manifested Himself to man in other ways. "The heavens declare the glory of God." The handiwork of God's creation in the universe illustrates God's existence and His love for mankind.

Another way of revealing His will was to place within man a conscience—that inner ability to detect right and wrong. Although 2,500 years was a long time without the written Word, God planned adequate provisions through:

- Oral communication
- Revelation of creation
- Inner voice of human conscience

## **FIRST WRITTEN COVENANT**

Moses was the first man to view the written covenant of God. Atop Mount Sinai, the Lord talked with Moses and with His finger inscribed the law on tablets of stone. Then God revealed the plan whereby He would preserve His written Word for all generations.

## **LAW IS PRESERVED**

The nation of Israel was chosen to preserve both God's written and spoken Word. Moses was instructed to place the tablets of stone in the most holy and sacred place: the ark of the covenant.

Moses was also commanded to have the Levites and scribes make a copy of the law for their king when Israel would desire to have a ruler like other nations:

"And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them" (Deuteronomy 17:18-19)

Through the following ages, copies and manuscripts were written on clay tablets, wood, leather, animal skins, parchment and sheets of papyrus. Finally, paper was used for biblical manuscripts.

## ENTIRE LAW READ EVERY SEVEN YEARS

One commandment required that every Israelite adult and child hear all the reading of God's written laws every seven years:

“And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi . . . And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing” (Deuteronomy 31:9-11).

Throughout Israel's history, the nation often strayed from the teaching of the law. When the citizens of Jerusalem were led captive to Babylon, Daniel and Ezekiel carried with them precious copies of God's Word for preservation. Returning to Israel seventy years later, the word was preserved.

Ezra, a scribe in Israel, read and emphasized the Word of God by reading to his people from the books of Law, History, and the Prophets. Through Ezra's efforts, Old Testament books were restored to full prominence. Actually, more Old Testament books were yet to come—the prophetic works of Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi. From Ezra's time forward, all the Old Testament writings were gathered into one collection. These Holy Spirit inspired texts were preserved until the time of Christ.

God planned that the Hebrew Scriptures be meticulously preserved until the time Christians would use them. Christ also put His divine approval on all the Old Testament while teaching His new gospel:

“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

Notice that Jesus specifically mentioned the three major sections of Old Testament Scripture: the **Law**, the **Prophets**, and the **Psalms**.

The Law includes the first five books of Scripture. The Prophets include Major and Minor Prophets, as well as Joshua, Judges, Samuel and the Kings. The Psalms were also a general division including: Psalms,

Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Chronicles.

## **SCRIBES COPY LAW**

From Christ's remarks concerning the law, we know that the common text of that day was identical to the Old Testament of today. Why is this true? The Jewish scribes, fulfilling their God-given mandate to preserve the Scriptures, had developed a detailed plan to ensure the accuracy of each copy. Meticulous detail was given to copying each letter.

In A.D. 700 a group of Jewish scholars called "Masoretes" developed a system for the accurate transmission of the Old Testament to future generations. Strict rules were established for all copyists:

1. No word or letter could be written from memory.
2. The scribe must look attentively at each word, then pronounce it before writing it.
3. The words and letters of each section were counted. If the total figure did not balance with the original, the manuscript was discarded.

## **FIRST BIBLE PRINTED A.D. 1488**

This careful process continued until the invention of the printing press about the middle of the fifteenth century in Germany. John Gutenberg was the inventor of the printing press. The first book to be printed was the Bible!

Because of their precise attention to detail and accuracy, modern scholars have proven that today's Old Testament is exactly the same as in ancient biblical times. Nothing has changed! It's accurate! It's authentic! It's pure!

## **THE WORD IN OUR HANDS**

The original Hebrew Scriptures were copied and translated for generations. In Alexandria, Egypt, during the second and third centuries B.C., one of the earliest and most important translations into the Greek language was called the "Septuagint" (meaning "seventy") because of the seventy Jewish scholars who prepared it. Since that time, the Bible has been translated and paraphrased into more languages than any other book in existence.

Some of the earliest translations were into Syriac, then Latin, Armenian and Gothic. The first complete English translation was made in 1382 by John Wycliffe. His work was soon followed by other English translators, producing the Tyndale Bible, Coverdale Bible, and the Geneva Bible.

The King James Version was published in 1611. This became known as the Authorized Version because the work of translation was encouraged and sponsored by King James I of England.

The Latin Vulgate translation was the first to incorporate verse and chapter divisions in both Old and New Testaments.

So the Book was a long time in preparation. From the very first day God spoke audibly with Adam until the Old Testament collection was printed and translated in English . . . was a long road, but not by coincidence. God, in His divine providence, saw our need and sent His Word. Here we are holding it now. It's a miracle Book!!