

Old Testament Survey - Part 1

by Dick Woodward

The Mini-Bible College aims to acquaint students with the content and outline of the Bible, and to show how all the books relate to one another.

Duration: 28:44

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "Bible Survey", "Old Testament"

Description

This sermon introduces the Mini-Bible College, a comprehensive survey of the Bible in 180 sessions, aiming to acquaint believers with the content, outline, and devotional application of each book. It emphasizes the unity of the Bible and the importance of equipping lay people for ministry. The sermon also discusses the tools needed for Bible study and provides an overview of the organization of the Bible, highlighting the different types of books in the Old and New Testaments.

Transcript

Please enjoy this original recording of the Mini-Bible College, also known as MBC, hosted by the author himself, Pastor Dick Woodward, in the 1980s. International Cooperating Ministries is privileged to make his timeless Bible lessons available. Each weekly episode is 30 minutes.

Together, these sessions create a three-year curriculum. This practical walk through the Bible, his nurturing believers and equipping disciples speaking 31 languages in more than 50,000 small group Bible studies around the world. Now, here's Pastor Woodward with the Mini-Bible College.

Welcome to the Mini-Bible College. Our Mini-Bible College, as we call it, is actually a survey of the Bible in 180 sessions. This survey of the Bible has some objectives.

Our objective in surveying all the 66 books of the Bible is to acquaint you with the content and with the outline, but especially with the devotional application of every book of the Bible to the practical areas of your life. It's also our objective in surveying all the books of the Bible in this course of study to show you something about the unity of the Bible or how all of these books relate to one another. Somewhat is called this approach to the study of the scripture a synthetic study of the Bible or Bible synthesis, not in the sense that it's artificial, but in the sense that the word synthetic or synthesis means taking the many parts and bringing them into a whole.

The Bible is made up of a plurality of books, 66 books, and there is a unity and a theme that runs through all of these 66 books, and it will be our purpose as we survey each of the 66 books of the Bible to show how all the parts fit into the whole. It's also our objective in this course of study to administer the Bible to the so-called lay person. It's not our purpose to in any sense replace the course of study that's offered in professional schools, but we believe that the potential of the church is really wrapped up in its lay people.

The Apostle Paul expressed this objective in these words. He said it was his intent to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry. According to Paul, the work of the ministry is committed to the saints, not just to a few professionals.

And since God has committed the work of the ministry to the saints or to the whole church, we feel that there's great potential in equipping the saints for the work of that ministry. We believe that lay people have a hunger today to really go through the Scripture and understand the different books of the Scripture. So it's our objective to go through all 66 books of the Bible and try to put each of these books in perspective and show you what these books are, how you should approach these books, what you should expect to find in these books, and especially, as we said, how to apply these books to the practical areas of your life.

Now in order to accomplish these objectives, certain portions of the Scriptures will be assigned for you to read. We have a notebook or a workbook that goes with this course, which you'll be able to obtain. And in this workbook or notebook, assignments will be given, written assignments, portions of Scripture will be assigned for you to read, questions will be given that we hope will guide you into the reading of these books.

Now if you have any understanding at all of the vast amount of material that this is going to cover, then you realize that in 180 sessions, this will only amount to practically an introduction to the 66 books of the Bible. It's our hope that as we put these books in perspective for you, then you will come to these books yourself and read these books for yourself. The nature of this course of study then will be sort of a directed study, and it will be our intention to direct your study or your reading of the Word of God by giving you perspective and perhaps some insights into the garden spots of these 66 books of the Bible.

Now as you embark upon this study with us, I feel almost as if we're about to take a journey together. It's going to be a long journey. When people take a journey together, perhaps to the Holy Land, it gives them kind of a bond, and I expect to develop a bond with you as we go through the 66 books of the Bible.

And may I say, the first thing that you need as you embark on this journey is to have the tools for Bible study. You know, carpenters, plumbers, dentists, surgeons, watchmakers, people like this all have tools of their trades. If you're going to study the Bible seriously, there are some tools that you need.

The first one, of course, is your Bible. I recommend a well-bound Bible, because as you really get into a serious study of the Bible, you will mark your Bible and become very familiar with your Bible. And if it isn't well-bound, just about the time you're deep into your study of the Scripture, you'll have to replace it or discard it.

So I recommend that you invest in a well-bound Bible. Many people feel that the King James Translation of the Bible is very special, and many of the other tools that I'm going to recommend are geared to the King James Translation of the Bible. So it is perhaps a good practice to own a King James Translation of the Bible.

But for readability, there are many other translations of the Bible today that are very good. I frankly recommend the Living Bible, and the Living Bible is the translation that I'll be using most of the time through this course of study. For readability, the Living Bible is excellent.

For accuracy, probably the New American Standard Bible translation is your best, or the New International Version of the Bible. There are many excellent translations of the Bible today, the Jerusalem Bible and others, and I recommend that you have perhaps a King James Bible and also one or two of these revised translations for readability. Another Bible study tool that you need to have is a Bible dictionary.

A Bible dictionary is a book that tells you about every person, place, or thing recorded in the Bible. If you took a trip to the Holy Land and took a Bible dictionary with you, you could be an authority on everything in the Holy Land, because every place or everything mentioned in the Bible that's over there would be explained in your Bible dictionary. The Bible dictionary is a very helpful tool.

I recommend Unger's Bible dictionary, or perhaps in five volumes, the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Another important Bible study tool is the Concordance. A Concordance is a book that lists all the words of the Bible, everywhere they're found in the Bible.

Now, this has two uses. First of all, if you're trying to locate a verse of Scripture in the Bible, if you're wondering, where does it say in the Bible that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son? If you can't think of any place where that's found, in your Concordance you can look up the word world, or any word in that verse, and then under that heading of the word world, you'll find this verse referred to, and then you'll know where it's located in the Scripture. Another use of the Concordance is the topical study of the Bible.

If you ask a lot of Bible scholars this question, if you were stranded on an island and you could only have one book in addition to your Bible, what would you want that book to be? So many of them will say a Concordance. And the main reason they say that is, you can study the Bible topically with a Concordance. Every character in the Bible, for instance, if you just look up his name, look up the name Abraham, and right away you'll see every place in the Bible Abraham is mentioned.

Or take a theme like love, or take a theme like money, or stewardship, or anything like this. Just look it up in the Concordance and right away you'll see listed there all the verses in the Bible that use that word, and therefore you can study that topic by going through the Concordance. Another important Bible study tool, especially for a survey of the Bible, is the Bible Handbook.

A Bible Handbook gives you a little bit of information about every chapter in the Bible, and I recommend one by Henry H. Haley. Also Unger has a Bible Handbook. And then some other tools for a survey study of the Bible would be books like What the Bible's All About by Henrietta Maris, or The Little Paperback Briefing the Bible by Dr. J. Vernon McGee, An Exposition of the Whole Bible by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, and a two-volume set, sometimes in one volume, Living Messages of the Books of the Bible by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan.

These are some tools that would help you in a survey study of the Scripture. Now in this first introductory session, and I hope to have three introductory sessions before we get into our survey of the Scripture, I'm going to assume that you know nothing at all about the Bible. If you're a Bible scholar, be patient, and we'll catch up to you very soon.

But at first, at least, I'm going to assume you know nothing about the Bible. And in these introductory sessions, I want to share some perspective on the Bible in this spirit. It says in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Luke that one of the last things Jesus did with the apostles before he ascended was this.

He opened up their understanding of the Scripture. The Bible was a closed book to the apostles, just like it is to many people today. And there was one statement Jesus made about the Bible that opened up the Bible to the apostles.

That statement, which we'll look at later, was that the Bible was all about him. But when he shared some perspective with them about the Bible, then their understanding of the Bible was opened up. Now in that spirit, I would like to share some information about the Bible in these introductory sessions with the prayer and with the hope that this information about the Bible will open up your understanding of the Bible.

First of all, I would like for us to think about what the Bible is. What is the Bible? Now the word Bible, if you saw it in its original form and you were familiar with the original language, is a plural word. It's the word Biblia, and if you looked at that word in its original form and you were familiar with the original language, you would know that it's talking about books and not just one book.

Now most Bibles have this word in front of the word Bible, Holy Bible. What do we mean when we call this collection of books holy? Well, the word holy means that which comes from God, or that which belongs to God, that of which God is the source. That's what holy means.

So when you put holy in front of this word Bible, what you're suggesting is that this collection of books come from God, or belong to God, or in some sense God is the source of these books. In this same sense, the Bible is referred to as the Word of God. Now we refer to these 66 holy little books as the Word of God because of some statements that are made by people like Paul and Peter.

For instance, listen to this statement made by the Apostle Paul about the Bible. The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and helps us to do what is right.

It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone. The Apostle is saying to us here in this scripture, 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, in the Living Bible paraphrase, in this passage of scripture, the Apostle Paul is saying to us that the Bible came from God. God gave us the Bible through a process that Paul calls inspiration.

The word inspiration means God breathed. The idea is that God breathed into men, the authors of these holy little books, and because the Spirit of God breathed into them, their thoughts were not their own and the words that they put down on paper were not their own words. They were the thoughts of God and they were the words of God.

God put these words and these thoughts in the minds of these men. That process is called inspiration. So through the process of inspiration, the Apostle Paul says, God gave us this book.

That's why it's called a holy book and that's what the word inspiration means. Now Peter gives us an additional focus on this word inspiration. He tells us how inspiration works.

Peter put it this way in 2 Peter 1, verses 16 and 21. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his

majesty. For no prophecy recorded in the scriptures was ever thought up by the prophet himself.

For the prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Now again, Peter is saying the same thing that Paul said. He's just describing it a little bit more.

He's saying to us that these people who wrote these holy little books, their thoughts and their words did not originate with them. The thoughts and the words that these people wrote in the holy little books that we call the Bible had their origin in God. They came from God and God gave these thoughts and these words to these authors, these human authors through this process of inspiration.

Peter describes the process this way. He says holy men of God spoke as they were carried along or moved along by the Holy Spirit. Now when he says carried along, he uses the Greek word phero, P-H-E-R-O.

It's the word from which we get our word ferry, for a ferry boat. A ferry boat is a boat that moves you from one point to another. The Greek word suggests wind blowing in the sails of a boat, moving that boat along.

So what Peter is saying is this. These men who wrote these holy little books, the Spirit of God just moved them along as they wrote these books and so again their thoughts and their words had their origin in God and not in their own minds. Now that's what we mean when we say the Bible is holy and that's why we call the Bible the word of God and say it's the word of God and not the word of man.

Now the expression word of God is used in two other ways. The expression is applied first of all to Jesus Christ because he according to scripture was the living word of God. Everything he was, everything he said and everything he did was God's word to man.

He just completely revealed God by his life and his actions and his teachings and so he's referred to as the word of God living and the scripture is referred to as the word of God written. We also hear about the word of God preached. The apostle Paul told us that preaching is a great miracle.

He said it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Men and women are saved when they hear the word of God preached. Someone has said the word of God preached is like this.

The Spirit of God using the word of God through a man of God to make a son of God. So the word of God is used in three senses but the Bible is called the word of God written. Now I would like to say something about the organization of the Bible.

There are sixty-six books in the Bible and I would like to get into an overview right now of these sixty-six books and share with you something of how these sixty-six books are organized in the canon of scripture. You might expect that these books would be found in the scripture on the basis of when they were written but that isn't the case. The books of the Bible are grouped together in the Bible on the basis of the kind of books they are.

You have two primary divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Now this was not always so. In the day of Jesus there was no such thing as the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The New Testament hadn't been written yet and so the scriptures that existed in the day of Jesus were not called old, they were just called the scriptures or the word of God. After the New Testament was written and put together, then the distinction was made between Old Testament and New Testament. Now the Old Testament really means the old agreement or the old covenant between God and man and the New Testament, that expression means the new agreement or the new covenant between God and man.

There's a sense in which the Old Testament books all say this one big thing, Jesus is coming and there's a sense in which all the New Testament books say Jesus came. According to the scriptures themselves, in the beginning when God created man, God and man were like this, they were absolutely at one, they were together. But God created man a creature of choice and we'll read about this in the first book of the Bible.

Man exercised and he exercises his choice to turn away from God and all of God's plan for his life and since God is holy and he can't look upon a disobedient sinful man, God turns away from man. Now this divorce between God and man, that's the fundamental problem with which the scriptures deal. The Old Testament says to us, will you believe me when I tell you, I'm going to reconcile that divorce.

And the New Testament simply says, will you believe me when I tell you, I did reconcile that divorce. The Old Testament says, that divorce is going to be reconciled when Jesus comes and Jesus is coming. And the New Testament says, that divorce was reconciled when Jesus came.

Now the Old Testament books break down into five divisions. First of all, there are law books, five of them, and these law books are the cornerstone of the scripture. In a sense, if you really want to understand the whole Bible, you need to understand the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

They're called law books because much of the law of God is found in these books. They also contain history, some of them, but in addition to that history, these books contain the law of God. And this is the pure word of God, which is preached by the prophets, which is sometimes lived or sometimes not lived by the people of God, but these first five books of the Bible are the cornerstone of the Bible, these law books.

And then you have twelve history books, and these twelve history books, which give us the history of the Hebrew nation, first of all are important because they give us the historical context in which the Messiah is going to come into the world. But they're also important because in these history books, you have these historical narratives which give us things that, in addition to being historical, are allegorical. The Apostle Paul put it this way.

He said in 1 Corinthians 10-11, all these things happen to them for examples, and they're written as a warning for you and me upon whom the ends of the world are come. That means that all these things that happen to these people did happen to them, their history, but they happen for examples and warnings. So we should read the history books looking for examples and warnings.

After the history books in the Old Testament, you have poetry books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. These poetry books speak to the people of God about the things that are going on in their hearts. In the book of Job, God addresses the happenings in the hearts of his people when they're suffering.

In Psalms, he addresses that which is going on in their heart when they're worshipping. In Proverbs, he deals with the practical wisdom they need to live life every day. In Ecclesiastes, he addresses their hearts

even when they're doubting.

And in the Song of Solomon, he speaks to the hearts of his people when they're making love. Now, in addition to the poetry books, you have prophets. And the prophets were simply preachers.

You have major prophets and minor prophets. The major prophets were called major prophets because they were long-winded, frankly. Their books have 66 chapters, 52 chapters, 48 chapters.

The minor prophets are called minor prophets because their books are shorter. Now, in a sense, they might have been better preachers, these minor prophets, than the major prophets were. But in no sense are the major prophets superior to the minor prophets or the minor prophets inferior to the major prophets.

The prophetic literature, as it's called, is the largest section of the Old Testament. So in the Old Testament, you have five kinds of books, law books, history books, poetry books, major prophets, and minor prophets. In the New Testament, you have 27 books.

The New Testament begins with four biographies of Jesus, which are called gospels. We have four inspired biographies of the most important life ever lived, and that's the way the New Testament opens. And these gospels will really say to us, Jesus came.

Then in the New Testament, you have one history book, just one, the book of Acts. And again, you look for examples and warnings because it's a history book. Now, these examples and warnings have to do primarily with the Church because the book of Acts is the history of the Church in its first generation.

The book of Acts, or the history book of the New Testament, is followed by the epistles. First you have the epistles of Paul, and then you have the general epistles. A teenager asked me once if an epistle were the wife of an apostle, and even though it sounds as if that should be, that isn't the case.

An epistle is a letter, and the apostle Paul writes 13 letters in the New Testament, 14 if he wrote Hebrews. They're not sure about that. But at least half of the New Testament is written by the apostle Paul, and these letters of Paul are certainly an important part of the New Testament.

Now after the letters of Paul, you have the general letters, and these general letters are called general letters because they're written by more than one author, and they're addressed to different people who are dispersed and living in different locations. And the general letters start with the book of Hebrews and go through the book of Jude. And then at the end of the New Testament, you have one prophetic book, and it's called the Revelation.

It's the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The Revelation is as if it's a message from God to the people of God in code. It's like Christian or spiritual or inspired cryptography.

In order to understand a coded message, you need to have the keys that break the code of that message. And there are some keys that break the code of the book of Revelation, and we need to understand those in order to understand that book. So in the New Testament, you have five kinds of books, Gospels, one history book, the letters of Paul, the general letters, and the prophetic book, the Revelation.

That means that in the Bible, you have ten kinds of books. In the Old Testament, you have five kinds of books, law books, history books, poetry books, major prophets, minor prophets. In the New Testament, you have five kinds of books, Gospels, the history book, the letters of Paul, the general letters, and the

prophetic book, the Revelation.

Now that's how the books of the Bible are organized. The books of the Bible come under those headings. Now in addition to this information about the organization of the Bible, let me say just one word about historical perspective.

Since the books of the Bible are not placed in the Bible based upon when they were written, you have a tremendous problem facing you. It's the problem of historical perspective. For instance, when you get those history books of the Old Testament, when you read the last of the history books, the book of Esther, the history of the Hebrew nation has ended insofar as the Old Testament is concerned.

But when you come to all these prophetic books, and you have all the prophets, the major prophets and the minor prophets, how do you know which prophets go with which history books? Or how do you know what historical period is being referred to when that prophet is preaching? Well, you just don't know. That's something you just have to learn. It's a tremendous challenge.

When we come to the study of the prophets, we'll recommend that you make a chart, and that on this chart you fit the prophets into the historical books. And that's quite an assignment. That's a tremendous challenge.

But you can see the challenge historical perspective is, according to the Scripture, if you understand something of how the Scripture is organized. Also, in connection with historical perspective, you need to realize that sometimes the Bible is integrated in its historical perspective. For instance, the book of Acts will give you a foundation which will make it possible for you to appreciate the letters of the Apostle Paul.

And in the Psalms, which are written, at least many of them, by David, 1 and 2 Samuel, which is the biographical background for the life of David, gives you great insight into the Psalms. It's interesting when you match up prophets like Haggai and Zechariah with the historical characters of Ezra and Nehemiah. And when you come to Chronicles, you find a very interesting lesson in historical perspective.

The books of Samuel and Kings cover a period of history in Hebrew history, from about 1000 B.C. to 500 B.C., and the book of Chronicles goes back and repeats that period of history a second time. And if you ask the question, why is it repeated? The old rabbis answered that question by calling the book of Chronicles, Things Omitted, because they were fascinated in reading Chronicles, which goes over this period of history a second time, at the things that were omitted. For instance, the sin of David is omitted, the sin of Solomon is omitted, because these men confessed their sins.

In the historical literature we read about the fact that David confessed his sin, and especially in the Psalms we see the confessions of David about his sin, so that his sin isn't even mentioned in the book of Chronicles, because in the sight of God it never happened. That's what the word justified means, just as if I'd never sinned. Well, the historical perspective is an important challenge as you come to the survey of the Bible, and as we go through the Bible we'll constantly be sharing with you historical perspective on the Scripture.

Again, it's our prayer that just as Jesus shared some facts about the Bible that opened up the understanding of the apostles of the Bible, we pray that these facts we've shared with you about the Bible will open up your understanding of the Bible.

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