



Bible 101: Old Testament 101

***A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study
by Jeff S. Smith***

Introduction

In centuries earlier than the twenty-first, the Bible was so universally taught in Western nations that nearly everyone had intimate knowledge of the basics of Scripture. Sadly, that interest in God’s word has waned mightily and now even among Christians, the young are more likely to be immersed in entertainment and recreation than fundamental, divine principles. This two-part series of studies, *Bible 101*, is designed to chase away ignorance of God’s word with an overview of the Bible message. Old Testament 101 begins at Creation and follows the patriarchs, judges and kings all the way to the Intertestamental Period.

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Lesson 1: *Creation*

1. It is believed that the first five books of the Bible were written by Moses. The first of this group, called the Pentateuch, is the book of Genesis, which commences with a history of creation. What was the condition of the Earth as God prepared to create (Genesis 1:1-2)?

2. Consult Genesis 1:3-31 and complete the following chart:

DAY	GOD CREATED THIS
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

3. What did God do on the seventh day of the creation week? What aspect of the Jewish 10 commandments originated with this event (Exodus 20:8-11)?

4. Exactly how did God bring these things into existence? What was God's estimation of his efforts (Genesis 1:31)?

5. From what did God create the first human (Genesis 2:1-7)? From what did he create the first woman (Genesis 2:18-25)? Why?
6. What was the law of Eden (Genesis 2:10-17)? Explain how it was first broken (Genesis 3:1-24) and enumerate the consequences.
7. The drive for immortality—to regain access to the Tree of Life—becomes the theme of the Bible. Nestled in Genesis 3:15 is a clue to God’s plan to grant victory to the elect. What is it?
8. Why did Cain kill Abel (Genesis 4:1-16)? What lessons do we need to learn from this episode and the way God handled it?
9. What so upset God during Noah’s era (Genesis 6:5-8)? Why did Noah find grace in God’s eyes (Genesis 6:9-10)? How did Noah accept it?
10. What happened to the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9)?

Lesson 2: *The Patriarchs*

1. Meet Abraham in Genesis 12. From what three things does God require him to leave? What three promises does God make him?

2. Who is Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-24)?

3. How did Abraham and Sarah try to help God fulfill his promises (Genesis 16:1-15)?

4. Why was Lot living in a place like Sodom (Genesis 13:1-13)? Why and how did God punish Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29)? Who escaped?

5. How did God determine that Abraham was truly obedient (Genesis 21:1-7, 22:1-14)?

6. Name and describe the sons of Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 25:19-34).

7. To what is Jacob's name changed (Genesis 32:22-32)?

8. List Jacob's 12 sons—the 12 tribes of Israel.

- By Leah (Genesis 29:31-35):
- By Bilhah (30:1-8):
- By Zilpah (30:9-13):
- By Leah (30:17-20):
- By Rachel (30:22-24):
- By Rachel (35:16-20):

9. Why did Joseph's brothers hate him (Genesis 37:1-11)? What did they do to him (Genesis 37:12-36)?

10. To what rank did Joseph rise (Genesis 39:1-41:57)? How?

11. What occasioned a reunion of the family (Genesis 42:1-24, 45:1-8)?

12. How did Joseph summarize his life and prepare his people for the next era in which they would live in Egypt (Genesis 50:15-26)?

Lesson 3: *The Exodus From Egypt to Canaan*

1. Why were the Hebrew people in Egypt (Genesis 45:3-8)?

2. Why did the Israelites' fortunes in Egypt change so dramatically (Exodus 1:8-22)? What did their lives become?

3. How did Moses survive the Pharaoh's death sentence on Hebrew boys (Exodus 2:1-10)?

4. What message did God bring Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-10)? What name did God call himself (Exodus 3:11-22)?

5. List the 10 plagues that Moses inflicted on Egypt, to show Pharaoh God's power and convince him to cooperate with their redemption:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
 - 8.
 - 9.
 - 10.

6. How did the Israelites avoid the tenth plague (Exodus 12:21-36)? How did they plunder the Egyptians? What annual feast was born?

7. Why did God lead Israel by the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17-22)? How did God lead them? How did they manage to cross the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1-31)?

8. How did Israel almost immediately begin to show the weakness that would prolong her wandering (Exodus 15:22-26, 16:1-3)? How long was the journey from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea (Deuteronomy 1:2)?

9. Israel wandered for 40 years to eliminate the first generation of doubters. What report did the 12 spies bring back (Numbers 13:1-14:45)?

10. Why didn't Moses lead Israel across the Jordan River (Numbers 20:1-13, Deuteronomy 34:1-12)? Who succeeded Moses (Joshua 1:1-9)? Was the conquest of Canaan ultimately successful or failed (Joshua 11:16-23)?

Lesson 4: *The Law of Moses*

1. How was God's blessing and covenant with Israel conditional (Exodus 19:1-9)? Where did Moses receive the Law (Exodus 19:10-25)?

2. List the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:1-20):

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

3. Were there any other laws? What is regulated in Leviticus 11? What is regulated in Leviticus 18?

4. What was the nature and purpose of God's sanctuary while Israel wandered in the wilderness (Exodus 25:1-9)?

5. What was Israel doing while God gave Moses the commandments (Exodus 32:1-35)? How did Moses respond?

6. What was the punishment for violating the Sabbath (Exodus 35:1-3, Numbers 15:32-36, 28:1-10)?

7. Of which tribe did the priests come (Leviticus 8:1-9)? Why did Nadab and Abihu die (Numbers 10:1-3)? Think!
8. Before Joshua died, he renewed Israel's relationship with God. In what two aspects did he challenge the people to serve God (Joshua 24:14-15)? Compare to what Christ teaches us today (John 4:23-24).
9. What is the great threat to fidelity that Joshua recognizes?
10. What idols are identified in the following passages?
- a. Ephesians 5:5:
 - b. Matthew 6:19-21, 24:
 - c. John 12:42-43:
11. Is the Law of Moses, including the 10 commandments and the Jewish Sabbath, still in effect today (Matthew 5:17-20, Acts 10:9-16, 34-35; Second Corinthians 2:7-16. Ephesians 2:11-22, Colossians 2:11-15, Hebrews 7:11-13, 8:13)? How do you know?
12. What was the purpose of the Law of Moses (Romans 7:1-7)?

Lesson 5: *The Judges Era*

1. Consider Deuteronomy 7:2-5. What did God instruct the people to do as they were taking Canaan? Did Israel obey and succeed (Judges 1:16-2:10)? Why do you think they followed this course of action?

2. What was Israel like after Joshua's demise (Judges 2:7-23)? What was God's strategy for restoring His people?

3. Complete the chart of some of the judges.

PASSAGE	JUDGE	CLAIM TO FAME
a. 3:7-11		
b. 3:12-30		
c. 3:31		
d. 4:1-5:31		
e. 6:1-8:35		
f. 10:1-2		
g. 10:3-5		
h. 10:6-12:7		
i. 12:8-10		
j. 12:11-12		
k. 12:13-15		
l. 13:1-16:31		

4. The four most notable judges in this period are Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. Answer the following questions about them:
- a. Who was Deborah's general?
 - b. Why was Gideon's army so small?
 - c. Who fell victim to Jephthah's vow?
 - d. What was the source of Samson's strength?
5. What is the closing statement in the book of Judges (21:25)?
6. In the days when the Judges ruled, Elimelech went to Moab with his wife. What was her name and those of her two daughters-in-law (Ruth 1:1-5)? For what reason did Naomi plan to return to Judah? What did Naomi want her daughters-in-law to do? What did each do?
7. (2:1-23) What relationship existed between Naomi and Boaz? According to verses 10-13, why did Ruth find favor in his eyes? What favor does Boaz show her in this passage?
8. (4:13-22) After the two are married and begin a family, where is this genealogy eventually headed?

Lesson 6: *United Kingdom*

1. The people of Israel demanded a king and two reasons emerge from reading First Samuel 8:1-5. What are they?

2. How did God comfort a disappointed Samuel? What charge did he give Samuel to prepare Israel for a monarchy (cf. verses 10-22)?

3. God gave Israel what she wanted, even though he was opposed to it. Who becomes the first king of Israel (First Samuel 9:1-12:25)? What is he like as his reign begins?

4. What is the first sign of danger in Saul's behavior (First Samuel 13:7b-15)? Explain. What are the consequences for his administration?

5. What later caused God to say, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king" (First Samuel 15:11)? How did Saul respond (15:24-31)?

6. Whom does Samuel anoint as Saul's successor (First Samuel 16:1-23)? What does the next king do to distinguish himself in Israel (17-18)? How does he finally become the king (31)?

7. Although a man after God's own heart, David is far from flawless. Describe the progression of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12).

8. When David died of old age, who took his place on the throne (First Kings 12:1-4). What charge did the king give his successor?

9. How does Solomon show his fitness for the crown immediately (First Kings 3:1-28)? What building project did he undertake (First Kings 6-8)?

10. What caused Solomon's heart to turn from the Lord (First Kings 11)?

11. Who is introduced as Solomon's rival (First Kings 11:26-43)?

Lesson 7: *Divided Kingdoms*

1. Who is Solomon's successor (First Kings 12)? What decision of his immediately shows a lack of Solomonic wisdom in the son?

2. Who is made king of the northern kingdom of Israel (First Kings 12:18-20)? What comprises the southern kingdom of Judah? What prevented civil war between the two (12:21-24)?

3. How did Jeroboam seal the northern kingdom's fate (12:25-33)?

4. Twenty monarchs ruled over the northern kingdom and not one of them was any good. Perhaps, the worst, however, was Ahab (First Kings 16:29-22:40). Describe him (18:18, 21:25-26). What was the outcome of the contest on Mount Carmel (18:1-40)?

5. Who conquered Israel (Second Kings 17:5-41)? How could God permit this (Second Kings 18:9-12)?

6. About this time (727-721 B.C.), Hezekiah becomes king of the surviving southern kingdom of Judah (Second Kings 18:1-8). Why was he such a good king?

7. How did Judah survive the last Assyrian onslaught (Second Kings 19:35-37)?

8. Less than a century later, King Josiah takes the throne of Israel. What important discovery occurs during his reign (Second Kings 22:1-20)? What is the result (Second Kings 23:1-25)?

9. Who was Nebuchadnezzar? What did he do to Judah (Second Kings 24-25)?

10. How could God let this happen to Judah (2 Chronicles 36:11-21)?

11. Who is the last king of Judah?

Lesson 8: *The Exile*

1. By 586 B.C., both kingdoms of Israel and Judah had been conquered by heathen armies. In spite of this devastation, God preserved a remnant of people through whom the Messiah could come. How did he use Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to this end (Second Kings 24:8-16, 25:11-12)?

2. Two of the “major” prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel were captives who prophesied in Babylon. How did Ezekiel learn that Jerusalem had been conquered (Ezekiel 33:21-22)?

3. How did Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah distinguish themselves as captives in Babylon (Daniel 1:1-21)? What ordeals did the three friends of Daniel survive and why (Daniel 3:1-30)? What did Daniel himself endure and why (Daniel 6:1-28)?

4. What meant the handwriting on the wall for Babylonian king Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1-31)? Who ruled the empire after him (cf. Second Chronicles 36:20-23)?

5. What was the edict of Cyrus (Second Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-11)?

6. Who are the other leaders in this restoration movement?

a. Ezra 3:2:

b. Ezra 5:1:

7. Why did Ezra go to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:10, Nehemiah 8:1-6)? Why did Nehemiah make the journey (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8)?
8. During this period of exile and reconstruction, a Persian king named Ahasuerus takes his country's throne (Esther 1:1-22). How did he come to have a Jewish wife (2:1-20)?
9. Why did Haman want to destroy the Jews in Persia (Esther 3:1-15)?
10. How did Mordecai persuade Esther to act (Esther 4:1-5:8)?
11. The king had already decreed the extermination of the Jews when he learned of the consequences of his plan. How did he countermand his order (Esther 8:11-14, 9:1-15)?
12. What Jewish feast resulted from this victory (Esther 9:16-32)?

Lesson 9: *Major Prophets*

1. Four authors of five books are called “major” prophets because of the size of their writings. Isaiah is the oldest of them. Which kings reigned in Judah during his tenure (740-697 B.C., Isaiah 1:1)?

2. One of Isaiah’s major themes is the heartless nature of Hebrew worship around him. Consider chapter one. How had Israel reacted to God’s previous attempts to chasten her back to submission? What was God’s opinion of their worship? What did God suggest they do?

3. Isaiah turns to prophesy of the new kingdom of God to be established (2:1-5). Will its population be confined to Hebrews by birth? From what geographic location will the law of the kingdom emanate? How is this true of the church (Acts 10:34-35, 1:1-8)?

4. Why would this man of sorrows have to suffer? How did Jesus go to the cross as Isaiah prophesied?

5. Jeremiah labored from 625 B.C. to Judah’s fall in 586 B.C. He is also credited with writing the Lamentations, a book of sorrowful poems on Jerusalem’s destruction. What was his objection to taking the prophetic office (1:1-13)?

6. Why was God divorcing Judah in Jeremiah’s time (2:1-13)? What did God truly want from Judah (3:1-15)?

7. The major issue in Judah concerned the prospects for war against either Egypt or Babylon (6:1-15). What was God predicting? What were the prophets of Judah predicting?

8. How did the king respond to Jeremiah's prophecy (36:20-32)? Did Jeremiah quit?

9. How did Jeremiah react to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (Lamentations 1:1-22)? To what does he attribute her demise?

10. Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonian exile as one of the captives (597-571 B.C.). Describe the role God gave him (3:16-27).

11. How were Israel's shepherds failing the flock (34:1-16)? Explain.

12. Daniel was a young Jew taken captive in 605 B.C. He prophesied to the exiles during both Babylonian and Medo-Persian occupations. Describe the image he saw in a dream (2:31-45).

Lesson 10: *Minor Prophets*

1. Joel writes around 830 B.C. What horde does he foresee coming to devour Israel (2:1-11)? Why (2:12-14)? When was his Spirit prophecy fulfilled (2:28-32)?

2. Jonah works around 780 B.C., but not among his people. To whom is Jonah sent? What results does he get? Is he happy with them?

3. Amos writes around 755 B.C. List four things God would refuse from Israel (5:21-27). What did God desire more than these?

4. Hosea worked in 750 B.C. Describe his wife and why God wanted Hosea to marry her.

5. Micah prophesied between 725-701 B.C. What did he predict about the Messiah (5:1-2)?

6. Zephaniah prophesied around 627 B.C. about a Day of the Lord coming on Judah. Summarize his description and the reason for their suffering (1:14-18).

7. Nahum prophesied around 620 B.C. What was his audience (1:1)? What words should strike fear in any hearer (3:5)?

8. Habakkuk worked around 612-606 B.C. What work of God's did Habakkuk refuse to believe (1:5-12)? What is the key to respecting God (2:20)?

9. What was Obadiah's audience in 587 B.C. (1)? What was their sin (10-14)?

10. Haggai prophesied in 520 B.C. What is his theme (1:7)? What was his audience's sin (1:8-11)?

11. Zechariah worked in 520-516 B.C. What challenge and reward does God present to the people (1:1-6)? What important lesson should they have learned from their fathers?

12. Malachi ends the Old Testament around 432 B.C. God was preparing to send a forerunner ahead of the Savior (3:1-7). Who is this? What is his purpose? How had the people robbed God (3:8-18)? What would become of the faithful few?

Lesson 11: *Wisdom Literature*

The wisdom literature consists of the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes and the book of Job.

1. Consider Psalm 23 as an example of the Psalms. Explain how the Lord is one's shepherd, with appropriate New Testament citations. Explain the significance of Christ's rod (Hebrews 12:1-11) and his staff (Second Corinthians 5:7). Describe how Christ ensures that a Christian may dwell in the house of the Lord forever (John 14:1-6, First Peter 1:3-5).

2. What is David apologizing for in Psalm 51? What kind of attitude does he exemplify (17)?

3. The theme of the Proverbs is revealed immediately. What is it, according to Proverbs 1:1-7?

4. List the seven things that are abominable to God (Proverbs 6:16-19).

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | |

5. (1:1-2) Who is the preacher (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2)? What did he say?

6. Explain what he is trying to convey in this speech (3:1-11).

7. What is the meaning of life (Ecclesiastes. 12:13-14)?

8. What is Solomon's song about (1:1-3)?

9. Why did Satan want to attack Job (1:1, 8-11)?

10. How did Job respond to the loss of his children, servants and livestock (1:20-22)? How did his wife respond (2:9-10)?

11. Name Job's three friends (2:11-13). What did they do first? Did they offer wise counsel (42:7-8)?

12. How did Job's suffering end? What does this prove (James 5:11)?

Lesson 12: *Intertestamental Period*

PERSIAN PERIOD (539-331 B.C.)

- 478-473** The events of the book of Esther occur during the reign of Xerxes I.
- 457** Ezra comes to Jerusalem and makes his reforms.
- 444** Artaxerxes I (465-425) sponsors the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem at the request of his cupbearer, Nehemiah.
- 432** Malachi prophesies to the Jewish remnant.
- 425-331** Xerxes II, Darius II, Artaxerxes II, Artaxerxes III, Arses and Darius III reign successively in Persia.
- 331** Alexander the Great takes Persia and Palestine for Greece.

GREEK PERIOD (331-167 B.C.)

- 323** Alexander dies and four of his generals assume divided power.
- 301** Palestine falls to Syria and then Egypt.
- 198** Syria, under Antiochus the Great, regains Palestine with plans to exterminate the Jews.
- 168** Antiochus Epiphanes devastates Jerusalem, defiles the temple, offers a sow on the altar, erects an altar to Jupiter, and prohibits circumcision and worship of Jehovah. He sells thousands of Jews into slavery, destroys copies of the Scriptures and tortures the rest of the Jews.

MACCABEAN PERIOD (167-63 B.C.)

- 167** A priest named Matthias, infuriated at Epiphanes, gathers a band of Jews and revolts. Matthias dies in 166 and his son, Judas, takes the lead.
- 165** An amazing military genius, Judas re-conquers Jerusalem and purifies the rededicated temple. Judas establishes the Asmonean line of priest-rulers, nicknamed Maccabees, that rules for 100 years.

ROMAN PERIOD (63-1 B.C.)

- 63** Palestine is conquered by Rome's Pompey. Antipater, an Edomite, is appointed to rule Judea. His son, Herod the Great, is installed as the governor of Galilee.
- 37** Herod is made king of Judea and rebuilds the temple to garner Jewish favor.
- 4** Jesus is born, just escaping the wrath of the jealous king.

1. What are the names and approximate eras of the four periods of history during the last five centuries before Christ?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
2. What powerful military leader conquers Persia and its possession, Palestine. When?
3. Who takes Palestine in 198 B.C. and with what intent?
4. Who devastates Jerusalem in 168 B.C.?
5. What historical period begins with a revolt against him?
6. What military genius conquers Jerusalem in 165 B.C.?
7. What line of rulers is established at this time? How long will it stay in power?
8. Who conquers Palestine in 63 B.C.?
9. What governor of Judea rebuilds the temple? Why?
10. Who is born in approximately 4 B.C. and narrowly escapes the wrath of the jealous king?

Lesson 13: *Review*

1. Why did Cain kill Abel (Genesis 4:1-16)? What lessons do we need to learn from this episode and the way God handled it? What so upset God during Noah's era (Genesis 6:5-8)? Why did Noah find grace in God's eyes (Genesis 6:9-10)? How did Noah accept it?

2. Meet Abraham in Genesis 12. From what three things does God require him to leave? What three promises does God make him? To what is Jacob's name changed (Genesis 32:22-32)?

3. How did the Israelites avoid the tenth plague (Exodus 12:21-36)? How did they manage to cross the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1-31)? How did Israel almost immediately begin to show the weakness that would prolong her wandering (Exodus 15:22-26, 16:1-3)?

4. What was the purpose of the Law of Moses (Romans 7:1-7)?

5. What is the closing statement in the book of Judges (21:25)?

6. Name the three kings who ruled only over a united Israel.

7. When and to whom did Israel and Judah fall?

8. Which two major prophets were Babylonian captives? Why did Ezra go to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:10, Nehemiah 8:1-6)? Why did Nehemiah make the journey (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8)?

9. List the five major prophetic books and note something about each:

-
-
-
-
-

10. In which centuries do the minor prophets work? What is the last one's last words?

11. Which books are considered wisdom literature?

12. What are the Intertestamental eras and dates?

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