

SAINT AMBROSE COLLEGE



KINGDOM, COVENANTS
AND CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

STUDY GUIDE
GEC 502

Why Study the Old Testament?

Lesson 1 from the series *Kingdom, Covenants & Canon of the Old Testament* Study Guide

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Notes

I. Introduction

II. Distance from Us

When we study the Old Testament, we find that many parts of it are unfamiliar.

A. Causes

At least two features of the Old Testament often cause us to view it as a foreign land.

1. Organic Inspiration

The Holy Spirit employed the personalities, experiences and intentions of the original human writers in composing the Bible.

God controlled the content of Scripture so that it is without error and may rightly be called the word of God.

2 Peter 3:15-16 — Paul's letters involve both God and the human writer.

2. Divine Accommodation

Accommodation: every time God reveals himself to humanity, he appears and speaks in finite human terms.

God designed the Old Testament for specific historical situations that the Jewish people living in the ancient Near East encountered.

B. Kinds

Theological, cultural and personal dimensions of life are deeply entwined and influence each other in countless ways.

1. Theological

The historical difference between:

- the revelation that the writers of the Old Testament possessed
- the fuller revelation that Christians possess

2. Cultural

Dimensions of life characteristic of the cultures of :

- characters
- writers
- original recipients

Cultural distance occurs because human society is constantly changing.

Many differences exist between the ancient Near East and our modern world. Many things we read in the Old Testament are unfamiliar to us.

3. Personal

People who lived in the days of the Old Testament were different from modern people in many ways.

III. Relevance for Us

The Old Testament has abiding value for our lives.

Full life in Christ cannot be accomplished without the guidance of the Old Testament.

A. Teachings of Jesus

1. Negative Comments

Some of the teachings of Jesus appear, at first glance, to present a negative view of the Old Testament.

Jesus did not contradict the Old Testament. He refuted common misunderstandings of its teachings.

Jesus opposed false interpretations and reasserted the true teachings of the Old Testament.

2. Positive Affirmations

Jesus constantly referred to the Old Testament as the basis of his own teachings.

Every detail of the Old Testament will remain in force until the end of all things.

Jesus called his followers to receive the Old Testament as God's authoritative word.

B. Teachings of Paul

1. Negative Comments

Many Christians wrongly believe that Paul was very negative about the Old Testament.

Paul believed that New Testament faith was fuller revelation.

Paul did not deny the relevance of the Old Testament; he simply objected to the misuse of the Old Testament.

Paul opposed those who relied on obedience to the law for their salvation. He opposed those who wanted to be justified by the law.

Paul used the Old Testament to prove that salvation is by faith alone.

2. Positive Affirmations

Christians should expect the Old Testament to be relevant for life.

IV. Application to Us

The Holy Spirit's help is essential to the study and application of the Old Testament.

We must learn how to apply the Old Testament in responsible ways.

A. Challenge

Overcoming the distance that separates us from the Old Testament allows us to recognize its relevance for today.

Proper application of the Old Testament to our day involves interpreting the Old Testament in its own terms, according to its original meaning.

To apply the Old Testament properly, we must:

- look carefully at the times between the Old Testament and our day;
- see the connections and developments that took place in biblical faith.

The Old Testament was written with future generations in mind.

B. Connections

We have three primary connections to the original audiences of the Old Testament.

1. Same God

The God of New Testament Christians is the same God we read about in the Old Testament.

The fact that we serve the “same God” establishes important connections because God is immutable or unchangeable.

- God’s eternal counsel is unchanging.

God’s eternal plan teaches us that his purposes in the Old Testament align with his purposes in the New Testament.

- God is immutable in his character or attributes.

God’s character is unchanging. His actions in the New Testament period are harmonious with his eternal nature.

- God is unchanging in his covenant promises. He will fulfill everything he covenanted to be and to do for his people.

God made many promises to Old Testament believers. In the New Testament he is keeping those promises.

2. Same World

The Old Testament comes from and describes the same world in which we live.

a. Historical Backgrounds

Old Testament events and teachings form backgrounds to events and teachings in the New Testament.

b. Parallel Situations

Many current events share similarities with earlier events.

Beyond superficial dissimilarities, our circumstances are very similar to those of Old Testament writers and their audiences.

3. Same Kind of People

There are fundamental continuities that connect us with the people who lived during the days of the Old Testament.

a. Image of God

All human beings are the image of God.

b. Sinful

We are like the people of the Old Testament because all human beings are fallen into sin.

Because we are fallen images of God, we can understand how Old Testament people turned from God to sin.

c. Divided

Since the fall, human beings have always been divided into groups according to their relationship with God.

Throughout the Bible, God distinguishes three groups of people:

- Outside of covenant with God and lost.
- In covenant with God and lost.
- In covenant with God, justified by faith, and eternally saved.

The human race is divided in our day as it was in the days of the Old Testament.

C. Developments

1. Epochal

God has revealed himself in various epochs or ages.

There is much confusion about the kinds of epochal considerations that must be made as we apply the Old Testament to our lives today.

a. Segmented Outlook

Stresses the differences between the various epochs or ages of Scripture.

Tends to apply to modern believers only those things in the Old Testament that are repeated in the New Testament.

b. Flattened Outlook

Focuses on things that have remained the same between the various ages of Scripture.

Assumes that the Old Testament should be followed as closely as possible, unless altered by the New Testament.

c. Developmental Outlook

Looks at biblical history as both unified and developing.

All of the Old Testament is relevant for us, but every dimension of the Old Testament has developed.

All the teachings of the Old Testament must undergo epochal adjustments by passing through the filter of the New Testament.

2. Cultural

We must take into account the variations between the cultures represented in the Old Testament and those of our own world.

We must make appropriate cultural adjustments to the Old Testament's message as we apply it to modern life.

3. Personal

There are similarities and dissimilarities between the people of the Old Testament and modern people. We must account for these personal variations.

V. Summary

3. Explain the relationship between Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the Old Testament.

4. How does Paul's teaching affirm the ongoing value of the Old Testament?

7. Describe the connections that make it possible for us to apply the teachings of the Old Testament in our contemporary world.

8. Describe three significant developments that took place between the period of the Old Testament and period of the New Testament.

Application Questions

1. Think of a time when the Old Testament was perplexing to you. What contributed to your initial confusion?
2. How would you respond to someone who said, “Jesus’ teaching on such things as murder, adultery and love for enemies contradicts the teachings of the Old Testament”?
3. In the Sermon on the Mount, why did Jesus keep contrasting what was *said* versus what was *written*? In what ways might modern Christians be tempted to make errors like those that Jesus refuted?
4. What benefits come from acknowledging God’s unchanging nature as you study the Old Testament?
5. Why is it helpful to recall that people in both the Old Testament and the New Testament lived in the same world?
6. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

The Kingdom of God

Lesson 2 from the series *Kingdom, Covenants & Canon of the Old Testament* Study Guide

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Notes

I. Introduction

II. Broad and Narrow

A. Unchanging

God has always had and always will have unwavering kingship over his creation.

B. Developing

The kingdom of God develops, ebbs and flows, and eventually extends over the entire world.

The kingdom of God comes to earth and transforms it, so that the earth mirrors the standards and glories of heaven.

The Old Testament promised that God would one day redeem, renew and perfect the earth so that it reflected the wonder of heaven.

We should ask God to come to the earth in his glorious, royal splendor.

III. Primeval History

A. Place

Genesis 1 explains how God first began to establish the earth as the location of his kingdom.

1. Initial Preparations

Genesis chapter 1 focuses on the way God first prepared the world to become his kingdom.

Genesis 1:2–2:3: God began forming the earth into a place for his glorious reign in a threefold structure.

Genesis 1:3-31: Six days of ordering in creation. God made the world fit to become his kingdom.

- In days one through three, God dealt with the fact that the world was formless.
- In days four through six, God dealt with the fact the world was empty.

“creation was good” — God approved of his work in a moral sense:

- He had significantly restrained the chaos, the darkness and the deep.
- He had brought order to the world.

Tov in Hebrew denotes:

- pleasant
- pleasing
- beautiful

2. **Ongoing Expansion**

Genesis 2: The entire world had been ordered to some extent, but only Eden could be called a paradise.

Eden in Hebrew means

- pleasant
- pleasing

Eden was God's special delight.

B. People

God ordained the human race as his kingdom servants, the instruments by which God would complete his preparations for the earth to become his kingdom.

The job for which God created humanity was too great for one creature to accomplish on his own.

1. Priests

Adam and Eve were given jobs of priestly service.

Adam and Eve's role in the garden is described in ways that reflect the technical description of the Levites' service to God.

2. Vice-Regents

Adam and Eve were ordained as royalty, as God's vice-regents. They were royal priests.

God called his royal image to multiply numerically and to fill:

- the garden of Eden
- the entire earth

God ordained humanity to have dominion over:

- the garden of Eden
- the entire earth

The great king of heaven ordained humanity as the instrument for kingdom expansion.

C. Progress

1. Cosmic Treason

Because of Adam and Eve's rebellion:

- Humanity and the earth were cursed.
- Multiplication and dominion became difficult, frustrating and painful.

Humanity was forced to:

- dwell in a hostile world
- experience pain and futility in living as God's image

2. Corruption and Judgment

Humanity continued to pursue a path of corruption that eventually led to severe judgment from God.

3. Long-term strategy

God designed a long-term strategy for extending his kingdom throughout the world.

God determined to redeem a select group of human beings from the dominion of sin, and to build his kingdom through them.

Satan and those human beings who followed him would trouble Eve's seed. But eventually her true descendants, redeemed humanity, would conquer the enemy.

God established stability in nature and removed the threat of a second worldwide flood so that his redeemed images could fulfill humanity's original task.

The historical kingdom of God:

- began in Eden
- was to be extended throughout the entire earth by God's priestly and royal images, the human race

IV. Nation of Israel

A. Place

Because Abraham was the father of Israel, God's dealings with Abraham set the course for everything God would do through Israel.

Abraham's Promised Land became the geographical center for God's activities in the world from this time forward.

1. Original Center

The original center of God's earthly kingdom was Eden.

God called Abraham back to the vicinity of the Garden of Eden.

2. Extension

God gave the land to Old Testament Israel as a staging ground for extending his reign to the ends of the earth.

Through a process of blessing and cursing nations in response to their reaction to Abraham's family, all peoples would eventually be blessed.

Abraham's blessing would reach all families throughout the earth.

B. People**1. Selection of Israel**

The tribes of Israel were the special people of God's kingdom.

2. Kingdom of Priests

The designation of Israel as a kingdom of priests shows that Israel continued to fulfill the twofold role of Adam and Eve:

- Kings
- Priests

3. Priests and Kings

Some Israelites were given the specialized offices of priest and king.

Aaron and his descendants were to serve God as his priests.

David and his descendants were ordained to serve as kings of God's people.

C. Progress

The kingdom of God made advances, but because of human sinfulness, these advances did not spread God's kingdom to the ends of the earth.

1. Promise

During the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve heads of Israel's tribes, God made many promises about the future of Israel.

2. Exodus and Conquest

God promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the holy land of Canaan.

God promised that his special people Israel would have dominion and enjoy prosperity in the Land of Promise.

God was leading his people toward his holy dwelling as their Shepherding King.

God intended to establish Israel as the people who would surround his royal throne.

3. Empire

During the imperial stage of Israel's history, Israel became an established nation with a king and temple.

David and his son Solomon moved God's kingdom on earth forward by establishing Jerusalem as the location of the king and the temple.

David's royal family would represent God's rule on earth.

As God's kingdom spread through the reign of David's house, God's glorious presence would fill the whole world, just as it fills heaven.

V. New Testament

The New Testament gospel or the good news of Christ is an outworking of the Old Testament theme of the kingdom of God.

The gospel is a message about the kingdom of God.

A. Place**1. Center**

The kingdom of God in the New Testament is centered in Israel.

By the time of Jesus, the people of Israel had been exiled, scattered and tyrannized by five pagan empires for hundreds of years:

- The Assyrians
- The Babylonians
- The Medes and Persians
- The Greeks
- The Romans

Jesus came to earth to end this exile.

2. Expansion

The New Testament teaches that one day the hope of worldwide expansion will actually be fulfilled in Christ.

B. People

God ordained that his worldwide kingdom would mirror his kingdom in heaven. This was to take place through the work of his image, the human race.

1. Christ

a. Last Adam

Christ reversed the curse that Adam had brought.

- Adam's sin condemned humanity
- Jesus' obedience fulfilled humanity's role as God's image

Because humanity's death came through a man (Adam), humanity's resurrection also had to come through a man (Christ.).

b. Priest and King

Christ also fulfills the kingdom offices of priest and king.

Because Christ perfectly fulfills the office of king, the kingdom of God will never end.

Through Christ's leadership as priest and king, God's kingdom will come to earth as it is in heaven.

2. Believers

Everyone who follows Christ is counted among the people of God and given the role of building the kingdom of God.

As we follow Christ and live in the power of his Spirit, we are all the special, chosen instruments of the kingdom of God.

C. Progress

The kingdom of God would begin small. In time it would grow to be the largest kingdom the world has ever known.

1. Inauguration

Jesus and his apostles inaugurated the glorious kingdom of God on earth.

2. Continuation

The continuation of the kingdom spans all of church history between the first and second coming of Christ. This is the time in which we live.

3. Consummation

The time when Christ returns and fulfills God's plan to turn the whole world into his kingdom.

VI. Summary

5. Briefly sketch the progress of God's kingdom during the primeval period.

6. What was the place of the kingdom during the days of ancient Israel?

7. How did the people of ancient Israel establish and prepare God's kingdom?

8. Describe the progress of God's kingdom during the time of ancient Israel.

9. What does the New Testament say about the place of God's kingdom?

10. How does the New Testament describe the people of the kingdom of God?

11. Explain the New Testament's teaching about the progression of God's kingdom.

Application Questions

1. What did Jesus mean in Matthew 6:9-10 when he taught his disciples to pray “your kingdom come”?
2. When God created the earth, he judged it to be good. And after humanity’s fall into sin, God established a long-term strategy for redeeming the earth from its fallen state. In light of God’s program for redemption, how should Christians view the earth?
3. In God’s kingdom strategy, people are his chosen instruments by which he is preparing the earth to become his kingdom. What implications does this have for your interactions with others? What does it imply about the significance of individual service to God?
4. What kind of kingdom is God establishing? When God’s kingdom is manifested on earth as it is now manifested in heaven, what will life on earth be like?
5. What is the connection between the gospel and the kingdom of God? How does knowing this connection enrich your understanding of the gospel?
6. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

Divine Covenants

Lesson 3 from the series *Kingdom, Covenants and Canon of the OT* Study Guide

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Notes

I. Introduction

II. Kingdom and Covenants

The term usually translated “covenant” (*berith* in Hebrew) appears 287 times in the Old Testament.

A. Archaeological Discoveries

Discoveries from ancient cultures surrounding ancient Israel have given us many insights into the character of biblical covenants.

One of the most important discoveries is a group of writings known as Suzerain-Vassal treaties.

B. Biblical Insights

One specific form of covenant in the Old Testament was the divine covenant. These are the covenants that God himself made with people.

When we look at the covenant God made with Moses, we see that it was structured in ways that resemble ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties.

- *Divine Benevolence*: God reminded Israel of his divine benevolence demonstrated in the way God had graciously delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

- *Human Loyalty*: God required his servants to be loyal, and Moses' law spelled out many of the ways Israel was to show their loyalty.

- *Consequences*: Moses' covenant entailed consequences for loyalty and disloyalty from God's people.

Old Testament divine covenants were royal arrangements. Covenants were the means by which God ruled over his kingdom.

III. History of the Covenants

During each period or stage in the kingdom, God introduced covenants that addressed the particular issues that people were facing at each stage of the kingdom.

A. Universal Covenants

Adam and Noah represented every person from every tribe and nation. Their experiences impacted the lives of every human being to come after them.

1. Adam

The covenant with Adam appears in the creation narrative found in the Genesis 1–3.

Three pieces of evidence strongly suggest that God established a covenant with Adam as the representative of humanity.

- The basic contours of divine covenants are present in Genesis 1–3.
- Hosea 6:7 compares the sinfulness of Israel with Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden, and speaks of both as breaking covenant.
- Noah’s covenant was presented as a confirmation of a previously existing covenant, namely the covenant God made with Adam.

God entered a solemn relationship with Adam who represented the entire human race; a covenant of foundations.

The covenant with Adam laid out the parameters of humanity's relationship with God for all time. It established the foundations of our role in his kingdom.

2. Noah

The covenant with Noah was:

- established in the primeval period of God's kingdom
- concerned some of the most basic issues that face all of humanity

Mentioned in Genesis chapters 6 and 9.

The Noahic covenant was introduced to assure stability in the created order; it is rightly called a covenant of stability.

God established his covenant with Noah, promising that nature would remain stable so that the human race could reach its destiny in this fallen world.

B. National Covenants

As the kingdom of God moved from the primeval history to the period in which God focused especially on the nation of Israel, God established three national covenants.

1. Abraham

We find explicit references to Abraham's covenant in Genesis chapters 15 and 17.

The covenant with Abraham set the people of Israel apart to be God's special instruments in bringing his heavenly kingdom to the whole earth. This covenant can be seen as a covenant of promise.

2. **Moses**

Moses frequently appealed to the covenant with Abraham as the basis of his own kingdom work.

The national covenant with Moses built upon and was in harmony with the national covenant that God had previously made under Abraham.

The Mosaic covenant is recorded in Exodus 19-24. We may refer to this covenant as a covenant of law.

When the people of Israel agreed to enter this covenant, their commitment came in the form of commitment to God's law.

3. David

David's covenant was built upon the previous covenant with the nation of Israel.

- 2 Chronicles 6:16
- Psalm 89

David's covenant promised David that his family's line would always be Israel's ruling dynasty. We may call David's covenant Israel's covenant of kingship.

C. New Covenant

The Old Testament spoke of a new covenant that would come during the final stage of God's kingdom.

- Jeremiah 31
- Ezekiel 37

Through this new covenant in Christ, God administers his kingdom in its final stage, which we call the New Testament age. The new covenant is a covenant of fulfillment.

This covenant of fulfillment was to govern God's people when he ended their exile and spread his kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Remembering the three phases of the kingdom in the New Testament is essential to understanding how God established the new covenant.

The New Covenant will bring to fruition all of God's purposes behind the covenant administrations in Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David.

IV. Dynamics of the Covenants

These emphases are not comprehensive descriptions of covenant life; they merely touch on certain highlights:

- Adam's covenant — foundational patterns
- Noah's covenant — the stability of nature
- Abraham's covenant — God's promise
- Moses' covenant — God's law
- David's covenant — the Davidic dynasty
- The new covenant — fulfillment

The dynamics of living in covenant with God always involved:

- the benevolence of God
- the requirement of human loyalty
- consequences for human loyalty and disloyalty

A. Universal Covenants**1. Adam**

Divine Benevolence: God showed much benevolence toward the first man and woman, even before they sinned.

Human Loyalty: God tested their loyalty with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Consequences: God told Adam and Eve that they would suffer the consequences of curse if they were disloyal and ate the forbidden fruit.

What was true for Adam and Eve was true for all of their descendants as well.

2. Noah

Divine Benevolence: God determined to save Noah and his family.

Human Loyalty: God commanded Noah to build the ark and gather the animals.

Consequences: Noah was faithful to God. God was pleased with Noah's sacrifice after the flood and blessed him with a stable world.

B. National Covenants

1. Abraham

Abraham's covenant emphasized the promises of progeny and land for the people of Israel, but all three covenant dynamics were operative at this time.

Divine Benevolence: God showed mercy to Abraham, forgiving him of sin, counting him as righteous, protecting him from troubles.

Human Loyalty: God required Abraham to:

- leave his homeland and family and to go to a land he had never seen
- walk before him and be blameless

Consequences:

- The increase of Abraham's descendants would be a consequence of loyalty.
- Anyone who was not circumcised among the men of Israel would suffer the curse of being cut off from his people.

2. Moses

The covenant with Moses stressed God's law because it was established when God was forming the tribes of Israel into a unified nation.

Divine Benevolence: Evident in the Ten Commandments in the prologue that precedes God's laws.

Human Loyalty: First Commandment — divine grace supported and led to the requirement of faithfulness.

Consequences: The Ten Commandments speak of the consequences of loyalty and disloyalty in Exodus 20:4-6.

3. David

Divine Benevolence: God chose David and established him and his descendants as the permanent dynasty over Israel.

Human Loyalty: David and his sons were required to keep God's Law.

Consequences: If David's sons forsook God's laws, they would be punished severely. Great blessings would come to the sons of David who were faithful to God.

C. New Covenant

Divine Benevolence: God promised to show great kindness to his exiled people as he established the new covenant.

Human Loyalty: God does not promise to do away with his laws, and he does not exempt anyone from obeying them.

Consequences: God would bring great blessings to his people because they would keep the obligations of this covenant.

The new covenant comes into effect in three stages, following the pattern of the final phase of God's kingdom in Christ.

- *Inauguration:* The new covenant is inaugurated because Christ finished his earthly ministry.
- *Continuation:* The new covenant also depends on Christ's continuing work as the mediator of the covenant.
- *Consummation:* One day Christ will return and bring to completion the promises of the new covenant.

V. People of the Covenants

A. Divisions of humanity

1. Within Covenants

Every covenant in the Old Testament included both believers and unbelievers.

The universal covenants with Adam and Noah include all people, whether believers or unbelievers are bound to God by these covenants.

The national covenants also included believers and unbelievers.

Throughout Israel's history, God distinguished between those who believed and those who did not within the nation of Israel.

The promise of the new covenant is that at its fulfillment, everyone in it will be true believers.

We must remember that the kingdom of God in the new covenant is fulfilled in three developing phases.

Until Christ returns to bring full salvation, the people of the new covenant are still divided into two groups: believers and unbelievers.

New Testament writers knew that not everyone in the new covenant community was a true believer.

Until Christ returns, the church, the new covenant community, consists of both true believers and unbelievers.

2. **Included and Excluded**

All people including Gentiles are included in the universal covenants, but Gentile nations were excluded from Israel's national covenants.

Once God initiated the national covenants with Israel, there are actually three kinds of people in the world:

- those within Israel's covenants with God who were true believers
- those within Israel's covenants with God who were unbelievers
- those who were outside of Israel's national covenants

Now that Christ has come, those outside of the new covenant include both Jews and Gentiles who have no part in Christ or his church.

B. Application of Dynamics

Both Old Testament Israelites who first read the Old Testament, and Christians who read it now, face a similar threefold division of the human race:

- those outside covenant
- unbelievers in covenant
- believers in covenant

1. Unbelievers Excluded

Unbelievers participate in the universal covenants with Adam and Noah, so their lives are touched by all three dynamics of the covenants

- *Divine Benevolence*: All unbelievers experience God's kindness through the mercy he shows to all people. We often call these blessings "common grace."

- *Human Loyalty*: Unbelievers outside the national covenants and the new covenant remain obligated to be loyal to their creator.

- *Consequences*: When Christ returns, these unbelievers will have no blessings from God. They will only suffer his eternal judgment.

2. Unbelievers Included

Unbelievers who are in the covenants with the nation of Israel and in the new covenant experience all three dynamics of the covenant:

- *Divine Benevolence*: God shows greater mercy to unbelievers who are in an exclusive covenant with him than he does to unbelievers outside those covenants.
- *Human Loyalty*: They have heightened requirements of loyalty because they have received greater knowledge of God than other unbelievers have received.
- *Consequences*: They experience many temporary blessings. But when Christ returns, they will face eternal judgment.

3. Believers Included

These people are the wondrously redeemed people of God destined irrevocably to share eternal life in Christ:

- *Divine Benevolence*: Immeasurable benevolence, including the forgiveness of sins and eternal fellowship with God.

- *Human Loyalty*:
 - Loyal obedience out of gratitude for what God has done for us in Christ.
 - Follow Scripture's rules and regulations to test and prove their faith.

- *Consequences*: True believers in the Old Testament and New Testament experience the consequences of their loyalty and disloyalty:
 - True believers experience temporary blessings and curses from God.
 - When Christ returns in glory true believers will only experience the eternal blessings of God.

Every passage in the Old Testament warned and encouraged its original readers to consider their status in relation to God's covenants and we must do the same today.

Covenant dynamics apply to every kind of person living today.

VI. Summary

3. How did the universal covenants move God's kingdom purposes forward?

4. How did the national covenants move God's kingdom purposes forward?

5. How does the new covenant move God's kingdom purposes forward?

6. How are covenant dynamics expressed in the universal covenants?

7. How are covenant dynamics expressed in Israel's national covenants?

8. How are covenant dynamics expressed in the new covenant?

Application Questions

1. How is your personal relationship with God shaped by the three central features of covenants? In what ways do these three features highlight important aspects of your relationship to God?
2. In this study, we have seen that all covenants are dependent upon the grace and mercy of God. Why is it significant to recall this fundamental element of covenants as we the requirement of loyal obedience, and the consequences due to loyalty and disloyalty?
3. All biblical covenants contained consequences of blessing and cursing. What are some ways you can see this dynamic at work in the modern world? In your church? In your own life?
4. How should the understanding that there are three types of people in the world impact the way you view other members of the church? How should it impact your understanding of church membership? Does it have any impact on your understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper?
5. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

The Canon of the Old Testament

Lesson 4 from the series *Kingdom, Covenants & Canon of the Old Testament* Study Guide

Contents	page
Outline — An outline of the lesson, including the time code on the DVD at which each section begins.	2
Notes — A template that provides: the lesson outline; key notes, quotations and summaries from the lesson; and space for writing additional notes.	3
Review Questions — Questions on the basic content of the lesson, and space for writing answers; suitable for written assignments and tests.	22
Application Questions — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology and ministry; suitable for group discussions, written assignments and tests.	25

How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you remember, describe and defend the main ideas.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Review Questions** — Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Application Questions** — Applications questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:28)
- II. Canon as Mirror (3:11)
 - A. Basis (5:06)
 - 1. Character of Scripture (5:36)
 - 2. Biblical Examples (9:55)
 - B. Focus (12:04)
 - 1. Doctrines (12:48)
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- III. Canon as Window (18:53)
 - A. Basis (21:22)
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 - A. Basis (56:01)
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 - B. Focus (1:13:55)
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 - 3. Document (1:23:01)
- V. Summary (1:32:07)

Notes

I. Introduction

II. Canon as Mirror (Thematic)

We often treat books as mirrors, seeing ourselves as the books reflect our interests and concerns.

“Thematic analysis” emphasizes themes or topics that are important to us.

A. Basis

1. Character of Scripture

Old Testament passages touch on many different topics, and have implications for multiple issues.

- Prominent themes
- Minor themes
- Extraneous themes

Thematic analysis rightly draws attention to the array of secondary or minor topics that Old Testament passages address.

2. Biblical Examples

Biblical writers often drew attention to relatively minor aspects of Old Testament passages.

B. Focus

Different thematic approaches may be used with the Old Testament.

1. Doctrines

Primarily, thematic analysis has been used for the support of Christian doctrines.

Thematic analysis with this emphasis often provides proof-texts; quick references to specific passages to justify doctrinal positions.

Well-established proof-texts are usually valid and helpful ways of referring to themes in biblical passages, even when these themes are not central to the passages.

2. Examples

We look to the Old Testament for characters whom we should imitate or reject.

Searching for examples is a legitimate way to find the authoritative, detailed teaching of the Old Testament.

3. Personal Needs

Thematic analysis uses the Old Testament to gain guidance for more personal concerns, questions, struggles and needs.

III. Canon as Window (Historical)

The Old Testament is an authoritative window to the history of salvation recorded in the Bible.

One of the most central features of the Old Testament Canon is its presentation of the history of God's dealings with his people.

A. Basis

1. Character of Scripture

The Old Testament is inspired by God. It is "God-breathed."

The Old Testament is highly selective in the history it reports. It omits much more than it mentions.

There have been objections to the historical reliability of the Old Testament.

Followers of Christ should believe in the supernatural world that the Old Testament describes.

The Old Testament sometimes seems to be in tension with other sources of historical information:

- Scientists sometimes misunderstand evidence supporting their claims.
- Apparent incongruities between the biblical record and history sometimes arise from Christians misunderstanding the Old Testament.
- Sometimes both scientific opinion and our interpretation of the Old Testament are in error.

The inspiration of Scripture establishes the historical authority of the Old Testament.

2. Biblical Examples

In all of the Scriptures, there is not one instance of biblical writers questioning the historical veracity of the Old Testament.

The writer of Chronicles relied on the historicity of the Old Testament in his genealogies.

In Luke's record of Stephen's speech in Acts 7, the Old Testament:

- recorded historical figures
- recorded factual stories
- was the basis for repentance and faith in Christ

B. Focus

“Biblical theology” is a broad term that refers to several different historical approaches to the Scriptures.

One of the most influential forms of Biblical theology focuses on two basic steps:

- Creating a “synchronic snapshot,” looking at a period of time in the Old Testament as a unit.
- Performing a “diachronic trace,” looking at the connections between events through time.

1. Synchronic Snapshot

Divide the Old Testament into periods of time, and explore what the Scriptures tell us about those periods.

The criteria we use to divide the Old Testament into ages heavily influences the divisions we create.

Geerhardus Vos divided the Old Testament according to the criteria of major shifts in the form and content of divine revelation.

Vos believed that the major changes that took place in the form and content of divine revelation moved history from one age to the next.

Biblical theologians typically focus on the more formative or central events of each period in the Old Testament.

2. Diachronic Trace

The diachronic trace focuses on the ways biblical events connect with each other through time, from one period to another.

Comparison of events in each age often reveals vectors, directions or paths that the Old Testament followed.

An example of diachronic tracing is God's promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham:

- God established humanity as his vice-regents and instructed them to take dominion over the entire earth.
- In the flood of Noah's day, God maintained his plan to bring his kingdom to earth.
- God gave the Promised Land to Abraham as a beginning point from which to lead all families of the earth toward the blessings of redemption and God-honoring dominion over the entire earth.

- In the exodus and conquest under Moses and Joshua, God established Israel in the Promised Land as her national homeland.
- The security of the land provided by the house of David was a further step toward solidifying and expanding the initial conquest of the land.
- This great hope in the house of David faced a horrible collapse during the time of exile and failed restoration.
- God acted in Christ to reverse the failures of the exile and failed restoration and to bring fulfillment of the dominion of redeemed humanity over the earth.

IV. Canon as Picture (Literary)

The Old Testament Canon is a collection of literary works, books that were skillfully composed.

- We appreciate the literary artistry in the Old Testament
- We seek to understand how Old Testament writers conveyed their outlooks to their original audiences.

Writers carefully construct their documents to express their own outlooks in an attempt to influence the opinions and lives of their readers.

A. Basis

1. Character of Scripture

The Old Testament Canon comes to us in books or literary units:

- sophisticated literary qualities
- great deal of literary variety

a. Literary Units

Our Old Testament contains 39 books.

The Old Testament books' names in our Bibles are not original.

The books' sequence in the Old Testament has differed throughout history.

In literary analysis we seek to arrange our theological assessments in ways that parallel the literary units in the Canon.

Literary analysis:

- seeks to minimize re-arrangement
- looks for the literary units and priorities of the Old Testament itself

b. Literary Qualities

Literary analysis is justified by the fact that Old Testament books exhibit sophisticated literary qualities.

The literary sophistication of Old Testament books calls for careful attention to their literary qualities.

Archaeologists have discovered a wide range of written materials from the ancient world of the Old Testament.

The books of the Old Testament are among the most elaborate literary works known from the ancient world.

The literary qualities of Old Testament books enable their communicative power.

c. Literary Variety

We should pursue literary analysis of the Old Testament because of the variety of literature that it contains.

Each genre has its own conventions, its own ways of communicating its influence.

2. Biblical Examples

Literary analysis is based on the fact that biblical characters and writers sought the guidance of the Old Testament Canon in this way as well.

In Mark 10:4, Jesus focused on literary analysis as he dealt with the topic of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1.

Literary analysis also appears in Galatians 4:22-24.

B. Focus

1. Writer

Focusing on the human writers of the Old Testament presents a danger when we become involved in speculation.

Focusing on biblical writers offers benefits if we are careful and responsible. We can have varying degrees of knowledge about their:

- identities
- broad circumstances
- basic theological motives

An overemphasis on the writer may be called “the intentional fallacy.”

2. Audience

Responsible literary analysis of the Old Testament also considers the original audience.

Some forms of literary analysis depend too heavily on detailed, uncertain knowledge of the audience. This speculation is a danger.

An overemphasis on the audience may be called “the affective fallacy.”

There are many benefits we can derive from considering the audience because we usually know lots of helpful general information:

- understand if not read ancient Hebrew
- general location
- major events that they had experienced
- some faithful, others unfaithful

3. Document

The term “document” refers to any portion of the Old Testament that we may have in view, regardless of its size.

The “graphic fallacy” is placing too much emphasis on the document.

As we consider the writers, the audiences and the literary qualities of Old Testament documents, we can discern the main purposes for which the various part of the Old Testament Canon were written.

V. Summary

3. How does the character of Scripture and the biblical example provide a basis for using the Canon as a window?

4. How do synchronic snapshots and diachronic traces function? Why are they useful?

5. How do the character of Scripture and biblical examples provide the basis for viewing the Canon as a picture?

6. Describe the value of a three-fold focus on the writer, audience and document in literary analysis.

Application Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you might appropriate thematic analysis to gain guidance and insight for a personal concern.
2. Have you ever found it difficult to believe the historical events of the Bible? Why should Christians believe the supernatural events of the Old Testament?
3. How does understanding the diachronic trace of biblical events enrich your understanding of Scripture?
4. Give an example of how knowing the writer's intentions can help you understand Scripture better.
5. In literary analysis, how can you avoid the fallacies regarding the writer, the audience, and the document?
6. In what ways is the Bible like any other book? In what ways is it different? How should these similarities and differences affect the way read it?
7. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?