

BIBLE OUTLINE: PENTATEUCH

BIBLE OUTLINE OVERVIEW

- The Bible is a very large collection of writings that can be confusing to read. We have created these outlines as way to give you an overview of each section of the Bible and to remind each reader that the Bible is a story that points to God and is fulfilled in Christ.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

- The Pentateuch was written to give a history of the creation of the world in God's covenantal love and faithfulness, and to remind God's people and all people of the Lord's redemption plan.
- The Pentateuch was first told through oral tradition, or storytelling, to remind God's people of who God was, who they were, where they came from, and what they were called to do and be.
- The Pentateuch was written to give complete collection of the Law to the God's people to guide them through the wilderness and into the Promised Land.
- The Pentateuch was written to point all people to God and the coming Redeemer, Christ Jesus.

THE PENTA WHAT?

- The first five books of the Bible are called the "Pentateuch," which means the five scrolls. These books include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books detail:
 - the creation of all things,
 - the fall of humanity in sin,
 - the formation of God's people (Israel) through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their families,
 - the enslavement of Israel by Egypt and the deliverance of Israel by God through Moses,
 - the giving of the Torah (Law) to Israel,
 - the leading of God's people through the wilderness into the Promised Land, and
 - God's faithfulness to His people in the midst of their sin and unfaithfulness.

WHO WROTE THE BOOKS?

- There are a few theories on who wrote the first five books of the Bible. Many believe Moses wrote them because of his connection to God and the giving of the Law. Some struggle with this theory because Moses dies before the first five books were finished. So, there are others who believe there was a collection of writers and editors who pieced together the stories.
- Although authorship is important, the most important thing about the Pentateuch is that it gives us an understanding of who God is, how God creates, what God's plan of redemption looked like through His covenantal faithfulness to His people, and how it all points to the Messiah who would fulfill God's Law and promises in bringing salvation to all people.

SETTING

The Old Testament is set in what is known as the “Ancient Near East,” which is located in and around the Fertile Crescent. The land was made up of the Mesopotamian valley, the Nile River delta, and the Syria-Palestine region. These settings played a major role in what was written and how it was written.

THE NILE RIVER DELTA

The Nile River stretches from the Mediterranean Sea in Northern Egypt to Uganda. The “delta region” of the river was home to Egypt. From enslavement to alliances to refuge, Egypt played a major role in the life and journey of God’s people. Eventually, after the Old, Middle, and New Kingdom periods of Egypt, they lost power to other emerging empires such as Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. The impact of the Egyptian pharaohs, economy, languages, religions, architecture, and more left an undeniable impact on the surrounding nations, namely Israel.

THE MESOPOTAMIAN VALLEY

Mesopotamia was the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This land has a long history of being home to significant national and political powers. These key groups were:

- The Sumerians - creators of cuneiform writing, builders of many cities, and storytellers of a creation story called “Enuma Elish.”
- The Akkadians - expanded upon what the Sumerians built, including their creation story, myths, languages, and civilizations.
- The Amorites - located in ancient Babylon. Many scholars believe Israel’s ancestors were from the Amorites.
- The Hittites - formed many law and treaty texts.
- The Assyrians - a massive empire that expanded control over much of Syria, Israel, and Egypt. During the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, they conquered and exiled Israel.
- The Babylonians - they conquered Assyria and took control of the area, including Israel in 586 BC.
- The Persians - an empire that conquered Babylon and the surrounding region in the 6th century, expanding as far as India.

Mesopotamia played a very significant role in the Old Testament and gives clear understanding to its stories and themes.

THE SYRIA-PALESTINE REGION

The Syria-Palestine region is the most frequently mentioned area in the Old Testament. This region of land included Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Canaan, Philistia, Phoenicia, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Midian. Some of the most significant groups were:

- The Philistines - inhabitants of southwest Canaan who provided a constant threat to Israel until the reign of David around 1,000 BC.
- The Canaanites - inhabitants of Palestine who were descendants of Noah’s son, Canaan.
- The Phoenicians - inhabitants of the northwest coastal shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The capital city was Tyre.
- The Arameans - inhabitants of Damascus in Syria who descended from the Amorites. They frequently had border struggles with Israel.
- The Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Midianites, and Amalekites - inhabitants of the land surrounding the Jordan River. These descendants of Lot and Esau held hostile postures toward Israel.

Palestine and Canaan are how scholars refer to the land of Old Testament Israel. This “land flowing with milk and honey” was located alongside the Mediterranean Sea and stretched to the eastern lands of the Jordan River, and from Mount Hermon in the North to the Negev in the south.

GENESIS OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. Genesis means “beginning” or “origin”. It includes the details about the creation of the world, the creation of God’s people, the ongoing struggle with humanity and sin, and the ongoing faithfulness of God’s love for His creation and people. Genesis depicts God’s goodness in correlation to the wickedness of the creation. Even though humanity rejects God, God chooses to offer redemption, reordering, and covenant blessing not only to His people but ultimately, through them.

The content of Genesis can be broken into the following parts:

- God and the Creation - Genesis 1:1-11:32
 - The Creation, the Garden, and the Fall - Genesis 1-3
 - The Spiral of Sin, the Flood, and Babel - Genesis 4-11
- God and the Family of Abraham - Genesis 12:1-50:26
 - God Blesses Abraham - Genesis 12 & 15
 - God’s Covenantal Faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and Joseph - Genesis 13-50

Key Characters, Themes, Terms, Locations, and Stories:

- God the Creator, Blessing, and Redeemer of Creation
- Adam and Eve - the first humans that God made in His image and blessed to fill, rule over, and bless the creation - Gen. 2-3
- The Fall - Adam and Eve are tempted by the enemy, choose sin (disobedience, broken relationship), and reject God’s ways to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, leading to the fall of humanity in sin and the exile of humanity from the Garden of Eden - Gen. 3
- Cain and Abel - first account of murder - Gen. 4
- Noah and the Flood - God cleanses the earth of its wickedness with a flood while choosing one righteous man (Noah) and his family to repeat God’s blessing in creation - Gen. 6-9
- Babel - the people on earth try to build a tower to the heavens to make a name for themselves, to which God responds by scattering these people all over the earth with new languages - Gen. 10-11
- Abraham - God blesses Abraham with a covenantal blessing that would be upon his family and go through his family to all peoples - Gen. 12-15
- Hagar and Ishmael - Abraham uses his wife’s (Sarah) servant, Hagar, for the purpose of having a promised son. She conceives Ishmael, but is sent out from their house by Sarah into the wilderness, where she encounters the God who sees her and helps her - Gen. 16
- Isaac - Abraham and Sarah conceive Isaac, the promised son of Abraham. God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (foreshadowing Jesus), but before the sacrifice, God provides another sacrifice and is called “the Lord who provides. Isaac marries Rebekah, who gives birth to Jacob - Gen. 21-25
- Jacob/Israel - Jacob is the son of Isaac, deceives his father and his brother, Esau, by taking Esau’s birthright. They reconcile after Jacob encounters God and is given a new name, “Israel.” After being deceived, Jacob marries both Rachel and Leah, who conceive 12 sons for him (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin) - Gen. 25 - 36
- Joseph - Joseph is the 11th and beloved son of Israel, who is sold as a slave to the Egyptians by his brother. Through his journey, he is elevated to second in command in Egypt, saving Egypt and the surrounding nations during famine, saying, “What was intended for evil, God planned it for God, saving many lives (Gen. 50:20).” - Gen. 37 - 50

EXODUS OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE

Exodus is the second book of the Bible. Exodus means “going out” or “deliverance.” Exodus explains the people of God’s slavery in Egypt, deliverance from slavery, and their guidance by God’s Presence and power through the wilderness into the Promised Land. During their journey, they are given the Law of God (Torah) that reorders, directs, and makes a covenant with the people of God in both the wilderness and the land they would enter. Exodus is only understood in light of what has come before: the stories of Genesis that reveal God as Creator, Redeemer, and Promise Keeper.

The content of Exodus can be broken into the following parts:

- Exodus from Egypt - Exodus 1-18
 - Israel’s Enslavement in Egypt and the Calling of Moses - Exodus 1-4
 - The Plagues and the Deliverance of God’s People - Exodus 5-15
 - The Journey to Sinai and Complaining in the Wilderness - Exodus 16-18
- God’s Covenant with Israel - Exodus 19-40
 - The Covenant at Sinai - Exodus 19-24
 - Instructions about the Tabernacle - Exodus 25-31
 - Israel’s Idolatry and Restoration - Exodus 32-34
 - The Construction of the Tabernacle - Exodus 35-40

Key Characters, Themes, Terms, Locations, and Stories:

- God the Creator, Blesser, and Redeemer of Creation
- Egypt - under the reign of Pharaoh Rameses II, the Hebrew people were taken into bondage and slavery, with specific orders to kill their male children when they were born, because of the impending threat the Egyptians felt from the Hebrew people’s growing numbers - Ex. 1-2
- Moses - Moses was a Hebrew born child whose life was saved by Pharaoh’s daughter. He grew a royal child, but fled for his life when he murdered a Egyptian slave master. He fled to Midian, where he was taken in by Jethro and married his daughter, Zipporah. While in Midian, he encountered God through a burning bush at Mount Horeb and was called to deliver the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt - Ex. 2-4
- Yahweh - God reveals His name to Moses as “I am who I am” or Yahweh. This name implies that God is self-existent, eternal, and always with us. Our Bibles translate Yahweh as “the LORD” - Ex. 3:14
- The Ten Plagues, Pharaoh’s Hard Heart, and Passover - God sends ten plagues on Egypt because Pharaoh hardened his heart against God and Moses’ request to free the Hebrew people from slavery. God then hardened Pharaoh’s heart more until the 10th plague, which was marked by God calling the Israelites to observe Passover. They sacrificed a lamb and spread its blood over the doorframes of their homes. Those with the blood on their doorframes were spared, while those without had their firstborn struck down. This prompted Pharaoh to release the Hebrews, only to pursue them, but eventually be drowned in the Reed Sea that God parts for Israel to pass through as He guides them with His Presence of cloud by day and fire at night - Ex. 12-15
- Amalekites - this group attacked Israel on their journey through the wilderness, and God gave them victory over them in battle - Ex 17
- Mount Sinai - Israel is given a covenant from God that was based on their obedience to God and keeping of His commands. This included the giving of the Ten Commandments and other instructions of the Law referred to the covenant code or book of the covenant - Ex. 19-24
- The Tabernacle and Sacrifice - God calls for Israel to build a tabernacle where His Presence would dwell and they could make sacrifices for their sin and in offering to God - Ex. 25-40

LEVITICUS OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE

Levitcus is the third book of the Bible. The name Leviticus implies that this book was an instruction manual for the priests or “Levites”. Leviticus portrays the people of God in the wilderness being given the Law of God. This Law details how they ought to provide sacrifices, practice rituals, and devote themselves to holy living in response to who God is, what God has done, and where God was leading them.

The content of Leviticus can be broken into the following parts:

- Various Offerings and Sacrifices (1:1-7:38)
- Priestly Ordination (8:1-10:20)
- Holy Living:
 - Clean and Unclean (11:1-15:33)
 - Day of Atonement (16)
 - Holiness Code (17:1-26:46)

Key Characters, Themes, Terms, Locations, and Stories:

- God the Creator, Blessing, and Redeemer of Creation
- Moses and Aaron - The content of Leviticus is often described as God giving proclamations of the Law to Moses and Aaron to then instruct the people and priests about God’s Law. Aaron was Moses’ brother, and he was the first ordained priest of the Israelites. His descendants and other Levites continued to be priests to God in Israel.
- Offerings - offerings were gifts that people brought to the holy presence of God. There were five different offerings:
 - Burnt Offering - the sacrifice of an unblemished male animal which was fully burned on the altar of God (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17).
 - Grain Offering - the burning of a small portion of grain on the altar of God (Lev. 2:2).
 - Peace Offering - In addition to the burnt offering, this offering was concluded with a sacred meal that was shared between a priest and a worshiper. The peace offering was done with thanksgiving and freewill to demonstrate a person’s gratitude to God (Lev. 7).
 - Sin Offering - this animal sacrifice brought necessary forgiveness of sins as well as purification for ceremonial cleanliness (Lev. 4).
 - Guilt Offering - this offering was also known as the “reparation” offering, and it was given in addition to the sin offering to repair and pay full restitution to those who were damaged by the sin (Lev. 5).
- The Day of Atonement - Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, was a designated day in which the whole nation of Israel was cleansed from sin and its consequences through a special sacrifice. Each year, the high priest would enter the holy of holies to offer the sacrifice of a bull for his and his household’s sin, and then he would offer the sacrifice of a goat as the sin offering and send another goat away into the wilderness. These goats, known as Azazel or “scapegoats,” had the sins of Israel proclaimed on them, and their blood was sprinkled on the “mercy seat” of the ark of the covenant. This annual ritual offered cleansing from sin for the whole nation and was held as a Sabbath day of rest from work and the power of sin (Lev. 16).
- Holiness Code - The people of God were called to be holy as God was holy. This important code of holiness addressed the areas of worship, eating, sexual activity, socialization, priestly conduct, religious calendar and festivals, justice, and land practices and ownership, among many other ordinances. This theme of holiness was centralized around the theme of loving one’s neighbor as they love themselves (Lev. 19:2), and the laws flowed from both personal and communal actions of holiness.

NUMBERS OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE

Numbers is the fourth book of the Bible. The name is used to describe the census that was taken in Numbers 1 and 26. The book of Numbers continues to describe the people of God in the wilderness receiving God's Law. Unlike Leviticus, Numbers includes much more narrative that explains the people's rebellion against God's ways and God's calling for them to follow in His holiness. The Laws given in Numbers were to call people into participating in God's covenant faithfulness through holy living, dependence on God, and blessing other nations.

The content of Numbers can be broken into the following parts:

- Preparing to Depart from Sinai (1:1-10:10)
- Journey from Sinai to Moab (10:10-21:35)
- Israel in the Plains of Moab (22:1-36:13)

Key Characters, Themes, Terms, Locations, and Stories:

- God the Creator, Blesser, and Redeemer of Creation
- Mount Sinai, Kadesh, Canaan, and Moab - the book of Numbers details the journey of the Israelites from Mount Sinai to Kadesh to Moab. The accounts also include their inspection of the land of Canaan through sending spies to report back about this land.
- Census - God ordered Moses to take a census of the people, including all tribes that were able to serve in their army (this did not include the Levites).
- Levites - the people of the tribe of Levi lived around the Tabernacle and preserved the sanctity of this sacred space. Levites were ordered to attend to the duties of the tabernacle as able.
- Purity and Nazarites - God called His people to eliminate impurity from their lives in preparation of their travels. Specific people could take a "Nazarite vow" to demonstrate a purity in their lives committed to God.
- Miriam and Aaron - these siblings of Moses complained against Moses' leadership, but God revealed to them that Moses was the chosen leader.
- Twelve Spies - these men were sent into the land of Canaan to inspect the land of milk and honey. Ten of the twelve reported that the land was indeed good, but it was inhabited by giants. This caused panic and rebellion against God's instructions to go into this land. However, two of the men, Joshua and Caleb, pleaded with the people, but God sent the judgment of wandering in the wilderness for 40 years on these people who rebelled. All, except Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness, never entering the promised land.
- Korah, Dathan, and Abiram - these men challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron, but God revealed Aaron's family to be the true priestly family, and then sent judgment through opening the earth to swallow up these rebellious men and sending fire on them as well (Num. 16).
- Meribah - Meribah means testing or quarreling, and represents the location where the people of God complained to Moses about having no water, and God instructed Moses to take his rod and speak to a rock to yield water. However, Moses struck the rock twice with his rod. Although water came forth, this act of disobedience was judged by God, and Moses was given the judgment of not entering into the promised land (Num. 20-21).
- Edom - the king of Edom would not allow Israel passage through his nation, so Israel traveled around Edom, defeating many nations but experiencing the death of Aaron along the way.
- Balaam and Balak - Balak, king of Moab, sent his messengers to hire Balaam, a magician from Mesopotamia, to curse the Israelites. However, on his way to Balak, Balaam is stopped by his donkey and then God speaks to him through his donkey, telling him not curse, but bless Israel.
- Moab - in the plains of Moab, Israel indulges in worship of Baal and engages with the Canaanite fertility cult. They take another census here, defeat more armies, and await instructions to enter the promised land.

DEUTERONOMY OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Bible. The name “Deuteronomy” means “second law,” and the book details the re-giving of the Law for the people of God to be reminded of God’s commands as they go through the wilderness into the Promised Land. In this book, Moses presents ‘sermons’ to the people, calling them to hear and prioritize the primacy of God in their lives through codes and laws. However, the generation hearing the Law does not enter into the promised land because of their rebellion. Rather, Deuteronomy reveals how the next generation of God’s people is called to move into the land, abiding by the Law of God. This is highlighted through the death of Moses outside the land and the appointment of Joshua as the next leader, who centers the life of Israel around God and His Laws.

The content of Numbers can be broken into the following parts:

- Moses’ First Sermon: The Summary of Israel’s Journey (1:6-4:43)
- Moses’ Second Sermon: The Shema and Commitment of God’s People (5:1-28:68)
- Moses’ Third Sermon: The Call to Obedience (29:1-30:20)
- The Epilogue: The Ending of the Wilderness Generation and Beginning of the Promised Land Generation (31:1-34:12)

Key Characters, Themes, Terms, Locations, and Stories:

- God the Creator, Blessing, and Redeemer of Creation
- Torah - the Hebrew word that means “law,” representing the instructions from God to His people for one’s life and conduct. These guiding principles were given to Israel in the wilderness for life in the wilderness and the promised land.
- Shema - the Hebrew word that means “hear,” that is part of a declaration and prayer given to God’s people explaining Yahweh as God alone and calling for His people to demonstrate exclusive loyalty to Him alone through loving God with all they are and passing this teaching on from generation to generation (Dt. 6:4-9). This central theme is key to understanding God’s covenantal faithfulness to Israel and their invitation to join in covenantal faithfulness (Dt. 10).
- Jordan River - While in the plains of Moab, Israel camped in the “trans-Jordan” region on the eastern side of the Jordan River. This river was not only a physical boundary, but a spiritual boundary of the wilderness behind and the promised land before them.
- Canaan - Canaan was the historical name for the land promised to God’s people so that they would be a blessing to all nations. This land flowing with milk and honey was inhabited by many enemies of Israel, and many of the Israelites would never set foot into it because of their rebellion. God’s promise to Israel is that He would clear the land of the Canaanites and their idolatry for Israel to settle.
- Festivals - Israel was called to hold specific feasts and festivals in order to remember, celebrate, and worship Yahweh alone. These “pilgrim” festivals called for Israelite males to travel to Jerusalem for worship. They were the following:
 - Passover - celebration of Israel’s deliverance and redemption from Egypt
 - Unleavened Bread - remembrance of Israel removing leaven from bread during the Exodus.
 - Feast of Weeks - a time for Israel to present their “firstfruits” during harvest time. Also known as Pentecost, and was a time to remember the giving of the Law at Sinai.
 - Feast of Booths/Tabernacles - this feast marked the end of the agricultural year and reminded Israel of her time in the wilderness. They would set up booths or tents for seven days in remembrance of the wilderness.
- Obedience/Covenant Faithfulness - God calls His people through Moses to choose life through obedience and covenant faithfulness to Him and His Law (Dt. 27-30).
- Mount Nebo - Moses ascends to the top of Mount Nebo to see the promised land, but dies before entering the land, setting up the next leader and generation to follow God’s call into the land.

BIBLE RESOURCES

You will find that there are many challenging passages to understand and apply to your life in Christ. We suggest the following resources to aid your study and application of Scripture.

- **Scripture Reading Practices:**

- SOAP
- Discovery Bible Study
- Lectio Divina
- Communal Reading of Scripture

- **Websites:**

- The Bible Project
- Bible Gateway

- **Commentaries:**

- New Beacon Bible Commentaries
- Word Biblical Commentaries
- Anchor Bible Commentaries

- **Books:**

- *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Fee and Stuart
- *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew About the Bible* by Bird
- *Discovering the Old Testament* by Alex Varughese
- *Reading the Pentateuch* by John McDermott
- *Left of Matthew* by Norman Hubbard
- *Bruce and Stan's Guide to the Bible* by Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz
- *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* by Gordon Wenham