

Biblical Studies Program Fall 2011
Introduction to the Bible
Lesson One

I. The Bible: A Book of Salvation

- A. The Bible consists of sixty-six books, divided into two Testaments
 - 1. The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books, that can be divided (broadly speaking) into three types of literary styles (or genre): History, Poetry, and Prophecy
 - a. History
 - (1) The Torah (“law” or “instruction”)
 - (a) The first five books (“Pentateuch”)
 - (b) Genesis through Deuteronomy
 - i) From the creation of all things
 - ii) To the death of Moses
 - (2) Joshua through Esther
 - i) Twelve books
 - ii) These books record the history of Israel from 1406 B.C. to ca. 440 B.C.
 - b. Poetry (also called “Wisdom” literature) – Job through Song of Solomon
 - c. Prophecy
 - (1) Major Prophets – Isaiah through Daniel
 - (2) Minor Prophets – Hosea through Malachi
 - 2. The New Testament contains twenty-seven books
 - a. The four Gospels
 - b. The Book of Acts – history of the early church and the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ
 - c. Epistles
 - (1) Letters of Paul – Romans through Philemon (13)
 - (2) The Letter to the Hebrews
 - (3) The Letter of James
 - (4) The Letters of Peter (2)
 - (5) The Letters of John (3)
 - (6) The Letter of Jude
 - d. Revelation
- B. The relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament
 - 1. The promises made in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ
 - 2. Jesus Christ is the focal event of all salvation history
 - a. And since we read the books of the Bible following that climactic event...

- b. All texts in the whole Bible bear a discernible relationship to Christ and are primarily intended as a testimony to Christ
 - 3. This is what Jesus Himself taught:
 - a. Luke 24:27 – *“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”*
 - b. Luke 24:44-45 – *“Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ (45) Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...”*
- C. Jesus Christ (in terms of promise and fulfillment) is the unifying theme of the Bible
- D. 2 Tim 3:15-17 – *“...the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”*
 - 1. All Scripture is “breathed out” by God – inspired by God
 - 2. Scripture is able “to make you wise for salvation”
 - a. The term “salvation” here includes much more than the forgiveness of sins
 - b. It includes all of God’s eternal plan to redeem and restore mankind and all of creation
 - 3. The means by which people are saved – “through faith in Christ Jesus” – through the gospel

II. The Land of the Bible

- A. At a particular time in history, in a particular part of the world, God called a people to Himself – *“...history and geography constitute the arena in which God chose uniquely to speak and act”*¹
- B. Israel’s Strategic Location
 - 1. Israel was one of the smaller countries of the ancient Near East; however, her political importance was very much tied to her strategic location
 - 2. Wedged between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Arabian desert on the east, Israel afforded the only routes for north-south traffic between the major powers of the ancient world, Egypt and the kingdoms of Mesopotamia and Anatolia (located farther north, present day Turkey)

¹John Stott, *Understanding the Bible*, page 31

3. The mighty kingdoms on both sides of the “fertile crescent” considered this strip of land a thoroughfare, and both of them labored to impose their authority over it, mainly so as to control the trade routes passing through it and to use it as a bridgehead for defense or offense
 4. During periods when there was an “international vacuum” in the land between Egypt and Mesopotamia, local powers struggled for political, military, and economic control of the main highways of the country
- C. Geography of the Land of the Bible (see “Land of the Bible” supplement)
1. Israel lies along the southern portion of the Mediterranean’s Eastern coastline and extends approximately 150 miles north to south and approximately 60 miles (at its widest point) east to west
 2. Natural limitations confined Israel on three sides:
 - a. To the east was the Syrian-Arabian desert
 - b. To the south was the Negev, the Wilderness of Zin, and the Wilderness of Paran
 - c. On the west was the Mediterranean (the Great Sea)
 3. In spite of its limited area, Israel is divided into many smaller districts which differ radically from one another
 4. Due to extreme variations of altitude over small distances, Israel is divided into many regions, each possessing its own particular geographical features²
 - a. The **Coastal Plain**
 - (1) The Plain of Acco
 - (2) Carmel and the Jezreel Valley – largest valley bisecting the central mountain range and the only one that connects the coastal plain with the Jordan Valley
 - (3) The Sharon
 - (4) The Philistine coast
 - b. The **Shephelah** (“Lowland” from the standpoint of the Israelite mountain population)
 - (1) Famous for its olives and sycamore trees (1 Chron 27:28; 1 Kings 10:27)
 - (2) During the Old Testament Period, this area was the most valued part of the Judean kingdom, fortified by a chain of fortresses against the Philistines and more distant enemies; its most fortified cities stood on the

² In the geographical breakdown that follows, the highlighted regions (**Coastal Plain**, **Shephelah**, etc) identify the longitudinal zones of the land of Israel, going from the Mediterranean (to the west) toward the Arabian Desert (to the east). Under each of these longitudinal zones are the geographical features within this zone, going from north to south.

various valleys through which the roads led to the mountains of Judah

- c. The **Central Mountain Range**
 - (1) Galilee
 - (a) Upper Galilee
 - (b) Lower Galilee
 - (2) Mount Ephraim - 2953 ft.
 - (3) Judean Hill Country - 3280 ft. (Jerusalem saddled)
 - d. The **Judean Wilderness**
 - e. The **Jordan Rift Valley**
 - (1) Huleh Valley - 210 ft. above sea level
 - (2) Sea of Galilee (Chinnereth; Sea of Tiberias) - 689 ft. below sea level
 - (3) Jordan Valley - 70 miles from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, river more than twice that; 90 to 100 ft. in width, up to a mile at flood season
 - (4) Dead Sea (Salt Sea) - 1312 ft. below sea level
 - (5) Arabah
 - f. The **Transjordan Highlands** - averages 3300 ft
 - (1) Bashan
 - (2) Gilead
 - (3) Moab
 - (4) Edom
 - g. The **Negev** and the Southern Wilderness
5. General rule regarding climate: hotter and drier the further east and south you go
- D. The geographical nature and position of this land do not inherently encourage its independence nor its development as a natural center of political power
- E. Geological forces have made a mixture of mountains, canyons, passes, and plains, making travel extremely difficult, except along defined natural routes
- 1. Such a land does not lend itself to unification or rule under any one government
 - 2. The slightest shift in world climatic conditions can render the country helpless, producing drought and famine
 - 3. There exists the almost continual conflict between the herdsman and the farmer, between the desert and the sown
 - 4. The country lacks natural frontiers and is vulnerable to attack on all sides; in the south, desert raiders posed a constant threat to the settled population; in the north, there was imminent danger along the major routes