

Old Testament #1: Pentateuch

The Pentateuch is the first five books in the Hebrew Bible. The word *pentateuch* comes from two Greek words *penta* (five) and *teukhos* (scroll).

1. Moses is the foundational author of the Pentateuch. His primary audience was the people of God preparing to enter the Promised Land.
 - The Pentateuch affirms Moses as its author (Exodus 24:4, 34:27; Numbers 33:2).
 - Other books of the Old Testament affirm Moses as the author (Joshua 8:32; II Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18).
 - The New Testament affirms Moses as the author (Mark 12:26; John 5:46; Romans 10:5).

Modern critical scholars, with anti-supernatural presuppositions reject Mosaic authorship.

Moses collected incidents from personal experience, oral tradition, earlier documents, and 80 days in the presence of the Lord to complete Genesis and the Pentateuch.

An editor or scribe obviously added the final words concerning his death (Deuteronomy 34:5, 6, 10-12).

The Exodus occurred around 1450 BC and Moses wrote Genesis sometime between then and his death forty years later.

GENESIS

BACKGROUND

1. Genesis is the foundation of all further biblical revelation. Everything that comes after rests upon it. To understand the Bible, we must understand Genesis.
2. Genesis can be divided into two distinct parts: the Primeval History (1–11) and the Patriarchal Narratives (12–50).

Primeval History	Patriarchal Narratives
The focus is human history in general.	The focus is Jewish history in particular.
The pace is fast and the time span is great.	The pace is slow and the time span is short (relatively).
The themes of sin, curse, and judgment predominate.	The themes of redemption and blessing predominate.
Begins with one man’s sin and disobedience: Adam.	Begins with one man’s faith and obedience: Abraham.

THEMES

1. Creation (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3). Creation is the first recorded fact in the Bible, and therefore the most significant one. All other truths connect to it.

Stephen Wellum

*[Creation] establishes the sovereign-personal Triune God at the center of the universe, and reveals that everything and everyone is both dependent upon him and responsible to him. It also reveals who man is and what his place is in God's world. And finally, it displays the goodness of God's original creation and sets us up for what eventually goes wrong with it.*¹

2. The Fall - The depth of sin in the human heart.

David Clines

*“There is an ever-growing ‘avalanche’ of sin, a ‘continually widening chasm between man and God.’ There is a movement from disobedience to murder, to reckless killing, to titanic lust, to total corruption and violence, to the full disruption of humanity.”*²

3. God’s Covenantal election of Abraham and his descendant.

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1–3)

¹ Stephen J. Wellum, The Doctrine Of Creation Matters, Journal: Southern Baptist Journal of Theology Volume: SBJT 11:1 (Spring 2007) .

² David Clines, The Theme of the Pentateuch, p. 70.

EXODUS – THE BOOK OF REDEMPTION

BACKGROUND

1. The book of Exodus begins with the conjunction and to emphasize that it was a continuation of Genesis. It begins with the death of Joseph and ends with the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

Three months after leaving Egypt, Israel arrived at Mount Sinai. They spent over a year in this location. The rest of Exodus, all of Leviticus, and the first part of Numbers take place at this location.

2. Exodus is divided into three sections.
 - Section one (1:1-18:27) concerns the Exodus from Egypt; it reveals the power of God.

Exodus opens with the Israelites as slaves in Egypt and no longer honored guests.

“And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.”

But the Israelites cried to the Lord and He rose up a deliverer for them.

“The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.” (Exodus 2:23, 24)

The deliverance from Egypt, and especially the parting of the sea, became the determining event in the history of the nation (Joshua 24:6, 7; Nehemiah 9:11; Psalm 78:12, 13, 53; Psalm 106:9-11; Psalm 114:1, 3; Hebrews 11:29).

- Section two (19:1-24:18) concerns the giving of the Law; it reveals the holiness of God.

The Law was given to provide a standard of holiness, to identify sin, and to reveal the divine nature.

- Section three (25:1-40:38) concerns the design of the Tabernacle; it reveals the wisdom of God.

“Then have them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them.” (Exodus 25:8)

3. The book of Exodus is filled with types that foreshadow things to come.

Crossing the Red Sea is a type of water baptism (I Corinthians 10:1, 2).

The Passover Lamb is a type of Jesus and His sacrifice for sins (I Corinthians 5:7).

Egypt is a type of the system of this world that attempts to keep God’s people in bondage and tries to seduce them back with memories of garlic and leeks.

PURPOSE

1. Exodus shows God’s people that He kept His promise to Abraham and that He is sovereign in history.

LEVITICUS – THE BOOK OF HOLINESS

BACKGROUND

1. Only a small part of Leviticus is narrative. The rest of the book is legal literature in two forms.

The three narrative sections are:

1. **The consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests to the Lord in chapters 8-9.**
2. **The rebellion of Aaron’s sons in chapter 10.**
3. **The stoning of the blasphemer in chapter 24.**

2. Leviticus is an instruction manual for priest and people.

**It teaches the priests the proper worship of God.
It teaches the people how to relate to God and each other.**

3. Leviticus contains an abundance of typology, especially in reference to the three annual feasts of the Lord: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

THEMES

Three themes are particularly underlined in Leviticus:

1. Israel's theocracy. It covers issues as diverse as labor, capital, property, marriage, and land ownership.

Leviticus provided the basis for Israel's theocracy. It also provides the first principles whereby any nation can order their civil life after the law of God.

2. Atonement – the covering over of sins through the various sacrifices available.

The Hebrew word for atonement occurs fifty-two times in Leviticus. The word blood occurs eighty-eight times. "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." (Leviticus 17:11)

- The sacrificial goat was a picture of the person of Christ perfect, unblemished, and sacrificed for the sins of the people. The scapegoat was a picture of the work of Christ, banished and never seen again.

The sacrificial atonements in Leviticus did not actually remove sin – they covered the penitent until the Lamb of God would come to take away their sins. (1 Peter 1:18, 19)

"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Hebrews 10:4)

3. Holiness – separation from everything that makes fellowship with God impossible.

The word 'holy' is used over a hundred times in Leviticus. "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2)

NUMBERS – REBELLION IN THE WILDERNESS

BACKGROUND

1. Numbers chronicles Israel's thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness. It begins as the first generation leaves their final encampment at Sinai, and it ends on the plains of Moab as the second generation prepares to enter the Promised Land.
2. The Hebrew name for this book is: "In the Wilderness." This term is an appropriate metaphor for the judgment that fell on the people who refused to enter the land of rest.
3. Numbers recounts events that N.T. authors will use as examples for the church: the bad report (13:30-33; 14:1, 2; Hebrews 3:7-13), the rebellion of Korah (16:1-3, 13; Jude 1:11), and the judgment of the fiery serpents (21:5-9; I Corinthians 10:9-12; John 3:14-15).

PURPOSE

1. Numbers is a warning of the dangers of disobedience and rebellion to God's laws *and* God's leaders.

Leaders also have the same responsibility to obey. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam all rebelled against the Lord at different times and experienced the consequences of their sin.

2. Numbers is an exhortation to believers to not repeat the same mistakes in their Promised Land.

DEUTERONOMY – PREPARATION FOR THE PROMISE

Deuteronomy was written during the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the departure from Egypt, as the people faced the flooded Jordan River and the walled city of Jericho (1:1-3).

BACKGROUND

Deuteronomy is referred to over eighty times in the New Testament and is quoted more by Jesus than any other book.

1. Deuteronomy consists of **three sermons** Moses gave before the people entered the land, and before he entered eternity.

SERMON	VERSE	LOCATION	CONTENT
One	1:5–4:40	East of the Jordan, in Moab.	Past record of Israel’s journeys
Two	4:44–28:68	In the valley of Beth Peor.	Future concerns of life in the Promised Land
Three	29:1–32:47	In Moab.	Covenant renewal

2. The book prepared Israel for two events they would soon face: the death of Moses and the conquest of the Land. It contains laws for the orderly governance of the nation by priests, judges, kings, and prophets. It also stipulates the laws governing war.

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of Deuteronomy is to prepare Israel for God’s gift of the Promised Land. (Deuteronomy 1:8)

“See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord swore He would give to your fathers.”
 (Deuteronomy 1:8)

2. Moses’s exhortations can be put into five categories:

- Hold fast the Word. (4:5, 6, 40; 5:32; 6:17; 8:1; 12:32; 29:9)
“Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” (Deuteronomy 11:8)
- Teach your children. (4:9; 11:19; 32:46)
“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.” (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7)
- Remember God’s covenant faithfulness. (4:10; 8:18; 32:7)
“Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 4:23)
- Stay humble. (8:11-17; 9:4)
“And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might

humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.” (8:2)

- Do not be afraid. (7:17, 18; 31:6).
“When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.” (Deuteronomy 20:1)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Genesis has been described as the overture forecasting several distinct themes that are woven through all of Scripture; choose one of the themes and briefly describe why this is true.
2. There are those who portray the God of the Old Testament as a God of wrath and judgment and the God of the New Testament as a God of grace and love. Discuss how God has always shown grace in dealing with his people from the very beginning. Give examples from Genesis, Exodus and Numbers.

HOMEWORK

1. Briefly articulate the purpose and message of each book of the Pentateuch.