

The Old Testament: Part 1, Introduction

I. Getting Started with the Old Testament (OT)

- A. Commonly, we talk about the OT as having three parts: the law and history (or *story*), the writings, and the prophets. Why would God reveal himself in these various ways? For example, why not record the law without all of the history? Why include poetry?
- B. Can we trust that the Bible is true? If yes, how would you explain your reasons for trusting the truthfulness of Scripture to someone who questions you? What might cause someone to doubt the truthfulness of Scripture?
- C. Throughout this series, we are asking people to read through large sections of the OT. If you have ever gone through the OT, how did you do it, or what are some ways to be disciplined and enjoy reading the OT?

II. Habits to Avoid, Questions to Ask

- A. Pastor Matt warned against reading OT texts as speaking directly to us out of context. What are some passages which people tend to take out of context? If these passages don't apply directly to us, do they apply to us at all and affect our lives? In what way?
- B. Why do we expect the OT to be unified in itself and also with the New Testament, when it was written over the course of thousands of years by several different authors? What differences should we expect to see as we read, and what similarities?
- C. He also warned against seeing OT characters as heroes and mimicking their actions. How, then, should these stories and people influence our actions?

III. Interpreting the OT (a.k.a. Hermeneutical Help)

- A. Pastor Matt mentioned three ways to interpret, or understand the meaning of, OT narratives:
 1. Understanding the story in context and at face value. Question to ask: What is happening in this story, and what did these laws/poems/events mean for people at that time?
 2. Understanding the place of the story in the broader story of God's people. Question to ask: How does this story or person affect the way God relates to his people, or the way his people relate to God?
 3. Understanding the place of the story in the metanarrative, or big picture, of God's salvation and redemption of his creation throughout history. Questions to ask: What does this story have to do with creation, fall, redemption, and restoration? Where is Jesus in this story?
- B. I would encourage you to choose an OT story (a favorite passage)—and practice these three ways to interpret the passage in order to introduce your small group to this way of thinking.