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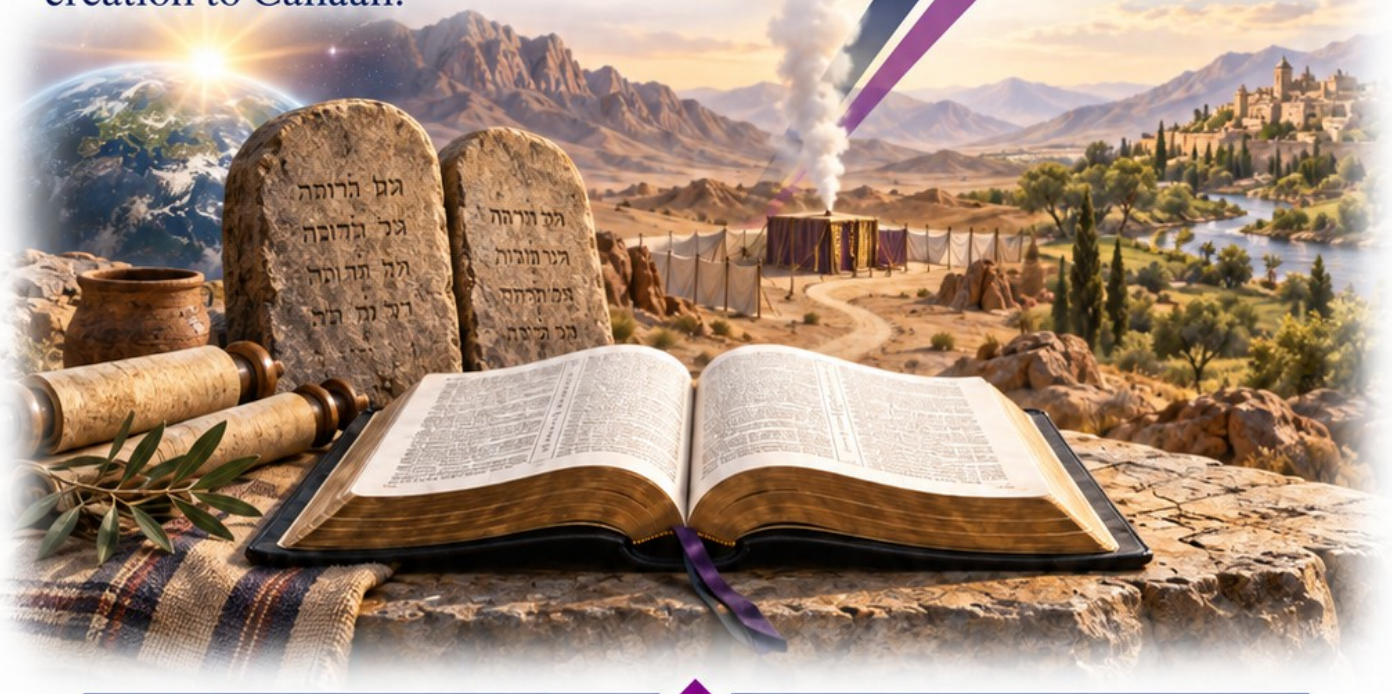
STUDY GUIDE 5

Understanding *the* Bible

STUDY GUIDE 2 OF 8:

The Books of the Law — Creation to Canaan

An overview of the Law from creation to Canaan.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

BACK TO CONTENTS

The previous Study Guide considered how the Bible was structured, formed, transmitted and preserved. We now begin examining the books themselves, starting with the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Together, these books form the foundation for much of what follows in Scripture. They take us from creation and the beginning of humanity, through the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, into Israel's bondage in Egypt, their deliverance through Moses, the giving of the Law, the wilderness journey, and finally to the borders of the Promised Land.

These five books are commonly known as the Law, the Books of Moses, the Pentateuch and the Torah. Although each book has its own emphasis, they should not be viewed as separate stories. Together, they form one continuing account of God's dealings with humanity and with the people of Israel.

Genesis introduces the beginnings and the promises. Exodus records deliverance and covenant, Leviticus teaches Israel concerning holiness, sacrifice and worship, Numbers follows the nation through the wilderness, and Deuteronomy prepares a new generation to enter the land God had promised.

Throughout this Study Guide, we will also include approximate historical dates where they help the student understand when people and events fit within the wider biblical story. Because many dates from very ancient history cannot be established with absolute certainty, approximate dates will normally be identified with *"c."*, meaning *"circa"* or *"approximately."*

Our purpose is not simply to learn names, dates and events. We want to understand the story being told, why each stage matters, and how these books prepare the way for the fuller revelation of God's purpose in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the five Books of the Law begin the biblical story that points toward Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Have you treated the dates and names in these books as facts detached from God's continuing purpose?

Action Step

Trace a promise beginning in Genesis. How does seeing God's larger purpose change what you value when reading the Books of the Law?

INTRODUCTION: THE FOUNDATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

BACK TO CONTENTS

The first five books of the Bible form the opening section of the Old Testament and provide the foundation for much of what follows. They introduce the beginnings of humanity, the patriarchs, the nation of Israel, the covenant given through Moses, and the laws that governed Israel's relationship with God and with one another.

These books are much more than a collection of laws. They tell a continuous story that begins with creation and moves through the fall of humanity, the Flood, the nations, the calling of Abraham, the lives of Isaac and Jacob, the family of Israel entering Egypt, their later bondage, their deliverance through Moses, and their journey towards the land God had promised.

The first five books are:

- Genesis: beginnings, the patriarchs and the promises;
- Exodus: deliverance from Egypt and the establishment of the covenant;
- Leviticus: holiness, sacrifice, priesthood and worship;
- Numbers: Israel's wilderness journey, testing and unbelief;
- Deuteronomy: Moses' final instructions to the generation preparing to enter Canaan.

These books are often called the Law, the Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, and the Torah. The word Pentateuch means *"five volumes,"* while Torah is commonly understood as *"law"* or *"instruction."*

Although the Law contained many commandments, regulations and ceremonies given specifically to Israel under the Old Covenant, its importance extends beyond the nation of Israel. It reveals God's standard, exposes the seriousness of sin, establishes important principles of holiness and obedience, and provides the historical setting necessary for understanding much of the remainder of Scripture.

At the same time, the Books of the Law continually move the biblical story forward. The promises given to Abraham, the deliverance from Egypt, the Passover, the sacrificial system, the priesthood and many other features of Israel's life prepare the way for truths that would later be revealed more fully in Jesus Christ.

For this reason, we should not approach Genesis through Deuteronomy as though they were simply ancient books containing customs that no longer matter. We must first understand them within the historical and covenant setting in which they were given, and then recognise how they contribute to the unfolding purpose of God throughout Scripture.

This Study Guide will therefore follow the story from Genesis to Deuteronomy, examining each book individually while also showing how the five books belong together. Our aim is to understand where each book fits, what happens within it, what its principal message is, and how it prepares the student for the rest of the Bible.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do Genesis through Deuteronomy form a continuous account from creation to the border of Canaan?

Personal Reflection

Which of these books have you read without seeing its place in the larger story?

Action Step

Review how the five books fit together. Which one have you neglected, and how will you now give its message proper attention?

THE BOOKS OF THE LAW

BACK TO CONTENTS

The first five books of the Bible are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Together they form the opening section of the Old Testament and provide the foundation for much of what follows in Scripture.

These books are commonly known as the Law, the Books of Moses, the Pentateuch and the Torah. The word Pentateuch means *"five volumes,"* while Torah carries the idea of law, teaching or instruction.

Although divided into five books, they form one continuing story. Genesis begins with creation and follows the promise through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Exodus records Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai. Leviticus explains holiness, sacrifice and worship, Numbers follows Israel through the wilderness, and Deuteronomy prepares a new generation to enter the Promised Land.

The Law Was Given to Israel

The Law was given within a particular historical and covenant setting. God first delivered Israel from Egypt and then gave them His commandments at Sinai.

Moses said in **Deuteronomy 5:1-3**:

> *"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day."*

This helps us understand why the Law must first be read within the setting in which God gave it. Its commandments governed Israel's worship, national life, relationships and covenant responsibilities.

The Law was therefore not a collection of unrelated rules. It taught Israel how they were to live as the people God had delivered and brought into covenant with Himself.

Moses and the Written Law

The first five books are closely associated with Moses, and Scripture repeatedly refers to *"the law of Moses"* and *"the book of Moses."* Moses occupied the central place in receiving, teaching and recording God's instructions for Israel.

Deuteronomy 31:24-26 states:

> *"And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."*

The written Law was to remain as a witness among the people. Israel was expected to hear it, learn it, teach it and live according to it.

The final account of Moses' death was necessarily completed by another writer. Joshua is traditionally regarded as the most likely writer of this concluding section, although Scripture does not specifically identify him.

Five Books, One Story

The five books carry the biblical story through a clear progression:

- Genesis: Beginnings and Promise: Creation, the fall, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph;
- Exodus: Deliverance and Covenant: Egypt, Moses, the Passover, the Red Sea and Sinai;
- Leviticus: Holiness, Sacrifice and Worship: Priesthood, offerings, cleansing and atonement;
- Numbers: The Wilderness Journey: Testing, unbelief, judgement and a new generation;
- Deuteronomy: Remember and Obey: Moses' final instructions before Israel entered Canaan.

Together they move from creation → to promise → to bondage → to deliverance → to covenant → to wilderness → to the border of the Promised Land.

This progression helps us see that Scripture is not presenting isolated stories. God is revealing His purpose step by step.

The Law Leads to Jesus Christ

As important as the Law was, Scripture makes clear that it was not the final destination of God's purpose.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:24-25**:

> *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."*

The Law therefore had an appointed purpose: *"to bring us unto Christ."*

This principle must remain before us as we study Genesis through Deuteronomy. We are not studying these books simply to learn about ancient Israel, laws, sacrifices and ceremonies. We are learning how God's revelation was preparing the way for Jesus Christ.

Moses Wrote of Jesus Christ

Jesus Himself gave us the clearest principle for reading the Books of the Law. He said in **John 5:46-47**:

> *"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"*

Jesus said plainly: *"he wrote of me."*

This does not mean that every person, event or object in the Law should automatically be given a symbolic meaning. We must first understand each verse within its proper historical setting.

However, Scripture repeatedly shows that these writings prepare the way for Christ. The promise to Abraham, the Passover, the sacrifices, the wilderness Rock, the serpent lifted up

and the Prophet foretold by Moses all become important parts of the biblical testimony concerning Jesus.

The Books of the Law therefore establish much of the language through which the New Testament later explains redemption.

As we examine each of the five books individually, we will keep two questions before us: What is happening in the biblical story? And how is this preparing the way for Jesus Christ?

These questions will help us understand the Books of the Law as the beginning of an unfolding revelation that ultimately finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do the Books of the Law establish the language of promise, covenant, sacrifice and holiness used later in the Bible?

Personal Reflection

Which of those themes have you overlooked when reading the opening books of the Bible?

Action Step

Choose the theme of covenant, sacrifice, holiness or promise. What does its fulfilment in Jesus change about your own understanding of God?

GENESIS: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

BACK TO CONTENTS

Approximate Historical Setting: From creation to c. 1800 B.C.
Patriarchal Period: approximately 2100-1800 B.C.
Approximate Date of Writing: c. 1400 B.C., traditionally associated with Moses
Place in the Biblical Story: From creation to the family of Israel living in Egypt

Genesis is the first book of the Bible and contains fifty chapters. It begins with creation and follows the biblical story through the fall of humanity, Noah and the Flood, the nations, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Genesis is the book of *"beginnings"*, introducing many of the people, events and truths upon which the remainder of Scripture builds.

The name Genesis means beginning or origin. Yet Genesis does not describe the beginning of God because God is already present when Scripture opens. The first words of the Bible simply declare His existence and His creative work.

In the Beginning

Genesis 1:1 states:

> *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

The Bible therefore begins with God. Everything that follows rests upon this foundation. The world belongs to God because He created it, humanity receives life from Him, and history has meaning because God is working within it.

Genesis introduces the creation of the heavens and the earth, light, land, seas, vegetation, the sun, moon and stars, living creatures, and finally humanity. Man and woman are not presented as accidents of nature but as part of God's deliberate creation.

The opening chapters therefore establish a principle that continues throughout Scripture: human beings are accountable to the God who created them.

The First Commandment

Genesis also records the first commandment God gave to humanity. **Genesis 2:16-17** states:

> *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."*

Adam was given freedom, but that freedom existed within the authority of God's Word. God clearly stated what was permitted and what was forbidden.

The issue was therefore one of obedience. Adam and Eve were not left to decide for themselves what should be right or wrong. God had spoken, and they were responsible to obey what He had said.

Sin Enters Human Experience

Genesis 3 records the disobedience of Adam and Eve and the entrance of sin into human experience. They rejected God's command, and the consequences affected their relationship with God, with one another and with the world around them.

Yet even in the account of judgement, God began to reveal that sin would not have the final word. **Genesis 3:15** states:

> *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."*

At this early stage of Scripture, all the details are not yet explained. However, a line of promise has begun.

As the Bible develops, that promise becomes clearer until the New Testament reveals its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Genesis therefore introduces both the problem of sin and the beginning of God's revealed answer.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the promise following Adam and Eve's disobedience begin a hope developed later in the Bible?

Personal Reflection

Where has reading Genesis only as a record of beginnings obscured the promise in its story?

Action Step

Read Genesis 3 and its promise. How should God's response to sin change the way you face wrong attitudes or actions in your own life?

From Adam to Noah

The generations following Adam show how quickly sin affected humanity. Cain killed his brother Abel, violence increased, and the condition of humanity became increasingly corrupt. Genesis eventually describes a world filled with wickedness.

Yet Noah found grace in the sight of the LORD. God instructed him to build an ark, and through that ark Noah and his family were preserved while judgement came upon the world through the Flood.

The account therefore contains two important themes that will continue throughout Scripture: judgement upon sin and God's provision of deliverance.

After the Flood, God established a covenant with Noah and gave the rainbow as a sign that He would not again destroy the earth by a flood.

Babel and the Nations

After the Flood, humanity multiplied again. Genesis records the descendants of Noah's sons and then describes the events surrounding the Tower of Babel.

The people attempted to gather themselves together, build a city and make a name for themselves. God confused their language and scattered them.

This event helps explain the development of different peoples and languages and marks an important change in the direction of Genesis. The opening part of the book deals broadly with humanity and the nations, but the focus then narrows to one man and one family through whom God would continue revealing His purpose.

That man was Abraham.

God Calls Abraham

The calling of Abraham is one of the great turning points in the Bible. God said in **Genesis 12:1-3**:

> *"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."*

God promised Abraham several things. He would give him a land, make of him a great nation and bless him. Most importantly, through Abraham *"all families of the earth"* would be blessed.

The promise therefore reached far beyond Abraham himself.

The Promise Leads to Jesus Christ

The New Testament explains where the promise to Abraham ultimately leads. Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:16**:

> *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."*

This is one of the most important connections between Genesis and Jesus Christ. The promise given to Abraham continues through the biblical story, but its ultimate fulfilment is not simply the development of a physical nation.

The promised Seed is Christ.

Therefore, when we read the story of Abraham, we should understand both its historical meaning and its place in God's larger purpose. Abraham's story is part of the road that leads to Jesus.

Isaac: The Son of Promise

Abraham and Sarah waited many years for the son God had promised them. Eventually Isaac was born.

His birth demonstrated that God's promise did not depend upon normal human possibility. Abraham and Sarah were already advanced in age, yet God remained faithful to what He had spoken.

Later, Abraham faced one of the greatest tests of his life when God instructed him to offer Isaac. Before Isaac was killed, God stopped Abraham and provided a ram for the offering.

The event demonstrated Abraham's faith and obedience and was followed by another confirmation of the promise. The promised line would continue through Isaac.

From Isaac to Jacob

Isaac and Rebekah had two sons, Esau and Jacob. The line of promise continued through Jacob.

Jacob's life was marked by conflict, family difficulties and many occasions when God had to deal with him. Yet God did not abandon His purpose.

While Jacob was fleeing from Esau, he dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. God used that occasion to repeat the promises previously given to Abraham and Isaac.

Later, Jesus Himself referred to the imagery of Jacob's dream. He said in **John 1:51**:

> *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."*

Jesus places Himself at the centre of the imagery Jacob had seen. Once again, Genesis points beyond its immediate history towards Jesus Christ.

Jacob Becomes Israel

God eventually changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob had twelve sons, and from those sons came the families that would later form the twelve tribes of Israel.

The nation therefore does not suddenly appear in Exodus. Genesis explains where Israel came from.

The story has moved from Abraham → Isaac → Jacob → the twelve sons of Israel. But the family would soon experience events that would take them away from Canaan and into Egypt.

Joseph Goes Down Into Egypt

Joseph was one of Jacob's sons and was especially loved by his father. His brothers became jealous of him and eventually sold him. Joseph was taken into Egypt, where he experienced slavery, false accusation and imprisonment.

Yet God continued working through circumstances that appeared disastrous. Joseph eventually interpreted Pharaoh's dreams concerning coming years of abundance followed by famine, and Pharaoh raised him to a position of great authority.

When famine later reached Canaan, Joseph's brothers travelled to Egypt seeking food. They did not initially recognise him, but eventually Joseph revealed himself and the family was reunited.

Looking back upon everything that had happened, Joseph said in **Genesis 50:20**:

> *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."*

Joseph understood that the wrongdoing of his brothers had not defeated God's purpose. God had used the circumstances to preserve the family through whom the promise would continue.

Israel Moves Into Egypt

Jacob and his family eventually moved into Egypt, where Joseph was able to provide for them during the famine. Genesis therefore ends in a very different place from where it began.

The book begins with the creation of the world and ends with the family of Israel living in Egypt.

God had promised Abraham a land and a great nation, but neither promise had yet reached its full historical development. The family was in Egypt, not Canaan, and they were still a family, not yet the great nation seen later in Scripture.

Genesis therefore deliberately leaves the story unfinished.

Genesis Points Forward

Genesis establishes many of the foundations needed for understanding the rest of the Bible. It introduces creation, sin, judgement, promise, faith, covenant, Israel and the promised Seed.

Most importantly, the book begins to direct us towards Jesus Christ. The promised Seed leads to Christ. The blessing promised to all nations leads to Christ. Jacob's ladder is later applied by Jesus to Himself.

The entire family line through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is being preserved as God's purpose moves forward. Genesis therefore does much more than explain beginnings. It begins the unfolding Scriptural testimony that will eventually reveal Jesus Christ in fullness.

The story now continues into Exodus, where the family that entered Egypt has become a large people living under bondage. God's promise has not been forgotten.

The next stage will reveal God as Deliverer.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did God preserve the family line through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob before the story moved to Egypt?

Personal Reflection

When circumstances make God's promises seem distant, what does the faithfulness seen in Abraham's family reveal about your own trust?

Action Step

Trace the promise through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Which present doubt about God's faithfulness do you need to reconsider?

EXODUS: DELIVERANCE AND COVENANT

BACK TO CONTENTS

Approximate Historical Setting: c. 1500-1400 B.C.
Approximate Date of Writing: c. 1400 B.C., traditionally associated with Moses
Place in the Biblical Story: From Israel's bondage in Egypt to deliverance, covenant and the tabernacle

Genesis ends with Jacob's family living in Egypt under the protection of Joseph. Exodus begins generations later, after Joseph and the Pharaoh who had favoured him were gone. The descendants of Israel had multiplied greatly, but their circumstances had changed from security to bondage.

The name Exodus means *"going out"* or *"departure,"* describing the central movement of the book. Exodus contains forty chapters and records how God delivered Israel from Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea, led them to Mount Sinai, gave them His Law and established them as a covenant nation.

Yet Exodus is more than the history of one nation's escape from slavery. It introduces themes of deliverance, redemption, covenant and God's dwelling among His people that prepare the way for the fuller revelation of Jesus Christ.

Israel in Bondage

The descendants of Jacob had become numerous in Egypt. A new Pharaoh feared their growing strength and forced them into harsh labour.

When oppression failed to stop their increase, Pharaoh ordered that Hebrew male children should be killed. Moses was born during this dangerous period but was preserved and eventually raised within Pharaoh's household.

After killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, Moses fled into Midian, where he remained for many years. Israel continued suffering in Egypt, but God had not forgotten His covenant.

Exodus 2:23-25 states:

> *"And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."*

The connection with Genesis is clear. God's actions in Exodus continue the promises already given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God Calls Moses

While Moses was tending sheep in Midian, God appeared to him from the burning bush and called him to return to Egypt.

Exodus 3:7-10 states:

> *"And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."*

Moses was the servant God chose, but the deliverance itself belonged to God. God said, *"I am come down to deliver them."*

Moses initially felt inadequate for the task, but God promised to be with him. Aaron, Moses' brother, would assist him in confronting Pharaoh.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What did God's call of Moses show about whose power would accomplish Israel's deliverance?

Personal Reflection

When you feel inadequate, do you look mainly at your weakness or at God's ability to accomplish His purpose?

Action Step

Read Moses' call at the burning bush. What fear or excuse in your own life needs to give way to trust in God's direction?

The Plagues of Egypt

Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh with God's command to let Israel go, but Pharaoh refused.

A series of plagues then came upon Egypt, including blood, frogs, lice, flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts and darkness. Pharaoh repeatedly resisted God's command despite the increasing severity of the judgements.

The final plague would bring the death of the firstborn throughout Egypt. Before that judgement came, however, God gave Israel specific instructions that would lead to their deliverance.

The Passover

Each Israelite household was instructed to take a lamb, kill it and place its blood upon the side posts and upper doorpost of the house.

God said in **Exodus 12:12-13**:

> *"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."*

The Passover became one of the most important events in Israel's history. It reminded succeeding generations that God had delivered them from bondage.

The New Testament later identifies the greater reality towards which the Passover pointed. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 5:7**:

> *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:"*

Scripture therefore gives us the connection directly: *"Christ our passover."*

The historical deliverance from Egypt prepared the language through which the greater redemption in Jesus Christ could later be understood.

Israel Leaves Egypt

After the death of Egypt's firstborn, Pharaoh finally permitted Israel to leave. However, he soon changed his mind and sent his army after them.

Israel found themselves trapped between the Egyptian forces and the Red Sea. Moses told the people in **Exodus 14:13-14**:

> *"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."*

God opened the sea, Israel crossed on dry ground, and the Egyptian army was destroyed when the waters returned.

The message is unmistakable: Israel could not deliver themselves. God provided the way of deliverance.

This becomes an important biblical principle. Salvation does not begin with humanity rescuing itself. It begins with God acting to save.

From Egypt to Sinai

After crossing the Red Sea, Israel began travelling through the wilderness. They soon faced hunger and thirst and repeatedly complained. Nevertheless, God provided water and gave them manna for food.

Eventually they arrived at Mount Sinai, and here the story enters a new stage. The first part of Exodus centres on deliverance from bondage, while the second centres on covenant, Law and worship.

God had brought Israel out of Egypt, and He would now teach them how they were to live as His people.

God Brings Israel to Himself

Before giving the covenant commandments, God reminded Israel of what He had already done.

Exodus 19:3-6 states:

> *"And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."*

One expression is especially important: *"I... brought you unto myself."*

The goal of deliverance was not simply to move Israel from Egypt to another geographical location. God was bringing them into relationship with Himself.

God brings His people out of bondage so that they may belong to Him.

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20 records the giving of the Ten Commandments, sometimes called the Decalogue, meaning *"ten words"* or *"ten sayings."* This is one of the central events in Exodus.

The commandments begin in **Exodus 20:1-3**:

> *"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."*

Again, the order is important. God first says, *"I... brought thee out."* Then He gives His commandments.

Israel's obedience was therefore to be the response of a people whom God had already delivered. The Law addressed their relationship with God and with one another and formed part of the covenant that governed Israel as a nation.

The Covenant Is Confirmed

The covenant was formally confirmed in Exodus 24. **Exodus 24:7-8** states:

> *"And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."*

The Law therefore belonged within a definite covenant relationship between God and Israel.

This covenant setting becomes increasingly important as the Bible develops because the New Testament later contrasts the former covenant with the better covenant established through Jesus Christ.

The Tabernacle

A large portion of the later chapters of Exodus concerns the construction of the tabernacle. God said in **Exodus 25:8-9**:

> *"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."*

The central thought is *"that I may dwell among them."* God had delivered Israel, brought them into covenant and now provided a sanctuary connected with His dwelling among them.

The details of the tabernacle will not be developed here because later studies will deal more fully with shadows and fulfilment. The important point in Exodus is that God desired to dwell among the people He had redeemed.

This theme ultimately leads beyond an earthly tabernacle. John wrote in **John 1:14**:

> *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."*

The greater revelation is found in Jesus Christ.

The Golden Calf

While Moses was on the mountain receiving God's instructions, Israel became impatient and asked Aaron to make gods to go before them. Aaron made a golden calf, and the people worshipped it.

This event demonstrates how quickly people can turn away even after experiencing remarkable works of God. Israel had seen the plagues, crossed the Red Sea and heard God's voice, yet they still turned to idolatry.

Their failure becomes an important warning that outward experiences alone do not guarantee inward faithfulness.

The Glory of the LORD Fills the Tabernacle

Exodus ends with the completed tabernacle. **Exodus 40:33-35** states:

> *"And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."*

The contrast between the beginning and ending of Exodus is striking. The book begins with Israel enslaved under Pharaoh and ends with a delivered people gathered around the dwelling place of God.

That movement captures the message of Exodus. God delivers, brings His people to Himself, establishes covenant and desires to dwell among them.

The themes introduced in Exodus continue moving the biblical story towards Jesus Christ, our Passover and the greater reality of God's redemption.

The next book, Leviticus, explains how this covenant people were to approach and live before the holy God who now dwelt among them.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do deliverance from Egypt and covenant at Sinai belong together in Exodus?

Personal Reflection

Have you separated God's saving action from the obedience He sought from the people He delivered?

Action Step

Compare God's deliverance and Israel's response at Sinai. How should knowing Christ's completed saving work govern your obedience today?

LEVITICUS: HOLINESS, SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP

BACK TO CONTENTS

Approximate Historical Setting: c. 1400 B.C.
Approximate Date of Writing: c. 1400 B.C., traditionally associated with Moses
Place in the Biblical Story: Israel has been delivered from Egypt and brought into covenant with God. Leviticus explains how they were to worship and live before a holy God.

Leviticus is the third of the five Books of the Law and contains twenty-seven chapters. It deals mainly with sacrifices, offerings, priesthood, cleansing, holiness and worship. Leviticus helps us understand both the holiness of God and the sacrificial system that ultimately points towards Jesus Christ.

Exodus ended with the glory of the LORD filling the tabernacle. Leviticus now answers an important question: How could a sinful people live in covenant relationship with a holy God who dwelt among them?

A Holy God and a Separated People

One of the central themes of Leviticus is holiness. God said in **Leviticus 11:44-45**:

> *"For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."*

Again, God reminds Israel that He was the One who had delivered them from Egypt. Their holiness was therefore connected with their relationship to the God who had redeemed them.

To be holy means to be set apart unto God. Throughout Leviticus, Israel was taught to distinguish between:

- Holy and unholy;
- Clean and unclean;
- Acceptable and unacceptable;
- Obedience and disobedience.

These distinctions continually reminded the nation that God determined how He was to be approached and worshipped.

Sacrifice and Atonement

The opening chapters of Leviticus describe several kinds of sacrifices and offerings. These included offerings connected with worship, thanksgiving, fellowship, sin and restoration.

The sacrifices differed in purpose, but together they taught Israel that sin was serious and that approach to God required what He had provided.

Leviticus 17:11 states:

> *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."*

The sacrificial system introduced the important biblical idea of atonement. Under the Old Covenant, God provided sacrifices through which Israel could approach Him according to His instruction.

Yet those sacrifices were not the final answer.

The Sacrifices Were Shadows

The New Testament explains the greater purpose of these sacrifices. The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:1**:

> *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."*

This helps us understand Leviticus correctly. The sacrifices were God-given, but they were also shadows. They pointed beyond themselves towards something greater.

The blood of animals could not bring complete spiritual perfection. The repeated sacrifices demonstrated that the final reality had not yet arrived.

That reality would be found in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why could the repeated animal sacrifices in Leviticus point forward without bringing complete spiritual perfection?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever given an outward religious action greater importance than what Jesus Christ has already accomplished?

Action Step

Consider one Levitical sacrifice and its fulfilment in Jesus. Where have you given outward forms more importance than Christ Himself?

Jesus Christ: The Greater Sacrifice

Hebrews explains the contrast between the Old Covenant sacrifices and the work of Christ. The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 9:11-12**:

> *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

Leviticus gives us the language of sacrifice, priesthood and atonement. The New Testament shows us the fulfilment.

The Old Covenant priest offered the blood of animals, while Jesus Christ gave His own blood. The Old Covenant sacrifices were repeated, while Christ obtained eternal redemption.

This is why Leviticus is so important. Without its background, many New Testament statements concerning Jesus would be much harder to understand.

The Priesthood

Leviticus also gives detailed instructions concerning the priesthood. Aaron and his sons were appointed to serve as priests, and specific responsibilities governed their ministry.

The priests were not free to invent their own approach to God. Their service was regulated by the commandments God had given.

This established a principle that continues throughout Scripture: God determines how He is to be worshipped.

The priesthood also prepared the way for a greater understanding of Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews later presents Jesus as the greater High Priest, whose work surpasses the Old Covenant priesthood.

The priests under the Law ministered repeatedly. Christ accomplished a greater and complete work.

Nadab and Abihu

Leviticus records a serious example of what happened when God's instructions concerning worship were disregarded. **Leviticus 10:1-3** states:

> *"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace."*

The important phrase is *"which he commanded them not."* The lesson is clear.

Sincerity does not give people authority to replace God's instruction with their own ideas. God had established the way in which Israel was to worship Him.

Clean and Unclean

Leviticus also contains many instructions distinguishing between what was considered clean and unclean. These laws affected food, disease, bodily conditions, worship and daily life. These distinctions are one of the major features of the book.

The purpose was larger than simple outward cleanliness. Israel was repeatedly reminded that they were a people separated unto God.

The distinction between clean and unclean formed part of the outward covenant system given to that nation. Later Scripture would reveal a greater spiritual cleansing through Jesus Christ.

The movement of Scripture is therefore from outward cleansing towards inward cleansing and holiness through Christ.

The Day of Atonement

One of the most important ceremonies in Leviticus was the Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16. On that day, the high priest entered the most holy place and made atonement in connection with the sins of the nation.

The ceremony was repeated every year, and that repetition becomes important when we reach the New Testament.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:3-4**:

> *"But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."*

The repeated sacrifice showed that the system itself was not final. If complete redemption had already been accomplished, the offering would not have needed to be repeated.

The Day of Atonement therefore pointed forward to something greater.

Christ Offered Himself Once

Hebrews contrasts the repeated sacrifices of the Law with the completed work of Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:10-12**:

> *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"*

Under the Law, sacrifices were repeatedly offered. In Christ, the sacrifice was offered *"once for all."*

This is one of the clearest ways in which Leviticus leads us forward to Jesus. The repeated shadow gives way to the completed work of Christ.

Love Was Also Taught in the Law

Leviticus should not be viewed as a book concerned only with sacrifice and judgement. It also teaches love.

Leviticus 19:17-18 states:

> *"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."*

Jesus later identified this command as one of the two great commandments. Love was therefore not introduced for the first time in the New Testament.

The Law itself taught, *"thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."* Jesus revealed the central place that love had always held within God's purpose.

Holiness Was to Affect Daily Life

The holiness taught in Leviticus was not limited to ceremonies inside the tabernacle. The book also contains instructions concerning family relationships, honesty, justice, sexual conduct, care for the poor and many other areas of life.

This teaches an important principle: Relationship with God is meant to affect everyday conduct. Worship and life cannot be separated.

The same principle remains true in Jesus Christ. The believer's life is to reveal the holiness, love and truth of the One who dwells within.

Leviticus Leads Us to Christ

Leviticus may appear less dramatic than Genesis or Exodus, but it plays an essential part in the biblical story. Genesis introduces sin. Exodus records deliverance. Leviticus explains how a delivered people were to live before a holy God.

Its great themes are holiness, sacrifice, priesthood, cleansing and atonement. Yet none of these themes ends with Leviticus.

The sacrifices point forward. The priesthood points forward. The Day of Atonement points forward.

The entire system prepares us to understand the greater reality found in Jesus Christ.

The next book, Numbers, moves the story forward again. Israel leaves Sinai and begins the journey towards Canaan, but the wilderness will reveal how unbelief can prevent people from entering what God has prepared for them.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do sacrifice, priesthood and the Day of Atonement prepare readers for the greater reality in Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Which feature of Leviticus has seemed distant because you have not connected it with Christ?

Action Step

Read about the priesthood or Day of Atonement. How will the completed work of Jesus Christ change where you place your confidence?

NUMBERS: THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

BACK TO CONTENTS

Approximate Historical Setting: c. 1400 B.C.
Approximate Date of Writing: c. 1400 B.C., traditionally associated with Moses
Place in the Biblical Story: From Mount Sinai through the wilderness to the borders of the Promised Land

Numbers is the fourth of the five Books of the Law and contains thirty-six chapters. It records Israel's journey through the wilderness and the events that took place between Mount Sinai and the borders of Canaan. Important events include the two numberings of Israel, the twelve spies, Moses striking the rock, Balaam and the seriousness of Israel's idolatry and unbelief.

The name Numbers reflects the two occasions when the people were counted. The first numbering took place near the beginning of the book, while the second prepared a new generation for entry into Canaan.

Between those two numberings lies the great lesson of Numbers: God remained faithful, but unbelief prevented an entire generation from entering what He had promised.

Israel Is Numbered

The book begins with God instructing Moses to number the men who were able to go to war. **Numbers 1:1-3** states:

> *"And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies."*

Israel was no longer simply the family that had entered Egypt in the days of Joseph. They had become a large nation, organised by tribes and preparing to move towards Canaan.

They had already experienced God's deliverance from Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, received the Law and seen the tabernacle completed. They had every reason to trust God.

Yet Numbers shows that seeing God's works does not automatically produce faith.

The Journey Towards Canaan

Israel left Mount Sinai and began travelling towards the land God had promised. The journey should have brought them forward into Canaan, but their progress was repeatedly interrupted by murmuring, rebellion and unbelief.

They complained about hardship, food and Moses' leadership. At times they even spoke as though returning to Egypt would be preferable to continuing with God.

This reveals a serious spiritual problem. Israel had been physically delivered out of Egypt, but many still looked backwards towards the life God had delivered them from.

The wilderness therefore became a place where the condition of their hearts was exposed.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What did Israel's complaints in the wilderness reveal about their hearts after physical deliverance?

Personal Reflection

Which form of complaint, distrust or resistance to God's guidance resembles a response in your own life?

Action Step

Identify a complaint or resistant attitude in your life. How will you respond differently this week, trusting the life of Christ within?

The Twelve Spies

One of the most important events in Numbers occurred when twelve men were sent to search the land of Canaan. All twelve saw the same land, its strength and its inhabitants, but they did not all respond with the same faith.

Numbers 13:30-33 states:

> *"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."*

Ten spies focused upon the difficulty.

Joshua and Caleb focused upon God.

Joshua and Caleb Believed God

Joshua and Caleb urged the people to trust the LORD. **Numbers 14:6-9** states:

> *"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not."*

The real issue was therefore not the strength of the Canaanites. The issue was whether Israel would believe God.

The people chose fear and refused to enter the land.

Unbelief Changed Their Journey

Because Israel refused to believe God's promise, that generation would not enter Canaan. **Numbers 14:29-34** states:

> *"Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise."*

The wilderness wandering was not the destination God had originally set before them.

Unbelief prolonged the journey.

The generation that had experienced deliverance from Egypt failed to enter because they would not trust the God who had delivered them.

Moses Strikes the Rock

Numbers also records an important failure in the life of Moses. When Israel again complained because there was no water, God instructed Moses to speak to the rock. Instead, Moses struck it twice.

Numbers 20:7-12 states:

> *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."*

Even Moses remained accountable to God's Word. His long years of faithful service did not give him authority to change what God had commanded.

The Rock Was Christ

The New Testament gives the wilderness Rock a greater significance. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:1-4**:

> *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."*

Paul states plainly: *"that Rock was Christ."*

The wilderness event was real history, but Scripture itself shows that it also pointed towards Jesus Christ. Once again, the Books of the Law are preparing the language through which Christ would later be revealed.

Balaam and Balak

As Israel approached Canaan, Balak, king of Moab, became afraid of them and sought the help of Balaam. Numbers records the unusual event in which God opened the mouth of Balaam's donkey.

Numbers 22:28-30 states:

> *"And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay."*

Balak wanted Israel cursed, but God remained in control.

Yet Israel later became involved in idolatry and immorality with the people around them, bringing severe judgement upon the nation. This is another example of the seriousness with which Numbers treats idolatry.

The Serpent in the Wilderness

When Israel again complained against God and Moses, fiery serpents came among them. God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and lift it upon a pole.

Numbers 21:8-9 states:

> *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."*

Jesus later explained the significance of this event. He said in **John 3:14-15**:

> *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

Jesus Himself connects Numbers directly with His saving work. The people who had been bitten could not heal themselves. God provided the way by which they could live.

Jesus then said, *"even so must the Son of man be lifted up."*

A New Generation Is Numbered

Near the end of Numbers, Israel was counted again. The first numbering concerned the generation that had left Sinai, while the second concerned the generation preparing to enter Canaan.

Between those two numberings, the older generation had largely passed away. Yet God's promise had not failed.

A new generation now stood ready to receive what their parents had refused through unbelief.

Numbers Points Us Forward

Numbers teaches several important lessons. God is faithful. Unbelief has consequences. Outward experiences do not replace inward faith. Human leaders remain subject to God's Word.

Most importantly, the book continues directing us towards Jesus Christ. The Rock was Christ. The serpent lifted up pointed towards Christ being lifted up.

The generation that left Egypt largely passed away, but God's purpose continued. A new generation now stood on the plains of Moab, looking towards Canaan.

Before they crossed the Jordan, Moses would speak to them one final time. That brings us to Deuteronomy: Remember and Obey.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did God's purpose continue through the wilderness despite the unbelief of the generation that left Egypt?

Personal Reflection

Does the wilderness account make you more attentive to God's faithfulness or only to Israel's failures?

Action Step

Read one wilderness account. What habit of focusing on failure rather than God's faithfulness should you change?

DEUTERONOMY: REMEMBER AND OBEY

BACK TO CONTENTS

Approximate Historical Setting: c. 1400 B.C.

Approximate Date of Writing: c. 1400 B.C., traditionally associated with Moses. The final account of Moses' death was likely completed by Joshua, although Scripture does not specifically identify the writer.

Place in the Biblical Story: Israel stands on the plains of Moab, preparing to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy is the fifth and final Book of the Law and contains thirty-four chapters. Numbers has brought Israel through the wilderness to the borders of Canaan, and Deuteronomy records Moses' final instructions to the generation preparing to enter the land.

Deuteronomy may be understood as the *"Second Giving of the Law"* and records Moses' final speeches, Israel's need to remember God's commandments, the blessings connected with obedience, the consequences of disobedience and the death of Moses.

One word captures much of the message of Deuteronomy: Remember. Israel was about to move forward, but Moses repeatedly warned them not to forget what God had already taught them.

A New Generation Must Hear the Law

The generation that originally left Egypt had largely died in the wilderness. Their children now stood ready to enter Canaan, so Moses restated the covenant requirements for this new generation.

Deuteronomy 5:1-3 states:

> *"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day."*

Notice the progression:

- Hear;
- Learn;
- Keep;
- Do.

Israel was not simply to possess God's commandments. They were to understand them and live by them.

The same principle remains important when we study Scripture. Truth is not given simply to increase knowledge. It is intended to shape the way we live.

Moses Looks Back

Much of the opening part of Deuteronomy reviews Israel's journey from Horeb through the wilderness. Moses reminded the people of:

- God's command to leave Horeb;
- The sending of the twelve spies;
- Israel's refusal to enter the land;
- The years of wilderness wandering;
- God's provision;
- The consequences of rebellion and unbelief.

The generation standing before Moses needed to understand why their parents had failed to enter Canaan. They were being warned: Do not repeat the unbelief of the generation before you.

Remember What God Has Done

Moses repeatedly instructed Israel to remember God's dealings with them. **Deuteronomy 8:2-3** states:

> *"And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."*

The wilderness had revealed what was in Israel's heart. God had sustained them with manna, guided them, protected them and remained faithful even when they had been unfaithful.

They therefore had no reason to become proud when they entered the land.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why did Moses call the new generation to remember God's provision before entering the land?

Personal Reflection

Where might success or security tempt you to forget the help you have received from God?

Action Step

Remember one way God has cared for you. How will gratitude influence a specific choice or response this week?

Jesus Quoted Deuteronomy

The words Moses spoke later appear directly in the ministry of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was tempted, He answered in **Matthew 4:4**:

> *"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

Jesus was quoting from **Deuteronomy 8:3**. This is important because it shows that Deuteronomy was not simply an ancient collection of instructions. Jesus Himself used its words when confronting temptation.

Where Israel had repeatedly failed in the wilderness, Jesus remained faithful to the Word of God. Throughout His temptation, He answered, *"It is written."*

Several of those answers came directly from Deuteronomy.

Hear, O Israel

Some of the best-known verses in Deuteronomy begin with a declaration concerning God. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** states:

> *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."*

God's Word was to be *"in thine heart."* It was also to be taught continually to the next generation.

Israel's relationship with God was therefore not intended to consist only of outward ceremonies. His Word was to shape their hearts, homes and everyday lives.

Love the LORD Thy God

Jesus later identified these verses as containing the greatest commandment. He said in **Mark 12:29-30**:

> *"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."*

Jesus therefore directs us back to Deuteronomy and shows us what stood at the heart of God's requirement: love for God.

The Law was never properly understood as outward rule-keeping without inward devotion.

Teach the Next Generation

Moses understood that Israel's future depended upon one generation faithfully teaching the next. The people entering Canaan had witnessed many of God's works, but their children would not necessarily have the same experiences.

They therefore had to teach them:

- Where Israel had come from;
- How God had delivered them;
- Why the wilderness judgement occurred;
- What covenant God had made with them;
- How they were expected to live.

Truth cannot simply be assumed because an earlier generation understood it. Every generation must be taught the Word of God.

Do Not Forget God in Prosperity

Moses also warned Israel that prosperity could become a danger. In the wilderness their need was obvious, but in Canaan they would inherit cities, houses, fields and vineyards.

Deuteronomy 6:10-12 states:

> *"And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."*

Hardship can test faith, but prosperity can also test faith.

Deuteronomy therefore repeatedly joins two ideas: remember God and do not forget God.

Blessing and Consequence

Moses made clear that Israel's choices mattered. Deuteronomy 27-30 sets before Israel blessings for obedience and consequences for rebellion.

Moses said in **Deuteronomy 30:19-20**:

> *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."*

The nation stood at a turning point. Canaan lay ahead, but possession of the land did not remove their responsibility to remain faithful to God.

The later Historical Books will show repeatedly what happened when Israel forgot these warnings.

Moses Speaks of a Prophet to Come

Deuteronomy does not only look backward. It also looks forward to Jesus Christ.

Moses said in **Deuteronomy 18:15**:

> *"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;"*

The New Testament identifies this prophecy with Jesus. Peter declared in **Acts 3:22-23**:

> *"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."*

Moses therefore pointed beyond his own ministry. He told Israel that another would come and that they must hear Him.

That promised One is Jesus Christ.

Moses Comes to the End of His Ministry

Moses had led Israel out of Egypt, received the Law and guided the nation through the wilderness. But he would not lead them across the Jordan.

Because of his earlier disobedience, God permitted him to see the land but not enter it.

Deuteronomy 34:5-8 states:

> *"So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended."*

Because these verses record Moses' death and events following it, Moses could not personally have written the whole conclusion. Joshua is traditionally regarded as the most likely writer of this final portion, although Scripture does not specifically identify him.

Moses' ministry was complete, and Joshua would lead the people forward.

Deuteronomy Points Us Forward

Deuteronomy closes the Books of the Law, but it does not close the biblical story. Israel stands at the border of Canaan, Joshua is ready to lead, and the land lies ahead.

Yet Deuteronomy also points beyond Joshua and beyond Canaan. Moses spoke of the Prophet who would come. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy during His temptation, and the greatest commandment comes directly from this book.

The direction therefore remains the same: forward towards Jesus Christ.

The five Books of the Law have now carried us from creation to the borders of the Promised Land. Before concluding this Study Guide, we must consider one final question: Why did God give the Law, and what was its greater purpose?

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Deuteronomy point beyond Joshua and Canaan toward Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Have you treated entry into the land as the whole goal of the Law's story?

Action Step

Read Moses' final words about God's promises. How will looking beyond earthly blessings strengthen your trust in Jesus Christ?

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

BACK TO CONTENTS

Having followed the story from Genesis through Deuteronomy, we can now ask an important question: Why did God give Israel the Law? The answer is broader than simply saying that Israel needed rules to govern the nation.

The Law belonged to the covenant God made with Israel, and it regulated their worship, conduct and national life. At the same time, it revealed God's requirements, exposed sin and prepared the way for the greater reality that would come through Jesus Christ. The Law served as a schoolmaster leading to Christ and contained shadows of what was yet to come.

The Law Governed Israel

Israel was both a covenant people and a physical nation. They therefore needed commandments concerning worship and holiness, but they also needed laws governing relationships, property, justice, leadership and national life.

For study purposes, the laws given through Moses are often grouped into three broad categories:

- Moral laws: Concerning right and wrong and man's relationship with God and others;
- Civil laws: Governing Israel as a nation;
- Ceremonial laws: Regulating sacrifices, priesthood, cleansing, feast days and Old Covenant worship.

These are useful categories for understanding the different functions of the Law, although Scripture itself does not formally divide the Mosaic Law under these three headings. This distinction helps us understand why different commandments within the Pentateuch served different purposes.

We should therefore avoid treating every commandment in exactly the same way. A law governing Israel's civil courts served a different immediate purpose from a command concerning sacrifice, while a command forbidding murder expressed a moral truth that existed before Sinai.

The Law Revealed God's Standard

The Law showed Israel what God required of them. It taught them about worship, justice, holiness, relationships and obedience, and it continually reminded them that God, not human opinion, determined what was right.

Yet revealing God's standard also exposed how far people fell short of it. Paul wrote in **Romans 3:19-20**:

> *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

Notice Paul's conclusion: *"by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

The Law could identify sin and show people where they had broken God's requirements. It could therefore reveal the problem, but simply knowing the Law could not remove the problem from the heart.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did the Law reveal sin and God's requirements without itself giving the complete remedy?

Personal Reflection

Which command has exposed a need that you might otherwise excuse or overlook?

Action Step

Examine a command that exposes sin. What must you acknowledge honestly, and how does Christ's saving work answer that need?

The Law Could Not Justify

Paul makes equally clear that righteousness could not be obtained simply by performing the works of the Law. He wrote in **Galatians 2:16**:

> *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."*

The Law could command righteousness, but it could not itself produce spiritual life within the person. It could identify sin, pronounce judgement upon disobedience and provide sacrifices within the covenant, but it could not make the worshipper spiritually complete.

This limitation was not a failure in God's plan. It was part of the Law's appointed purpose because it demonstrated humanity's need for something greater.

The Law Was a Schoolmaster

Paul explained the temporary and preparatory role of the Law in **Galatians 3:23-25**:

> *"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."*

The important expression is *"to bring us unto Christ."* The Law therefore had a destination.

It was not given so that God's people would remain forever under its outward system. It prepared the way for Jesus Christ.

This is why the Books of the Law contain so many themes that later become important in the New Testament: sacrifice, blood, priesthood, cleansing, covenant, redemption and deliverance.

The Law gives us the language. Jesus Christ gives us the reality.

The Law Contained Shadows

Hebrews describes another important purpose of the Law. The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:1**:

> *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."*

A shadow is not the reality itself, yet a shadow tells us that there is something real producing it.

The sacrifices and ceremonial system were therefore not meaningless. They were God-given shadows, but they pointed beyond themselves.

We have already seen examples:

- The Passover points towards Christ our Passover;
- The wilderness Rock is identified as Christ;
- The serpent lifted up is applied by Jesus to Himself;
- The sacrifices prepare us to understand Christ's offering;
- Moses foretold the Prophet whom the New Testament identifies as Jesus.

These connections show that the Law was continually preparing the way for Christ.

Jesus Came to Fulfil

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:17-18**:

> *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."*

Jesus did not come because the Law had been a mistake. He came to fulfil the purpose towards which it had been pointing.

Fulfilment does not mean that God simply discarded what came before. It means that the reality arrived to which the former system had been directing God's people.

The shadow had served its purpose. Christ had come.

From Outward Law to Inward Reality

The Old Testament itself promised a covenant in which God's Law would no longer remain only external. The writer of Hebrews quotes this promise in **Hebrews 10:15-17**:

> *"Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."*

Under the former covenant, the Law could be written in a book and upon stone. Under the New Covenant, God says, *"I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."*

The movement is therefore from an outward covenant system towards an inward spiritual reality through Jesus Christ.

The believer is not made holy by performing Old Covenant ceremonies. The believer is made new through Christ dwelling within.

The Law Reaches Its Goal in Christ

Paul summarised the direction of the Law in **Romans 10:4**:

> *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."*

The Law therefore reaches its intended goal in Jesus Christ. It governed Israel for its appointed time, revealed God's requirements, exposed sin, showed the limitations of human righteousness and contained shadows that prepared the language of redemption.

Above all, it served as a schoolmaster *"to bring us unto Christ."*

That is the great purpose we must remember when reading Genesis through Deuteronomy. We should neither despise the Law nor stop at the Law.

The Law points beyond itself to Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does it mean that the Law served as a schoolmaster to bring people to Christ?

Personal Reflection

Where have you relied on knowing rules while missing the Law's direction toward Christ?

Action Step

Read a verse showing why the Law leads to Christ. What reliance upon rule-keeping must you surrender in favour of His completed work?

FROM PROMISE TO THE BORDER OF CANAAN

BACK TO CONTENTS

The five Books of the Law form one continuous story. Genesis begins with creation and the promise given through Abraham, while Deuteronomy ends with Israel standing on the plains of Moab, ready to cross the Jordan into the land God had promised.

Across these five books, God's purpose moves steadily forward.

From Abraham to Israel

God called Abraham and promised that his descendants would become a great nation and that through his seed all families of the earth would be blessed.

That promise continued through Isaac and Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. Jacob's twelve sons became the fathers of the families that would later form the twelve tribes of Israel.

By the end of Genesis, however, the family was living in Egypt rather than Canaan. The promise had been given, but its historical fulfilment was still unfolding.

From Bondage to Deliverance

Exodus shows the family of Israel grown into a large people but living under Egyptian bondage. God raised up Moses and delivered them through the Passover, the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea.

Yet God's purpose was greater than simply removing Israel from Egypt. He told them in **Exodus 19:4**:

> *"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."*

God brought Israel out of bondage in order to bring them unto Himself. At Sinai, He established His covenant with them and gave them His Law.

From Deliverance to Holiness

Leviticus then explains how the people God had delivered were to worship and live before Him. The sacrifices, priesthood, cleansing and Day of Atonement continually reminded Israel that God is holy and that sin cannot be treated lightly.

These things belonged to the Old Covenant, but they also prepared the language through which the work of Jesus Christ would later be understood.

The people had been delivered from Egypt, but they now had to learn what it meant to belong to God.

From Sinai to the Wilderness

Numbers records the movement from Sinai towards Canaan. The land had been promised, but the generation that left Egypt refused to enter because of unbelief.

Their failure delayed their entrance into the land, but it did not cancel God's promise. Joshua and Caleb believed God, and a new generation eventually stood ready to continue the journey.

The wilderness therefore reveals both the seriousness of unbelief and the faithfulness of God.

A New Generation Stands Ready

Deuteronomy brings the story to the borders of Canaan. Moses speaks to a generation that had grown up during the wilderness years and repeatedly tells them to remember.

They were to remember God's deliverance, His provision, His commandments and the failures of the generation before them. The choice before them was clear: they could trust God and move forward, or they could repeat the unbelief of their parents.

Moses' ministry was now ending, and Joshua would soon lead the nation across the Jordan.

The Story Continues

The Books of the Law therefore carry the story through a clear progression:

Promise → family → nation → bondage → deliverance → covenant → wilderness → the border of Canaan.

But the story is still incomplete. Israel has not yet entered the land, the kingdom has not yet been established, the prophets have not yet spoken, and most importantly, the promised Seed has not yet been fully revealed.

The Books of the Law therefore leave us looking forward. Historically, the next stage will begin with Joshua and Israel entering Canaan.

Spiritually, the greater direction remains unchanged. Everything is continuing towards Jesus Christ, the One to whom Moses and the Law ultimately point.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the story at the border of Canaan remain unfinished both historically and spiritually?

Personal Reflection

Which unresolved promise or expectation at this point in the story do you most need to follow into later the Bible?

Action Step

Identify a promise not yet fulfilled when Israel reached Canaan. How will its fulfilment in Christ change your understanding of God's purpose?

CONCLUSION: THE LAW LEADS TO JESUS CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

The five Books of the Law, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, form the opening foundation of the Old Testament. Together they take us from creation, through the calling of Abraham, the growth of Israel, deliverance from Egypt, the giving of the Law and the wilderness journey, until the nation stands ready to enter Canaan.

These books contain history, covenant, commandments, sacrifice, priesthood and worship. Yet their purpose is greater than simply preserving the story of ancient Israel.

They continually prepare the way for Jesus Christ.

Moses Wrote of Christ

Jesus Himself explained how we should understand the writings of Moses. He said in **John 5:46-47**:

> *"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"*

That statement gives us an important principle for everything we have studied. Jesus said, *"he wrote of me."*

The Books of the Law therefore should not be read as though their meaning ends with Moses, Israel or the Old Covenant. Their history and commandments belonged to a real covenant setting, but within them God was also preparing the testimony that would later reveal Jesus Christ more fully.

The Promise Leads to Christ

Genesis introduces the promise given to Abraham. The New Testament identifies the promised Seed in **Galatians 3:16**:

> *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."*

The promise therefore did not end with a physical nation. It reached forward to Jesus Christ.

The Shadows Lead to Christ

The same pattern continues throughout the Books of the Law. The Passover points towards Christ our Passover. The sacrifices prepare us to understand the offering of Christ, and the wilderness Rock is identified as Christ.

The serpent lifted up in the wilderness is used by Jesus to describe His own saving work. Moses also spoke of a coming Prophet, whom the New Testament identifies as Jesus Christ.

The Law therefore contains many shadows and patterns, but the shadows were never the final destination.

Christ is the reality.

The Law Was a Schoolmaster

Paul summarised the purpose of the Law in **Galatians 3:24-25**:

> *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."*

The Law had an appointed purpose. It governed Israel, revealed God's requirements, exposed sin and prepared the language of redemption.

But above all, it was *"to bring us unto Christ."*

We should therefore neither despise the Law nor stop at the Law. The correct direction is always forward.

One Story, One Direction

The five books we have studied form one great historical movement:

Creation → Promise → Bondage → Deliverance → Covenant → Wilderness → Canaan.

Yet beneath that historical movement is an even greater spiritual direction:

Promise → Preparation → Fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

The Books of the Law establish the foundation upon which the rest of the Old Testament builds. The Historical Books will continue the story of Israel in the land, while the Prophets and other writings will add further revelation.

But the central direction will remain unchanged. The Scriptures continue moving towards Jesus Christ.

As we continue through the Old Testament, we should keep before us the truth Jesus taught His disciples: Moses wrote of Him.

- The Law points to Him.
- The promises lead to Him.

And the fuller purpose of God is ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the promises, deliverance, wilderness and Law together lead readers toward Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Which part of the Law's story has most changed the way you understand God's purpose?

Action Step

Look back across all five books. Which truth has challenged you personally, and how will it now influence your faith or conduct?

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

How does the story from creation in Genesis to Israel at the border of Canaan in Deuteronomy establish the promises, covenant and need that point toward Jesus Christ?

2. Understanding

How do Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy each advance the one story of the Books of the Law, and what distinct contribution does each make?

3. Personal Reflection

Which account of promise in Genesis or unbelief in the wilderness in Numbers has most challenged your understanding of God's faithfulness and your own response to Him?

4. Response to Truth

How will you respond to Deuteronomy's call to remember God's provision and obey Him as you consider a present responsibility or decision?

5. Action Step

Choose a sacrifice described in Leviticus and examine its fulfilment in Jesus. What must change in the way you rely upon outward religious forms rather than Christ's completed work? State when you will begin.

6. Early Response

Have you examined that sacrifice and its fulfilment in Christ? Describe the resulting change in your belief or trust. If not, explain what has stopped you.

7. Ongoing Practice

What ongoing reading practice will help you follow the Books of the Law from promise through deliverance, holiness and the wilderness journey to Moses' final instructions?

8. Doctrinal Clarity

How do the sacrifices and priesthood in Leviticus, the Law's knowledge of sin, and its role as a schoolmaster clarify why the Law points beyond itself to Jesus Christ?

9. Living the Truth

In a real choice this week, how will Israel's wilderness unbelief and Deuteronomy's call to remember and obey shape your trust in God and treatment of others?

10. Final Response

Bring together the promise in Genesis, deliverance in Exodus, holiness in Leviticus, Israel's wilderness journey, and Moses' final call to obey. What has changed in your understanding of how the Law leads to Christ, and what response will you make?