

UNDERSTANDING
THE STORY OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT



HOPE

FOR ALL THE EARTH

MITCHELL L. CHASE

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10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

Email: info@10ofthose.com

Website: www.10ofthose.com

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For Jensen, Logan, Owen, and Grayson,
my four beloved sons.

May your hearts rejoice in Christ,
the hope of all the earth.

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A SELECT TIMELINE

The following list of dates is a timeline of major Old Testament events.

2000 BC The call of, and covenant with, Abraham

1446 BC The exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt under Moses

1446–1406 BC The forty years of wandering

1406 BC The conquest of the promised land under Joshua

1010 BC The beginning of David's reign

970–930 BC The reign of Solomon

930 BC The division of Israel's united kingdom

722 BC	The destruction of the northern kingdom by Assyria
586 BC	The destruction and exile of the southern kingdom by Babylon
539 BC	The end of the Babylonian captivity
536 BC	The return of many exiles to the promised land
520 BC	The ministries of Haggai and Zechariah
516 BC	The completion of the rebuilt temple
483–473 BC	The story of the book of Esther
458 BC	The arrival of Ezra
444 BC	The completion of the rebuilt wall around Jerusalem under Nehemiah



INTRODUCTION:

THE BIBLE JESUS READ

The Old Testament exists to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. The narratives and songs, the prophecies and patterns, point to the Savior who would rescue us from our sin and establish an everlasting kingdom. Jesus is the hope for all the earth.

These thirty-nine Old Testament books are the Bible that Jesus read. Joseph and Mary would have taught him the Scriptures as he grew, and he would have delighted in its divine commands. Jesus treasured the Old Testament, and at the same time he was—and is—its treasure. The many characters and promises and institutions in these books were like shadowy outlines of the coming Christ.

As Jesus read the ancient words of the faith, he would have discerned in the Scriptures that he was the covenant Son, the true Israel, the promised king, the greater temple, and the perfect priest. While such ideas will become clearer as our study of the Old Testament unfolds, Jesus knew he was fulfilling expectations and patterns that dated back millennia.

After Jesus' resurrection, he told his disciples, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). The Scriptures which Jesus read had testified of him.

We need the New Testament to understand the Old, and we need the Old Testament to understand the New. But haven't you sensed how much more challenging the Old Testament is to read and interpret? The Old Testament makes up three-quarters of our Bibles, so we would be wise to study it and think through the Big Picture.

The Old Testament was written over a period of one thousand years. More than thirty authors were involved in the composition of its thirty-nine books. Paul wrote, "All Scripture is God-

breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Holy Spirit inspired the biblical authors, ensuring that the content of the Old Testament is true and trustworthy.

The more we understand the Old Testament story, the more we can rejoice in Christ together, since the biblical authors anticipated his advent. Their message of hope was not just for some parts of the world. News of a coming Savior should be spread as far and wide as the reach of sin and death.

Do you see Christ in the Old Testament? Do you want to recognize the ways it points to him? The reason Jesus saw himself in Scripture was because of its design. The Bible Jesus read was a Bible about Jesus. As we understand the Old Testament in light of its grand purpose, we shall be blessed readers indeed. Let’s learn more about Holy Scripture, then, pursuing greater joy in Jesus.