

OLD TESTAMENT III

Old Testament III: Syllabus

Notes

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CLASS #1:

- I. Course Introduction.
- II. Poetry Books:
 - A. Hebrew Poetry and Songs.
 - B. Wisdom in the Old Testament.

CLASS #2:

- II. Poetry Books: (cont.)
 - C. The Book of Psalms.
 - D. The Book of Proverbs.
 - E. The Book of Job. (intro.)

CLASS #3:

- II. Poetry Books: (cont.)
 - E. The Book of Job. (cont.)
- III. The Rolls: Introduction.

CLASS #4:

- III. The Rolls: (cont.)
 - A. Song of Solomon
 - B. Ruth.
 - C. Ecclesiastes.

CLASS #5:

- IV. The Five “other” Books of History.
 - A. Three Stages of Return from Exile (Ezra and Nehemiah).
 - B. The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles.
 - C. The Book of Daniel.
- Exam.

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Possible 20 Point Questions

- 1) What is Biblical wisdom (pp. 295,296)?
- 2) Define and discuss the sin of Job (pp. 300,301).
- 3) State the conclusion of Ecclesiastes and discuss its message (p. 308).

Possible 10 Point Questions

- 1) Define Hebrew “parallelism” and give an example (pp. 294,295).
- 2) What does it mean to “fear” God (pp. 296)?
- 3) List four authors of Psalms (p. 297).
- 4) Name, define, and give an example of one category of Psalms (pp. 297-299).
- 5) What is Job’s greatest reward (refer to a specific verse; p. 301)?
- 6) Briefly define the idea of a “kinsman redeemer” (p. 307).

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I. Course Introduction.

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A. The Old Testament (O.T) Series of Courses.

The Old Testament (O.T.) Series of Courses:

The Old Testament is too extensive to study adequately in a brief series of courses. It is not our goal to study the entire O.T. within this course. Our goal is to **survey** the O.T. through:

- 1) Various general studies that cover a broad area of Scripture or a general theme.
- 2) Several specific studies that focus on one section of Scripture or one specific theme or topic.

We will seek to develop an appreciation for the O.T. by acquiring a better understanding of its purposes and its content.

The Old Testament series is organized into three courses according to the three divisions defined by the Hebrew version of the Old Testament (called the Masoretic Text):

The Three Old Testament Courses:

Old Testament I: The five books of **THE LAW** (the Pentateuch). This includes: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

Old Testament II: The 21 books of **THE PROPHETS**. This includes the “Former Prophets”: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings; the “Latter Prophets”: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and “The Twelve (Hosea - Malachi).

Old Testament III: The 13 books of **THE WRITINGS**. This includes: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

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B. Contents of This Course.

1. We will use the method of division that we offered in the first course regarding the category of books called the “Kethubim” or “Writings.”
2. We will first study the poetry books (Psalms, Proverbs, Job).
3. Then, we will study the “Rolls” (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther).
4. Finally, we will study the five “other” books of “history” (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1&2 Chronicles).

II. Poetry Books.

A. Hebrew poetry and songs.

1. Parallelism.
 - a. Hebrew poetry is not the type of poetry that rhymes. It is not poetry because of its form but because of its contents.
 - b. It is poetry in the sense that successive lines correspond to each other. This is called “parallelism.” It is a symmetry of ideas that can appear in several different forms:
 - 1) Synonymous (“the echo form”) (see Prov 20:1).
 - a) “Mocker” is to “wine” what “brawler” is to “beer.” That is, mocker is synonymous with brawler and wine is synonymous with beer.
 - b) Also consider Ps 19:1,2; 33:6; 121:6; Job 27:4. Can you find the poetry?
 - 2) Contrasting (see Job 42:5; Ps 1:6; Prov 10:1). Can you find the poetry?
 - 3) Progressive (see Ps 15:2; 29:1, 2; 55:6). The second line amplifies the idea of the first line.

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- 4) Inverted (see Ps 2:9; 51:1; Prov 18:6, 7; 23:15, 16). In a re-statement of the thought, the order of two lines are put in the opposite order.
 - 5) Simile or descriptive (see Ps 42:1; 103:11-13; Prov 25:23, 25).
 - 6) Comparison (see Prov 15:16, 17; 16:8; 25:24).
2. Figurative language (the use of images) (see Ps 96:12; 98:8; 104:2, 3; Song of Solomon 4:1-16; Is 55:12; Hos 10:11-13). This type of writing is also what would be called Hebrew poetry.

B. Wisdom in the Old Testament.

1. The Hebrew word for wisdom is “hokmah” (see Prov 1:2, 7; 2:2).
 - a. It can refer to practical skill (Ex 31:3-5; 35:31-35; I Chron 22:15) and ability in military and secular activities (Is 10:13; 29:14; Job 5:13).
 - b. In Proverbs, the word refers to “skill in living.” It can be associated with discretion and good judgment in governing (Prov 20:26).
 - c. It is practical, moral, intelligence that works within the laws of God’s universe to avoid problems (Ps 37:30, 31).
2. Other related Hebrew words.
 - a. “Musal” means instruction, discipline, correction (Prov 1:2, 3, 7, 8). It’s motive is to educate and to reform (Prov 3:11).
 - b. “Binah” means understanding, discernment (Prov 1:2; 2:3).
 - 1) It signifies an intelligence that enables one to discern well (Prov 1:5).
 - 2) It is very closely related to “wisdom” (Prov 4:7).
 - c. “Haskel” means wise behavior, intelligence, and skill that results in success and prosperity (1 Sam 18:14; Jer 23:5; Is 52:13).

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- d. “Ormah” means prudence, common sense (Prov 8:5,12). It is used to describe someone who is sensible (Prov 12:23; 13:16; 15:5).
 - e. “Daath” means knowledge that is the result of practice and experience (Prov 24:5; 1:4, 7; 2:5, 6, 10). It can also be the perception of the wise man (Eccl 1:18).
 - f. “Mezimmah” means the result of good planning (Prov 3:21; 5:2; 8:12; 1:4; 2:11).
3. The basic meaning of **“WISDOM.”**
- a. Study Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7; 9:10; 15:33.
 - 1) What is wisdom?
 - 2) What are the most important words to understand from these verses?
 - b. The word “beginning” refers to the primary or main ingredient. The phrase “the beginning of wisdom” could be translated “the heart or essence of wisdom.”
 - c. The word “fear” does not refer to being scared (Prov 1:33). It does not describe someone who lives a life in fear of punishment (1 Jn 4:18; Heb 10:26, 27). It does mean:
 - 1) To regard Him as holy (Is 8:12, 13).
 - 2) To be in awe of Him (Ps 22:23; Mal 2:5).
 - 3) To honor Him and to worship Him (Ps 50:23; 5:7; 96:9).
 - 4) To acknowledge the greatness of God (Job 37:23, 24; 11:7-9).
 - d. A person who fears God will obey Him (Eccl 12:13) and serve Him (Josh 24:14). He will turn from evil (Prov 3:7; 8:13; 14:16; 16:6) and will seek God and have a relationship with Him (Ps 25:14, 15; 34:10, 11).

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C. The Book of Psalms.

1. The book of Psalms is divided into the following five sections (with suggested Psalms to read in parenthesis).
 - a. Book I - Ps 1-41 (Ps 25, 37).
 - b. Book II - Ps 42-72 (Ps 51, 57).
 - c. Book III - Ps 73-89 (Ps 86).
 - d. Book IV - Ps 90-106 (Ps 91, 103).
 - e. Book V - Ps 107-150 (Ps 116, 119, 121, 127, 128, 130, 139, 142-146).
2. Authors.
 - a. David (a total of at least 73).
 - b. Asaph (Ps 50; 73-83).
 - 1) Asaph was an outstanding Levite musician in the time of David (Neh 12:46)
 - 2) He was appointed along with Heman as the minister of music (1 Chron 15:16-19).
 - c. Sons of Korah (Ps 42-49, 84, 85, 87, 88). They were singers in the temple choir.
 - d. Solomon (Ps 72, 127).
3. Categories of Psalms.
 - a. Introductory Psalms (1, 2).
 - 1) Ps 1: The two ways for the individual.
 - 2) Ps 2: The two ways for nations and kings.

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- b. Prayers, lamentations, and petitions for deliverance (almost half of the Psalms would fall in this category). Some examples are Ps 3-6 and 139.
- c. Praise hymns (Ps 106, 111-113, 135, 146-150).
 - 1) These are Psalms that begin and usually end with the words “praise the Lord.”
 - 2) There are approximately 30 other Psalms that focus on praise (see Ps 33, 48, 65, 103, 118).
- d. Individual songs of devotion and thanksgiving (Ps 21, 23, 27, 30).
- e. Remorse for sin (Ps 6, 32, 51, 143).
- f. Intercession for the king, Israel and Jerusalem, and other nations (Ps 20, 122).
- g. Cursing or vindictive (Ps 35, 109).
 - 1) These Psalms must be understood from the angle of the child of God’s desire for the glory and reputation of God.
 - 2) The Psalmist does not take revenge himself, but looks to the sovereign Judge of all men to act justly.
 - 3) These Psalms are consistent with Ex 21:23-25; Lev 24:15-22; Rom 12:14, 19; Acts 8:20-23; 13:6-12; 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 4:14. They are pointed toward enemies of the Gospel/God as opposed to personal enemies of individuals (see Mt 5:43-45).
- h. Teaching Psalms (Ps 1, 14, 15, 37, 49, 107, 111, 112, 127, 128).
- i. Nature Psalms (Ps 29, 65, 104, 147, 148).
- j. Historical Psalms (Ps 78, 105, 106).
- k. Psalms of praise for the Law of God (Ps 1, 19, 119).

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- l. Psalms of worship and confession of faith (Ps 8, 29, 50, 95-100).
- m. Messianic Psalms (Ps 2, 8, 16, 22-24, 40, 45, 68, 69, 72, 89, 102, 110, 118, 132).
 - 1) Jesus said that the Psalms spoke about Him (Lk 24:44).
 - 2) The most important Messianic Psalms are Ps 2, 45, 72, 110.

D. The Book of Proverbs.

1. Proverbs are wise sayings that give descriptions by using comparisons.
2. How to study Proverbs.
 - a. By the chapter.
 - 1) You can read one chapter each day (along with five Psalms) and go through the book once each month.
 - 2) In this way, you could read through Proverbs and Psalms 12 times in one year.
 - b. By the topic.
 - 1) You could study one theme like wisdom, speech, relationships, or justice by reading through the book and studying the appropriate parts.
 - 2) The MOTMOT™ course, Proverbs: Talking and Relating is a topical study of the themes in the book.

E. The Book of Job.

1. Author.
 - a. Tradition says that it was written by Moses.
 - b. It is thought that Job may have lived during the time of the Patriarchs.

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2. The key questions of life.
 - a. Would I love and fear God without blessings and rewards?
 - b. Meditate on the implications of Job 1:9.
 - c. Do we live for ourselves or for God? Do we accept our position as creations? Can we accept that God's redemptive program can include suffering?

Discussion Point

Discuss these "key questions of life" as they relate to the lives of the students.

3. The sin of Job.
 - b. The most important thing to understand regarding Job's sin is that his sins did not cause his problems, but his problems caused him to sin.
 - 1) In the midst of his problems, he sinned because he did not understand the reason for his problems. Because he did not understand he began to question, doubt, and accuse God.
 - 2) There is a great lesson here.
 - 3) God is sovereign and His ways are higher than our ways, so we must not question Him when we cannot understand Him.
 - b. Job's sin began in Job 9:15 when he implied that God could be wrong since he (Job) must be right.
 - 1) Job's revelation of God's capacity to be right (His righteousness) stops at his understanding of God's capacity to control all things.
 - a) Thus, for Job, God is right only because He defines what is right and wrong.
 - b) This is true but it is not complete.

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- 2) God is not only right in His sovereignty, but He is right in His holiness. He is perfectly pure. God cannot be wrong because of His very nature, not simply because He is greater than everyone else.
- 3) Consider Job 9:32, 33.
 - a) What does Job imply here?
 - b) God cannot be argued with. Job implies that God is right because He says he is right, not necessarily because He truly is right.
- c. Job's sin continues in chapter 31.
 - 1) Notice how Job tried to justify himself (at the expense of God) with the repetition of the "if...then" statements.
 - 2) What do these statements imply?
 - a) They imply that God is not just.
 - b) God makes this clear in 40:8 when He says "Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?"
4. Rewards for Job.
 - a. Job was rewarded by God. Even though he sinned in the midst of his problems, God acted with grace toward him because he did not deny God and he proved Satan to be a liar.
 - b. He was rewarded materially (Job 42:10, 11).
 - c. More importantly, he was rewarded spiritually with a fuller revelation of God (Job 42:5). As is consistent with all of Scripture, the greatest reward is to **know God better**.

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5. Appendix: Biblical reasons why people suffer.¹

a. Universal suffering.

1) Suffering is a result of the Fall of man (Rom 8:20-22).

a) Both the wicked and the godly are victims of sickness, death, wars, and natural disasters.

b) All people must work and sweat (Gen 3:23).

2) Universal suffering includes the suffering of “innocent” people (Lk 13:1-5; Jn 9:2, 3).

b. Punishment.

1) As part of the moral order of the universe, God must punish sin.

2) There are many references to the destruction of the wicked (Ps 9:5,15-17; Job 15:20-35).

a) There are many specific events concerning the punishment of the ungodly:

(1) The Flood (Gen 6:5-17).

(2) Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20; 19:24; Jude 7).

(3) Ten plagues of Egypt (Ps 78:49-53).

(4) The Canaanites (Lev 18:24, 25; Deut 9:5).

b) Retribution for the sins of the people of God (Ps 78:17-22, 29-33, 56-64). The principle of Gal 6:7, 8 certainly explains some suffering.

c) Apocalyptic judgments on the whole earth (Rev 6-19, etc.). The destruction of the ungodly when Christ returns (2 Thes 1:6-9).

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c. Repentance.

- 1) Sometimes God's people suffer in order for God to get their attention. This type of suffering can turn people back to God.
- 2) It's purpose is to lead sinners to repentance (see Job 33:14-30; Prov 20:30; 23:13, 14; Ps 78:32-35).

d. Discipline and training.

- 1) Suffering can be a form of discipline that can lead to growth in character and purity (Job 23:10; Heb 5:8; 12:4-11).
- 2) Suffering can result in a greater maturity (Jms 1:2-4).
- 3) Suffering can cause people to examine their lives. This examination may reveal pride and self-righteousness (Job 32:1, 2; 33:9, 16; 34:5, 6).
- 4) Suffering is part of the process of death to self. It is associated with knowing God, being transformed into Christ's image, and being filled with the Spirit (see Job 42:1-6; Lk 9:23-25; 2 Cor 4:7-12, 16, 17; Phil 3:10).
- 5) Suffering can teach people to have compassion on others (2 Cor 1:3-7).

e. Redemptive suffering.

- 1) The substitute.
 - a) Jesus suffered instead of us. He died in our place (Is 53; 1 Pt 2:23, 24).
 - b) Moses (Ex 32:32; Heb 11:25) and Paul (Rom 9:1-3) were willing to be substitutes (also see Col 1:24; Gal 6:17).

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- 2) The burden bearer.
 - a) Suffering and sacrifice in order to help those in need (Gal 6:2; Rom 15:1-3; 2 Cor 11:23-29).
 - b) This can include giving your life to save another life (Jn 15:13; Rom 5:7).
- f. Suffering that demonstrates and praises the glory of God.
 - 1) The demonstration and proof of faith (Job 1:8, 9; Jms 1:12; 5:10, 11).
 - 2) Suffering for Christ's sake (1 Pt 1:7; 2:18-23; 4:12-19; Hab 3:16-19).
 - 3) Death as a martyr (Rev 2:10; 6:9-11; 13:15-18; 20:4).
 - 4) Suffering as an opportunity for God to manifest His power and glory through healing and deliverance (Jn 11:4, 40; 9:3; Ps 107:4-8; Lk 13:11-17).

III. The Rolls.

Author's Comment:

The books of the "Rolls" were read at the different Jewish feasts during the year.

At each feast, one of these entire books was read to the people.

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A. Song of Solomon.

Notes —

1. Methods of interpretation.

a. Allegorical (symbolic).

- 1) Jewish - The Old Testament Jews understood the book to represent God's love for Israel (see Ezek 16:8-14).
- 2) Christian - The book symbolizes the relationship between Christ and His Church.

b. Dramatic.

- 1) One interpretation sees two main characters in the drama.
 - a) Solomon, the young king and lover (Song 1:4, 12; 3:9, 11; 7:5; 8:12).
 - b) Shulammite, the female form of "Solomon" in Hebrew.
- 2) Another interpretation sees three main characters in the drama.
 - a) Solomon, the king who attempts to seduce a young maiden from her shepherd lover.
 - b) The young maiden.
 - c) Her shepherd lover.

c. Teaching.

- 1) A book of teaching on the purity and godliness of the marital relationship. A celebration of the divine relationship between man and woman that was ordained by God.
- 2) The use of marriage to illustrate and teach principles of relationship that should exist between God and His people.

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2. A possible general outline (using a “teaching” type of interpretation).
 - a. Anticipation of marriage (Song 1:2-2:7).
 - b. Memories of the development of the relationship (Song 2:8-3:5).
 - c. The consummation of the marriage (Song 3:6-5:1).
 - d. Reflections on the adjustments made in married life (Song 5:2-8:4).
 - e. Affirmation of love (Song 8:5-14).
3. The key passage.
 - a. Consider Song 8:6, 7, from the perspective of a “teaching” interpretation.
 - b. How does it relate to Gen 2:24, 25?
 - c. How do these verses show that God has a positive view toward intimate love within the marriage relationship?
4. The purpose and use of the book.
 - a. God instituted marriage.
 - 1) He also instituted the wonder of sex. The true and pure practice of sex within marriage is a gift from God (who is Himself, love).
 - 2) The love that is pure between husband and wife is a reflection of the character of God who created man and woman in His image (Gen 1:27-28).
 - b. Moreover, the intimacy of man and woman is a reflection of the intimacy that God desires between Himself and His people (remember that the Hebrew word in Gen 4:1 is the same as the one in Prov 3:6). God wants us to know Him intimately.

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B. The Book of Ruth.

Notes —

1. Author and date.
 - a. This book was written around the time of the Judges.
 - b. It may have been written by Samuel.
2. Key theme - The “kinsman redeemer” (read chapter 3).
 - a. This concept is represented by the Hebrew word “goel”. It is a preliminary idea of redemption or a “type” of redemption.
 - b. In the Old Testament, there are various aspects of the “kinsman redeemer” theme.
 - 1) The marriage aspect (Deut 25:5-10).
 - 2) The land aspect (Lev 25:25).
 - 3) The revenge or vindication aspect (Job 19:25; Num 35:19).
 - 4) The slavery aspect (Ex 6:6; Lev 25:48).

C. The Book of Ecclesiastes (the Preacher).

1. The nature of the book.
 - a. It has a negative view of life. However, its negativity has a purpose. It is used to magnify the futility of life that is based upon earthly ambitions and desires.
 - b. The negativity is extreme. However, it is understandable when we realize that life without God is also extremely negative and extremely meaningless.
 - c. The pessimism is used to expose the futility of life without God.

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2. The theme of the book.
 - a. All of life outside the context of God is meaningless because life alone cannot explain itself or give meaning to itself.
 - b. Only life in the context of God has meaning because life without God is meaningless.
 - 1) Life can only have meaning relative to the Creator of life and His purposes for it.
 - 2) This is logical. The repeated logic is that only the eternal things are not vanity. All else is fading away and empty.
3. The conclusion and message of the book (see 12:13).
 - a. The meaning of life is found in this two part formula:
 - 1) Fear God (relationship with Him).
 - 2) Obey God (serving Him).
 - b. Compare this two part formula with other versions that are found in:
 - 1) The Prophets: Is 43:8-13.
 - 2) The Law: Gen 12:1-3.
 - 3) The teachings of Jesus: Mt 22:37-39.
 - 4) The teachings of Paul: Phil 1:22 and 3:10.

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IV. The Five “Other” Books of History.

Notes —

A. Three Stages of the Return From the Exile.

1. Ezra 1-6 (538 B.C.) - With Cyrus as the king of Persia and Zebubbabel as the governor of the Jews, approximately 50,000 exiles returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple.
2. Ezra 7-10 (458 B.C.) - With Artaxerxes as king of Persia, Ezra the priest returned with 1750 exiles and taught the law to the Jews.
3. Neh 1-2 (445 B.C.) - Under Artaxerxes, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem as governor of the Jews. He established administrated, and completed the project of rebuilding the city walls.

B. The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles.

1. The nature of the books.
 - a. These books were probably written by Ezra as part of the post exile revival of the law.
 - b. The contents of the books focus on the sovereignty of God.
 - c. The books can be used as supplements to the books of Samuel and Kings.
2. The emphasis of the books.
 - a. Ezra emphasizes the religious revivals of the past in an attempt to help spark a fresh revival.
 - b. There is also an emphasis on the historical benefits that Israel has received for faithful worship and obedience.

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C. The Book of Daniel.

1. Summary - The writings of Daniel's life in exile that focus on the victorious God and on apocalyptic revelations.
2. Characteristics of Daniel.
 - a. Self control (Dan 1:8; 10:3).
 - b. Courage (Dan 5:22, 23).
 - c. Integrity (Dan 6:4).
 - d. Prayer (Dan 2:17, 18; 6:10).
 - e. Humility (Dan 10:17).
 - f. Spiritual vision (Dan 7:9-12; 10:5, 6).
3. Methods of interpretation of the apocalyptic sections (chapters 2,7-12).
 - a. Historical.
 - 1) This view says the book of Daniel was written approximately the time of the Greek empire of Alexander.
 - 2) In this view, the symbolism represents historical events that have already happened.
 - b. Predictive. This view looks at the symbolism representing events that were yet to come and focuses on the first and second comings of Christ.
 - c. Note: There are many ways to interpret the book of Daniel. We will not begin to study the details here, but we will conclude with a diagram that may promote further interest in this study.

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Discussion Point

Use the following diagram to promote discussion and interest in the apocalyptic message of the book of Daniel.

DANIEL

Chapter 2	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Representation of:
Head of gold	Lion		Babylon (2:48) Fell in 539 B.C.
Chest of silver	Bear	Ram	Media\Persia (8:20) Fell in 330 B.C.
Belly and thighs of bronze	Leopard	Goat	Greece (8:21) Fell in 63 B.C.
Legs and feet of iron and pottery	Fierce Beast		Roman Empire Fell in 400 A.D.

Conclusion:

This concludes our study in the Old Testament. We should now have a general awareness and understanding of its content. We can also address some specific issues in a more detailed way. (As time allows, the teacher can end the course with a review of the series).

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Old Testament III: Endnotes

¹John Rea, Adapted from class notes, Era of the Writing Prophets course at Regent University, 1987.