

Introduction to the Old Testament Timeline (OTT)

Introduction

The Old Testament Timeline (OTT) is a clear, vivid, and detailed chronological representation of the books, authors, and major events of the Bible. The Old Testament lays the foundation for the New Testament which also appears in the timeline. Pastors, teachers, church leaders and serious Bible students across denominations who are making and empowering disciples for Christ's Kingdom by teaching the Bible find that this pictorial tool saves thousands of words with a glance. A "God's-eye view" of Biblical history is manifest for efficient, easy comprehension laying the groundwork for a far more profound understanding of God's work throughout history in Bible teaching.

The OTT will augment the Bible-teaching ministry by demonstrating that God makes and keeps His promises – promises to judge and to bless across time and nations culminating in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. God always keeps His word. Thus, His faithfulness is magnificently portrayed throughout history. God is the supreme Promise Keeper.

Features

Upper and Lower Time Lines

This teaching tool has two major components, the upper and lower timelines.

The upper section composes the major portion of this teaching aid. It displays the history of the Old Testament starting with Genesis 12 where God called Abram (Abraham) out of the Haran to Canaan, the land He promised to give him and his descendants (Genesis 11:31-12:1-3) to the close of the Old Testament and through the 400 Silent Years (Intertestamental Period). In this area, the timeline traces the location of the people of Israel from approximately 2,100 B.C., through the life of Jesus Christ, to A.D. 100-the approximate close of the New Testament. The names of key people, kingdoms, and events of the Old Testament appear from one end to the other. The blue color field represents Israel living in the Land (the Land of Canaan or the Land of Israel) which God promised to Abraham and his descendants. The salmon color field represents Israel living scattered among the nations. The black line visualizing the travels of the Israelites between these two color fields vividly illustrates the fulfillment of God's promise to either gather the people to the Land (for their trust in and obedience to Him) or scatter them among the nations (for their faithlessness and disobedience).

The lower time line bears the shape of the upper time line but extends farther back to the left to include the time of creation and farther to the right to include the life of Christ, the period of the New Testament, the spread of the Church since Pentecost, and the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. It presents a "God's-eye view" of Biblical history starting at creation, through the Old and New Testaments up to the present. Viewing Biblical history this way helps the viewer to become aware that the God of creation was not only actively involved in the past making and keeping promises throughout Biblical history, but He is still active today fulfilling all of His promises that remain. He will return just as the disciples saw Him go into heaven at the ascension

(Acts 1). He will bring about the end of history after the Gospel of the kingdom has been preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations (Matthew 24:14). He has not changed. His plan is on schedule. What He has promised He will deliver. God is faithful!

Between the upper and lower timelines, two other key features appear. The first is the Period of Bible History bar. This graphic divides the history of the Bible into 11 time periods: *Beginnings, Patriarchs, Exodus, Conquest/Judges, United Kingdom, Divided Kingdom, Exile, Postexile, 400 Silent Years, Life of Christ and Church*. These delineations help the user to ascribe events and people to specific periods of Bible history. It is the authors' desire to eventually provide more details about each period of Bible history by attaching them to this feature of the OTT.

This teaching device also places the books of the Old Testament in their approximate historical context. Each green rectangle with white print places the whole of an Old Testament Book (with the exception of the Book of Genesis) approximately in the place where its author or events appeared.

A color key box appears toward the left end of the lower timeline to provide a brief reference as to what each color represents.

Advantages of Using the OTT

The OTT is very simple by design. Concise single words identify strategic dates, people and events in Old Testament history. This simplicity allows the user to stay focused on the chronology and flow of history without becoming lost in a myriad of details. The result is a clearer understanding and appreciation of the faithful works of God in the order in which they occurred. The OTT provides a framework to view history as "His story."

This simplicity also facilitates ease in reproducing this teaching tool in other languages. French and Spanish will most likely be the next versions of the OTT. The authors are open to producing this visual aid in additional languages. Please inquire using the contact information given under "Availability" printed below.

An additional advantage of using the OTT is its value in helping users to understand the unfolding of God's plan across time and nations. It places the books of the Old Testament in their chronological order so that in context, His sovereign direction of history can be understood culminating in the coming of the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself whose appearing was foretold many times throughout Biblical history.

Ideas for Use

The Old Testament Time Line is a simple overview of history but it cannot be viewed well in a single PowerPoint slide. Printing the OTT on a vinyl banner provides an attractive and durable visual aid that can be hung on a frame or mounted on a wall. This is especially important for teachers in harsh climates with few resources. Transporting the OTT in banner form is very easy; it rolls up. An 8-foot by 4-foot copy of the OTT is an excellent resource for a serious Bible teacher and an ideal size to use in a church,

Christian school, home-school, college or seminary classroom. Printing individual 11 by 17-inch photocopies of this tool on heavy stock paper provides a valuable individual reference tool for each student which can be punched along one of the short edges, folded and stored in a three-ring 8 ½ by 11-inch binder. Use maps where appropriate and perhaps employ PowerPoint slides to project specific Scriptures and outlines or facts related to the teaching.

Tracing various themes and topics through the Old Testament allows the OTT to accentuate the faithfulness of God across time.

- Present a panorama of God’s plan from Genesis to Revelation in one message or lesson and then do a series to give more details on selected topics or periods of Bible history.
- Simplify an Old Testament survey using the timeline.
- Place one Bible story in the bigger picture of its historical context.
- Starting in the Gospels, pinpoint prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah.
- Explore Jesus’ view of Himself as the promised Messiah.
- Trace the theme of God’s promise of the Land to Abraham and his descendants observing how this was fulfilled, lost, and again fulfilled according to God’s word.
- Study the Gospel writers’ references to the Old Testament in their writings.
- Study the various covenants in their original contexts.
- Pinpoint the heroes of the hall of fame of faith in Hebrews 11 in their historical contexts, noting that all of them lived “by faith.”
- Study God’s concern for and promises to bless the Gentile nations throughout Scripture.
- Study specific promises such as the birth of an unexpected baby, the fall of a city or the naming of a future leader noting when the promise was made and when it came to pass.
- Identify and note general promises such as, “I will be with you,” and trace God’s faithfulness to that promise over hundreds or thousands of years.
- Examine the changeless character of God by observing and pinpointing the appearance of His various attributes.
- Identify and distinguish between those promises which have been fulfilled, those which are currently being fulfilled, and those which are yet to be fulfilled.
- Use your own creativity exploring other themes and trace them through the Scriptures.
- Help your students to stand in awe of the mighty word and acts of God across history.

Availability

The OTT is intended for wide distribution with little cost. Printable files containing this visual aid in English and several other languages are available for download from the Internet at (<http://www.simusa.org/index.php/category/church-resources>). Printing costs must be covered by the user. Many commercial printing companies and office supply stores have the capacity to print the OTT in the 11 by 17-inch size. Specialty printers such as HalfPriceBanners.com (www.HalfPriceBanners.com) can print banners up to 8-feet by 4-feet and also can supply frames upon which to hang them. While the OTT is offered free of charge no changes may be made without the consent of the publishers. Please direct questions, comments and suggestions to Ray Hutchison

(Ray.Hutchison@sim.org;717-625-2975) or Stephen Vannah (Stephen.Vannah@sim.org; 413-243-4253).

Disclaimer:

The OTT is a very general and generic teaching aid. Because of differing views and the limitations of graphics (spacing, font size, etc.) the names of people, events, periods of Bible history and books of the Old Testament may not be in their exact location. The authors have attempted to be as accurate as possible within these limitations.