



Don't forget

EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS AND DEUTERONOMY

Aim of lesson

To review the books of the Pentateuch, to see how they fit into Old Testament history and to bring out some lessons for us.

Bible background

Exodus – Deuteronomy

Preparation required

Read through the lesson and decide in which order you intend to do things and in what detail, depending on your class.

Outline of Lesson

Overview of the books

Introduce the books by explaining that they cover the time of Moses' life. The class could look at Exodus 1 and Deuteronomy 34 to confirm this. Remind the class that Genesis ends with Jacob's family going into Egypt and that at the start of Exodus they are a nation. Highlight in the students' books the time period covered – roughly 1500 -1400 BC. When you have talked about the events in these books in more detail, you could mark those things on the class timeline. You will recall that Moses lived 120 years.

You could also mark or highlight the time periods the books cover.

Talk about each book by asking what the students know first and then supplying more detail. If they want to tell you the stories you could identify where they fit on one of the timelines. Alternatively you could leave the stories until after the overview and use the picture method as described. There are things we can learn from this review and these could be discussed as you go through or the class could do it as a different exercise and fill in the table in their books later.

Exodus

The word Exodus means 'a going out'. Explain that the Israelites were not just leaving the country of Egypt but its idolatry. This was important to God. The plagues had shown him to be Lord of the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12), and now he wanted his people to leave them behind (Exodus 20:2-3).

In the same way, and for the same reasons, we are asked to leave behind the idolatry of the world around us (Colossians 3:5, 1 John 2:16-17).

Leviticus

This book contains the complete law, including all the feasts and offerings in detail, as well as rules for everyday life. The name of the book comes from the 'Levi' whose descendants were to administer the law.

Nowadays we go to different people for different problems – lawyers for the law, doctors for our health, teachers for education. Under God's law you would see the same people for all these problems – the priests. This is because the priests were God's representatives.

The law was ahead of its time. The laws on health, such as those on leprosy and sanitation, would prevent very many diseases. The priests were still failing humans though, whereas the Lord Jesus is the 'better' priest - the perfect high priest.

Numbers

Numbers continues the story of the wilderness journey. It starts and ends with two 'numberings' (or countings) of the people, one not long after they left Egypt, the other not long before they entered the promised land. Over a period of 40 years you

would expect the population to grow. However, when you compare the numbers you see the population actually decreased by approximately 2000 people. This was a result of all the revolts and rebellions against God. The class can fill in the numbers in their book to confirm this using Numbers 1 and 26. A completed chart is below; the grid shows how the Israelites were told to camp (Numbers 2:1-31).

	1: 62700 2: 64400	Dan	1: 41500 2: 53400	Asher	1: 53400 2: 45400	Naphtali	
1: 35400 32200 40500	2: 45600 52700 32500	Benjamin Manasseh Ephraim	Tabernacle and Levites	Judah Issachar Zebulun	1: 74600 54400 57400	2: 76500 64300 60500	
	1: 45650 2: 40500	Gad	1: 59300 2: 22200	Simeon	1: 46500 2: 43730	Reuben	

There is little change in the totals: when the people are first numbered the total (1) is 603550; 38 years later the total (2) is 602730. However, during that time Manasseh grew by 63% while Simeon¹ declined by the same percentage.

The Levites were not counted because God told them not to (Numbers 1:47-48).

In the same way as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the promised land, we are currently on a wilderness journey to the promised kingdom.

Deuteronomy

This is the 'forget not' book. It means 'repeating the law' or 'second telling'; words like duet and duel remind us of two. It is what Moses wanted to tell the people as they neared the promised land. The majority of the generation that came out of Egypt had died by this point, as God had said they would. The new generation are encouraged repeatedly to remember the things that had happened, and the laws they had been given. Moses was trying to boost the people in preparation for their entry into the land, knowing that he himself was about to die and wouldn't be there to help them.

This principle of remembering is continued in the New Testament. Followers of Jesus are commanded to remember him at the Breaking of Bread in order to help overcome sin as we wait for the promised kingdom.

God offered the Jews a choice in Deuteronomy 28 and 30:11-20 - to do as he had commanded and receive exceptional blessings, or reject his way and experience terrible curses. The Jews didn't obey, and consequently we see the curses fulfilled in fine detail.

The completed tables in the students' books might look something like this:

	What is the book about?	What can we learn?
Exodus	leaving (exit)	we should leave behind modern 'idolatry'
Leviticus	the law (Levi)	God's rules were all the people needed. Jesus is the perfect High priest
Numbers	counting (numbering) the people in the wilderness	our lives are described as a wilderness journey
Deuteronomy	repeating the law (duet)	we should get into the habit of remembering what's important

The timeline

You may like to use the pictures in the students' books to form a timeline to overview the events of the four books. Or you could get the class to decide which book(s) the stories are in. Of course there will be no pictures for Leviticus, because it doesn't record any events - and sometimes one story will be in two books, but this will reinforce what the books are about.²

¹ A possible cause of the decline in the tribe of Simeon is the plague recorded in Numbers 25, in which perhaps Simeon was most affected (:14). There is a hint in 1 Chronicles 4:24 that the tribe of Simeon may have been less fertile than the others; if the plague was sexually transmitted these two things may be related.

² Just in case it isn't clear, the pictures are: 1: Manna and quails; 2: Aaron's rod; 3: Spying out the land; 4: The plague of boils; 5: The candlestick in the tabernacle; 6: Water from the rock; 7: The battle with the Amalekites; 8: The bronze serpent; 9: The burning bush; 10: The Passover; 11: Crossing the Red Sea; 12: The golden calf

Relevance to our lives

Once again we can see that everything God does reinforces the same messages throughout scripture, but the message of Deuteronomy is probably the most applicable one for the students to consider. 1 Corinthians 10:6-11 tells us specifically that the lives of the Israelites at this time were to be an example and a warning for us and we do well to remember.

Extension activities

Moses' plea

Look at Deuteronomy 30:15-16 to see Moses' plea to the Israelites before they went into the land. Verse 18 tells them to be obedient, as we discussed in lesson 9; verse 19 is an appeal that is equally applicable to us; and verse 20 will be a good introduction to lesson 14.

Principles

As with the Genesis lesson, you can draw out principles or types from the pictures in the students' books as appropriate to the class. Approximate dates are given.

Burning bush - 1486 BC	Exodus 3	Holiness of God, and his name
Plagues	Exodus 7 – 12	God proves himself to be supreme
Passover	Exodus 12 – 13 Deuteronomy 16	Jesus as the Passover lamb
Crossing the red sea - 1446	Exodus 13 – 15	Baptism (covered in lesson 31)
Manna and Quails	Exodus 16 Deuteronomy 2:7	God's provision for life
Water from the rock	Exodus 17	1 Corinthians 10:4. God provided the Lord Jesus for our journey.
Battle against Amalek	Exodus 17	Prophet, priest and king (overcoming sin through Christ)
The golden calf - 1444	Exodus 19 – 32 Deuteronomy 5, 9:7-21	Worship must be in accordance with God's commandments
Tabernacle (candlestick)	Exodus 25 - 40	Place where God's glory dwells, and he meets with his people.
Spies sent out	Numbers 13 Deuteronomy 1:19-46	Faith - God wants us to believe him.
Aaron's rod	Numbers 16	Rebellion against God ends in death
The bronze serpent - 1406	Numbers 21	Looking to Christ for salvation