

StudyJesus.com presents *The Pentateuch*

GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY

In a nutshell, the word “Pentateuch” literally means “5-volumed [sc. Book],” consisting of the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. *The Pentateuch* (“law” or “teaching”) forms the first division of the Jewish Canon.

The work opens with an account of the Creation, and passes to the story of the first human couple. The narrative is carried on partly by genealogies and partly by fuller accounts to Abraham. Then follows a history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the collateral lines of descendants being rapidly dismissed. The story of Joseph is told in detail, and Genesis closes with his death. The rest of *The Pentateuch* covers the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt, their exodus and wanderings, the conquest of the trans-Jordanic lands and the fortunes of the people to the death of Moses. The four concluding books contain masses of legislation mingled with the narrative (I.S.B.E.).

However, as New Covenant people, we read Holy Scripture first and foremost to find what it reveals about Jesus Christ. We believe Him to be both its Central Character and Ultimate Treasure.

Jesus Christ-as-the-focal-point was the interpretive guide the early church used to approach Holy Scripture. They viewed Holy Scripture as contributing to God’s story about Jesus—Who He has always been, what He came to do, how He lived and what He taught, how He showed love to God and others, how He gave God glory by living every day to do the Father’s will, how and why He fulfilled God’s goal for His life on the cross, how He aims to build His church, how He lives even to this day as the victorious Lord of Lords and King of Kings, how history is “His-story”, and how He wants us to live with the knowledge that there is more going on here than meets the eye.

They did not read Holy Scripture like an encyclopedia of religion, or some sort of plotless book, arranged by subject. They saw Holy Scripture Christologically. Through Holy Scripture we come to know Jesus, choosing whether or not to follow Him and be a part of Him. We should read God’s Holy Word with this purpose in mind.

The sharpest critics Jesus had in His day and time were the scribes and Pharisees. Yet, they were avid students of Scripture. They revered God’s Word, memorizing much of it, organizing it topically. They discussed its finer details, and tried to regulate their lives by its teachings. They were serious students of

the Word, yet they did not believe in or accept Jesus Christ. Why? Obviously because they read Holy Scripture to pursue and validate their religion, instead of hearing God and coming to know Him better through His Chosen One.

Jesus responded to the scribes and Pharisees in this way: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. There are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." Whenever we read Holy Scripture in search of truth, these words of Jesus should always ring loud and clear in our hearts: "**I am ... the truth.**"

Therefore, our brief consideration of *The Pentateuch* will focus on trying to understand what the first five books of the Bible reveal about Jesus, because Holy Scripture says: ". . . the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

Part I of *The Pentateuch*

GENESIS rendered by the Jews according to its first word, *B'reshith* ("In the Beginning"). In Talmudic times it was also called, "Book of the Creation of the World." The title "Genesis" is from the LXX rendering of 2:4a, "This is the book of the *geneseos* of heaven and earth," and of the subsequent headings, 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2. The word means "origin," "source," "generation."



Part II of *The Pentateuch*

EXODUS was called by the Jews after its opening words, "And these are the names," or simply *shemoth* ("names"). The LXX named it *Exodos* according to its central theme (the word appears in Ex. 19:1), and the Vulgate, *Exodus*.



Part III of *The Pentateuch*

LEVITICUS third book of Moses, opens with the words "And he called," and is so designated by the Jews. In Talmudic times it was also called Law of the Priests (*torath kohanim*). In the LXX it bears the title *Levitikon* ("Levitical," an adjective modifying the word *biblion*, "book," which is to be understood). The Vulgate designates it simply *Leviticus*.



Part IV of *The Pentateuch*

NUMBERS is called, by the Jews, "In the wilderness" (*bemidhbar* -- the word is construct) or "And he spake" (*wayedhabber*). The LXX gave it the title "Numbers" (*arithmoi*), and this is followed by the Vulgate.



Part V of *The Pentateuch*

DEUTERONOMY is the fifth book of Moses, and bears the name "These are the words" (*devarim*). It came also to be designated by the Jews as "Repetition of the law" (*mishneh*), from the words in 17:18. It has also been called "The book of admonitions" (*sefer tochahoth*). The LXX has rendered 17:18 "this second law" (*to deuteronomion touto*). In his book, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Young points out that the Vulgate incorrectly renders the passage, "Deuteronomium."

