

# Old Testament Survey – Introduction

Dial's Church, Bereans Bible Class

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**Purpose:** The Old Testament was written "*For our instruction*" (Rom. 4:16-24; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. 6:13-19; Heb. 11).

## Introduction:

- A. The 39 books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew.<sup>1</sup>
- B. The books were arranged in 3 categories **by order of importance**:
  1. The "Law" (Torah) Genesis – Deuteronomy: God's Commandments for Israel
  2. The "Prophets" (Major & Minor): God's warnings to Israel
  3. The "Writings" (historical, wisdom, poetic books): Historical context & human testimony, encouragement, and consequences of obedience and disobedience.
- C. The entire Old Testament was commonly called "*The Law and the Prophets*" (Matt. 7:12; Matt. 22:40; Luke 16:16; Acts 13:15; Rom. 3:21), or just "*Scripture*."
- D. The New Testament claims that all three categories were "inspired" by God (2 Tim. 3:14-17; Peter – 2 Pet. 1:18-21).
- E. About 300 years before Jesus' birth, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek by 70 Temple scribes.
  1. Originally called "*the Version of the Seventy*," today called "*the Septuagint*" Latin for 70, and abbreviated by Roman numerals (LXX).
  2. Greek had become the common language of trade while Hebrew was becoming a dead language, spoken primarily in Judea (around Jerusalem).
  3. The LXX was originally translated about 300BC at the request of Ptolemy king of Egypt for his vast library at Alexandria where there was a large Jewish population and many synagogues.
  4. The Septuagint became very popular and was the version used in the synagogues all over the Roman Empire before Jesus was born.
  5. While both the Hebrew and Greek versions were known and read at the time of Jesus and the Apostles, the New Testament quotations from the Old Testament usually agree more with the Septuagint than with the Hebrew, especially in important Chronologically significant passages (Ex. Isaiah 7:14 (*almah* – young woman) quoted in Matt. 1:23 from the LXX (*parthanos* – virgin); and Psalm 40:6-8 LXX quoted in Heb. 10:5-7).
  6. The churches all over the Roman Empire used the Septuagint as their OT through the 4<sup>th</sup> century after Christ. It is still used by Greek Orthodox Church.
  7. The early Christians made excellent use of the Septuagint in refuting the Jews and proving that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God.

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<sup>1</sup> A few passages were written in Aramaic during and after the Babylonian exile.