

“Con conversationally engaging; literarily transparent; materially comprehensive; pedagogically superb; academically sound, precise, and informed—all this and more. In over fifty-two years of teaching in the classrooms of higher education, I have seen nothing comparable to this magnificent work by DeRouchie—destined to be the classic in its field.”

—**EUGENE H. MERRILL**, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Studies,  
Dallas Theological Seminary

This book is for anyone who wants to learn how to observe carefully, understand accurately, evaluate fairly, feel appropriately, act rightly, and express faithfully God’s revealed Word, especially as embodied in the Old Testament.

- Follow an extensively field-tested twelve-step process to deepen understanding and shape theology (biblical, systematic, and practical).
- Engage with numerous illustrations from Scripture that model these interpretive steps.
- Learn how to track an author’s thought-flow, grasp the text’s message, and apply the ancient Word in this modern world, all in light of Christ’s redeeming work.

Loaded with examples, practical answers, and recommended resources, the twelve chapters will empower believers to study, practice, and teach the Old Testament as *Christian* Scripture, understanding and applying it in ways that nurture hope in the gospel and magnify the Messiah.

“I recommend this book if you have a wanderlust for exploring ancient treasures. There are many, and they are great. DeRouchie will show you how to find them.”

—**John Piper**, Founder and Teacher, Desiring God

“I can’t help but think of how much less doctrinal error and how much more peace in Christ we would enjoy if we took theology as seriously and cheerfully as DeRouchie.”

—**Gloria Furman**, Cross-Cultural Worker

“This volume not only will become a standard course textbook, but will also serve as a lifelong resource for those called to study and faithfully proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament.”

—**Miles V. Van Pelt**, Alan Belcher Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson

“Anyone wanting to grapple with how to interpret and apply the Old Testament will find this volume immensely helpful. It is scholarly, rich in theological and exegetical insight, and attentive to Hebrew grammar and syntax, yet the step-by-step approach to the interpretive task means that it is accessible for pastors and Bible teachers alike. You will want to have this volume in your library!”

—**Carol M. Kaminski**, Professor of Old Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

**Jason S. DeRouchie** (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis and an elder of Bethlehem Baptist Church.

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**PRP**  
P U B L I S H I N G

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HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY  
THE OLD TESTAMENT  
DeRouchie

“I have seen nothing comparable to this magnificent work.” —Eugene H. Merrill

# HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THE OLD TESTAMENT

TWELVE STEPS FROM EXEGESIS TO THEOLOGY



Jason S. DeRouchie

FOREWORD BY D. A. CARSON

“For nearly a century, only a handful of scholars have published manuals for the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible. *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* surpasses all previous works with its biblical-theological orientation, purposeful organization, depth of analytical guidance, clarity of explanation, illustrative examples, and direction regarding interpretive implications. DeRouchie walks the aspiring exegete and expositor through the steps of a text-focused, genre-aware, and context-sensitive methodology. No matter what one’s theological views might be on any particular text, this volume gives users superb guidance for interpreting the Old Testament. I commend it to every teacher and student of Hebrew exegesis as the best textbook available.”

—**William D. Barrick**, Retired Professor of Old Testament, The Master’s Seminary; Old Testament Editor, *Evangelical Commentary on the Old Testament*

“This book is an invaluable resource for anyone serious about preaching and teaching the Old Testament in a way consistent with our Lord’s words (Luke 24:25–27, 44–49). From genre classification to the biblical, systematic, and practical theological implications of expositing the Old Testament, DeRouchie works through every step necessary for establishing a Christ-centered (biblical-theological) exegetical methodology; the examples provided throughout are extremely helpful. This is the book I longed for as a student and pastor and am now excited to be using in several of my courses (Hebrew Syntax, Hebrew Prose, Hebrew Poetry, Old Testament Biblical Theology) as I train the next generation of international pastors and church-planters to preach Christ rightly from all of Scripture for the glory of Christ’s name among the nations.”

—**Derek D. Bass**, Assistant Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, Tyndale Theological Seminary, The Netherlands

“DeRouchie’s latest offering provides exegetical and theological tools for how to read and apply the Old Testament in a way that is centered on Christ, while having controls to ensure that we are reading out of the text what the authors intended rather than reading into the text our own ideas. Two contributions stand out. The first is the extended discussion of various genres, explaining the literary conventions that are required for responsible interpretation and showing how each genre contributes to the Bible’s coherent message, which centers its hope in the coming Messiah. The second is the thorough explanation of the method of discourse analysis that DeRouchie developed in his doctoral dissertation. The analysis begins with building a text hierarchy, which in turn supplies an objective basis for tracing the literary argument in a way that shows how each part of the text contributes to the author’s main point. The argument diagram then provides the basis for an exegetical outline that allows one to preach a text, confident that one is teaching what the author intended. DeRouchie’s book is a sure-footed guide to Old Testament interpretation and proclamation.”

—**John C. Beckman**, Assistant Professor of Old Testament, Bethlehem College & Seminary

“Not only is this the best road map to interpreting the Hebrew Bible that I know of, it also strengthens faith, motivates study, and exalts the Messiah. DeRouchie has carefully designed this book to serve both the reader who knows biblical Hebrew and the one who doesn’t. DeRouchie models excellent scholarship propelled by a passion for the Lord, and this book will provide the reader with the tools to study, apply, and teach the Scriptures for the good of the church and the glory of God.”

—**Todd Bolen**, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, The Master’s College

“*How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is not just another introduction to Bible interpretation. This is hinted at by the subtitle, *Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*. Readers—no, users—of this book will discover something of Jason DeRouchie’s passion for the good news as it is in Jesus that all his classroom students regularly observe as he provides tested and proven step-by-step procedures on progressing from simply reading the Old Testament Scriptures to deepening and enriching belief in Jesus Christ. Yes, indeed, this book features the Old Testament, but it focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ because DeRouchie correctly argues that from its beginning to its climax, the whole Old Testament is about the coming Messiah. He is rightly convinced that the Old Testament is Christian Scripture because it finds its true and proper culmination and fulfillment only in Jesus of Nazareth. I heartily commend this book. May it be instrumental in the formation of belief in Christ Jesus for many.”

—**Ardel B. Caneday**, Professor of New Testament and Greek, University of Northwestern—St. Paul

“DeRouchie brings both scholarly expertise and mission experience into the service of helping us see the Old Testament as *Christian* Scripture. Here is faithful interpretation of the Word of God in accord with its own historical setting and in harmony with its redemptive context. Such a whole-Bible perspective will help enable Bible interpreters to identify the particular concerns of Old Testament writers and to celebrate the continuities of their words with New Testament revelations of our Redeemer. As a result, believers will be enriched in their ability to apply the Old Testament to their lives in ways that nurture hope in the gospel and that fuel zeal for the glory of Christ.”

—**Bryan Chapell**, Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, IL

“Just looking over the table of contents gave me an adrenaline surge. I wish I’d had this book when I was teaching Old Testament, and I now envy the professors and students who use the book. Its content does not disappoint. Every sentence conveys the result of careful thought. DeRouchie is a scholar who knows the theological discourse regarding biblical interpretation and is thus well equipped to introduce students to it. But his work does more than orient the student’s head; DeRouchie also aims at producing the heart of a faithful interpreter of God’s Word. I applaud his commitment to ‘the distinct nature of Scripture as God’s unique Word’ against some (even evangelicals) who fail to distinguish the Bible as such. Thus he differentiates biblical narrative from ‘myth.’ As

he says, ‘We cannot deny the reality of an event that the biblical authors believed to be historical and still say that we affirm Scripture’s authority.’ I also applaud DeRouchie’s belief that Old Testament interpretation cannot end until we have discerned how each book points to Christ. The book is abundantly sprinkled with excellent instructive charts. In addition to being friendly to the reader (with chapter previews, reviews, and study questions), this book does not sidestep difficult issues but includes many footnotes pointing them out and suggesting helpful thoughts and resources. It is also full of insights regarding many biblical texts, such as Proverbs 22:6 (over three pages) and 1 Samuel 13:14 (four pages). Students who know Hebrew will be especially excited by many sections in the book that discuss issues arising in the study of the Hebrew Bible. I will be returning to this book often.”

—**E. Ray Clendenen**, Senior Editor of Bible and Reference Publishing, B&H Publishing Group

“In this monument of industry, Jason DeRouchie has appropriated insights from discourse linguistics to lay out for students the essential questions and methods for responsible study of the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture. And the overview of all the tools and resources—what a treasure trove! You don’t have to agree with every exegetical decision he makes to be grateful to him for his tireless work and to use this as a tool for learning and teaching the art of exegesis. Thank you, Dr. DeRouchie!”

—**C. John (“Jack”) Collins**, Professor of Old Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary

“DeRouchie’s *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is a veritable treasure trove for anyone interested in academically rigorous, God-glorifying, Christ-savoring Old Testament interpretation. His book is not just a book on hermeneutics; it is a biblical theology of how we should read our Bibles. His volume runs the gamut from highly detailed work, on such topics as word studies and the relationship between clauses, to grander, big-picture ideas, encompassing the Bible’s overall narrative. This book is must reading for anyone who is hungry to dig into the riches of the Old Testament.”

—**John C. Crutchfield**, Professor of Bible, Columbia International University

“DeRouchie writes with rigor, clarity, and passion. He details the extraordinary amount of work that is involved in seeking to understand the meaning of the biblical text—and yet at the same time the extraordinary importance of getting that meaning, for the exegetical payoff is out of this world. He moves us from the individual tree (exegesis) to the larger forest (theology) and then to the breathtaking, worship-inspiring view of the whole (doxology). He gives many examples and illustrations throughout the book that will help the student understand. I can sense that he wants us to ‘get’ the Bible so that the Bible can ‘get’ us.”

—**Stephen G. Dempster**, Professor of Religious Studies, Crandall University, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

“This book is an excellent resource with many strengths. It has tracks for those who do and do not know Hebrew and includes study questions, a glossary, and extensive bibliographical aids. As a textbook this work targets a specific theological audience, but its cutting-edge application of discourse analysis makes it a valuable reference work for all Hebrew-informed interpreters. It is set forth in a clear step-by-step format with helpful illustrations. Methodologically, it correctly works from the largest literary-linguistic unit to the smallest; then it progresses contextually from the smallest unit to larger spheres of literary, historical, cultural, and theological contexts; and most importantly, it continues on to guided reflection for the purposes of biblical theology, systematic theology, and practical application—all with a strong Christocentric focus.”

—**Rodney K. Duke**, Professor of Religion, Appalachian State University

“Once again DeRouchie has evidenced his special gift in combining the precision of a scholar, the organization of a teacher, and the heart of a pastor in his new textbook, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*. Writing in three concurrent tracks for beginning, intermediate, and advanced students, he develops a clear trajectory from exegesis to theology, providing discussion informed by recent scholarship, clear biblical examples, and abundant resources for further study. This, then, is a manual that invites rereading at increasing levels of insight and precision. For students of the Old Testament, DeRouchie’s work will likely become the standard for the next generation.”

—**Daniel J. Estes**, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament, Cedarville University

“This book is a marriage of hermeneutical theory and practice, of doctrinal and ethical theology. Dr. Jason DeRouchie has done an outstanding job of writing a step-by-step guide to studying the Old Testament that is both comprehensive and balanced. Jason is a man of scholarship and godliness. In this work he shares his expertise and faith to help readers interpret God’s Word accurately and apply it more appropriately. Each chapter offers options for reading depending on one’s ability and interest in studying the text in the original language. This approach makes it ideal for many classroom settings. From students to experienced preachers and teachers, people who want to know God better through the Scriptures will gain much from this careful study.”

—**Lee M. Fields**, Professor of Bible, Mid-Atlantic Christian University

“Too many American Christians either have given up altogether on understanding the Old Testament or have accepted shallow, even unbiblical readings. But Jesus didn’t! In *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, Dr. DeRouchie has given the church a great gift. These pages are packed with lucid, enlightening, and inspiring examples of exegesis done well—and done in ways that drive us to godly theology. Dr. DeRouchie’s methods will bless you and, above all, lead you to see Christ more clearly and love him more dearly. Highly recommended!”

—**William Fullilove**, Assistant Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary

“Students of God’s Word from all walks of life will benefit from *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*. Reflecting on my travels and work overseas, I can’t help but think of how much less doctrinal error and how much more peace in Christ we would enjoy if we took theology as seriously and cheerfully as DeRouchie. One of the key components of this volume’s usefulness is its three tracks for target audiences. As a busy mom, I don’t have time to read every page, but as a wannabe Hebrew student, I do want to grow in my understanding. The chapter-by-chapter ‘trail guides’ really helped me maximize my time in the book. Use and enjoy this volume in your personal studies, discipleship, and parenting.”

—**Gloria Furman**, Cross-Cultural Worker

“Textbooks on biblical hermeneutics generally come in two varieties: Either they are theoretical, describing the philosophical underpinnings of an interpretive method and meant primarily for the academy, or they are practical, giving instruction in how to go about interpretation and meant primarily for pastors, Bible teachers, and students. DeRouchie’s text is of the second variety, and it fulfills its purposes admirably. But DeRouchie also fills a significant gap among textbooks: he gives a clear and informed presentation of how the tools provided by Hebrew linguistics and discourse analysis enable readers to better understand the Hebrew Scriptures. So this is not just another book on how to read the Bible; it is a major resource for all who seek to seriously engage with the biblical text.”

—**Duane A. Garrett**, John R. Sampey Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, Professor of Biblical Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Magisterial in depth and scope, DeRouchie’s guide to biblical interpretation (exegesis and theology) of the Old Testament is an excellent beginning to a new truly Christian *Literarkritik*, which moves us away from the dead ends of the Enlightenment’s placing of critical human reason as the highest criterion for determining truth.”

—**Peter J. Gentry**, Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“DeRouchie’s *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is a guidebook for those who want to seriously pursue God in the Old Testament Scriptures. DeRouchie leads his readers through a twelve-stage interpretive process that takes them from the text of the Old Testament Scriptures to a Christ-centered application of those Scriptures to themselves, the church, and the world. This book is user-friendly, and its pages are filled with applications of Scripture that will draw the student into the deep and thorough study of the Old Testament that the book teaches and models. If you are serious about loving God with all your heart, mind, and strength, then this is the book for you. Its contents will feed and challenge your heart and mind. And if you are going to master everything in this book, it will require all the strength the Lord gives you.”

—**W. Edward Glenny**, Professor of New Testament and Greek, University of Northwestern—St. Paul

“Busy pastors and Bible teachers often see the various disciplines that structured their theological education recede into the distance because of the demands on their time. If only someone would provide them with a basic yet comprehensive handbook to serve as a reference resource and means of revision when needed! Jason DeRouchie has done exactly that. He sets out the logical stages in dealing with the exegesis of the biblical text in a way that can be negotiated even by readers who have no formal theological training. But for the student or pastor, this is a wonderful aid to teaching and preaching. The progression of the twelve steps from text to application highlights the care needed to arrive at a sound biblical theology and trustworthy doctrinal statements. The final stage of practical theology places the whole process into the pastoral ministry to God’s people. I consider this the crowning achievement of the book. All the toil in language and exegesis, moving through biblical and systematic theology, brings its copious rewards in the way the text is applied so that we, the readers, as well as our hearers, can truly discern the very Word of God to us in the Bible.”

—**Graeme Goldsworthy**, Former Lecturer in Old Testament, Biblical Theology, and Hermeneutics, Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia

“As one who loves and teaches exegesis of Old Testament texts, I view Jason DeRouchie’s volume *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* as nothing less than a gold mine! As with any other exegesis ‘how-to’ book, each of us will have this or that quibble. Regardless, DeRouchie has given professors, pastors, and students a treasure trove of solid procedure, great examples, and helpful insights. Besides providing a thorough explanation of his twelve steps, he provides clear examples, threading the same passages for the various steps (along with some new ones). On top of all that, his abundant provision of resources to aid the exegete for each step is a great asset. I look forward to using the book and recommending it to my students and alumni.”

—**Michael A. Grisanti**, Lead Professor of Old Testament and Director of the Th.M. Program, The Master’s Seminary

“People often ask me how they can grow in understanding the Bible when seminary is not an option. *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* provides exactly what those of us who don’t know Hebrew and Greek need to take a huge step forward in our learning. This book not only provides instruction on using the tools such as genre, grammar, and context, but also demonstrates clearly and effectively how to use these tools.”

—**Nancy Guthrie**, Bible Teacher; Author, *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament* Bible study series

“This is the most thoughtful and well-developed guidebook on how to do exegesis that I have encountered. While it is designed for a student of the Old Testament who has or is acquiring Hebrew skills, it is organized so that anyone who desires to study the Old Testament seriously can use it. The steps are not only clearly defined but also

excellently modeled through the exegesis of several key passages. The result is a book that is packed with rich nuggets of expositional insight embedded in a matrix of solid exegetical ‘how-to’ and thus an invaluable reference tool.”

—**Michael A. Harbin**, Professor of Biblical Studies and Chair of the Department of Biblical Studies, Christian Educational Ministries, and Philosophy, Taylor University

“DeRouchie has written a true gem—the many facets of a seminary education are encapsulated in this single volume! It will serve to encourage and guide serious Bible students seeking to understand the message of the Scriptures of Jesus and apply it to their contemporary settings. The book is plainly written with clear steps and adroit examples that model how one should study, do, and teach, following the ancient model of Ezra the scribe.”

—**Chip Hardy**, Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“DeRouchie’s *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is perhaps the most comprehensive and complete practical guide to Old Testament hermeneutics and exegesis available today. This is an outstanding work, and I heartily recommend it to all who teach Old Testament exegesis.”

—**J. Daniel Hays**, Professor of Biblical Studies, Ouachita Baptist University

“DeRouchie offers a twelve-step process for Old Testament exegesis that goes beyond exegesis proper to include biblical, systematic, and practical theology. From the beginning, DeRouchie’s confessional commitments are clear and central to the task. He provides an excellent ten-point argument for the importance of the Old Testament for Christians—not least of which is the fact that it was the only Scriptures of Jesus and the earliest church. DeRouchie presents an insightful introduction to the genres of the Old Testament (i.e., historical narrative, prophecy and law, psalms, and proverbs) with principles for interpreting each (chapter 1). His explanations of clause and text grammar (chapter 5) and argument diagramming (chapter 6)—with several examples—are particularly helpful. Notably, DeRouchie regularly discusses the New Testament authors’ interpretation of the Old Testament. He begins each chapter with ‘trail guides’ and then carries images through the rest of the book to aid in faster navigation of the material for readers who feel less adroit with Old Testament Hebrew. One strength of this book, besides illustrating the exegetical steps with a variety of biblical examples, is that the reader can follow DeRouchie’s treatment of one particular model passage—Exodus 19:4–6—through all twelve steps of the process. If you are looking for an integrative introduction to Old Testament exegesis that is aimed at worshipful application of God’s Word, this volume is worthy of your consideration.”

—**Douglas S. Huffman**, Professor and Associate Dean of Biblical and Theological Studies, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University



“DeRouchie has provided an excellent resource in his *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*. His explanations are clear and easy to follow, and they provide genuine helps in the process of preaching and teaching the Old Testament text. It encourages leaders to teach from the Old Testament in a day when such a practice of teaching is hard to find.”

—**Walter C. Kaiser Jr.**, President Emeritus, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“*How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* takes seriously the testimony of Scripture—that the Old Testament is *Christian Scripture*, and as such, it ought to be preached and taught in the church today. Anyone wanting to grapple with how to interpret and apply the Old Testament will find this volume immensely helpful. It is scholarly, rich in theological and exegetical insight, and attentive to Hebrew grammar and syntax, yet the step-by-step approach to the interpretive task means that it is accessible for pastors and Bible teachers alike. You will want to have this volume in your library!”

—**Carol M. Kaminski**, Professor of Old Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“This book is late. I wish I’d had it about fifteen years ago, because so much here would have helped me. This isn’t just a book about the Old Testament. DeRouchie never acts as though the Old Testament were the only testament, for he celebrates the gospel event page after page. Because of this, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* will impact your understanding of the New Testament. It is clear that DeRouchie knows the mechanics of the Old Testament. But far more than that, it is clear that he knows the God of the Old Testament. And he wants his readers to join him in worship. I can’t wait to get this into the hands of the people with whom I work.”

—**Tom Kelby**, President, Hands to the Plow Ministries; President, Alliance for Renewal Churches

“There can often be confusion for Christians in seeing the relevance of the Old Testament for modern-day living. DeRouchie systematically overcomes these obstacles and demonstrates both the need to study ‘Jesus’ Bible’ and the joy that awaits Christians who do. DeRouchie’s work is a thorough and sure guide in how to understand and apply the truths contained in the Old Testament. It also serves as a great reminder that biblical interpretation is the necessary ground for sound doctrine and practical Christian living. May many take up this book and be exhorted to engage the text of Scripture so as to love our great God—the Sovereign, Savior, and Satisfier.”

—**Jeremy M. Kimble**, Assistant Professor of Theological Studies, Cedarville University

“DeRouchie has produced a masterpiece of a guide to interpreting the Old Testament Scriptures. He has written it so that beginning, intermediate, and advanced students may grow in their understanding of the message of the divinely inspired text.

I enthusiastically recommend this book for everyone who desires to interpret the Old Testament faithfully.”

—**Tremper Longman III**, Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies, Westmont College

“Here is a comprehensive handbook that I readily endorse as a remedy to the problem of widespread ignorance of the Old Testament. Pedagogically sensitive, DeRouchie provides well-outlined steps, numerous creative charts, and ample documentation, together with resources and a glossary. DeRouchie has admirable control of all sections of the Old Testament, and is clearly conversant with current scholarship. Sections in which the author leans hard on the Hebrew language (of great help to seminarians) need not be offputting for the average reader, given his many helps along the way. Definitely evangelical and conservative, DeRouchie writes with spiritual warmth. I salute his passion for sound Bible interpretation that will yield understanding and result in godly behavior to the praise of God, the Author of Scripture and of salvation.”

—**Elmer A. Martens**, President Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Fresno Pacific University Biblical Seminary

“*How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is rightly titled, for it is more than an ordinary introduction. It’s a thorough, complete presentation of how Christian readers interpret the Old Testament correctly and effectively. DeRouchie’s treatment recognizes that proper interpretation takes account of the whole-Bible canonical perspective and that interpretation is deficient without practical application for Christian life. It is must reading for anyone—with or without knowledge of Hebrew—who wants more out of his or her study of the Scriptures.”

—**Kenneth A. Mathews**, Professor of Divinity—Old Testament, Beeson Divinity School

“When reading DeRouchie’s *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, two words come to mind: *comprehensive* and *accessible* (think: Grant Osborne meets Fee and Stuart). DeRouchie’s passion for the Old Testament and love for Christ come through on virtually every page. This book is a reliable guide for interpreting the Old Testament that is balanced with both light and heat.”

—**Benjamin L. Merkle**, Professor of New Testament and Greek, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Con conversationally engaging; literarily transparent; materially comprehensive; pedagogically superb; academically sound, precise, and informed—all this and more. In over fifty-two years of teaching in the classrooms of higher education, I have seen nothing comparable to this magnificent work by DeRouchie—destined to be the classic in its field.”

—**Eugene H. Merrill**, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

“This book (and its companion volume) does the church a great service. It is a rare and precious thing to combine the rigor of the academy with the passion of the preacher, but DeRouchie does just that. Rather than separate how to exegete and interpret the Old Testament from how to preach and apply it, this volume manages to bring both together in a way that is massively helpful and enormously enriching. I am confident that this handbook will prove to be a rich resource for generations of God’s people who want to take studying the Bible seriously.”

—**J. Gary Millar**, Principal and Lecturer in Old Testament, Biblical Theology, and Preaching, Queensland Theological College, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

“Jason DeRouchie has given us a comprehensive and readable orientation to reading, interpreting, and applying the Old Testament. He covers all the relevant issues and offers a sensible and balanced approach to controversial ones. Especially noteworthy is the way he illustrates key principles and issues through careful and detailed exegesis of texts.”

—**Douglas J. Moo**, Wessner Chair of Biblical Studies, Wheaton College; Chair, NIV Committee on Bible Translation

“What sets DeRouchie’s text apart is his intentional cultivation of a method of interpretation that aims at the heart. His clarity is surpassed only by his conviction that the Scripture is worthy of dedicated study because it testifies to the supremacy of Christ. DeRouchie guides the reader through a wise and skillful exegetical approach to the Old Testament and does not shy away from tackling some important questions of application in the life of the church. While some evangelical scholars might hold to a different point of view on a particular application, he surely succeeds in equipping students of the Bible to ‘rightly handl[e] the word of truth’ (2 Tim. 2:15).”

—**Christine Palmer**, Adjunct Professor of Old Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“In *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*, Jason DeRouchie reveals his great love for God, Scripture, and the church. He combines a clear and inductive presentation with key insights developed over many years of teaching. His contagious enthusiasm for the text empowers Christians to study and appreciate the Old Testament. He invites us to see that the Old Testament reveals the character of God, anticipates Christ, and clarifies how love for God and neighbor can be lived and applied today.”

—**David Palmer**, Adjunct Professor of New Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Senior Pastor, Kenwood Baptist Church, Cincinnati

“I think Jason DeRouchie would be happy if I said that this book is designed to move us from revelation through rigor to rapture—from the sacred Word of God, through the serious work of reading, to the satisfaction of knowing and enjoying God. There is no getting

around the hard work of reading for holy wonder of worship. So DeRouchie spares no effort to make the rigors of careful reading plain. For many folks, the Old Testament is a foreign land. Oh, how good it is to have a native with you when you travel to an unfamiliar place. With his help, dozens of strange things begin to make sense. You even start to feel at home. I recommend this book if you have a wanderlust for exploring ancient treasures. There are many, and they are great. DeRouchie will show you how to find them.”

—**John Piper**, Founder and Teacher, *Desiring God*; Chancellor and Professor of Biblical Exegesis, Bethlehem College & Seminary

“When I think back to my own student days of learning to exegete the Hebrew Scriptures, how I wish this resource had existed! DeRouchie is a sure and clear guide to studying the Old Testament with faithfulness and rigor—all with the goal of thinking and preaching rightly about God. Highly recommended!”

—**Robert L. Plummer**, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“In *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, Dr. DeRouchie has produced a thorough, comprehensive, and erudite introduction to the principles and objectives of exegesis and to the essential steps and component disciplines that are involved in the process. His style of writing and organization of the material is inviting, engaging, clear, and easy to follow. The foundation for this study is the author’s unwavering conviction that the biblical writings (Old and New Testaments) are the Word of God, that they are authoritative for Christian living (accurate, infallible, and inerrant), that they are relevant to life and living in today’s world, and that they are altogether sufficient for living in the presence of God. Delightfully, this study is infused throughout with a manifest love, reverence, and deep appreciation for God’s Word. There is also sustained emphasis on the glory of God and the good of his people as the ultimate objectives of the exegetical process, from establishing the text to proclaiming and applying its truths. This study is persuasive in making the case that proficiency with the biblical languages or even a measure of exposure to either of them will enhance the prospects for realizing these two main objectives of biblical exegesis. In my many years of teaching the various levels of Hebrew language and exegesis, I would have enthusiastically used Jason DeRouchie’s text in the noble responsibility of training men and women for the ministry of God’s precious Scriptures.”

—**Gary D. Pratico**, Retired Senior Professor of Old Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“DeRouchie’s book *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is a wonderful resource for both pastors and teachers. The book takes readers through all the steps needed for interpretation and application, and it is beautifully clear in providing guidance for readers. Numerous examples keep the book from being too abstract. DeRouchie teaches a method that interpreters can actually use! Finally, the book stands out because of its

theological stance. In other words, here is a book on Old Testament interpretation that is deeply informed by both biblical and systematic theology. A most helpful resource. I commend it enthusiastically.”

—**Thomas R. Schreiner**, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Associate Dean, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Cochair, CSB Translation Oversight Committee

“Jason DeRouchie has organized vast quantities of useful information into a comprehensive and practical handbook, covering the entire process of interpretation from textual criticism to systematic theology. Discussions of theory and principle are avoided in favor of copious worked examples, reams of sensible advice, and well-considered models for theological and Christological interpretation. Students with some Hebrew will derive the most benefit from this book, but it would make a valuable resource for any beginning theological student, as well as for preachers seeking to deepen and enrich their engagement with the biblical text.”

—**Andrew Shead**, Head of Department of Old Testament and Hebrew and Lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament, Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia

“This fascinating study teaches and demonstrates to readers (especially those who know Hebrew) how to systematically and accurately use the important exegetical tools available to us to comprehend and communicate the full theological message of the Old Testament. DeRouchie richly illustrates how this is possible by (1) taking into consideration the genre characteristics that influence the meaning and function of each different type of literature; (2) illustrating how to outline various Hebrew passages into a hierarchy of clausal dependency (using both a text hierarchy and arcing or bracketing) in order to bring out the persuasive contribution that each clause makes to support the central message; (3) securing the textual accuracy of a passage by critically evaluating various manuscript traditions; (4) preparing an outline based on the hierarchy of clauses in a passage in order to bring out the development of the theological purpose; (5) showing how to do word studies of key Hebrew terms; and (6) guiding the use of historical and literary context in order to ground the message in its original setting. But DeRouchie is not satisfied with just understanding the genre, words, structure, and context of a text! He cogently argues that it is necessary to press on for a wider synthetic biblical and theological examination that identifies the organic connections between passages throughout the Old and New Testaments, particularly those that relate to aspects of salvation history and the hope of a coming messianic King and his kingdom. Then, having thoroughly considered what God was communicating, DeRouchie addresses in the last section of this impressive study the challenge of setting forth principles for modern Christians that will provide appropriate and powerful applications, so that the lasting value of the Old Testament is preserved for our generation. I highly recommend this admirable approach, for it will greatly enhance the results of anyone’s biblical study.”

—**Gary V. Smith**, Retired Professor of Christian Studies, Union University

“If there is a deficiency in the contemporary evangelical pulpit, it is the absence of consistent expositional preaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. Many pastors either have lost touch with the biblical Hebrew they learned in seminary or are intimidated by the demands placed on those who would venture into the interpretation of complex Old Testament texts. If that is you, or perhaps someone you know, rejoice with me to see the publication of DeRouchie’s excellent treatment of the twelve steps essential for movement from exegesis to sound and substantive pastoral theology. The church has long awaited and greatly needed this volume. I highly recommend it.”

—**Sam Storms**, Lead Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Bridgeway Church, Oklahoma City; President, Enjoying God Ministries

“DeRouchie has put together a wonderfully comprehensive guide to the methodologies that allow us to see what the Old Testament is actually saying, so that we can rightly use the Old Testament for God’s glory. His book teems with user-friendly explanations, smart charts, diagrams, lists, judicious bibliographical pointers, and patient, step-by-step guidance through even the toughest sorts of interpretational challenges. Anybody—from beginner to seasoned interpreter—can learn a lot from this book.”

—**Douglas Stuart**, Professor of Old Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“This volume faces the challenge of understanding and applying the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. This has been a tricky and (sometimes) contentious endeavor in the history of the church. DeRouchie faces the challenge head-on with clarity and provides a constructive and thoroughly Christian proposal. There is much to learn from his approach, and I suspect that many will embrace it.”

—**Heath A. Thomas**, Dean, Herschel H. Hobbs College of Theology & Ministry, Professor of Old Testament, and Associate Vice President for Church Relations, Oklahoma Baptist University

“This ain’t your mama’s inductive Bible study method! This book is a practical and scholarly outworking of Ezra 7:9–10: ‘Ezra had set his heart to *study* the Law of the LORD, and to *do* it and to *teach* his statutes and rules in Israel.’ With his *TOCMA* method (*Text, Observation, Context, Meaning, Application*), DeRouchie provides both Bible student and Bible teacher with a one-stop resource for engaging and grasping the Old Testament. It is unusual in its balance of depth of scholarship and practicality—of academic rigor and precision to details, concepts, and terminology—yet it is written in a winsome, passionate, even pious style. The book includes topics covered in other good resources (e.g., how to identify genre, how to do a word study, how to trace a text’s argument, discussion of historical and literary contexts). But this book also incorporates advanced and specialized topics usually reserved for separate journals and books—such as Hebrew text linguistics and the interaction between exegesis and theological disciplines (biblical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology).

Throughout, DeRouchie expresses sensitivity to evangelical concerns (e.g., biblical authority, genre and historicity, Christological reading of the Old Testament). The book also includes all the practical items that make it a teacher's best friend: the inclusion of many examples of applying hermeneutical principles to specific texts; study questions in each section of the book; huge lists of resources; and a thorough glossary of technical terms. I will personally use this book in my own scholarship and adopt it as a required textbook in several introductory and advanced courses."

—**Kenneth J. Turner**, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Toccoa Falls College

"Like few others, DeRouchie understands that the path to orthodox theology and true worship is driven by one's encounter with the incarnate Word as presented in the written Word (Luke 24:44; John 5:39; Rom. 1:1–3). Thus, no amount of rigor is spared in leading students of the Bible from the science of analytical, exegetical analysis into the art of theological and practical application, which then culminates in the satisfaction of worship. Especially helpful are the sections on "Literary Units and Text Hierarchy" and then "Clause and Text Grammar." This volume not only will become a standard course textbook, but will also serve as a lifelong resource for those called to study and faithfully proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament. If you are hungry to devour Scripture (Ezek. 3:1–3), then 'rise,' take this book, and 'eat' (Acts 10:13)."

—**Miles V. Van Pelt**, Alan Belcher Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages, Director of the Summer Institute for Biblical Languages, and Academic Dean, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson

"Jason DeRouchie has accomplished something unusual—a guide to interpreting the Old Testament that emphasizes reading the Old Testament as Christian Scripture while giving thorough attention to the original historical and literary context. He faithfully guides readers through the maze of interpretive issues beginning with the foundational aspects of genre and context, and then working all the way up to theology and application. Students often ask me for resources for digging into the Old Testament, and now I know what to recommend first. DeRouchie writes with a scholar's touch and a pastor's heart, and his love for God's Word fills every page. He doesn't just talk *about* the Bible; he shows us how to open its treasures for ourselves."

—**Brian J. Vickers**, Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Biblical Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Assistant Editor, *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*

"DeRouchie is committed to reading the Old Testament as *Christian* Scripture, and in this volume he guides biblical interpreters in how best to grasp a passage's makeup, shape, placement, meaning, and application. His interpretive approach leaves few stones unturned, and he even gives helpful guidance to Christians in how to relate to Old Testament laws and promises and how to faithfully preach Christ and the gospel

from the Old Testament. *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is an up-to-date, accessible, and theologically rich guide to faithful biblical interpretation, and I heartily recommend it.”

—**Bruce K. Waltke**, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies, Regent College, Vancouver; Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Knox Theological Seminary

“This book lays out a clear and creative way to explain the steps in exegeting a passage. Its comprehensive twelve-step plan skillfully introduces readers to the basics of understanding an Old Testament passage—beginning with determining what the text says and going all the way to applying it. This volume is accessible and well organized, and will be helpful for students and laypeople alike.”

—**Paul D. Wegner**, Professor of Old Testament Studies and Director of Academic Graduate Studies Program, Gateway Seminary

“It is rare to find in one book everything you need to learn how to rightly interpret and wisely apply God’s Word to our lives, yet this is such a work! In addition, many Christians struggle with how to understand the Old Testament and apply it to their lives today, but this work removes the fog and makes the Old Testament come alive for Christians. Whether you have been studying God’s Word for years or you are a novice, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is a must-read. One will learn how to move rightly from the biblical texts in all their instruction, authority, and beauty to their proper theological application in our lives viewed in light of the glorious work of our Lord Jesus Christ. I know of no book that better puts all the pieces together and so wonderfully teaches the reader how to move from exegesis to theology, and that practically helps us become better readers of the Old Testament. Jason DeRouchie has given us a real gift, and I highly recommend this work for anyone who is serious about the study of Scripture and desirous of seeing God’s Word proclaimed, taught, and obeyed in the church.”

—**Stephen J. Wellum**, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Editor, *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*

“Rather than being simply another ‘how-to’ manual for doing Old Testament exegesis well, this book delivers much more besides. It includes a penetrating analysis of several Old Testament books and key Old Testament texts, as well as detailed discussion of how biblical, systematic, and practical theology inform our understanding and application of the Old Testament in a Christian context. Reflecting a deep respect for the Old Testament as inspired Scripture, DeRouchie helpfully uncovers various pitfalls that must be avoided by the sure-footed interpreter, and consistently demonstrates how his proposed ‘Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology’ will help elucidate the divinely intended meaning and message. While the benefits of learning biblical Hebrew are clearly illustrated in a number of sections, this book is a must-read for everyone who



wants a better grasp of how the Old Testament should be read and taught as Christian Scripture.”

—**Paul R. Williamson**, Senior Lecturer in Old Testament, Hebrew, and Aramaic, Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia

“This book is an outstanding accomplishment. It reflects years of careful and faithful investigation of that older half of our Bible that too often seems foreign to the rest of us. Every preacher will want to read this resource carefully and repeatedly because it is an invaluable guide toward a responsible, informed handling of the Old Testament Scriptures.”

—**Fred G. Zaspel**, Pastor, Reformed Baptist Church, Franconia, Pennsylvania; Executive Editor, *Books at a Glance*; Associate Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

HOW TO  
UNDERSTAND AND APPLY  
THE OLD TESTAMENT



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TWELVE STEPS FROM EXEGESIS TO THEOLOGY

Jason S. DeRouchie

**R&R**  
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To my beloved children—  
Janie, Ruthie, Isaac, Ezra, Joey, and Joy.  
May the Scripture on which this book focuses  
increasingly help you to set your hope in God  
and not to forget his works  
but to keep his commandments (Ps. 78:7),  
all for the glory of Christ.



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# ANALYTICAL OUTLINE



## **I. Introduction: A Journey of Discovery and Encounter**

- A. The Interpretive Task
- B. Ten Reasons That the Old Testament Is Important for Christians
- C. The Benefits of Hebrew Exegesis
- D. Overview of the Interpretive Process: TOCMA

## **II. Part 1: Text—“What is the makeup of the passage?”**

- A. Genre
  - 1. Defining Genre
  - 2. Putting Genre within Its Biblical Context
  - 3. Genre Analysis and the Old Testament’s Polemical Theology
  - 4. The Relationship of Genre to Historicity
  - 5. An Exercise in Genre—Exodus 19:4–6
  - 6. Historical Narrative
    - a. The Distinctive Nature of Biblical Narrative
    - b. History, Myth, and the Biblical Narratives
    - c. How to Interpret Old Testament Narrative
    - d. An Example of Interpreting Historical Narrative—1 Kings 17
  - 7. Prophecy and Law
    - a. The Distinctive Nature of YHWH-Prophecy
    - b. The Categories of Prophetic Speech
    - c. Law as Covenant Stipulation
    - d. Guidelines for Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy
  - 8. Psalms
    - a. A Christian Approach to the Psalms
    - b. Reading the Psalms as Messianic Music
    - c. The Variety of Psalm Subgenres



- d. Psalms of Lament, Trust, Thanksgiving, and Praise
  - e. Guidelines for Interpreting the Psalms
- 9. Proverbs
  - a. General Characteristics of Biblical Proverbs
  - b. Reconsidering Proverbs 22:6
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- 6. Seeing and Savoring Christ and the Gospel in the Old Testament

## **VII. Conclusion: A Final Word on Walking in the Dark**



# FOREWORD



I HAVE A confession to make: by default, I am suspicious of books with titles like *Ten Ways to Something-or-Other* and *Five Steps to Overcome This or That*. So what shall I make of a book titled *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*? It sounds painfully mechanical, and good readers know full well that good reading cannot be broken down into a small number of “steps.” Such titles may reflect robust marketing strategy, but hype should not be confused with subtlety and rigor. Right?

Well, *usually* right. This outstanding book is the exception. Jason DeRouchie tackles an amazing range of material, and does so in an orderly fashion that never feels boxy or merely theoretical. Partly this is because he provides many, many concrete examples of Old Testament exegesis; partly it is because his work, while rigorous, never fails to arouse wonder and worship. This book doubtless demands the hard work of intellectual discipline, but it is more than an intellectual exercise.

Part of the reason for the book’s length turns on the fact that DeRouchie writes at a beginning level, an intermediate level, and an advanced level (the latter requiring a reasonable grasp of Hebrew), with all the sections of the book clearly marked. Many of the book’s features make it an admirable textbook; its biblical indexes will be worth consulting by anyone preaching or teaching from the Old Testament, to check out whether DeRouchie has something to say on any particular passage. He provides penetrating structural analysis of several Old Testament books, and probing exegesis of many passages.

The heart of this textbook, however, is its competent and up-to-date treatment of the elements that go into faithful exegesis: competent comprehension of literary genres, accurate treatment of clausal dependence on which so much structural analysis depends, text-critical decisions that must be made, word studies (both how to do them and how not to do them), and careful study of the historical and literary contexts in which any particular passage is embedded. Most of these elements, of course, are nowadays grouped under discourse analysis. But DeRouchie is not satisfied to stop

there: he leads his readers to think through how to read Old Testament passages in a canonical context. Discourse analysis is wedded to biblical theology. Moving from Old Testament exegesis in an Old Testament matrix to an Old Testament exegesis in the context of the Christian Bible opens up a plethora of challenges. DeRouchie avoids the common mistakes and reductionisms, but still wants to remind his readers that the Old Testament books constituted the only Bible that Jesus had—and what he did with it has binding authority on those who confess him as Lord. And having gone so far, DeRouchie then reflects on what appropriate application looks like to contemporary Christians reading their Bibles.

All of this is packaged in twelve steps, complete with useful charts, symbols, thoughtful discussion questions, and other guides to make this an extraordinarily useful and reliable textbook. What this volume does *not* bother with is treatment of the so-called new (now aging) hermeneutic: the omission is a wise one.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to commend this book.

D. A. Carson  
Research Professor of New Testament  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

# P R E F A C E



## An Overview of the Book

This year, 2017, marks the five hundredth anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his Ninety-five Theses (October 31, 1517)—the spark that enflamed a global Reformation that is still alive and advancing today. The book you are now reading falls within and builds on this great gospel tradition, celebrating *sola Scriptura*—that Scripture *alone* stands as our highest authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.

Jesus loved the Old Testament. Indeed, it was his only Bible, and he believed that it pointed to him. I wrote this book to help believers better study, practice, and teach the Old Testament as *Christian Scripture*. I view God's inerrant Word as bearing highest authority in our lives, and I want Christians everywhere to interpret all of the Bible with care, celebrating the continuities between the Testaments while recognizing that Christ changes so much. I want to help Christians understand and apply the Old Testament in a way that nurtures hope in the gospel and that magnifies our Messiah in faithful ways.

This book targets both laypeople who don't know Hebrew and students studying the Old Testament in the original languages. This book is for anyone who wants to learn how to observe carefully, understand accurately, evaluate fairly, feel appropriately, act rightly, and express faithfully God's revealed Word, especially as embodied in the Old Testament. Through this book you will:

- Learn a twelve-step process for doing exegesis and theology;
- See numerous illustrations from Scripture that model the various interpretive steps;
- Consider how new covenant believers are to appropriate the Old Testament as Christian Scripture; and
- Celebrate the centrality of Christ and the hope of the gospel from the initial three-fourths of our Bible.



Two of the distinctive contributions of this book are its focus on discourse analysis (tracking an author’s flow of thought) and biblical theology (considering how Scripture fits together and points to Christ). Some of the practical questions that I will seek to answer include:

- What are Christians to do with Old Testament laws? Do any of Moses’ requirements still serve as guides for our pursuit of Christ?
- How should Christians consider Old Testament promises, especially those related to physical provision and protection? Can we really sing, “Every promise in the Book is mine”?<sup>1</sup>
- How does the Old Testament point to Christ and the hope of the gospel? How could Paul, who preached from the Old Testament, say, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2)?

I originally drafted this book in preparation for a course titled Old Testament Exegesis that I taught for Logos Mobile Ed in a studio at the Faithlife headquarters in Bellingham, Washington, in summer 2015. My colleague Andy Naselli taught the companion New Testament Exegesis course, and both are available at <https://www.logos.com/product/117883/mobile-ed-biblical-exegesis-bundle>. At the end of that process, John Hughes and the P&R Publishing team invited Andy and me to publish counterpart volumes, which are fraternal twins in every way—conceptually, structurally, theologically, and pedagogically.

### A Guide to Using the Book

Every level in the study of God’s Word includes beauties to discover and challenges to overcome. Recognizing that not every interpreter is the same, I have written this book with three tracks.



Easy



Moderate



Challenging

**Level 1—Easy** makes up most of the book and is for all readers. For *beginning interpreters*, this track may be the only one you will take, since it includes no exposure to biblical Hebrew. It will, however, still contain numerous exegetical and theological paths and vistas that will instruct, awe, inspire, and motivate.

1. The Sensational Nightingales, “Every Promise in the Book Is Mine,” *Let Us Encourage You* (Malco Records, 2005; orig. 1957).

**Level 2—Moderate** is also for all readers and does not require a knowledge of biblical Hebrew. It does, however, interact with the original language where beneficial for *intermediate interpreters*. I always translate the Hebrew and try to instruct clearly. Here you will gain exposure to some of the benefits of Hebrew exegesis and will learn how even those without Hebrew can profit greatly from important interpretive tools.

**Level 3—Challenging** is specialized for more *advanced interpreters* who know or are learning biblical Hebrew. These sections likely include technical discussions that will substantially benefit only those with some awareness of the original language and who will use their Hebrew Bibles for study.

Throughout the book I use the three symbols above to identify the difficulty level of each section or subsection. Decide what path you want to travel, and follow my lead. At the head of every chapter I also include a “Trail Guide” that will remind you where you are in the journey from exegesis to theology and that will give you a quick overview of the paths you are about to tread.

Even if you don’t know Hebrew, I encourage you to work through all Level 2—Moderate material, for the exegetical and theological payoff will be rich and the discussions should not be beyond your grasp. If you choose this path, just remember that all Level 1 material is also for you. For those who are studying or have studied Hebrew, *every part* of this book is for you, and my hope is that it will remind, clarify, and instruct, leading you into more focused, richer engagement with God and the biblical text.

At the end of every chapter I include “Key Words and Concepts,” “Questions for Further Reflection,” and “Resources for Further Study.” I hope these additions will benefit personal study, small-group discussions, and classroom use. The back of the book also includes a full glossary of the key terms, along with The KINGDOM Bible Reading Plan, a selected bibliography, the Index of Scripture, and the Index of Subjects and Names.

As we set out on our journey into biblical interpretation, may God the Father, by his Spirit, stir your affections for Christ and awaken your mind to think deeply. May you increase your skill at handling the whole Bible for the glory of God and the good of his church among the nations.

Jason S. DeRouchie  
Bethlehem College & Seminary  
Minneapolis, Minnesota



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



MANY INDIVIDUALS HAVE influenced the shaping of this book and my own journey in learning to understand, apply, and communicate the greatest Book. Though I may forget some folks, I will limit my thanks to seven groups:

First, I shaped the foundations of my interpretive approach during my B.A. and M.Div., the latter of which I completed nearly two decades ago. I took my initial two years of Greek study at Taylor University under the direction of Bill Heth. He modeled for me a zeal for God and his Word and gave me an initial framework for asking good questions and tracking an author's flow of thought. During my season at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, key figures such as Greg Beale, Scott Hafemann, Gordon Hugenberg, Gary Pratico, and Doug Stuart helped me hone my skill at original language exegesis and theology. Aware readers will see the distinctive influence of Beale and Stuart in my own exegetical and theological method.<sup>1</sup> I am deeply grateful for their faithful approach to Scripture as God's authoritative and inerrant Word.

Second, my doctoral studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary found me under the able care of both Dan Block and Peter Gentry. Their rigorous method of biblical interpretation matched by a deep-seated commitment to Christ and his church has forever shaped me. Block's entire ministry is dedicated to hearing the message of Scripture through careful literary analysis.<sup>2</sup> I hope the present book models this kind of attentiveness. Hours of dialogue with Gentry helped concretize my early approach

1. See especially G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009); Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

2. See, for example, Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* and *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Block, *Judges, Ruth: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999); Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

to Hebrew discourse analysis, and since then I have greatly benefited from his own wrestlings with whole-Bible theology from the bottom up.<sup>3</sup> To these I add a note of thanks to Tom Schreiner, whose discussion of tracing Paul's argument<sup>4</sup> served as an impetus in my choosing to devote my doctoral dissertation to tracing Moses' argument in Deuteronomy. Schreiner's own pastoral disposition and his approach to Paul and the Law have influenced me greatly.<sup>5</sup>

Third, during the summer of 2005, a brief lunch with John Piper and Justin Taylor set my life on a fresh trajectory of discovery and zeal, which has resulted in over a decade-long quest to learn how to faithfully make much of Christ and the gospel from the Old Testament. I feel as though I am only beginning, but being a part of both Bethlehem Baptist Church and, since 2009, the faculty of Bethlehem College & Seminary has helped to fuel this passion and has added to it a commitment to lead others in treasuring and proclaiming the glory of God in Christ by his Spirit among the nations. I thank my administration for empowering me to write and enabling me to teach in such a context and with such a goal. I love my school's theology, team, and strategy.

Fourth, my gratitude for Miles Van Pelt, Jason Meyer, and Andy Naselli deserves special comment. During my doctoral studies, numerous conversations with Van Pelt fanned my biblical-theological flames, especially with respect to how Scripture's frame is God's kingdom, form is covenantal, and fulcrum is Christ. Van Pelt's own thoughts are now captured in the introduction of *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*,<sup>6</sup> and the informed reader will see many parallels in our approaches. I am very thankful for our continued friendship and for the way his godliness pushes me closer to the Lord. Before taking on the role of Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Meyer served full-time as New Testament professor at Bethlehem College & Seminary, spurring me to deeper levels of holiness and increasing my celebration of God's covenantal purposes throughout all of Scripture. My life and teaching are better because of my time with him.<sup>7</sup> Naselli and I get to commute for about three hours per week, and our families are deeply entwined. My time with him fuels both godliness and joy in my life. He is constantly helping me think theologically, and I especially love coteaching a fourth-year graduate course with him on biblical theology.

3. See especially Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Gentry and Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

4. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 97–124.

5. See, most recently, Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010); cf. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998).

6. Miles V. Van Pelt, ed., *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 23–42.

7. See Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NSBT 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009); Meyer, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

I am so grateful for our partnership in the gospel at Bethlehem. Be sure to check out his companion volume to this one titled *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament*.<sup>8</sup>

Fifth, my thanks extend to many folks who made this particular volume possible. John Hughes and the P&R Publishing team accepted the project and have offered solid, Christ-honoring support from beginning to end. I am so grateful for Karen Magnuson's careful copyediting and Thomas Shumaker's painstaking typesetting! My thanks go out to Scott Jamison, Danny Francis, and Don Straka, all of whom offered solid suggestions on how to improve the manuscript. The latter two also helped prepare the "Key Words and Concepts" lists, the "Questions for Further Reflection," and the glossary. I also thank my colleague John Beckman for test-using the volume in his intermediate Hebrew course, and the thirty-five Bethlehem Seminary students from the 2016 spring semester who offered helpful feedback. I offer a special note of thanks to Andy Hubert of Biblearc ([www.Biblearc.com](http://www.Biblearc.com)) for his labors in finalizing the arcs and brackets and to my former student and freelance graphic designer Joel Dougherty, who generated most of the images and icons used in this volume. I believe his creativity and attention to detail have helped me communicate better. Finally, I say "thanks" to my student Ryan Eagy, who also stepped in to finalize some images.

Sixth, I thank the Lord for my faithful wife, Teresa, who stands on earth as my biggest advocate, best help, and truest friend. She is a model of wisdom, balance, and God-dependence. She treasures Christ, steadies and complements me, and enthusiastically supports the research-writing-teaching-shepherding ministry to which God has called me. She also delights in guiding our six children and in making our "Apple Tree Farm" a place of family rest and ministry fruitfulness. I am so grateful to her.

Seventh, I praise the Lord for my six children, to whom I dedicate this book. Each of them is a treasure, and each has encouraged and shaped this Daddy in various ways toward Christlikeness and careful Bible-reading. I love them all dearly, and I pray that the principles and guidelines I set forth in this book—many of which have been taught and modeled in our home—can help them to better see and savor the beauty of God in the face of Christ as disclosed in the pages of Scripture.

8. Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017).



# ABBREVIATIONS



AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. James B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969)
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ASV	Authorized Standard Version
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BBE	Bible in Basic English
BBR	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, <i>The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHQ	<i>Biblia Hebraica Quinta</i> , ed. Adrian Schenker et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004–)
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , ed. Karl Elliger et al., 5th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983)
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>



CDCH	<i>The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> , ed. David J. A. Clines (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009)
CEB	Contemporary English Bible
CEBA	Contemporary English Bible with Apocrypha
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> , ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002)
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CurBS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
DBCI	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation</i> , ed. Stanley E. Porter (London: Routledge, 2007)
DBSJ	<i>Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal</i>
DCH	<i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> , ed. David J. A. Clines, 9 vols. (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2014)
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> , ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992)
DLNT	<i>Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments</i> , ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997)
DNTB	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i> , ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000)
DOT:P	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch</i> , ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003)
DOT:WPW	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings</i> , ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008)
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
DTIB	<i>Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible</i> , ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005)
EDBT	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i> , ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996)
EDT	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Theology</i> , ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001)
EJ	<i>Evangelical Journal</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>

GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E. Kautzch, trans. A. E. Cowley, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910)
GNB	Good News Bible
GTJ	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition</i> , ed. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm, trans. M. E. J. Richardson, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001)
HBCE	The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
HS	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBHS	<i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> , by Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990)
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> , ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979–88)
JAAS	<i>Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBLMS	Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
JBMW	<i>Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood</i>
JDFM	<i>Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JMT	<i>Journal of Ministry and Theology</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSPHL	<i>Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters</i>
kjv	King James Version
LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
LXX	Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament)

MCED	<i>Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words</i> , ed. William D. Mounce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006)
Ms(s)	Manuscript(s)
MSG	The Message
MSJ	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NASU	New American Standard Updated
NCE	<i>New Catholic Encyclopedia</i> , ed. Thomas Carson, 2nd ed., 15 vols. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003)
NDBT	<i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture</i> , ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000)
NEB	New English Bible
NET Bible	New English Translation Bible
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDB	<i>The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009)
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997)
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
RBén	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
RBTR	<i>The Reformed Baptist Theological Review</i>

REB	Revised English Bible
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBET	<i>Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology</i>
SBJT	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SIL	Summer Institute for Linguistics, International
SOTBT	Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis et al., 15 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006)
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TLB	The Living Bible
TLOT	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , ed. Ernst Jenni and Clause Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle, 3 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997)
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TWOT	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> , ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke. 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980)
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UBS	United Bible Societies Greek New Testament
UCSD	University of California, San Diego
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WEB	World English Bible
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YLT	Young's Literal Translation
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebräistik</i>
ZEB	<i>The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> , ed. Merrill C. Tenney and Moisés Silva, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009)
ZECOT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament



# INTRODUCTION

## A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AND ENCOUNTER



*“The good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” (Ezra 7:9–10)*





Basic Overview	
The Interpretive Task	
Ten Reasons That the Old Testament Is Important for Christians	
The Benefits of Hebrew Exegesis	
Overview of the Interpretive Process: TOCMA	

Fig. 0.1. Trail Guide to Introduction

WE ARE ABOUT to embark on a journey of discovery and divine encounter. Beauty abounds at every turn, and the goal is to worship the living God in the face of Jesus Christ. What we call the Old Testament was the only Bible that Jesus had. Books such as Genesis and Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Psalms guided his life and ministry as the Jewish Messiah. It was these “Scriptures” that Jesus identified as God’s Word (Mark 7:13; 12:36), considered to be authoritative (Matt. 4:3–4, 7, 10; 23:1–3), and called people to know and believe in order to guard against doctrinal error and, even worse, hell (Mark 12:24; Luke 16:28–31; 24:25; John 5:46–47). Jesus was convinced that what is now the initial three-fourths of our Christian Bible “cannot be broken” (John 10:35).<sup>1</sup> He was also certain that the Old Testament bore witness about him (Luke 24:27, 46;

1. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations within the *body* text of the book are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations *within examples* are the author’s own.

John 5:39, 46), that it would be completely fulfilled (Matt. 5:17–18; Luke 24:44), and that it called for repentance and forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed in his name to all nations (Luke 24:47). I love the Old Testament because of the way it portrays God’s character and actions and serves as a witness to the majesty of our Messiah. The Old Testament is the initial three-fourths of God’s special revelation to us, and I want you to interpret the Old Testament rightly because there is no higher need for mankind than to see and celebrate the Sovereign, Savior, and Satisfier disclosed in its pages.

## The Interpretive Task



This book is designed to guide Christians in interpreting the Old Testament. The process of *biblical interpretation* includes both exegesis and theology. The former focuses mostly on analysis, whereas the latter addresses synthesis and significance.<sup>2</sup>

Our English term *exegesis* is a transliteration of the Greek noun ἐξήγησις (ἐκ “from, out of” + ἔγω “to bring, move [something]”), meaning an “account, description, narration.” Narrowly defined, exegesis of Scripture is the personal discovery of what the biblical authors intended their texts to mean.<sup>3</sup> Texts convey meaning; they do not produce it. Rather, following God’s leading, the biblical authors purposely wrote the words they did with specific sense and purpose. “Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). We have to carefully read what the Lord through his human servants gives us in Scripture. Exegesis is about discovering what is there, which includes both the specific meaning that the authors convey and its implications—those inferences in a text of which the authors may or may not have been unaware but that legitimately fall within the principle or pattern of meaning that they willed.<sup>4</sup>

2. For these distinctions, see Andrew David Naselli, “D. A. Carson’s Theological Method,” *SBET* 29, 2 (2011): 256–72; cf. D. A. Carson, “Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology,” in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 65–95, 368–75, repr. in D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, comp. Andrew David Naselli (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 111–49; Carson, “The Role of Exegesis in Systematic Theology,” in *Doing Theology in Today’s World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 39–76; Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” *NDBT* 89–104.

3. The term ἐξήγησις shows up in one Greek manuscript of Judges 7:15: “As soon as Gideon heard the telling [i.e., the narration, τὴν ἐξήγησιν] of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped.” This context associates exegesis with the mere description of the dream, which stands distinct from the assessment of the dream’s meaning. Today, exegesis of written material usually implies some level of interpretation, but the stress is still significant that exegesis is about carefully reading what is there in the biblical text.

4. For more on this, see Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 30–38; Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,” *JETS* 44, 3 (2001): 451–66; G. K. Beale, “The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of the Biblical Authors,” *WTJ* 76, 2 (2014):

The English term *theology* comes from the Latin *theologia*, which derives from a combination of the Greek nouns θεός (“God”) and λόγος (“a formal accounting, reckoning”). In short, theology is a “reasoning or study of God.” Because Scripture is God’s Word for all time and because every biblical passage has a broader context (historical, literary, and biblical), exegesis (narrowly defined) naturally moves us into various theological disciplines:

- Biblical theology considers how God’s Word connects together and climaxes in Christ.
- Systematic theology examines what the Bible teaches about certain theological topics.
- Practical theology details the proper Christian response to the Bible’s truths.

Biblical interpretation is not complete until it gives rise to application through a life of worship. Exegesis moves to theology, and the whole process is to result in a personal encounter with the living God disclosed in Scripture. Doxology—the practice of glorifying or praising God—should color *all* biblical study.

In this book, chapters 1–9 cover the basics of exegesis, whereas chapters 10–12 address theology. Here are a number of foundational presuppositions that guide my approach to biblical interpretation.

### 1. Biblical interpretation necessitates that we view Scripture as God’s Word.

The only way to truly arrive at what the biblical authors intended is to believe (as they did) that they were reading and writing God’s very Word (Isa. 8:20; 1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37). This requires a submissive disposition to Scripture’s authority. We must be willing to let our understanding and application of truth be conformed to the Bible’s declarations, all in accordance with God’s revealed intention. The Bible is *special revelation*—God’s disclosure of himself and his will in a way that we can understand (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21). The very words, and not just the ideas, are God-inspired (Matt. 5:17–18; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16–17). And the “words of the LORD are pure” (Ps. 12:6); his “law is true” (Ps. 119:142); “every one of [his] righteous rules endures forever” (Ps. 119:160); and his “commandments are right” (Ps. 119:172). Jesus said, “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), and Paul said that this is so because “all Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Indeed, as Peter said, “No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

The implication of these truths is that Scripture is both authoritative and accurate in all it declares. In order to stress that the Bible’s assertions are both reliable and unerring, the church has historically stated that (a) in matters of *faith* (doctrine) and *practice* (ethics), Scripture’s teaching is *infallible*—a sure and safe guide, and that (b) in matters

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263–93, esp. 266–70; cf. G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Divine Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 340–64, esp. 344–47.



of *fact* (whether history, chronology, geography, science, or the like), Scripture's claims are *inerrant*—entirely true and trustworthy.<sup>5</sup> Both terms mean something comparable but address different spheres, and both are rightly understood only in relation to what the authors, led by the Spirit, intended to convey by their texts (for more on this, see “History, Myth, and the Biblical Narratives” in chapter 1). The key for us is that the Bible will never lead us astray and should bear highest influence in our lives.

## 2. Biblical interpretation assumes that Scripture's truths are knowable.

Proper understanding of Scripture assumes that the Bible is, by nature, clear in what it teaches. In short, truth can be known. Peter recognized that “there are some things in [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand,” but he went on to say that it is “the ignorant and unstable” who “twist” these words “to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). The psalmists were convinced that God's Word enlightens our path and imparts understanding (Ps. 119:105, 130). Paul wrote his words plainly (2 Cor. 1:13) and called others to “think over” what he said, trusting that “the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Tim. 2:7). I will comment further on Scripture's clarity in “Shared Assumptions and the Bible's Clarity” in chapter 8.

## 3. Biblical interpretation requires that we respond appropriately.

The process of biblical interpretation is not complete once we have discovered what God has spoken. We must then move on to recognize that his Word is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). We must grasp not only the biblical author's intended meaning (which is possible for nonbelievers) but also his intended effect (possible only for believers, Rom. 8:7–8; 1 Cor. 2:14). We thus pray *IOUS*: “*Incline* [our] heart[s] to your testimonies” (Ps. 119:36); “*Open* [our] eyes that [we] may behold wondrous things out of your law” (119:18); “*Unite* [our] heart[s] to fear your name” (86:11); and “*Satisfy* us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (90:14).<sup>6</sup>

John Piper has helpfully captured the sixfold process of education:<sup>7</sup>

- *Observe* carefully;
- *Understand* rightly;
- *Evaluate* fairly;
- *Feel* appropriately;

5. The “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (1978) states: “*Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters. Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions. We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant” (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>).

6. John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 151.

7. John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 191–98. Piper actually applies the same process to both general revelation (God's world) and special revelation (God's Word).

- *Apply* wisely;
- *Express* articulately and boldly.

These are the necessary habits of the heart and mind needed for rightly grasping all truth in God’s Book.

#### **4. Biblical interpretation that culminates in application demands God-dependence.<sup>8</sup>**

The process of moving from study to practice is something that only God can enable, and he does so only through Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul writes, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” By “understand” here, Paul means “embrace, affirm, align with, delight in, apply.” Only in Christ is the veil of hardness toward God’s Word taken away (2 Cor. 3:14), but in Christ, the Word becomes near us, in our mouth and in our heart (Rom. 10:8). The biblical authors’ ultimate intent included a transformed life, the foundation of which is a personal encounter with the living God. This will not be experienced apart from the Lord’s help.

This book describes a process of Old Testament interpretation that is intended for the glory of God and the good of his people. Putting the Bible under a microscope (careful study) should always result in finding ourselves under its microscope, as Scripture changes us more into Christ’s likeness. We engage in exegesis and theology in order to encounter God. We approach humbly and dependently and never with manipulation or force. Biblical interpretation should create servants, not kings.

To this end, I invite you to pray the following words to the Lord:

You have said, O Lord, “But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” (Isa. 66:2). I want you to look toward me, Father, so overcome my pride, arrest my affections, and move me to revere you rightly. May I approach the Bible with a heart ready to conform, a heart awed by the fact that you have spoken in a way that I can understand, and a heart hungry to receive. Enable this book to guide me well, and help me to learn how to study, how to live out, and how to proclaim your Word with care, humility, and confidence. In the name of King Jesus, I pray. Amen.

8. For more on this theme, see John Piper, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

## Ten Reasons That the Old Testament Is Important for Christians



If Christians are part of the new covenant, why should we seek to understand and apply the Old Testament? While I will develop my response in chapter 12, I will give ten reasons here why the first word in the phrase *Old Testament* must not mean “unimportant or insignificant to Christians.”

### 1. The Old Testament was Jesus’ only Scripture and makes up three-fourths (75.55 percent) of our Bible.

If space says anything, the Old Testament matters to God, who gave us his Word in a Book. In fact, it was his first special revelation, which set a foundation for the fulfillment that we find in Jesus in the New Testament. The Old Testament was the only Bible of Jesus and the earliest church (e.g., Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:44; Acts 24:14; 2 Tim. 3:15), and it is a major part of our Scriptures.

### 2. The Old Testament substantially influences our understanding of key biblical teachings.

By the end of the Law (Genesis–Deuteronomy), the Bible has already described or alluded to all five of the major covenants that guide Scripture’s plot structure (Adamic-Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new). The rest of the Old Testament then builds on this portrait in detail. Accordingly, the Old Testament narrative builds anticipation for a better king, a blessed people, and a broader land. The Old Testament creates the problem and includes promises that the New Testament answers and fulfills. We need the Old Testament to fully understand God’s work in history.

Furthermore, some doctrines of Scripture are best understood only from the Old Testament. For example, is there a more worldview-shaping text than Genesis 1:1–2:3? Where else can we go other than the Old Testament to rightly understand sacred space and the temple? Is there a more explicit declaration of YHWH’s incomparability than Isaiah 40,<sup>9</sup> or a more succinct expression of substitutionary atonement than Isaiah 53? Where should we go to know what Paul means by “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)? All of these are principally derived from our understanding of the Old Testament.

9. YHWH, sometimes rendered with vowels as *Yahweh*, is the personal name by which the one true God identified himself and that the seers, sages, and songwriters employed in worship and preaching. YHWH is both the Creator of all things and Israel’s covenant Lord. Most modern translations represent the name through large and small capitals: LORD. The name is related to the verb of being and likely means “he causes to be”; that is, the Lord alone is the only uncaused being from whom, through whom, and to whom are all things.

Finally, the New Testament worldview and teachings are built on the framework supplied in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we find literally hundreds of Old Testament quotations, allusions, and echoes, none of which we will fully grasp apart from saturating ourselves in Jesus' Bible.

### **3. We meet the same God in both Testaments.**

Note how the book of Hebrews begins: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1–2). The very God who spoke through the Old Testament prophets speaks through Jesus!

Now, you may ask, "But isn't the Old Testament's God one of wrath and burden, whereas the God of the New Testament is about grace and freedom?" Let's consider some texts, first from the Old Testament and then from the New.

Perhaps the most foundational Old Testament statement of YHWH's character and action is Exodus 34:6: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." The Old Testament then reasserts this truth numerous times in order to clarify why it is that God continued to pardon and preserve a wayward people: "But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now" (2 Kings 13:23). "For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him" (2 Chron. 30:9). "Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God" (Neh. 9:30–31). Thus God's grace fills the Old Testament, just as it does the New.

Furthermore, in the New Testament, Jesus speaks about hell more than anyone else. He declares, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Similarly, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (18:6). Paul, quoting Deuteronomy 32:35, asserted, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Rom. 12:19). And the author of Hebrews said, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26–27). Thus God is just as wrathful in the New Testament as he is in the Old.

Certainly there are numerous expressions of YHWH's righteous anger in the Old Testament, just as there are massive manifestations of blood-bought mercy in the

New Testament. What is important is to recognize that *we meet the same God in the Old Testament as we do in the New*. In the whole Bible we meet a God who is faithful to his promises both to bless and to curse. He takes both sin and repentance seriously, and so should we!

#### **4. The Old Testament announces the very “good news/gospel” we enjoy.**

The gospel is this—that the reigning God saves and satisfies believing sinners through Christ Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. The gospel is this—that the reigning God saves and satisfies believing sinners through Christ Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Paul states that “the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached *the gospel* beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’” (Gal. 3:8). Abraham was already aware of the message of global salvation that we now enjoy. Similarly, in the opening of Romans, Paul stresses that the Lord “promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures” (i.e., the Old Testament Prophets) the very powerful “gospel of God . . . concerning his Son” that the apostle preached and in which we now rest (Rom. 1:1–3, 16). Key among these prophets was Isaiah, who anticipated the day when YHWH’s royal servant (the Messiah) and the many servants identified with him would herald comforting “good news” to the poor and broken—news that the saving God reigns through his anointed royal deliverer (Isa. 61:1; cf. 40:9–11; 52:7–10; Luke 4:16–21). Reading the Old Testament, therefore, is one of God’s given ways for us to better grasp and delight in the gospel (see also Heb. 4:2).

#### **5. Both the old and new covenants call for love, and we can learn much about love from the Old Testament.**

Within the old covenant, love was *what* the Lord called Israel to do (Deut. 6:5; 10:19); all the other commandments simply clarified *how* to do it. This was part of Jesus’ point when he stressed that all the Old Testament hangs on the call to love God and neighbor: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37–40). Christ emphasized, “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (7:12). Similarly, Paul noted, “The whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14; cf. Rom. 13:8, 10). As with old covenant Israel, the Lord calls Christians to lives characterized by love. But he now gives *all* members of the new covenant the ability to do what he commands. As Moses himself asserted, the very reason why God promised to circumcise hearts in the new covenant age was “so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 30:6). Moses also said that those enjoying this divine work in this future day would “obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today” (30:8). Moses’ old covenant law called for life-encompassing love, and Christians today, looking through the lens of Christ, can gain clarity from the Old Testament on the wide-ranging impact of love in all of life.

## **6. Jesus came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them.**

Far from setting aside the Old Testament, Jesus stressed that he had come to fulfill it, and in the process he highlighted the lasting relevance of the Old Testament's teaching for Christians: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17–19). In chapters 10 and 12 we'll further consider the significance of this text, but what is important to note here is that while the age of the old covenant has come to an end (Rom. 6:14–15; 1 Cor. 9:20–21; Gal. 5:18; cf. Luke 16:16), the Old Testament itself maintains lasting relevance for us in the way it displays the character of God (e.g., Rom. 7:12), points to the excellencies of Christ, and portrays for us the scope of love in all its facets (Matt. 22:37–40).

## **7. Jesus said that all the Old Testament points to him.**

After his first encounter with Jesus, Philip announced to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophet wrote" (John 1:45). Do you want to see and savor Jesus as much as you can? We find him in the Old Testament. As Jesus himself said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39; cf. 5:46–47). "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). After his resurrection, proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom (Acts 1:3), Jesus opened the minds of his disciples "to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:45–47). A proper "understanding" of the Old Testament will lead one to hear in it a message of the Messiah and the mission that his life would generate. Similarly, Paul taught "nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22–23). As an Old Testament preacher, Paul could declare, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). If you want to know Jesus more fully, read the Old Testament!

## **8. Failing to declare "the whole counsel of God" can put us in danger before the Lord.**

Paul was a herald of the good news of God's kingdom in Christ (e.g., Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:30–31), which he preached from the law of Moses and the Prophets—the Old Testament (28:23; cf. 26:22–23). In Acts 20:26–27 he testified to the Ephesian elders, "I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." The "*whole counsel of God*" refers to the entirety of God's purposes

in salvation history as revealed in Scripture. Had the apostle failed to make known the Lord's redemptive plan of blessing overcoming curse in the person of Jesus, he would have stood accountable before God for any future doctrinal or moral error that the Ephesian church carried out (cf. Ezek. 33:1–6; Acts 18:6). With the New Testament, Scripture is complete, and we now have in whole “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). This “faith,” however, is rightly understood only within the framework of “the whole counsel of God.” So may we be people who guard ourselves from bloodguilt by making much of the Old Testament in relation to Christ.

### **9. The New Testament authors stressed that God gave the Old Testament for Christians.**

Paul was convinced that the divinely inspired Old Testament authors wrote *for* New Testament believers, living on this side of the death and resurrection of Christ: “For whatever was written in former days was written *for our instruction*, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4; cf. 4:23–24). “Now these things happened to [the Israelites] as an example, but they were written down *for our instruction*, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor. 10:11).<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the apostle emphasized to Timothy, who had been raised on the Old Testament by his Jewish mother and grandmother (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5), that the “*sacred writings*” of his upbringing “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). People today can get saved from God's wrath and from the enslavement of sin by reading the Old Testament through the lens of Christ!

This is why Paul says in the very next verse, “All Scripture is . . . profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (3:16–17). New covenant believers can correct and reprove straying brothers and sisters *from the Old Testament* when read in relation to Christ, for in it we find many “profitable” things (Acts 20:20)—a “gospel of the grace of God” (20:24)—that call for “repentance toward God” and “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (20:21). Based on this fact, New Testament authors regularly used the Old Testament as the basis for Christian exhortation, assuming its relevance for Christians (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:8–12; Eph. 6:2–3; 1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Peter 1:14–16). Because we are now part of the new covenant and not the old, natural questions arise regarding how exactly the Christian should relate to specific old covenant instruction. We will address these matters in chapter 12. Nevertheless, the point stands that the Old Testament, while not written *to* Christians, was still written *for* us.

### **10. Paul commands church leaders to preach the Old Testament.**

The last of my ten reasons why the Old Testament still matters for Christians builds on the fact that Paul was referring to the Old Testament when he spoke of the “*sacred writings*” that are able to make a person “wise for salvation” and the “*Scripture*” that is

10. In chapter 12 under the section “God Gave the Old Testament to Instruct Christians,” we'll see that the Old Testament prophets themselves anticipated that this would be the case.

“breathed out by God and profitable” (2 Tim. 3:15–16). Knowing this colors our understanding of his following charge to Timothy: “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passion, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (4:2–4). For the apostle, Christian preachers such as Timothy needed to preach the Old Testament in order to guard the church from apostasy. While we now have the New Testament, we can, and indeed must, appropriate the Old Testament as Jesus and his apostles did for the good of God’s church.

### The Benefits of Hebrew Exegesis



You do not have to know Hebrew to profit much from this book. Indeed, every chapter contains solid information for guiding English-only Old Testament interpretation. Nevertheless, God gave us most of the Old Testament in Hebrew, and because of this a lot of material in the first half of the book (chaps. 2–7) clarifies the process of *Hebrew* exegesis. If you do not know Hebrew, I encourage you to keep reading this section, for I believe that it can move you to appreciate and pray for those who do. If you are not interested in hearing some of the benefits of Hebrew exegesis, feel free to jump ahead to the next section.

For most of my academic ministry career, the priest-scribe Ezra’s approach to Scripture has highly influenced my biblical interpretation. “The good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to *study* the Law of the LORD, and to *do* it and to *teach* his statutes and rules in Israel” (Ezra 7:9–10).



God’s Word: This was the order of Ezra’s resolve. Study shaped by careful observation, right understanding, and fair evaluation is to give rise to practice—feeling appropriately about the truth that is seen and then acting accordingly. Only after we have studied and practiced are we ready to teach. If we teach without having studied, we replace God’s words with our own; we become the authority instead of the Lord. If we teach without having practiced, we are nothing more than hypocrites. I want to consider why we need men and women in every generation who can approach the Old Testament using biblical Hebrew, and I want to consider the answer in light of Ezra’s resolve.<sup>11</sup>

11. For more pastoral reflection on Ezra 7:10, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “A Life Centered on Torah (Ezra 7:10),” in *Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar*, by Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 249–50.



While every believer must seek to know God, not everyone needs to know the biblical languages. Indeed, the Lord has graciously made his Word translatable so that those “from every tribe and language and people and nation” may hear of and believe in the Savior (Rev. 5:9; cf. Neh. 8:7–8; Acts 2:6). With this, grasping the fundamentals of Hebrew and Greek neither ensures correct interpretation of Scripture nor removes all interpretive challenges. It does not automatically make one a good exegete of texts or an articulate, winsome proclaimer of God’s truth. Linguistic skill also does not necessarily result in deeper levels of holiness or in greater knowledge of God. Without question, *the most important skill for interpreting Scripture* is to read, read, and read the biblical text carefully and God-dependently and to consider what it says about God’s character, actions, and purposes and how it points to Christ.

Nevertheless, we need some in the church in every generation who can skillfully use the biblical languages. Why? I have four reasons.<sup>12</sup> As I give an overview of these, if you don’t know Hebrew (yet), keep in mind what I say in the previous paragraph and let any inkling of discouragement turn into gratefulness to God for raising up some who can study, practice, and teach from this framework.

### **1. The biblical languages give us direct access to God’s written Word.**

Original-language exegesis exalts Jesus by affirming God’s decision to give us his Word in a Book, written first in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. In his wisdom and for the benefit of every generation of humankind, God chose to preserve and guard in a Book his authoritative, clear, necessary, and sufficient Word. Jesus highlights the significance of this fact when he declares that he prophetically fulfills all Old Testament hopes: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:17–18). The very details of the biblical text (every iota and every dot) bear lasting significance and point to the person and work of Christ. So we align ourselves with God’s wisdom and participate in his passion to exalt his Son when we take the biblical languages seriously in the study of his Book. This is the first reason why we do *Hebrew* exegesis.

### **2. The biblical languages help us study God’s Word.**

Using Hebrew and Greek can give us greater certainty that we have grasped the meaning of God’s Book. Knowing the biblical languages can also help us observe more accurately, understand more clearly, evaluate more fairly, and interpret more confidently the inspired details of the biblical text. Without Hebrew and Greek, ministers are:

- Required to trust someone else’s translation (many of which are excellent, but which are translations/interpretations nonetheless);

12. What follows is a condensed version of the main points in Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Profit of Employing the Biblical Languages: Scriptural and Historical Reflections,” *Themelios* 37, 1 (2012): 32–50.

- Left without help when translations differ;
- Forced to rely heavily on what others say in commentaries and other tools without accurate comprehension or fair evaluation; and
- Compelled to miss numerous discourse features that are not easily conveyed through translation.

Knowing the languages neither makes an interpreter always right nor sets all interpretive challenges aside. Nevertheless, by using the biblical languages we remove hindrances to understanding and take away many occasions for mistakes. Furthermore, knowing Hebrew and Greek enables interpreters to more accurately track an author's flow of thought through which the Bible's message is revealed.

### **3. The biblical languages help us practice God's Word.**

Employing Hebrew and Greek can assist in developing Christian maturity that validates our witness in the world. Scripture is clear that a true encounter with God's Word will alter the way we live, shaping servants instead of kings and nurturing Christ-exalting humility rather than pride. Sadly, practicing the Word is too often forgotten, thus hindering the spread of the gospel in the world.

Now, because our knowing the Lord and living for him develops only in the context of the Word and because Bible study is best done through the original languages, Hebrew and Greek can serve as God's instruments to develop holiness, which enhances the church's mission. Original-language exegesis can help clarify what feelings the Lord wants us to have and what actions he wants us to take. And along with opening fresh doors of discovery into the biblical text, the arduous task of learning, keeping, and using the languages itself provides many opportunities for growth in character, discipline, boldness, and joy. Hypocrisy hinders kingdom expansion, but biblically grounded study accompanied by a virtuous life substantiates the gospel and promotes mission, leading to worship.

### **4. The biblical languages help us teach God's Word.**

Original-language exegesis fuels a fresh and bold expression and defense of the truth in preaching and teaching. Saturated study of Scripture through Hebrew and Greek provides a sustained opportunity for personal discovery, freshness, and insight, all of which can enhance our teaching. Moreover, the languages provide a powerful means for judging and defending biblical truth. The church needs earnest contenders for the faith, those who are "able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). The biblical languages sharpen our teaching and preaching to make it as pointed, accurate, and penetrating as possible.

In summary, for the Christian minister who is charged to proclaim God's truth with accuracy and to preserve the gospel's purity with integrity, the biblical languages help in one's study, practice, and teaching of the Word. Properly using the languages opens doors of biblical discovery that would otherwise remain locked and provides

interpreters with accountability that they would otherwise not have. Ministers who know Hebrew and Greek not only can feed themselves but will also be able to gain a level of biblical discernment that will allow them to respond in an informed way to new translations, new theological perspectives, and other changing trends in church and culture.

In light of the above, I offer the following action steps to readers of all vocational callings:

- ***Seminary professors and administrators.*** Fight to make exegeting the Word in the original languages the core of every curriculum that is designed to train vocational ministers of God's Book.
- ***Church shepherds and shepherds-in-training.*** Seek to become God-dependent, rigorous thinkers who study, practice, and teach the Word—in that order!
- ***Other congregational leaders.*** Give your ministers who are called to preach and teach time to study, and help your congregations see this as a priority.
- ***Young-adult leaders and college professors.*** Encourage those sensing a call to vocational ministry of God's Word to become thoroughly equipped for the task.
- ***Everyone.*** Seek as much as possible to be a first-handers when interpreting God's Word, guard yourself from false teaching, hold your leaders accountable, and pray to our glorious God for the preservation of the gospel, for our leaders, and for the churches and schools training them.

Now let's discover how to understand and apply the Old Testament.

### Overview of the Interpretive Process: TOCMA



This book employs a twelve-step process to guide the move from exegesis to theology and from personal study to practice and then instruction. While this guidebook considers each stage independently, the interpretive process is more like a spiral by which we continually revisit various interpretive stopping points in our up-road climb to biblical faithfulness.

For the sake of easy recollection, I have tagged the whole process *TOCMA*, which stands for *Text, Observation, Context, Meaning, Application*. Each of the twelve stages falls within one of these overarching categories.

**Part 1: TEXT—“What is the makeup of the passage?”**

1. **Genre:** Determine the literary form, subject matter, and function of the passage, compare it to similar genres, and consider the implications for interpretation.
2. **Literary units and text hierarchy:** Determine the limits and basic structure of the passage.
3. **Text criticism:** Establish the passage’s original wording.
4. **Translation:** Translate the text and compare other translations.

**Part 2: OBSERVATION—“How is the passage communicated?”**

5. **Clause and text grammar:** Assess the makeup and relationship of words, phrases, clauses, and larger text units.
6. **Argument-tracing:** Finish tracing the literary argument and create a message-driven outline that is tied to the passage’s main point.
7. **Word and concept studies:** Clarify the meaning of key words, phrases, and concepts.

**Part 3: CONTEXT—“Where does the passage fit?”**

8. **Historical context:** Understand the historical situation from which the author composed the text and identify any historical details that the author mentions or assumes.
9. **Literary context:** Comprehend the role that the passage plays in the whole book.

**Part 4: MEANING—“What does the passage mean?”**

10. **Biblical theology:** Consider how your passage connects to the Bible’s overall flow and message and points to Christ.
11. **Systematic theology:** Discern how your passage theologically coheres with the whole Bible, assessing key doctrines especially in direct relation to the gospel.

**Part 5: APPLICATION—“Why does the passage matter?”**

12. **Practical theology:** Apply the text to yourself, the church, and the world, stressing the centrality of Christ and the hope of the gospel.

Come with me now on a journey of discovery and skill development. Chapters 1–9 focus especially on the process of exegesis, whereas chapters 10–12 address theology. God-honoring worship is both the fuel and the goal of every stage of biblical interpretation. So may your study result in practice and overflow in teaching that is filled with praise and proclamation—all for the glory of Christ and the good of his church among the nations.

## Key Words and Concepts

Biblical interpretation

Exegesis

Theology

Special revelation

Infallible and inerrant

IOUS

Whole counsel of God

Study → do → teach!

TOCMA

## Questions for Further Reflection

1. Describe the connection between exegesis and theology. What is the danger of doing theology apart from exegesis or exegesis apart from theology?
2. What are DeRouchie's four presuppositions that guide his study of the Bible?
3. What is the risk if you do not hold each of these presuppositions?
4. What is the ultimate goal of biblical interpretation?
5. Which of the ten reasons why the Old Testament is important for Christians most moved your soul? Which one most compels you to study the Old Testament?
6. In what ways does knowing Hebrew benefit and not benefit the process of biblical exegesis?

## Resources for Further Study<sup>13</sup>

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Carson, D. A. "Approaching the Bible." In *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* edited by D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, 1–19. 4th ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

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13. In each chapter, I have included "Resources for Further Study" that I believe will serve the student of Scripture in various ways. Not all the books listed are unified in their theological perspectives or interpretive approaches, so the reader needs to carefully evaluate all claims up against the Bible, which supplies the highest authority for the Christian. I have preceded with a star those resources that I believe to be the most important or best. A plain black star (★) marks resources that are intended for all readers, whereas a white star within a black circle (⊛) highlights those that are designed for more advanced readers and that may also contain Hebrew. I thank my friend and colleague Andy Naselli for his help in shaping these bibliographies.

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