

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Christian Story

Topic: OT Survey - Pentateuch

Fall 2026

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and his Word for the sake of living rightly before God in his world. Our theme for this fall is Christian Story. This session is an introduction to the Pentateuch.

An Introduction to the Pentateuch

The first five books of the Bible are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Though they are individual books, each with their own emphases, the OT and NT both speak of them as a single literary unit.

As a group, these five books go by several different names. The Hebrew word for "instruction" or "law" is **Torah**. While this word is used throughout the OT to refer to particular teachings, Torah has also long been used by Jews as shorthand for the first five books of the title. In English Bible translations of the word Torah, these books are often referred to as **The Law**. Since the second century AD, many Christians have called these books the **Pentateuch**, from the Latin for "five books." Various OT writers, as well as Jesus (Mark 12:26), refer to these books collectively as the **Book of Moses**.

Strictly speaking, the Pentateuch does not claim a particular author. However, traditionally both Jews and Christians argue that Moses authored the Pentateuch. The reason is because the rest of the OT, as well as the New Testament, each state this to be the case. Critical scholars believe the Pentateuch was written over a period of about 1000 years, but the whole thing was attributed to Moses by later generations. While critical scholars make many spurious claims, they do rightly note that at least some of the Pentateuch was clearly written after Moses's death (e.g. Deut. 34) or it seems unlikely Moses wrote it (e.g. Num. 12:3).

Conservative scholars believe that Moses is the **essential author** or **substantial author** of the Pentateuch and wrote the earliest version of the five books. However, later editors added at least some material to tie everything

- God will one day conquer sin completely through a descendent of the first humans
- God establishes a covenant with Noah that includes all creation
- God establishes a covenant with Abraham that includes his descendants and leads to blessing for all nations

The name *Exodus* comes from the Hebrew word for “going out” or “departure” (Exod. 19:1). Moses is the primary author. Exodus can be divided into three major sections. Exodus 1–18 focuses upon the oppression of the Israelites and their deliverance from Egypt through the leadership of Moses. Exodus 19–24 focuses upon the beginning of Israel’s wilderness wanderings and God’s covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. Exodus 25–40 focuses upon the construction of the Tabernacle, where God promises to be present with his chosen people. Exodus introduces Moses, one of the most important figures in redemptive history.

- There is only one God and he will defeat all his would-be rivals
- God delivers his people from bondage
- God will lead his people into a promised land of perpetual flourishing
- God establishes a covenant with Israel that binds them to him as his chosen nation marked by his Torah
- God's Torah is a gracious gift that assumes a covenant relationship with his people
- Disobedience to God's Torah leads to exile
- God is uniquely present with his people through the Tabernacle

The name *Leviticus* comes from Levi, the tribe identified with the priests. Moses is the primary author. Leviticus can be divided into two main sections. Leviticus 1–16 focuses upon the sacrificial system and proper worship of God. Leviticus 17–27 focuses upon the God’s Torah and the call to holiness. In many respects, Leviticus can be interpreted as the sequel to Exodus. Now that the Tabernacle is complete, Moses is teaching Israel how they are to live before the presence of God.

Key themes:

- God is holy and he calls his people to be holy
- God's Torah provides divine boundaries for holiness and divine guidance for authentic human flourishing
- The role of the sacrificial system in pointing to Israel's need to be purified from sin
- The role of atonement in turning away God's just wrath against Israel's sin

Numbers

The name *Numbers* is a reference to the census of Israel taken in Numbers 1–4 and 26. Moses is the primary author. Numbers can be divided into three main sections. Numbers 1–10 take place at Sinai and focus upon the preparation for the journey into the wilderness. Numbers 11–21 take place in the wilderness and focus upon Israel's exile and struggles to remain faithful to God. Numbers 22–36 take place in the Plains of Moab and focus upon Israel's conquest of pagan peoples and preparation to enter the land of promise.

Key themes:

- God's intention to fulfill his land promise to Abraham and Moses
- God's intention to multiply his people as he promised to Abraham and Moses
- God's presence with his people, even when they sin
- God's provision for the needs of his people
- God's conquest of pagan nations that worship idols instead of the Creator
- God's selection of Joshua to take Moses's place as Israel's leader

Deuteronomy

The name *Deuteronomy* means "second law," since Moses is reminding God's people of God's Torah before they enter into the land God promised to Israel. Moses is the primary author. Deuteronomy can be divided into four main sections. Moses delivers his first sermon in Deuteronomy 1–4, focusing upon recounting God's past mighty deeds and calling Israel to loyalty to him alone. Moses delivers his second sermon in Deuteronomy 4–28, reiterating the role of God's Torah among his people. Moses delivers his third sermon in Deuteronomy 29–30,

focuses on God's recent mighty deeds and calling Israel to faithful obedience to *Torah*. The final section in Deuteronomy 31–34 covers Moses's final instructions to Israel, two psalms recounting God's faithfulness, and Moses's death and burial.

Key themes:

- God's election of Israel as his chosen people
- The importance of proper worship of God
- God's faithfulness to Israel in keeping his covenant with Abraham
- God's conquest of Israel's pagan enemies because of their idolatry
- Israel's need to keep God's covenant with them at Sinai
- The blessings of *Torah* and the consequences of disobedience
- The need for Israel to remain faithful once Moses is dead

Recommended Resources

Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences: A Small Introduction to a Vast Topic* (InterVarsity, 2019).

Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Zondervan, 2000).

Eugene H. Merrill, Mark Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (B&H Academic, 2011).

Kevin Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (IVP Academic, 2019).

Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* (IVP Academic, 2015).