

SERMON NOTES – 07/12/26

‘(re)DISCOVERING SCRIPTURE – The Old Testament’

Joshua 1:7-9

Big Idea

Learning how the Old Testament came to be should strengthen—not weaken—our confidence in Scripture. God worked through generations of faithful people to preserve, shape, and pass on his Word.

The Bible Is a Library

- The Bible is not a single book but a library of books.
- The Old Testament was written by many authors over centuries in a variety of historical settings.
- Understanding how these books came together helps us appreciate the remarkable story behind Scripture.

The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh)

- The Jewish Scriptures contain the same books as the Protestant Old Testament, but they are arranged differently.
- The Tanakh is divided into three sections:
 - **Torah (Law)**
 - **Nevi'im (Prophets)**
 - **Ketuvim (Writings)**
- These divisions reflect both the importance of the books within Judaism and the order in which they were gradually recognized as Scripture.

The Septuagint

- Around the third century BC, Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek for Jews living throughout the Greek-speaking world.
- This Greek translation became known as the **Septuagint (LXX)**.
- The Septuagint included several additional Jewish writings that were accepted differently by various Christian traditions.
- This explains why Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Old Testaments contain different numbers of books.

What Is the Canon?

- The word *canon* means “rule” or “measuring stick.”
- The biblical canon refers to the books recognized as authoritative Scripture.

- The canon developed gradually as the faith community recognized which writings faithfully reflected God's revelation.
- Scripture was recognized over time rather than selected by a single council or individual.

The Importance of the Exile

- The Babylonian Exile became one of the defining events in Israel's history.
- It prompted God's people to preserve, collect, edit, and reflect upon their sacred traditions.
- Much of the Old Testament reached its final form during or after this period as Israel sought to understand God's faithfulness in the midst of suffering.

The Torah and Multiple Voices

- The first five books of the Bible were likely compiled from several ancient traditions woven together.
- Biblical scholars often refer to these sources as J, E, P, and D.
- These traditions emphasize different aspects of God's character, worship, covenant, and justice.
- Rather than competing with one another, these perspectives enrich our understanding of God's relationship with humanity.

Reading Scripture Faithfully

- The presence of different voices and perspectives in Scripture does not diminish its authority.
- Instead, it reveals God's willingness to speak through real people, real history, and diverse experiences.
- The Bible invites us to wrestle with its message, allowing its truths to shape our lives.

Takeaway

Joshua reminded Israel to meditate on God's Word day and night (Joshua 1:8). Understanding how the Bible came to us is valuable—but only if it leads us to read it, study it, and faithfully live it.

Sources Cited

Rob Bell, What is the Bible: How an ancient library of poems, letters, and stories can transform the way you think and feel about everything.

Adam Hamilton, Making Sense of the Bible