

The background of the top half of the cover is a photograph of an ancient stone building. It features a series of large, rounded arches supported by thick, cylindrical columns. The stone is a warm, yellowish-brown color, showing signs of age and weathering. The perspective is from within the structure, looking down a row of arches towards a bright, open area in the distance.

STUDENT'S GUIDE

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

AN OVERVIEW OF GENESIS
THROUGH MALACHI
AS TAUGHT BY



DR. DOUGLAS STUART

Old Testament Survey

as taught by
Dr. Douglas Stuart



BiblicalTraining.org
Because Spiritual Growth Matters

Old Testament Survey

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

BiblicalTraining.org
523 NE Everett St
Camas WA 98607

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<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/old-testament-survey/douglas-stuart>

Overview

Title: Old Testament Survey

Speaker: Dr. Douglas Stuart, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Did you know that the Old Testament contains more than 2/3 of the text of the Bible? Did you realize that the Old Testament timeline covers thousands of years of history and tells us the stories of people whose lives still affect world events today? Are you familiar with the Old Testament prophets that describe in detail the characteristics of the Messiah and the events that happen when he comes, hundreds of years before they take place? Have you ever read the Old Testament books of poetry and wisdom literature that contain inspirational and instructional passages that we still use today to inspire, comfort and inform our lives during life events, and are ubiquitous in both classic and contemporary literary works?

In Dr. Stuart's Old Testament Survey class, he guides you through each of the Old Testament books by giving you the historical background, major themes and insight into the stories, characters and teaching of the book. In the historical books, you will become familiar with Old Testament Names like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph and David. In the Old Testament prophets, Dr. Stuart will introduce you to the lives and messages of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and others. When you study the Old Testament books of wisdom literature, Dr. Stuart will give you insights into the teachings, structure and creativity in Proverbs, Psalms and other books in the Writings.

From the description of Creation in Genesis, to the last book of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, the Old Testament contains stories and teachings that can inform, inspire and transform your life. Dr. Stuart's years of training and his skill in communicating, provides you with this opportunity to study and learn from one of the best. Now it's up to you!

1.

II. GOALS

1. Understanding the main themes of each book of the Old Testament
2. Gain a feel for the chronological sweep of the Old Testament
3. Familiarity with the 130 questions and answers discussed throughout the course

III. ABILITY TO EMPLOY WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING FOR THE BENEFIT OF PEOPLE.

IV. REQUIREMENTS

1. 30 sessions
2. 2 hours per week (lesson and discussion)
3. Prerequisites
4. None
5. Format
6. Audio

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World class. All Bible classes are taught by world-class professors from major seminaries.

Holistic. We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application.

Configurable. Ministries can use BT lectures as well as their own to design their educational program.

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Broadly evangelical. Our materials are broadly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith, and are not tied to any one church, denomination or tradition.

Partners. We provide the content and delivery mechanisms, and our partner organizations provide the community and mentoring.

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Your Speaker

In 1964 Professor Stuart received the Bachelor of Arts magna cum laude from Harvard College. He spent two years in graduate study at Yale Divinity School, and then returned to Harvard University where he was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1971. The subject of his thesis was Old Testament and early Semitic poetry.

Professor Stuart is a scholar of the Old Testament, Assyrian and Babylonian languages and literature, and the cultures of the ancient Near East. He controls the use of 14 different languages, both ancient and modern. At Gordon-Conwell his courses include areas such as biblical and ancient oriental languages, exegesis and interpretation; Old Testament survey; exegesis of legal texts; and the historical, prophetic and poetical books. He also has authored articles in major journals, anthologies and magazines. His books have been translated into over thirty different languages.

Professor Stuart is active in several organizations and has served as co-chair of the Old Testament Colloquium for the Boston Theological Institute, a consortium of Boston's seminary and university Biblical professors. He is also past president of the Boston Orthomolecular Society, a trustee emeritus of the Massachusetts Bible Society and a past director of several other organizations.

In addition to pastoring several churches in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, Professor Stuart has preached and taught widely. He was most recently the senior pastor of Linebrook Church in Ipswich, Massachusetts. He has made many short-term mission trips, and has ministered often to Gypsies in Eastern Europe. Prof. Stuart is frequently asked to lecture in colleges and universities and has appeared as a guest on radio and television talk shows and the national series *Mysteries of the Bible* as well as *Christianity: The First Thousand Years*.

He and his wife, Gayle, have eight grown children: Joanna, Eliza, Eden, Milliesha, Hannah, Maria, Delia, and Jonathan. They reside in Bradford, Massachusetts and have two tree farms in New Hampshire.

I. EDUCATION

PhD, Harvard University

Postgraduate study, Yale Divinity School

BA, Harvard University

Student's Guide

We are pleased that you have chosen to use materials from BiblicalTraining.org. We trust that you will find them to be of the highest quality and truly helpful in your own spiritual growth and that of your church. Please read through the following guidelines; they will help you make the best use of this guide.

I. WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Listen or watch the lesson. The lesson for each chapter is designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts for an hour. This is a crucial step. If the meeting time with your fellow students is going to be productive and encouraging, everyone in the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

Take notes. This guide has the outline for each lesson with a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide at some point before your meeting.

Questions. Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data based, confirming that you understand the information. Other questions are more reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement is to think through your answers before your meeting and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

Meeting. Meet together with your group.

II. MEETING TOGETHER

While some people may have to study on their own, we strongly recommend finding a group with which you can study.

A group provides encouragement to finish the class.

Interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs.

Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so also they will need your help.

Mentor's Guide

If you are leading the group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions that should help you.

Your role is to facilitate. This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in the other people.

Preparation. Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and think carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going. A great question is, "What is the Lord teaching you this week?"

Creativity. What works to help one person understand may not help another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

Correct error. This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting down their participation. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and what was said was correct. So look for gracious ways to suggest that perhaps the person's comment was incorrect.

Focus. Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

Lead the discussion. People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

Silence. Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, then ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started, and then step out of the way.

Discipleship. Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the people in the group. Meet with them for coffee. Share some life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in relationship.

Different Perspectives. People process information and express themselves in different ways based on their background, previous experience, culture, religion and other factors. Encourage an atmosphere that allows people to share honestly and respectfully.

Privacy. All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

Goal. The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

Relationships. Share everyone's name, email and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack or WhatsApp.

Finish well. Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

Prayer. Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so all of you can pray over what you have learned and with what you have been challenged. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

1

Introduction to Old Testament Survey

LESSON OVERVIEW

The purpose of this overview of the Old Testament is to focus on the content of each of the Old Testament books, the historical events that give context to the books, and specific questions that help draw out the overarching principles contained in the Old Testament. There is also an emphasis on identifying ways to use this material that can help people in their daily lives.

I. THE STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

Read the Bible. You need to read scripture to gain a sense of its content. Many introductory questions typical of historical criticism will not be covered per se. Rather we will focus on the content of each book of the Old Testament.

A. Content of each book

B. Chronological sweep of Old Testament history

C. Particular answers to particular questions.

II. MINISTRY ISSUES

Most of you will be going into ministry, specifically the ministry of the word. The bible is a key tool in ministering to people. So, from time to time in the course, suggestions will be made as to how biblical texts can be used to minister to people.

III. BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE); Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia; Anchor Bible Dictionary; New Bible Dictionary.

QUESTIONS

1. Write some personal thoughts regarding what you hope to learn from the course.
2. How do you hope this course will add value to your own personal and spiritual formation?

2

Origins: Genesis

LESSON OVERVIEW

Genesis narrates ten stories that describe origins or beginnings. These include the origin of the “heavens and earth,” and the origin of specific families that are significant in God’s dealings with Israel and the nations.

I. ORIENTING DATA FOR GENESIS

A. Content: Origins of the world, humanity and Israel

B. Human author: Moses, using records from before his time

Book recommendation: *Rethinking Genesis* by Duane Garrett

C. Date of composition: 1400 BC or 1220 BC, depending on chronology

D. Historical coverage: Creation through the death of Jacob's son, Joseph, in Egypt

E. Emphasis

1. God's nature and purposes

2. The reasons why humans exist

3. The first divine covenants

4. The nature of sin

5. The perpetual corruption of human society

6. God's intolerance of sin

7. God's choice of a people

8. God's plan of redemption

9. God works through sinful people

II. OUTLINE OF GENESIS (ORIGIN STORIES)

A. 1:1-2:3 – Prologue

B. 2:4-4:26 – Origin stories of “the heavens and the earth”

C. 5:1-6:8 – Origin stories of the family of Adam

D. 6:9-9:29 – Origin stories of Noah

E. 10:1-11:9 – Origin stories of Shem, Ham, and Japheth

F. 11:10-26 – Origin stories of Shem

G. 11:27-25:11 – Origin stories of Terah

H. 25:12-18 – Origin stories of Ishmael

I. 25:19-35:29 – Origin stories of Isaac

J. 36:1-37:1 – Origin stories of Esau

K. 37:2-50:26 – Origin stories of Jacob

III. THE MOSAIC INTENTION OF GENESIS

What Moses has done is shown that God created the world, and he created humanity, and then he created a people for himself—Israel. Moses narrates this drama via ten individual story blocks that narrate how Israel ended up in Egypt waiting to become God’s special people. That is the way the book of Genesis operates.

IV. GENESIS 1: CREATION STORY STRUCTURE

The Hebrew creation story is stylized like other Ancient Near Eastern creation stories. And in this story, Moses is trying to say “God created everything, and broadly speaking, here’s what he did, and on the seventh day He rested.” This creation account is not scientific, but rather highly stylized prose-poetry which emphasizes that what God created was good. The account also emphasizes the Sabbath is a benefit for humankind. If God needs a Sabbath rest, then human beings made in his image also need a Sabbath rest.

A. Day 1 (1:1-5) corresponds to Day 4 (1:14-19)

B. Day 2 (1:6-8) corresponds to Day 5 (1:20-23)

C. Day 3 (1:9-13) corresponds to Day 6 (1:24-31)

D. Day 7: God rests and sanctifies the day of rest.

V. MAN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

A. Three options:

1. We look like God physically.

2. We are rational beings like God.

3. We represent God by doing his will.

B. Tselem – Idol

The word in Hebrew – *tselem* – is a standard word for idol. So the phrase “God created man in his image” could also be translated as “God created man as his idol.” In the ancient world people understood the concept of representation. The world quickly became pagan after creation. People began thinking there were lots of gods and goddesses so they made images of these gods. By Moses day, the concept of idol was a commonplace. So, in Moses day, a *tselem* is a thing you use to represent a god so that you can have contact with that god. But for Moses, human beings are his representatives on earth. We stand in his place to represent God on earth and to rule over creation. It’s a job assignment from God. Every human being is supposed to be a representative of God on earth.

VI. THE FALL

A. How Satan works

The narrative portrays the serpent undermining God's goodness and enticing humans to attain god-like knowledge.

B. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The knowledge of Good and Evil is a merism. A merism is an expression of totality by the mention of opposites. So the knowledge of good and evil is a way of saying in Hebrew idiom "the knowledge of everything." God is trying to protect humans from too much knowledge—so much knowledge that it could destroy humanity. Human beings have enormous capacity for finding incredibly ingenious ways to do evil, and God wanted to protect humans from such capacities.

C. Consequences of the Fall

We live with mortality. It's a reality that we must face. If we want to keep living there has to be a rescuer.

QUESTIONS

1. If all human beings are made in the image of God, what does that say about their inherent worth? How should that effect the way you treat others? Especially people who are very different than you?
2. According to the lecture, why is Israel significant? Why is it important for our personal faith to recognize the importance of Israel?
3. If someone asked you whether the bible describes how old the earth is, how might you respond? What level of intellectual certainty would you be able to respond with?

3

Origins: Themes in Genesis

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson covers selected passages in Genesis and their various potential interpretations. These passages include Genesis 2 regarding creation of women and their roles, Genesis 6 concerning the "Sons of God," and Genesis 9 relating to the "curse of Ham." Other themes are the story of Abraham, and God as a punisher of evil.

I. GENESIS 2:18

A. "Suitable"?

This does not seem like a good translation of the Hebrew idiom.

B. The Hebrew word for “suitable” is – Ezer.

The word *ezer* connotes a source of help that corresponds to the male.

C. Mirror image

The word can mean the “mirror Image,” “just the same as” or “exactly corresponding to” the man. This seems to support women leading with men as a pair on an equal basis.

D. Eve was created from Adam

It is all correspondence, equality language.

II. GENESIS 6:1-3

A. "Sons of God" = Angels

What does that mean? It refers to Angels. So it seems to be saying that angels saw human women and married them.

B. Influence of Satan

This could be demonic possession. It's a short vignette of how Satan is corrupting human society.

C. Early Sampling of God's Final Judgment

The flood story is an early sampling of God's Final Judgment. It shows God's intolerance for evil.

III. GENESIS 9:24

A. "Curse of Ham"?

What does this mean? This is not referencing modern racial discriminatory teachings.

B. "Uncovered his nakedness" = Have sex with

Likely means that Shem did something incestuous with Noah.

C. Curse on Canaan.

There is a denigration of the Canaanites.

IV. STRUCTURE OF GENESIS

A. History of the world to 2000 B.C. – Chapters 1-11

B. Story of Abraham – Chapters 12-24

There are a few key moments regarding creation noted in Genesis 1-11. Then Moses turns to focus on the life of Abraham and the story of God's people, Israel. This is the main storyline of genesis—the people of Abraham. There's a plan to bless the whole world through Abraham and Moses wants to focus on that even more than the key moments of creation.

V. GENESIS 15

A. "Sin of the Amorites"

B. Amorite = Canaanite.

They are synonyms. Canaanite culture was evil, inhumane, and idolatrous.

C. God as a punisher of evil.

God is promising that Abraham will bring his people into the land, but their sin is not yet filled up. This portrays

QUESTIONS

1. Which interpretation of these difficult passages offered by Dr. Stuart most surprised you? Why? How would you explain these difficult passages to a new believer?

3. According to the lecture, why will God not tolerate evil in his creation? How does this make you feel that God is committed to bringing goodness and justice into the world?

4

Origins: Exodus and the Law

LESSON OVERVIEW

The three major themes in Exodus are Israel's deliverance from Egypt, establishment of the Covenant and the Tabernacle. Other themes are how name repetition in a sentence is significant throughout Scripture, and how humility in the Jewish culture affects the actions and responses of many biblical characters. Exodus contains both apodictic and casuistic laws. There are also paradigmatic laws which are designed to give broad guidance for specific situations that arise. The first part of Exodus is mostly stories, and the second part is mostly a record of the laws which are the basis for how they interact with God and other people.

I. EXODUS

A. Orienting data for Exodus

1. Content in Exodus—three major plots.

a) Israel's deliverance from Egypt

b) The establishment of the covenant with Israel

c) The Tabernacle

2. Human author: Moses

3. Date of composition: 1400 or 1220 BC

4. Historical coverage:

The book of Exodus recounts events from the death of Joseph (ca. 1500 BC) to the encampment of the Israelites at Mount Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula (either 1440 BC or 1260 BC). The people of Israel remain at Mt. Sinai from Exodus 19-Numbers 2. This one location—Mt. Sinai—is where the Israelites remained encamped for 13 months. They remain there as they learn, day by day, who they are as God's people. At Mt. Sinai, Moses receives covenant teaching and comes down to deliver it to the priests and the people.

5. Emphases in Exodus

- a) The development of Egyptian oppression
- b) God's miraculous deliverance of his people from Egypt via Moses
- c) The reception of the covenant at Mount Sinai, including the Ten Commandments and the "Book of Worship"
- d) The establishment of proper worship, including the priesthood and a central sanctuary

- e) The early tendency of the people to rebel against the covenant

B. Name repetition examples

An interesting feature that recurs in other parts of scripture is the naming of an individual two times. God speaks the name of an individual twice. In Semitic culture, when you speak a persons' name twice it is an indication of endearment.

1. Examples

a) Exodus 3:4

"Moses, Moses" – God is speaking to Moses as a friend.

b) 1 Samuel 3:4, 10

"Samuel, Samuel"

c) 2 Samuel 18:33; 19:4

"Absalom, Absalom"

d) Matthew 27:46

"Eloi, Eloi"

e) Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14

"Saul, Saul"

f) Matthew 7:21, 22

"Lord, Lord"

g) Luke 6:46

"Lord, Lord"

C. Semitic humility

There are many stories in scripture of people being called prophetically by God. It is common in Semitic culture to give a ritual protest. To say something like "Not me God." And then for God to reassure them by affirming "Yes, I do want you." It is a common style in Semitic culture to be properly modest by not immediately accepting the call of God.

1. Abraham

2. Moses

3. Saul

4. David

5. Solomon

6. Isaiah

7. Jeremiah

8. Paul

II. THE LAW

A. TWO TYPES OF LAW

1. Apodictic Law

Apodictic law is an unconditional demand like those demands found in the Ten commandments. Many laws are found in the apodictic form. These are general universal commands, statements, and prohibitions. They are applicable to everyone at all times. Another example of apodictic law is "Love your neighbor."

2. Casuistic Law

Casuistic law is a conditional example where an instance of something is stated. They do not apply to everyone at all times, but apply only when the conditions stated in the law are met. For example, "If you knock out the tooth of a servant, then that servant goes free." Or "If an ox gores another ox, here is how you handle it." They are very specific example situations followed by guidelines for how to act. They are not universal. These laws are paradigmatic. A paradigm is a sample that gives guidance so that you can reason by extrapolation.

3. Laws of the Pentateuch

Both kinds of laws are found among the laws that we call the laws of the Pentateuch starting with Exodus 20 and going nearly all the way through the end of Deuteronomy

B. ISRAELITE JUDGES

1. Exodus 18

Describes how Moses began delegating his judicial caseload to other leaders who could judge cases that were being brought to him. Until this time,

2. Moses = Supreme court

Moses was serving as the supreme court to all of Israel.

3. Other judges = lower court

Jethro wisely advised him to set up lower courts and other judges to handle the caseload and to ensure justice was a part of Israel's emerging national life.

C. PARADIGMATIC LAWS

1. Extrapolation from particular to general

2. Examples

a) Exodus 21:33

This law is paradigmatic. It gives an example of what happens in a particular instance “a donkey falling into a pit.” But it provides a paradigm for extrapolating to other cases. If for example “a goat fell into the pit” the judge of the village would be equipped with the general guidelines to arbitrate in that case.

b) Exodus 22:18

While the apodictic law in this passage condemns sorcery outright it can also be extrapolated to condemn all forms of deceptive idolatrous practices. The passage is not simply condemning sorceresses. It is doing that, yes, but the passage is also paradigmatic and can be used to condemn all practices that entice God's people to put their trust in deceptive magical arts. God hates idols because he is a jealous loving God who wants people to be saved, not deceived by necromancy, magic, sorcery, witchcraft, etc.

3. Israelite law compared to modern law

In many ways, this kind of paradigmatic law is superior to modern law. Old Testament law has a total of 613 commandments. It is crafted so one can intentionally reason from those 613 commands to the myriads of actual situations which inevitably arise in the real world. In modern times western cultures don't use paradigmatic law. So unless there is a specific law in place, a modern day defense attorney can argue their client is not guilty and guard them from the prosecutors by appealing to technicalities.

In ancient Israelite law, however, there is a minimal amount of laws (613) so that a wise, honest, and prayerful judge could not only memorize those laws, but work from them, via his memory, to establish a decent level of justice among the people of Israel. Ancient Israelite law is efficient, memorable, and if properly followed creates a good legal system.

D. Bifid Structure of Exodus

Bifid means there are two equal parts to the book of Exodus. It begins with 19 chapters of stories about the making of the people of Israel. They are delivered, rescued, and brought to Mt. Sinai. Then, when the reader begins chapter 20 the book begins to list laws. In its structure the first half of Exodus is preamble and prologue (Exodus 1-19) and the second half is stipulation, sanctions, witnesses and documentation (Exodus 20-40).

QUESTIONS

1. How might the recounting of Israelite oppression in Exodus be made paradigmatic for God's people today? Are there other groups of people that suffer and are in need of an exodus? How might you get involved in hearing the cry of these people?
2. Based on the phenomena of ritual protests, what are some attitudes that seem to be essential for leading God's people? What happens when these attitudes are missing from leaders in the church?
3. As God is establishing the covenant with Moses, the Israelites are rebelling. Discuss.

4. Why might God give both apodictic and casuistic laws? What does this say about God's concern to order our lives? How should you respond to this?
5. What might Exodus 18 say about leadership? Why is the practice outlined in Exodus 18 important for every person who is making disciples?
6. Write a list of the necessary ethical commitments a judge in ancient Israel would need to possess to arbitrate justly.

5

The Law: Covenant Structure

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, the concept of a covenant is defined. In the ancient world there were many covenants. There were covenants between individuals, and even between nations. For example, a superior ruling king would make a covenant with a lesser vassal king. Covenants in the ancient near east contained the following six elements.

I. DEFINITION OF A COVENANT

A legal binding agreement between two parties.

II. SIX ELEMENTS OF A COVENANT

A. Preamble

This identifies who the parties to the covenant are. It can be simple as "I am the Lord God, and you are my people."

B. Prologue

This is background information on how the two parties chose to enter into this covenant agreement. Many have rightly argued that Exodus 1-19 is the prologue to the covenant agreement between God and Israel. So that the entire Pentateuch is organized like a covenant made between a suzerain and his vassals. A Suzerain is an ancient term for a powerful king and vassals refers to servants of that superior king. So a suzerainty covenant is a binding agreement made by a superior king toward an inferior king (or people).

C. Stipulations

The stipulations are the laws. This would include the 613 commandments in the Torah. This is the main content of any covenant. The stipulations delineate what the agreement is going to be, and how the agreement is going to arbitrate or function between the two parties.

D. Sanctions

The sanctions are curses for breaking the covenant and promises for keeping the covenant. You can think of them as positive reinforcements and rewards, and negative reinforcements and punishments.

E. Witnesses

In the ancient Egyptian and Babylonian covenants other gods would often be named to enforce the covenant of a Suzerain King. In the covenant with Israel, the witnesses are heaven and earth. This is a merism—a phrase that expresses totality. So this refers to all of creation as God's witness in his covenant relationship with Israel. All of creation is watching.

F. Documentation

Provision is typically made that each party has a copy of the agreement. The vassal would receive a copy, and the sovereign Suzerain king kept a copy. So that when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with two tablets it's likely that all 10 commandments were on each tablet so that Moses had two copies of the covenant. Moses places both copies in the ark which is the place where the covenant parties meet one another.

III. COVENANT = EXTENDED KINSHIP

A covenant brings people together in a family-like relationship. You're obviously not genetically related, but you are so intimately connected with the other party that the relationship is akin to being members of the same family. This makes sense of God referring to Israel as his son and wife.

IV. HIERARCHY OF THE LAW

A. Two great commandments – Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18

These are not part of the ten commandments. They were recognized in Judaism prior to New Testament times. The rich young ruler knew these were the two most important commands when Jesus asked him (Luke 10).

B. Ten (words) commandments – Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5

These are called the ten words in the Hebrew bible. They are special. The first four describe what it means to Love God with your whole heart. The final six focus on loving neighbor as yourself. They are about how you relate to people.

C. 601 commandments, paradigms

Some of these are apodictic and casuistic. But the 601 commands are paradigmatic as to how to follow the ten commandments in a particular context.

D. Two and ten are renewed in the New Testament, 601 Are Removed

Jesus, and Paul the Apostle, clearly argued that the law is reiterated in the New Covenant. So you can show how these twelve commandments are renewed in the New Covenant. Therefore the overarching principles are shared between the old and new covenant. The overarching principles are shared between the covenants. So we keep the essence of the old covenant as new covenant believers.

V. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the massive, dramatic, change from the old to the new covenant. Under the old covenant the Holy Spirit anointed individuals to lead the nation, and to administer the temple. In the new covenant, however, every believer receives the Holy Spirit to obey the law of Christ. It is what Jeremiah predicted would happen in the last day, that the law would be written on the hearts of every believer (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

QUESTIONS

1. The preamble of any covenant contains what type of information? What is the significance of this? How does this relate to agreements we make with people in our lives today? And how might you draw on the significance of the preamble material in your dealings with other people?
2. Since covenant is akin to extended kinship, how should we think about God? In turn, what kind of emotions are appropriate when we consider the covenant that God has now established with us in Christ? And how should that affect the way we approach God and treat others?

3. Discuss the hierarchy of the law and the role of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant. How should we view ourselves and other believers in light of the new covenant promise of Jeremiah 31? If you kept this view in mind, how might it change the way you think and act towards other believers?

6

The Law: Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

LESSON OVERVIEW

Does God punish the grandchildren for what the grandparents have done? Some people read these passages (Exodus 20:5, 34:7) and assume that they mean God punishes grandchildren based on their grandparents' sins. Unfortunately, they misinterpret these texts because they fail to understand the phenomena of numerical parallelisms. The Hebrew language favors parallelism, so that numbers which are close to other numbers will often be put in parallel to exhibit literary balance.

A special emphasis in Leviticus is how the Israelites can achieve holiness in their covenant with God. This includes holiness in ritual worship and also in daily life. All of Leviticus is received by Moses at Mt. Sinai.

At the beginning of Numbers they leave Mt. Sinai. So, in

Numbers, the people have received the Sinai covenant (Exodus 19-Leviticus) and now they have set out on a journey to the promised land. The book of Numbers provides a number of stories about their forty year journey to the promised land. Additionally, as the occasion requires more laws are given in the book of Numbers. This is similar to the amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The Sinai covenant is the original full covenant, and the laws in Numbers and Deuteronomy are amended to the Sinai covenant.

The structure of Deuteronomy is highly important. It is an overt covenant structure crafted for a new people who need to realize they are part of God's covenant. This book is written forty years after Mt. Sinai in northern Moab to a new generation about to enter the promised land. In some ways, Deuteronomy is the final draft of the covenant God made with Israel. Deuteronomy is perhaps more important than any of the other four books of the Pentateuch.

I. THE LAW: NUMERICAL PARALLELISMS

A. Numerical parallelisms in scripture:

1. 1 // 2

2. 3 // 4

3. 6 // 7

4. 7 // 8

5. 1,000 // 10,000

6. 7 // 77

7. 3 // 4 // 1,000's

This is not intended to say, "I will punish the 4th generation for what the 1st generation did. It means that if generations keep sinning against God and breaking his law, He will keep punishing them. What God wants to do is to bless thousands of generations who love Him. So the literary emphasis falls on God's desire to bless the nations. His purpose is to show faithful love to thousands. So there is a numerical contrast. Yes, God will punish 3 or 4 generations, but, more so, he desires to bless the generations (thousands meaning forever) if they will keep his covenant.

B. The meaning of the term "love"

William L. Moran, Ancient Near Eastern Background for the Love of God in Deuteronomy, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 25.1, 1963.

1. Action, not attitude

When we read the commandments, “Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbor as yourself” we are not reading about attitude in any degree. We’re reading about action. What William Moran showed is that in the Ancient Near East to love is actually to do acts of love. In that social-historical context love has almost nothing to do with feelings.

2. Used in international diplomacy

William Moran surveyed ancient texts used in international diplomatic relations to show how the terminology of love actually function in the Ancient Near East. Kings use the term love to denote other kings whom they considered allies. The term for love functions as a synonym for allies, and closely supportive relationships.

3. Corresponding usage of the term “hate”

Likewise, in the ancient near east, the term hate does not denote feelings of hatred per se. For example, the phrase “Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated” should not be interpreted to mean that God has feelings of hatred for Esau, but that God has an alliance with Jacob and the people of Israel, and that he does not have an alliance or a covenant with the Edomites.

4. Love of self is prohibited

Paul describes the last days as a time when people will be “lovers of self.” So loving oneself is a form of wickedness according to Paul.

II. THE LAW: LEVITICUS

A. Orienting data for Leviticus

1. Content

2. Author

3. When and where

4. Emphases

a) Five types of sacrifices

Chapters 1-5 cover five types of sacrifice. The sixth sacrifice is a special sacrifice—the day of atonement (Leviticus 16). The explanation of these sacrifices show that God has a desire that his people properly worship him.

b) The priesthood

God wants to connect to his people and so he chooses a specific group of people—the priests—to mediate between him and the people. They are to ensure the proper maintenance of the temple rituals and to ensure the people know how to sacrifice to God.

c) Clean and unclean

Leviticus is full of instruction as to how to get rid of uncleanness and to maintain a clean status before God. God is interested in the purity of his people and his dwelling place.

d) Sexual purity and food laws

Leviticus contains instructions on sexual purity and food laws. This shows that God is interested in the daily habits of his people. God is not simply interested in their holiness when they approach him for worship, but also in their holiness in the mundane activities of life.

III. THE LAW: NUMBERS

A. Orienting data for numbers

1. Content

2. Author

3. Date of Composition

4. Historical Coverage

5. EMPHASES

a) Preparation for military conquest

The people of Israel are moving in divisions. That is a military term. They camp by divisions so that they are starting to think of themselves as an army.

b) Doubting God's leadership

The people have a tendency to doubt God showing their lack of confidence in Him. The adult generation actually fails to enter the promised land because of their unbelief, and so the children are the ones to inherit the land. Deuteronomy is actually the second telling of the law to that new younger generation about to enter the promised land.

c) Doubting God

d) Unbelief leads to loss

e) Pagan prophet's blessing

The story of Balaam is fascinating. God is able to use a pagan to bless his covenant people and this shows the scope of God's sovereignty over all things.

f) Cultic immorality

g) Major preparation for the new conquest

At the end of Numbers the people of Israel make their way into the Transjordan (the area east of the Jordan river) so the conquest of the land of Canaan is underway by the end of the book.

h) Conquest begins

IV. THE LAW: DEUTERONOMY

A. Covenant restatement

B. Covenant structure

1. Prologue

In Deuteronomy there is quite a long prologue which summarizes what God has done in bringing his people to the edge of the promised land.

2. Witnesses

A brief mention of witnesses—Heaven and Earth. Again, this is a merism expressing that all of creation is witness to God's dealings with Israel.

3. Preamble

4. Stipulations

5. Document clause

6. Sanctions

7. Witnesses

8. Document clause

9. Witnesses

The word of God is mentioned as a witness as is the song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32).

10. Sanctions

11. Epilogue

The epilogue discusses the transition from Moses to Joshua who is introduced at the end of Deuteronomy.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the doctrinal viewpoint which is often referred to as generational sin. Why is Exodus not referring to this concept in Exodus 20:5, and 34:7?
2. How did your understanding of the term love change as a result of this lecture? Love has to do with action, how can you put this into practice in your life?
3. Why is God concerned with the Israelites achieving holiness? What does this reveal about God's heart for righteousness in his people? In other words, is the point of the holiness codes for God to illicit arbitrary moral obedience, or a way for fellowship between him and his people?

4. Is God interested in the holiness of his people only in worship, or in regular life as well? How does this make you feel about your daily activities? What might you need to change?

5. Why is it significant that the people are moving in divisions? What are they beginning to think about themselves? What does this say about God's people cooperating to accomplish a mission?

6. Why do the people doubt God's leading? In your life how do you doubt God's leading? What do you need to trust God more with?

8. Why does Deuteronomy have an extensive prologue? How does the content of this prologue remind us that God will be faithful to us? And therefore we should respond in faithfulness to him?

7

The Promised Land: Joshua

LESSON OVERVIEW

The historical books – Joshua, Judges, and Ruth – are essential reading for understanding how the bible views the progress of history. These books help us understand what the basic stages are in the progress of God's relations with humanity. There is development, and progress in history we can refer to as epochs. This lecture provides an overview of redemptive history and a summary of the book of Joshua.

I. REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

A. Simplification

Every simplification has risks, but simplifications can often provide helpful paradigms for quick recall.

B. Jerome Brunner

A prominent Harvard educational theorist stated, "Any person can learn any concept at any age in some form."

II. REDEMPTIVE HISTORY SIMPLIFIED

This is a basic overview. There is plenty of overlap and cross-influence, continuities and discontinuities between the biblical books of the Old Testament in this simplified account of redemptive history.

A. Creation and Prehistory

Genesis 1-11

B. Patriarchal Prologue

Genesis 12-50

C. Creation of Israel

Exodus-Deuteronomy

D. Israel under Blessing

Joshua-Ruth

E. Israel under Curse

Exile

F. Israel under Blessing

Restoration

III. STRUCTURE OF JOSHUA

Chs. 1-8 Central campaign

Chs. 9-10 Southern campaign

Chs. 11 Northern campaign

Chs. 12-19 Land allotments

Chs. 20 Towns for accidental killers

Chs. 21 Land for the Levites

Chs. 22 Eastern Tribes return

Chs. 23 Joshua's farewell

Chs. 24 Renewal of the Covenant

A. Conquest of Promised Land

The Israelites are in Northern Moab and are ready to enter into the promised land. Moses preaches Deuteronomy from the plains of Moab, and Joshua leads them across the Jordan to a small town called Gilgal. After setting up a monument at Gilgal, Joshua led them to Jericho to establish a beachhead. The Israelites succeed in taking Jericho before moving through the central hill country, then south, and then north along the Jordan valley. This conquest seems to have lasted about 20 years in the first ten chapters of Joshua. This is a story of former slaves who formed themselves into an army—into twelve divisions—to invade and possess a territory which long ago had been promised to them.

B. Land allotment

The second half of Joshua is material related to land allotment. It is quite boring. These are ancient boundary descriptions.

IV. LAST CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

A. Towns for accidental killers

B. God as a culture buster

V. COVENANT RENEWAL

After the promised land has been conquered Joshua calls the new generation to make the covenant their own. Joshua calls this new generation to fear the Lord, to get rid of idols, and to serve YHWH alone. This is exclusivity language. He uses Ancient near eastern bargaining language telling them “you can’t” only to provoke their obedience, and this was a common rhetorical technique in that world. Joshua wanted them to rid themselves of syncretism. The question is whether they will follow through with covenant obedience.

A. Exclusive nature of the covenant

B. Bargaining language

C. Call to leave false gods

VI. GENERAL CONQUEST PATTERN

A. Central/entry campaign

Eight chapters devoted to three cities; Jericho, Ai, Shechem.

B. Southern campaign

Two chapters devoted to a host of cities.

C. Northern Campaign

One chapter of Joshua is devoted to a large number of cities in the North. So why so much emphasis (8 chapters) on the first three cities? It seems that the writer wants to foreground how important it is to trust alone in the LORD. In the first city, they conquer a powerful city—Jericho—due to divine intervention. In the second city, they fail to capture Ai, even though it is small, due to disobedience to God’s command. In the third city, they capture Shechem due to renewed attention to faithfulness. So the author is making the point that faithfulness to the LORD is paramount to success in the conquest.

QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on how the book of Joshua reveals the progress of biblical history as Israel conquers the promised land in fulfillment of God’s promise in Genesis. How should God’s fulfillment of his promises impact our faith? And what might faith in God’s promises generate in terms of our behavior?

8

The Promised Land: Holy War

LESSON OVERVIEW

When discussing violence in the Old Testament it is important to discuss the concept of Holy War. This lesson does not suggest that Christians are soldiers first and nothing else since Christians are also called to be peacemakers. However, this lesson does put forward the idea that God is fighting a holy war. That is, God is seeking to promote blessing for all people by eliminating evil everywhere. The final enemy is death itself, and God is resolute on destroying evil and death. Holy war is a complex set of ideas that should be interpreted in light of the entire corpus of scripture.

I. ELEVEN CHARACTERISTICS

A. No standing army

The Israelites did not have a standing army (Deuteronomy 20). The army is run by volunteers who want to serve the Lord.

B. No pay for soldiers

This is unusual in the ancient world.

C. No spoil / plunder

In the ancient world it was common to incentivize armies by offering them a share of the plunder resulting from the conquering of various cities and towns. This incentive system was not part of Israel's war.

D. Only for conquest / defense of Promised Land

The war was only legitimized for the taking and holding of the promised land.

E. Only at Yahweh's call

A king cannot call for war. Only God can approve the war.

F. Only through a prophet

The prophet must announce the war on God's behalf.

G. Yahweh does the fighting

Deborah discusses how God must do the fighting for Israel (Judges 5). Paul discusses that there are spiritual forces fighting in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6).

H. Religious undertaking (fasting / self-denial)

Since the war is religious it is important that virtue be maintained. Saul declares a fast before the war and this is unbeknownst to Jonathan who takes honey and violates the declared fast. Fasting intensifies prayer and focus on the task at hand. When David and his men are pursued by Saul they are using self-denial practices. They come to Nob and eat from the table of showbread since they are consecrated in their focus on holy war.

I. Total annihilation of the enemy

This seems very brutal. It comes across vicious. God is focused on eliminating the culture and the generations. It is a judgment war to annihilate an evil culture.

J. Violator becomes enemy

Joshua says you must choose who to serve – God or idols (Joshua 24). The violator, or idolater, becomes the enemy of Israel.

K. Exceptions / mutations possible

For example, if people are enemies but not inhabitants of the promised land then deals can be made with foreign people. The people of Gibeon understood this process of Holy War and engaged in making a diplomatic peace agreement (Joshua 9). And even though the Gibeonites deceived Joshua, he still honored the covenant treaty.

II. HOLY WAR THEME IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Holy War is a concept that continues to the end of the bible. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is characterized as a warrior riding a white horse (Revelation 19). This is Holy War. Jesus is conquering and eliminating evil in the book of Revelation.

III. SIGNIFICANCE TO THE DEFEAT AT AI

In Joshua 1-8 the narrative puts forward a programmatic narrative. The Israelites march into the promised land, take Jericho, and destroy the city. But in chapter seven the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things. The egregious instance discussed is the defeat at Ai because of Achan's sin. This instance is paradigmatic of other instances that were recurrently happening among the soldiers. Every battle is supposed to be a success so that when thirty-six Israelites die at Ai the people are distraught. Because of this Joshua reads the Mosaic law before the people in order to renew the covenant with the people (Joshua 8:34ff).

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the eleven characteristics of Holy War did you find most helpful for understanding this ancient practice? How does this particular characteristic provide some justification for holy war?

2. How was the sin of Achan a clear violation of the holy war covenant? How might his sin inform our practice as Christian leaders?

9

The Promised Land: Judges and Ruth

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson the extent of the conquest is discussed to frame the book of Judges. The orienting data for the book of Judges helps explain how the book recounts the decline of the people of Israel. Finally, the Deuteronomic cycle which recurs in the book is explained and helps frame Israel's history up to the time of the exile.

The book of Ruth is a triumphant story when compared with Judges. Even while the majority of Israel is spiraling downward God is at work to care not only for the people of Israel but also for a Moabite widow. The story of Ruth ends in a genealogy showing that in this unlikely story the throne of David came to be established.

I. THE PROMISED LAND: JUDGES

A. Extent of the conquest

The conquest was not complete at the end of Joshua. The mistranslation of a certain passage “Joshua conquered all these lands” (Josh 10:42). The phrase means something like “Joshua conquered these lands one time” but the “conquered” people actually probably came back to those cities. And so those cities became reoccupied by those people. That helps explain how the majority of Judges recounts how the land of Israel is still occupied by Canaanite peoples. So the conquest was not a complete disaster, but neither was it a complete and total victory. This total victory did not occur until the end of David’s reign.

B. Orienting data for Judges

1. Content

Judges recounts the desperate struggle to hold onto the promise land. And because the book looks forward to the period of kingship it may be that Judges was written during the period of the Israelite kings.

2. Historical coverage: death of Joshua (1360 BC) to Samuel (1060 BC)

3. Emphases

a) Decline on four planes

The book of Judges is a tragedy. The decline is recounted on four levels. The first Judges are winning battles, and by the end of the book the judges are no longer winning. Spiritually they lose trust in God. Religiously they adopt syncretistic beliefs. Morally they become ethically indecent people.

1) Military decline

2) Spiritual decline

3) Religious decline

4) Moral decline

b) Tenuous conquest

c) Fading of revival

d) Preservation of values

e) How low people can sink

f) God rescuing

g) Charismatic leadership

h) The need for a good king

i) The attractions of idolatry

j) Disintegration of tribal unity

C. Outline of Judges

There is a pattern that Judges brings out which is referred to as the Deuteronomic cycle. And this pattern continues to repeat itself until the time of Exile. The Deuteronomic cycle is explained and narrated in Judges 2:7-19.

1. Military decline (1:1-2:9)

2. Spiritual decline (2:9-3:6)

3. Judges (3:7-16:31)

4. Religious disorder (17-18)

5. Moral disorder (19-21)

D. The Deuteronomic cycle (Judges 2:7-19)

1. Faithful, free (vv. 7-9)

2. Apostasy (vv. 10-12)

3. Anger of Yahweh (vv. 12-15)

4. Enemy oppression (vv. 14-15)

5. Cry for help (v. 18)

6. Rescue via judge (vv. 16, 18)

7. Faithful, free (vv. 16, 18)

8. Apostasy, etc. (vv. 17, 19)

E. Overview of the final chapters

By the end of the book we know the Philistines as the main enemy of Israel in the book of Judges. In addition to the Philistines, the Amalekites, Canaanites, Midianites, and Amorites are other groups rising up against the people of Israel. In chapter 18 whole tribes are giving themselves over to Idolatry. In chapter 19 a rape and murder are recounted in Gibeah. In chapter 20 the Israelites defeat the Benjaminites. In chapter 21 the people of Israel kill every man and woman in Jabesh-Gilead who is not a virgin. And because the tribe of Benjamin is lacking women, they are permitted to steal women from a festival in Shiloh. The book ends tragically explaining that “everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”

II. THE PROMISED LAND: RUTH

A. Emphasis in Ruth

- 1. God's control of history**
- 2. God allows miseries to righteous people**
- 3. Obedience to God is faithfulness in actions to others**
- 4. We can be exceptions**

5. Messiah's lineage is common and noble

B. OVERVIEW OF RUTH

1. Story background

Ruth is a woman from Moab who marries a man from Israel because there is a famine. When Ruth's father-in-law, husband, and brother-in-law die, she is left to live with her mother-in-law Naomi, and her sister Orpah. As a widow, Naomi intends to leave Moab and return to Israel. Orpah kisses her goodbye, whereas Ruth "clings" to Naomi asking to come with her.

2. Conversion statement

Furthermore, Ruth makes the statement to Naomi "Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." That is a phrase in the Ancient Near East to denote conversion to another people group and God. It's a conversion statement. So Ruth and Naomi return to Bethlehem.

3. Gleaning

Ruth goes to the fields to glean. This is a built in agrarian law so that the poor and the widow could access food.

4. Ruth proposes to Boaz

5. Women make key initial decisions

6. Issues of inheritance

Boaz brings up Naomi's land to the public legal arena—the city gate. Boaz proposes the purchasing of the land to the men of the city but indicates it comes with the taking up of Ruth as a spouse. The men are aware of the inheritance laws (Deuteronomy 21) which prohibit them from assigning land to only one spouse, and so they balk at the land purchasing opportunity. In this way, Boaz becomes the next of kin to inherit the land and marry Ruth.

7. Genealogy

The book of Ruth ends with a genealogy. In this case of Boaz and Ruth (a Moabite) have a child – Obed – who is the father of Jesse, the father of David. This is another example of interesting junctures in the lineage of the Messiah. God's plan, even with the Messiah, involves working with and overcoming these improper, impossible, and even inappropriate circumstances.

QUESTIONS

1. How does knowing the extent of the conquest of Joshua help frame your reading of Judges?
2. What does the Deuteronomic cycle reveals about God's faithfulness to his covenant promises? If the same God who was faithful to Israel is also our God, how might that inform the way you trust in his promises?
3. Israel declines in multiple ways during the period of the Judges. Discuss. How might their decline have prevented? And how might their decline be a warning to us?

10

The United Monarchy: 1 & 2 Samuel

LESSON OVERVIEW

After the division of the kingdom, 40 kings reigned during this period of the divided monarchy. Only three Kings reigned during the united monarchy – Saul, David, and Solomon. We might be able to assume the time period of the united monarch to be something like 120 years with each of the three kings reigning forty years. But the term “forty” in Hebrew means something like the English expression “several dozen.” That’s why we see the idiomatic expression “forty” so often in Hebrew literature.

I. THREE KINGS

II. 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

A. Unit – Bifid book

The book of Samuel at one time was a single book. In the Septuagint translation the Hebrew text was split in two for organizational purposes. Samuel actually dies in First Samuel, so he is not even in the second book. Saul's reign ends in first Samuel.

B. 1 Kings 1-11: Solomon

Solomon's reign is forty years but he only gets eleven chapters of coverage. Whereas Saul and David, who were much more local, get more chapters of coverage. So the space used in texts is not consonant with chronological time per se.

III. THREE LEVELS OF NARRATIVE

The Hebrew bible is not a catalog of chronological annals, but offers selective snapshots of events intended to communicate a theological message. The bible should be read as a narrative on three levels.

A. Top level – Bible story as a whole

Meta-narrative

B. Middle level – Individual blocks of material

C. Lower level – Particular stories, pericopes

IV. THE KINGDOM OF SAUL

Although there were many unconquered areas of the promised land, Saul controlled the majority of territory in Jerusalem and a portion in the north near Mt. Gilboa. So during the reign of Saul the conquest of the land remained incomplete.

V. ORIENTING DATA FOR 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

A. Content

1. Transition from Samuel to Saul

This is the book in which we move from the era of the judges to the kingship inaugurated by Saul.

2. Rise and tumultuous reign of David

David plays a key role in the history of redemption. He's an incredible military leader, but in other ways he acts foolishly in his life. He is hardly a moral example.

B. Author

These narrative books are often referred to as the former prophets. This is a proper designation in Judaism. These books reflect God's story based on his covenant with his people. Whenever there is a hint of an author, it often looks like the author is a prophet.

C. Date of composition

Solomon commissioned many scribes to gather materials and compose formal texts. So it is likely that these texts were written in the 10th century BCE.

D. Historical coverage

E. Emphases

1. Continuation of God's plan of redemption

2. Need to change from judges to monarchy

3. Samuel's good service

4. Danger from the Philistines

5. Saul's tragic reign

6. Hopeful rise of David

7. God's protection of his people

8. Need for a good king

9. The Messianic "Davidic Covenant"

10. Completion of the conquest

11.The choice of Jerusalem

12.Consequences of David's adultery

13.Rebellions against David

14.Initial plans for a temple

VI. OVERVIEW

The books of First and Second Samuel is tracing the succession of judges and kings in Israel. Like a relay race, the baton of leadership is being passed from one generation to the next.

A. 1 Samuel 1-7 - Samuel

B. 1 Samuel 8-15 – Samuel and Saul

C. 1 Samuel 16-31 - Saul and David

D. 2 Samuel – David alone

QUESTIONS

1. If the bible is offering selective snapshots concerning the life of these kings, how does that change the way you read these stories?
2. Do you agree that David is not a moral example in these books? Why or why not? How does that change the way you feel about the Davidic narratives? Or the psalms?

3. Which of the emphases in the books of Samuel are most directly applicable to your life? And how does that emphases speak to ways in which you need to make changes in your life?

11

The United Monarchy: Three Kings

LESSON OVERVIEW

David is a man after God's own heart. How is this possible when he made so many moral mistakes? Being after God's own heart does not mean David is morally upright, but that he has unwavering faith in the one true God of Israel. That is unique to David in these narratives. The narratives are clear that both Saul and Solomon conjoined belief in the God of Israel with the worship of other gods. David, however, is never portrayed as worshipping other gods or setting up altars to idols.

I. DAVID

II. SAUL

A. Ish-bosheth – “Man of Shame”

2 Samuel 2:8

B. Ish-baal – “Man of Baal”

C. Saul was a syncretist.

He worshipped Baal and the God of Israel. By doing this Saul was trusting other gods who he thought could be of use to him on different occasions.

III. SOLOMON

A. Solomon a syncretist

Solomon loved many women who turned his heart to the worship of other gods (1 Kings 11). So Solomon was a syncretist as well. And he built shrines to many of these gods.

B. "After God's Own Heart"

IV. REDEMPTION

A. 1 Samuel 1

The story of Samuel illustrates the process of redemption. Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord at the tabernacle at Shiloh so he will live there always. She chooses not to redeem her child so that Samuel grows up in the house of the Lord to serve as a priest.

B. Buying back the firstborn

God said every firstborn is mine, but God did not want to take the firstborn child. Rather he provides instructions for redeeming the child (Leviticus 26). Every family would offer their firstborn to God, and God instructed them to buy back the children so to speak as a way to illustrate the concept of redemption.

C. Redemption: God buys us back

V. COVENANT RENEWAL SPEECH

A. 1 Samuel 12

This is a farewell speech where he tells the story of Israel, Abraham, Moses and himself. So Samuel ties his life and ministry to the grand story of Israel. His speech is given in the form of a covenant renewal charter.

B. Other examples

1. Preamble/Prologue

2. Stipulations

3. Sanctions

4. Document Clause

5. Witnesses

C. The New Covenant Renewal

As Christians, we engage in covenant renewal every time we take the Lord's supper together.

QUESTIONS

1. What earned David the title "a man after God's own heart"? And how might knowing how David earned this title comfort someone who has committed grievous sin?
2. Which theological concept does the story of Samuel illustrate? Why is Hannah's action an exception to the rule?

3. What is the significance of Samuel's speech (1 Samuel 12)? How is this applicable to Christians today?

12

The United Monarchy: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson several key elements from the lives of Saul, David and Solomon are briefly reviewed. The rejection of Saul as King is explained. The rebellions against David are highlighted. And the disobedience of Solomon is described. Although these three kings are imperfect, God keeps the Kingdom of Israel unified throughout their successive reigns.

I. SAUL REJECTED AS KING

1 Samuel 15

A. Total annihilation of the Amalekites required by God

This is a holy war command from God to a prophet.

B. What's so bad about the Amalekites

1. Israel's first enemy

Not the Egyptians

2. Unprovoked attack on Israel

The Amalekites attempted to eradicate Israel before they even arrived at Mt. Sinai.

C. Saul fails to follow through in annihilating the Amalekites

D. Spirit departs Saul and an injurious spirit enters

II. RUACH

A. Possible meanings

It is an injurious spirit that enters Saul. The word Ruach – breath, wind or spirit – is quite vague. It could be a mood or tendency or an angel. It does not seem to be an evil angel sent from heaven, but some angels can do injurious things.

B. Possibly angel

III. SHOWBREAD (1 SAMUEL 21)

David eats the priestly bread at Nob. This seems to be a special exemption for David to use this holy bread (Exodus 25) in a matter of wartime emergency.

IV. WITCH OF ENDOR (1 SAMUEL 28)

A. Saul seeks help

Saul seeks help from a baalat-ov.

B. Baalat-ov means “Lady who owns a pit.”

Saul believed he could contact Samuel in the underworld through this witch.

C. God shows them Samuel.

The woman was scared to see Samuel since she did not expect to see him. She felt deceived by Saul. God, it seems, intervenes and gives the woman an image of Samuel. Through this means, God speaks to Saul to further prophetically indicate that the kingdom will be inherited by David.

D. End of the line for Saul.

V. REBELLION AGAINST DAVID

David killed Uriah and took his wife Bathsheba to be his wife, and the judgment which fell upon him was that the sword would not depart from his family. That is a judgment on David and his descendants. David was clearly successful in military terms, even though some of his men, from time to time, rose up against him in rebellion. Sheba led a rebellion against David (2 Samuel 20). But, arguably, the most treacherous rebellion is by his son Absalom, a member of Judah, and some other Judahites. The rebellions were so common that he began to employ some philistine mercenaries as his personal body guard since these foreigners have no interest in taking over the local government. So, at times, David was terribly unpopular among the people of Israel, the people of Judah, and even his own family.

VI. THE CENSUS

A. Scripture references

Exodus 30 promises a plague for taking a census. Other passages indicate that a census arouses the anger of the Lord (Exodus 38; Numbers 1, 26; 2 Kings 12; 1 Chronicles 12:21). Why is this not right?

B. Two purposes

A census is taken only for two reasons.

1. Produce new taxes

2. Counting the troops

C. David planned to expand

David has conquered the whole promised land. Why is he attempting to go to war again? David may be planning to conquest other lands beyond the promised land.

D. God turns bad to good

God stops David by sending a plague.

VII. THEMES OF 1 KINGS

A. Importance of orthodox worship

B. No gift or status prevents apostasy

C. God's promises carried out

D. True unity by belief

Even in the midst of political division

E. Social oppression

F. The power of the king to influence religion

G. Religious and political instability

H. Lone true prophet

I. Passing on the prophetic office

J. New and foreign things

1 Kings 3, 11

K. Miracles as confirmation of divine truth

VIII. SOLOMON

Solomon is the fulfillment of a number of warnings (Deuteronomy 17). The King needs to be chosen by God, and not by the people. The king must not multiply horses or multiply wives, not silver or gold. And yet, Solomon did all of this. Solomon built the temple in seven years (1 Kings 6), but it took Solomon thirteen years to build his own palace. His priorities were self-centered.

A. Fulfillment of God's warnings about a king

B. Building the temple.

C. Self-centered

D. Ashtoreth and Molech (1 Kings 11:5)

IX. THE BAALS AND ASHTORETHS

What was Canaanite theology like? Baal was a plural deity, a cloud rider, who controlled the weather. Baal controlled fertility. And Ashtoreth was his sacred prostitute.

A. Baal

B. Ashtoreth

QUESTIONS

1. What lessons can be drawn from the way Saul lost the kingship? How should Christians feel about his fall? And how can we reorient our lives to be more in line with God's ways as a result of reading these narratives?

2. While David was a great leader he also seemed to lose allegiance from those around him. What can explain this? What lessons might be drawn from this apparent failure of leadership?
3. How does the self-centeredness of Solomon eventually become his downfall? How does living in a self-centered way negatively impact our personal lives? What can we practically do to avoid self-centeredness?

13

Poetry and Wisdom: Psalms

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, Dr. Stuart provides an overview of the ten types of Psalms found in Scripture, a few suggestions regarding preaching through the Psalms, and addresses how we are to interact with the historicizing statements within the Psalms.

I. TEN TYPES OF PSALMS

A. Laments

Approximately 70 psalms

1. Four types of miseries

a) Facing enemies

Most common lament

b) Facing death

Second most common lament

c) Facing confinement

Third most common lament

d) Facing drowning

Fourth most common lament

2. Maximum applicability

Because of these four types, scholars argue these lament Psalms use stereotypical language so that it can have maximum applicability. These Psalms are designed to be applicable to quite a broad range of people and situations. In some ways, these are invitations to all for practicing lament.

3. Structural format for lament Psalms

a) Address

They are directed to the LORD

b) Complaint

They have a specific complaint

c) Trust

They expect trust in the midst of the complaint

d) Deliverance plea

A request for deliverance

e) Assurance

The deliverance will come

f) Praise

Thankfulness for God's faithfulness

4. Individual or corporate

An individual or a national prayer

5. Subcategories

a) Penitential Psalms

You're in trouble because you've sinned

b) Imprecatory Psalms

A request of God to vindicate the oppressed

B. Thanksgiving Psalms

1. Format

a) Introduction

Intention to praise

b) Misery

The past misery

c) Appeal

The past appeal

d) Rescue

The deliverance is described

e) Testimonial

The story is declared to people

2. Individual or corporate

An individual or national prayer

C. Hymns

1. Format

a) Summons

Let us praise the LORD

b) Reason

The justification for the praise

c) Recapitulation

A restatement of why we should praise

2. Creator hymns

The reason concentrates on God's wonderful creation

3. Israel hymns

The reason concentrates on God's rule over Israel

4. History hymns

The reason concentrates on God's faithfulness to Israel and entire world.

D. Enthronement Psalms

These emphasize the way God is king.

E. Royal Psalms

These praise God for human government.

F. Zion Psalms

These focus on God's presence among his people.

G. Wisdom Psalms

1. Format

Ethical Guidance Format (X or Y)

2. Wisdom is making the right choice

Wisdom is making the right choice between X or Y (Example: Psalm 1)

3. Two ways literature

Hokmah – Wisdom between two ways

H. Trust Psalms

These focus on trusting God (Example: Psalm 23).

I. Liturgies

These focus on words to be said in a worship service.

J. Torah Psalms

These focus on the beauty of scripture (Example: Psalm 1, 119)

II. PREACHING THE PSALMS

If you are going to preach from the psalms you could take the ten types of Psalms and preach one type each week. People love to learn the various types of Psalms. The Psalms cover many major life issues; enduring hardship, facing death, facing disease, priorities in life, understanding history, praying with endurance, peace with God, finding our place in the created world. Finally, the Psalms look forward with prophetic expectation to the King and his everlasting Kingdom.

III. “HISTORICIZING STATEMENTS”

Are the historic statements in the superscriptions to be trusted from a historical critical point of view? In the LXX and Latin tradition, the superscriptions never received verse numbers. Some of these superscriptions are not found in the Masoretic text (Hebrew version, 10th century CE). The Peshitta (popular Syriac version) has long extended historical statements about the historical context of the Psalms. This shows the strong historicizing tendency common in the ancient world, which was a desire to historically locate texts. These longer statements in the Peshitta were likely made up. Some examples of long statements can be found in:

A. Psalm 33

B. Psalm 67

C. Psalm 131

D. Psalm 137

QUESTIONS

1. Why are the psalms so full of lament? How could practicing lament change your prayer life?
2. What is the structure of a thanksgiving Psalm? Why is it important to not forget the second element in a thanksgiving Psalm? How can you implement this in your prayer life?

3. Which Psalm types have both individual and corporate elements? How could you find a way to pray some of these Psalms in a corporate gathering?

14

Poetry and Wisdom: Proverbs

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson provides an overview of the structure of Proverbs, which seems to be the most secular book of the bible. Proverbs is a book of wise memorable sayings collected by Solomon. These sayings are collected from various individuals in Israel and the Ancient Near East and serve to provide wisdom for how to live in the world.

I. OVERVIEW

A. Importance of seeking wisdom (Chs. 1-9)

B. Proverbs of Solomon (Chs. 10-22)

C. Words of the wise (Chs. 22-24)

D. More words of the wise (Chs. 24:23-34)

E. More Proverbs of Solomon (Chs. 25-29)

F. Words of Agur (30)

G. Words of Lemuel (31:1-9)

Agur and Lemuel are Arab kings who contributed to the wisdom of the Ancient Near East. Solomon was much more of a collector than an author of proverbs. So these proverbs were collected from wise people in Israel and the Ancient Near East. There are parallels between these proverbs and Egyptian proverbs.

H. A godly woman (31:10-31)

II. THEMES OF THE BOOK

Proverbs is an all purpose book of wisdom sayings that help people navigate the various issues they will face in life. It teaches humans how to be humane with one another, but it primarily does so by calling on people to reverence God.

A. Good speech

B. Family life

C. Hard work vs. laziness

D. Pride vs. humility

E. Rich vs. poor

F. Fear of the Lord

III. PROVERBS ARE PUZZLES.

A proverb is not intended to be simple to understand the minute you read it or hear it. A reasonable adult can figure various problems out, but it's important to recognize that proverbs use unusual expressions to heighten readers attention and connote multiple shades of meaning. So proverbs need to be read and interpreted with wisdom. Trying to solve a Hebrew proverb also aids in remembering the proverb. They are terse, epigrammatic, puzzling, and therefore easier to commit to memory.

IV. CONTEXT OF WARNINGS

V. SEXUAL PURITY AND CHOOSING A SPOUSE

It is important to make a wise choice in choosing a spouse. So the book of proverbs ends with the importance of finding a godly wife (Proverbs 31). This is life's biggest choice from a human point of view. This is obviously reversible in concept so that women should find a godly husband as well.

VI. A USEFUL PROVERB

QUESTIONS

1. Which themes of proverbs are most applicable to you currently? Are there any specific proverbs that you want to memorize and actively meditate on?
2. Why is it important that the proverbs are puzzles? How might this change the way you read, talk about, and recite proverbs with your family or friends?
3. Why might God find it acceptable for secular thinkers to contribute wise sayings to canonical scripture? And how does that change the way you think about secular people's perspective on the world?

15

Poetry and Wisdom: Job

LESSON OVERVIEW

An overview of the book of Job. The main question the book is asking is, where do you find wisdom? The answer is, wisdom is found in the LORD. Proverbs is monological wisdom, whereas Job is dialogical wisdom. People are debating back and forth throughout the book about the nature of wisdom.

I. STRUCTURE OF JOB

There is a chiastic structure to the book of Job that begins with the prologue and ends with the epilogue. In a chiasm, the middle portion is a convenient hinge of the book, it is not necessarily the most important piece of textual material.

II. SUMMARIZED OUTLINE

In the book, Satan argues that he will get Job to curse God. As Job's misfortunes mount, even Job's wife tells him to curse God and die, but Job never curses God.

A. Job – Chapter 3

B. Cycle one – Chapter 4-14

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have good intentions but they unwisely and wrongly argue that Job has sinned and thus incurred the judgment of God. Job argues back rightly that he has not sinned.

1. Eliphaz – Chapter 4-5

2. Job – Chapter 6-7

3. Bildad – Chapter 8

4. Job – Chapter 9-10

5. Zophar – Chapter 11

6. Job – Chapter 12-14

C. Cycle two – Chapter 15-21

1. Eliphaz – Chapter 15

2. Job – Chapter 16-17

3. Bildad – Chapter 18

4. Job – Chapter 19

5. Zophar – Chapter 20

6. Job – Chapter 21

D. Cycle three – Chapter 22-27

1. Eliphaz – Chapter 22

2. Job – Chapter 23-24

3. Bildad – Chapter 25

4. Job – Chapter 26-27

E. Wisdom interlude – Chapter 28

F. Monologues

1. Job – Chapter 29-31

2. Elihu – Chapter 32-37

At first Elihu seems to be neutral, but in the end he argues Job is a sinner.

3. Yahweh – Chapter 38-41

Then, finally, God comes and answers Job (Chs. 38-41). God asks Job to consider the complexity of the entire universe, but he does not answer Job's questions directly.

G. Job – Chapter 42

So the answer to the problem of human suffering, in Job at least, is that God is ultimately in charge of a very complex universe. At the end of the very book, God does correct the friends and vindicate Job (Job 42:7).

III. EPILOGUE

QUESTIONS

1. Job's friends believed they were providing the correct advice, but they were wrong. How should that effect the way we give advice or offer wisdom to our friends? What is the right tone we should take in offering our perspective to friends?
2. Is God's answer to human suffering in Job sufficient for you or not? Why or why not? What more would you like to know about human suffering? And are there other places in scripture one can look to understand why suffering happens?

3. Job is vindicated in the end because despite the fact that he questioned God. How does this impact the way we approach God in prayer? What does it say about the sorts of questions God can handle from us?

16

Poetry and Wisdom: Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson briefly describes existentialism as a philosophical movement in order to frame Ecclesiastes as an ancient type of existentialist literature. Existentialism tends to argue that this life is all there is. Ecclesiastes entertains these various perspectives in the first six chapters, which serve as a literary foil, before ending with a surprise for the reader – life does have meaning because there is a God who will judge our actions.

There is a storyline to the Song. A clue is found in the term Shulamite, which in Hebrew can be translated as Mrs. Solomon. So this is a story about Solomon marrying his wife. It conveys some of the challenges Solomon and his wife face in coming together in covenant marriage. The beginning of the book outlines their engagement. In the middle of the book they get married, and the end discusses their

honeymoon. What we see in the Song is the biblical ideal of a monogamous marriage, which, ironically, Solomon failed to live up to.

I. POETRY AND WISDOM: ECCLESIASTES

A. Existentialism

1. Theistic existentialism

This type of existentialism is associated with Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. He felt lonely and estranged from God. He argued that we must live life boldly as if there is no God since we do not get much guidance or direction from Him. You must live with doubt and uncertainty in this life.

2. Dostoevsky and Nietzsche

Dostoyevsky said, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." And Nietzsche declared "God is dead", by which he meant we are now doing philosophy without presupposing the existence of God. God no longer sets the value system.

3. "Because of death, life is absurd."

If death is final, there is no memory of your previous life, and so in this existentialist system it does not matter how we live. Existentialists do not believe in living a "good" or "bad" life per se, but argue all people should live authentically. By living what is authentic to you, one can find satisfaction in this life.

B. Summary

1. Chapter 1

"Death makes life absurd"

"History is meaningless"

"Wisdom yields disappointment"

2. Chapter 2

"Projects are meaningless"

"Death makes life and work meaningless"

3. Chapter 3

"What happens happens for no reason"

"Animals and humans are alike"

4. Chapter 4

"Life is meaningless"

5. Chapter 5

"Live authentically"

"Enjoy your youth"

"Eat, drink, and merry"

"Wealth is meaningless"

6. Chapter 6

"Divine blessing, wealth, and long life are meaningless"

7. Not meaningless at all

"Life is not meaningless at all"

"Fear God and keep his commandments"

"God will bring every deed into judgment"

C. Foils

The author has given us a literary foil. A foil is a misleading alternative. In a murder mystery there are many foils built in so you suspect different characters before the detective reveals the murderer. They are the alternative to the truth. Ecclesiastes chapter 1-6 are literary foil, to show you alternatives if there is no God who cares and will not judge our deeds. If this life is all there is then life is meaningless, but the twist at the end of Ecclesiastes is that there is a judgment and life after death.

1. Tempting, misleading alternatives

2. "If this life is all there is ..."

3. Emptiness of life

4. Argument for judgment and life after death

II. POETRY AND WISDOM: SONG OF SONGS

A. Romance is essential

Everything in the book emphasizes romance at every stage in the relationship.

B. Applying the Song of Songs today

1. True love is exclusive and faithful.

2. True love is staying attracted to one person.
3. True love is acting like the two of you are one flesh.
4. True love leads to sex only in marriage.
5. True love preserves romance in marriage.
6. True love is both pure and permanent.

C. Comparison to modern love songs

Some of the metaphors in the song are a bit strange “your neck is like the tower of David,” “You’re teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn” “Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon”. These metaphors show that Solomon and his wife appreciate every detail of one another. When we compare these with modern love songs we can find even stranger metaphors.

QUESTIONS

1. Why can the book of Ecclesiastes be classified as a literary foil? Why might it be significant that scripture entertains other perspectives for the majority of the book? How can this posture towards other perspectives inform our engagement with other systems of thought?

2. Are there any benefits to thinking existentially? Why or why not? If yes, are there ways you can practice thinking from an existentialist, and yet Christian, point of view?
3. How is chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes a plot twist? Based on this reading, what does God want you to feel about your life? And how can you live differently as a result?
4. What are some of the challenges the couple in the song face prior to marriage? Are these similar or different to challenges couples face in the modern world?

6. Look back at the ways we can apply the Song of Songs today. Which application is most important in your life? If applicable, how can you implement this practice with your spouse?

17

The Divided Monarchy: Prophetical Books

LESSON OVERVIEW

While it is difficult to preach through the prophets it can be done well if some basic views are taken regarding the prophetic books in general.

I. PREACHING THE PROPHETS

A. Dependency on Pentateuch

The prophets are assuming the covenant law and they are merely explaining how God has been faithful to the covenant and the people have been unfaithful.

B. Lack of novelty

The prophets were not making up anything new, *per se*. They were merely trying to get the people of Israel to remember the covenant.

C. Watch out for liberal assumptions

If you read critical commentaries some of them will argue that the prophets do not quote any passages from the Torah. Because of this, they argue the Pentateuch was not yet in existence. So the Torah was only compiled by the 4th century BCE. This is not an accurate form of reasoning since we know that the concept of legal citation did not exist until the Roman imperial period.

D. Special stress on covenant sanctions

They are covenant enforcement mediators. They are dealing with the question of whether God will enforce his covenant. They are proclaiming that the time has finally come in which the covenant curses for disobedience will come upon the people. Israel will not escape the covenant curses.

E. Evidence followed by curse fulfillment

The prophets point out Israel's behavior to show how Israel broke the covenant and to convince them they are guilty.

F. "Rib Formula"

The prophets frequently argue that God is prosecuting Israel for her disobedience. Israel is on trial, God is the prosecuting attorney and the judge, and sometimes God is even the plaintiff.

G. Prophets as messengers

1. Messenger formula

2. Usually speaks in first person

3. Prophets are dictation documents

There is a high frequency of messenger formula (thus says the Lord) in the prophets.

4. Prophet is messenger in original delivery context

5. Implications

H. Visions as verbal content

Visions are not necessarily describing images prophets have seen. Rather, the images are like visual aids the support their verbal discourse. So the function of a descriptive vision is the images are mnemonic visual aids, and the verbal description is primary.

I. Eschatology in the Prophets

There are three great epochs the prophets discuss: (1) the past blessing on Israel; (2) the time of Exile; (3) the future restoration and blessing.

J. Personalizing, church-state confusion

The passages in the prophets are not predicting future events happening in our time.

K. Oracles against foreign nations

In every one of the prophets there is denunciation of other nations. The point of this is that God is not going to let the foreign nations do evil to Judah and Israel forever. He will bring judgment on the surrounding nations that have oppressed them.

L. Dramatized prophecy

Some prophets act out their speech. Ezekiel, for example, builds small cities out of dirt and clay before smashing them. Isaiah walks around naked like an Exile to predict the coming Exile.

II. SOME THEMES FROM HOSEA

A. A God of reversals and surprises

"I'm going to punish you, but in three days I will raise you up."

B. God's people loved and therefore chastened

If God loves you and you are doing wrong he is going to correct you.

C. Reliance upon human diplomacy vs. reliance on God

D. The determination of God to redeem a remnant

God will make sure the faithful are preserved.

E. Ritual no substitute for substance

F. Corruption of clergy a precursor to national degeneracy

G. Sin as infidelity to God

H. Sin and political instability

I. Divine forgiveness

III. OVERVIEW OF THE PROPHETS

The vast majority of the prophets are southern prophets. You have one northerner who goes to Assyria (Jonah), and one northerner who preaches in the north (Hosea). The prophets span about three centuries in Israel's history (760–460 BCE). This is the time period of the end of Israel, and Judah, the Exile, and the restoration of people returning to the land.

QUESTIONS

1. How are the prophets dependent on the Pentateuch? Why is this significant at this time period? How can this inform the way we read the law and the prophets?
2. What is dramatized prophecy? What does that reveal about God's way of communicating with people? How can this apply to Christian witness today?

3. God corrects those whom he loves. How does this make you feel? If this is the case does it change the way you think about committing sin?

18

The Divided Monarchy: Hosea, Amos and Jonah

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson provide an overview concerning three contemporary Prophets during the period of the divided monarchy at the end of the 8th Century BCE.

I. AMOS

He delivers prophetic oracles against foreign nations, and also against Judah and Israel. Four chapters of judgment oracles against Judah are recounted. This is followed up by five visions and a little biography of Amos. In this biography, we learn that he is a professional sheep breeder and fig farmer. Without any official discipleship he became empowered by the Spirit to prophesy.

A. Not a professional prophet

B. Restoration promise

II. HOSEA

Hosea preaches from 760–720BCE. We know this because Hosea discusses the victory of Assyria. Hosea's life is a prophetic symbolic act. His own family is used to depict God's marital relationship with Israel. There is a long section on judgment for the sins of the people, but the book concludes with the mercy of God (Chs. 14).

III. JONAH

A. Go to Nineveh – A hated enemy

B. Trying to flee from God

When Jonah flees his actions betray a common faulty theology in the Ancient Near East. It is likely Jonah thinks the gods had primary influence and power where they worshipped. He thinks God is localized so he flees to Joppa (a Philistine territory) hoping to escape from God's presence.

C. Thanksgiving inside a fish

D. Repentance of Nineveh

E. No thanksgiving outside the city

F. God's love and concern for all peoples

We know Jonah preached judgment and destruction against foreign enemies of Israel (2 Kings 14). So Jonah is disappointed that God wants to have compassion on a foreign enemy of Israel. The end of the book conveys the value of every individual whether an Israelite or a foreigner.

IV. ORIENTING DATA FOR AMOS

Amos is a southerner preaching in the north about 760 BCE. Amos predicts judgment and restoration to Israel.

A. The problem is moral

Morality effects your future. That is the main problem with the human condition. There is personal and social structural sin in the world.

B. Judah and Israel no better than enemies

Even God's chosen people can break the covenant and abandon God.

V. ORIENTING DATA FOR HOSEA

Hosea is a northerner preaching in the north about Israel's sin. His entire life is a symbolic actions to show how the people of Israel have abandoned their covenant with God.

A. Israel guilty of prostitution

B. Sin permeates culture, judgment follows, then restoration

QUESTIONS

1. Amos is not professionally trained, and yet God calls him to prophesy. How should this example impact the way the church thinks and feels about new believers? And about those who have never earned an accredited degree?
2. Jonah exhibits a disregard for foreign people. In what ways does the church sometime replicate this exclusive behavior? And how can we work for a church that reflects the heart of God?

3. Hosea shows that Israel has prostituted herself to other foreign gods. According to the end of the book, does the God of Israel divorce his spiritual wife or remain faithful to her? How should this impact the way we help others repent of sin? And how should this influence the way we feel about them?

19

Judah: 2 Kings

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson provides an overview of the background and content of 2 Kings.

I. THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

During this time period, the Assyrian Empire undergoes rapid expansion taking over the entire Ancient Near Eastern region. This occurs under the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III who came to power in 748 BCE and began raids into Israel in 745 BCE.

II. TIGLATH-PILESER III

A. Why expand?

It is an economic consideration. If a King want to gain wealth, in the ancient world you gain money from taxes, tolls, and tributes. Tiglath-Pileser forced countries he conquered to pay tribute to Assyria as the ruling empire.

B. Tax, toll and tribute

You can make roads and charge a toll to travelers.

III. OVERVIEW

A. Elijah and Elisha

The first eight chapters of 2 Kings are especially devoted to these two prophets. Elijah knew that Elisha would be his successor (2 Kings 2:9). The heir always receives the double portion of the inheritance, so this is a common idiom in the Ancient Near East for requesting inheritance. Elisha is acting to carry on Elijah's work (2 Kings 2:10).

B. Jehu massacres Baal / Ashara worshippers

This is a vast massacre of Baal and Ashara worshippers (2 Kings 9-10).

C. Focus on Kings of Judah (2 Kings 11-14)

D. Destruction of the north (2 Kings 15-17)

The Northern Kingdom is captured by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

E. Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah (2 Kings 18-24)

F. Fall of Jerusalem to Babylonians (2 Kings 25)

The Southern Kingdom is capture by the Babylonians in 586 BCE.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do both Israel and Judah ultimately experience exile according to the narrative of 2 Kings? How should this effect the way we think about our relationship with God?

2. When Elisha requests the double portion of Elijah's spirit what conclusions should we draw? How is this passage misused in some church traditions? What should we think instead?

20

Judah: Historical Overview

LESSON OVERVIEW

Historical context is vital when one moves to reading the prophets. After Solomon's death in 931 BCE, the kingdom of Israel undergoes an extended period of civil war as rivaling leaders take control of the northern and southern regions of the kingdom. Unfortunately, this split eventually becomes permanent. In the north the kings reigned for short periods and when compared with the southern kingdom of Judah this shows a tremendous amount of upheaval. This may have to do with the fact that the north is never ruled by a descendant of David. In addition, the north fails to worship at the Jerusalem temple, and decides instead to worship idols.

I. THE DIVIDED MONARCHY

A. A civil war never resolved

B. 40 kings – 20 north and 20 south

C. No decent northern kings, 8 decent southern kings

D. Increasing apostasy

E. Rise of classical prophecy

F. Heterodox south and north

G. One single orthodox prophet

II. WHAT ARE THE “HIGH PLACES”?

Some kings were good to an extent, but even these good ones often failed to remove the high places. These were improper worship shrines usually located on a hill and under a tree. A little altar would be there with a single priest who would invoke the idol and offer the sacrifice you had brought. It is a pagan worship shrine.

III. SYRO-EPHRAIMITE WAR (2 KINGS 16)

A. Tiglath-Pileser's conquests in Syria-Palestine

B. An anti-Assyrian alliance is formed

C. Ahaz refuses to join the alliance

Ahaz, the King of Judah, declined because Isaiah was preaching against this alliance.

D. Syria and Israel attack Judah

Because Ahaz declined, Syria and the northern kingdom attacked Judah.

E. Judah appeals to Assyria

Ahaz appealed to Assyria in disobedience to Isaiah's advice.

F. Israel attacked by Assyria and Judah

Hosea condemns this action by Judah against the north (Hosea 5-8).

G. Israel reduced to rump state

The ten northern tribes are now dissolved.

IV. ISAIAH 9

In this context of the Assyrian war, Isaiah prophesies that God will honor Zebulun and Naphtali, the Galilee of the Gentiles. A special child will be born who will reign on David's throne. Nazareth is in the middle of Zebulun, and Galilee is in the land of Naphtali so that becomes significant in Matthew's reading of Isaiah.

V. EMPHASES IN CHRONICLES

There are many parallel stories between Samuel and Kings, and Chronicles. While chronicles covers a similar historical period it has special emphases.

A. The Temple

The chronicler encourages those returning from Exile to remember the importance of the temple.

B. The South

C. The Monarchy

The chronicler selectively highlights the strengths of David and Solomon.

D. Theocracy

The chronicler shows how God superintends over events in history.

E. The Priesthood

F. Proper worship

G. Lineages

H. Reconstitute around the temple

I. Judean restoration

There is a remnant, and God is going to restore his people.

J. Faith and hope of God's reward

QUESTIONS

1. Why is historical context important in reading the prophets? If this historical overview helped you have a framework how can you use that to help others read the prophets?
2. What are the high places and why did some good kings fail to deal with them? What leadership lessons can be drawn from this failure? And how can we learn to deal with the so called high places in our lives?

3. Why is the chronicler providing a new history on the same period as Samuel and Kings? What is the point? How can the chronicler be understood as a prophet? And how might this knowledge change the way you read chronicles?

21

Judah: Isaiah, Micah and Nahum

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson an overview is provided for the prophetical books of Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum.

I. LATE EIGHTH CENTURY PROPHETS

A. Who is the issue?

Assyria is the nation God is employing to fulfill the covenant curses against Israel. So the sinful north and south are critiqued by the eighth century prophets for abandoning the covenant.

B. What are we dealing with?

1. Office of prophet

Prophets were treated as diplomats. They were to be given freedom of speech and respect as mediators between God and Israel.

2. Divine council reporter

3. Messenger

4. Intercessor

5. Preachers to the world

God is not just speaking to Israel, but to the surrounding nations as well.

6. Written prophecy – preservation

There were many prophets, but the era of classical prophecy (760–460 BCE) includes collecting, writing down, and preserving the words and acts of the Prophet.

C. Where is it all located?

Judah and Northern Israel.

D. When?

Around the time of the fall of Samaria (722 BCE)

E. Why are the Prophets preaching?

1. History of breaking God's covenant

2. Yahweh treated as national god

3. God's justice and judgment inviolable

4. Idolatry, social injustice, class divisions

5. Punishment of nations and individuals

As urbanization began to develop in this period class divisions began to develop. Cities like Samaria and Jerusalem became very large and consequently many farm workers moved to the city and thus became dependent on the urbanization system for sustenance. This increased the risk of exploitation by the upper classes upon the lower classes. Isaiah, Micah, Amos, Hosea, and Nahum all preached against the rich who exploited the poor.

II. ISAIAH

A. Sample themes in Isaiah

1. Creation ongoing

2. Apocalyptic concept begins

The idea that heavenly realities can be revealed to an individual prophet begins at this period in Israelite history (Isaiah 24, 27). This revelation recurs in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation.

3. Reuses Canaanite mythic themes (Isaiah 5)

4. Messiah and nation / Christ and church

In the servant songs (Isaiah 40-55), Israel and the Messiah are regularly interchanged.

5. The council of Yahweh

6. Advisor to the king

Isaiah is often consulting Hezekiah.

7. Blessing / curse / restoration blessing

8. All nations in plan of God (Isaiah 66)

9. God is running the show

10. Redemption dependent on divine opportunity

B. Overview of Isaiah

1. Introduction (Chs. 1-2)

2. Early prophecies (Chs. 3-4)

3. Inaugural vision (Chs. 5)

4. Present world vs. coming kingdom of God (Chs. 7-12)

5. Oracles against foreign nations (Chs. 13-23)

6. Isaianic Apocalypse (Chs. 24, 27)

7. Woes (Chs. 28-30)

**8. Judgment on Edom, joy for the redeemed
(Chs. 31-35)**

9. Historical chapters (Chs. 36-39)

**10. Looking forward to Exile and need to return
(Chs. 40-55)**

11.Zion's glory and shame (Chs. 56-66)

III. MICAH

Micah has three blocks of material.

C. First woe / weal (Chs. 1-2)

1. Punishment of Samaria and Judah

2. Reunification under Yahweh

D. Second woe / weal (Chs. 3-4)

1. Woe on corrupt leaders and corrupt Jerusalem

2. Complex set of weal oracles

E. The final cycle (Chs. 5-7)

1. Covenant lawsuit

2. Weal of lament

IV. NAHUM

A. This is a foreign nation oracle

The book of Nahum is an entire foreign nation oracle against Nineveh

B. Nahum is a southern prophet

Nahum is a southern prophet in the 7th century BCE.

C. Timing

D. What are some of the emphases

A great reversal is coming; Defeat of the prideful nation

E. Overview

God's righteous anger against Nineveh; Nineveh is extensively wicked

F. General Advice

QUESTIONS

1. Are any roles of the prophets applicable to us today? If so, how can we model our lives after the prophets? And speak to people in prophetic ways?

2. What are the prophets preaching for and against?
What can we learn from their prophetic message that is applicable to our world today?
3. What is the concept of apocalyptic? How did Christians (like the author of Revelation) think in apocalyptic ways similar to Isaiah? Should Christians today think in apocalyptic categories as well?

22

The Last Days: 2 Kings 22-25

LESSON OVERVIEW

An overview of the revival under King Josiah, the fall of King Josiah, and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem to Babylon.

I. THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

The empire covered a vast region in the Ancient Near East. It spanned from modern day Turkey south to Ethiopia, Egypt and some of Libya.

II. 2 KINGS 22-25

A. Foundation deposits

A revival occurs in Israel (2 Kings 22–23). Josiah is a boy king at eight years old. A discovery is made in the foundation deposits (like a modern day time capsule). Solomon apparently created this in 970 BCE. Then in 622 BCE people discover a copy of the law. This copy is brought to King Josiah at 26 years of age and he asks them to read it to him. Josiah tears his garments, requests the prophet Huldah to seek her advice. Josiah then has the law read to the entire people (2 Kings 23).

B. Covenant renewal

C. Josiah's big mistake

Josiah eliminated the baal and asherah altars from the Jerusalem temple. He got rid of the high places, and the priest who practiced there. He burnt and destroyed the asherah pole. He got rid of places of prostitution and places of child sacrifice. The nation had become completely corrupt. But he makes one big mistake. Josiah attempts to block the Egyptians from helping Assyria in its battle against the Babylonians (611-605 BCE). As a result, he is mortally wounded (609 BCE).

D. The Babylonian practice of exile

In the last days of Judah a succession of Kings reign in Jerusalem until the Exile (2 Kings 23-25). The Babylonians deported the leaders of Jerusalem so that no rebellion would occur (605 BCE). In 598 BCE, the Babylonians returned to exile Jehoiachin and many more thousands of people. After this, they installed Zedekiah (a puppet king) who did their will. Ten years later Zedekiah organized a rebellion that failed so that in 586 Jerusalem was besieged and fully taken by the Babylonians.

E. Jehoiachin at the King's table

According to Second Kings, Jehoiachin was released from prison in Babylon in 537 BCE. Some scholar thought this note was pious fiction until Donald Wiseman discovered a tablet in the British Museum that explains various exiled kings who were allowed to sit at the table of the Babylonian King. Among the various exiled Kings was listed none other than Jehoiachin.

QUESTIONS

1. How does Josiah respond when a copy of the law is discovered? How can this be an encouragement to the way we engage with scripture?

2. How might reading about Josiah's mistake foster humility in our own lives?

23

The Last Days: Jeremiah

LESSON OVERVIEW

Jeremiah begins his ministry in 627 BCE. This is five years before the great revival under Josiah in 622 BCE. So Jeremiah spans the time from the Assyrian domination to the invasion of Judah by Babylon. Unlike other prophets who predicted a short exile, Jeremiah preached a long, though not unending exile. Because of this Jeremiah was not popular with the government establishment of Jerusalem.

I. ORIENTING DATA

A. Long career as a prophet (627-585 BCE)

B. Emphases

1. Prophet to the nations

The great empires are changing. As a result, Jeremiah is addressing the empires and their rulers. God calls him to be a prophet to the surrounding nations (Jeremiah 4:1-5). God tells him that he will be with him to protect him.

2. God causes the Babylonian Invasion

God tells Jeremiah to instruct Judah not to fight the Babylonians. The Babylonians are sent by God to carry out the covenant curses on Judah for their unfaithfulness. Because of this, Jeremiah is hated by the government establishment in Jerusalem. Jeremiah reassured the people that the curse and judgment of Babylon would not last forever. He encourages them to build houses, to seek the peace of the city, and to multiply in number while in exile (Jeremiah 29).

C. Sub-themes

1. Blessing / curse / blessing pattern

Jeremiah explains that the blessing of God has been taken away, the curse has come, and it will last for 70 years before God's blessing returns.

2. The relationship of prophets and disciples

Jeremiah is our most detailed source for understanding the relationship between prophets and their disciples. In the book you can see how Jeremiah interacts with his prominent students, like Baruch. Jeremiah actually dictates some of his speech to Baruch who serves as his scribe. This helps explain the composition and preservation of prophetic literature (Jeremiah 36:2). In fact, most of the prophetic books are probably the written production of the prophets disciples.

D. Corrupt national leadership and its consequences

If the government does not lead righteously the people will follow their misleading.

E. Overview

The book has four sections:

1. Prophecy against Judah and Jerusalem (Chs. 1-25)

2. Biographical material related to Jeremiah (Chs. 26-45)

3. Foreign nations oracles (Chs. 46-51)

4. Historical conclusion (Chs. 52)

II. PROPHETS AND OPPOSITION

A. From false prophets

False prophets directly opposed Jeremiah offering a more pleasurable message. They had a better voice and more sophisticated speech. Hananiah, a false prophet, was well loved by the people (Jeremiah 28).

B. From the government

The powerful in government are not interested in Prophets who predict they will lose power because of their inherent corruption (Jeremiah 36).

C. From priests

The priests colluded with the government officials to maintain economic power. So it was in the vested interest of the priests to keep the temple establishment financially afloat. Jeremiah preached that the priest were robbing the people (Jeremiah 7).

D. From the people in general

Jeremiah was very unpopular with the people. The people wanted quick victory against Babylon, they wanted to practice idolatry, and so his message was not well received by the general public.

III. PROPHETIC LAMENT FORM

This is a literary form found a few dozen times in Jeremiah. This is a form of prophetic discourse that follows the form of a funeral service in the ancient world so it can be referred to as a funerary lament (2 Samuel 1). There are four elements:

A. A call to mourning

B. Direct address to the dead

C. Eulogy

Good words about the deceased

D. Loss to the survivors

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Jeremiah's message unpopular with the people? What are some aspects of the gospel message which are unpopular with people you talk to? How can Jeremiah be an example to you of your role in unbelievers lives?
2. Jeremiah likely dictated his prophetic speech to Baruch his scribe. How does this affect your view of scriptural composition? How should this view change the way you read scripture?

3. Who were the false prophets of Jeremiah's time? What was their message? Are there parallels to false prophetic messages in our day?

24

The Last Days: Joel, Obadiah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah

LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Stuart provides an overview of Joel, Obadiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah and how they each relate to end times and God's eternal reign.

I. JOEL

A. Locust invasion or human invasion?

Is Joel talking about a locust invasion? Or is he metaphorically describing the Babylonian invasion? It seems Joel is describing the Babylonians since he is describing national political concerns. On this view, the book can be dated to the mid 6th century BCE since it is describing the Babylonian invasion.

B. Themes

1. The Day of the Lord

In the Ancient Near East, there was a widespread notion that the greatest Kings could win a war in one day. This theme gets picked up by the biblical prophets who argue that since God is the greatest sovereign, he will always win in one day.

2. Oracles against foreign nations (3:1-8)

Joel predicts a judgment on nations who abuse Israel.

3. War oracles

Joel predicts battles between the nations and the Lord (3:9).

4. Democratization of the Spirit

After Joel describes God's victories over his enemies he predicts a future time of blessing (Joel 2:28). In this time God will give the gift of his Spirit to all people regardless of gender, age, status, or ethnicity.

II. OBADIAH

A. Oracle against Edom

Edom is not a large nation and yet it receives the most prophetic critique of any other nation. This is due to the rivalry between Jacob and Esau that continues from that time until the present day against the people of Judah.

B. Edom during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem

When the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem (588–586 BCE), the Edomites took the Judean farmlands and used their crops to pay tax and tribute to the Babylonian empire. The Edomites rejoiced at Judah's destruction and participated with the Babylonians against the people of Judah.

C. What God will do for Israel

God will bring Israel back from Exile and vindicate them against Edom.

III. HABAKKUK

Habakkuk can be dated to shortly after the Babylonian exile.

A. First complaint

He complains with God asking why God has allowed them to wipe out Israel. God responds by indicating the judgment on Israel is only temporary, and that Babylon too will fall.

B. Second complaint

C. The just shall live by faith

In the meantime, between judgment and restoration the righteous ones will live by faith trusting God to bring about justice and vindication in the end.

D. New exodus

The ultimate solution to Habakkuk's complaints is that God will bring about a new exodus wherein he will bring his people back into the land to live under his rule.

IV. ZEPHANIAH

A. Historical setting

He is preaching contemporaneous with Jeremiah during the reign of Josiah and prior to the great revival under Josiah of 622 BCE.

B. “Day of the Lord” prophecy

This prophecy contains hyperbolic statements to make sure the impact of the message is felt (Chs. 1-2). Zephaniah calls the people to repent and thus avoid the judgment against disobedient Israel. He puts Assyria and Israel in parallel saying they will both receive judgment. Finally, the book ends with predictions of restoration about a great future for the faithful remnant in Israel.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the “day” of the Lord significant? What does it convey about God’s sovereign strength against his enemies? How can this bring you hope in the midst of injustice you have experienced in your life?
2. Why was God upset with Edom? What does this reveal about how God views vindictive attitudes and behavior towards others? How can this inform the way you treat your enemies?

3. Habakkuk questions why God allowed evil to come upon Israel. How is there a mixture of judgment and hope in God's response to Habakkuk? How are the faithful to live in the midst of this? In what ways can this message be applied to the church today?

25

The Exile: Lamentations

LESSON OVERVIEW

Lamentations is a massive, huge, compound, complex lament that seeks to help God's people see God's goodness in the midst of tragedy.

I. ORIENTING DATA

A. Who wrote it?

It is potentially Jeremiah, and this fits with the traditional image of him as a weeping prophet. The LXX, and the Jewish Talmud also remember Jeremiah as the author.

B. Where would it have been written?

There is specific information about the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. So it is likely written in Jerusalem around that time. It expresses a plea for deliverance.

C. What is it about?

1. The Siege of Jerusalem (588-586 BCE)

2. The Exile

3. Hope for foreign help

4. Judah betrayed by its allies

II. LAMENTATIONS' FUNCTION IN THE BIBLE

A. Theodicy

This is an explanation of how something that looks wrong, is actually right because God's ways are different than ours. Tragedy can correlate with a God who loves, cares, and is in control.

B. God has not failed

In fact, God has been faithful to the covenant and the prophetic word of doom. Because of this the faithful readers of lamentations should remain faithful. Sin has an awful fate.

C. Need to move on

1. From Israel to Judaism

You can speak of Israelites prior to 586 BCE. After 586, the people are Jews up until the present day. After 1947, the people of Israel can be referred to as Israeli's.

2. From Old Covenant confidence to New Covenant hope

There is a hope now for the future restoration of the covenant.

3. From corporate to individual responsibility

D. How does God accomplish it

III. STRUCTURE OF LAMENTATIONS

A. Acrostic

Part of the form is acrostic—going through the alphabet on one topic. This is employed to heighten the lament. The enumeration of the lament in this way is cathartic. So chapter one has 22 verses (one for each letter in the Hebrew alphabet). This structure conveys tragedy in Hebrew tradition.

B. Chiastic

Lamentations exhibits a concentric structure of correspondence between the chapters:

1. Chapter 1 - Summary of the disaster

2. Chapter 2 - Explicit detail of the disaster

**3. Chapter 3 - Highly intense emotion and
promise of future restoration**

4. Chapter 4 - Explicit detail of the disaster

5. Chapter 5 - Summary of the disaster

IV. HOW WOULD YOU USE THIS BOOK?

This book can be used in several ways for the church:

Corporate lament

Praying for deliverance

Comfort for those lamenting

As an aid to accept God's will

A reminder of God's plan

V. DATING OF PROPHECIES

Before the exile, the prophetic books do not give us date specific information. Now, after the fall of Jerusalem, the prophets give us specific dates of prophecies. What is the reason for this? Why such an emphasis? The answer comes from Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25, 29). Jeremiah predicted 70 years exactly for the exile. This period begins with the destruction of the temple in 586 BCE. The prophets are counting down from 586 to 516 BCE. They believed the time would end with the restoration of the temple. So much of the later prophetic exhortation to complete the rebuilding of the temple seems to be related to Jeremiah's prophecy.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is Lamentations comforting to the Jewish people who experienced the destruction of Jerusalem? How can lamentations serve as a comfort to us today?
2. What is significant about the structure of Lamentations? How should the intentional arrangement of biblical texts encourage you as you study?

26

The Exile: Ezekiel

LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Stuart provides a brief overview of Ezekiel, his difficult message of impending judgment on Jerusalem and his uplifting message of the hope to come.

I. ORIENTING DATA

A. Overview

1. Fall of Jerusalem

There is a special emphasis on the fall of Jerusalem. This single theme is expressed in various ways for the first half of the book (Chs. 1-24). Ezekiel's main message is that the exile will not be short and it will not be partial. Hannaniah, the false prophet claimed the exile would be two years, but both Jeremiah and Ezekiel are predicting seventy years for the exile.

2. Oracle against foreign nations

Ezekiel contains oracles against Egypt, Tyre, and Magog.

3. New Jerusalem and New Temple

B. Author

Ezekiel is a priest and prophet from 593-571 BCE.

C. Emphases

Ezekiel emphasizes the judgment of God, the presence of God's glory, the idolatry in Jerusalem, the unfaithfulness of God's people, and the total and final victory of God's people.

II. THEMES AND ISSUES

A. Major themes

1. Give up your false hope

2. Advisor to the community

3. Interrelationship of leader and people

4. Universal divine sovereignty

This is especially emphasized in Ezekiel's vision of God's Chariot Throne (Chs. 1).

5. Hope in a hopeless situation

6. Individual and national responsibility

7. Unification as a prelude to eschatological fulfillment

Israel and Judah will be reunited under God's rule.

8. Corporate leadership of the Holy Spirit

9. Certainty of fulfillment of God's word

**10. Transformation of people prior to
eschatological fulfillment**

11. Transformation of the temple

12. Transformation of the Promised Land

13.The Presence of God

B. Highlights

C. Other Issues in Ezekiel

1. The turning of history

The exile period is a moment when history is turning. God's judgment has come in the exile and now the faithful remnant people are to wait for God to bring them back and restore their fortunes.

2. Apocalyptic

Ezekiel draws on apocalyptic elements.

3. Lament form

4. Dated prophecies

5. Prophecies not materialistic

Ezekiel uses the language of material restoration in an attempt to describe the complete transformation of the entire human and divine space.

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the fall of Jerusalem receive so much emphasis in Ezekiel? How does this serve to prepare readers for the second half of the book?

2. Ezekiel is prophesying at a turning point in history. Describe this turning point and what Ezekiel is attempting to convey to the people of Judah. How can we take hope in his message today?

27

The Exile: Daniel, Esther and Isaiah

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, Dr. Stuart describes the characteristics of apocalyptic literature and gives an overview of the books of Daniel, Esther, and the latter half of Isaiah.

I. OVERVIEW OF DANIEL

The main message of Daniel is that the kingdoms of the world are going to pass away, and in the end God's Kingdom is going to be established under the Messiah King. The book can be divided into two parts.

A. Stories about Daniel (Chs. 1-6)

B. Apocalyptic prophecy (Chs. 7-12)

II. ORIENTING DATA FOR DANIEL

A. Style factor

The stories in Daniel are folk stories so they are told in popular format but that does not necessarily mean everything about the stories is fiction. It has a large section of Aramaic which reflects life under the foreign regime.

B. Dating

The traditional date for Daniel is 6th century BCE. Others have argued for a 2nd century BCE date so that Daniel is a cypher for the Maccabean revolt.

III. APOCALYPTIC AS A CATEGORY

Apocalyptic is a type of literature that emphasizes God has revealed the reality behind current or near future events.

A. Visionary

There are a lot of visions.

B. Great sweep of history

It discusses the current time and the time leading to the end of the world.

C. Numerical coding

D. Symbols

E. Images

F. Encouragement

When life is difficult it is encouraging to know how you will be vindicated by God.

G. Prophet-angel / prophet-God dialogue

H. Hidden truth is revealed

This gives certainty for God's chosen people.

IV. OVERVIEW OF ESTHER

We should not use Esther as an exemplar, per se.

A. Content

B. Author

This is a story of how Jews escaped extermination during the reign of the Persian King Xerxes (486-464 BCE). Esther, a Jewish woman, became a queen and with the help of her step-father helped preserve the Jews.

C. Date

Probably written by a Jew in the 5th century BCE. The author has extensive knowledge of the Persian records so was likely a member of the civil service like Daniel. The text could have been written around 470 BCE or written down later since it cites the feast of Purim.

D. Emphasis

The book emphasizes how the Jewish people and Jewish identity survived in a hostile culture; The importance of remembering that God was merciful to a whole group of people.

V. THEMES AND ISSUES IN ESTHER

A. Those who did not return to Judah

Esther discusses the people who stayed behind living in the Persian empire.

B. Would God further punish His people

C. Accommodating pagan ways

These are Judeans who live in pagan ways in order to survive in a foreign land.

D. No mention of God

E. Not cited in New Testament

F. Laws of the Medes and Persians

VI. SECOND PART OF ISAIAH

A. Message

The main message is hopeful restoration after exile (Chs. 40-48). The text also focuses on the Messiah (Chs. 49-55). Finally, there is a strong emphasis on Zion as the homeland of the restored people (Chs. 56-66).

B. Zionism

The Isaianic eschatological view of Zion should be distinguished from the modern political movement of Zionism which calls for people to join the democratic nation-state of Israel.

C. Reverse of the exile / reverse of the curse

Isaiah expected God to reverse the curses of the exile. He specifically addresses Cyrus as the Persian King who will deliver the captives.

D. Comfort was there, salvation was not

Those who stayed in the Persian Empire were embracing comfort rather than the will of God to return to the land.

E. New Israel

Those who respond in faith are the new Israel.

F. New creation

G. Servant songs (Chs. 42-53)

The Servant is a Moses figure who will lead a new Israel in a new exodus.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the main message of Daniel? How can this message convey hope to us today? How would you communicate the message of Daniel to a new believer?
2. How should Esther be read and used? How should it not be used? What are the most pertinent aspects of Esther that can apply to your life?
3. What does the second part of Isaiah envision? Why is the second half so important for understanding the message of the entire book?

28

The Return: Background to the Post-Exilic Books

LESSON OVERVIEW

An overview of the background to the post-exilic books including the necessity of the temple and the role of the Persian empire in it's rebuilding.

I. 1 CHRONICLES 9

A. The genealogies

This is the end of the genealogy section. The chronicle begins with Adam and brings us to the time of the return from exile.

B. Importance of rebuilding the temple

The chronicler is deeply concerned to encourage the rebuilding of the temple. The chronicler highlights the righteous motives of Solomon in building the temple to inspire the people.

C. Major problems because the temple was destroyed

The temple was destroyed in the Babylonian siege (586 BCE) and had laid in ruins for fifty-six years. In 530 BCE, some of the exiles began to return and the chronicler attempts to encourage them about the temple since it is the place where God's presence rested in Israel. So the chronicler can be thought of as a prophet with a similar pro temple message as Haggai, and Zechariah.

II. THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

When the Persians took over the Babylonian empire (540 BCE) they ruled almost the entire known world. The empire extended from India to Greece, and from Afghanistan to Egypt. The Greeks resisted the Persians for hundreds of years.

A. Attitude toward conquered territories

When the Persians took over the Babylonian empire (540 BCE), they changed the rules for their conquered peoples. The Persians did not engage in exiling conquered peoples.

B. The decree of Cyrus

Because of this Cyrus issues a decree ordering that Jews may return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple and land.

C. Syncretism of Cyrus

Since Cyrus was syncretistic who worshipped multiple gods, he did not mind having the temple of the Jewish God restored.

III. CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Chronicles (530 BCE)

Haggai (520 BCE)

Zechariah (520–500 BCE)

Malachi (460 BCE)

Ezra (458 BCE)

Nehemiah (444 BCE)

QUESTIONS

1. What is highly important for the Chronicler? Why? How can this emphasis in Chronicles apply to the way we treat our own bodies today?
2. A syncretist allowed the Jews to return to their land and rebuild the temple. What do you think of this? Can this inform the way we think of our political leaders today?

29

The Return: Haggai and Zechariah

LESSON OVERVIEW

An overview of Haggai and Zechariah, the beginning of the rebuilding of the temple, the encouragement of God's people to put the things of God first, God's sovereignty, the need to be faithful, the nature of God's covenant, and God's promises being fulfilled.

IV. OVERVIEW OF HAGGAI

A. Three months in 520 BCE

All Haggai's prophecies take place within this short period of time.

B. Theme: Encourage the building of the temple

Haggai is encouraging Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Zerubbabel is the governor of Judah, a descendant of David who was appointed by the Persians at Daniel's guidance. Jeshua is the High Priest. So Haggai is encouraging the political and religious leadership in Jerusalem to finish the building of the temple.

C. Content

1. Problem unless temple is rebuilt

2. Promise of glory for future temple

3. Susceptibility of defilement

4. Power over the nations

D. Similarity to Zechariah

Zechariah is also encouraging the people to listen to Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

E. Why the emphasis on encouragement? (Ezra 3)

1. Started building in 538 BC

Zerubbabel and Jeshua are described as the first ones to lay the foundation of the temple and to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles (Ezra 3).

2. Zerubbabel and Jeshua caved when opposition came

The enemies of Judah and Benjamin came to offer help and when their help was not accepted they set out to discourage the people of Judah to rebuild the temple (Ezra 4:4).

3. Why support failures?

So in 520 BCE, which is 18 years later, Haggai needs to encourage the people to trust that God has chosen Zerubbabel and Jeshua to lead the final rebuilding efforts.

4. Public endorsement by God through prophets

V. THEMES IN HAGGAI

A. God and his work must take first place

B. Putting personal interests ahead of God is self-defeating.

C. God blesses those who put him first

D. Work is valued by how it conforms to God's will

VI. DATES IN HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH

Cyrus the great led the Persian empire to its greatness. Darius, a former military leader for the Persians became the empire and stabilized the entire kingdom and its borders within two years (522-520 BCE). This stabilizing of the empire provided latitude for the Jewish people to rebuild the temple.

VII. IV. ORIENTING DATA FOR ZECHARIAH

A. Content

Haggai and Zechariah worked together in Jerusalem. So it's not surprising that we get similar themes in both books. Zechariah employs more apocalyptic to convey his message. The people need to rebuild the temple, remain faithful, and trust God to empower their work. There are many messianic prophecies in this book.

B. Author and date

Zechariah covers the period of 520-516 BCE.

C. Emphases

His emphasis is to rebuild the temple by 516 BCE. He encourages Zerubbabel and Jeshua. He predicts the final victory of the messiah over all his enemies.

VIII. OVERVIEW OF ZECHARIAH

A. First vision

He sees horseman who have been riding around the world and making reports to a heavenly angel. They report that the whole world is stable. They are angels who return to Jerusalem to meet with this angel.

B. Second vision

He sees four horns and an angel helps to interpret the vision. The four horns are the four kingdoms (Assyria, Babylon, Egyptians, Persians). He then sees four farmers who have come to push out the four horns. This vision promises that the four kingdoms and their rule over God's people is over. It's given to provide comfort. There will now be a long period of stability.

C. Third vision

Zechariah sees a man attempting to measure Jerusalem but he cannot find the boundaries. This seems to suggest Jerusalem as a new nation will be a refuge for all nations.

D. Fourth vision

Zechariah sees the high priest Jeshua receive a change of clothing. This symbolizes Jeshua's acceptance as priest before God.

E. Fifth vision

Zechariah sees a lampstand with olive branches symbolizing Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the high priest.

F. Sixth vision

Zechariah sees a flying sickle (or scroll?) that symbolizes the removal of civil and religious strife. The Hebrew word for sickle is ambiguous. The word literally means “curve” so it could be a sickle, or a scroll.

G. Seventh vision

Zechariah sees a measuring basket with a woman in it. The woman represents evil that is deported to Babylon.

H. Final vision

Zechariah sees four horse drawn chariots that indicates God’s omnipotence all over the world.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the main message of Haggai? Why is his message so important in this period? Are there people in your life who need a similar encouraging message to complete something they have started?
2. If you were going to encourage someone using the book of Zechariah what passage would you take them to? And what would you say to them about that passage? Is there someone in your life you can do this for?

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The Return: Malachi, Ezra and Nehemiah

LESSON OVERVIEW

A look at the latter days, the closing of the prophetic cannon, and the books of Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

I. "THE LATTER DAYS"

The Latter days is not necessarily referring to events in our time. Rather it is often referring to events that will take place when Jesus of Nazareth comes on the scene, and the eschatological changes that occur as a result of his death resurrection, ascension, and giving of the Spirit. Perhaps the few things still to occur are the final messianic victory over his enemies and the resurrection of the all the dead.

A. Tribulation

There will be opposition to God's kingdom in the last days.

B. Return to the Lord

There will also be a great return to the Lord.

C. Messianic victory

The Messiah will defeat the rulers of the world. These are spiritual rulers.

D. The saints are raised from the dead

This is likely at the very end of days at the final resurrection.

E. New Covenant

This was inaugurated by Jesus at the last supper.

F. New Kingdom with a Davidic King

This condition has been fulfilled by Christ.

G. Gentiles experience deliverance

This happened during the ministry of Jesus and the early church (Acts 2, 15).

II. CLOSING OF THE PROPHETIC CANON

Malachi is the last of the prophets to be included in the biblical canon (460 BCE). The restoration is underway in Malachi's day, but there is still much more work to be done.

A. Restoration barely underway

1. Spiritually

2. Politically

The Persians are still in control, so the new exodus has not fully taken place yet.

3. Economically

B. Restoration depends upon Messianic arrival

C. Restoration the Holy Spirit

D. Restoration only begun by return to homeland

III. ORIENTING DATA FOR MALACHI

A. Content

Judgments, warning, and promise.

B. Date

Malachi preaches right before Ezra (460 BCE).

C. Emphases

Malachi emphasizes obedience to the covenant law. He also reiterates the prophetic expectation for the Messiah's arrival.

D. Disputation Style

After the brief superscription we encounter six disputations: (1) Against Edom; (2) Against Jerusalem priests; (3) Against the people of Judah; (4) Against the people for their unfaithfulness; (5) Against failure to offer tithes; (6) Against the people for failing to honor God. These six disputations have a recurrent structure:

1. Assertion

God makes an assertion

2. Objection

The people object

3. Response

God responds

4. Implication

God explains the implications

E. Language of Diplomacy: Love and Hate

In the Ancient Near East the language of diplomacy was love and hate. It did not express emotion per se, but rather allegiance to another nation. So when God says he loves Israel, he is saying they are his people to whom he has given allegiance. And when God says he hates Edom, he is saying they are not his people, and he makes no promise of allegiance towards them. So when God promises that he is going to eliminate Edom it is because they continue to do injustice to God's people.

IV. OVERVIEW OF MALACHI

A. Problems from enemies

B. The priesthood is corrupt

C. Divorce and remarriage

D. Not giving adequate tithes and offerings

E. Failure to fear and honor God

V. EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

Ezra first describes what happened between 538–458BCE (Ezra 1–6). In this period, the initial rebuilding attempt of the temple occurred. Then there was a long hiatus due to opposition before the building is finally completed. Ezra shows up in 458 BCE and Jerusalem is still in ruins (Ezra 7). Moreover, it is morally decrepit. So he addresses the divorce and remarriage problems in order to purify the people and be faithful to the covenant. Ezra returned as a priest, not a governor. Whereas Nehemiah returns as the governor (14 years after Ezra). So Nehemiah, comes to govern Judah (444 BCE).

A. Ezra

1. Rebuilding of the temple

2. Ezra arrives – Jerusalem still uninhabitable

3. Morally decrepit

B. Nehemiah

1. Nehemiah as Governor

2. Safety first

Rebuild the walls

3. Social injustice

4. Threat of neighbors attacking

5. Restore proper worship

Restore proper worship by getting legitimate temple priests

6. Covenant renewal

Nehemiah 8

7. Resettling Jerusalem

8. Problem with intermarriage again

QUESTIONS

1. What are the latter days? Why is it important to clarify this concept for Christians today? How can you help others understand this concept?

- Describe the achievement of Ezra and Nehemiah. What is taking place under their leadership? How can their leadership characteristics be a good and poor example of leadership strategy?