

## OLD TESTAMENT

### Lecture 3: Overview of the Old Testament as Theology

\*\*\*Pause\*\*\*

Purpose of Class: to read the Old Testament with better understanding and deeper joy and greater usefulness.

Goals: To give use of basic readings tools; To shrink the OT; To begin to answer common concerns with the OT; To expand our understanding of Jesus.... To help you love Jesus and others more freely and effectively. (Lk 24:27) To lead us to wonder. Ps 119:18

#### PRAY

[Themes: OT is always about the Goodness of God in Jesus; OT is a story of stories all retelling and pretelling One Story; OT is as important and applicable today as ever.]

\*\*\*end\*\*\*

## THE OLD TESTAMENT AS THEOLOGY

Goal:

### I. Problems

- A. Meaningless Readings. A common struggle: What is *this* supposed to MEAN? What's the point? Fault: too high (meet my need!...), too fast (...now!); low and (therefore) slow. IOUS
- B. Moralistic Readings. Do this—don't do that. Goal: be happy/make God happy. Fault: only God can make us happy/only Jesus makes God happy. // Better-living techniques will not satisfy our soul or our God.
- C. Mistaken Reading: God is not good and cannot be trusted. Fault: lack of understanding/patience with text; not too critical a reading, but an unwillingness to read on God's, that is, the Author's, terms. Ex. LOTR and Middle Earth.
- D. Example. Jephthah's Tragic Vow. Judges 11:30-40
  1. Meaningless? "Don't think too hard about this...nothing to see here...just keep moving."
  2. Moralistic? "People shouldn't make vows to God because people are dumb; like my spouse, neighbor, co-worker, person at church..." (Moralistic readings are usually applied to others, not ourselves.)
  3. Mistaken? "God is really weird and maybe not as good as He sometimes seems. I should be careful about relating to Him like a regular person."

II. Solution: Remember + Presuppose: “INSPIRATION” (def. 2 Tim 3:16, “God-breathed”): This was authorized BY GOD to tell us ABOUT GOD so that readers will TRUST AND LOVE GOD. God wants to tell us about Himself in order to draw us into His joy.

A. Therefore,

1. God wants to tell us ABOUT HIS LOVE...specifically about His love as embodied in Himself, that is, HIS SON.
2. God wants to tell us ABOUT OUR NEED for Him so that we will come to Him and love Him.
3. God wants to tell us ABOUT THE RESISTANCE that is in us, in the world (curse), and in the air (devils). This resistance pushes lies about God and about our need. As God exposes this resistance, He explains to us the right interpretation of hard things.

B. Summ: God wants to tell us about Himself in such a way that we will be drawn into His joy. That’s the point of the Bible and the point of everything in it.

C. In Other Words, God’s Love + Our Need + Flesh/World/Devil = GOSPEL, the ONE STORY that is pre-told and re-told throughout the Bible before and after Jesus.

D. Example. Jephthah. Isaiah 13-14:1.

1. What does it say?

a. Literature. Judges is a series of sermon illustrations.

What’s the sermon? Judges 2:11; 3:7; 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1—14:3, 7; 16:210—17:6; 21:25. What we are reading is not to be understood as divine-sanctioned behavior but as a result of human sin and stupidity. Even though God let Jephthah beat the Ammonites, this is in the context of Israel rejecting God. In the next story, Jephthah slaughters 42,000 Ephraimites. This is not good. God used him, but does not sanction his behavior.

b. Location.

5+ previous judges. 11:12-16. // Children of Lot + daughter. Deut 2:19, they’re okay to stay. // Prohibition against killing children as worship: Deut 12:29-34. // Tambourine and dancing? Ex 15:20, Miriam; next, for David; last, Jer 31:4 (cf. Ps 68:25).

2. What does it say about God? God uses wicked, dumb people to do His will. God doesn’t need perfection in us to do good through us.
3. About us? Just because God is doing good through us, doesn’t mean we’re free from major foolishness.

4. About resistance? Our sin and foolishness gets egged on so that we bring tragedy upon ourselves.
5. What did it mean? Return to the Lord with your whole heart.
6. How does it point to Jesus? We need a Deliverer who will save us all and not make any mistakes; who can protect us and not fail us.
7. What does it mean for us? Let Jesus be the Savior in all our saving works; promise nothing but what He has promised; vow nothing that He has not paid. Also, if you're going to save anyone, it will involve risks; but any work of ours always involves foolishness and unintended consequences.

III. So how does this all work together?

- A. We must put passages in their Literary and Historical context; IN ORDER TO interpret the passages Theologically.
    1. Without Theological Reading, we do not have interpretation, only observation. We are not making sense of it, only describing what we see.
    2. We MUST study to understand what it is saying (Literature), what it meant (Location), but only because we want to know what it means (Theology).
    3. What does it say? What did that mean? What does it mean? What is this? What is it about? What is it REALLY about?
  - B. Cycle: to seek meaning, forces us back to what it says. Cycle: Literature→History→Theology→Literature. The Theology influences the Literature which influences the way the History is presented, which becomes more Theological.
  - C. There is meaning in the text, but it is never fully discovered, fully accessible, or fully known to any one of us at any one time. We go deep, we return to simplicity, we see in new textual light, new emotional light. Confusion, Frustration, Doubts, Darkness are only new ways of reading the text; each sheds new light on the Bible. A commitment to reading will, over time, bring us through valleys and peaks. And it's difficult to say from which place we enjoy the best views.
- IV. HMWK: Pick one passage (any passage) in the OT: Say? Meant? Mean?
- V. Conclusion: Don't be content with time in the Bible that doesn't result in God looking good, in Jesus becoming more precious, and in wonder being born in your soul.