

# A Complete Course in the Old Testament by Fr. White

## Lesson 1

### What is the Old Testament?

**I – Intro: I am your tour guide. I will take you on a journey but time will not permit us to see every place. We will stop at some of the highlights and give you a firm foundation for further study.**

### II – What is the Old Testament?

- a. Consists of 2/3 of our current bible.
- b. Testament = Testamentum (Latin) or Berith (Hebrew)
- c. The testament is a covenant. Covenant is a social arrangement of the ancient world to establish a relationship between 2 parties. Expressed: *“I will be your God; you will be my people.”*
- d. God initially breaks into our world by making a covenant with Israel. In Christian circles this becomes known as the Old Covenant – the journey, adventure, unfolding, and living out of this relationship between God and his chosen people.
- e. Christians make the distinction between Old and New. Jesus brings about a New Covenant. *“This is the blood of the new and everlasting covenant”*....stated at the Last Supper. So that which speaks of the New Covenant in Jesus is called the New Testament and the story of Israel is known as the Old Testament.
- f. But both are important, inspired, and relevant for us today. Christians see the Old Testament being fulfilled in Jesus. So continuity with the Old is vitally important. The Old Testament has not been revoked and continues to have meaning. The Christian bible = the Old + New; not the Old against the New.

- g. The Old Testament is also known as the Hebrew Scriptures or 1<sup>st</sup> Testament.**

### **III – Division of the Books in the OT (Christian)**

- 1. HISTORICAL BOOKS – Genesis through Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Machabees, up to the time of Jesus. Speaks of the history of the journey of God with his people. Don't be misled by the term Historical. This does not automatically mean that everything here is strict history as we know it today.**
- 2. WISDOM BOOKS – Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, etc. – Practical insight on living today as a member of this covenant people.**
- 3. PROPHETIC BOOKS – How to live and prepare for the future.**

### **IV – Division of the Books in the OT (Jewish)**

- 1. LAW (TORAH) Mostly on the deliverance from Egypt to the Covenant at Sinai.**
- 2. PROPHETS (NEBIIM)**
- 3. WRITINGS (KETUBIM)**

**V – Which books are included in the Old Testament and considered to be divinely inspired? This gets us into the question of the CANON of Scripture.**

**CANON – QANEH = MEASURING STICK or reed or rod for measuring. The NORM by which we measure. CANON = that which is**

**recognized as normative and sacred for a particular religious group. Both Jews and Christians have a Canon.**

- **At the time of Christ there were multiple Jewish expressions. The Jewish Canon could vary from group to group and was still a bit fluid except for the PENTATEUCH (1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the bible). The Jews somewhere between 100 & 200 AD closed the Canon definitively.**
- **Early Christians used one of the larger (46 books) Jewish Canons based on the SEPTUAGINT (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). There was also a Palestinian Canon (39 books used by the Aramaic speaking Jews in Palestine.)**
- **The New Testament writers quoted from the Septuagint. And early Christians used this version as well until the Protestant Reformation. Reformers went back to the earlier Palestinian translation with its 39 books and that's how we get the difference between Protestant and Catholic versions of Scripture. Eastern Christians also use the larger Canon.**
- **Protestants then referred to these extra books as APOCROPHA whereas Catholics referred to them as DEUTEROCANONICAL (2<sup>nd</sup> Canon).**
- **The Deutero canonicals (Considered inspired by Roman and Eastern Christians):**
  - a. **Historical books: Tobit, Judith, I & II Machabees**
  - b. **Wisdom: Sirach, Wisdom,**
  - c. **Prophets: Baruch**
  - d. **Along with a couple of sections in the prophet Daniel**

## Lesson 2

### **A Catholic Approach to Biblical Studies**

**I – Encourages the balance between studying and praying it. Important to understand the historical and cultural background of the ancients as well as the literary forms which they used. But we don't stop there. We also let it speak to us as a community of faith.**

**II – The Bible is the Word of God. This is a central teaching of Christians and Jews.**

**III – How would Catholics and mainstream Protestants understand this?**

- a. The PRIMARY Word of God is Jesus himself. He is the Father's Word to the human race made flesh.**
- b. The Bible was preceded by the Church, which CANONIZED it. (Note how many fundamentalists do not take this seriously.)**
- c. The Word is primarily used to be proclaimed to the faith assembly as it gathers weekly.**
- d. It is not about ME and MY bible but about US. You didn't even have a private bible until the printing press.**
- e. Like Jesus, the bible has both a human side and a divine.**

#### **1. Human side:**

- Rooted in ancient history**
- Rooted in ancient cultures**
- Uses the literary forms of the day, which might differ from ours.**

- Must be studied with the same tools by which we would study any other ancient human document.

## 2. Divine side:

- It is a way in which God speaks to us.
- It is inspired or *spirit breathed, spirit led, spirit directed*.
- Spirit also involved in it being passed down through the centuries and the Spirit is also involved in our hearing it.

- f. The bible speaks the TRUTH but not scientific or historical truth necessarily. There are scientific and historical errors.

Dei Verbum from Vat. II affirms that the truth of the bible consists of the truths we need for our salvation.

The bible does not teach the realities of scientific truth but the truth we need to live our lives as God intended.

- g. For Christians, the bible is:

- AUTHORITATIVE
- NORMATIVE
- GOD IS PRAYED AND WORSHIPPED THROUGH IT
- A NOURISHMENT FOR FAITH AND LIFE OF THE CHURCH

## IV – (Back to the human side) Importance of studying literary forms

- When you read the 3 Little Pigs which begins with “*Once upon a time*” you know you are dealing with a fairy tale. Just so, when you read the story of Jonah being swallowed by a huge fish, you need to know that you are dealing with a parable rather than history.

- **Catholicism and mainline Protestantism call us to take the history, culture, and literary forms of the ancient world seriously.**

### Lesson 3

#### **Historical Settings of Ancient Israel**

##### **I – The 4 periods:**

- 1. THE FORMATIVE PERIOD – 1900 – 1,000BC**
- 2. MONARCHY – 1,000 – 587BC**
- 3. BABYLONIAN EXILE – 587 – 539BC**
- 4. RETURN – 539BC – time of Christ**

**A. FORMATIVE: 1900-1500BC (not easy to date exactly) Stories of Patriarchs in Genesis 12-50. These are the times of Israel's earliest ancestors prior to the migration into Egypt. This is where God is referred to as the God of our Fathers. These early ancestors are a part of the people of Canaan.**

**Famine will eventually drive them to Egypt where they will live for centuries and eventually be put under oppression. They cry to God for deliverance and so begins the Exodus (somewhere between 1300 and 1250BC) back to the land of Canaan.**

**The Exodus is the central moment of Israelite faith that establishes them as a community. They then begin to get to know this God as Yahweh. A special covenant is made between Yahweh and his people at Sinai. (Exodus through Deuteronomy speaks about these events and the ramifications of the covenant).**

**(1250 – 1200 ) Settlement in the land of Canaan through both conquest and gradual settlement. This is described in the books of Joshua, Judges, and I Sam. There is also an extra-biblical reference to the**

**people of Israel being in this area around this time. They initially live in the land as loosely organized tribes.**

**The Philistines who were settled along what is now known as the Gaza strip, started out as a small city-state. They were now growing in power and were putting pressure on the Israelites who were expanding along with them. Up till this time, if there were a military conflict a charismatic figure known as a Judge would rise up and put together a military campaign and lead the fighting. With the rise of Philistine power a cry goes up for a king, an army, and more organization.**

#### **B. THE MONARCHY (1,000BC).**

**Saul is made the 1<sup>st</sup> King followed by David. David rules in the south and his reign is the only time you have a united monarchy of the north and the south with all of the tribes. Jerusalem is his capitol. It was neutral territory not connected with any of the tribes. He was a master of organization.**

**Theologically we have Nathan the prophet making a covenant with him, which will now be the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important covenant for Israel. He promises David an heir to his throne (2 Sam. 7), a blessing for the House of David, and that the Kingdom of David will flow out to the nations. These stories can be found in 2 Samuel and I Kings.**

**David dies and his son Solomon takes over. Under him, the Kingdom reaches its heights with a great military, building campaign, the building of the Temple, trading, and fortified cities. Solomon is known for his great Wisdom, which is why so many of the Wisdom books are attributed to him.**

**He also has a shadow side. He reorganizes the territory around districts rather than tribes and tribal identity. He had high taxes, a draft, and forced labor. He had many wives who brought in their foreign gods. His son will soon make a greater mess of things. (See 2 Samuel and I Kings)**

**Solomon, who was putting the pressure on people, finally dies and his son Rehoboam takes over. He is advised to ease up and back off but decides to show whose boss. Between 930 & 922 the 10 tribes of the north (Israel) split off leaving him with two tribes in the south (Judah). The Davidic king only rules in the south. The north had a king but it was a king without a dynasty and promise of successor. Two roles of this king were to set up religious centers and a capital city. The religious centers were Bethel and Dan while Judah had the temple in the south. The capital city in the north became Samaria while the south had Jerusalem.**

**The north would also have its prophetic figures such as the famous Elijah and Elisha. Amos and Hosea would rise up between 750 and 722BC as the Assyrians started to become more powerful and expand. This was also a time of mass social injustice in the north toward the poor; a complaint which would occupy the prophet Amos.**

**Around 722 the north kingdom of Israel is defeated by Assyria. The people of the northern kingdom are scattered around the empire so they lose their identity. These tribes became known as the “lost tribes” since they were then absorbed into the ancient world. Judah was more stable at this time. King Ahaz of Judah was pressured into fighting the Assyrians but instead made a treaty with them to become a vassal of Assyria. It was either do this or be conquered like the north. Judah as a vassal**

would now have many restrictions put upon them.  
(See I Kings)

Later King Hezekiah of Judah wanted to revolt but this came to naught and they remained an Assyrian vassal.

Assyria began to crumble during the reign of Josiah King of Judah who was a great reformer. He brings about a religious reform in the 600's that included a massive cleaning out of the temple that had been used for pagan worship. It was then that they found in the Temple a Book of the Law, the core of which many scholars feel are parts of the Book of Deuteronomy.

After Assyria falls, Babylon rises to power. Jeremiah lived at this time and gave many warnings of what could be coming their way.

## **B. THE BABYLONIAN EXILE (See 2 Kings & Jeremiah)**

Judah falls to Babylon in 587BC. Whereas the Assyrians spread the conquered throughout the Middle East, Babylon deported people into exile. This would forever bring about the death of the monarchy.

This Exile was one of the greatest faith crises that the people ever knew. They lost their promised land and their temple. It looked as if God's promises came to nothing. It was in the Exile that major construction or putting together the OT writings took place. This is also where we begin to use the word Judaism for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Ezekiel will emerge as one of the major prophetic figures of this time.

## **C. THE RETURN**

**Between 538 & 539BC Babylon falls to Persia who is led by King Cyrus. He allowed the Hebrew people to return to their land. They go back in small numbers, plan to rebuild the Temple, but have no political independence. It is during this time that the priesthood would emerge among the locals for leadership. The 2<sup>nd</sup> temple is built which lasted until 70AD when it was destroyed by Rome. This is known as the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple period.**

**Nehemiah a political reformer and Ezra a religious reformer team up for a major religious reform of the people as well. (See the books of Ezra and Nehemiah)**

**Persian control comes to an end in 333BC with the arrival of the Greeks under Alexander the Great. In 175BC the Greek leader Antiochus IV Epiphanies arrives on the scene demanding to be worshiped as a god and to have a statue inserted in the Temple. This triggers off what has become known as the Maccabean Revolt where many Jews were persecuted and many died for the faith. (See I and II Maccabees) Finally, around 60BC Rome becomes powerful on the scene. Rome is in place during the time of Jesus and finally destroy the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple in 70AD. Since then, the Jews have not had a temple.**

**What we see here is wave after wave of oppressors ruling over these people.**

**So where do we get all this history?**

- 1. The bible itself – Problem is that you do not have history, as we know it today. We have theologically interpreted history where the emphasis is more on the theology.**
- 2. Archeology – Gives us some background to fill in the blanks**
- 3. We need to connect the two for a fuller picture but there will still be loose ends.**

## **Lesson 4**

### **The Pentateuch**

**1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of bible answering 4 questions for people of Israel:**

- 1. Who are we?**
- 2. How do we fit into this world?**
- 3. How do we live?**

**- Comes from 2 words:**

- 1. PENTA = 5**
- 2. TUKOS = Scrolls**

**- The 5 books:**

**Genesis = Beginnings**

**Exodus = Out on the road**

**Leviticus = Levites**

**Numbers = Census or numbering of the people**

**Deuteronomy = 2<sup>nd</sup> Law. A summary review looking back**

**- Also called TORAH = teaching/instruction (The legal and law materials are given within the narrative story).**

- **It is all about the COVENANT STORY: What God has done for his people and how they are to respond.**

### **THE KEY THEMES OF EACH BOOK:**

1. **GENESIS: Creation story of ch. 1 & 2 situates the people of Israel within a wider cosmic context. These are known as the PRIMEVAL STORIES. They continue with the creation and fall of man and the ongoing snowballing effect of sin in the earliest descendents of the 1<sup>st</sup> man and woman.**

**Abraham is called in ch. 12 and is given the promise by God that his descendents will number like the sands of the sea. The promise is continued to his immediate descendents of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These are known as the ANCESTORAL STORIES.**

**Due to famine in the land the descendents of Abraham settle in Egypt.**

2. **EXODUS: The Hebrews come under slavery and oppression in Egypt. God calls Moses to be their deliverer. He accepts the call and leads them out of Egypt into the desert. The high point, which gives the people their identity as a people, is the Covenant at Sinai. Besides God, Moses would be the Key human figure not only here but also in the entire Pentateuch. The Covenant at Sinai was the definitive founding moment of Hebrew History where they became the people of God.**
3. **LEVITICUS: Consists of obligations for holiness, details for feasts and rituals, moral teachings, etc.**

- 4. NUMBERS: Deals with the 40-year wandering in the desert as a punishment for their rebellion.**
  
- 5. DEUTERONOMY: Written as if it were a farewell discourse of Moses right before his death and before their entrance into the Promised Land. It looks back on all that has happened and reminds the people of the stipulations of their end of the covenant.**

### **MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP**

**Used to be taken for granted by Jews and Christians alike until we started to note some difficulties:**

- 1. The O.T. itself never made that claim.**
  
- 2. How does one write about their own death? Deuteronomy speaks of Moses' death.**
  
- 3. Gen. 21 & 26 mentions the Philistines. They were not known and did not come into a prominent place until after Moses.**
  
- 4. Genesis speaks of the northern most boundary of the land as Dan. According to Judges this was not the case till years later. Gives a hint that some of this material was written at a later date after Moses.**
  
- 5. Yahweh tells Moses that the Patriarchs did not know him by name. Yet Gen. 4:26 mentions the earliest humans invoking Yahweh by name.**
  
- 6. How many animals did Noah take into the Ark? Gen. 6 says 2 of each kind. Gen. 7 says 7 pair of clean and 1 pair of unclean. Sounds like two different people telling the story.**

7. One place says to boil the paschal lamb and another says not to. All of this gives evidence to several authors of the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the Bible.

## **WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF THE PENTATEUCH?**

### **Dating of the Pentateuch?**

**Oldest writings around 950BC – More recent around 587BC**

1. 2 Narrative sources
2. 2 collection of law sources

### **The 4 Source Theory of authorship of the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books**

1. “J” – Yahwist Source - (German word, Jave) Originates at the time of David in the 900’s and is the oldest source. It is written in narrative form. It is written in Judah and it tends to use the word, Yahweh for God.
2. “E” – Elohist Source – Comes from the Northern Kingdom, uses narrative form, and uses the term Elohim for God.
3. “D” – Deuteronomistic Source – Comes from the Northern Kingdom and deals with Laws as well as the negative consequences of wrong actions.
4. “P” – Priestly Source – These are the concerns of the temple priests during and after the Exile. It is a legalistic source and is from around 587BC.

**It is these various sources and authors that account for some of the reduplication and contradictions in stories.**

**So we see that the Pentateuch's end product took place over a long period of time and was put together by several authors in different locations.**

## **WHAT ABOUT THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE PENTATEUCH?**

- **Covers the earliest part of Israel's history. We have no other historical or archeological records to compare it with. This is all we have.**
- **At the time of the Monarchy you will get better historical accuracy, but not with these earlier stories. However, they are not all mythical. You do have historical memories preserved but the main concern of these writings is theological; who God is, what he has done, who we are as his people, and how do we live our lives in response.**

### **Lesson 5**

#### **The Creation Story – Genesis 1& 2**

- **Genesis 1 is from the Priestly writer. The style when read out loud has almost a liturgical rhythm to it.**
- **The creation stories are similar to other ancient creation myths and borrowed from them as well, but the theology is changed to reflect the God of Israel.**
- **Images of God that emerge in this account:**
  1. **God is like a CRAFTSMAN. (He stands back, admires his work, and says that it is good.)**

2. God is like a **MIGHTY KING** giving orders (Creation by his authoritative word.)
  3. God is like a **WARRIOR** defeating the chaos.
- We do not have here a notion of a “creation out of nothing.” That idea would come with later philosophy. Rather, God creates using the existing chaos and lifelessness.
  - Creation in 7 days. 7 days of 24 hrs. each was even questioned by the earliest Christian writers.
  - “God creates light.” The image you get here is that of the light of God’s presence putting limits on the darkness.
  - The fact that we have light before the sun is created is a red flag showing us that we are not dealing with a scientific account but with a mythical story meant to teach profound theological truths.
  - Creation of the sun, moon, and stars – They are not worshipped as they are by Israel’s neighbors.

What are the main theological truths of Genesis 1?

1. Everything that exists does so in relation to God.
2. All things are created **GOOD**.
3. Humans are created in God’s image
4. They are called to share in God’s creative activity.
5. Divine providence. God provides for humans.

## Lesson 6

### The Creation of Human Beings

I – Reminder that the *literary form* is mythical, not scientific.

- Science asks – HOW?
- Theology asks – WHY? (Interest in meaning and purpose)
- So there is room for evolution. Evolution does not have to be atheistic.
- 

**II – Since these accounts are interested in meaning, let's see what they say about what it means to be human.**

- **MAJOR POINT – We are made in the IMAGE of God**
  - a. Radical idea in its day.
  - b. Israel's neighbors had images of the gods but this was forbidden for Israelites. To make an image of God would make them like the other nations.
  - c. So God makes the image of himself and that image is man & woman.
  - d. The Original Sin would somehow involve humanity not being content with being image (#2 place). We wanted to be #1; God.
  - e. The word for human beings in these texts is ADAM = Human beings. It was not originally a proper name.

**III – How do we image God?**

1. **DOMINION = Share in God's reign over creation. Adam & Eve are presented as if King & Queen exercising dominion over the rest of creation in God's name. Later on the prophets would expound that this dominion involved Sedaka or justice. Justice involves God's order and means that humanity is responsible for seeing to it that there is harmony, peaceful order, and right relationships in God's creation. There are also ramifications here for ecology.**

- 2. BEING FERTIL AND MULTIPLYING = Giving life.**  
**Besides procreation, how else might we give life? (by words as God did by the Word.)**

**IV – Ramifications for Catholic tradition – Since all humans are created in the image and likeness of God, we all share a common human dignity which must be upheld at all costs. This is the basis of all Catholic social teaching.**

### **Lesson 7**

#### **Ancestral Stories**

**I – HISTORY BEGINS in chapter 12 of Gen. but it is not history as we know it.**

- **Ancestral stories were passed down orally through the generations by the 12 tribes. There are historical cores, but much theologizing. No on the spot reporters.**
- **Stories of the Patriarchs:**
  - a. **Abraham**
  - b. **Isaac**
  - c. **Jacob**
  - d. **Joseph**
- **These stories give us the ancestral origin of the 12 tribes as well as an explanation of how the people of Israel got down into Egypt in the first place.**

#### **II - THE CYCLES OF GEN. 12-50**

- a. **12-25 = ABRAHAM**
- b. **25-36=JACOB**
- c. **37-50=JOSEPH**

**Isaac does not have a cycle of his own but he is an important patriarch and has a prominent place in these stories.**

### **III – PATTERNS FOUND IN THESE STORIES**

- a. These stories carry the theme of God’s PROMISE**
- b. They show tensions and jealousies on the human level (The bible is one of the few ancient works that hangs out the dirty laundry of its heroes.)**
- c. They all speak of JOURNEYS and a people on the move.**
- d. They speak about the experience of God (THEOPHANIES).**

### **IV – THE ROLE OF GOD IN THESE STORIES**

- a. He intervenes in history. (Abraham stories show him intervening openly.)**
- b. He often intervenes behind the scenes even in the midst of human weakness and sinfulness. (This is his main action in the Joseph stories.)**
- c. The Joseph stories present more the norm of our experiences today.**

### **V – PATIARCHS AS PEOPLE OF FAITH**

- a. Abraham is called to step out in faith which involves letting go of the past and trusting in the future.**
- b. Abraham’s faith journey involves struggle, commitment, and hanging in there no matter what.**
- c. Jacob shows us a faith which involves wrestling with God. His name is later changed to ISRAEL. There are many biblical name changes. They all involve change of identity.**
- d. Joseph is presented as one who FEARS God and is a blessing to many including the Egyptians.**

## Lesson 8

### The Exodus

#### I – OVERALL THEOLOGY OF EXODUS

- **Yahweh is seen as:**
  - a. **Deliverer**
  - b. **One who is with them (Ex. 3)**
  - c. **One who cares for them**

#### II – THE DELIVERANCE

(2 stages: Plagues/Sea)

##### 1. The Plagues:

- **Frequent natural phenomena occurring in that area**
- **The miracle often occurs in the timing rather than interference in the laws of nature. Each plague – symbol of defeat of an Egyptian god.**
  
- **Pharaoh himself was considered a god (identified with the sun god)**
  
- **So this conflict will be a conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh.**

**PHARAOH = Slavery and oppression**

**YAHWEH = Freedom/liberation/new future**

**The key question is “who is in charge?” Later OT theology will flesh out the idea of Yahweh as Lord of history (Daniel).**

**The plagues and the deities = Yahweh’s judgment on the gods**

- 1. Nile = the god, Hapi**
- 2. Frogs = Goddess Heket (Often worshiped as a frog)**
- 3. Darkness = Sun god Re**
- 4. Death of 1<sup>st</sup> born. Pharaoh’s 1<sup>st</sup> born son would have a ceremony in which he was divinized. This represented judgment on the political system.**

**When Moses asked to let the people go he 1<sup>st</sup> asked this so that they may offer sacrifice to Yahweh. They were going to sacrifice goats and rams. Why? Because these were symbols of some of the gods worshiped in Egypt. Not just because God likes the smell of burnt flesh.**

## **2. The Deliverance**

**Pharaoh released the people and later regrets it and pursues them.**

**Biblical account speaks of almost 2 million people escaping (biblical numerology – symbolic meanings.) The large # means that these later writers see the whole people of Israel here in a symbolic way. Historically, it was probably a small group.**

## **THE RED/REED SEA**

- 1. The Hebrew word, *Mein Sup* could be translated either way. Most scholars feel it is the Reed Sea. (A very marshy sea at the time)**
- 2. What happened historically?**
  - a. We assume that it was how Cecil B. DeMill pictures it.**

**b. Problem: There are 3 different descriptions of this event in Exodus.**

- **Ex. 13-15 combines the Priestly and Yahwist accounts**
- **In one account, Moses lifts his rod and ZAP; the sea parts! In the other, you have a wind blowing all night.**
- **Ex. 15 – The Song of Miriam**
  - a. **One of the oldest pieces of literature in the OT (perhaps as far back as 1150BC?) based on linguistic studies. (Take a moment to actually read this song)**
  - b. **Note: Moses and the people are not even mentioned in the event; only the drowning of the Egyptians.**
  - c. **Blast from his Nostrils: = Wind**
  - d. **This discription sounds like a storm at sea in which possibly a raft of Egyptians drowned.**

**“Jahwist Tradition” – Wind blows all night drawing the sea back**

**“Priestly Tradition” – Instantaneous at the hand of Moses**

**Question: So, what do you think actually happened?**

**Answer: Who knows?**

## Lesson 9

### God Redeems His People at the Sea

#### I – The theology behind the crossing of the sea:

- a. Yahweh reveals Himself as “I am with you to deliver you.”
- b. Theology of “miracle.”
  - The biblical word is always “signs and wonders.”
  - SIGNS = That which points to something else.
  - WONDERS = Something awesome and wonderful
  - SIGNS + WONDERS= Wonderful acts full of meaning.
  
  - It is our contemporary non biblical definition of miracles which sees them as suspensions of the natural law. The ancients would have no concept of certain laws in nature so were more open to the wonder of it all than we are. In the ancient world, anything that would point to God can be seen as a sign. We need to get back to seeing our God constantly breaking into our lives and history even if some events can be explained.
  
  - So, what exactly happened? We will never find out from the bible. We have a distant memory that has a historical core but which is mythologized with the language of Cana and Babylon and theologized around Yahweh. All that we can say is that something marvelous happened in which they sensed the redeeming presence of Yahweh.

### **c. Yahweh as Redeemer**

**Redeemer = Goel. This is based on a social institution in later Israel. Families were more tightly bonded than they are today and they were obligated to help one another. The Goel would be the member of the family who would come to the help of anyone in the family in need.**

**This fits into the major theology of the entire OT. God through his Covenant is forming a family on the earth. Whenever that family is in trouble, he is the Goel who comes to their aid.**

## **Lesson 10**

### **Sinai Covenant**

#### **I – SINAI COVENANT**

##### **a. What is a Covenant?**

- **BERITH – In Hebrew**
- **Covenants were agreements between nations, tribes, city states or families.**
- **They were made between two parties and before witnesses**
- **They were made binding by oath or some other symbolic gesture.**
- **They were closely connected to religion since the gods of both parties would be invoked and also be expected to enable the CURSES should the covenant be violated.**
- **They were expressed in KINSHIP terminology**

- The goal was (shalom/peace)

**b. See EXODUS 24**

- The covenant between Yahweh and his people was a kinship Covenant in which Yahweh would forever say, “I will be your God and you shall be my people.”
- The RITUAL: Moses erects pillars & offers animal sacrifices to God.
- The people respond, “all that the Lord has said, we will do.”
- Moses sprinkles blood on the people.
- Why BLOOD? Life is in the blood. The two parties are giving their lives to each other. Since we share the same life, we are now the same family.
- Notice how similar this is to the ritual of the New Covenant; “This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the New and everlasting covenant.....”
- There is also a sharing in a meal or COMMUNION SACRIFICE in which the animal victim which was offered to Yahweh is now shared in a meal. Again, notice the similarity to our Eucharist.
- “GOD AND MAN AT TABLE ARE SAT DOWN.”
- They came to a sense that “we are God’s people and he is our God.

**c. The Covenant and its demands**

- Covenant involves a change of behavior. It involves OBLIGATIONS for living a new life.

- **Two areas of obligation:**
  1. **VERTICAL: Unto God; serving God; being faithful to God.**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> set of commandments demand no other god before him, honor to his holy name, and keeping holy the Sabbath.**
    - **Worship of false gods would be the foundational sin of all sins against the covenant. This does not mean atheism but the worship of other gods. In later history, the prophets would rail out at this very sin committed over and over by Israel.**
    - **Serving Yahweh also has to do with proper worship. Various liturgical instructions would later be outlined in Leviticus.**
  2. **HORIZONTAL: Unto one another (2<sup>nd</sup> set of commandments); demands of social justice. Of special concern was the treatment of the weakest of society such as widows, orphans, the poor, the oppressed, and the alien.**
    - **Yahweh treated THEM with love when oppressed in Egypt, now they must do so for others.**
    - **Once settled in the land however, they would be guilty of various sins against one another and the prophets would rail out at them.**
    - **This HORIZONTAL task involves the living out of the IMAGE OF GOD as found in Genesis.**
    - **Ex. 20-23 = Commandments & Laws**
    - **Historically it is hard to say how much was original at Sinai. Some of the regulations reflect later stages in Israelite development.**

- **The biblical word, commands, precepts of the law were constantly developed to meet new needs throughout the years in the historical journey of the people of Israel.**
- **All of this is taken together and attributed to Moses at Sinai.**
- **Ex. 32 – The Golden Calf incident:**
  - a. **A major idolatrous falling away from the covenant.**
  - b. **The calf represented the Egyptian god Apis. The Apis cult exalted sexual virility, orgies, and youthful power. (Nothing changes does it? Even then, the idols were power and sex.)**
  - c. **Israel was not commanded to offer any animal sacrifice till this time. The sacrifice of animals which symbolized so many Egyptian gods, represented a daily war on idolatry.**
- **Ex. 32-34 = Renewal of Covenant**
- **Conclusion: There were 2 foundational events for the people of Israel; the EXODUS and the SINAI COVENANT. EXODUS = FREEDOM FROM, freedom from oppression.**
- **SINAI = FREEDOM FOR, freedom for service of God.**

## Lesson 11

### **GOD PITCHES HIS TENT; TABERNACLES AMONG HIS PEOPLE**

**I – Exodus 25-31 = detailed instructions to Moses on building the Tabernacle and the Ark**

**II – Exodus 35-40 = How they went about constructing everything**

### **III – What were the Tabernacle and the Ark?**

**a. TABERNACLE = Portable tent shrine which they fold up and carry with them through their journey through the wilderness.**

**b. ARK OF THE COVENANT = Box carried on polls when transported. Two meanings:**

**1. Like a PORTABLE MOUNTSINAI – They worshipped around it blowing the shofar and using incense to represent the cloud & thunder of Sinai. It was the vessel of the REAL PRESENCE**

**2.FILING CABINET for the covenant tablets.**

### **IV – These final chapters also highlight importance of SABBATH.**

- **Sabbath is to be a sacred sign of covenant representing God resting on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. It is to be a day that is Holy and a day of rest (non work).**

**This reflects the creation story where God rested.**

### **V – The Construction: Ch. 35-40 reflects the story of creation in the construction of the Tabernacle. Same language used.**

- a. “It happened just as Moses commanded” (It happened just as God commanded in Genesis.)**

- b. We also see it in crossing of Red Sea. ((It happened just as God commanded)
- c. “Thus all the work was finished.” (Again, reflects Genesis)
- d. “Moses blessed it.” (“God blessed it.” As in Gen.)
- e. God chooses those who will work on the construction and fills them with his breath/spirit
- The RUACH ELOHIM (breath or spirit of God) blew over the waters at creation and blew over the Red Sea all night.
- f. Lamps must be set in place in the tent. (Lights must be set in the heavens).

#### **VI. When is the tabernacle finally ready so God can dwell there?**

- To be readied on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month = NEW YEAR’S DAY
- 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month is when the new creation begins in the Noah story.
- In the ancient world, New Year’s Day was the day to celebrate the New Creation.

#### **VII - The dwelling of God**

- Cloud of glory covers the tabernacle just as it did at Sinai
- He is truly present there as he was on Sinai.
- God’s presence will now go with them through this portable shrine as they journey to the Promised Land.

#### **VIII – Entire goal of Exodus = EMMANUEL = GOD DWELLING IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE**

- **This is the ultimate goal of the Genesis story. Creation is complete when you have a people authentically worshiping God.**

## **IX – HISTORICITY:**

**Very elaborate description of tabernacle. This is obviously coming from later descriptions of the Temple of Jerusalem read back to this time period. This period was foundational for things to come.**

**Note: The creation of the Tabernacle has much creation imagery in it. It is like a window on a computer. The big window is the story of creation. Reduce it and it brings into focus the tabernacle. Click on that and it enlarges to the big window of creation.**

**The Tabernacle is the place where creation is most complete. Our worship has ramifications for how we bring about the completion of God’s creation.**

## **X – GOD WILL ULTIMATELY TABERNACLE IN HIS FULNESS AMONG US IN THE COMING OF JESUS.**

### **Lesson 12**

## **NUMBERS & DEUTERONOMY**

### **I – Numbers**

- **After almost a year at Sinai, the people set out on the journey again. At this time a CENSUS is taken (hence NUMBERS)**

- Deals with 40 yr. wandering in the wilderness due to unfaithfulness.
- 40 is not literal. It is symbolic for AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME.
- PURPOSE = STRUGGLE, PURIFICATION, PREPARATION FOR SOMETHING GREATER.
- Concludes with leading them to PLAINS OF MOAB where they see the Promised Land and are ready to cross over.

## II – DEUTERONOMY

- Presented as Moses' review of the covenant and its obligations before entering Promised Land.
- Comes from 2 words:

DEUTERO = 2<sup>ND</sup>  
 NOMOS = LAW

- Deuteronomy Contains:
  - a. Covenant behavior material
  - b. Speech material. (Preached law rather than book law) 3 speeches in all.
  - c. Exhortations to faithfulness
- Historical background:
  - a. In the 700's under grave tensions from Assyria, King Hezekiah in the south began a religious reform exhorting people not to worship Assyrian gods.
  - b. After his reign, his son Manasseh does opposite and encourages religious syncretism instead. This would include Baal worship, worship of Assyrian gods, astrology and divination in the Temple itself, and child sacrifice. (At this time Yahwism almost completely disappears.)

- c. He is succeeded by his son Amnon
  - d. Succeeded by Josiah
  - e. Josiah begins a politico-religious revival.
  - f. Massive project of cleaning out the implements of idolatry from the Temple.
  - g. In clean up process, a Book of the Law is discovered giving direction to this revival. This contained the core of the book of Deuteronomy. Ch. 12-26 & 28
  - h. Josiah calls for a Covenant Renewal Ceremony, which became known as the **JOSIAH OR DEUTERONOMIC REFORM**.
  - i. Josiah does everything the book says to do for the reform.
- How did the book get there?
- a. Temple is in south but material from this book comes from the **NORTH**.
    1. Horeb is used instead of Sinai
    2. Other distinctive vocabulary also indicates the north.
    3. Stress on **MOSES** as vehicle for God. The southern kingdom would have emphasized the **DAVIDIC** covenant.
  - b. It would have gotten there from the Assyrian persecution in the north. Some escaped to the south and probably brought this material with them for Hezekiah's reform.

- c. Up north, this material seems to originate with the preaching of Levites or prophets at shrines during covenant renewal ceremonies.
- How was the Covenant structure different from Sinai?
    - a. Sinai was more of a FAMILY TREATY which was relational.
    - b. Deuteronomy was like an Assyrian Vassal Treaty containing stipulations, blessings, curses, etc.
    - c. Main purpose = ASSYRIA is not your Lord. YAHWEH is.

### Lesson 13

#### Deuteronomy; lessons & themes

1. **ELECTION: God's chosen people (quahal Yahweh or assembly of God) = those called out to hear & live out the Word.**
2. **SHEMA Israel: Hear O Israel. (Involves a hearing with one's whole heart; listening with the core of one's being. Biblically, the heart is the center of one's being. The opposite would be HARKENING OF HEARTS; another OT theme.**
3. **Listening involves HARKENING & OBEDIENCE.**
4. **Importance of REMEMBERING – (Sin = forgetfulness). This is why we need weekly Mass; to remember the mighty deeds of our salvation at a memorial meal.**

**This is a call to remember the STORY. Remembrance of the past brings those events into the present. They become real today.**

**There is a sense in which God made a covenant with all of us at Horeb even if we weren't there. (Very similar to the Eucharist) It's as if I were at Calvary and the empty tomb.**

**Remembering also gives us our identity. We know who we are, where we've come from, and where we are going. We also remember who we are not. We can use the covenant memory to critique our present behavior.**

- 5. Yahweh alone is God. This is the Shema recited even to this day by Jews. The covenant stipulates harsh consequences for worshipping false gods.**
- 6. God's love – His choice and election is not based on our power or righteousness but on God's love alone. See Deut. 10**
- 7. Keep your worship pure. Your worship also involves your quality of relationships and how you treat others.**
- 8. Blessings and curses are stipulated according to our willingness to obey. This was typical of Vassal treaties which Deut. is modeled on. See Deut. 30**
- 9. The danger here is in having a too simplistic a view. I've been good, so I deserve the blessings. "I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine." The OT would teach early on that bad things do happen to good people. God's ways are mysterious and not that black or white. Job would be the major work that would deal with this topic.**

## **Lesson 14**

### **Deuteronomic History**

**I – Deuteronomy is like an introduction to the historical books which give a survey of Israel's History:**

- **JOSHUA**
- **JUDGES**
- **SAMEL**
- **KINGS**
- **CHRONICLES**

**This history takes us to the time of the Babylonian Exile.**

**It is called Deuteronomic history in that this is the theological lens through which this history is read.**

#### **DEUTERONOMIC THEOLOGY:**

- **Infidelity invokes the curses. Sin leads to chastisement.**
- **Repentance invokes the blessings.**

**Toward the end of this history as recorded in Kings, Josiah is praised as a reformer who did everything called for by Deuteronomy.**

#### **The Historical Books start with JOSHUA:**

- **Servant of Moses**
- **Leads them to Promised Land**
- **Main theology: Call for commitment to covenant and covenant renewal ceremony (Covenant renewal ceremonies in the Christian era would be compared to all other sacraments after Baptism).**

#### **JUDGES:**

- **Charismatic leaders raised up by God before the kingship came into being.**
- **Contains many failure and grace stories.**

**Need for a King emerges and Saul is chosen. He fails and then David is chosen.**

## **KINGS:**

**Cover the death of David, the reign of Solomon, splitting of the Kingdom, reform of Josiah, and ending with the Exile.**

## **II – Sources for the Historical Books:**

- 1. Hero Sagas (Such as the story of Samson)**
- 2. Legends**
- 3. Literary sources from court archives**
- 4. Oral traditions**
- 5. Elijah/Elisha stories from the North**
- 6. Speeches**
- 7. Summary statements**

**Scribes compiled, edited, added their own ideas, and theologized.**

## **III – Emergence of prophetic figures**

- 1. Moses (referred to as prophet in Deut.)**
- 2. Elijah**
- 3. Elisha**

**Purpose of prophets: To call Israel back to repentance and covenant fidelity. Also were messengers of hope.**

## Lesson 15

### The Kingdom of David

We are now moving into the third covenant concerning the people of Israel.

#### I – In the context of Israel’s theology of *Kingship*

- a. Originally – GOD alone is KING
- b. Seen as the Lord/King of all creation in Genesis
- c. He is TRUE king of Israel who issues his royal decrees.
- d. His throne on earth is the meeting Tent & Arc of Covenant; later the Temple.
- e. This is known as a THEOCRACY
- f. King’s role = continue God’s creative role of bringing about justice (God’s order) and peace.
- g. Through the King’s dominion, and working for justice and peace, he shows forth the image and likeness of God.
- h. Later Israel and Christianity would gain insight that “we all” show forth his image and likeness; not just special people. We are all called to work for peace and justice.
- i. The King was called “the son” of Yahweh. Also called “the anointed.”
- j. According to God’s dream, the King of Israel would be his vicar on earth.

#### II – Beginnings of Kingship in Israel.

- a. Originally, God alone is King**
- b. Then a cry to have a King like the other nations rises up.**
- c. King was originally not elected. Was chosen by God. Similar to the Judges in earlier books. Later the King would come into power through descendency.**
- d. Saul is 1<sup>st</sup> King chosen. Starts off good but winds up bad**
- e. David is chosen by God and anointed by Samuel – Stories of David can be found in I & II Samuel, I & II Kings and Chronicles.**

### **III – Reign of David**

- a. Beginning around 1,000 BC**
- b. A master political/military genius**
- c. Accomplishments:**
  - Captures Canaanite city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites**
  - Jerusalem becomes his capital and is known as City of David**
  - Creates a united nation, one time and only time. (Unity would fall apart after the reign of his son Solomon & Kingdom would be divided into Israel in the North and Judah in the south.)**
  - Defeat of Philistines**
  - Brings the Arc of the Covenant into the city & begins plans for the building of the Temple. (Will be completed under the reign of his son, Solomon who began massive trade with other nations bringing in the riches into Jerusalem.) The capital will now become a religious center.**

- The Old Testament now begins to be written down at this time.
- d. **Known as a man after God's own heart but bible hangs out his dirty laundry. (Affair with Beersheba, killing her husband Uriah, etc.) Books of Chronicles written after the return from the Babylonian Exile tended to whitewash this side of David.**
- e. **An everlasting blessing is promised his dynasty through the prophet, Nathan.**
- f. **Read 2 Sam. 7**
- g. **Synopsis: David wants to build God a house and God reverses it. He will establish a house for David.**
- h. **Here a covenant is made with David and his house. It will be an everlasting covenant. (Here we see a modification of the Mosaic covenant with its big IF'S. Sinai depends on the people keeping their part.) God will forever be with the house of David and accomplish great things through it even though his successors may fail. (Belief in Messiah develops later as they see the unfaithfulness of the successors. Belief emerges that in the future will come the great King like David who will be faithful and defeat Israel's enemies.)**
- i. **Also modified in that this represents a universal thrust unlike the Sinai covenant which was sectarian.**
- j. **All the tribes of the earth will be blessed in David just as in Abraham.**
- k. **This idea of the everlasting faithfulness of God will be reflected in the primeval stories of Genesis written at this time.**

#### **IV – Conclusion**

**David is the ideal King against which all successors will be measured.**

**He is the ideal King against which the future messianic king will be measured.**

## **Lesson 16**

### **The Babylonians are Coming The 2<sup>nd</sup> Wilderness experience**

#### **I – Intro**

- a. Babylonian Exile is dated 587-537BC**
- b. Some were of the opinion that this did not happen & was made up by Israelites. Archeological info has proved them wrong. Babylonian records mention the Jewish exiles.**
- c. Ancient practice of deporting conquered peoples:**
  - Detach from land and destroy resistance**
  - Suppress a sense of national identity**

#### **II - Theological significance:**

- Warning from Jeremiah that this will happen.**
- Chastisement for sin. They would be in exile until they were finally purified. (As in a 2<sup>nd</sup> wilderness experience)**
- What sins? (False gods were brought to the borders of the temple. Magic, fortune telling and false prophets also)**

- **Extensive work was done on the sacred books during the exile. ( Most of the historical books were collected and edited. The Priestly authors gathered the traditions from the Yahwist and Elohist schools and gave them their own stamp, and editing. This was their major work since they could no longer offer sacrifice. Major construction was done on the Pentateuch. Two major prophetic books Ezekiel and Isaiah 40-55 were written at this time. These books would all be colored by this disaster and would give theological background explaining it.)**
- **Synagogue worship was developed for 1<sup>st</sup> time without the temple or the land.**
- **Significant in that it shows the survival of national and religious consciousness.**

### **III- Life in Babylon**

- a. **Relative freedom**
- b. **Opportunities to even get ahead**

### **IV – Exile’s end**

- a. **562 Nebuchadnezzar dies. His sons are not able to match him. The empire slowly begins to fall apart.**
- b. **The Persians then emerge on the scene as the next world power under King Cyrus.**
- c. **Ruled the largest empire that part of the world ever seen and would be a matter of time before Babylon would be in trouble.**
- d. **We found an account from Cyrus of his conquest of Babylon in the ruins of that city.**

- e. **Finally, Cyrus allows the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild. He is looked upon as an instrument of God in the Scriptures.**

## **LESSON 17**

### **The Wisdom Tradition**

#### **I – GENERAL BACKGROUND**

- **The Wisdom tradition becomes prominent after Exile**
- **Wise teachers (Sages) – Important source of religious teaching**

#### **The TEACHERS in Israel:**

- a. **PROPHETS – The teachers of VISION**
- b. **PRIESTS – The teachers of TORAH**
- c. **SAGES – The teachers of common sense COUNSEL**

- **Meaning of the word Wisdom – HOKMA (Hebrew)/SOPHIA (Greek)  
(The Wisdom books give skills for living life or coping) Image in Proverbs of a rudder which steers a ship.**

#### **Characteristics of Wisdom:**

##### **1. Involves:**

- **Intelligence**
- **Common Sense**
- **Sound judgment**

- **Shrewdness**
- 2. **Fruit of the quest for meaning in life.**
- 3. **Gift from God which seeks us out. (Proverbs 1-9)**  
**(Remaining chapters of Proverbs involve us seeking it out.)**
- 4. **Involves self understanding in relationship to:**
  - **Things**
  - **Others**
  - **God**

**Overall theme is “*self in relationship.*”**

#### **Unique Characteristics of Wisdom:**

1. **Says very little about distinct Israelite institutions. Speaks more to humans as humans. Has a universal ring like proverbs of other cultures.**
2. **Theme of God working through human experience rather than breaking in.**

## **II – WISDOM IN THE BIBLE**

### **3 levels:**

- **Wisdom literature**
- **Wisdom movement**
- **Wisdom attitude**

### **A. WISDOM LITERATURE**

**OT = Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, some of the Psalms, Song of Solomon**

**Catholic Bible also includes: Sirach (180BC) & Wisdom (written around birth of Christ)**

**New Testament Wisdom = Parables (Jesus was a Wisdom teacher telling people to look at the world around them and let that world teach them.) The Epistle of James would also be an example of New Testament Wisdom type literature.**

## **B. WISDOM MOVEMENT**

- 1. Child training material (Family oriented)**
- 2. Influential teaching from the Court/Temple Scribes**

## **C. WISDOM ATTITUDE**

- 1. Openness to learning from life experiences. (See Prov. 24:30-34) Pattern=I gazed, I saw, I learned. Emphasis on ongoing lifelong learning.**
- 2. Time of Christ & after, the rabbis were seen as wise figures & there is a whole body of wise Rabbinical sayings.**

**[Who are the rabbis? They are scholars and descendants of the scribes & Pharisees. We mistake them for the Jewish equivalent of priests. You do not need a rabbi to have a synagogue.]**

- 3. This Wisdom attitude was instilled in the children. Perhaps the Wisdom texts of the Bible were the textbooks used in educating Hebrew adolescents.**

### III – The Wisdom tradition and theology

1. Among ancient Hebrews, the sacred & the secular were one.
2. Basic theological principle – “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.*”

**FEAR = AWE, FAITH**

3. Wisdom books also highlight *the fool* and *foolishness*. Without God, the search for knowledge can be destructive. The *fool* is the one who behaves *destructively* in the human community.
4. The idea is that humans are limited and always will be.
5. Wisdom theology is rooted in CREATION. The cosmos was created by God’s Wisdom. His wisdom founded the earth and established the heavens. (Image of God as a *wise architect* in creation.)
6. Wisdom personified – LADY WISDOM (Similar to Francis’ Lady Poverty) Described like a person separate from God. [In later Trinitarian theology, the personified Wisdom would be applied to the pre-existing Christ. OT also mentions the spirit of Yahweh. Christians see seeds of the Trinity here but Jews do not.]
7. Wisdom enters our hearts as a *pure gift from God*. It comes to us in the highways, byways, shopping centers, and human interactions of daily life.
8. Wisdom leads to the fullness of a good life BUT they had to wrestle also with the fact that **BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE** . This is known as THEODICY. The Book of Job (a long, drawn out parable) would be the main text for this.

**Explanations for suffering:**

- a. It tests us.
  - b. Punishment for sins (Job's friends & John. 9)
  - c. Mysteriousness of God's ways
9. The basic spirituality of Wisdom – Spirituality of everyday life and relationships.

## **SUMMARY OF WISDOM BOOKS**

### **1. The Book of JOB**

- a. Written somewhere between 7<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century BC
- b. Attributed to Solomon but author is unknown
- c. Deals with **THEODICY: Why the innocent suffer. The just suffer in this life and it tests their fidelity. Our finite minds cannot probe the depth of God.**
- d. Literary form: Parable containing speeches
- e. Synopsis:
  - Job = pious/upright oriental chieftain who is prosperous
  - Sudden turn of fortune and loses it all.
  - Job does not curse God
  - Friends try to console him & help him figure out how he had sinned.
  - Job longs for death
  - Begs to hear from God the cause of his suffering.
  - God answers not by giving reasons but talking about his omniscience and power.
  - In humility Job trusts in God and finds strength in suffering

### **2. PROVERBS**

- a. **Primary purpose – to teach wisdom**
- b. **Other themes: God’s omniscience, power, providence, goodness**
- c. **Directed to the young**
- d. **Attributed to Solomon but probably has many contributors.**
- e. **Final edition probably ready by early 5<sup>th</sup> century.**

### **3. ECCLESIASTES**

- a. **Title = One who convenes the assembly**
- b. **Treatise on the *vanity of all things*.**
- c. **There *is* a divine plan, but get used to the fact that it is hidden from the mind and understanding of man.**
- d. **All the seeking here below will never find happiness.**
- e. **Talks about suffering and the fact that riches and pleasures avail to nothing.**
- f. **Existence can be monotonous, enjoyment fleeting. Life is like a puzzle which we cannot solve.**
- g. **Enjoyment of the pleasures of the world are useless unless we give due thanks to the creator.**
- h. **True wisdom will not be found in this world. It can only be perceived through faith. (Read Eccles. 3)**
- i. **Again, attributed to Solomon as an honor but we don’t know the author.**

- j. Written about 3 centuries before Christ and is different from the style of any other book in the OT.**

#### **4. SONG OF SONGS**

- a. You'll see these readings at weddings and in mystical literature**
- b. Song of Songs = Greatest of Songs**
- c. Poetry of marital love and the erotic love between husband and wife.**
- d. Was also applied as an allegory expressing the love between God and his people. Nuptial imagery was used by such prophets as Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Ezekiel. Israel is the BRIDE of Yahweh. Idolatry is playing the HARLOT.**
- e. Attributed to Solomon but style = after the Exile. The author is unknown.**
- f. The New Testament would also use marriage images to talk about the relationship between Christ and his Church.**
- g. Later mystics would use this to speak of "mystical marriage" or the deepest union between Christ and the individual soul.**

#### **5. WISDOM**

- a. Unknown author who was a Jewish member of the community of Alexandria in Egypt. Written about 100 yrs. Before Christ.**
- b. Writes in Greek and speaks in the person of Solomon**
- c. Shows profound knowledge of OT**

**d. Main purpose: Edify the people in the midst of oppression and suffering.**

**e. Specific topics:**

- **Glories of the Exodus**
- **Idolatry and its folly**
- **Justice in the rewarding and punishing of individual soul**

## **6. SIRACH (ECCLESIASTICUS)**

**a. Only author we know specifically**

**b. Jesus son of Eleazar, son of Sirach – Sage who lived in Jerusalem. (Written between 200 & 175).**

**c. Sirach is also known as Ecclesiasticus – Church book – Due to extensive use church made of it in preparing new members in moral teaching.**

**d. Topics:**

- **The individual**
- **The family**
- **Community relationships**
- **Relationship with God**
- **Friendship, education, poverty and wealth and worship**
- **Eulogies of the great heroes of Israel**
- **Moral instruction**
- **Gratitude to God**

- Not included in Hebrew bible after 1<sup>st</sup> century nor accepted by protestants

## LESSON 18

### The Prophets

#### I – Intro material

- PROPHEMIC BOOKS – NABIIM in Hebrew
- Divided into MAJOR & MINOR based on size.

Ex. Of Major: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.

Ex. Of Minor: Amos, Hosea, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Habbacuk, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Baruch, Micah, and Malachi.

#### II – How they came to be written

**AUTHORSHIP:** Prophets were preachers, not writers. Written works by their disciples.

#### 3 phases:

1. Prophet's actual ministry
2. Collection of their words
3. Final writing by disciples
4. At times added to by other prophetic voices that were in harmony with the original eg. Is. 1-39, Is. 40 – 55 – During Exile

**Is. 56-66 – Post Exilic. Book of Isaiah spans 250 years. It consists of the words of three prophets (All flavored by the vision of the original Isaiah.)**

### **III – What is a prophet?**

- a. Involves FORTH telling more than FORTELLING**
- b. God's NOW word**
- c. 2 Greek words – Phetes = to speak, Pro = on behalf (One who speaks on behalf of another)**
- d. (Hebrew) NABI = One who has been called**
- e. Mouthpiece of God**
- f. Future dimension could be there but it was not primary.**
- g. Other ancient cultures had prophets, oracles, seers, shamans**
- h. Women were prophets also. (OT – Miriam, Deborah, Isaiah's wife)**
- i. Could also be false prophets as well. These were the ones who told the leaders what they wanted to hear.**

### **IV – Prophecy today**

**It involves the giving of the right word at the right time which an individual or group needs to hear.**

### **V – Primary task of prophet**

- a. Pass on TORAH
- b. Encourage repentance
- c. Encourage faithfulness to Covenant

**MOSES – Seen as the greatest of prophets – all others would have him as a standard. (This is why Matthew presents Jesus as the New Moses.) The coming prophet like Moses was also big up north. That is why the Samaritan woman in John 4 asks if Jesus is the expected prophet like Moses. David would be the standard down south.**

**VI – What is the central base for Christians and Jews out of which prophecy arises?**

1. **JEWS - Prophets point to their central event of Torah and covenant. This is why in the Jewish bible they are located right after the Torah(1<sup>st</sup> 5 books).**
2. **CHRISTIANS – Prophets point to the coming of Christ. This is why they are located *right before* the Gospels.**
3. **Today’s scholars – Emphasize that they were speaking to their own Present. (Their words were situated in the crises of their times.)**
4. **They challenged and critiqued the people**
  - a. **Using Mosaic covenant (prophets in the north)**
  - b. **Using Davidic traditions (prophets in the south)**
  - c. **Example – Isaiah is from the south and is very Davidic in flavor. Prophets of the south would also have easy access to the Kings and the Temple**

## **VII – Their key challenges**

- 1. The Kings and the people must be faithful to the covenant obligations to God.**
- 2. They must be faithful to Covenant obligations to one another (Amos).**
- 3. Different prophets had different emphases:**

**Amos (North) – Justice    Hosea (North) Worship of Yahweh**

**Amos – “I hate your feasts.”    Hosea – “It is love I desire and not sacrifice.”**

**WORSHIP ALONE WITHOUT A LIFESTYLE OF JUSTICE IS EMPTY.**

## **VIII – Injustices of the day**

- a. Corruption of the court system**
- b. Dishonest business practices**
- c. Power used to keep the underprivileged poor. (Sound familiar?)**

## **IX – The prophets and the future**

**This is one of the tests of a true prophet:**

- A. Test of the prophet in Deuteronomy 18 – His prediction must come true. You needed to test because there were an abundance of false prophets who told the people what they wanted to hear.**
- B. Writings of the Deuteronomic theologian will refer to many things coming true “in fulfillment of the prophets.”**

**C. Often this fulfillment wasn't seen till many years later.**

**D. Another test was the quality of the prophet's life. Are they getting rich off the oracles?**

**Right and wrong predictions: (The bible is honest about them)**

**A. Examples of predictions coming true:**

- **JEREMIAH – Babylonians came and conquered as predicted**
- **AMOS – Northern kingdom would be destroyed. It happened.**

**B. Examples of predictions not coming true:**

- **After exile, people wondered about restoration of Davidic dynasty.**
- **Haggai – “I will make Zerubbabel King.” It never happened.**
- **Zecchariah said the same thing.**
- **Amos (prophet from the south who went north) – “Jeroboam will die by the sword, his wife would be treated as a harlot, and Jeroboam and his children would die in a foreign land. He also predicted that Israel will be exiled from the land.” Part II came true but part I did not.**
- **Ezekiel – Predicted that Tyre would be destroyed by the Babylonians. Never happened.**
- **11 years later in ch. 29 he predicted that Babylon would destroy Egypt. Never happened.**

**How do you explain all this?**

- 1. Only Jesus had a 100% pure pipeline to God.**
- 2. The human can get in the way.**

3. The fact that the bible includes the errors makes it more credible.
4. Some of the saints in church history erred as well.
5. God changing his mind (many examples in OT – The King James Version of the Bible often uses the phrase – “God repenteth himself.”
  - a. Amos – example of him asking God for mercy and God changes mind and shows pity.
  - b. Jonah – Nineveh repents and God changes his mind about judgment.
  - c. God may change his mind depending on our behavior.
6. Ultimately there is the WISDOM solution: We have to surrender to the mystery.

## **X – Two futures addressed by the prophets**

**A. Near**

**B. Far**

**I - Near future messages – Oracles of judgment**

*“The North will fall to the Assyrians”*

*“Judah will fall to Babylon”*

### **1. Concept of the DAY OF THE LORD**

- Not always the END OF THE WORLD, but in *some* passages it is.
- Usually a day of judgment which will come upon Israel’s immediate enemies.
- Amos turns this around and now the judgment will fall on Israel because of their sins so the Day of the Lord will be a day of darkness for Israel. (Am. 5:18)

## **2. The concept of the REMNANT**

- **The judgment upon Israel will not wipe them all out. A small remnant will be saved so that they can begin to build again. Isaiah, Amos, and Micah all talk about the remnant.**

## **II – Distant future messages**

### **1. Last word is always GRACE & HOPE**

### **2. Exodus and former covenants are the TEMPLATES by which they look toward the future.**

- **NEW EXODUS**
- **NEW COVENANT**
- **NEW DAVID**

**All these themes along with NEW MOSES would be highlighted in Matthew's Gospel written for Jewish Christians.**

### **3. The New Thing that God is doing will involve the nations. All nations will come streaming toward Zion. (Favorite theme of Paul).**

### **4. The lens of the Mosaic tradition. Jeremiah 31 – New Covenant. Ezekiel will emphasize this as well. (Last supper shows a fulfillment with the blood of the New Covenant.)**

### **5. Jer. & Ez. Speak of the New Covenant as a time when the Torah will be placed within our hearts. (Major theme with Paul)**

### **6. The goal is for all to “know the Lord” or have a personal relationship with him.**

### **7. Ezekiel will also use Davidic themes – Ez. 37 – “*My servant David will be my shepherd over them.*”**

- 8. Like the Davidic Covenant, the New thing God is doing will involve the nations.**
- 9. Isaiah (700's BC) is also very Davidic. He looks toward a future King.**  
(Is. 9 – a child is born) (Is. 11 – a shoot shall sprout)
- 10. This is known as MESSIANISM**
  - **All kings were considered messiahs (anointed ones)**
  - **After Exile, the dynasty seems destroyed and hopes begin to arise that the Lord will send a new King.**
  - **JESUS? He was not the kind of King they expected although Christians see him as the ultimate fulfillment of this longing.**
  - **Jewish people at time of Jesus were looking for a king who would rule from David's throne and overthrow their enemies the Romans.**
  - **BUT – Christ came as the “suffering Messiah.”**
  - **What about the prophecies in the OT that seem to refer to Jesus? Did the prophets get future snapshots of Jesus?**
  - **NO!! They were speaking to their day and to events in the near future. Long after they are gone the Christian community in looking back, sees a fuller fulfillment in Jesus.**

## **Lesson 19**

### **Apocalyptic Literature**

**Ask: What does it mean?**

**APO = BACK    COLYPSE = VEIL    (Greek)**

**RE = BACK VELA = VEIL (Latin) Revelation**

**Apocalyptic = to reveal that which is hidden**

- a. Post Exilic in emphasis – 200BC- 100AD**
- b. Book of Daniel is the only apocalyptic book in OT**
- c. Some of the prophets have apocalyptic sections such as Is. 24-27.**
- d. This is a unique literary form using strong symbols and confusing/exotic language.**
- e. Very popular around the time of Christ but most of these popular works never got into the bible. They are known as the Intertestamental Literature. ( Book of Enoch/ Apocalypse of Adam & Eve, etc. (about 24 works in all)**
- f. Dynamic = A heavenly being in a sense pulls back the veil and reveals a reality that is to come. Shows a painful historical reality but lifts the veil enough to let you see that God is in control behind the scenes.**

**Looks forward to a NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH. No more death, and the fulfillment of all things.**

**Popular style of writing at a time when things on earth look like they are all falling apart.**

**Gives hope and consolation to a suffering and persecuted people during a time when there is a crisis in meaning. **GOD IS IN CHARGE OF HISTORY** and will be faithful to bring it to its conclusion. History is now broken and dark but God's victory will have the final world.**

**Uses the symbolic language of ancient mythology (slaying the dragon, beasts with horns, etc) Colors have special meaning  
Red = blood, White = victory**

**Speaks of an ultimate/cosmic battle between good and evil.**

**Out of this cosmic struggle will come a new heaven and new earth.**

**Perhaps a more modern example of this would be Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol**

**3 visitors take Scrooge on a journey, pull back the veil for him, and he comes back changed. In Apocalyptic we are caught up in a heavenly world to gain a new perspective and bring it back to this world.**

## **Lesson 20**

### **The Book of Daniel**

- **Best example of OT Apocalyptic**

#### **I – Historical background**

- **Alexander the Great begins his period of conquest around 333BC.**
- **Around 175BC – The Greek ruler Antiochus IV takes over the area of Palestine. He buys the priestly office and presents himself as the incarnation of God (Zeus). He then get's the nickname from his followers; “Epiphanes.” (or manifestation of God)**
- **The Jews gave him another nickname; “Epimanes” = “madman” or Alexander the NUT.**

- **Jews are pressured to accept him and his identity. Persecution begins around 166BC. This would lead to the Machabean revolt which would eventually get them out since they had other concerns to be bothered with.**
- **This is another time of great suffering for the Jews in which all looks hopeless. All looks out of control.**
- **The cold war – Many Jews are starting to like the Greek customs. They are enamored with the gymnasiums and with Greek Wisdom which was also called SOPHIA. Those faithful to the covenant would emphasize that true Sophia can only be found in God.**

## **II – Two literary forms in the Book of Daniel:**

### **a. Mythical narrative [ch.1-6]**

**Tales of the mythical figure of Daniel serving as an advisor in a foreign court. He is put to the test but is faithful. The story is situated in Babylon and has a context very similar to the Joseph story in Genesis. (Like Joseph, he is a wise interpreter of dreams.)**

- **Mythical for two reasons:**
  - 1. It is structured like a new Joseph story**
  - 2. Contains historical errors.**
- **Darius the Mede is mentioned but there is no other mention of him in history.**
- **Detailed description of how Antiochus dies, yet it doesn't fit into historical fact.**

### **b. Apocalyptic literary form - [ch 7-12]**

**Mediated by an angelic being, the future is talked about.**

**Typical of this genre – 4 beasts – 70 years**

### **III – Two languages**

- a. Daniel begins as well as ends in Hebrew.**
- b. Middle is Aramaic (language they were speaking at the time)**

### **IV – Purpose of the book**

- a. To proclaim; “all is in God’s hands.”**
- b. Be faithful to him no matter what.**

### **V. The story and the reality it is addressing**

**The story is about suffering Jews during the Babylonian Captivity. This is a cover up for the real story which is being addressed.**

**The real story involves the Jews suffering under the Greek persecution**

### **VI – Recurring themes**

- a. God alone is the source of Wisdom (Babylonian seers can’t interpret dreams but Daniel can.)**
- b. God is in charge of history**
- c. The arrogant rulers of this world are ultimately brought low.**
- d. God can rescue those who keep faith even if it means that this will happen after death.**

## **VII – The famous “Son of Man” passage in Dan.7.**

### **A. Vision of 4 beasts and the nations they represent:**

**LION = BABYLONIANS**

**BEAR = MEDES**

**LEOPARD = PERSIANS**

**BEAST WITH IRON TEETH & HORNS = GREEKS**

**THE LITTLE HORN = ANTIOCHUS IV**

### **B. “One like a SON OF MAN coming on the clouds of heaven.**

- **Contrast is made between the oppressing empires that look like BEASTS and the Son of Man figure who looks human.**

- **“Son of Man” – Jewish interpretations:**

- 1. Michael the Archangel**
- 2. The people of Israel itself**

- **Christian interpretation**

- 1. Favorite title of Jesus**
- 2. Seen in its “fuller sense” of the coming of Jesus at the end of time.**

**This chapter also talks more clearly of resurrection from the dead than any other chapter in the entire bible. You get hints in Psalms and Job. But the teaching in Daniel is very clear.**

**This is typical of apocalyptic – emphasis in salvation beyond the time and space of this world begins to develop.**

## **VIII – Interpreting the Books of Daniel and Revelation – 3 schools of thought.**

- 1. Fundamentalist: Both are totally referring to events that will surround the end times in the future.**
- 2. Liberal Protestant school: Both are only referring to persecutions in the past using coded language.**
- 3. Middle road position (Catholic: Refers to past events but there is a sense in which these words are fulfilled generation after generation.) Doesn't every age have its beast who is ultimately conquered?**

