

H/O #01

Why Should Christians Read and Study the Old Testament?

A. Do Christians need to read and study the Old Testament?

Some Christians have suggested that Christians do not really need to learn the Old Testament. They argue that Christians live according to the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament, so we do not need to know or follow the Old Testament.

Yes, it is true(!) that Christians should follow and live by the teachings of Jesus. And yes, there are things in the OT that many Christians do not understand, or do not know what to do with. And yes, sometimes it is not clear how the OT should apply to Christians.

But nonetheless, there are very good reasons for Christians to read and study and come to understand the Old Testament.

1. To begin with, it is necessary to know about many things in the OT in order to understand the NT.

For example, the NT refers to Abraham, to Moses, to the Law, to David, and to the new covenant. How do we know what these things are? We know what they are because the OT tells us about them.

2. Jesus never taught that he had come to set aside the Old Testament. He never taught his followers to ignore the OT.

Rather, Jesus views the OT as the word of God; he affirms the authority of the OT. Some examples of what Jesus said:

- Scripture is the Word of God (Matt 15:6, Luke 11:28).
- It is the command of God (Matt 15:3).
- Jesus affirms that God's word is truth (John 17:17).
- He affirms that Scriptures (which, in Jesus' time, meant the Old Testament) cannot be broken (John 10:34-35).
- And in Matt 5:17, Jesus told us that he did not(!) come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it.

3. The rest of the New Testament also views the OT as Scripture, as from God, as having authority, and as being useful for Christians.

- *Everything that was written in the past **was written to teach us**, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* (Rom 15:4)
- *. . . as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known **the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*** (2 Tim 3:14-15).
- ***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,** ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (2 Tim 3:16-17).

4. The NT does not re-interpret the OT; it *rightly* interprets the OT.

5. If there is only one God, then the God of the Old Testament is indeed the same as the God of the New Testament. If that is true, then whatever the OT teaches us about the nature and character of God remains true, because God does not change.

In like manner, whatever the OT teaches us about the fundamental things that God desires from us remains true.

Here are some examples:

1 Peter 3:10-12 quotes Ps 34:12-16.

*Whoever would love life and see good days,
must keep his tongue from evil, and his speech from being deceitful.
He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.
For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,
but the face of the Lord is against those who commit evil.*

Jesus, in Matt 9:13 & 12:7, quotes Hosea 6:6.

*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,
and the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.*

Consider Micah 6:6-8.

*⁶With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow down before the exalted God? [. . .]
⁸He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act with justice, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.*

The verses just cited provide good guidance for anyone who wishes to serve God, whether during the Old Testament, or as Christians under the New Testament.

B. Main Conclusion:

So, in general, the NT affirms that the OT is Scripture from God, that it has authority, and that it is useful for teaching Christians. Also, knowing the OT allows us to understand the NT better. Finally, whatever the OT teaches us about the nature and character of God remains true(!), because God does not change.

However . . .

However, some elements in the OT do not apply to Christians directly; they do not govern us the same way they governed OT Israel.

For example, Christians no longer need to sacrifice sheep or goats or bulls to God (Heb 10:1-19). And we are no longer required to observe the food regulations that God gave OT Israel (Mark 7:19).

When in Doubt . . .

When in doubt: if we are not sure what to do with an OT passage, but the NT teaching on the subject is clear, then follow the NT teaching. Do not(!) set aside clear teaching from the NT in favor of something from the OT that you are not sure what to do with.

Question:

So how do we know what still applies to us directly, and what does not? In other handouts we will set forth guidance from the Bible itself to answer this question. Those handouts will explain what in the OT still applies to Christians directly, what does not, and why.

A Closing Thought on the Old Testament Scriptures:

Luke 24:32 records the thoughts of the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, as he explained the Scriptures to them.

*"They asked each other, **"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the [OT!] Scriptures to us?"***

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H/O #02

Some Brief Answers to Common Objections to the Old Testament

Here are some brief answers to four common objections that people raise against the Old Testament. Almost all of the objections people make against the OT are the result of misunderstanding the OT. We will address some of these issues in more detail later in this course, and some in other courses. But for now, we will provide some brief answers.

1. The God of the OT is not the same as the God of the NT.

The God of the OT is a God of wrath and justice; the God of the NT is a God of mercy and grace.

When people say this, they are partly right. The OT certainly shows the wrath and justice of God, and the NT certainly emphasizes the mercy and grace of God.

But that is not the complete picture for either the OT or the NT. The OT also teaches that God is merciful and gracious. And the NT also affirms that sin arouses the wrath of God, and that God will ultimately bring about his final justice.

Here are some passages in the OT that highlight the love & mercy of God:

Gen 18:20-33 – God will spare the entire city of Sodom if He can find just ten righteous people in it.

Exod 34:6,7 [This verse is quoted in part or whole a dozen times in the OT: Neh 9:17; Ps 103:7; Ps 145:8; Jonah 4:2.]

*Then the Lord passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "Yahweh, Yahweh, **the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. He maintain love to thousands, and forgives wickedness, rebellion, and sin.**"*

Psalms 51

¹*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.*

[...]

¹⁷*The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite spirit, O God, you will not despise.*

Psalms 103:10-17

¹⁰*God does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his unfailing love for those who fear him.*

[...]

¹⁷*Indeed, from everlasting to everlasting is the Lord's unfailing love with those who fear him.*

Hosea 11 – The entire chapter describes God's tender love for Israel, esp. verses 1, 3, 4, & 8.

Here are some passages in the NT that highlight the wrath & justice of God:

Matt 10:28 (Jesus speaking)

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Romans 1:18 - 32

¹⁸*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness . . .*

[. . .]

³⁰*[They are] slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful. They invent ways of doing evil. They disobey their parents. ³¹They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²And although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but they also approve of those who practice them.*

2 Thess 2:9,10

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

2 Peter 2 (the entire chapter)

Revelation – The main focus of chapters 6-20 is the wrath of God that will be coming upon the earth. These chapters climax in the Great White Throne judgment in ch. 20, which concludes with these sobering words:

¹⁵*If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

We see, then, that both the OT and the NT speak of God's love and mercy (to those who repent and believe), and yet also of God's justice and wrath (to those who scorn God). So it is not correct to say the NT presents a different picture of God than the OT did. The God of the OT and the NT is the same God. ". . . the Father . . . does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17).

2. Didn't God command Joshua & the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites? Would a loving God do such a thing?

The claim that <God commanded Joshua and the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites> is not accurate.

If we carefully read the commands that God gave concerning the Canaanites, we find the following:

- The most basic command that God gives Israel concerning the Canaanites is: ***Do not become like them.*** This means: *Do not live among them, do not inter-marry with them, do not adopt their ways;* and certainly: *do not worship their gods.*
- After that, the main command is: ***Drive them out;*** *do not let them continue to live in the land.*
- But if the Canaanites would not leave, if they fought Israel, then Israel was to kill all of them.
- So in brief, the command is: ***Drive them out, or wipe them out. If they will leave, they may live, but if they stay and fight, then they die.***
- **Rahab**, the Canaanite prostitute mentioned in Joshua chs. 2 & 6, honored and served the Lord God, and was permitted to live. Reading Joshua chs. 2, 6-8 shows that God approved

sparing Rahab. This establishes the principle that a Canaanite who turns to Yahweh God as the one true God, and who serves him, can be spared(!) with God's approval.

Therefore, the idea that <God commanded Israel to exterminate the Canaanites> is not true. Yes, God commanded Israel to drive them out. And the general rule was that Canaanites who stayed and fought were to be killed.

But the example of Rahab establishes the principle that: a Canaanite who turns to Yahweh God as the one true God, and who serves him, can be spared(!) with God's approval.

3. The NT encourages us to "turn the other cheek," but the OT teaches "an eye for an eye" – doesn't it?

Yes, the phrase "an eye for an eye" does occur in the OT. But it is important to note the context in which it occurs.

It only occurs **3x** in the entire OT (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21). And in the contexts where it occurs, it is not(!) making "eye for an eye" the recommended way of life in the OT. Rather, "an eye for an eye" describes the punishment given for **reckless or deliberate bodily harm to a fellow human-being**.

Again, "an eye for an eye" is not the way of life in the OT; consider the following OT verses:

Exod 23:4-5 Help someone's ox or donkey, even if(!) the person is your adversary (see also Deut 22:1–4).

Lev 19:17,18 ¹⁷ "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ **You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.**"

Prov 12:16 ". . . a prudent man overlooks an insult."

Ps 37:21,26 ²¹ *The wicked borrow and do not repay,
but the righteous give generously. [. . .]*
²⁶ *They are always generous and they lend freely;
their children will be blessed.*

Prov 20:22 & 24:29 **Do not say, "I will return evil for evil,
I will do to him as he has done to me."**

We have already seen Ps 34:12-16 in **H/O #01**.

*Whoever would love life
and desires to see good days,
must keep his tongue from evil,
and keep his speech from being deceitful.
He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.
For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,
but the face of the Lord is against those who commit evil.*

What do we find when we look at these OT verses?

We see that the Old Testament calls upon people to be generous, to be merciful, to seek peace, and to not(!) repay evil for evil (Prov 24:29). So no, "an eye for an eye" is not the Old Testament's

prescription for a way of life. Rather, it is the punishment specified for reckless or deliberate bodily harm to a fellow human being.

The truth is, in general, that the Old Testament commends the same basic manner of conduct, the same basic way of life, as the New Testament does. There is no great change in this area from the OT to the NT.

4. No one abides by all the weird rules from the OT, especially those from the book of Leviticus. And if we ignore those rules, then how can anyone claim that we should obey the rest of the teachings in the OT?

This is a fair question. But we are not left to simply guess at the answer. We will see that the Bible itself explains what does apply to Christians from the OT, what does not, and why. We will address this in later handouts in this course, **and again in other courses**. We will find that the historic views and practices of the church are sound, and have their basis in the Bible.

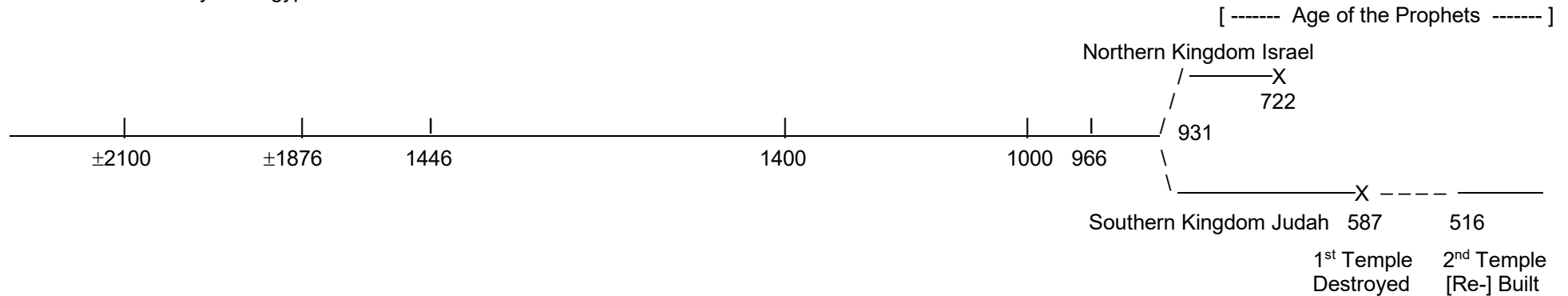
In Summary:

Almost all of the objections that people make to the OT *are the result of misunderstanding the OT*. As we learn more about it, we will see that, although there are differences between the OT and the NT, nonetheless → *the basic teachings of the Old Testament are in agreement with the basic teachings of the New Testament*.

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PRIMEVAL HISTORY	PATRIARCHS	BONDAGE IN EGYPT	EXODUS & SINAI	40 YEARS WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS	CONQUEST	JUDGES	UNITED MONARCHY	DIVIDED KINGDOM	JUDAH ALONE	EXILE	POST-EXILIC PERIOD
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Creation												
Fall, Flood, Tower of Babel	Abraham Isaac Jacob = Israel, 12 sons → 12 tribes Joseph & the entry into Egypt	400 yrs. in Egypt	10 Plagues, the Exodus; the law given at Mt. Sinai	12 Spies; disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea; 40 Years Decreed	Joshua, Jericho	Failure to drive out the Canaanites	Saul David Solomon, the Temple	Kingdom splits after the death of Solomon	Fall of Samaria	Fall of Jerusalem	Return from exile in Babylon	



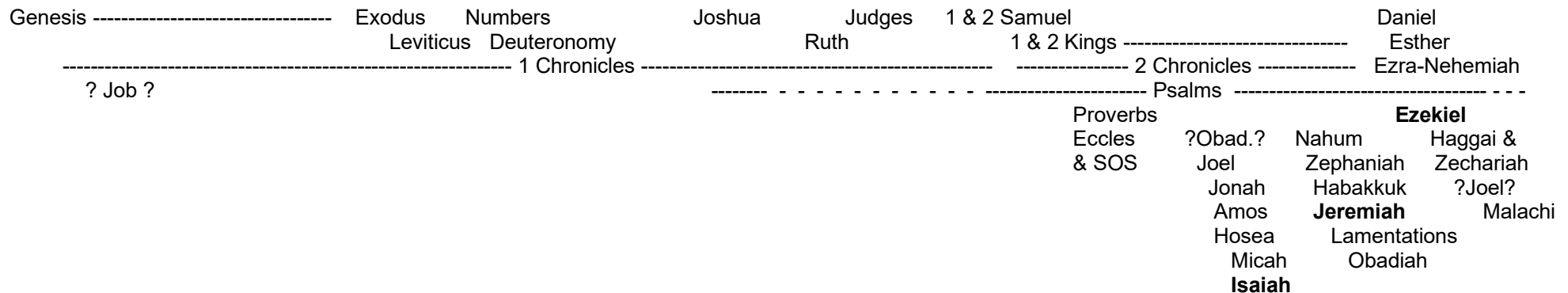
[New Covenant prophesied →]

Davidic Covenant (with David & his Son) → → →

Sinai Covenant (w/ Israel) =====>>>

Abrahamic Covenant (with Abraham & his seed) → → →

The Noah Covenant (with the human race) → → →



H/O #04 – List of Main OT Events

(1-4) The creation, the fall of mankind into sin & judgment; Noah & the flood; the tower of Babel.

(5) The call of the **patriarchs** (Abraham, Isaac & Jacob/Israel). God gives them three main promises:

- He will make them into . . .
- He will give them . . .
- He will . . .

These promises are also called the **Abrahamic Covenant**. Gen 12, 15, 17, 22.

In the New Testament, important chapters for the Abrahamic covenant are:

(6) Joseph, and the entry of the patriarchs into **Egypt**. They spend **400 years** there. Over time, they are oppressed more and more by the Egyptians, until they cry out to God.

(7) The **exodus**: God's delivers Israel from Egypt via the 10 plagues & the Red Sea. **1446 BC**.

(8) The nation of Israel arrives at **Mt. Sinai**.

There they have a monumental encounter with God through Moses.

They receive the 10 Commandments and the rest of the Law. ☺

They build the golden calf (Exod 32). ☹

They build the ark of the covenant and the Tabernacle. ☺

(9) **The Sinai Covenant**

In particular at Mt Sinai, Israel enters into a special relationship with God, namely, the 'Sinai covenant' (Exod 19–24).

The main dynamic of the Sinai Covenant is this: (Exod 19, Lev 26, Deut 7, Deut 28)

If → Israel will . . .

then, God will . . .

But if → Israel dishonors Yahweh, breaks the laws of the Sinai covenant, and if they worship other gods, then . . .

So note carefully:

(10) After the 12 spies spy out the land from Kadesh-Barnea, Israel decides not to enter the land.

Their subsequent **punishment** is **40 years of wandering in the wilderness**, while the entire unbelieving generation dies off. Num 13 & 14; 26:6-65; then later Deut 1 & 2; Josh 5:5-7. See also Psalm 95:8–11.

(11) After the 40 years are completed, they enter the land under **Joshua**. Israel is generally faithful to God at this time. Joshua, esp. chs. 1-2, 7, 11, 22-24.

- (12) But not long after Joshua dies, Israel becomes unfaithful to God, and even begins to worship idols and other gods. This is the time of the **Judges**. The book of Judges repeats the refrain, "*And again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.*" There is a downward **cycle** in the book of Judges (see Judges ch. 2). // Israel cries out for a king.
- (13) Saul becomes Israel's first king. But he disobey God, and loses his kingship. He persecutes David for no good reason. Saul is eventually rejected by God.
- (14) David becomes king; he wins many victories. He brings the ark to Jerusalem. **±1000 BC**.
- (15) **The Davidic Covenant**
 God promises David that a son of his ("God's anointed") will reign on the throne forever; David's son will be God's Son. 2 Sam 7; 2 Chron 17; Ps 2, Ps 89, Ps 110, Ps 132.
- (16) David's personal failures: His adultery with Bathsheba and effective murder of Uriah the Hittite. David's own son Absalom (a handsome but godless young man) rebels against him. David is succeeded by his son Solomon.
- (17) Solomon builds the temple; the ark of the covenant is brought to reside there. **966/960 BC**.
- (18) **931 BC**. Solomon dies, and the **kingdom divides** into two kingdoms:
- Northern-kingdom 'Israel' ("NKL", 10 tribes), whose capital is _____; and,
 - Judah (2 tribes), whose capital is _____. 1 Kgs 11 & 12.
- (19) Jeroboam (1st king of NKL) sets up centers of worship at Bethel & Dan ("The sin of Jeroboam"). ☹ // Shortly after this time is when . . .
- (20) **As the result of scorning God, worshipping other gods and breaking the Sinai covenant, Samaria was laid waste by the Assyrians.** Most of the northern 10 tribes were scattered into Assyria's empire, and Gentiles were imported into the region of Samaria. 2 Kings 17. **722 BC**.
- (21) The prophet Jeremiah announces a **'new covenant'**, which will come in the future (Jer 31). Its two main dynamics are: (1)
 (2)
- (22) **As the result of scorning God, worshipping other gods and breaking the Sinai covenant, Jerusalem is laid waste by the Babylonians, the temple is destroyed, and the nation is dragged off into **exile** to Babylon (587 BC).** 2 Kings 25, 36; Jer 39 & 52; Ezek 20-23, 33. **587 BC**.
- (23) The Jews return from exile (announced in 2 Chronicles 36, and in Ezra ch. 1), after 70 years.
- (24) They rebuild the temple. Ezra 1-6. The 2nd Temple is completed in **516 BC**.
- (25) They later rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-6).
 The people are back in the land, and there is no more idolatry. The promises to Abraham and the promise of a son of David, the Messiah, remain. But the mood is not positive, and the people are not as faithful to God as could be hoped (Neh 10-13; see similarly Haggai & Malachi). That is where the Old Testament ends.

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H/O #05 The Books and Sets of Books in the Old Testament

A. Some Basic Facts about the Books of the Bible:

As you probably know, the two main divisions in the Bible are the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The total number of books in the Bible is:

The Old Testament has . . .

The New Testament has . . .

Q: Is the "Old Testament" the same thing as what the Bible calls "the Old Covenant"?

Q: Is the "New Testament" the same thing as what the Bible calls "the New Covenant"?

Answers:

- The Old Testament is . . .
- The old covenant is . . .
- The New Testament is . . .
- The new covenant is . . .

B. What are the Main Sets of Books in the Old Testament?

The books of the Old Testament fall into four natural sets, four natural groupings:

The Pentateuch, the Historical Books, the Wisdom Books, and the Prophets.

1. The Pentateuch / the Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy

We will provide a brief summary of the Pentateuch in **H/O #06**.

2. The Historical Books:

The OT historical books fall into two main groups:

1. The books that tell the history of God working with and through Israel *before* the exile:

Joshua, Judges, & Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings.

2. The books that review that history up until the exile, and then continue that history *after* the exile.

1 & 2 Chronicles, and then Ezra & Nehemiah, and Esther.

3. The Wisdom Books: (sometimes called the “Poetic Books”)

The OT wisdom books give us wisdom for living. Many of the psalms were written by . . .

Two wisdom books, Proverbs & Ecclesiastes, are associated with . . .

The five wisdom / poetic books are:

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs (also called 'Song of Solomon')

4. The Prophets / the Prophetic Books:

There are total of 16 books of the prophets in the Old Testament.

The prophets are commonly divided into the *major prophets*, and the *minor prophets*.

There are three major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Ezekiel) and 12 minor prophets.

Jews sometimes refer to the minor prophets as . . .

The major prophets are simply much longer than the minor prophets.

- The major prophets are each approx. . . .
- The minor prophets, on average, are about . . .
- All of the minor prophets taken together add up to be about the length of one major prophet.

There is one prophetic book that is in a category by itself:

Daniel is not one of the major prophets, and Jews do not include it with “the Twelve.”

The three major prophets are (Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Ezekiel) are in the order that they fall into chronologically.

[The book of Lamentations is associated with]

The twelve minor prophets naturally divide into three groups:

1. The books that take place during the . . .

Joel; Hosea, Amos, & Micah; Jonah // Obadiah (?)

2. The books that take place during the . . .

Nahum, Habakkuk, & Zephaniah // Obadiah (??)

3. The books that take place after the . . .

Haggai & Zechariah; Malachi.

There is broad agreement that the last historical book written was:

There is also broad agreement that the last prophetic book written was:

They were both written around 450 BC. The period of time from after them until when Jesus comes is often called “the 400 silent years.” It is also called “the inter-testamental period.” It ends when people recognize that John the Baptist is a prophet.

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H/O #06

A Brief Introduction to & Overview of the Pentateuch

A. The Titles & Labels for the Pentateuch:

The common NT label for the Pentateuch & esp. the "**law** of Moses" is simply . . .

[Greek: νόμος, nomos.]

The common OT label is . . .

[Hebrew: תּוֹרָה *tōrah*]. "Torah" means "teaching." Jews view the laws as the *teaching* that God gave Israel through Moses. This is how Jews and Jewish scholars commonly refer to the five books of Moses.

[However, "*the torah of Moses*" is still usually translated "the **law** of Moses" in English Bibles in the Old Testament so that it will read the same way the New Testament reads. Josh 8:31,32; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 4:6, etc.]

Both terms, *torah* and *law*, make sense, because . . .

The Pentateuch is also called "the five books of Moses" because Moses is viewed as their primary author.

The Hebrew Bible views these five books as a set. This is reflected in "scribal notes" that are at the end of the book of Deuteronomy.

B. A Basic Observation about the Pentateuch:

The Pentateuch is . . .

C. The Major Developments / Events in the Pentateuch:

Genesis: The Pentateuch tells the story of creation and the fall.

The flood, and the preservation of the race through Noah.

The confusing of languages and the subsequent scattering of the nations at the tower of Babel.

Then, God called one family / nation (Abraham) through which . . .

The covenant with Abraham & his offspring.

The patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Jacob's name is changed to . . .

Jacob & his family (the Israelites) wound up down in Egypt.

Exodus: God brought them out with great power.

Israel has a dramatic encounter with God at Mt. Sinai.

The nation of Israel enters into a covenant with God at Mt. Sinai = _____.

The 'Law' is the stipulations of this covenant. // They build ark of the covenant.

Leviticus: Israel receives the laws which govern . . .

Numbers: Israel spied out the land.

But the Israelites do not believe God to enter the land, and voted not to go in.

As a consequence, God decrees that they will . . .

The older unbelieving generation gradually dies off over 40 years by the end of the book of Numbers.

Deuteronomy: Eventually, God leads the younger generation to the plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan river. That is where the book of Deuteronomy takes place. Moses gives speeches, reminders, and exhortations to the generation that is about the cross the Jordan to enter the promised land. That is where the Pentateuch concludes.

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H/O #07 – Main Events and Developments in the Pentateuch that the Rest of the OT assumes the Reader is Familiar with.

- (1) The creation of the heavens and the earth by God.
- (2) The creation of Adam & Eve.
- (3) The fall of Adam & Eve fall into sin; they are expelled from the garden of Eden.
- (4) The flood; God makes a covenant with Noah / with the human race that He will not destroy the earth with a flood again.
- (5) The Tower of Babel; the confusion of the languages; the spread of humans over the earth.
- (6) The call of the Abraham, and God's **promises** to him and his 'offspring / seed'. The three main promises are:
 - [1] God will make Abraham's offspring into a great nation.
 - [2] God will give them a land.
 - [3] God will bless all nations(!) through Abraham / through his seed. This is the overall goal of the Abrahamic promises.These promises are also known as the **covenant with Abraham**; it is with "Abraham and his seed"; Gen 12, 15, 17, 22.
- (7) Esau sells his birthright to Jacob (Gen 25; see esp. v. 34).
- (8) God reaffirms the promises to Abraham's son Isaac (Gen 26).
- (9) Jacob deceives Isaac, and obtains Isaac's blessing, instead of Esau. (Gen 27).
[Q: *Did the blessing belong to Esau to begin with?*]
- (10) The promises are confirmed to Isaac's son Jacob (Gen 28).
- (11) Jacob has 12 sons; his favorite son is Joseph. The brothers are jealous & angry, and sell Joseph to Ishmaelites / Midianites, who then take him to Egypt, and sell him to Potiphar.
- (12) After many difficulties, Joseph rises to a position of great importance in Egypt. He helps Egypt store grain from 7 years of plenty so that there will be enough grain for the 7 years of famine that are coming.
- (13) Joseph's own family (= Jacob and his other 11 sons) eventually comes to Egypt to buy grain. After some intrigue and some testing, they are re-united with Joseph, and they remain in Egypt.
- (14) Jacob & his family enter Egypt around 1876 BC. They remain there for probably 400 years. During this time, their population grows greatly.

- (15) Eventually, the Egyptians treat them badly and subject them to harsh labor (Exod 1). The Israelites cry out to God, and God remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac & Jacob (Exod 2:24).
- (16) God sends them a deliverer, Moses. After God sends 10 plagues upon Egypt, the Pharaoh finally relents, and lets the Israelites go. This is the **exodus**. It likely dates to 1446 BC.
- (17) But Pharaoh changes his mind, and pursues the Israelites. God dramatically saves the Israelites by parting the waters of the Red Sea (perhaps: *Sea of Reeds*), and then by drowning the entire Egyptian army that had pursued Israel.
- (18) Two or three months later Israel arrives at Mt Sinai, where they have a dramatic encounter with God via Moses ☺. They receive the 10 Commandments. But they build a golden calf ☹, and are punished. They receive the rest of the Law. They build the ark of the covenant and the Tabernacle.
- (19) **At Mt Sinai**, Israel as-a-nation enters into a special relationship with God, a covenant, often called the **Sinai Covenant**. This covenant offers to bless Israel above(!) the nations *if they honor Yahweh as God and obey the Sinai covenant* (= the Law). But if they don't → there will be judgment. Exodus 19-24; Leviticus (esp. ch. 26) & Deut (esp. ch. 7).
- The Law contains laws governing Israel's moral life, its civil life, and its ritual / ceremonial life (the sacrifices & food rules, etc.).
- The last half of the book of Exodus, all of Leviticus, and Numbers chs. 1-9, take place at Mt. Sinai.
- (20) After spending 14 months at Mt Sinai, Israel departs (Num 10). In about a month, they arrive at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 13:26). From there, Israel sends out 12 spies to spy out the land.
- (21) The spies report it is a plentiful land; Joshua & Caleb urge Israel to enter the land. But 10 of the 12 are afraid of the people who live there; Israel decides not to enter the land (Num 14:1-10).
- (22) So the Lord decreed that none of the adults of that generation would enter the land; instead, they would **wander for 40 years in the wilderness** until all the adults of that unbelieving generation die off, except for Joshua and Caleb (Num 13 & 14; 26:6-65, esp. v. 64; then later Deut 1 & 2; Josh 5:4-7).
- (23) At the end of the 40 years, Aaron dies (Num 20), and Israel arrives at the "plains of Moab," just east of the Jordan River (Num 33:48,50; Deut 34:1,8).
By that time, all the adults of the unbelieving generation have died off (Num 26:63–65; see also Deut 2:14–15, and Josh 5:6).
- (24) The Book of Deuteronomy (= the speeches that Moses gave to the new generation) takes place on the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan river. // Moses dies there. Israel will soon cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land, with Joshua as their new leader.

* * * * *

H/O #08 - The Basic Nature of OT Covenants & ANE Treaties

A. In general, what is an OT covenant / ANE treaty?

In brief, a covenant or treaty is a solemn, binding, sworn agreement between two parties. It governs their relationship until one of the parties dies.

The fact that OT uses the same word for *covenant* and for *treaty* tells us that, even if there are some differences between a covenant and a treaty, nonetheless, they are generally very similar.

Covenants/treaties were used in the world of the Old Testament, often called "the ancient Near East" (ANE). [The ancient Near East is mainly the nations surrounding Israel during the time of the Old Testament, such as: Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Moab, Edom, Philistia, etc.]

Covenants and treaties governed the relationship between nations, and sometimes between individuals. To be more precise, a covenant or treaty usually bound one king to another king.

In the modern world . . .

We find covenants in the Old Testament as well as in the greater ancient Near East. The OT refers to covenants between **individuals** (Jacob & Laban, Gen 31; David & Jonathan, 1 Sam 20). There are also covenants/treaties between **kings** (such as Solomon & Hiram, 1 Kings 5:12).

B. Why is it important to understand the nature of Old Testament covenants?

Because in the Old Testament, there are not just covenants between persons or between kings, but between humans and God. These covenants are important for understanding what God is doing, and how He wants us to live and to relate to him.

Covenants are not vague theological ideas. Rather, they provide structure, definition and explanation to the overall question of what is going on in the Old Testament. And they are the key to understanding how the Old Testament applies to Christians.

C. The Major OT Covenants:

The major covenants in the Old Testament are:

[For now we are just listing them. We will come back to them in H/O #09.]

- The covenant with **Noah** & the whole earth (Genesis 8 & 9).
- The covenant with **Abraham** and his seed (Gen 12, 15, 17, 22).
- The covenant given through Moses to the nation of Israel at Mt. **Sinai**, which came with the 10 commandments and the rest of the law (Exodus 19 → Deuteronomy).
- The covenant with **David**, and his son (2 Sam 7 = 1 Chron 17; 1 Kgs 2 & 9; Ps 2, 89, 110, & 132).
- The **New** covenant (Jer 31; also Ezek 36 [in the NT, see Hebrews 8]).

D. In Specific: What is a "Covenant"? [Hebrew: *b^e-rîṭ'*]

The lecturer wrote his doctoral dissertation (May, 2000) on this topic.

A good short definition of a covenant is:

A covenant is a life-long unchangeable solemn agreement between two designated parties in which one or both of them make an oath-bound pledge to the other to continue to perform a specified commitment or else suffer the wrath of God.

It is vital to observe that a covenant always involves a promissory oath; promissory oaths have two features:

- (1) A **solemn pledge** sworn before God (the gods) to perform a specified ongoing commitment.
- (2) There is a **curse** invoked upon the person taking the oath. The curse invites the lethal wrath of God (the gods) upon the person taking the oath if he/she should break the oath.

Q: If a covenant always contains an oath, is there any difference between a covenant and an oath?

A: Yes there is. The difference is that a covenant contains *a pledge to continue to perform a specified commitment*. An oath, in and of itself, does not have a such an ongoing pledge.

The essence of an oath is that . . .

E. Are all covenants basically alike?

While all covenants share certain common features (a lifelong oath-bound unchangeable commitment, etc.), there are nonetheless meaningful differences among them. In the Old Testament, we find **three 'kinds' of covenants**:

(1) A "Parity" Covenant / Treaty. A parity covenant or treaty was between two parties of essentially equal strength. In parity treaties, both kings take an oath to each other, and the terms are very balanced, often identical. The kings refer to each other as "brothers."

[A famous ANE parity treaty was between Pharaoh Ramses the Great and the Hittite King Hattusilus III. It was made at Kadesh (in modern-day Syria, near Lebanon), in 1258 BC. Archaeologists have found both the Hittite language and the Egyptian hieroglyphic version of this treaty. In the Old Testament, two examples of parity treaties are: (1) the treaty between Solomon and Hiram, the King of Tyre (I Kings 5:1); and (2) the treaty between Ahab and Ben-Hadad of Syria (I Kings 20:32-34).]

(2) A "Vassal" Covenant / Treaty. A vassal treaty is not between to kings who are equals. They are between a stronger king (also called the sovereign, or the great king), and a weaker king. The weaker king is the *vassal*. [The general meaning of the term "vassal" is a person who serves and does the will of another, stronger person.]

In a vassal covenant / vassal treaty, the vassal swears an oath to perform specified services to the stronger king. The oath places him under the threat of destruction if he fails to do so. The vassal refers to himself as the *servant* of the great king. He refers to the great king as his 'father'; the great king refers to the vassal as his 'son'. This sort of covenant/treaty is well known from the world of the Old Testament.

The benefit to the great king was . . .

The benefit to the lesser king was . . .

If the vassal violated the covenant . . .

We have examples of vassal treaties in the Old Testament. Ezekiel 17:11-15 explicitly mentions one. Also, such a treaty was almost certainly involved in the plea of King Ahaz (of Judah) to the king of Assyria to rescue him from Aram / Syria (*"I am your servant and your son . . . now save me from the king of Aram . . ."*; 2 Kings 16:7).

(3) A "Promissory" Covenant / a "Royal Grant". In a promissory covenant, the stronger member freely grants a benefit on behalf of the weaker member. However, such grants are not given at random. Rather, they are given to people who have already served the king well. Nonetheless, they are given *freely*; the king was not required to do so. It is not part of a deal, so to speak.

Among the nations which were near Israel in the times of the Old Testament, such promissory covenants are called . . .

F. Important Clarifications about Covenants: How they do and do not work:

- 1a.** They do not expire. But neither are they automatically eternal. Rather, they last until one of the parties dies.
- 1b.** However, *they can be broken*. This can end the covenant.
[In 1 Kings 15:19, Asa (king of Judah) offers a bribe to Ben-Hadad (king of Syria), to break(!) his existing treaty with Baasha (king of N.K. Israel), so as to make a treaty with him (Asa).]
- 1c.** Even a covenant with God can be broken and come to an end, if the earthly party is disobedient and breaks the covenant.
- 2a.** The terms of a covenant do not change. They are locked in. You cannot add to them or subtract from them.
- 2b.** The basic dynamics of a covenant do not change.
That is, a gracious promissory covenant does not change into a vassal-like covenant; neither does a vassal-like covenant change into a promissory covenant.
- 3.** The covenant is between the two parties who formed the covenant, so covenants do not 'transfer' from one party to another.
[Even when a vassal king dies, and his son succeeds him, the covenant does not transfer to the son. That son must affirm the terms of the covenant himself; he must personally swear the oath.]

4. What binds the parties in a covenant together is *the oath*.
The parties might or might not be friends; that does not matter. They are bound, they are obligated, by the oath they took.
5. Covenants are fundamentally bilateral, or two-sided.
 - a. Even in vassal treaties that are heavily one-sided, there is always some element or expectation of responsibility or obligation on both parties.
 - b. In the end, they are entered into *by agreement*; they are not imposed unilaterally.
 - c. It is inaccurate to call a covenant "unconditional." There is always some expectation of response or obligation on the other party.
6. The covenants in the OT might not line up with ANE treaties exactly; there are some differences. But they are close enough that it makes sense to use the same word for both of them.

G. How do these different types of covenants pertain to the major OT covenants?

We will elaborate on this in **H/O #09**. For now we just want to state which OT covenants resemble what sort of ANE treaties & covenants.

- The covenant with **Abraham**, the covenant with **David**, and the **New covenant** resemble promissory covenants / grants.

In these covenants . . .

- The covenant made with the nation of Israel at Mt. **Sinai**, given through Moses (involving the 10 Commandments and the rest of the law), resembles a vassal treaty-covenant.

In the "Sinai covenant" (also called "the Mosaic covenant"), . . .

H. Some Important Conclusions So Far:

- The main covenants in the OT are not all the same. They are not different ways of describing one collective covenant. Rather, they are five different covenants, with different earthly parties. Further, they are not even all the same kind of covenant. The covenants with Abraham, with David, and the new covenant, resemble royal grants, but the Sinai covenant is like a vassal covenant. They are different covenants.
- It is not accurate to say that <the OT covenants that are with the nation of Israel have been transferred to the church>. Covenants do not transfer. The question is: *Which OT covenant is with the nation of Israel?* Answering that question is the key.

* * * * *

H/O #09 - The Five Main Covenants in the Old Testament

A. The Purpose of this Handout:

In **Handout #08**, we briefly mentioned the five main covenants in the OT. The present handout describes those covenants in more detail, and shows from the OT why we understand them the way we do. Knowing which covenant is which, and knowing who are the earthly parties of each covenant, is the key(!) to understanding how the OT does, and does not, apply to Christians.

Of these five covenants, the two which are the most important for understanding how the OT applies to Christians are: (1) the covenant with Abraham, and (2) the Sinai covenant.

B. The Five Major Covenants in the OT:

As mentioned before, the five major covenants in the Old Testament are:

- The covenant with **Noah** & the whole earth (Genesis 8 & 9).
- The covenant with **Abraham** and his seed (Gen 12, 15, 17, 22).
- The covenant with the nation of Israel, entered at Mt. **Sinai** (Exodus 19 → Deuteronomy).
- The covenant with **David**, and his son (2 Sam 7 = 1 Chron 17; 1 Kgs 2 & 9; Ps 2, 89, 110 & 132).
- The **New** covenant (Jer 31; also Ezek 36).

We will now look at each one, in the order that they appear in the Bible.

C. The Covenant with Noah and the Whole Earth [Genesis 8:20 – 9:17]

The main provision of the covenant with Noah is that → God will never again destroy the world with a flood. This applies to all human beings, whether they are Israelites, Gentiles, believers or unbelievers, Christians or non-Christians.

So in terms of figuring out what in the OT does apply to Christians versus what does not, we may move on to the other OT covenants.

D. The Abrahamic Covenant:

[Main **OT** passages: Genesis chapters 12, 15, 17, 22, also 50:24; Exodus 2:24, 3:15-17, 6:2-8; Psalm 105:7-11, 42; Jer 33:23-26; Micah 7:18-20. // In the **NT**, see: Luke 1:55, 72-73; John 8:31-59; Acts 3:24-26, 13:26-48; Rom 4:9-17; 15:7-12; Gal 3:6-14, 15-29; Heb 6:13-20.]

By Genesis chapter 11 . . .

Then in Genesis 12 . . .

God promises, in general, that He will bless Abraham and his seed, and that his presence will be with them. After that, there are **three specific main promises** that God makes to Abraham and his seed in this covenant:

1. God will . . .
2. God will . . .
3. God will . . .

This third promise . . .

Some important observations & clarifications regarding the Abrahamic covenant:

1. It is often assumed that the Abrahamic covenant is "with the nation of Israel," but this is not accurate. **The Abrahamic covenant is with "Abraham and his seed."** It is *never* said to be between God and "the sons of Israel," i.e., Israel-as-a-nation.

"The sons of Israel" –

[The "sons of Israel" and the "seed of Abraham" do overlap, but the Old Testament never fully equates them with each other. This is why it is important to note that the **promises to Abraham** are not said to be with the "sons of Israel," but rather, **they are to "Abraham and his seed."**]

2. The **sign** of the Abrahamic covenant is _____ (Gen 17).
 - It is the sign that there is a covenant between God and Abraham & his seed.
 - It symbolizes the change of heart needed for an individual person to be rightly related to God.
 - Negatively, a person who rejects circumcision has broken the covenant. A person who refuses to be circumcised will be kicked out of the covenant community (Gen 17:14).
3. This covenant is **guaranteed** by the oath of God. However, it is possible for individuals to scorn it and therefore to fail to inherit its blessings (see esp. Gen 17, Ps 37 & Ps 50:16-23).

Genesis 18:19, Gen 22:15–18, and Gen 26:5 refer to the **conditions** needed to be blessed by this covenant. Therefore it is misleading to call it "unconditional" without explaining what you mean. It is better to say that the covenant has conditions, but that it also comes with a guarantee from God that some people will(!) believe and will be(!) blessed.
4. This covenant **does** provide that **a remnant** (a physical remnant) of Abraham's physical offspring (i.e., the Israelites) will inherit the promises. So Israel will endure as a nation/people group. And a remnant of them will also be believers (a believing remnant).
5. However, **nowhere** does the OT promise that all Israelites will inherit the Abrahamic blessings. Rather, Israelites who scorn God will perish (see e.g. Exod 32:33, Ps 50, Isa 1, Micah 2:5).

[The NT agrees with this; see John 8:31-47, and Romans 9:1-8, 27-29.]
6. Similarly, **nowhere** does the Old Testament ever state that Gentiles will not share in the promised land; rather, several passages indicate that Gentiles will also inherit it. [See Ps 37 & 87; Isa 14:1-2; 19:18-25; 49:6; 56:3-7; **Ezek 47:22!**; Zech 2:10-13; Zech 8:22-23; Mal 3:16-18, 4:1-3.]

Sometimes Christians assume . . .

7. This is why God calls Abraham . . .

[Paul applies this expression directly to believing Gentiles in Romans 4:16-17.]

In sum: The Abrahamic covenant guarantees that God will bless Abraham's "seed." That "seed" is *all who believe, whether they are Jews or Gentiles*. And there will be(!) a believing remnant of Abraham's physical seed (Lev 26:44; Jer 31:35-37; 33:19-26) who will inherit the blessings promised to Abraham.

E. The Sinai Covenant:

[Exodus 19-40 (esp. chs. 19–24); the book of Leviticus, part of Numbers and most of Deuteronomy.]

At Mt. Sinai, *Israel-as-a-nation* enters into a covenant with God for the first time. In this covenant, Yahweh offers Israel that ***if they worship him alone as God, obey him fully and keep his covenant***, then out of all the nations they will be his "special people / special treasure" (Exod 19:5:6), and he will bless them greatly.

The Law (= the 10 Commandments and the rest of the laws) are the stated requirements of this covenant. The sign of this covenant is the **Sabbath** (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17, + also Num 15:32–36).

To be specific: If(!!) Israel honors God and obeys the laws:

- God will . . .
- In fact (see esp. Deut 7:14; 26:16-19; 28:1), God offers to . . .
- Further, God's . . .
Namely: the cloud by day/fire by night, and also His presence in the tabernacle and later in the temple; see Exod 34:10-11, **Exod 40:33-38**; Lev 9, esp. 22-23; 1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chron 7:1-3.]
- But if they disobey God → He will punish them (see esp. Lev 26 and Deut 28).
And if they break the covenant by serving other gods, then God will . . .

Some Clarifications regarding the Sinai Covenant and the Law:

1. This covenant with its laws was never given to be . . .
2. The fundamental laws of God (honor God, love your neighbor, no murder, theft or adultery, etc.) did not originate with the Sinai covenant. They reflect God's unchanging nature & character. They were true before the Sinai covenant, during the Sinai covenant, and they remain true today.
3. The Law, by implication, **condemns us all as sinners**, and shows our need of God's forgiveness. However, it was not given only for that purpose. When Israel honored God and obeyed the Law (as under Joshua, Solomon, Josiah, etc.), Israel was blessed, just as God had said.
4. The Sinai covenant is what the Bible refers to as . . .

The Outcome of the Sinai Covenant between God and Israel:

Although there were times when Israel served God well and enjoyed the blessings of the Sinai covenant, Israel was generally unfaithful to God. Israel eventually broke the Sinai covenant (Hos 8:1; Jer 11:10, **31:32**; Ezek. 44:7). God then executed the curses of the covenant, destroyed Jerusalem & the temple, and kicked Israel out of the land (587 B.C., by Nebuchadnezzar & the Babylonians).

However, the Sinai covenant did not come to an end then. **Hebrews 8:13** says the "old covenant" (= Sinai) is "*obsolete, and is passing away*", which means that it had not quite yet passed away as of that that writing.

G. How the Sinai Covenant is Different from the Abrahamic: [Note also Galatians 3 & 4.]

1. In the Sinai covenant, Israel makes the pledge, and so . . .
In the Abrahamic covenant, God takes the oath, and so . . .
2. The Sinai covenant is with **Israel as-a-nation**, collectively. They get blessed, or punished collectively. The Abrahamic covenant *involves* Israel, and guarantees a remnant of Israel, but was not with Israel *as an entire nation*. It is with the _____, not the _____.
3. In the Sinai covenant, God explicitly offers to bless Israel . . .

The Abrahamic covenant promises to bless "Abraham's seed". But nowhere does it say that . . .

4. God offers to bless Israel as a nation "right here, right now," in the Sinai covenant.
In contrast, the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic blessings is clearly in the future.
5. Since the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant endure forever and are guaranteed by God, the Abrahamic covenant is eternal.
The Sinai covenant (the book of Hebrews calls it "*the old covenant*"), on the other hand, can come to an end if Israel breaks it and God invokes the curses. // [Your prof thinks it ended in _____.]

H. The Covenant with David and his Son:

[2 Sam 7:8-16 = 1 Chron 17:7-14; 2 Sam 23:5; 1 Kings 2:1-4, 6:11-13, 9:3-9; Ps 72, esp. v. 17; Ps 89, Ps 132; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Jer 22:15; chs. 31-33, esp. 33:14-17; Ezek 34:20-24; 37:24-28; Amos 9:11-12]

After David became king of Israel (2 Sam 5), God spoke to him through the prophet Nathan. God told him that He was going to "build a house for David" (**2 Sam 7:11–16**). God promised him that:

- He will put David's own son on the throne;
- That son will build a house for God's Name / for the ark;
- He will establish that son's kingdom forever;
- GOD WILL BE HIS FATHER, AND HE WILL BE GOD'S SON (v. 14a)
- *If the son sins, God will punish him/them "with the rod of men"* (v. 14b);
- But God's loyal love (Hebrew: *'hesed*; often translated "mercy") will never be taken away from this son (v. 15).
- David's line and his kingdom will be established forever.

Psalms 89 and 132 look back on this and call it God's *covenant* with David.

Some Important Observations and Clarifications about the Davidic Covenant:

1. Like with the Abrahamic covenant, in the Davidic covenant it is God who pledges himself, who "swears" to David; see esp. Ps 89:3-4, 34-35. Therefore the Davidic covenant is . . .

But did God fulfill this promise through one of Israel's wicked kings?

Therefore, the Davidic covenant has a condition:

2. Unlike the Sinai covenant, this covenant is not with Israel; it is with . . .
3. The covenant is not with David's sons (plural), but with David's _____ .
4. The Davidic covenant guarantees an eternal kingdom to David and his son (singular!). But it is entirely possible for there to be . . .
[See 1 Kgs 2:1-4, 9:3-9; Jer 22:15.]
That is why Amos tells us that God will return and will "restore David's fallen tent" (Amos 9:11-12).

I. The New Covenant:

[Main Passages: **Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:25–28**; also Deut 30:1-10; Ps 119; Isa 51:1-8, esp. v. 7; Joel 2:28-32.]

[In the NT: Luke 22; 1 Cor 11; 2 Cor 3; Heb 8.]

The New covenant accomplishes two main things (Jer 31:31-34)

1. It writes . . .

Which means:

This is sometimes described as

or else as . . .

2. It provides . . .

It does what Hebrews 10:4 teaches us that the blood of animals could never do: it takes our sin away, once & for all.

The New Testament teaches that Christ's death inaugurated the new covenant. In specific, his death was the "blood of the covenant"; i.e., it was *the sacrificial death which ratified the new covenant and put it into effect*. All genuine Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles by birth, are heirs of the new covenant.

J. How Do these Covenants Apply to Christians?

We will address this question directly in **Handout #27**, "How does the OT apply to Christians?"

* * * * *

H/O #10 – Some Major Conclusions from the Pentateuch

*This handout summarizes some of the major conclusions that the Pentateuch provides us.
We address these issues in more length in our course on the Pentateuch.*

A. The Importance of the Pentateuch:

1. The Pentateuch contains the foundational biblical basis for the nature of God, of mankind, and of creation. Genesis chs. 1-3 are absolutely essential to Christian theology, and to the biblical view of human nature and our relationship to God.
2. The Pentateuch bases its claim to authority on the reality of the events it records, especially exodus and Sinai. If they did not really happen, then the Pentateuch has no claim to divine authority. The claims of the Pentateuch, and the religion of the Bible, are both anchored in history.

B. The Nature of God, Mankind, & Creation:

1. **The Nature of God:** By the end of the Pentateuch we have an essentially balanced and complete picture of the nature and character of God:

Enormously Powerful.

Ruler over nature.

He is a person.

He has a will.

He is morally perfect, holy.

Pre-disposed toward the good.

Makes himself known.

He has passion, feelings (Gen 6).

He is just; He avenges sin.

Yet He shows mercy to
thousands who turn to Him.

2. **The Nature of Creation:** There is sincere debate among Christians over whether God created the world in six days, or over a longer (perhaps much longer) period of time. That debate will continue. The fundamental claim of the Pentateuch is that God(!) created the heavens & the earth; there is nothing that exists outside of God and his creation.

God also arranged the universe, and the universe is sustained and controlled by his wisdom & power. He has given it dependable “fixed laws” (Jer 33:25; Prov 25:2) by which it normally operates. God himself, however, is not bound by these laws; they do not limit him.

3. **Human Nature:** Human beings are the specific creation of God. We were made in God’s image (Gen 1:26–27), and we retain that image (Gen 9:6). Yet God also gave us a capacity to choose, to make moral choices, and in specific, to choose whether we would serve & obey God, or not. Our first parents, Adam & Eve, eventually chose to disobey God (Genesis 3, “the fall”), which harmed their relationship with God. All of us, to some degree, have followed in their footsteps.

So the Pentateuch gives us two fundamental affirmations about human nature:

- (1) Human beings were made for fellowship with God, and were made in his image. Even after the fall, we have some capacity to recognize that which is good.
- (2) Yet because of the fall, we are separated from God, and are prone to serve ourselves instead of serving God. Our self-serving impulse, if it is not restrained, can lead to great evil (just look at human history).

It is the combination of these two factors that explains human nature.

C. Israel's Religion Compared to the Pagan Religions Surrounding it:

The biblical religion of Old Testament Israel does bear some points of resemblance to the pagan religions around it (both have some idea of god, both have places of worship / temples, sacrifices, creation accounts, flood accounts, etc.). Nonetheless, Israel's religion is distinct, and involves a radically different underlying worldview. We addressed this in Hermeneutics, and will explore it at more length in the Pentateuch course, but here are a few examples: *(on the next page)*

- (1) Israel's God is morally perfect, not like the flawed and petty gods of the pagan religions.
- (2) Israel's God is immeasurably powerful, as opposed to pagan gods, who can be beaten by magic, and need to be fed(!) by sacrifices to remain strong.
- (3) The God of the Bible creates matter by an act of His will out of nothing. In paganism, matter always existed in a primordial dark watery *chaos*. The gods somehow arose from this chaos. They then *formed* the earth and stars out of material that was already there.
- (4) In the Bible, mankind is in made God's image, is given dominion over earth;. In paganism, mankind is there to serve and feed the gods; to do the "grunt work."
- (5) The purpose of pagan sacrifices is to feed and placate the gods.
The sacrifices set forth in Leviticus have as their goal *personal and community holiness*.

Therefore:

The suggestion that: "*Israel's religion was derived from the existing religions around it*" makes no sense. The most sensible explanation as to where Israel got its religion is the explanation given in the Pentateuch: that it was revealed to them by the one true God.

D. Summary of the Covenantal Framework so far:

[We described the OT covenants in **H/O #09**. So here we will summarize them briefly.]

The Pentateuch sets forth three main covenants: the covenant given through **Noah**, the covenant with **Abraham**, and the **Sinai** covenant. The two that pertain the most to Christians are the covenant with Abraham, and the Sinai covenant.

1. The Abrahamic Covenant – has three major promises:

1. God will make Abraham / Abraham's seed (offspring) into a **great nation**.
2. God will give them a **land**.
3. **All nations will be blessed** through Abraham's seed.
[This third one is the overall goal of the Abrahamic promises.]
 - These promises are "certain & guaranteed", but not utterly unconditional.
 - Israel's unique role: → Israel is the nation *through whom* the blessings will come.
 - The Abrahamic promises are for → all who have faith like Abraham's faith (Romans ch. 4).

2. The Sinai Covenant / the Law:

- The Sinai covenant is with "the sons of Israel." It is with Israel, *as-a-nation*.
- The Law = the laws are the stipulations, the requirements, of the Sinai covenant.
- **If (!)** Israel honors Yahweh alone as God and obeys the Law:
 - They will be blessed **above** all other nations.
 - They will be blessed "right here, right now."
 - And God's dramatic presence will go with them - his "Shekinah glory."
- But conversely, if they scorn Yahweh and worship other gods, they will eventually be judged severely, and kicked out of the land. Leviticus 26 and Deut 28 spell this out.

E. Question: So, Does the Law Apply to Christians? We will address this in **H/O #27**.

F. Summary & Conclusions:

The Pentateuch contains a compelling revelation of God, through the testimony of the patriarchs and of Moses, and also through the dramatic events it records (the plagues in Egypt, the Red Sea, the encounter at Sinai, the Law itself, God's Shekinah glory that accompanied them presence in the wilderness). It also provides a full picture of the nature and character of God.

Therefore → the Pentateuch is the standard by which all subsequent claims of revelation about God are to be judged; the Pentateuch is the standard and the authority.

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H/O #11 – An Overview of the Old Testament Historical Books

A. How the Pentateuch Sets the Stage for the Historical Books:

In the Pentateuch –

The book of Exodus records the Israelites being freed from their slavery and being brought out of Egypt ("the exodus") under the leadership of Moses. They then arrived at Mt Sinai, where they entered into a covenant with God (the "Sinai covenant"), and received the Law. This is described in the books of **Exodus** and **Leviticus**.

From there, they send spies to spy out the land. But the nation does not trust God, is afraid to enter the land (Num 13 & 14). So God decrees that they will spend 40 years wandering in the wilderness, until the entire generation that did not believe God dies off (Num 26:63-65). That wandering takes place in the book of **Numbers**.

In the book of **Deuteronomy**, the 40 years of wandering has ended, and the new generation of Israelites has arrived at the Plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan river. Moses then speaks to them. He reminds them of what has happened, he repeats many of the laws, and he exhorts them to trust and obey the Lord. God designates Joshua to be the next leader of Israel (Deut 31:14-23, + Deut 34:9). Then Moses dies (Deut 34:5-8).

So as of the end of the Pentateuch –

The nation of Israel is camped on the Plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan River. Joshua is now their leader, and they are ready to enter the promised land.

Q: Will Israel honor & obey Yahweh, and receive the blessings of the Sinai covenant, or will they disobey the law, scorn God, follow other gods, incur his judgment, and be ejected from the land?

B. By Way of Definitions, what are the OT "Historical Books"?

The OT Historical Books –

The OT Historical books are the books that pick up at the end of the Pentateuch. They record the ongoing history of Israel, and what God does with and through and to Israel, until the end of the OT era. They naturally divide into two main groups:

- (1) The **"pre-exilic"** historical books = the books written before the exile to Babylon. These are the books that record the events from the end of the Pentateuch until the exile; and –
- (2) The **"post-exilic"** books = the books written after the exile to Babylon. These are the books that record the events from the exile until the end of the OT era.

C. The Pre-Exilic Historical Books:

The pre-exilic books are: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings. Your prof sometimes abbreviates them as: "JJ-SS-KK". Since the book of Ruth falls during the time of the Judges, it is also a pre-exilic book. Here is a summary of the time period and the main events for each of these books covers:

Joshua The book of Joshua records the entry to the land under the leadership of Joshua. God and the Israelites drive the nations out and take much of the land. Israel is generally faithful to God, and things go well.

Judges The book of Judges covers the period after the life of Joshua, but before Israel had kings. This is the time when 'judges' led Israel. Among them are: Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson. During this period, things began to go badly; Israel was not faithful to God. There came to be a pattern, a **cycle**:

Disobedience → leads to judgment → Israel cries out to Yahweh → He raises up a deliverer → they have a time of rest → more disobedience → leads to more judgment.

Judges 2:10-19 summarizes this cycle. Over the course of the book of Judges, things gradually get worse, not better.

- Ruth** The book of Ruth takes place during the time of the Judges (Ruth 1:1). An Israelite woman, Naomi, moves to Moab with her husband and her two sons. One of her sons marries Ruth, a Moabite. Before long, Naomi's husband and her two sons die. When Naomi returns to Israel, Ruth comes with her. In Israel, God provides a husband for Ruth, named Boaz.
- The book of Ruth shows us Israelites who are faithful to God (Boaz), and a Moabite woman (Ruth) who embraces the God of Israel. And it looks forward to the birth of King David.
- 1 Samuel** In 1 Samuel, Israel gets its first king, Saul. Saul starts well (1 Sam 11), but he disobeys God at two significant points (1 Sam 13 and 15). As a result, God rejects Saul. David is chosen and anointed by Samuel (1 Sam 16). Saul tries to kill David (1 Sam 23), but never succeeds (Ps 18). Saul dies at the end of 1 Samuel (ch. 31).
- 2 Samuel** 2 Samuel describes David's reign over Israel. God promises David that a son of his will reign forever (= the Davidic covenant, 2 Sam 7). Solomon is born.
- 1 Kings** Early in 1 Kings, David dies, and Solomon becomes king. In his early years Solomon builds the temple, and presides over its dedication.
- But Solomon has too many wives, and they distract him from serving the Lord. As a consequence, right after Solomon's death, the nation of Israel divides into two kingdoms (1 Kings 11):
- a southern kingdom, called **Judah**.
 - and a northern kingdom, called "**Israel**."
- The division of the kingdom takes place in **931 BC**.
- The rest of the book of 1 Kings follows these two kingdoms for about 80 more years, until the death of King Ahab (he was an evil king of northern kingdom Israel). This is the time of the prophet Elijah.
- 2 Kings** The early chapters of 2 Kings are the time of the prophet Elisha.
- The book of 2 Kings follows the spiritual decline of the northern kingdom until it is judged by God. And so it is defeated by Assyria in 722 BC (2 Kings 17).
- The rest of the book records the account of Judah, and its eventual spiritual decline, until it is judged by God. And so it is defeated in 586 BC by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed.
- 2 Kings ends, then, with Judah being dragged off into exile to Babylon. This is what God had warned them would happen if they scorned him, worshipped other gods, violated the laws, and thus broke the covenant.

Summary of the Pre-exilic Books:

- JJ-SS-KK & Ruth describe the history of Israel, and of God's working with Israel –
- from → the time Israel entered the land under Joshua (approx. 1400 BC);
 - until → Judah was kicked out of the land and taken into exile to Babylon (586 BC), because they were unfaithful to Yahweh God / because they broke the Sinai covenant.

D. The Post-Exilic Historical Books:

The post-exilic books are: 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

Here is a summary of the time period and the main events which each of these books covers:

- 1 Chron** 1 Chronicles begins with nine chapters of genealogies which trace the lineage of the Israelites from Adam(!) through Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, down to the time of David. The first event recorded is the death of Saul (ch. 10). The last event recorded in 1 Chronicles is the death of David.

- 2 Chron** 2 Chronicles begins with the reign of King Solomon (chs. 1-9), and then the division of the kingdom when Solomon dies (chs. 9 & 10). Like 1 & 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles traces the history of northern kingdom Israel and of southern kingdom Judah until each is defeated. It records the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. It ends with Judah being taken into **exile** for 70 years (2 Chron 36:20-21).
- However(!), 2 Chronicles records one more very significant event that occurred near the end of the 70 years in exile. It records **the decree of the Persian King Cyrus** (who conquered Babylonia) that the Jews may return to Judah, and may rebuild a temple for their God in Jerusalem.
- Thus while 2 Kings ends with Judah being dragged off into exile, 2 Chronicles ends with the decree that they may return home.
- Ezra** The book of Ezra has two main sections:
Chs. 1-6 record the re-building of the **temple**. It was completed and dedicated in **516 BC**.
 Then there is a 60-year gap between chs. 6 and 7.
 [The book of Esther takes place during this time period, during the '60 year gap'.]
Chs. 7-10 resume the action. They begin in **458 BC**, when **Ezra** the scribe returns to Jerusalem from Babylon. The rest of the book deals with the practical and religious problems that Ezra confronted in Jerusalem.
- Nehemiah** The book of Nehemiah flows right on from the book of Ezra. It begins in **445 BC**, when Nehemiah receives permission from the king of Persia (King Artaxerxes) to return to Jerusalem to help rebuild its walls. There is opposition from the local Samaritans (ch. 4), but eventually the walls are rebuilt (ch. 6). The rest of the book deals with the ongoing moral and religious problems that Nehemiah faced dealing with the Jews in Jerusalem. The story line in Nehemiah ends at approximately **430 BC**. Chronologically, Nehemiah is the last of the historical books in the Old Testament.
- Esther** The book of Esther dates to approximately **480 BC**, during the reign of the Persian King Xerxes. [Note: the OT calls this Persian king "*Ahasuerus*," which reflects the king's Persian name; "Xerxes" is what the Greeks called him, and is what he is usually called in the west.]
 As mentioned above, chronologically, the book of Esther takes place during the '60 year gap' in the book of Ezra. The story takes place in Susa, the capital city of Persia.
- King Xerxes is looking for a new queen, and eventually chooses Esther (ch. 2). He does not know that she is Jewish. There comes to be a plot against the Jews living in Persia, to kill many of them. Esther is able to appeal to Xerxes to help overcome the plot (ch. 7). The events recorded book of Esther are the origin of the Jewish festival of *Purim* (ch. 9), which celebrates the Jews in Persia being spared.

Summary of the Post-exilic Books:

1 & 2 Chronicles mainly re-trace Israel's history up to the exile. But then 2 Chronicles adds the very important event that Cyrus, the king of Persia, decrees that the Jews may return to their homeland, to Judah, and may re-build the temple in Jerusalem.

Question: Why are 1 & 2 Chronicles are considered "post-exilic"? Almost everything they record took place before(!) the exile.

Answer: They are considered "post-exilic" books because *they were written after the exile ended*.

Then the other three post-exilic books, **Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther**, record significant events and developments that happened with the Jews after the end of the exile, especially, the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra chs. 1-6).

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H/O #12

The Books of Chronicles and Samuel-Kings – How They are Similar, and How They Are Different

*1 & 2 Chronicles overlap a lot with Samuel-Kings in terms of the history which they cover.
However, they focus on different things, and they have different perspectives.*

I. Overview of 1 & 2 Chronicles: (Often simply: "Chronicles")

- **Genesis → 2 Kings** forms the first account of Israel's history / of God's working with and through Israel. It begins with the account of creation, and ends with Judah going into exile.

Chronicles is . . .

- In particular, Chronicles picks up at . . .
and it ends with . . .
- In the traditional Jewish arrangement of the books of their Scriptures (= the Christian Old Testament), Chronicles is . . .

So the Jewish Scriptures end with decree of Cyrus (**2 Chron 36:22–23**) –

²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

*²³ "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia,
'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. **Let him go up**.'"*

So the Jewish canon ends on this hopeful note: the Jews being permitted to return to Jerusalem.

II. Chronicles ↔ Samuel-Kings

A. They Have a Different Focus: Chronicles –

1. Picks up after the death of Saul, and clearly focuses on:
2. Focuses on . . .
3. Focuses on . . .
and on . . .
4. Focuses on . . .
Because after the exile, there was no king, but there was a temple; thus the temple now stood as the identifying factor of the nation of Israel.
5. Says much more about . . .

(Continued on back.)

B. Chronicles and Samuel-Kings Have Different Perspectives: In general –

Sam-Kings explains: *How did we get in to this mess? (= How did Judah come to be **in exile**?)*

Chronicles ends with: *But we have made it through it. (= They **can now return** from exile.)*

Samuel-Kings: *Highlights the division of kingdom and the sinfulness of the Northern Kingdom.*

Chronicles: *Does not elaborate on the sinfulness of the Northern Kingdom; and more often speaks of “all Israel,” recalling their underlying unity.*

C. Specific Examples of What Chronicles Added or Omitted:

<u>SAMUEL-KINGS</u>	<u>CHRONICLES</u>
David's struggle to come to the throne; Joab & Abner, Ish-Bosheth, Mephibosheth.	Ø
David's sin with Bathsheba.	<i>Bathsheba who??</i>
[Samuel-Kings records little about this. →]	David's massive <u>preparations</u> for the construction of the temple (eight chapters!)
The charge to Solomon (1 Kgs 9).	Records fire falling from heaven , and adds the line, <i>"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves . . . and pray, I will hear . . ."</i>
Solomon taking thirteen years to build his own palace.	Ø
Solomon's wives.	Ø
Ø	Hezekiah purifying the temple (2 Chron 29).
Ø	Hezekiah celebrating a Passover (2 Chron 30).
Ø	Those who are ceremonially unclean but who have <i>set their hearts on seeking God</i> may celebrate this Passover.
Mentions " <i>the sins of Jeroboam</i> " ±20x.	Ø
22 chapters on Elijah & Elisha.	<u>One verse</u> mentions Elijah; that's it.
Manasseh is horribly evil. →	True . . . <i>however</i> . . . Manasseh repents (!) [See 2 Chron 33]
Ends with Judah in exile.	Ends with the decree of Cyrus (King of Persia) that the Jews may return and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

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H/O #13 – The Importance of the Exile

A. The Exile – What it is, and Why it is Very Important.

1. Where Does the Exile Fall in Israel's History?

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt at 1446 BC. Israel came to Mt Sinai later that same year. At Mt Sinai they had a dramatic encounter with God. They also entered into the Sinai covenant with God, and received the Law (the Law both guides Israel's life and is also the requirements of the Sinai covenant). After Moses died, Israel crossed the Jordan river and entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. This occurred at about 1400 BC.

David became the king of Israel approximately 400 years after the time of Joshua. Thus David ruled as king over Israel around the year 1000 BC. He was followed by Solomon. When Solomon died (931 BC), the kingdom of Israel split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom had 10 tribes and was called "Israel." The southern kingdom had 2 tribes (Judah & Benjamin), and was called "Judah."

The kings who were descended from David and then Solomon ruled Judah, the southern kingdom, from its capital city, Jerusalem. These kings ruled Judah for over of 400 years. This line of kings ruling Judah came to an end when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians (led by king Nebuchadnezzar), in 587/586 BC. That is when the exile begins.

2. What is the Exile?

When Jerusalem fell, the Babylonians destroyed the Temple and much of Jerusalem. They took thousands of Jews to Babylon to be workers, servants, and slaves (not all of them were slaves). The Jews remained in Babylon for 70 years, until Babylon itself was conquered by the Persians (see Daniel 5). Shortly after that happened, the Persian king Cyrus decreed that the Jews could go home = they could return to Jerusalem (see 2 Chron 36 and Ezra 1). The 70 years they spent in Babylon, away from the promised land, are called "**the exile**."

3. How Important was the Destruction of Jerusalem, and the Exile, to the Israelites?

This is a major(!) event in the history of Israel. It occurred as a result of . . .

Even though Moses and the prophets had warned Israel that this could happen, when it finally did happen, . . .

Many Christians do not realize how important, even how staggering, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple were to the Jews. It made the Israelites question . . .

The importance of the exile to Jewish thinking is reflected in the fact that in the New Testament, . . .

B. Passages that warn Israel that they could be taken away from the land and sent into exile if they scorn God and reject his laws:

Leviticus 26 / Deuteronomy 28

1 Kings 8

1 Kings 9

C. Passages that record the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the Jews being taken into exile:

2 Kings 25 / Jeremiah 39 & 52

2 Chron 36

D. Passages that look back on the fall of Jerusalem –

Some of these passages explain it. Others express great sorrow, and even anguish, over it.

Ezra 9

Psalms 74

Psalms 77

Psalms 79

Ezekiel 33:21–33

The entire book of Lamentations; see esp. 5:22.

E. A psalm which shows that Israel eventually realized why they had been punished and sent into exile. In this psalm Israel confesses that it sinned and was unfaithful to God.

Ps 106

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H/O #14 – Some Selected Passages in the Historical Books

These passages are not the most important ones for establishing the larger theological conclusions from the OT Historical Books. But they do hold lessons for us. And they also show that it is helpful to understand what is going on in the Old Testament in general, in order to understand these individual passages, in particular.

Joshua 5 The Israelites at Gilgal

Judges 9 Abimelech, the son of Gideon

The book of Ruth – Theologically, which verse in *Ruth* is the most important one?

1 Samuel chs. 9–11, esp. ch. 11 The early days in the reign of King Saul

1 Samuel 23 Jonathan & David
esp. 23:16–17

2 Samuel 6, & 1 Chron 16 The Ark of the Covenant comes to Jerusalem // Uzzah

2 Samuel 13 Amnon & Tamar . . . and Absalom.

1 Kings 8
esp. 8:17–18

Solomon's great sermon at the dedication of the Temple
[*See also 1 Chron 22:6–11.*]

[*First, read 2 Kings 2:1–14, esp. verses 9–11.*]

2 Kings 6:8–23

Elisha is surrounded by enemies, the Arameans

1 Chronicles 21
esp. 21:18–22

David counts his fighting men; the sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah
[*Parallel passage: 2 Samuel 24*]

2 Chronicles 21

Jehoram, a very wicked king of Judah

Nehemiah 9

A great public prayer of confession by the Jews after the exile.
Note the reference to Abraham!

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H/O #15 – Some Conclusions & Lessons from the OT Historical Books

A. The Main Questions that Framed the Issues as We Read the Historical Books:

- (1) Will Israel be faithful to God, and enjoy the blessing offered in the Sinai covenant?
Or will they be unfaithful, and incur the warnings and the judgments of that covenant?
- (2) If Israel is not faithful to God, and if God brings upon them the curses of the Sinai covenant, will that affect, or perhaps even cancel, the promises God made to Abraham? (= the Abrahamic covenant; Gen 12, 15, 17, & 22).

B. A General Observation:

We know that God judged Israel for being unfaithful to him. But when Israel was faithful to God (not perfectly, but meaningfully), God blessed them. Examples:

- Josh 2:24 tells us that God gave Israel **rest** on every side.
[Compare that to the book of Judges, where we are repeatedly told that, "*The Israelites did evil in God's sight . . . and so God handed them over to <some nation> who oppressed them*".]
- In Solomon's time, we are told that Israel lived in peace, and that "*every man had his own vine and his own fig tree*." (1 Kgs 4:25).
- In the time of King Asa of Judah (2 Chron 15), Judah took an oath to re-dedicate themselves to serving the Lord. We are told, ". . . *they sought God eagerly, and He was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side*." (2 Chron 15:15).

So it is not accurate to say that the Law only brought judgment and death. When Israel obeyed the Law, it brought blessing.

C. An Important Clarification: Rahab and the Canaanites:

God gave Israel a general command to "*drive out the Canaanites*." And if the Canaanites met Israel in battle, God commanded Israel "*do not let any of them live*." Because of these commands, many readers of the Bible have concluded that God in effect commanded Israel to *exterminate* the Canaanites. But the example of Rahab in Joshua 2 & 6 shows that this is not correct. Rahab affirmed that the Lord, the God of Israel, was the one true God. Joshua spared Rahab, and the ongoing account (Joshua chs. 2 – 7) shows that God approved of this.

This establishes the principle that → **a Canaanite who turns to Yahweh God** as the one true God, and who serves him, can be spared(!) with God's approval.

Yes, the Israelites were to drive the Canaanites out of the land. Canaanites who left could live, but if they stayed and fought, Israel was to kill them all. But if individual Canaanites turned to God, believed in him and served him, they could be spared. The account of Rahab demonstrates this. Therefore, God did not order the total extermination of the Canaanites as a race.

D. An Important Development: The Promise of a Messiah = The Covenant with David:

In **2 Samuel 7**, God promises David that He will raise up a son from David's own body, who will reign on his throne forever. Of this son, God says, "*I will be his Father, and he will be my Son*" (2 Sam 14).

This future king is referred to afterwards as "the anointed one" / "God's anointed." When the Hebrew word for "*anointed one*" is brought into English, it is the word "Messiah." The equivalent NT term is "Christ." So when the NT calls Jesus, "*the Christ*," it is saying that Jesus is(!) the promised future king = the son of David = the Messiah.

The prophets tell us that this king will be just and will be righteous, and will delight in revering the Lord (Isa 11:1-5). He will set up a glorious kingdom that will last forever.

[Question: Has that happened by the end of the Old Testament?]

E. What Happened to Israel Under the Sinai Covenant?

As we mentioned in section **B** above, there were(!) times when God blessed Israel for being faithful to him. So there were times when Israel enjoyed the blessings of the Sinai covenant.

But too often, Israel was not faithful to God. At these times, they began to experience God's judgment. The book of Judges is a clear example of this. And even though some of Judah's kings were good, most of Judah's kings were evil. And none(!) of northern kingdom Israel's kings were truly good.

Eventually, God pronounced judgment on them. Northern kingdom Israel was destroyed in 722 BC by the Assyrians. Assyria dragged many Israelites off into exile.

Judah had some good kings, and lasted longer, but it too was judged by God. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 586 BC. And thousands of Jews were taken in exile to Babylon.

So rather than serving and obeying God and experiencing the blessings of the Sinai covenant, Israel and Judah were so unfaithful that God declared that they broke the covenant (Jer 31:32). And so God carried out the curses of the covenant: they were defeated, their cities were destroyed, the temple was destroyed, and they were kicked them out of the land.

F. Some Conclusions & Lessons Learned:

- (1) God is always(!) looking for people who will serve him freely, from the **heart**. True obedience always comes from within, always comes from the heart.
- (2) Obedience is better than making a show of religion: "*To obey is better than to sacrifice*" (1 Sam 15:22).
- (3) Even Israel, God's "chosen people," must obey God. They cannot just sin all they want and get by with it. God will hold them accountable, and will eventually judge and punish them, if they do not repent.
- (4) Yet the OT also teaches that, if people do repent and return to God, He is merciful to them, and He will forgive them. A striking example of this is the evil king Manasseh, whose repentance is recorded in 2 Chron 33:12-13. [See also Ps 32, Ps 51.]
- (5) The fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC is not(!) a mystery. We know exactly why it happened. It happened because Israel scorned the Lord, served other gods, and broke the Sinai covenant. See Lev 26; Deut 28; Josh 23:16; 2 Kings 17, Jer 31:32; and esp. **Ps 106**.
- (6) But even though God carried out the curses of the Sinai covenant upon Israel, He did not destroy Israel completely (**Nehemiah 9:31**). He was faithful to his promise that even when He judges them, He would not destroy them completely (Lev 26:44).
- (7) In like manner, the promises to Abraham = the covenant with Abraham, is still in effect. After the exile, this can be seen in Nehemiah 9, 1 Chron 16:16 and 2 Chron 20:7. God is faithful to what He has promised (**Ps 105**).

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H/O #16 – Review of OT Poetry

I. The Basic Assumptions about Interpreting Scripture:

Although the Bible is not(!) a normal book—it is God's divine revelation to us—nonetheless, God did choose to put it into written language. So we *read* the Bible according to *the normal use of language*. [This approach to reading the Bible is often labeled "the historical-grammatical method."]

In brief, this means:

- For the parts of the Bible that are written in a generally straight-forward style (the OT historical books, the laws, the NT epistles, the gospels & Acts), we read them in a generally straight-forward manner. For the large majority of verses in these books, we may take what they say at face value.
- For the parts of the Bible that use **poetic** language (Psalms, most of Job, much of the prophets), we bear in mind that that language is more artistic, and is often figurative.
- We pay attention to the grammar & to the meanings of the words.
- We bear in mind the historical background & setting of the book, esp. where does it fall in the flow of the events in the Bible.
- And we always(!) pay attention to the context of the passage. Always! Always! Always! Always!

II. Which OT Books Are <mostly> Poetic?

The "Wisdom Literature": Job, Proverbs, & Ecclesiastes (and to a degree, Song of Songs).

The book of Psalms.

Many of the Prophetic Books: Esp.: Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk & Nahum.

Most of the other prophetic books are at least partly written in poetry, even Jonah.

III. Understanding How OT Poetry / Hebrew Poetry Works:

If one compares the OT poetic books to books like Joshua, Samuel, Kings or Chronicles, it is clear that they are a different style of writing, a different **genre**. Understanding how Hebrew poetry works is very helpful to understanding the OT poetic books.

A. The General Nature of Hebrew Poetry

1. Poetry involves an artistic use of language. It is often **figurative**. For example, Psalm 18:2 tells us, "*God is my rock.*" This does not(!) mean that God is a literal, physical rock.
2. Poetry is more **descriptive** than it is **precise**.
Poetry usually does not of give the date, or tell specifically who was involved. or name the place where something happened. Instead, it tells what something was like in general, or how it felt.
3. Poetry often **evokes emotion**, and may display **strong swings of emotion**. Ps 9 ↔ Ps 10; Ps 31.
4. A given poetic passage might only tell you **one side of the story**.
Psalms 52 – 59, for example, compared to the lament-song that David sings about Saul in 2 Sam 1.
5. It is important to note that poetic passages sometimes describe **how something feels to the speaker**, rather than describing the objective reality of the situation.
Ps 12:1 Ps 44:23 Ps 73:4-12 Ps 74:1a Ps 89:38-39

In Sum:

What OT poetry says is true in some sense; but it does not always describe each situation with balance or with literal precision. We need to bear in mind that it is poetry. Nonetheless, interpreting it is not a free-for-all; rather, we read it the way one normally reads and understands poetry.

Also, we have seen that a given poetic passage might not tell us the whole story, and that poetry is often more descriptive than precise. Since that is the case, to get a balanced and more accurate overall picture from poetry, *we have to read a lot of it*.

Finally, it will help if we bear in mind what the straight-forward portions of Scripture tell us about the issue, the topic, being described in the poetic passage.

B. The Most Common "Literary Features" of Hebrew Poetry

By "literary features" we mean: How is it actually written, what are the features of its writing style.

For example, the features of traditional English poetry are: rhyming & cadence.

Hebrew poetry, on the other hand, does *not* rhyme, nor does it have precise meter or cadence.

But Hebrew poetry does have some identifiable features, and learning to recognize these is very helpful for understanding what the passage is saying. Here are the main ones:

1. The **main** literary feature of Hebrew poetry is: **parallelism**. By that we mean:
In poetic passages, the lines of text tend to come in pairs, and we are intended to read them together. The poetic pair of lines is the minimum context for reading.
2. In poetic parallel lines, the thought of the second line usually relates back to the thought of the first line in one of three main ways:
 - (1) It **restates** or **closely echoes** or the thought of the first line.
 - (2) It gives **contrasting image** which makes the same point.
 - (3) It **develops** or **completes** or **qualifies** the thought of the first line.
3. Sometimes the second line does not form a complete statement, some words are 'missing', so to speak. This is called **gapping**. When this occurs, the second line is assuming some words from the first line, usually the verb. Knowing this helps us make sense of lines of poetry that seem incomplete. Ps 24:1.
4. Again, in OT poetry, the lines will usually come in pairs.

Q: But what if we have an unpaired line, or a triplet?

A: When there is an unpaired line, it usually does one of two things:

 - It is either **a point of emphasis**, or ,
 - It is **the end of a poetic stanza**, or both.

Examples: the last verse in Ps 18, Ps 37, & Ps 94; then also Ruth 1:16,17.

IV. Closing Thought about OT Poetry and How the Language of the Bible Works:

Christians do(!) believe that the Bible is true. But consider the following statement:

"I believe that every verse of the Bible is literally true."

Q: Is that accurate? **Q:** Is that an accurate description of how *OT poetry* works? **Q:** Is God a rock?

This is a better statement:

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H/O #17 – Introduction to the OT Wisdom Books

I. Some Basic Facts about the OT Wisdom Books:

All of the books of the Bible have value for knowing how we should live. However, there are a few books in the Bible that specifically focus on giving us wisdom for living. They are called the Bible's "wisdom books" or "wisdom literature."

The three main wisdom books are . . .

There are two other books that also considered "wisdom books," Psalms, and Song of Songs.

[The closest book in the NT to wisdom literature is . . .]

A. How the Wisdom Books Compare to the Other Books in the OT:

The books of Moses (Genesis → Deuteronomy, the 'Pentateuch') tell us about the creation of the world, and the fall of Adam & Eve. They tell us about how God came to be working with and through the nation of Israel, and they record the 10 Commandments & the Law; the wisdom books do not.

The historical books (Joshua & Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, etc.) tell us what happened with Israel: did Israel serve God well, or not, and what was the outcome? The wisdom books do not.

The prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, etc.) often give us direct statements from God, "*Thus says the Lord . . .*"; the wisdom books sound more like sanctified advice.

And in contrast to the rest of the Old Testament, in general, the wisdom books do not mention the covenants (the promises that God gave to Abraham; the law covenant that Israel entered into with God at Mt. Sinai, the promises God made to David and his son).

However, Wisdom books do have . . .

B. Where the Wisdom Books Fall in the Overall Flow of the OT:

Job –

Nothing in the book of Job tell us directly when the events in the book took place. Traditionally, interpreters have felt that the book of Job could easily be before the time of Moses. It is possible, even likely, that Job lived around the time of Abraham.

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs –

These three books are linked to the time of King Solomon. These three wisdom books do not much mention the covenants or the major events earlier in the Old Testament. However, these three books do(!) assume that the reader is familiar with the general idea of God as it is presented in the Old Testament (that there is one true God, who is the Creator, who is good, righteous, and just, etc.).

Psalms –

In contrast to the other wisdom books, the Psalms often refer to major events in the Old Testament. They also refer to the covenants: to Abraham, to the Sinai covenant ("the Law"), and to the oath God swore to David. The book of Psalms was not completed until after the exile. So having a working knowledge of the main events in OT history, and of the covenants, is very helpful for understanding many of the psalms, and the book of Psalms, in general.

However, within the book of Psalms, there are about ten psalms which mainly give wisdom for living; they are called the "**wisdom psalms.**" The following ten psalms are commonly regarded as "wisdom psalms": 1, 32, 34, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133. Interestingly, information about Israel's history, and about the covenants, is not needed to understand the wisdom psalms.

C. The Nature of the 'Wisdom' in the OT Wisdom Books:

(1) Again, what the wisdom books give us is wisdom, that is, they give us . . .

(2) While some their content is highly reflective (mainly in Job & Ecclesiastes), nonetheless . . .

That is, they give us . . .

(3) You often have to think (!) about it, and re-read it, to get the point.

D. The Different Moods & Perspectives of the Bible's Three Main Wisdom Books –

Proverbs (like the book of Psalms) is generally characterized by a . . .

Job and **Ecclesiastes**, on the other hand, . . .

E. The Main Theme of the Wisdom Books: The fear (= reverence) of the Lord / of God .

Proverbs 1:7 says that the fear of the Lord . . .

Proverbs 9:10 (and also Ps 111:10) says that the fear of the Lord . . .

! This is the way the OT describes . . .

For example, consider Abraham in **Gen 22:12** – The angel of the Lord says to Abraham: "**Now I know that you fear/revere God . . .**".

On the other hand, individuals who do not care about God, and who live however they please, are called "the wicked," and are said to have no fear of God. Consider Psalm 36:1 –

Ps 36:1 – *An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked:
There is no fear of God before his eyes.*

The fear, the reverence of God, is *not(!)* a cowering fear, but rather: **Prov 14:26-27**.

Those who truly fear/revere God are characterized by both:

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This concept, "the fear of the Lord," also shows up **in the New Testament**:

See! Acts 10:34-35 !

Luke 1: 50

Rev 14:6-7, ". . . the eternal gospel . . . fear God, and give him glory . . ." (Rev 19:5 is similar).

To Sum up: To fear / to revere the Lord means . . .

This involves . . .

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)

And for those who truly fear the Lord . . .

II. Insights for Understanding the Bible's Wisdom Books:

1. Wisdom literature often does not have a tight train of thought which builds clearly from one paragraph to the next. Often, it simply shifts & flows from one thought to another without announcing it. This feature is obvious in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.
2. It is widely recognized that a single verse of the Bible rarely gives the Bible's entire teaching on a subject. This is also true of wisdom literature. But this can be true for wisdom literature *even when a verse reads like it is a maxim or general truth*.

Some examples of this from Proverbs: Note that . . .

Marriage & Wives: Prov 18:22 *He who finds a wife finds a good thing . . .*

Prov 25:24 *It is better to live on the corner of a roof
than to live with a quarrelsome woman.*

Prov 27:15–16 *A quarrelsome wife is like a continual dripping on a rainy day . . .*

Yet note the balance in this verse:

Prov 12:4 *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
but one who brings shame is like decay in his bones.*

Making Money: Prov 10:4 & 22 *Lazy hands make a man poor;
diligent hands bring wealth.*

Prov 23:4–5. *Do not wear yourself to get rich . . .
. . . cast a mere glance at riches, and they are gone.*

Giving Away Money: The righteous are generous: Prov 14:31; 28:27; Ps 37:21,25–26.
But(!), they are not foolish: Prov 11:15; 19:15, 19:19; 20:16; 30:15.

Again, one verse does not give us the Bible's whole picture; this is especially true with wisdom books.

3. Similarly, unless a verse of OT poetry is obviously sarcastic, we expect that what it tells us will at least be true *in some sense*, or, *from some perspective*, even if it is not *universally* true. Consider Eccles 7:2-4.

² *It is better to go to the house of mourning • than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind, • and the living should take it to heart.*

³ *Sorrow is better than laughter, • for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.*

⁴ *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, • but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*

There are no doubt some aspects of going to the house of feasting that are "better" than going to the house of mourning. The writer's point is that *there is something about going to the house of mourning that is better than going to the house of feasting*. This could easily be that → in the house of mourning we are more likely to contemplate our own mortality—a good thing to do.

Similarly, the writer isn't denying that a fool has ever attended a funeral, or that a wise person has ever been at a party. Rather, it is *like the wise* to comfort others, whereas it is *like a fool* to place a high priority on laughter and entertainment.

In sum, unless a verse is clearly sarcastic, there will be a element of truth in it. What it says might not be true in all cases, but something that it affirms will be true, in some cases, from some perspective.

4. Finally, wisdom literature does not tend to yield its insights to a one-time quick reading. Some examples:

Prov 10:26 - Sending a lazy person on an errand → is like vinegar to the teeth & smoke to the eyes.

So what's the point?

Eccles 7:1–9 - Some of these proverbs are clearly true → so are *all* of them true? → *in some sense*?

You can see why Proverbs describes some of its material as "riddles." In each of these cases, the reader must reflect on it to get the point. // Wisdom literature often requires the reader to think.

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H/O #18 – Job

A. References to Job Outside of the Book of Job:

Job is mentioned twice in the Bible outside of the book of Job: **Ezekiel 14:13–20**, and **James 5:11**. In both of these places, . . .

B. The Book of Job Compared to the Book Ecclesiastes:

It is no great observation, but if Ecclesiastes wrestles the seeming dilemma of life *in general*, the book of Job . . .

C. The Basic Story Line of the Book of Job:

In the book of Job, we are introduced to Job, who is a righteous and God-fearing person. God has blessed him. One day, Satan comes before God, and raises the challenge that → *Job only serves God because God has blessed him*. Take away his blessings, Satan scoffs, and Job will curse you to your face (1:11). So God permits this to happen. But Job does not curse God.

When God points out to Satan that Job has remained faithful, Satan counters that if God will let Job be harmed *physically*, then he will surely curse God. So God again gives Job over to Satan, but with the limit that Satan cannot take Job's life. So Satan afflicted Job with boils & sores all over his body. But again, Job does not curse God.

But in the next chapter (ch. 3), Job does curse the day of his birth (3:1). And the rest of the book shows that Job cannot make any sense out of what has happened to him, *because it does not fit with his understanding of the goodness and justice of God*.

[It is noteworthy that the reader knows what has transpired between God and Satan. So the reader knows why all this has happened to Job. But Job does not know this (and neither do his friends). They do not know that Job is the object of a challenge from Satan to God to see if Job will stay faithful to God, even if he loses everything that God had blessed him with.]

Job's three friends come, and discuss and debate the situation with Job (chs. 4–27). In short, they affirm the goodness and justice of God. In specific, they affirm the principle that God blesses the righteous and judges the wicked. Since Job has lost all his blessings, and his body has been wracked with pain, Job's three friends conclude that Job must have(!) done something seriously wrong. And so they exhort Job to admit his sin (examples: 4:7,8; 8:3–7; 22:4–11).

But Job never admits that he has committed serious sin. He affirms that his conduct has been good, and that he is innocent (not totally sinless, but innocent of serious sin; 13:23,24).

Their speeches go back & forth for 25 chapters, but neither side convinces the other.

D. Some Insights for Interpreting the Book of Job:

1. In **Biblical Interpretation (BS 102)**, we pointed out the difference between . . .

That means, when we read the book of Job, we need to bear in mind that **the speeches** . . .

With one exception: If God is the speaker . . .

2. Also, all of the speeches in Job are what kind of genre?
So, what does that matter? It is possible that . . .
3. A lot of what the friends say about God **is** true. God is wise, he is good, he is just. However, God himself tells us that something the friends say about God is not true. In specific, in Job 42:7, God says:

*“You [three friends] have not spoken of me what is right, **as my servant Job has.**”*

So → to correctly interpret the book of Job, it will help us if we can figure what Job’s friends say about God that is different from what Job says. And that is. . . (?)

E. Questions Raised by / Issued Posed by the Book of Job:

The Initial Question Posed by the Book of Job:

Satan hurls an insult, a challenge, to God: *Job only serves you because you continue to bless him. But take his blessing away, and he will curse you to your face.*

So the initial question is:

Q: *Will people continue to serve God even if God removes their earthly comforts & blessings?*

But there us a related question that is worth our attention:

Q: In the end, does God ultimately ask us to serve him *for nothing?* (Job 1:9-10).

A Basic Issue Involved in the Book of Job:

A basic issue with the book of Job involves the ultimate justice of God. All of the main speakers in the book of Job (Job, his three friends, and Elihu), affirm the following general principle:

Those who serve God and obey his commands will be rewarded, and those who violate God's commands and reject God will be judged & punished.

Q: Does the OT (and the Bible, overall) teach this principle as something that is generally and ultimately true?

Q: But is the ≈reverse dynamic true? That is →

If you are suffering, is it always & only because you have sinned?

This is a basic question in the book of Job.

Q: What do Job's three friends assume?

Q: Are they right? How do we know?

F. The Question Job Can't Answer / Job's 'Conundrum':

[Definition: A *conundrum* is a problem that seems to have no solution.]

Job affirms that God is good and just, that the righteous are blessed, and that the wicked suffer and are punished. Job himself, being a godly and righteous man, has been blessed, as one would expect. But now Job is suffering the way one would think only the wicked should suffer. But Job is *not* wicked. So in his exasperation, Job concludes (in 9:22):

*It is all the same; that is why I say,
"He [= God] destroys both the blameless and the wicked."*

Yet Job knows that this would be counter to the ultimate goodness of God, so it can't be true. ↔ Yet Job looks at his own life and says, "*But it **is** true . . . but it **can't** be true . . .*" This is what drives Job crazy; this is Job's conundrum.

G. The Final Question and Challenge that Job Poses to God:

Job's final request / question is this:
(See: 7:20; 10:2; 30:20; 40:8).

Job's closing challenge is . . .
(Ch. 31, + also see Job 1:1 & 28:28)

H. God's Reply to Job:

When God addresses Job, God does critique *something* about Job, because Job "repents in dust and ashes" (42:6). The book's answer (God's answer) to Job's lament emphasizes three main ideas:

- **Job 38:2** "*Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?*"
- **Job 38:4** "*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?*"
- **Job 40:8** "*Would you discredit my justice to establish yours?*"
[See similarly 8:3 & 8:20]

It is vital to note here that the book of Job **affirms(!)** . . .

Does God actually answer Job's final question?

In short, God's answer back to Job is:

Job, you are out of your league here; and no, you are not even entitled to an explanation.

However:

But notice what answer God does **not** give?

Note(!) Job 42:11, where the narrator(!) says, "*. . . all the trouble the Lord had brought on him.*"

I. The Conclusion of the Story / the Final Outcome of Job's Life

Q: Does God bring <further> disaster on Job?

Q: In fact, does God restore Job's blessings?

Q: What does that imply about God's assessment of Job?

Q: In fact, what does God call Job in 42:7?

J. Some Large Lessons We Learn from the Book of Job

- Regarding the "reverse dynamic" of the principle of God's ultimate justice—Job's three friends insist that → *If Job is suffering the way he is, it must be because he has sinned.* Are they right?
- Does Job have a right to an explanation from God?
- Does the book of Job affirm God's <ultimate> justice?
- What two attributes of God does God's reply to Job emphasize?
 - 1.
 - 2.
- So when Job is faced with unjust suffering, what does he need to do?

What do we need to do?

* * * * *

H/O #19 – Proverbs

A. Two Key Items from the Beginning of the Book, Proverbs 1:1–7

- Prov 1:2-6 The nature & purpose of the book:
- Prov 1:7 A fundamental declaration of the book:

B. Insights for Interpreting Individual Proverbs / the Book of Proverbs

1. A key insight for understanding and applying Proverbs: **"proverbs" are not . . .**
 - What proverbs are . . .
 - What proverbs are not . . .
2. Proverbs are useful reminders of what is often true, but they do not necessarily set forth *something that is true in all circumstances*. Consider from the professor's culture:

"Absence make the heart grow fonder." ↔ "Out of sight, out of mind."

3. Not every verse in the Book of Proverbs consists of a . . .

Prov. 1:6 mentions "*proverbs, parables, sayings, and riddles*." It also has sections which are extended exhortations. Here are some examples:

Chs. 1-4, and again chs. 6-9 are not classic short proverbs. Rather, . . .

Sayings: Prov. 22:17ff, + chs. 23 & 24, are explicitly labeled "*the sayings of the wise*." These sayings are more like direct teachings and instructions. They are close to commands. They often begin with "*Do not . . .*". Here is an example:

22:22-23 *Do not exploit the poor just because they are poor,
and do not crush the needy in court,
for the Lord will take up their case
and will <someday> plunder those who plunder them.*

Proverbs ↔ Riddles:

Some proverbs are entirely self-evident:

13:1 *A wise son heeds his father's advice,
but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.*

22:10 *Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife;
quarrels and insults are ended.*

Some proverbs require more thought to get their point.

- 11:2 *When pride comes, then comes disgrace;
 but with humility comes wisdom.*
- 13:24 *He who spares the rod hates his son,
 but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*
- 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man,
[=16:25] but in the end it leads to death.*
- 17:5 *Whoever mocks a poor person shows contempt for his Maker;
 whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.*

Riddles are like proverbs that you have to think about even more to get the point.

- 26:14 *A door on its hinges,
 and a sluggard on his bed.*
- 20:14 *"Bad, Bad," says the buyer,
 but then he boasts.*

C. Some Examples of Proverbs that are Useful for Learning How to Interpret Proverbs:

26:4 + 26:5 (Compare how different translations render this verse.)

To Note! It is possible to misunderstand and therefore to misuse a proverb: **26:9**

"Like a thornbush in the hand of a drunkard, is a proverb in the mouth of a fool."

19:19 An example of "tough love" → *"A hotheaded man . . ."*

30:17 *"The eye that scorns"*

D. Some Classic Proverbs:

- 12:18 *Reckless words pierce like a sword, **but the tongue of the wise brings healing.***
- 15:1 *A gentle answer turns away wrath, **but a harsh word stirs up anger.***
- 19:4 *Wealth brings many friends; **but a poor man's friends desert him.***
- 12:16 *A fool shows his annoyance at once, **but a prudent man overlooks an insult.***
- 29:11 *A fool gives full vent to his anger, **but a wise man keeps himself under control.***
- 14:9 *Fools mock at making amends for sin, **but good will is found among the upright.***

* * * * *

H/O #20 – Ecclesiastes

I. Introductory Observations:

- **The Meaning of the Title of the Book.**

The title of the book is the same as the word found in 1:1 & 2 and also later in the book in 7:27; 12:8,9,10. Its basic meaning is "Teacher" or "Lecturer" or "Preacher."

- **A Classic Term or Phrase from Ecclesiastes:** "vanity" / "meaningless"

The term translated "vanity" or "meaningless" in Eccles 1:2 occurs about 70x in the OT; half of those in Ecclesiastes. It conveys three main ideas:

- (1) Its literal/physical meaning is . . .
- (2) It describes efforts that . . .
- (3) It describes situations/outcomes that . . .

Dr. Lane's interpretive paraphrase:

- **The Main Question Posed by the Book:** (1:3; [2:11]; 2:17 & 22; 3:9; 5:16)

II. Two 'Problems' with the Book of Ecclesiastes:

Problem #1: Ecclesiastes Seems to Disagree with → Proverbs & Psalms:

Books such as Psalms & Proverbs strongly assert the following two affirmations:

[A] God's justice will prevail; the wicked will be punished, and the righteous (i.e., those who serve God) will be blessed - even here & now on earth.

[B] Those who revere/fear God will find joy and satisfaction in Him, and in serving Him.
[See esp. Ps 16:11; Ps 84:10-11; Ps 145:16-19.]

The problem is that Ecclesiastes seems to disagree with both of these affirmations.

[A] As regards **divine justice**, consider these verses from Ecclesiastes:

8:14 *There is something senseless that takes place on earth - that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is senseless.*

9:11 *I have seen something else under the sun -
the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent,
nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.*

[B] And as regards the question of whether there is **satisfaction in this life**, whether there is **anything worth doing**, consider the mood set by the opening passage.

1:2-11

1:12-2:16

2:17-23 (!)

This is why some interpreters think that Ecclesiastes really does disagree with Proverbs & Psalms. This is the first 'problem' with Ecclesiastes.

Yet consider the very next paragraph, Eccles 2:24-26. It may be summarized as:

*So a person should eat & drink and find enjoyment in his work;
this also, I saw, is from the hand of God. [v. 24]*

Q: How can the writer offer such a positive suggestion/conclusion after all the pessimism and frustration with life he has expressed in 1:2–2:23? This brings us to the second 'problem'.

Problem #2: Ecclesiastes Seems to Disagree with → Itself (!):

Recall: The overall mood of the book is very negative: there is no justice, life is senseless, and it does not satisfy. It would seem like, in the end, how we live does not matter.

So we might expect the conclusion of the book to be either . . .

But when we finally get to the end of the book (12:13–14), where it states its conclusions, what does it recommend?

So the second 'problem' with Ecclesiastes is that: *The conclusions of the book do not seem to match the book's own argument.* Ecclesiastes seems to disagree with itself.

In view of these two seeming 'problems' with Ecclesiastes → We can see why people have wondered how to make sense of this curious book. Some interpreters have even wondered how Ecclesiastes got into the Bible to begin with.

Q: So how do we make sense of this fascinating but admittedly puzzling book?

A: ??? The reader is driven to re-read the book to see if he or she has overlooked something.

III. Four Insights & Observations that Help Us Make Sense of Ecclesiastes:

Insight #1. What 'Type of Literature' ('genre') is Ecclesiastes?

Recall: Ecclesiastes is *wisdom literature*, and it contains a lot *poetry*. This means:

- It might not speak flatly literally at every point.
- We might have to re-read it and think(!) about it to get the point.

Insight #2. When Ecclesiastes Mentions God, what it says Agrees with the Rest of the Bible.

We have seen that many verses in Ecclesiastes which seem to disagree with the rest of the Bible.

Yet when the book states its conclusion (12:13–14), *in which it explicitly mentions God*, its conclusion agrees with the rest of the Bible.

Resulting Question:

In the rest of Ecclesiastes, when the text clearly refers to God, does what it says agree with, or seem to disagree with, what the rest of the Bible teaches about God?

Answer:

When we re-read the book, we find that it mentions God several times. To be specific, Ecclesiastes refers to God **43x** in **38** different verses. So do these verses agree with, or disagree with, what the rest of the Bible teaches about God? Here is what those verses say about God:

- God is the creator. 1:13; 3:10; 12:1; 12:7
- God is involved with his creation. 1:13; 3:14; 3:18; 5:2–7; 6:2; 7:13–14; 8:17; 9:1; 11:5; 12:14
- God made men upright(!), but they have gone in search of many schemes. 7:29
- God has placed a sense of eternity in our hearts. 3:11
- The capacity to enjoy life is connected to, and comes from the hand of, God. 2:24 (+ perhaps 2:25); 3:13; 5:18–20; 6:2; 8:15; 9:7; 9:9
- God clearly differentiates between righteousness and wickedness. 8:12–13; 9:1

- It is possible, at least in a general sense, to please God. 2:26; 7:26
- It is both right and wise for us to fear God; it will go well for those who do so (5x). 3:14; 5:7; 7:16–18; 8:12–13; 12:13
- God will(!) someday judge us & our deeds. 3:17; 11:9; 12:14

Conclusion:

Whoever wrote these verses in Ecclesiastes knows a lot about God. They present a **theistic** conception of God: God is the Creator and the righteous judge; He interacts with his creation. His creation can and should be enjoyed.

Thus, even though much of what Ecclesiastes says seems to disagree with the rest of Scripture, we find that → ***whenever it directly refers to God, what it says agrees with the rest of Scripture.*** This is not a small observation.

Remaining Question:

Nonetheless, how do we understand all those verse in Ecclesiastes which do seem to disagree with what the rest of the Bible says? Keep reading.

Insight #3. The Interpretive Key to Ecclesiastes is the Phrase: "under the sun."

The expression "under the sun" occurs 29x in 27 verses in Ecclesiastes. This phrase does not occur anywhere else in the Old Testament. It is unique to Ecclesiastes. *No other book in the OT contemplates life "under the sun."* That is a big hint.

The basic sense of the phrase "under the sun" is simply "*life here on earth, where we live.*"

Of the 29x the phrase occurs in Ecclesiastes, it occurs **4x** in verses which also refer to **God** (5:18, 8:15, 8:17, 9:9). All four of them speak of enjoying what God has given us (family, food, work) during our days under the sun.

But the majority (25x) of the "under the sun" verses in Ecclesiastes strike a very different tone. When we examine the rest of the "under the sun" passages, that is where we find the pessimistic & negative statements that characterize Ecclesiastes.

In addition to the ones already listed above on p. 1, here are some more examples:

- 1:14** *I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and all of them are a senseless waste of time, a chasing after the wind.*
- 2:10–11** *When I surveyed all . . . I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.*
- 2:17** *So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*
- 2:22–23** *What does a man gain from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils under the sun? ²³All his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity (= a senseless waste of time).*

So this what life is like "under the sun."

But if that is the case, then what are we to make of the passages in Ecclesiastes (2:24; 3:13; 3:22) which affirm that we are to enjoy life's activities? And further, what are we to make of those verses which affirm that God will <someday> judge, and that we should fear/revere him (3:7; 5:7; 8:12; 11:9; 12:13–14)? How do we sort all of this out?

We admit that life on earth often does(!) look the way the pessimistic statements in Ecclesiastes describe it. And additionally, from just watching life on earth, it is next-to-impossible to figure it all out (8:17). It is impossible to know whether anything we do ultimately matters. If **all** we knew was what could be learned from observing life "under the sun," the pessimistic conclusions in Ecclesiastes would be the conclusions we would reach.

However, the passages in Ecclesiastes which refer to God paint a very different picture. When Ecclesiastes mentions God, it affirms that God does see, that there will be justice, that life is enjoyable, even satisfying. This agrees with(!) the rest of Scripture—including Psalms & Proverbs. But all of this is true *only if one takes the reality of God and of God's final justice into account*.

At this point, it is helpful to ask:

Q: How does the Teacher know (8:12) that it will go better for those who revere God?

And *how* does he know all those things about God we mentioned above under **Insight #2?**

A: He knows these things → because the Teacher/Preacher is **not** limited to what can be known by simply observing life as you see it on earth, life "under the sun." Rather, he clearly has knowledge about God that came to us through divine revelation.

Therefore, we may conclude that → **the pessimistic views in Ecclesiastes are what you *would* conclude about life, if all you did was observe life on earth *without* any knowledge of God.** And that is what Ecclesiastes describes as life "**under the sun**" [= life on earth, as you see it, without taking God into account.] // But again, those statements are not the book's final word on the matter.

Insight #4. Ecclesiastes puts the "God" statements and the "under the sun" statements side-by-side, without explaining to the reader what it is doing.

Ecclesiastes puts the pessimistic "under the sun" statements, and the 'positive / God' verses side-by-side → without explaining to the reader that it is doing so. That is why the book is so confusing.

But remember, Ecclesiastes is wisdom literature. This means we might have to read it more than once, and think about it, to figure out what it is doing, to get the point. Ecclesiastes make us do that.

IV. Conclusions & the Overall Message of Ecclesiastes:

- **Q:** In the end, does Ecclesiastes contradict, or perhaps 'correct', Proverbs & Psalms? _____ .
- **Q:** In the end, does Ecclesiastes contradict *itself*? _____ . **Rather,**
 1. Again, it puts the negative and positive statements side-by-side without(!) explaining to the reader that it is doing so. This drives the reader to think about it.
 2. Although the conclusion of the book (12:13 & 14) can come as something of a surprise to the reader, it is noteworthy that 12:9 & 10 affirm that what the Teacher said was true!
 3. Yes, most of the statements in the book are negative and pessimistic. But there are also many positive statements within it, those that refer to God. In view of this mix, the concluding verses of Ecclesiastes (12:13–14), should be viewed as **a final clarifying declaration** that the verses which refer to God do(!) state the final conclusion of the book.
- **The particular emphasis of Ecclesiastes** is that → life without God . . .

That is why Ecclesiastes has so many negative verses; it is to get that negative point across.

That is the emphasis that is unique to Ecclesiastes; and that is why it is the only book in the Bible that uses the phrase, "under the sun."

V. Some Reflections & Applications on the overall Message of Ecclesiastes:

- The key to understanding life on earth . . .
- In the short run, life on earth is often not fair.
- We need to remind ourselves that life without God . . .
- Genuine satisfaction in this life . . .
2:24–25; 5:19–6:2

* * * * *

H/O #21 – Song of Songs

A. The Title & Author of the Book:

The title of this book is commonly given as either the “*Song of Solomon*,” or, “*Song of Songs*.”

The title comes from the first verse of the book. Translated tightly from the Hebrew, the first verse reads, “*The Song of Songs, which [is] of Solomon.*” So either form of the title makes sense.

The professor mildly prefers “*Song of Songs*” because, in the end . . .

B. The Main Interpretive Question re: Song of Songs (SOS):

The main interpretive question is:

- Is SOS to be interpreted **essentially literally** = according to the natural sense of the words, in which case it is about
- Or, is it **allegorical or metaphorical**, in which case it is about

Two Observations:

- (1) Even one takes SOS essentially literally = at the natural sense of the words, . . .
- (2) **This is important!** → Even if(!) SOS was not intended to be taken literally, nonetheless, . . .

C. The Dominant View of the Church Down through History –

The dominant approach of the church down through history is to read SOS as . . .

D. Why Your Prof Thinks SOS Should be Understand Essentially Literally:

There are two problems with the allegorical / metaphorical interpretation of SOS.

#1. It does not do justice to the fact that . . .

In **H/O #17** (“Introduction to the Wisdom Books”), we noted an important feature of OT wisdom books, namely → that they reflect on the realities of everyday life, and give us wisdom for living. If we bear that in mind, then it is likely that SOS is addressing

#2. The second problem is this: a thoroughly allegorical / metaphorical reading of SOS . . .

E. The High Point of the Book:

It makes sense that one function of SOS is to highlight the ideal of an intense romantic love between one man and one woman, between a husband and his bride. That is why more than one interpreter of SOS believes that 8:6-7 are the high-point of the book:

*⁶ Set me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal over your arm;
for love is as strong as death,
its passion is as unyielding as the grave.
It burns like a blazing fire,
like a mighty flame.*

*⁷ Many waters cannot extinguish love;
rivers cannot sweep it away.
If a man were to offer all his wealth to buy love,
it would be utterly scorned.*

Solomon had enormous wealth. But the message of these two verses is that, even for Solomon, his money would not be able to buy him love. True romantic emotional love is given freely.

F. Main Conclusions about the Message of Song of Songs:

Genuine emotional love and physical intimacy between husband and wife is viewed by the Song of Songs, and by the rest of Scripture, as a good thing. (See also Proverbs ch. 5.)

In the context of a marriage, physical intimacy between a husband and wife . . .

That is an essential message of the Song of Songs.

* * * * *

H/O #22 – The Book of Psalms

I. The Background We Need to Know to Understand the Book of Psalms

There are three areas of background information that are very helpful for understanding the book of Psalms:

- A. The main outlines of the history of Israel.
- B. The life of David, in particular.
- C. The three covenants: covenant with Abraham, the Sinai covenant, and the covenant with David.

This section will summarize what the book of psalms assumes the reader knows from those three areas. It will also list some of the psalms that refer to these events and covenants.

A. The Main Outlines of the History of Israel

We have seen all of these before in **H/O #03**, **H/O #04**, and **H/O #07**. Here we are repeating the ones which are particularly important for reading the Psalms, because the Psalms refer to them.

- Moses & the exodus from Egypt. Ps 105:38.
- Israel received the Law and entered into a covenant with God at Mt Sinai (Exod 24). Ps 1:2; Ps 10:5; Ps 19:7; Ps 50:16; Ps 78:5,10,56; Ps 89:30; Ps 147:119,20.
- Israel spied out the land, but did not trust God, and was afraid to enter the land (Num 13, 14). Ps 106:24-27.
- So God decreed that Israel would wander in the wilderness for 40 years, until the generation which did not believe him all died off (Num 14; Num 26:6-65; Deut 1 & 2; Josh 5:4-7).
- That same generation committed idolatry with the Baal of Peor (Num 25). Ps 106:28-31.
- When the 40 years was done, Joshua led them into the land, as God drove out the nations from before Israel (the book of Joshua). Ps 44:1-8; 105:44.
- But after Joshua died, Israel failed to continue to drive out the nations. Israel began to be influenced by their pagan customs (in the time of the Judges). Ps 106:34-36.
- After that, when Israel had kings, some of Israel's kings were good. But several of Israel's kings were evil; some even worshipped the gods of Canaan. Israel was unfaithful to the Lord, and broke the covenant. Ps 106:37-39.
- As a result, God brought severe judgment upon Israel. First the northern kingdom fell (in 722 BC). Then Judah fell to the Babylonians; Jerusalem & the temple were destroyed in 586 BC, and Judah went into exile. Ps 74; Ps 79; Ps 106:40-42.
- But after 70 years, God brought the Jews back to Judah and Jerusalem. Ps 107; Ps 126; Ps 137; Ps 147.

B. The Main Events in David's Life

These are the events in David's life which various psalms refer to:

- David is chosen and anointed by God to be king. Ps 78:71; Ps 89:20.
- Saul persecutes David, and tries to kill him. See the superscriptions to Ps 52, 54, 57, & 59.
- David becomes king; he brings the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. Ps 24; Ps 132:8.
- God promises David that a son of his will reign on his throne forever (= the Davidic covenant). Ps 89:3-4, 19-29, 34-37; Ps 132.
- David's sin with Bathsheba; David's confession. Ps 51; Ps 32.
- The rebellion of David's son Absalom. Ps 3 (and perhaps Ps 42 & 43).

C. The Three Covenants: Abraham, Sinai, and David

The psalms assume the reader is generally familiar with these three covenants. We have already mentioned them in **H/O #09**. We list them here simply for review.

- God promised **Abraham** that He would bless him, make him into a great nation, and would bless all nations of the earth through Abraham and his seed.
Ps 105:8-9,42; Ps 106:44-46; probably also Ps 47:9, Ps 74:20, and Ps 87.
- Israel received the Law and entered into a covenant with God at Mt **Sinai** (Exod 24).
Ps 1:2; Ps 10:5; Ps 19:7; Ps 50:16; Ps 78:5,10,56; Ps 89:30; Ps 147:119,20.
- God promised **David** that a son of his will reign on his throne forever (= the Davidic covenant).
Ps 89:3-4, 19-29, 34-37; Ps 132.

You will find that, as you read the Psalms, many of them will make more sense to you if you are familiar with events and covenants listed above.

II. Some Insights that Will Help Us Understand the Book of Psalms

A. The Psalms are all written in Hebrew Poetry.

We looked at the nature of Hebrew poetry in **H/O #16**. Here we will just review a few items:

- The lines in OT poetry usually come in pairs; this feature is called: _____.
What's the point?
- The language is often _____ and is not meant to be taken flatly literally.
- Sometimes, one poem or one psalm will only tell us . . .
- Sometimes, instead of telling us the facts of the matter, poetry will tell us . . .

B. It is Helpful to Identify: Who is the *Speaker* in a Psalm?

The "Speaker" versus the "Psalmist"

The term, "the psalmist" refers to the person who wrote the psalm (David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, etc.) The 'speaker' in a psalm is usually the same as the psalmist, but not always.

When we read the psalms, we find that the 'speaker' can shift within a given psalm (from singular to plural, from a human to God, etc.).

For example, in **Psalm 46**, the 'psalmist' is "the sons of Korah," the 'speaker' is plural, and could be them, or perhaps even the nation. But in v. 10, the *speaker* is clearly God; then in v. 11, the speaker shifts back to plural, the people / the nation / the godly. This distinction between the 'psalmist' and the 'speaker' will be especially important in psalms like Psalm 89 and 91.

C. It is Helpful to Identify: Who is the Psalm Speaking about?

1. Psalms which sound like they are about David, but which describe events beyond anything David ever experienced.

There are psalms that are by David, and which speak in the 1st-person, as if it were David describing something about himself / his own experience. But in some of these psalms, the psalm describes things that go beyond anything David ever experienced. Two examples are Psalm 16 and Psalm 22. In such cases, interpreters have concluded that David is not talking about himself, but is talking about the Messiah. See Psalm 16 and Acts 2:24–32.

2. When the Person Being Referred to in a Psalm is Not Clear

Usually, who or what a psalm is talking about is obvious. But sometimes the person that a psalm is referring to might not be clear. A psalm can sometimes move from talking about one person to another very smoothly = without signaling to the reader that it has done so. In these cases it can be hard to identify who the psalm is talking about.

Most often the question is: Is the psalm talking about David, or about a future Davidic king? For example, consider **Psalm 8**:

In **Psalm 8**, does the phrase "*the son of man*" refer to all human beings, or to the Son of Man? When Psalm 8 is read in the context of the Old Testament, it easily & naturally seems to be referring to human beings, in general. But Hebrews 2 picks up on those words, and applies them to Jesus as *the* Son of God, in a unique way. Can the words in Psalm 8 *refer to* both? That is, can they reasonably apply to both?

Further, within the same psalm, there will sometimes be verses that seem to be speaking about the Messiah, and yet others which *cannot* be speaking about the Messiah, but nothing has signaled this shift to the reader. Consider **Psalm 41**:

The NT (Heb 10:5–7) quotes parts of **Psalm 41** (vv. 6–8) and tells us that they are about the **Messiah**. But other parts of Psalm 41 *cannot* be about the Messiah, because they confess the speaker's many sins! (v. 4).

So the person that the psalm is speaking about can shift without the psalm telling us it has done so. Identifying who the psalm is talking about is very important. [Two examples: this is especially important in Psalm 89 and 91.]

III. The Five-Book Structure of the Book of Psalms

A. Question: Is there an overall structure, or an overall flow, to the book of Psalms?

For centuries, interpreters have said no, there is no overall structure, no overall flow, to the book of Psalms. If that is the case, then it does not matter what order we read them in.

But in recent years (since about 1970), interpreters have paid more attention to the fact that the book of Psalms is divided into five "books." Many modern Bibles indicate this. See in your Bibles just above Ps 1, Ps 42, Ps 73, Ps 90 and Ps 107. The five books are:

Book I	Psalms	1 – 41
Book II	Psalms	42 – 72
Book III	Psalms	73 – 89
Book IV	Psalms	90 – 106
Book V	Psalms	107 – 150

The five books are not balanced: they do not have the same number of psalms in them; and they are not same approximate length, either. [Book V has 44 psalms in it; Book III has only 17. In a typical printed Bible, Book I is about 40 pages long; Book III is less than 20.]

This raises the **question**: If the five books do not divide the book of Psalms into either equal numbers of psalms, or into sets that are roughly the same length, then why are those book-divisions there?

So interpreters have re-read the book of Psalms in the last 50 years, and have paid attention to the five-book structure. They have found that there is a perceptible overall flow to the book of Psalms.

B. The General Nature of the Overall Flow of the Book of Psalms:

As modern interpreters have re-read the book of Psalms, they have found that there is an overall **chronological** flow to it.

Clarification #1: When we say this, we do **not** mean that Ps 1 was the earliest psalm written, and that Ps 150 was the last psalm written. And we do not mean that the psalms flow in a *precise* chronological sequence from one psalm to the next.

What we mean is that → there is a general chronological sequence **from one book of the Psalms to the next book**. In brief, here is the overall flow:

Books I & II Before the exile. Books I & II mainly reflect and address David's life, and David's time as king. They reflect the setting *before* the exile.

Book III Early in the Exile. Book III has psalms that reflect and address the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (in 586 BC, by the Babylonians). Book III feels like it is wrestling the implications of all of this while the ruins of Jerusalem are still smoldering, while it is still early in the exile.

Book IV Late in the Exile. Book IV has a few psalms which suggest the end of the exile is near, and that Jerusalem will be rebuilt soon.

Book V After the Exile. Book V reflects the situation *after* the exile. It has some psalms (at least: 107, 126, 137, & 147) that were written after the exile, when the Jews have returned to Judah & Jerusalem.

Clarification #2: We have said that <there is a general chronological sequence from one book of the Psalms to the next book>. But when we say that, we do **not** mean that all of the psalms in Book III were written during the exile, or that all of the psalms in Book V were written after the exile.

Rather, *some* of the psalms in Book III were written during the exile, and the other psalms in Book III were put there to address the issues raised by the destruction of Jerusalem and the onset of the exile.

C. The Chronological Flow of the Five Books Suggests an Overall Thematic Development:

The overall flow of the book of Psalms is not simply chronological. There is also a *thematic development* from one book to the next.

In Books I & II, the overall mood is positive. Many of the psalms in Books I & II are positive. But it is also true that there are many 'lament' psalms in Books I & II.

["Lament psalms" – are psalms which basically complain to God about something. But they do not simply complain about life's normal irritations. Rather, they complain about something that is not right *morally*, something that is *unjust*. Lament psalms cry out to God to do something about it. They call on God to act in a manner that is consistent with his justice. Lament psalms fully assume the justice and righteousness of God. In the end, they trust God, and they leave the matter with God.]

Again, there are several lament psalms in Books I & II (for example: Psalms 3–7, and 10–13). However, all of the lament psalms in Books I & II end on a positive note; they end with confidence that God will do something about it. In specific, Book II ends with Ps 72, a psalm which portrays the Davidic king ruling over the whole earth with justice and righteousness. So Books I & II end on a very positive note: all is well with the Davidic kingdom.

Book III – This positive mood changes as of Book III. Book III has the first psalms which address the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Ps 74, Ps 79). This was the most traumatic event in Israel's entire history during the Old Testament. It was unthinkable to many Israelites that the temple of God could actually be destroyed. In addition, there was no longer a Davidic king reigning over Israel. As a consequence, some Israelites wondered if God had abandoned them.

So Book III has lament psalms which actually end on a negative, unconfident note (Ps 88, Ps 89). Book III questions whether God will be true to the things He has promised. If Books I & II end with a confident assertion that all will be well, and that David's kingdom will rule the entire earth, Book III asks, "*Really?*"

Book III asks painful questions which it does not answer, which it leaves hanging.

[See: Psalm 74:1,9,10,20; 77:7-9; 79:5,8,9; 80:3,4,7,14,19; 85:4,5,6,7; and 89:46.]

Book IV – reassures the reader that God truly does reign (Psalms 93-99). And it answers the questions that Book III leaves hanging. Among them:

Book III asks: / Book IV answers:

Q: Has God's steadfast love failed forever? (Ps 77:8)

A: No, his steadfast love endures forever to those who fear, who revere him (Ps 103).

Q: Why does your anger (= God's anger) burn against the sheep of your pasture? (Ps 74:1).
Why did all of this happen to us?

A: It is because we have sinned, just like our fathers did; we have done wrong, and acted wickedly (Ps 106:6).

Ps 106 is the only national prayer of confession in the entire book of Psalms; there is no other psalm like it. And it is the very last psalm in Book IV. So Book IV ends with Israel confessing its sin, which was a spiritual requirement for them to be returned to the land (see: Lev ch. 26, esp. 26:40-45).

Q: Where is your great steadfast love, which You promised to David? (Ps 89:49)

A: Ps 91 & Ps 92 describe someone whom God will rescue (Ps 91:14-16), and who will see the defeat of his wicked enemies (Ps 92:9-11). Ps 102 tells us God will have compassion on Zion (= David's palace, from which he ruled; Ps 102:13). And in Ps 103, David himself declares that God's steadfast love indeed endures forever for those who fear / revere God.

So Book IV answers the questions that were left hanging in Book III.

And then at least two psalms in Book IV anticipate that Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Ps 102:13-17), and that God will gather the Israelites from the nations, and bring them back (Ps 106:47). So Book IV anticipates the end of the exile.

Book V – has psalms that look back on the exile as something that is over (at least: 107, 126, 137, & 147). Psalms 120-134 are the "Psalms of Ascents," psalms that were sung as people travelled to Jerusalem. It makes very good sense that they are in Book V.

However, Israel's return to Judah & Jerusalem does not entirely satisfy the kingdom language of Book V. Psalm 119 speaks of the Law being in the heart, which is fulfilled under the new covenant. Psalm 145 envisions the kingdom of God ruling forever, which has certainly not occurred by the end of the Old Testament.

And what is more, Book V seems to anticipate further conflict yet to come (Ps 137-144). Nonetheless, Book V affirms that the steadfast love of God endures forever (Ps 136). In the end, God will ultimately win: those who have revered & served God will be delivered. The wicked will be judged and defeated. God's righteous kingdom will be established and will endure forever (Ps 145). God's Son = David's son = the anointed One, will rule over it forever (Ps 132).

D. Summary of the Five-Book Structure of the Psalms:

When we look carefully at the five 'books' of the books of Psalms, we see that there is an overall flow to the book of Psalms. **That overall flow is chronological** (that is: the book-by-book flow in the Psalms is chronological, but **not** psalm-by-psalm). It moves from the time before the exile (Books I & II), to early in the exile (Book III), to late in the exile (Book IV), to after the exile (Book V).

And that overall chronological flow suggests a thematic development: The book of Psalms, as a book, wrestles the question: What to make of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple? In Book III it asks: Why did this happen? Has God's steadfast love failed? Have the promises to David failed?

Books IV explains that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, not(!) because God had forgotten to be faithful, but because Israel had not been faithful to God. And Book IV and Book V assure the reader that God's promises to David and to the people of God will come true, that the faithful will be rescued, and that God's kingdom will be established and will indeed endure forever.

IV. Some Psalms that Are Especially Important

All of the psalms are valuable. Here are 12 that are especially important.

Psalm 1 The fate of the righteous versus the wicked

Psalm 2 The Anointed Son

Psalm 16 David foresees the . . .

Psalm 22 The physical suffering of . . .

[Ps 15 is similar to Ps 24.]

Psalm 24 The qualities need to dwell with God

↑ ↓

Psalm 25 So what are the rest of us going to do?

Psalm 37 Observe(!) the outcome of the lives of the righteous . . .

[Ps 73 is similar to Ps 37]

Psalm 51 David's confession of Sin

Psalm 72 The righteous Davidic King ruling over the world

Psalm 87 This one was born in _____ . But was he?

Psalm 103 The mercy & steadfast love of God is . . .

Psalm 110 *The Lord said to my Lord . . .*

For your personal reflection:

- Who is the speaker in Psalm 89? (not the psalmist, the *speaker*)
- Whom is Psalm 91 talking about?

* * * * *

H/O #23 – Introduction to the Prophets

I. The Age of the Prophetic Books / Their General Redemptive-Historical Context

II. The Three Main Clusters of Prophetic Books / Their Specific Historical Contexts

Isaiah

Jeremiah - - - - -

- - - - - Ezekiel

+ (!) Note the order of the 12 Minor Prophets; it generally follows . . .

III. The Function of the Prophets

Their main function is . . .

The reason these objectionable books, full of judgment and condemnation, came to be preserved and revered, was (Ezek 33:33) . . .

IV. The Main Messages & Emphases

1. Warnings / Judgments / Calls to Repent, to both to Israel & Judah, but also sometimes to the nations. // For Israel <alone> they function as . . .
2. Predictions/Descriptions of a Future Blessing / of "the _____." But always (!) the people are repentant & obedient, even righteous.
3. However, in any & all prophetic books that pronounce judgment upon Israel/Judah, there is always:

V. OT "Predictions" ↔ NT Fulfillments

- Not always "square peg → square hole."
- The basic meaning of the NT term for "fulfillment" is . . .
- There is (!) a perceptible resemblance / a correspondence in the way the NT uses the OT passage to the way that passage is used in its OT context.
That is to say, the NT's use . . .
- A NT "fulfillment" may be surprising (Matt 2:15 ↔ Hosea 11:1), but . . .

VI-a. Similarities to the Book of Psalms

Like Psalms, most of the prophetic books are written in _____.

Both the Psalms & the Prophets provide . . .

VI-b. A Point of Contrast versus the Book of Psalms

The Prophets name several of Israel's & Judah's kings.

The Psalms, in the text proper (not counting the superscriptions), names only one king:

* * * * *

H/O #24 – A Brief Survey of the Prophetic Books

I. The Major Prophets – The Big Three, + One:

Isaiah – lived during the Divided Kingdom period; he lives through the destruction of Samaria.

Major themes:

Chs. 1–39 refer to:

Chs. 40–66 refer to:

Jeremiah . Jeremiah predicted and lived through the destruction of Jerusalem.

He repeatedly calls Judah/Israel . . .

In something of a surprise, he tells Judah to . . .

He explicitly predicts that the exile will last . . .

He explicitly speaks of the . . .

[Remember: The old **covenant** ≠ the Old **Testament**. The old covenant =

Ezekiel – was taken to Babylon in the 2nd deportation (597 BC; 10 yrs. before Jerusalem fell);
so he prophesied from Babylon during the exile.

The book has multiple visions, and has apocalyptic visions of the end-times.

It opens with an extended vision of . . .

Which implies what?

It ends with an extended vision of . . .

Daniel

Daniel was taken to Babylon in the 1st deportation (605 BC); so the book (its narratives & its visions) all take place there. It has dramatic visions of the future.

II. The Three Clusters of Minor Prophets:

A. During the Divided Kingdom = Before the Fall of Samaria:

Hosea

Noteworthy fact: God tells Hosea to . . .

Amos – Amos is often called . . .

The book begins (chs. 1–3) with a cycle of judgment oracles, each of which begins with the expression:

The expression is a rhythmic device that signals the beginning of a new oracle, and probably carries the sense, "*The more I think about them, the madder I get.*"

The oracles in chs. 1–3 are pronounced against the nations surrounding Judah and NK Israel, but . . .

Micah

Explicitly predicts . . .

Micah 5:2 mentions . . .

Jonah

You know the "great fish" account; but what city was Jonah sent to?

Does the city repent? How does Jonah respond?

Joel – is hard to date. [Your prof favors the divided kingdom period; others favor early post-exilic.]

Joel has a dramatic vision of . . .

He also has a vision of . . .

B. During 'Judah Alone' = Before the Fall of Jerusalem:

Nahum – Is written concerning the nation of . . .

What other minor prophet addresses Nineveh?

The name "Nahum" means . . .

Habakkuk – consists of . . .

Zephaniah – Pronounces judgment against Judah and four other nations, in the “great day of the Lord.”
But it ends with . . .

C-1. A Possibly(??) Early Exilic Minor Prophet: Obadiah.

Or, Obadiah might date to the Div. Kingdom; if so, probably ±840 BC, when Edom raided Judah.

A noteworthy feature: the book of Obadiah is . . .

The book of Obadiah is about . . .

In the prophetic books, Edom / Esau sometimes seems to be used as . . .

C-2. An Early Exilic Book from the "Writings": Lamentations.

Lamentations is not(!) . . .

But it is mentioned here because it is short, and is related to a prophet; the prophet . . .

Q: So what is the book of Lamentations about?

A: It is . . .

C-3. Post-Exilic Period; Judah is now under what empire? _____ .

Haggai & Zechariah

Both date themselves to . . .

Both urge . . .

Both are mentioned in . . .

Haggai

Haggai re-iterates the general principle that . . .

Haggai poses the **Q:**

A:

Zechariah

•

•

• The book of Zechariah makes a lot more sense if . . .

Malachi

• Malachi is definitely . . .

• Most of the book is a set of disputes between God and Judah.

• Two important closing notes: Malachi 4:4

Malachi 4:5

Conclusion: In the post-exilic period, it is clear that . . .

* * * * *

H/O #25 – Some Selected Passages from the OT Prophetic Books

Isaiah 9 & 11 A son in the line of David will rule upon David's throne forever.

Isaiah 19:19-25 Egypt and Assyria (!) will be blessed along with Israel (esp. v. 25).

Isaiah 42:1-7 The Servant of Yahweh → will be a covenant <for> the people, a light to the **Gentiles**.
[See similarly **Isaiah 49:6**; also **55:4-5** ← the context here is Davidic.]

Isaiah 52:13 - 53 The Righteous Servant who suffers for transgressors and who is consequently lifted up and highly exalted.

Isaiah 56:3-8 Foreigners who serve and love Yahweh will be accepted. They will come to his temple and offer sacrifice which Yahweh will accept. [See similarly **Isa. 14:1-2.**]

Jeremiah 4:1-4 + 17:9-10 Yahweh looks at the heart. Those of Judah & Jerusalem must circumcise their hearts, or Yahweh's wrath will break out against them.
The Point:

Jeremiah 9: 25-26 Yahweh will someday punish all those who are only _____.

Jeremiah 12:14-17 God speaks of His judgment upon, but then the future **restoration** of, the nations.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 **The New Covenant.** Its two main provisions:

-
-

Jeremiah 31:35-37 There will be a _____ as long as the present order of creation continues.

Jeremiah 33:14-26 **The 3 Covenants of Promise** In the context of the **New** Covenant, we are told:

- The covenant with David . . .
- God will never completely destroy . . .

☐ • A son of / David . . .

Daniel 5 Records the fall of Babylon to the Persians (539 BC); the “writing on the wall.”

Ezekiel 1-11

The glory of God departs the Temple.

That glory was part of which covenant? _____ .

This is what Ezekiel's vision of a "wheel in a wheel" represents - see 1:4-28.

But what is the point of the vision?

Ezekiel 34 – 37, in general.

34:20-31 "David" will be the prince over the flock (vv. 22-24); there will be a covenant of peace (v. 25).

36:22-32 This passage is the OT backdrop for the NT passage:
[Ezek. 11:16–21 is similar.]

37:24-28 Again, David will be King over them in the land Yahweh gave to Jacob forever;
Also, they will . . .

Ezekiel 47:21-23 This passage is the OT background for what NT passage?

In a vision of the restored temple & land, aliens who settle within Israel are to be:

- Considered (v. 22) as . . .
- They are to be given an inheritance . . .

!! Gentiles are viewed as Israelites, will dwell with Israelites, and receive an inheritance in "Israel's" land.

The idea that God-fearing Gentiles will be fellow-heirs with believing Israel does not(!) originate in the New Testament; it is anchored in the Old Testament.

Amos 9:11**Micah 6:6-8, esp. v. 8****Micah 7:18-20**

God will be true to the mercy he pledged to _____ in days long ago.

Zechariah 2:10-13

"Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day, and will become my people."

Zechariah 6:9-15

A vision of a **priestly king** who will build Yahweh's temple and rule on the throne.
What does this call to mind?

Zechariah 8; esp. 20-23 Ten men will implore one Jew to let them go with him, because they have heard that God is with them (= the Jews).

Zechariah 9:9

"Behold, your king comes to you . . . riding on a donkey . . . on the foal of a donkey."

Zechariah 12:10

"They will look on me, whom they have pierced"

Malachi 3:16-17

Yahweh's treasured possession will consist of _____ .
[Recall the phrase "treasured possession" from Exodus 19:5 & Deuteronomy 7:6.]

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H/O #26 – Has the Old Testament Been Copied Carefully over the Centuries?

A. Where does the 'text' of our Bibles come from?

When a publisher prints a new translation of the Bible, someone has to decide which words are actually going to go on the page. In the modern world, translators work from well-established printed editions of the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament (your prof has a copy of each with him).

Those modern printed editions are themselves based on earlier printed editions. The printed editions go back to about AD 1500; but in the end, all of the printed editions are based on earlier hand-written **manuscripts**. We currently possess Old Testament manuscripts dating from \approx AD 1400 back to about 200 BC (they are kept in the archives of museums, universities, and major libraries; some are in the Vatican, etc.).

B. The Two Main Problems:

1. **Textual Variants.** No two major manuscripts are identical to each other; there are differences between them. This is the case for both the Greek NT and the Hebrew OT manuscripts. The different readings are called **textual variants**. The scholarly endeavor to sort through the textual variants in order to identify the words that were most likely the original text is called "**textual criticism**." This is a neutral term used by scholars who believe the Bible ("conservatives") as well as by scholars who do not.
2. **The \approx '1,000 Year Gap'.** In the case of the Old Testament, up until about World War II, the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Old Testament we possessed dated to **AD 1008**. After that date, we have a fairly good supply of large OT manuscripts. But before that date, while we do have a few important large manuscripts, most of what we have are small manuscript fragments which cover only a few verses. So there is roughly a **1,000 year gap** from our major OT manuscripts back to the time of Jesus, who told us that the Scriptures <of his day> were trustworthy. But was the Old Testament copied carefully over that 1,000 year 'gap'?

C. The Evidence: (. . . as concerns the Old Testament)

1. Re: The Textual Variants:

- a. **There are a lot of them.** Modern printed editions of the Hebrew OT commonly list textual variants in footnotes at the bottom of each page. In the current standard edition of the Hebrew Old Testament (printed in Stuttgart Germany in 1977), there are typically 10-20 some variants cited *per page*. Since the edition is over 1,500 pages long, that yields approx. 25,000 variants cited for the Old Testament. Yes, you read that right.
- b. **However, vast majority are insignificant, and do not even affect the specific meaning of the verse they occur in.**
The majority reflect such things as:
 - Differences in spelling of names or places.
 - Differences between "you-plural" versus "you-singular."
 - The difference between mentioning someone by name, or just referring to them, such as: "*and the Lord said to Moses . . .*", versus "*and the Lord said to Moses **and Aaron** . . .*"; versus "*and the Lord said to them . . .*".
 - The use of a synonym: "So Moses **went** to Sinai . . ." \leftrightarrow "So Moses **walked** to Sinai . . ."; etc.
- c. **Those variants which do affect the meaning of a verse rarely affect the overall sense of the passage, let alone larger matters of doctrine.**
This is the view of Bible interpreters whether they are Jewish, Protestant or Roman Catholic. They agree that that *no substantial matter of doctrine is affected by any textual variant*.

2. Re: The Evidence from the “Ancient Versions” of the Old Testament :

The 1,000 year gap in Hebrew manuscripts is not completely empty; there are many manuscripts in other languages from that time.

While there are few OT manuscripts *in Hebrew* from the period before AD 1000, there is other evidence. Just as the Bible has been translated into several <thousand!> languages today, so also the OT had been translated into a number of other languages before AD 1000. These translations are referred to as the “**ancient versions**” of the Old Testament, and they provide us with a lot of manuscript evidence. Here are the major **ancient versions**, in their likely chronological order:

The Greek Septuagint (*often abbreviated “the LXX”*). It was translated by Jews for Jews, mostly in ancient Egypt, around 200 BC. [Eventually, it became the version of the OT used most often by the early church, because so few of the early Christians knew Hebrew.]

The Aramaic “Targums” (*the word “Targum” is simply the Aramaic word for “translation.”*)

After the exile, Aramaic gradually replaced Hebrew as the language which Jews actually spoke (see for example Matt. 27:26). The Aramaic translations of the OT were well established by AD 300–400.

The Syriac Versions

Syriac was the ancient language in modern-day Syria. It is not known whether it was initially translated by Jews or by Christians. It was in use by Syriac-speaking Christians by around AD 400.

The Latin Vulgate

The Vulgate OT was translated from the Hebrew by St. Jerome around AD 400. It became the standard for the Roman Catholic church for over 1,000 years. There are thousands of Vulgate manuscripts.

These ancient versions clearly show that the content and structure of the OT was well established. Their overall agreement with each other and with the Hebrew manuscripts is substantial.

3. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has bridged the gap.

In 1947 scrolls were discovered in a cave near the Dead Sea, near an ancient community called **Qumran**. Subsequent exploration has yielded roughly 200 OT manuscripts; these are the “Dead Sea Scrolls” (in scholarly circles they are often referred to as the **Qumran scrolls**). They date to approx. 100–150 BC; most of them are in Hebrew. Most of them are small and fragmentary, containing a portion of a chapter. But a few are larger; the largest is a complete scroll of Isaiah, roughly 24 feet in length. All of the major ones have been translated, studied in detail, and carefully compared to the Hebrew manuscripts.

Q: The obvious Question was: *How close will the text of these scrolls be to the text of the standard Hebrew manuscripts - from which they are removed by over 1,000 years?*

A: The Answer: We cite statements from two important scholars:

Millard Burrows (a professor at Yale University, in north-eastern USA), was the author of two major early works on the DSS (1955, 1958). He said this about the complete Isaiah scroll (which is sometimes called the “St. Mark’s manuscript”):

“The conspicuous differences in spelling and grammatical forms between the St. Mark’s manuscript and the [traditional Hebrew] text makes their substantial agreement in the words of the text all the more remarkable. Considering . . . what a long time intervened between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the oldest of the medieval manuscripts, one might have expected a much larger number of variant readings and a much wider degree of divergence. It is a matter for wonder that through something like a thousand years the text underwent so little alteration.” (Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York, 1955; p. 304).

Gleason Archer (a world class Hebrew & OT scholar, whom I knew personally), studied the text of the two major Isaiah Dead Sea Scrolls. He concluded,

“The two copies of Isaiah . . . proved to be word-for-word identical to our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.” (Archer, *A Survey of OT Introduction*, Chicago, 1994 edition; p. 29).

D. Conclusion: The Dead Sea Scrolls provide solid evidence that the text of the OT was indeed copied faithfully over the 1,000 year ‘gap’. Scholars no longer debate this. Our modern translations of the OT are based on a text that has been copied very carefully over centuries and centuries.

* * * * *

H/O #27 – How Does the Old Testament Apply to Christians?

I. The Issue / the Nature of the Problem:

Q: How does the Old Testament apply to Christians?

A: The answer to this question is not always obvious.

On the one hand, much of the Old Testament can be read at a common-sense level, and its application to Christians seems fairly self-evident. For example:

The Pentateuch sets forth the foundations: God is the creator; He is good and is powerful. He has revealed his moral law to us. Ultimately, He will rescue and bless those who honor and obey him, and he will judge those who scorn and reject him and his righteous will.

The historical books show these basic principles worked out in action in the life of Israel and her kings.

The prophets likewise call on us to live lives that are honoring to God, and assure us that judgment and/or blessing pivot on our choices.

The Psalms certainly call upon us to worship Yahweh alone as God, and to live uprightly before him. They constantly contrast the righteous to the wicked. And the timeless value of the wisdom in the book of Proverbs has been affirmed by generation after generation.

Yet on the other hand, there are many individual items that are either unclear, or even seem at odds with the spirit of the New Testament. Among them:

- Do the promises to Abraham apply to Christians? Many Christians would say "yes."
Then is the Law binding upon Christians? Most Christians would say "no."
But how can Christians claim the blessings of the Old Testament, yet not accept the burden of the Law? It seems a bit too convenient.
- If "the land is promised to Israel" (as Christians commonly say) –
Then will **all** Israelites inherit it? ↔ Will **only** Israelites inherit it?
- Leviticus 25:20-22 says that they should let the land go fallow every 7th year, and that God will give them a triple crop (!) on the 6th year. Does this apply to modern Christian farmers?
- Is it true that conservative Christians 'pick-and-choose' what we take literally from the Old Testament?
Is it true that we apply some things literally, but choose to ignore others?
[For example: If conservative Christians take the statements condemning homosexual acts literally, then why do they pretty much ignore passages like Deut 21:18-21, which command that stubborn & rebellious sons be taken to the gates of the city, condemned, and then stoned to death? Also, should we put witches to death? (Exod 22:18, KJV).]
- And what to make of those 'imprecatory' psalms? (= psalms that invite God's judgment upon people)
*"May their backs be bent forever!
Charge them with crime upon crime!"* (Ps 69:23, 27)
*"Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;
tear out, O LORD, the fangs of the lions!"* (Ps 58:6)
These things sound more like what you would expect from a Samurai warrior than from a Christian.
- Is the Old Testament God a God of wrath? In the New Testament, is God a God of grace and mercy?
But isn't God *"the same yesterday, today, and forever?"*

It is fair to say that how the Old Testament applies to Christians is not obvious at first glance.

II. Some Preliminary Observations:

A. Some things change between the testaments, but not everything.

It is clear that some things have changed between the NT and the OT. Two examples:

1. Jesus declared all foods clean; Mark 7:14-23.
2. We no longer have to offer up the sacrifices required in the OT by the Sinai covenant. Hebrews 8-10, esp. 8:3-13; 9:1-10; 10:1-4+11-18

But does the NT simply set aside the OT? Has everything changed? No!

Mark 7:1-13

2 Tim 3:15-16

Further, the NT often quotes the OT to explain a matter. Both Jesus and the apostles appeal to the ongoing authority of the Old Testament. So no, not everything has changed; the NT does not set aside the OT. ↔ However(!), some interpreters think that the Sermon on the Mount does set aside the OT.

Q: Does the Sermon on the Mount set aside the OT?

One NT passage *almost* sounds like it sets aside the OT. It is **Matt 5:21-48**, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), in which Jesus says, "*You have heard . . . but I say . . .*", six times. But does this mean Jesus is setting aside the OT? No. Here is why:

- (1) Just before that very passage, Jesus explicitly says:

*"Do **not** think I have come to abolish the law or the prophets."* (Matt 5:17-20)

- (2) And if we closely examine the six verses in which Jesus says, "*You have heard it said . . . but I say . . .*", we see that Jesus is not(!) refuting or setting aside an OT teaching. Rather, he is *correcting a mistaken idea associated with the OT passage mentioned*.

It is important to note the specific words Jesus uses. Jesus says, "*You have heard it said . . . but I say . . .*". Jesus never says, "*It stands written . . . but I say . . .*". Jesus does not set aside the OT.

In Sum: So yes, some things change between the testaments. But no, the New Testament never completely sets aside the Old Testament.

B. An Initial Practical Recommendation:

If the New Testament is clear on something, and the Old Testament is not, then stay with the New Testament guidance until you understand the OT passages better.

C. A Guaranteed Benefit from Reading the Old Testament:

Even though there are items that are difficult to know what to do with (at first!), nonetheless, the following are guaranteed benefits from reading the Old Testament:

- (1) What the OT teaches about: God's nature & character is true, because God does not change.
- (2) What the OT teaches about: what God wants from us is true, because God does not change.

III. The Key to Understanding How the OT Applies to Christians: The OT Covenants

A. The New Testament Refers to the OT Covenants Often:

The New Testament itself often refers to the covenants in the Old Testament. It does so when it is explaining what does and doesn't carry over to the New Testament / to Christians. A few examples:

Luke 1:32-33	The promises to David.
Luke 1:69-73	The promises to David; the promises to Abraham.
Acts 3:24-26	The promises to Abraham.
Acts 13:32-39	The promises to Abraham; the promises to David.
Romans 4, & 15:8,9	The promises to Abraham.
Gal 3:6-29 & 4:21-31	The promises to Abraham.
Hebrews 6:13-20	The promises / the oath sworn to Abraham.
Hebrews ch. 8	The new covenant.

We looked at the five main covenants in some detail in **H/O #09** ("The Five Main Covenants in the OT"). We are now ready to summarize how they do, or do not, apply to Christians. The two which are the most important for Christians are: (1) the covenant with Abraham, and (2) the Sinai covenant. We will address the five covenants in the order they appear in the Bible.

B. The Covenant with Noah

As noted in **H/O #09**, The main provision of the covenant with Noah (that God will never again destroy the world with a flood) applies to all human beings, whether they are Israelites, Gentiles, believers or unbelievers, Christians or non-Christians. There is nothing that Christians need to do, or not do, for this covenant, in & of itself. So in terms of figuring out what in the OT does, and does not, apply to Christians, we may move on to the other OT covenants.

C. The Covenant with Abraham / with Abraham and his seed.

The promises to Abraham & his seed not utterly unconditional; they are conditional (see Gen 18:19; Gen 22:15-18; Gen 26:5). To receive the blessings, a person must have faith like Abraham's faith; a person must be a true believer. But there is a guarantee that someone will(!) be blessed by them.

Galatians 3 & 4 make it clear that all true believers, whether Jewish or Gentile, are Abraham's seed. That is, all true believers are Abraham's children, are heirs to the promises. **Romans 4** likewise affirms that Christians will inherit the blessings promised to Abraham. Romans 4 tells us that Abraham is the <spiritual> father of us all = of all true believers. The covenant with Abraham applies to Christians. Christians will inherit the blessings promised to Abraham.

D. The Sinai Covenant

The Sinai covenant was with Israel as-a-nation. It began at Mt. Sinai and ended because Israel broke it (Jer 31:32). It probably ended when the 2nd Temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 (as Jesus predicted, Matt 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6). Here is how the Sinai covenant (the Law) does, and does not, apply to Christians.

To Begin with: Christians are not under the Sinai Covenant.

Christians are not under the Sinai covenant for two reasons: (1) We never were; it was with Israel-as-a-nation. (2) The Sinai covenant is over; it has ended.

In Specific, Christians are not bound by the Ceremonial Laws of the Sinai Covenant.

In particular, Christians are not bound by the food or the 'cleanness' restrictions; Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19; Rom 14:20). Also, we are not required to bring the sacrifices described in Leviticus (Hebrews 10:14-18). We are not bound by the 'ceremonial' aspects of the law.

Similarly, Christians are not bound by the Civil and Criminal Laws of the Sinai Covenant.

Christians are not bound by the civil & criminal penalties set forth in the law. For OT Israel, the civil & criminal laws *were* their governing laws. But Christians obey the laws of the governments they live under (Rom 13:1-7; unless those laws are directly counter to the commands of God, Acts 5:29).

God has not(!) offered to Christians, to the Church, the specific earthly blessings He offered to Israel under the Sinai covenant.

Just as Christians are not bound by the requirements of the Sinai covenant, so neither can we claim the blessings which were offered to Israel *uniquely* under the Sinai covenant. In particular:

God promised Israel health and prosperity if they honored him and obeyed the laws of the Sinai covenant. But such a promise is not repeated anywhere to Christians in the New Testament.

There are Christians who preach that <if you honor God well, and give him your tithe faithfully, God will make you rich>. But they are mis-reading the OT badly, and are applying statements to Christians that were addressed to Israel under the Law (for example, Malachi 3:10).

Nonetheless, Christians may still benefit from the study of these laws.

Even though the civil and ceremonial laws of the Sinai covenant are not binding upon Christians, there is still benefit in the study of these laws, because they increase our understanding of God's nature and desires. And they can teach us something of God's logic; they can teach us his views of how things ought to be. So even though such laws do not bind us, they can still teach us.

But what about the moral aspects of the Law?

Many of the laws express the *moral will* of God: honor your father and mother; do not steal; do not murder; etc. If Christians are not under the Sinai covenant, do these moral laws still apply to us? Yes!

The moral law of God reflects God's unchanging nature and character. It was in effect before Israel entered into the Sinai covenant, it remained in effect during the Sinai covenant, and is still in effect today. The moral law does not change → because God's nature & character do not change.

Therefore any believer who seeks to honor God should study and reflect on the Law, especially the moral laws within the Law, to help inform them of what God is like and what He desires. And when God flatly says that something is right and good, or that something is wicked or is an abomination, it does not change.

In fact, nine of the Ten Commandments are expressly re-affirmed in the New Testament.

Can you guess which one is not? _____.

It is because the Sabbath is the sign of the Sinai covenant (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17). When the early Christian church moved its day of worship from the Sabbath (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday), this had very large symbolic significance. Israel was absolutely required to keep the Sabbath under the Sinai covenant; Christians are not.

E. The Covenant with David and his Son

This covenant is not actually with Israel, nor is it with Christians. It is with David and his Son. So Christians do not inherit the blessings promised to David's Son (we will not rule on David's throne forever, etc.). The ultimate Son of David is called "the anointed" = the Messiah. In the NT, this Son of David is called "the Christ." ["Christ" and "Messiah" both mean "anointed one".]

However, Christians will benefit from this covenant. Jeremiah 33 and Ezek 37 teach us that the Son of David is the one who will rule over God's kingdom and will shepherd Abraham's children in the promised land forever. Further, it is his death which will pay for our sins and also will inaugurate the new covenant.

F. The New Covenant

Those who truly believe the gospel have their sins fully forgiven and have the law written on their hearts. The new covenant clearly applies to all Christians, automatically.

IV. Summary: How Does the Old Testament apply to Christians?

- Christians will inherit the promises to Abraham = the Abrahamic covenant.
Those who truly believe the gospel, whether Jew or Gentile, are rightly called children of Abraham. Thus Christians will inherit the blessings promised to Abraham. We will be part of the 'great nation', and will inherit the land promised to Abraham and his seed, along with believing Jews.
- Christians are not under the Sinai covenant.
In specific, we are not bound by the civil or the ceremonial & sacrificial laws of the Law. We do not have to observe the 'cleanness' rules or the food restrictions. We do not need to offer animal sacrifices.
- But the laws which express the moral will of God are binding on Christians, because those laws reflect the unchanging nature and character of God. They were true before the Sinai covenant, during it, and after it. They are still true today, and will be true in heaven.

When in doubt, Christians should follow a clear NT teaching over an unclear OT text. But we would suggest that when one understands the OT well, there is no contradiction of principle. God's nature and character do not change: He always seeks those who will serve him faithfully from the heart. And for those who fail, the sacrifice God desires remains a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17).

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