

S T U D Y G U I D E

# Dust to Glory

## Old Testament

An Overview of the Bible

R.C. Sproul



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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# Introduction

Our Lord declared that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). The Bible is that Word by which we are to live.

I believe that *Dust to Glory* is the most important teaching tool Ligonier has produced. It is our prayer that it will serve you in your desire to grow in the knowledge and love of God. As Christians, we are called to be people of the Word. My hope is that *Dust to Glory* will encourage, stimulate, and assist you in your goal to dissect the Scriptures so that the Scriptures may, in turn, dissect you (Heb. 4:12).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R.C. Sproul". The initials "R.C." are written in a smaller, more compact style than the last name "Sproul", which is written in a larger, more flowing cursive.

Sincerely,  
R.C. Sproul

# 1

## Creation

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The account found in the first chapters of Genesis makes unique assertions regarding the time, author, and method of creation. These assertions set biblical Christianity apart from other world views and philosophical systems. Into a dark, empty, and chaotic void the voice of God speaks and brings light, fullness, order, and life. A perfect and wondrous setting is put into place for the image bearers of God to work, dwell, and reflect the glory of God. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the creation account found in the first chapter of Genesis.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and explain the three unique assertions of biblical Christianity regarding the creation found in Genesis 1:1.
2. To contrast the assertions of the Genesis account of creation with other philosophical systems.
3. To evaluate the significance to the ancient mind of the words “formless,” “empty,” and “darkness” in describing the primordial earth.

## QUOTATIONS

*O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works.*

—Psalm 19:1

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The title of this series is *Dust to Glory*. The purpose of this study is to give a brief overview of the Holy Scriptures.
  1. The essence of the life of Christ was his passion to be obedient to every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God.
  2. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).
  3. The great crisis of our age is the neglect of the content of Scripture.
  4. We need to renew our resolve to understand the content of Holy Scripture.
- B. The first proclamation of Scripture is found in Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
- C. There are three important words in this verse that are central to biblical Christianity and set it apart from many other world views. These three words are *beginning*, *God*, and *created*.
- D. The word *beginning* asserts a starting point in time and history.
  1. The book title, *Genesis*, means beginning.
  2. This assertion of a starting point in time contrasts with other philosophical systems.
  3. The nineteenth-century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, taught the “myth of eternal recurrence,” meaning, time has no starting or finishing point.
  4. The book of Ecclesiastes addresses the pagan skepticism attached to the idea that there is no purposeful beginning or conclusion of history and concludes it is a “vanity of vanities.”
  5. Many other modern cosmologies (studies of the origin and structure of the universe) agree that there was a beginning in history. The question then arises, “who or what started the universe?”

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- E. The word *God* indicates that a personality is the author of everything.
1. There is a radical difference between all creaturely existence and the author of creation.
  2. Anything that has a beginning must also have someone or something preceding it in order for it to begin.
  3. Scripture proclaims the existence of God—a being without a beginning, eternal, and self-existent.
- F. The word *created* indicates an action by someone at a point in time.
1. An artist or musician demonstrates “mediated creativity” by rearranging already existing substances. He creates within an established medium.
  2. God creates outside of a medium. His acts of creation are *ex nihilo* or “out of nothing.” God alone can create something out of nothing.
  3. God’s method of creating is by the divine imperative which is the transcendent, majestic, holy command of God.
  4. God speaks into the void and says “Let there be . . .” By the sheer power of the command of one who eternally has the power of being in Himself a universe is formed.
- G. “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2).
1. The unformed universe is described with three negatives that in the ancient world would be considered very threatening to human existence and meaning.
  2. *Formlessness* is absolute chaos with nothing having any order.
  3. *Emptiness* describes the worst sensation we have in our souls when we feel frightened or alone and therefore feel empty. The entire primordial universe is empty.
  4. *Darkness* is a term that describes not the presence of something, but rather the absence of something—the absence of light.
  5. The Spirit of God hovers over the formless, empty, darkness of the deep. The voice of God speaks, “Let there be . . .” and form replaces formlessness, fullness replaces emptiness, and light replaces darkness.
  6. The lights come on, a world begins, and a setting is established for God to scoop his hands into the dust and to prepare a creature for his glory.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, what are the purposes for which God has designed Scripture? Can it achieve these purposes for us if we are ignorant of its content?
2. Every worldview seeks to answer this fundamental question: Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the answer that Genesis 1:1 gives to this basic question?
3. Based on the creation narrative in Genesis 1, is God independent of or dependent upon the universe? Did He have a beginning? Do the answers to these questions mean that He is fully sovereign or only partially sovereign over what transpires in creation?
4. From what materials does God create the heavens and the earth? What is the Latin term for “out of nothing”?
5. Genesis 1:2 describes the universe as being formless, empty, and dark prior to the Lord’ creative act. According to R.C., were the qualities of formlessness, emptiness, and darkness considered good by the very first readers of Genesis? How does the prediction about the destruction of Judah for her sin in Jeremiah 4:23 inform us about how God evaluates that which is “without form and void”?
6. Many ancient mythologies depict a war of the gods against the forces of nature that brings about the existence of all that now exists. Must God battle independent natural forces or other gods to create His world in Genesis 1? What does He actually do in verses 3, 6–7, 9, 11, 14–15, 20–21, and 24 to bring creation into existence?

## DISCUSSION

1. Human beings cannot create something out of nothing but we can imitate God’s creative abilities at home, in our families, in the arts, and in the workplace. How do you “create” life and other things in your life and sphere of influence?
2. Are most human beings content to live as creatures in submission to their Creator? What are some of the ways mankind rebels against its creatureliness? How have you sought to usurp the Creator’s rightful sovereignty over your life?
3. Read John 1:1–18. What does the role of the Son of God in creation mean for our relation to Him? What does the activity of God’s Son say about His equality with our Father in heaven?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Sproul, R.C. and Robert Wolgemuth. *What’s in the Bible?*

Sproul, R.C. *Not a Chance*



## 2

# The Image of God in Man

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The implication of believing that God created the heavens and the earth is that the world and all that it contains is not an accident. The creation exists due to an ordered and intelligent decision by a supernatural being who has a purpose for everything He does. Believing that God created man and woman as His image bearers gives us the grand identity of those who reflect the very glory of God. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul explains what it means to bear the image of God and the consequences of believing or rejecting this truth.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 2

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To formulate conclusions about human behavior in response to various world views.
2. To grasp the connection between divine creation and human purpose.
3. To summarize the identifying marks of being created in the image of God.

### QUOTATIONS

*The entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of his virtues and perfections; every creature is in his own way and according to his own measure an embodiment of a divine thought. But among all creatures only man is the image of God, the highest and richest revelation of God, and therefore head and crown of the entire creation.*

—Herman Bavinck

*We must still see fallen man as an image-bearer of God, but as one who by nature, apart from the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, images God in a distorted way. In the process of redemption that distortion is progressively taken away until, in the life to come, we shall again perfectly image God.*

—Anthony Hoekema

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The title of this series is *Dust to Glory*. The word *to* indicates a goal, an aim, or a purpose. The preposition indicates a starting point and a point of completion.
  - History is inaugurated by the creative act of God and finds its consummation in the redemptive purpose of God.
- B. The reality of the creation leads us to ask why a world, people, and history were created. The answer is for the glory of God.
- C. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26–27).
  - Within the Trinity there is plan of action. God is acting with a purpose in creating a creature with purpose.
- D. The great crisis in human thought and philosophy at the end of the twentieth century in the Western world focuses on the question of purpose.
  1. The crisis regarding human purpose is due to the rejection of the belief in divine creation.
  2. The implication of “God created the heavens and the earth” is the idea that the world and all that it contains is not an accident.
  3. The creation exists due to an ordered, intelligent decision by a supernatural being who has a purpose for everything he does.
- E. A world view that rejects Genesis 1:1 enters the crisis of explaining the purpose of anything and anyone.
  1. “We are grown up germs who have fortuitously grown up from the slime.”
  2. A world view without intelligent design and therefore without purpose led Albert Camus to point out that suicide was the only remaining serious question for philosophers to consider.

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3. Suicide becomes an option when there is no answer to the question, “What is the purpose?”
  4. “To be or not to be? That is the question” (Hamlet).
  5. When the origin of the universe is due to a cosmic accident, life is reduced to outrageous fortune and chance.
  6. Human existence is caused by the intelligent decision of an eternal, omniscient being who has a purpose for everything He does.
  7. The question that separates modern world views has become, “Is there a purpose for our existence?”
- F. In Genesis 1:26 man is described as being created in the image and likeness of God.
1. God creates a creature that has the purpose of bearing his image.
  2. God could not have made another god, which by definition would have been a finite creature, so instead He creates a creature that will mirror His glory.
  3. Man will display God’s character and have dominion over the rest of creation.
- G. There is an “analogy of being” between God and man. Man is not exactly like God, but there are ways in which he is like God.
1. To bear the image of God includes being an *intelligent being*.
  2. To bear the image of God includes *having a moral nature*.
  3. To bear the image of God includes *having a personality*.
  4. To bear the image of God includes *reflecting the glory of God*.
- H. The consummate, or ultimate, day of creation was the seventh day that was made sacred.
1. The penultimate day of creation was the sixth day on which the image bearer was made.
  2. The purpose of the image bearer was for the sacred, for something holy, and to reflect His glory.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Isaiah 48:11 and identify the attribute God is jealous to keep for Himself and will not give to another. What does this say about the purpose for which the Lord created the heavens and the earth?
2. All human beings try to determine the purpose for their existence. What does Genesis 1:26–27 give as the purpose for humanity? Who gave us this purpose?
3. The prevalent worldview forced upon us in Western society today says that the universe came about by chance and that there is ultimately no meaning or purpose to it. How does Genesis 1 refute these erroneous assumptions?
4. Could God have created another “god”? Why or why not?
5. Genesis 1:27 tells us that men and women alike are made in the image of God. Though this idea is complex, theologians have agreed that to bear the image of God means that human beings are like Him in six major ways. What are they? Which of these six aspects set us apart from the animals?
6. God rested on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 2:1–3) after He had created human-kind. Humans stand out as being made in the image of God. What does this say about the status God bequeathed to us?
7. The image of God has been marred but not eliminated in human beings. According to Colossians 1:15–20, which person has alone manifested the image of God perfectly?

## DISCUSSION

1. Sin has impaired our ability to take dominion of the earth for the glory of God (Gen. 1:26). How do human beings and societies fail to obey this divine mandate? How do you fail to obey God’s command that you exercise righteous dominion over the world?
2. James 3:7–10 draws out several implications for how the fact that all people are made in God’s image should affect our behavior. According to this passage, how do our words deface the image of God in man? Can we rightly claim to love God if we impenitently curse other people, especially other Christians?
3. What are some of the ways government and society fail to treat human life with the dignity it deserves because we are made in God’s image? What role should the church play in exhorting the culture to respect and preserve human life at every

stage of its existence? What can you as an individual do to impact friends, family, the political process, and other arenas with the reality of the dignity of human beings?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Boice, James Montgomery. *Genesis* (3 vols.)

Godfrey, W. Robert. *God's Pattern for Creation: A Conventional Reading of Genesis 1*

Sproul, R.C. *A Hunger for Significance*

Sproul, R.C. *Not a Chance*

# 3

## The Fall

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The tone of Genesis changes in chapter three because events occur here that plunge a glorious and perfect creation into misery and ruin. The fall of humanity occurs when the first image bearers believe they can reject the Word of God and face no consequences. Adam and Eve grasp for sovereignty and autonomy, but are left with slavery and fear. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the horrifying consequences for humanity of rejecting the Word of God.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 3–11

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the purpose of the Old Testament and its relevance for believers today.
2. To locate the point of attack in the fall of man, the temptation of Jesus, and all other temptations.
3. To explain the conflict over sovereignty in the fall of man.

### QUOTATIONS

*It is the image of God reflected in you that so enrages hell; it is this at which the demons hurl their mightiest weapons.*

—William Gurnall

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## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Many people think that the only part of the Bible that matters is the New Testament, and that the Old Testament is archaic and irrelevant for Christian living.
  - 1. What is the significance of the Old Testament?
  - 2. The Old Testament contains accounts of creation, people, history, conflict, wars, migrations, slavery, and sin; but it is not strictly a history book.
  - 3. The Old Testament is primarily about the self-disclosure of God. It is God's autobiography about how He relates to the world and its inhabitants.
  
- B. The first malediction in Scripture is God's pronouncement in Genesis 2:18: "It is not good that the man should be alone."
  - 1. Man's aloneness is remedied with the special creation of woman.
  - 2. Man and woman are united together as co-regents with God over the created sphere.
  
- C. The tone of Scripture changes in Genesis 3 with the foreboding words, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made."
  - 1. When Jesus encountered Nathanael He declared, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" (John 1:47).
  - 2. Genesis states that the serpent was filled with nothing but guile.
  
- D. The guile of the serpent is revealed in its first words to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?' "
  - 1. Eve is the first defender of the faith and initially rejects this attack on the Word of God.
  - 2. The implication of the serpent's attack is that if God gives laws, exercises sovereignty, or limits your freedom at any one point, then you are a slave or a puppet.
  
- E. The point of attack against the Second Adam or Jesus was also the Word of God.
  - 1. At Jesus' baptism, the Father declared Jesus to be His son, in whom He was well pleased (Luke 3:22).
  - 2. The serpent tempts Jesus to doubt the Word of His Father and to prove His identity by turning the stones into bread.

3. The whole encounter between Jesus and Satan focused on the trustworthiness of the Word of God.
  4. Christians are under the daily assault of, “Can you really live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God?”
- F. The serpent launches a direct attack against Eve by contradicting the Word of God.
1. “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. 3:5)
  2. The idea that one can violate the law of God without consequences is a lie prevalent in the church today.
  3. The serpent tells Eve that she can become more than God’s image bearer. She can become divine and eliminate the Creator and creature distinction.
  4. Eve is given an invitation to become autonomous or self-ruling.
  5. Every temptation is a battle for sovereignty between the will of man and the will of God.
- G. The serpent is described in the New Testament as the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3) who is always the enemy of the law of God.
- H. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” (Gen. 3:6-7)
1. The eyes of the man and woman were opened not to freedom and sovereignty, but to their shame, nakedness, bankruptcy, and impoverishment.
  2. Man is created to rush to, and delight in, the presence of God; but now the first man and woman run and hide as fugitives from the gaze of God.
  3. The rest of the Bible is the story of God pursuing His creatures, stooping to clothe their nakedness, dealing with their embarrassment, covering their guilt, and restoring them to their position as the image bearers of God.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, why does Paul tell us the events of the Old Testament happened and were recorded? What is the Bible primarily about?



2. Before the fall into sin, what was the one thing that God found *not* to be good about His creation (Gen. 2:18)? How did the Lord first go about solving this problem (vv. 19–20)? What was the effective solution to the problem (vv. 21–24)?
3. According to Dr. Sproul, what role do men and women share in God’s created order?
4. What is the distinguishing mark of the serpent in Genesis 3:1? How else does Scripture describe the Devil in John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 11:14, and 1 Peter 5:8? How may we resist his wiles according to James 4:7?
5. What was the point of attack against Eve when the serpent tempted her in the garden (3:1)? Did he use the same strategy, or a different one, when he tested Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–13)? Does he use the same strategy or a different one against us?
6. What was the distinction Adam and Eve were trying to eliminate when they ate the forbidden fruit? What is the distinction we are trying to eliminate when we sin?
7. Describe the consequences for Adam and Eve’s sin that now affect the whole human race (Gen. 3:16–19)? Did God abandon His creation after the fall? How did He show His love and care for Adam and Eve even though they had sinned (v. 21)?

## DISCUSSION

1. Where do you find it difficult to believe God at His Word?
2. In what ways do you seek to usurp the rightful authority of the Lord over your own life? How can we combat that inborn tendency towards self-autonomy that makes us want to be laws unto ourselves?
3. What can you do to prepare yourself to combat the Devil with the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), just as Jesus fought against Satan in the wilderness?
4. Genesis 3:15 is often called the protoevangelion or the “first gospel.” Why do you think theologians see in this verse the first prediction of the Messiah’s victory over death and sin? How did the serpent wound the Messiah’s heel on the cross, and how did the Messiah crush the serpent’s head?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*  
Sproul, R.C. *Chosen by God*

## 4

# Covenant with Abraham

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Many have lost hope regarding Christ's promises because they were spoken approximately 2,000 years ago. Yet such thinkers forget that the faithful at the time of Christ had also seen 2,000 years pass until the promised Messiah was born. Moreover, when the promises of the covenant were originally given to Abraham, the patriarch himself saw very limited fulfillment of them in his lifetime. Yet the history of redemption cannot be understood apart from this key covenant granted 4,000 years ago. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the historicity of Abraham and the significance of the promises God gave to him.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 12–24

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to summarize the archeological evidence that supports the historicity of the patriarch Abraham.
2. To be able to outline the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.
3. To understand why the whole history of redemption is the working out of the Abrahamic covenant promised 4,000 years ago.

### QUOTATIONS

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. . . . For*

*he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*

—Hebrews 11:8, 10

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The change in a millennium makes the current age a particularly dramatic era.
  1. Some have labeled the present age as the post-Christian era in which the church and the Scriptures are considered irrelevant.
  2. Yet a faithful group in the church remains that still holds on to promises made 2,000 years ago.
- B. Mary sang the Magnificat when the angel announced to her she would give birth to the Christ child: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. . . He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever” (Luke 1:46–47, 54–55).
- C. Zechariah also prophesied when his son John the Baptist was born: “. . . that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham to grant us” (Luke 1:71–73).
- D. Many have lost hope regarding Christ’s promises because they were spoken approximately 2,000 years ago.
  - Mary and Zechariah bless God for His faithfulness to the promises of Abraham despite a two-thousand-year interval. These two faced a situation similar to our own.
- E. The Old Testament is the self-disclosure of God, but He chooses one man and his family as primary characters in the story.
- F. Skeptical scholars have attacked the historicity of Abraham and have labeled his life as a myth or a legend. Yet archeology continues to prove the accuracy of the Scriptures.
  1. A discovery at Ras Shamra in 1929 proved a very early date for written texts refuting the objection that writing did not exist in Abraham’s day.
  2. The Mari tablets were discovered in 1935 revealing a record of ancient customs consistent with the biblical account of Abraham. The discovery of the Nuzi tablets corroborated the scriptural account also.
  3. The Ebla tablets discovered in 1976 record cities, peoples, and even names that occur in the Bible.

- G. The life of Abraham should not be read as a myth or legend, but rather as a real history of a real God calling a real man to a real land to receive real promises.
- H. “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’” (Gen. 12:1-3).
- I. Abraham is “blessed to be a blessing” with a covenant containing three promises.
1. An unknown land is the first promise given to Abraham.
  2. Descendants as numerous as the stars and the sands is the second promise given to Abraham.
  3. Abraham’s seed will be a blessing to the entire world is the third promise given to Abraham.
- J. Abraham saw very limited fulfillment of these promises during his lifetime.
1. His burial site at Machpelah is the only piece of land Abraham owns at his death.
  2. Abraham tries to hasten God’s promise with the birth of Ishmael through Hagar, but God faithfully fulfills the promise with the birth of Isaac in Abraham and Sarah’s later years.
    - Abraham is faithful when God’s tests him to sacrifice his beloved son.
    - Isaac was to be sacrificed upon the same mountain on which the Son of God was eventually to be sacrificed. Isaac was spared, but the Son of God was not.
  3. Isaac was spared so that the seed of Abraham would continue and eventually the greatest descendant of Abraham would be born as the Savior of the world.
- K. The promises to Abraham were not quickly fulfilled, and Mary and Zechariah celebrated because they knew God remembered His mercy and His promises given to Abraham.
- The whole history of redemption is the working out of that event 4,000 years ago.

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## BIBLE STUDY

1. Mary and Zechariah sang songs at the time the Messiah and His forerunner, John the Baptist, were finally born (Luke 1:46–47, 54–55, 71–73). What covenant did both of them see as being fulfilled with the coming of Jesus? How many years had passed between the patriarchal covenants and the birth of Christ?
2. List some of the archaeological evidence given in the lecture that corroborates the historicity of the story of Abraham in the book of Genesis.
3. What are the three major elements of the promise that God first gives to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3? What benefits are added to this promise in Genesis 17:6 and 22:17?
4. How did Abraham and Sarah manifest their impatience with God when they thought He was taking too long to keep His promise? How long did Abraham have to wait before the son of promise was finally born to him (Gen. 12:4; 21:5)? Does this encourage or discourage us when we think the Lord is taking too long to fulfill His promises to us?
5. How is the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22 similar to the sacrifice of God's only begotten Son on Calvary? How are the two events different? According to Dr. Sproul, why did God preserve Isaac?

## DISCUSSION

1. In what ways are we still waiting for God to fulfill completely His promises?
2. God forgives us when we repent of our sin and trust Christ (1 John 1:8–9), but we may still feel earthly consequences for our transgressions. Abraham and Sarah sinned in producing Ishmael (Gen. 16), and most Bible scholars agree that the effects of this sin are still felt today in the Middle East conflict. Does the fact that your sin can produce such things encourage or discourage you to pursue holiness? How have the sins of other people had an effect on you, even if the wickedness was not committed in your own generation?
3. Hebrews 11:17–19 says Abraham trusted God to do the impossible and raise Isaac from the dead, if that is what it would have taken for the Lord to keep His pledge to the patriarch. Do you find it easy or difficult to trust God to do what is humanly impossible? How has He accomplished the impossible in your life?
4. How is the promise that Abraham's sons and daughters will be royalty in Genesis 17:6 related to mankind's charge to take dominion over the earth in Genesis 1:28? How is the promise that the people of God will be kings and queens fulfilled in the new covenant (2 Tim. 2:12)?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Horton, Michael. *Introducing Covenant Theology*  
Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Christ of the Covenants*

## 5

# The Patriarchal Blessing

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

God frequently identifies Himself in Scripture as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God covenanted with the patriarchs of Israel to write the story of redemption. The primary question of the patriarchal history therefore became, “Who will inherit the promises originally given to Abraham?” The pattern of passing on the blessing is a key theme in Scripture and foreshadows the passing of the gospel among the people of God today. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the history of the patriarchal blessing in Genesis and its relevance for God’s covenant people today.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 25–36

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To define the role and significance of the biblical patriarchs.
2. To track the path of the patriarchal blessing among Abraham’s early descendants.

### QUOTATIONS

*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

—Hebrews 11:13–16

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. A patriarch was a father who was also a ruler. A patriarchal society is a society ruled by fathers.
  - Biblical patriarchs also ruled over their extended family and often over related clans and tribes.
  
- B. God frequently identifies Himself in Scripture as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
  - 1. These patriarchs are the inheritors of the covenant's promises.
  
  - 2. Abraham is viewed as the supreme patriarch—the father of the faithful—in the New Testament.
  
  - 3. Everyone adopted into the family of God is an heir of the patriarchal blessing.
  
- C. The primary question of the patriarchal history is, “Who will inherit the promises given to Abraham?”
  
- D. Traditionally the firstborn should be the primary heir, but he is often passed over in Genesis in favor of a younger son.
  - 1. Ishmael was the first son of Abraham, but Isaac is God's choice as the child of promise.
  
  - 2. Esau was the first son of Isaac, but Jacob is God's choice as the child of promise.
  
- E. The wrestling match between Jacob and the angel of the Lord is a struggle for the blessing.
  
- F. Jacob and his mother Rebekah conspire to steal the patriarchal blessing in Genesis 27.
  - 1. Isaac intends on giving the blessing to his firstborn Esau.
  
  - 2. Rebekah leads Jacob into a plot to take advantage of Isaac's blindness and receive the blessing from his father.
  
  - 3. Isaac is tricked and gives the blessing to Jacob.
  
  - 4. How can the one who deceived (Jacob), be the recipient of the blessing in redemptive history?



5. Jacob was chosen over Esau: “though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of his call” (Rom. 9:11).
- G. The significance of the angel asking Jacob’s name is that he is forced to submit to the angel’s authority.
1. *Jacob* means “supplanter,” “stealer,” or “deceiver.”
  2. God blesses Jacob with the patriarchal blessing after this submission, and he passes on the blessing to his descendants.
- H. There is a pattern of fall and salvation in redemptive history.
1. Sin and rebellion expand after the fall of man.
  2. A small remnant—Noah’s family—is saved from the flood.
  3. God chooses Abraham’s family as his people and they multiply into a great nation, but then collapse into sin and rebellion.
  4. A narrow remnant is further narrowed to one man who embodies Israel and was the supreme descendant of Abraham.
  5. Jesus was the only son of Abraham who perfectly walked in covenant faithfulness.
  6. Jesus grants a new covenant and the gospel expands His people from the disciples, to the Jews, the Gentiles, and to the ends of the earth.
- I. The pattern of passing on the blessing among the patriarchs foreshadows the passing of the gospel among the people of God today.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. According to Dr. Sproul, what is the name for a society that is ruled by fathers? What was the potential scope of a biblical patriarch’s rule?
2. Read Galatians 3. Who does Paul identify as the recipients of the covenantal blessings of God? How are these blessings received?
3. Traditionally speaking, Dr. Sproul states that the firstborn male son is the primary heir of a family’s blessing. Was tradition followed in the case of Isaac and Ishmael (Gen. 15:17–21)? Was it followed with Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27)?

4. Does Scripture say that Jacob deserved the blessing that he received? Why did God choose Jacob over Esau (Rom. 9:6–13)?
5. What was the purpose for Jacob's struggle with the angel in Genesis 32:22–32? What is the meaning of Jacob's name, and what was he confessing when he revealed his name to the angel? How is the pattern of confession of sin and blessing repeated in our own lives?
6. What was the new name God gave to Jacob after this wrestling match?
7. Describe the biblical pattern of sin and salvation as conveyed in the lecture.
8. According to Dr. Sproul, what does the pattern of the passing on of the blessing of the patriarchs foreshadow?

## DISCUSSION

1. God's blessing of the younger brother over the older brother in the book of Genesis indicates that He often acts in ways that human beings and traditions do not expect. How has the Lord worked unexpectedly in your life?
2. How does the story of Jacob show us that God blesses sinners on account of His grace and not according to what they deserve?
3. List some of the ways the church is called to bear witness to the blessing of God under the new covenant.
4. If God is not obligated to bless any sinner, why do so many people find the doctrine of election to be unfair? How should we respond to this complaint? How does Paul respond to it (Rom. 9:19–23)?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Christ of the Covenants*  
Horton, Michael. *Introducing Covenant Theology*

## 6

# Moses and the Exodus

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The transition from the patriarchal period to the period of the exodus is made with two of the most remarkable biographies in Scripture. Joseph was the shepherd who became a prince and Moses was the prince who became a shepherd. These two figures were instrumental in God continuing His covenant faithfulness to His people in the books of Genesis and Exodus. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the lives of Joseph and Moses and their significant role in the story of redemption.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 37–50 and Exodus 1–10

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize the significance of the lives of Joseph and Moses in the history of redemption.
2. To compare the mediator of the first covenant with the mediator of the second covenant.
3. To identify the primary themes of the book of Exodus.

### QUOTATIONS

*In its biographical sketches, character change is what Genesis is all about.*

—Gordon Wenham

*Ancient Egyptian texts teach that the heart is the essence of the person, the inner spiritual center of the self. Pharaoh's heart was particularly important because the Egyptians believed it was the all-controlling factor in both history and society. . . . Yahweh hardens Pharaoh's heart to demonstrate that only the God of the Hebrews is the Sovereign of the universe.*

—John Currid

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The transition from the patriarchal period to the period of the exodus is made with two of the most remarkable biographies in Scripture.
  - The first is the story of a shepherd who became a prince, and the second is the story of a prince who became a shepherd.
  
- B. The first biography is that of Joseph, the son of Jacob.
  1. He is betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery.
  2. He is falsely accused and languishes in prison for years until God intervenes and elevates him to the position of prime minister of Egypt.
  3. He devises a wise plan to rescue Egypt from a severe famine, and many surrounding peoples come to Egypt for food.
  4. His brothers come to Egypt for food and are terrified when they realize the brother they betrayed has become Egypt's prime minister.
  5. Joseph forgives them and invites Jacob and all his descendants to come to live in Egypt, in the land of Goshen.
  6. The book of Genesis closes with Jacob blessing his sons.
  7. Judah is given the scepter, forecasting that from his tribe kings will come.
  8. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and inherits an everlasting throne.
  
- C. The book of Genesis closes with the Israelites in a state of prosperity. The book of Exodus opens with the Israelites in a state of slavery.
  
- D. The new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph's story begins a systematic plan to oppress the Israelites.
  1. Taskmasters are appointed to enslave the Israelites.

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2. The Israelites are forced to gather their own straw for bricks without reducing their daily building quota.
  3. The Hebrew midwives are ordered to murder the Hebrew male babies, but they disobey the Pharaoh's orders.
  4. The Egyptians are commanded to murder the Hebrew male babies.
- E. One baby escapes this genocide by being placed in a reed basket and floated down the Nile River.
1. The baby is drawn out of the river by the daughter of Pharaoh.
  2. The baby is named "Moses" meaning "drawn out" and is raised as a prince in Pharaoh's palace.
  3. Moses later murders an Egyptian guard for beating a Hebrew. To preserve his life, he flees to Midian when the deed is discovered.
- F. Moses is probably the most significant figure in Old Testament history.
1. He is eventually the mediator of the old covenant.
  2. He is the liberator of Israel from Egypt.
  3. He is the giver of the Law.
  4. He is the leader of the theocratic state and church of the Old Testament.
- G. Moses foreshadows the person and work of Christ.
1. "The new is in the old concealed, and the old is in the new revealed" (St. Augustine).
  2. God calls His son Israel out of Egypt in the Old Testament and calls His greater son Jesus out of Egypt in the New Testament.
  3. Moses is the leader of the first exodus and Christ is the leader of the second and greater exodus.
  4. Moses is the mediator of the first covenant and Christ is the mediator of the second covenant.
- H. God calls Moses from the burning bush in the Midian wilderness because He has heard the cry of his people amidst their oppression.

1. Moses goes before Pharaoh demanding the release of the people so that they may go and serve the Lord their God.
  2. The great contest of the book of Exodus centers on who the people of Israel will serve, Pharaoh or God?
  3. God brings ten plagues against Pharaoh and Egypt to prove His power and to demand the release of His people.
- I. There is no period in redemptive history with such an abundance of miracles as the time of the exodus, other than during the ministry of Jesus.
    1. God demands the release of His people so that they may serve and worship Him only.
    2. Exodus, law, and tabernacle are the three primary themes of the book of Exodus.

#### BIBLE STUDY

1. Briefly describe the sequence of events that led to the people of Israel becoming residents in the land of Egypt (Gen. 37–50).
2. What is the significance of Judah's gaining a scepter in Genesis 49:8–13? Who is the greatest son of Judah and to which animal is this son compared?
3. As the book of Genesis draws to a close, what elements of the blessing to Abraham remain partially unfulfilled (Gen. 12:1–3)? Do the requests of Jacob (47:29–31) and Joseph (50:22–26) to be buried in Canaan indicate that they believed God would keep His promises? According to Hebrews 11:22, why was Joseph convinced that his bones should be carried up out of Egypt?
4. Why did the pharaoh, who did not know Joseph, fear the Israelites in his kingdom (Ex. 1:8–10)? How did he attempt to keep his fears from being realized?
5. Explain the circumstances that led to the rescue of Moses from the hand of pharaoh. According to the biblical doctrine of God's sovereign providence (Gen. 50:20; Prov. 16:33; Eph. 1:11), could any of these be described as mere coincidences?
6. What are the reasons that Dr. Sproul gives for identifying Moses as perhaps the most significant figure in Old Testament history?
7. According to Dr. Sproul, how does Moses foreshadow the person and work of Christ?

8. What are the reasons given in Exodus 2:23–25 and 5:1 for God’s intervention to redeem the Israelites from Egypt?
9. What does Dr. Sproul identify as being the three primary themes of the book of Exodus?

## DISCUSSION

1. Dr. Sproul noted how Moses foreshadows Christ. Are there ways in which we could say the same thing about Joseph foreshadowing Christ? Consider the themes of unjust imprisonment, betrayal by brothers, salvation from famine and relate them to the life of Christ.
2. Do you think the Hebrew midwives acted righteously when they lied to the Egyptians in order to save the Hebrew children (Ex. 1:15–21)? Why or why not?
3. Dr. Sproul says the great contest in Exodus centers on who the people of Israel will serve, Pharaoh or God? How do we face a similar contest every day of our own lives? Who or what are you tempted to serve in place of God?
4. Why do you think the life and ministry of Christ is the only other period in redemptive history with an abundance of miracles like we find in the exodus?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Currid, John. *A Study Commentary on Exodus*  
Motyer, J.A. *The Message of Exodus*

# 7

## The Passover

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Passover was such a significant event in the history of Israel that God placed it at the beginning of the Hebrew calendar in order that it might be remembered always. This important ceremony commemorated God's heroic rescue of His people from Egyptian bondage. Moreover, the ritual of the Passover foreshadows the greater exodus Jesus brings to His people in the New Testament. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the history and significance of the Passover.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Exodus 11-12

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To demonstrate the necessity of both mercy and judgment in God's plan of redemption.
2. To identify the significance of each of the Passover elements.
3. To describe the new covenant fulfillment of the Passover symbols.

### QUOTATIONS

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*

—Isaiah 53:7



*The Passover is not primarily about the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. Nor is it mainly about the humiliation of Pharaoh and Egypt. Rather its essential purpose is the glorification and exaltation of Yahweh: "It is Yahweh's Passover."*

—John Currid

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Many people struggle with the emphasis on divine judgment in Scripture.
  1. The two sides of judgment are mercy and wrath and they are recurring themes throughout Scripture.
  2. At the fall of man, God demonstrates judgment by expelling Adam and Eve from Eden, and demonstrates mercy by clothing His embarrassed creatures.
  3. The two elements of mercy and judgment are also present in the event of the Passover.
- B. "So Moses said, 'Thus says the LORD: About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle'" (Ex. 11:4–5).
  - The angel of death will come and slay the firstborn regardless of wealth or position.
- C. Modern Jews continue to celebrate the Passover and remember the events of the exodus.
  1. The redemption accomplished for Israel in the Passover was a redemption from the judgment of God.
  2. Salvation is accomplished by God to deliver us from God's wrath.
- D. Passover is an escape route for the Israelites from the wrath of God.
  - Passover is so significant that the Jewish calendar hence forth will begin with the month during which the ceremony is celebrated.
- E. Israelites were to select a male lamb that was without blemish.
  1. The new covenant cannot be understood properly without a thorough understanding of the old covenant.
  2. The blood of the lamb was to protect the people from the judgment of God.
  3. Upon seeing Jesus, John the Baptist declares, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

- F. The lamb was to be slain, and the blood was to be spread on the door frames of each house.
  - 1. The angel of death would “pass over” each house upon which he saw the lamb’s blood and not slay the firstborn.
  - 2. Believers covered by the blood of Jesus escape the outpouring of God’s judgment at the end of the world.
- G. A day of judgment has been appointed for all humans by Almighty God, and only those covered by the blood of Jesus will escape God’s wrath.
  - 1. God is a god of judgment, and His patience is eventually exhausted.
  - 2. God comes against Pharaoh in judgment because He is just.
  - 3. Vengeance is prohibited for the believer, but belongs to the Lord (Deut. 32:35).
  - 4. The warrior God of Israel goes to battle for His people and secures His own divine justice against His enemies.
- H. The event of the exodus occurs once in history just as the event of the cross occurs once in history.
  - 1. Neither event is repeated, but a ritual for each is frequently reenacted.
  - 2. The purpose of the institution of the Passover was for God’s people to remember their deliverance from Egyptian slavery.
- I. Jesus deeply desired to celebrate the Passover with His disciples.
  - 1. Jesus abruptly changes the meaning of the Passover during the last supper with His disciples.
  - 2. The cup of wine now symbolizes His blood shed for the remission of sins, and the unleavened bread symbolizes His broken body.
  - 3. The institution of the Lord’s Supper was to help Jesus’ followers always remember His sacrifice for their sins.
  - 4. The Passover foreshadows the ultimate exodus accomplished by Christ.
- J. God requires the Passover bread to be unleavened bread.
  - 1. Leaven in the Old Testament is a symbol of corruption.

2. The unleavened bread symbolizes how God has set apart His own people from corruption.
  3. Jesus warned about the “leaven of the Pharisees” or false teaching.
- K. Wine and bitter herbs were also included in the Passover meal.
- These two elements were symbols of the sweetness and judgment of God’s redemption.
- L. Celebrants of the Passover were to wear a belt while they ate the meal.
1. Belts were worn to hold up a robe for running or battle.
  2. Celebrants were to wear a belt and sandals to remind them that they left Egypt in haste.
- M. All of the Passover’s elements symbolize what God was about to do during the greatest event in Old Testament redemptive history.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. According to Dr. Sproul, what are the two sides of judgment seen in Scripture? How are these two sides demonstrated in Genesis 3:21–24? How are they seen in the Passover?
2. Based on Exodus 11:4–5, does God discriminate in the distribution of His wrath according to wealth or position? That is, does He favor the rich over the poor or vice versa? Does He favor the politically influential over the powerless or vice versa? Do these facts make Him a partial or impartial judge?
3. What and who were the Israelites saved from in the Passover event (Ex. 12:29–32)? Based on the answer to this question and 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10, fill in the following blanks: Salvation is accomplished by \_\_\_\_\_ in order to redeem us from \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint, the blanks should each have the same answer.)
4. How do the actions the people of Israel were commanded to perform on the eve of the Passover (Ex. 12:1–28) prefigure the work of Christ?
5. Will God’s patience towards sinners last forever? What is the only way a sinner will escape the wrath of God on judgment day?
6. Who has the responsibility to secure divine justice against the enemies of God (Deut. 32:25; Rom. 12:19)?

7. What ritual commemorates the once-for-all event of the exodus? What ritual commemorates the once-for-all event of Christ's atonement?
8. According to Dr. Sproul, what do the unleavened bread, wine, and bitter herbs of the Passover meal symbolize? What do the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper represent for new covenant believers?

## DISCUSSION

1. How do you think a proper understanding of the old covenant helps a believer to understand the new covenant?
2. Do you tend to emphasize the justice of God or the mercy of God in your own thinking and when you talk to other people? How can you better hold these attributes of our Creator in tension in your thoughts and witness?
3. How can we prepare ourselves to better remember Christ's work on our behalf before and during the celebration of the Lord's Supper?
4. Describe how the exodus and Christ's atonement are both acts of salvation. How is the cross an even greater display of God's mercy and justice than the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Currid, John. *A Study Commentary on Exodus*  
Motyer, J.A. *The Message of Exodus*

## 8

# The Giving of the Law

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

There is a modern tendency to isolate the Ten Commandments from their original historical and theological context. The Ten Commandments are not an abstract list of rules. They are the summary of the law of God given in a context of worship. They include moral absolutes and are followed by examples of application for the people. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the giving of the law of God at Mount Sinai.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Exodus 13–24

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the historical and theological context in which God gave His law to the Israelites.
2. To define the distinctives of apodictic and casuistic law.
3. To underscore the need for reverence in approaching God.

### QUOTATIONS

*For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

—Matthew 5:20

Question 95: *Of what use is the moral law to all men?*

*Answer: The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives: to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.*

—Westminster Larger Catechism

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The contemporary church and culture needs another Moses to lead God's people through the modern Red Sea of trouble and confusion.
  - 1. The destruction of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea is one of the greatest events in redemptive history.
  - 2. Critical scholars have attacked the scriptural account of the Red Sea arguing it occurred at the Sea of Reeds without a miraculous deliverance.
- B. God leads the Israelites for three months into the wilderness with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night.
  - 1. God gathers His people at the base of Mount Sinai to give them His covenant law.
  - 2. God speaks through Moses and invites the Israelites to become His treasured possession, kingdom of priests, and holy nation.
  - 3. The people are commanded to consecrate themselves, wash their clothes, and avoid touching the mountain.
- C. There is a popular tendency to isolate the Ten Commandments from their original historical and theological context.
  - 1. The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) is not an abstract list of rules.
  - 2. The Decalogue is given in a context of worship.
- D. A recurring theme in the Old Testament is the meeting between a God who is holy and a people who are unholy.
- E. "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and

- they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire” (Ex. 19:16–18).
- F. Much of modern religion has become casual and cavalier.
    - 1. God is often treated as a peer, rather than as the supreme being in the universe.
    - 2. Even believers clothed in the righteousness of Christ should have a sense of trembling and awe before Almighty God.
  - G. God descends on Mount Sinai in a theophany.
    - 1. A theophany is an outward manifestation of the invisible God.
    - 2. God often manifests Himself in Scripture with fire.
    - 3. Mount Sinai is shrouded with smoke and fire.
    - 4. God tells Moses to warn the people to avoid touching the mountain unless God “breaks out” or brings judgment against the Israelites.
    - 5. The people are reminded of the God who delivered them from Egypt and are brought to worship before they receive the law.
  - H. The Decalogue is written by the finger of God on tablets of stone.
    - 1. The beginning of the law focuses on proper worship of God by prohibiting other gods, graven images, blasphemy, and Sabbath desecration.
    - 2. The second portion of the law focuses on man’s duty to each other prohibiting dishonoring parents, murder, adultery, theft, and covetousness.
  - I. The Ten Commandments are the foundational law of the book of the covenant or holiness code of Israel.
  - J. The Decalogue is an example of apodictic law which is law presented in personal address.
    - 1. Moral absolutes written as “thou shalt” or “thou shalt not” are examples of apodictic law.
  - K. The laws that follow the Decalogue are known as casuistic law or case law.
    - 1. Laws written in an “if. . . then” format are examples of casuistic law.

2. Casuistic law includes examples of particular applications of the universal law of the Decalogue.
- L. The law of God applies concretely to every human situation.
1. The law of God includes moral absolutes and examples of application for the people.
  2. The law recorded in Exodus includes provisions regarding the ceremonies, civil legislation, medical diagnoses, and worship regulations.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. According to Exodus 14, what was God's purpose in having the Egyptian armies pursue His people and drown in the Red Sea? What was the effect of this miracle on the people of Israel (vv. 30–31)?
2. What are the preparations that the people of Israel must perform as they gather at the foot of Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:7–15)? What do you think the ritual cleanliness is to symbolize spiritually?
3. According to Dr. Sproul, the Ten Commandments are given in what context? Is the tendency of modern religion to view God more as a peer or as the Lord God Almighty? Should Christians who have been justified by faith alone have a sense of trembling and awe before the Lord (Heb. 12:18–29)?
4. What is a theophany? What does Dr. Sproul give as a common manifestation of God in Scripture? How does the Lord manifest Himself at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19)?
5. The Ten Commandments or the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1–17) can be divided into two parts. What does the first section of the Decalogue focus on? What about the second?
6. How do the Ten Commandments function in relation to the book of the covenant or the holiness code of Israel?
7. Dr. Sproul refers to apodictic law and casuistic law in the lecture. What are the differences between these two types of law? Are the Ten Commandments an example of apodictic law or casuistic law?
8. True or false: The law of God applies concretely to every human situation? What are some of the provisions that the Mosaic law includes, according to Dr. Sproul?



## DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think critical scholars are so keen on dismissing the miracles found in the book of Exodus and other portions of Scripture?
2. Does God give the Ten Commandments before or after He saves His people from Egypt? What does this tell us about mankind's ability to keep the law?
3. How can you help other Christians recover a sense of awe and reverence before the holy Lord of all?
4. Is there a difference in the way apodictic law could be applied to our situation today than the way we would apply casuistic law?
5. Ancient Israelites spent a lot of time on their roofs. Why then does God command His people to build parapets on their roofs in Deuteronomy 22:8? How might we apply the principle behind this law today?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Currid, John. *A Study Commentary on Exodus*

Douma, J. *The Ten Commandments*

Motyer, J.A. *The Message of Exodus*

## 9

# The Tabernacle

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

There was no centrally established sanctuary for the people of God before the tabernacle. During the patriarchal period worshippers of the true God would construct altars, sacrifice animals, or consecrate holy places. The construction of the Tent of Meeting offered God's people an opportunity to witness God within their midst and present their sacrifices to Him. Yet as grand as the tabernacle was, it only foreshadowed the work of the One who would eventually "tabernacle" among us. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the contents and significance of the tabernacle.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Exodus 25–40

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To contrast the worship of God's people before and after the construction of the tabernacle.
2. To identify and explain the function of the pieces of the tabernacle.
3. To connect the symbols of the tabernacle with the work of Christ.

### QUOTATIONS

*For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*

—Hebrews 9:24

*Thus everything in the tabernacle was very splendid, agreeable to that infant state of the church, when such things were proper enough to please children, to possess the minds of the worshippers with a reverence of the divine glory. . . .*

—Matthew Henry

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1–2, 14).
  - This verse regarding the incarnation could also be translated: “and the Word became flesh and he ‘pitched his tent’ among us,” or even more literally: “the Word became flesh and he ‘tabernacled’ among us.”
- B. The three most important parts of the book of Exodus are the exodus and Passover, the giving of the Law, and the construction of the tabernacle.
- C. There was no centrally established sanctuary for the people of God before the tabernacle.
  1. During the patriarchal period, moments of worship occurred by sacrificing an animal or constructing an altar.
  2. Noah built an altar after the Flood. Abraham built one when he received the covenant, and Jacob anointed his stone pillow with oil after his vision.
  3. The consecration of time and space occurs during the patriarchal period.
  4. Altars are constructed, feast days appointed, and specific ground is designated as holy.
- D. The domain of God is the whole earth, for He is omnipresent.
  1. *Immanuel* is one of the names of Jesus and means “God with us.”
  2. Special places where God meets with His people are designated as particularly sacred.
- E. The tabernacle or Tent of Meeting was constructed and was easy to transport until the Israelites settled into the Promised Land.
- F. The tabernacle was set up in the middle of the camp with the tribes of Israel encircling the tent.
  1. The camp was arranged in order to symbolize God’s presence amidst His people.

2. “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns” (Ps. 46:4–5).
  3. Among the camps of semi-nomadic peoples, the king’s tent was always placed in the center of the camp.
  4. God is His people’s king and dwells in the center tent.
- G. The tabernacle was transported until it was set up facing east.
- The Kohathites were a sub-division of the tribe of Levi and responsible for transporting the tabernacle.
- H. The tabernacle was 1,200 square yards in area.
1. Most of this area was the outer court.
  2. The inner court was called the Holy Place.
  3. The innermost court was called the Holy of Holies.
  4. The combined dimensions of the two inner courts was 55 x 15 feet.
- I. The perimeter of the tabernacle was protected by the Levites. Other tribe members came to the tabernacle, but did not enter the tent.
1. The laver and the altar of burnt offering were located in the outer court.
  2. The bronze laver was for the purification of the priests.
  3. The altar of burnt offering was for sacrificing animals.
  4. The horns of the altar were for tying down animals and for individuals to seek sanctuary and plead for their lives.
- J. There is a progression of holiness and valuable materials as one approaches the inner court.
1. The seven branched candlestick or menorah was in the Holy Place.
  2. The candles burned continually to symbolize the eternal presence of God.
  3. The altar of incense in the Holy Place symbolized prayer.
  4. The incense mitigated the smell of sacrificed animals.

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5. The prayers of an obedient people were a pleasant smell in God's nostrils, but the prayers of a rebellious people were a stench in God's nostrils.
  6. The table of shewbread with twelve loaves of bread was in the Holy Place.
- K. Jesus fulfills all the symbols of the tabernacle as the light of the world, the sweet aroma of His sacrifice, the bread of life, the One who cleanses away sin, and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
- L. The ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies was a chest made of acacia wood and covered with pure gold.
1. Sculpted cherubim extended their wings over the top of the ark.
  2. The ark contained the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and the blooming rod of Aaron.
  3. The lid of the ark was the mercy seat.
  4. The ark was a symbol of God's throne and mercy.
  5. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat.
  6. The blood symbolizes the atonement made for our sins and protection from the judgment of God.
- M. The whole work of redemption, mercy, and judgment, was found in the living symbols of the tabernacle.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. What are the three most important parts of the book of Exodus, according to Dr. Sproul?
2. The tabernacle provided what kind of sanctuary for the people of God? How did the patriarchs worship before the tabernacle was constructed? Describe some of those occasions (see Gen. 8:20–22; 12:1–9; 28:10–22).
3. Does God's omnipresence preclude Him from appearing in special places and in special ways to His people? What does the Old Testament say about those places where God meets with His people in a special way?

4. In light of the Israelites' historical context, what is the significance attached to placing the tabernacle in the center of the camp?
5. What are the three main sections of the tabernacle as given in the lecture?
6. Which tribe was tasked with guarding the perimeter of the tabernacle? Were members of other tribes allowed to enter the tabernacle?
7. What was the purpose for the bronze laver? The altar of burnt offering? The horns of the altar?
8. What did the branched candlestick and the altar of incense in the Holy Place symbolize? According to Dr. Sproul, how does Jesus fulfill these and all the other elements of the tabernacle?
9. What did the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies symbolize? What was contained within it (Heb. 9:4)? Who could enter the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the altar, and what did the blood symbolize?

## DISCUSSION

1. Do you think that there is provision for sacred spaces under the new covenant? Why or why not?
2. What do you think are the advantages of having a centralized sanctuary in and around which the people of God gather for worship both in the old covenant and today?
3. What do the architecture of your church's sanctuary and the elements used within it (candles, pulpit, cross, etc.) symbolize about the work of Christ on our behalf?
4. Since Jesus has "tabernacled" among us (John 1:1-2; 14), will there ever be the need for a tabernacle or a temple in Jerusalem again?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Currid, John. *A Study Commentary on Exodus*

Motyer, J.A. *The Message of Exodus*

Poythress, Vern. *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*

# Aaron and the Priesthood

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

People intending to read through the entire Bible often stall or give up when they encounter the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy because the contents of these books seem so foreign and irrelevant. Yet these books contain a wealth of information for our understanding of the work of Christ. In fact, every ceremony God established for the Israelites foreshadows a part of the work of Christ. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the primary themes and purposes of the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the primary themes and purposes of the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
2. To explain the emphasis on purity in the book of Leviticus.
3. To connect the holiness code of Israel with God's call for Israel.

## QUOTATIONS

*In one sense then the whole ceremonial law in Leviticus is obsolete for the Christian. We are interested in the sacrifice of Christ, not in animal sacrifice. But in another sense the Levitical rituals are still of immense relevance. It was in terms of these sacrifices that Jesus himself and the early church understood his atoning death. Leviticus provided*

*the theological models for their understanding. If we wish to walk in our Lord's steps and think his thoughts after him, we must attempt to understand the sacrificial system of Leviticus.*

—Gordon Wenham

*For the Christian reader, Deuteronomy ends with a pointer toward the future. The earthly kingdom of God, in the founding of which Moses played so important a part, came to an end as an independent state early in the sixth century BC. The prophets who followed Moses at a later date began to point forward to a new covenant. It was in the formation of the new covenant that at last a prophet like Moses appeared again, but he was more than a prophet. Whereas Moses was a servant in the household of God, the coming prophet was a son, Jesus Christ, who brought with him the liberation of a new exodus and established the relationship of the new covenant.*

—Peter C. Craigie

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. People intending to read through the entire Bible often stall or give up when they encounter the book of Leviticus because it seems so foreign and irrelevant to them.
  - Difficult books like Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy contain a wealth of information critical for our understanding of the New Testament.
  
- B. Leviticus receives its name for being the book of instructions to the priestly tribe of Levi.
  1. The priesthood was established from the tribe of Levi.
  2. Aaron and his sons were called to serve the cultus of Israel.
  3. Cultus describes the life and activity of any religious community.
  4. Leviticus focuses primarily on ritual or ceremonial law.
  5. Every ceremony God established for the Israelites foreshadows a part of the work of Christ.
  
- C. The book of Numbers receives its name for containing the results of the census done in Israel.
  
- D. The book of Deuteronomy is a recapitulation of the law for the second generation of Israelites in the wilderness.
  - *Deutero* means “two” and *nomos* means “law.”
  
- E. Holiness is the primary theme of the book of Leviticus.



1. God demands holiness in the ceremonies and lifestyles of the Israelites.
  2. “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:45).
- F. The fundamental purpose of the priesthood was to maintain and promote holiness in the ceremonies and lifestyles of the Israelites.
1. “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD” (Lev. 10:1–2).
  2. Nadab and Abihu are judged because they change the priestly ceremony ordained by God.
  3. “Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said, “Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.” And Aaron held his peace” (Lev. 10:3).
  4. Moses reminds Aaron of God’s strict requirements of holiness.
  5. The holiness of God and the holy worship He requires is the primary theme of the book of Leviticus.
  6. The Levites were required to guard the tabernacle so that its holiness was not violated by the people and that they would enforce its ceremonies.
- G. The rituals in the book of Leviticus were given to keep the defiled and the profane away from the sacred.
- The Israelites were to be a light of purity among all the defiled nations of the earth.
- H. The dietary and agriculture laws were to maintain the purity of the people.
1. The dietary laws had medicinal value, but were primarily a ritual to emphasize what was clean and unclean.
  2. Israelites were to eat only domesticated animals and of their own crops.
- I. The fundamental difference between God and His people is holiness and purity.
1. Israel was called to be His people and therefore holy to be a light to the nations.
  2. The holiness of God and the defilement of man are common themes in Leviticus.

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- J. The Levitical priests oversaw the sacrifices, civil administration, and were also physicians.
1. The Levites diagnosed people with various illnesses.
  2. Jesus told people to go show themselves to the priests after He had healed them.
- K. The holiness of the priests is revealed in the details God gives to their garments.
1. “Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty” (Ex. 28:1–2).
  2. The clothing of the priests was to be distinct for its glory and beauty.
  3. The glory of God is demonstrated in the beauty of His regulations.
  4. Beauty reveals the nature and character of God.
  5. The Levitical ceremonies point us to worship God in the beauty of His holiness.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. What does Dr. Sproul give as the primary focus of the book of Leviticus? Of Numbers? Of Deuteronomy?
2. Which tribe was tasked with the priesthood and with serving the cultus or religious life of ancient Israel (Num. 1:47–54; 18)?
3. According to Dr. Sproul, what was the fundamental purpose of the priesthood? Why were Nadab and Abihu consumed by the Lord’s fire if they were supposed to be priests (Lev. 10:1–3)?
4. What does Dr. Sproul give for the purpose of the dietary and agricultural laws in the life of ancient Israel?
5. What is the fundamental difference between God and fallen human beings (see Isa. 6:1–7)?
6. Fill in the blank: In addition to sacrifices and civil administration, the Levites also served as \_\_\_\_\_ (see Lev. 13).

7. What was the purpose of the garments of the priests (Ex. 28:1–2)?
8. According to Dr. Sproul, how is the glory of God demonstrated according to the Law? What does beauty reveal? What do the Levitical ceremonies point to regarding the worship of the Lord?

## DISCUSSION

1. Under the old covenant, the religious leaders were the priests (Num. 1:47–54; 18). New covenant religious leaders are pastors and elders (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). In what ways are these two groups similar? In what ways are they different? (See also Lev. 16; Neh. 8:1–8; 1 Peter 5:1–5)
2. Is there a place for the visual beauty of architecture, images, and so on in our corporate worship today? Why or why not?
3. How does your church incorporate beauty in its worship? Consider music, artwork, building design, stained glass, lighting, and more.
4. Why do you think modern churches do not pay as much attention to visual beauty in their sanctuaries as those of the medieval period?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*  
Wenham, Gordon. *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*  
Wenham, Gordon. *The Book of Leviticus*

# Old Testament Sacrificial System

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Old Testament sacrificial system has been called “primitive and obscene.” This is an appropriate description because God gave these symbols to a primitive people to teach about the obscenity of human beings rebelling against a holy God. Indeed the most obscene event in history was when Jesus of Nazareth hung on a cross at Calvary substituting Himself as an obscenity for His unholy creatures. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses how the sacrifices under the Old Testament system foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ Himself.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Leviticus

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To demonstrate that Christ made atonement for our sins by fulfilling the requirements of the Old Testament sacrificial system.
2. To identify the two fundamental themes inherent in the Old Testament sacrificial system.

## QUOTATIONS

*Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws containing several typical ordinances; partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament.*

—Westminster Confession of Faith 19.3

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## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Christ made atonement for our sins by fulfilling the requirements of the Old Testament sacrificial system.
  - 1. The Son of God became a curse for us in bearing our sins.
  - 2. The whole drama of the cross is “primitive and obscene.”
  - 3. The Old Testament sacrificial system with its abundant slaughter of animals and sprinkling of blood seems barbaric and primitive.
  - 4. God is concerned with communicating His message to the simplest person in this world.
  - 5. God’s redemption is dramatized in the Old Testament in a primitive manner for a primitive people.
  - 6. The drama of human redemption deals with the obscenity of human rebellion against God.
  - 7. The most obscene event in history was when Jesus of Nazareth hung on the cross at Calvary.
  - 8. The blameless and pure Son of God took all our filthy sins upon Himself and became the quintessential obscenity.
  - 9. The gospel is the message that God has descended to us to cover our obscenities.
  - 10. This is the message that is portrayed in the Old Testament sacrificial system.
- B. The two fundamental themes inherent in the Old Testament sacrificial system were *expiation* and *consecration* (propitiation).
  - 1. Old Testament worship was characterized by an offering of praise.
  - 2. Abel’s sacrifice was offered to God in a posture of faith, praise, and thanksgiving.
  - 3. The system of sacrifices evolved with deeper meanings and particularly, the idea of expiation.
- C. *Expiation* focuses on the removal of defilement or sin.
  - 1. On the Day of Atonement the sins of the people were transferred to a scapegoat that was sent outside of the camp to the place of defilement (Lev. 16).

2. When John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching he sang the *Agnus Dei*:  
“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).
  3. Christ is both the lamb and the scapegoat that removes or expiates the sins of the world.
- D. *Propitiation* focuses on satisfying the demands of God’s holiness and justice.
- E. *Substitution* was also a fundamental concept in the Old Testament sacrificial system.
- F. There were six primary steps in Old Testament offerings. The first three were performed by the worshipper and the last three were performed by the priest.
1. A worshipper would bring one of his own animals for an offering.
  2. The worshipper would lay his hands on it to symbolize the transfer of his sins to the animal.
  3. The worshipper would then kill the animal for the sacrifice.
  4. The priest would take the animal’s blood into the tabernacle and sprinkle it on the altar.
  5. A portion of the offering would be burned on the altar.
  6. A portion of the offering would be left to the priest for eating.
- G. A symbolic relationship existed between blood and life in the Hebrew mind.
1. The concept of the shedding of blood is symbolic of the giving up of life because the penalty for sin is death.
  2. The death of the substitute is required for the penalty to be fulfilled.
  3. The significance was not in the blood, but rather the significance was in giving up the entire life of the animal.
- H. The sacrifices under the Old Testament system foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ Himself.
1. “For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:13–14).

2. The sacrifices symbolized the promised Redeemer who would eventually give His life for atonement once and for all.
- I. The aroma that rose to heaven from the burning of the sacrifices was declared to be sweet and delightful in God's nostrils.
    1. When sacrifices were offered by a disobedient people the aroma became a stench in God's nostrils.
    2. The offerings of the saints are declared a sweet and pleasant aroma to God.
  - J. The blood was sprinkled on the altar or the mercy seat to symbolize the idea of covering.
    1. The first awareness of man and woman after the Fall is of their nakedness and shame.
    2. The first act of God's redemption is to stoop to earth and clothe their nakedness and embarrassment.
    3. Noah's sons, Shem and Japheth, are blessed by God for covering their father's nakedness.
    4. The symbolism of the sacrifice and blood is to work as a covering that shields our sin and evil from the holy gaze of God.
    5. Christ is called the "garment of our righteousness," as His blood is shed in the final consummate act of covering the sin of His people.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Many skeptics have described the crucifixion and blood atonement pejoratively as "primitive and obscene." According to Dr. Sproul, why does God communicate His message so dramatically with the institution of animal sacrifices? Biblically speaking, how does the cross reflect and deal with the obscenity of human rebellion (Isa. 53; Gal. 3:13-14; 1 Peter 2:21-25)?
2. Fill in the blanks: The two fundamental themes inherent in the Old Testament sacrificial system were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

3. What does expiation accomplish in the sacrificial system? How was it symbolized with the scapegoat under the old covenant (Lev. 16)? How is it accomplished under the new covenant (John 1:29)?
4. What does propitiation accomplish in the sacrificial system?
5. Describe the concept of substitution.
6. List and describe the six primary steps in Old Testament offerings that Dr. Sproul gives in the lecture.
7. Why is death necessary to achieve the redemption symbolized by the old covenant sacrifices and accomplished by Christ on the cross (Gen. 2:15–17; Rom. 6:23)?
8. What made the aroma of sacrifices a stench in God's nostrils under the old covenant? What made it a sweet and pleasant aroma?
9. What was the first act of God's redemption after the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21)? How is the sprinkling of blood on the altar related to this act? What covering act was symbolized and predicted by animal sacrifice during the period of the old covenant?

## DISCUSSION

1. Muslims, atheists, and even some who profess to be Christians, recoil at the suggestion that Jesus placated God's wrath through His death on the cross. Why do you think people resist the idea of penal, substitutionary atonement?
2. Some Christians are looking forward to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple and the reinstatement of animal sacrifices. Is this an appropriate view, considering that Jesus has made perfect atonement for all of our sin? Why or why not?
3. What can we do to make sure that the incense of our prayers is a sweet smell to the Lord (for example, see Matt. 5:21–26)?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Wenham, Gordon. *The Book of Leviticus*



## 12

# Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The book of Joshua records the account of the Israelite conquest of Canaan and the initial fulfillment of the land promises made to the patriarchs. The conquest has been routinely criticized by scholars as an unnecessary and excessively brutal campaign never sanctioned by a loving God. Yet Joshua's campaign into Canaan was indeed a divine mission bringing judgment on the wicked and glory not to himself but to his holy God. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the life of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Joshua

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the primary themes and purpose of the book of Joshua.
2. To evaluate the necessity and purpose of the requirements of Holy War.
3. To identify the threat of religious syncretism to Israel's holy covenant.

### QUOTATIONS

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.*

—Hebrews 11:30–31

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The first five books of the Bible are known as the Pentateuch or Torah.
  - 1. Some scholars have argued that the book of Joshua was originally grouped with the first five books of Scripture and was known as the hexateuch.
  - 2. There are similar themes between Joshua and the first five books.
- B. The book of Joshua records Israel's conquest of Canaan and the initial fulfillment of promise to the patriarchs of a promised land.
  - The Israelites move from wilderness wandering, to conquest and settlement in Canaan.
- C. Joshua is a prominent figure in the Pentateuch.
  - 1. Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who returned from the Promised Land with a positive report (Numbers 14).
  - 2. Joshua is blessed with longevity while his entire generation of Israelites die in the wilderness.
  - 3. He is appointed as the successor to Moses who is forbidden from entering the land.
- D. The passing of authority from Moses to Joshua in Deuteronomy 31:1-8 is an example of Dynastic Succession.
  - 1. The covenant is renewed and the people pledge allegiance to Joshua.
  - 2. There are similarities between this succession and Christ promising the presence of the Holy Spirit and the new covenant in the upper room.
- E. "After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 'Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. . . . No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you'" (Josh. 1:1-3, 5).
  - God's pledge of His presence was an important part of the patriarchal blessing and is now promised to Joshua.
- F. The book of Joshua reads like a military history because it is the account of the Israelite conquest of Canaan.
  - 1. Joshua is met by the divine warrior in Joshua 5:13-15, and he asks the figure for what side He is fighting.

2. The warrior responds by saying He is the captain of the Lord's army.
  3. The might of the Lord's army goes before the Israelites.
  4. Some scholars argue this captain of the Lord's army was Christ Himself.
  5. A *Christophany* is an Old Testament manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ.
- G. The book of Joshua includes the account of Rahab's protection of the spies, the fall of Jericho, the defeat and victory at Ai, and Achan's greed.
- H. The conquest of Canaan has been criticized by some scholars as unnecessary violence and not sanctioned by a loving God.
1. God calls the Israelites to holy war including, "theban" in which all the men, women, and children of Canaan would be killed.
  2. God did not choose Israel because they were more holy, but because He had decreed judgment against His enemies in Canaan.
  3. The conquest of Canaan was a holy war for God to recapture His glory from the unholy Canaanites.
  4. Joshua and the Israelites are not completely obedient or successful in wiping out the Canaanites.
- I. Joshua and the Israelites are continually warned against religious syncretism.
1. *Religious syncretism* is mixing various religious beliefs together.
  2. The saints of the Old Testament continually fight against the intrusion of paganism into the worship of Yahweh.
  3. The Israelites were to practice ethnic separation so that they would not be influenced by pagan religions.
  4. Holy War continues throughout the Old Testament as a conflict against religious syncretism.
- J. Another covenant renewal ceremony occurs at the end of the book of Joshua.
1. "And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15).
  2. The Israelites pledge obedience to the law and faithfulness to the covenant.

3. Joshua warns the Israelites they will fall short of God's holiness.
4. Only the Holy One of Israel faithfully fulfills the covenant.

### BIBLE STUDY

1. List the six books that make up the so-called "Hexateuch." Why would scholars group these books together?
2. Name the tribe from which Joshua came (Num. 13:1–16). Why is he not regarded as one of the faithless Israelites from the wilderness wanderings (13:25–14:38)?
3. What important part of the patriarchal blessing does God promise to Joshua in Joshua 1:1–5?
4. Who does Joshua encounter in Joshua 5:13–15? With what New Testament individual do many scholars identify him? What is the term for a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus to His people?
5. According to Dr. Sproul, what was the purpose for the conquest of Canaan? Was Israel successful in wiping out the Canaanites? Were the Israelites chosen to destroy the Canaanites because they were more holy than the pagans?
6. What is *religious syncretism*? How does Dr. Sproul say holy war is related to religious syncretism throughout the rest of the Old Testament?
7. Does Joshua predict success or failure in Israel's attempt to measure up to God's holiness (Josh. 24:19)? Who can faithfully fulfill the covenant?

### DISCUSSION

1. How are Christians today tempted to mix the beliefs and practices of false religions and the values of this fallen world with the teaching of God's Word? How have you been guilty of this sin?
2. God's presence is a blessing not only for the patriarchs but also for all the people of the Lord (Heb. 13:5). How has God made His presence real to you in your life?
3. Why is the church not permitted to take up the sword to spread the gospel?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Davis, Dale Ralph. *Joshua: No Falling Words*  
Pink, Arthur. *Gleanings in Joshua*

# The Cycle of Judges

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The book of Judges is an exciting and action-filled book of the Bible. The book relates the stories of heroic men and women of God who delivered the Israelites from their enemies. As idolatry and apostasy compete with God's covenant for the hearts of the people, the judges bring leadership and victory in a time when Israel had no king. Their divine commission reveals God's commitment to the covenant and Israel, even as His people turn away from Him. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the period and themes of the book of Judges.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Judges–Ruth

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the recurring cycle in the book of Judges.
2. To contrast the covenantal commitment of God with the Israelites.
3. To highlight the theme of God's salvation in the book of Judges.

## QUOTATIONS

*The book of Judges presents the picture of a nation called the people of Yahweh, but seemingly determined to negate that appellation if not destroy itself. But the Lord will not let this happen. He has chosen them to be his agents of light and life to the world; he has rescued them from Egypt; he has entered into an eternal covenant with them; and he has delivered the land of Canaan into their hands as an eternal possession. In the final*

*analysis, God cannot let his program abort. The mission of grace to the world depends upon the preservation of his people. So against all odds, and certainly against Israel's deserts, the nation survives the dark days of the judges. The true hero in the book is God and God alone.*

—Daniel Block

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The book of Judges is an exciting and action-filled book of the Bible.
  - 1. The book covers a period of approximately 350 years from the death of Joshua to the time of Samuel.
  - 2. The book covers the transitional time from the wilderness wanderings and conquest to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel.
  - 3. This period in biblical history is known as the amphictyony.
  - 4. Israel was a collection of loosely federated tribes and cities without a central source of power.
- B. God raises up charismatic leaders during the amphictyony to deliver Israel.
  - 1. *Charisma* means a “gift of grace.” God gives a charismatic or special gift to specific individuals to accomplish specific tasks.
  - 2. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Moses, the tabernacle builders, the kings, and the prophets to accomplish His tasks.
  - 3. The Spirit of the Lord empowered the judges to perform mighty deeds and tasks for the welfare of God’s people.
  - 4. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, granting him great strength to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines.
- C. “And Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,” is a recurring phrase in the book of Judges.
  - 1. God would raise up Israel’s enemies to oppress His people to chastise them for their sins.
  - 2. The people would repent of their sins and cry to God for deliverance.
  - 3. God would raise up a judge such as Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Barak, Gideon, or Samson to defeat the nation’s enemies and bring deliverance.

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- D. William Hendricksen describes this cycle in the book of Judges using four words.
1. *Relapse* describes the apostasy of the people by worshipping foreign gods.
  2. *Retribution* describes the outpouring of God's retributive justice or punishment on Israel for her idolatry.
  3. *Repentance* describes the change in the people's hearts as they cry out to God for forgiveness and deliverance.
  4. *Rescue* describes the heroics of the judge that God raises up and the freedom that is secured for a time in Israel.
- E. The pattern of Israel's recurring apostasy in the book of Judges is a blatant forsaking of the covenant they pledged themselves to as a nation in Joshua 24.
1. Israel breaks her promise and forsakes the covenant.
  2. God never breaks His promise and is faithful to His people and the covenant.
  3. Jesus was forsaken by God on the cross to secure a new covenant with His people.
  4. Believers are spared the forsakeness of God because Jesus was forsaken for them.
  5. Forsaking God and then being brought back by His grace is a cycle not just in the book of Judges, but throughout church history.
- F. The God of Israel is a god that promises both blessing and curse, prosperity and calamity.
- The cycle of the judges is described in Judges 2:11-19.
- G. The cycle of the judges is demonstrated during the life of Gideon.
1. "The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. . . . The LORD is with you O mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:1-11).
  2. Gideon is terrified by this call of God on his life, lamenting his weakness and inadequacies.
  3. God promises Gideon His presence and His strength.
  4. Gideon assembles a large army, but the Lord tells him his army is too large.

5. The fearful are allowed to go home and then his army is pared down to 300 soldiers.
6. A remarkable victory is won by Gideon over the Midianites with only a small army.
7. The story of Gideon's remarkable victory illustrates the recurring Old Testament theme that salvation is of the Lord.

### BIBLE STUDY

1. Between the death of Joshua and Samuel, how was the nation of Israel organized and led? What is the technical term for the period of the Judges?
2. What does the word *charisma* mean? Why did the Spirit of the Lord come upon the Judges during the amphictyony?
3. William Hendriksen identifies four elements that recur in each cycle of Judges: relapse, retribution, repentance, and rescue. Define each of these elements. Identify each of them in the story of Othniel (Judg. 3:7–11).
4. According to Dr. Sproul, is the cycle of forsaking God and then being brought back by His grace limited only to the book of Judges?
5. God always keeps His promises and never forsakes His people. Why are believers spared the forsakeness of God?
6. Which kingdom oppressed Israel just prior to the call of Gideon (Judg. 6:1–10)? What was Gideon's first act of deliverance (vv. 28–35)?
7. How does Judges 7 prove that salvation is of the Lord and the Lord alone?
8. What does the author of Judges imply as the solution to the problem of lawlessness in Israel near the end of the period of the Judges (Judg. 21:25)?

### DISCUSSION

1. Describe any parallels you see between current events and Judges 21:25.
2. Read Judges 16 and discuss whether God waits for His people to be perfectly holy before He uses them. How does Samson's life show us it is better to be obedient to God's law while we are being used of Him, rather than disobedient?



3. Can we see any of the Judges as models for our own service to God? Why or why not?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Block, Daniel. *Judges, Ruth*

Davis, Dale Ralph. *Judges: Such A Great Salvation*

Hubbard, Robert. *The Book of Ruth*

# The Monarchy

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel contain fascinating stories of the lives of such significant individuals as Samuel, David, and Saul. During this period of crisis and defeat in Israel's history, God raised up godly heroes for His people. Yet God also grieved as His people rejected His rule again and sought an earthly king to rule over them. The corrupt history of Israel's monarchy is the sad consequence of Israel's rebellion against their divine king. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the book of 1 Samuel.

## SCRIPTURE READING

1 Samuel

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the significance of the life and times of Samuel.
2. To comprehend Israel's rebellion in seeking a king.
3. To trace the decline of the career of Saul alongside the emergence of David.

## QUOTATIONS

*True to their nature as holy Scripture, the books of Samuel were "written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." As a source of instruction, the writer of Hebrews used 1 and 2 Samuel, citing David and the prophet Samuel as heroic examples of faith in action. James urged his readers to take "as an example of patience in the face of suffering . . . the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord"; presumably he was in part referring to Samuel. Along with the rest*

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*of Scripture, the New Testament writers urged Christians to keep the words of 1 and 2 Samuel in remembrance, and to implement their teachings.*

—Robert Bergen

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel offer us exciting stories about Samuel, Saul, and David, and a rich portrait of the character of God.
  - The period of the judges extends from the death of Joshua until the life of Samuel who was Israel's last judge.
  
- B. Samuel is the answer to the prayers of the barren Hannah who vows to give her child to the Lord's service.
  1. The prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2 is very similar to the Magnificat sung by Mary in Luke 1:46–55 upon the birth of Jesus.
  2. The Lord speaks to Samuel and tells him of the coming judgment against the house of Eli.
  3. Judgment comes in the defeat of the Israelites in battle, the deaths of Eli, the sons of Eli, the daughter-in-law of Eli, and the loss of the ark of the covenant.
  4. Eli's daughter-in-law dies in childbirth and names her child Ichabod, meaning "the glory has departed," for the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines.
  5. Samuel emerges as the spiritual leader of Israel in a context of war, defeat, and embarrassment.
  6. The Philistines are afflicted with plagues as long as they hold onto the ark.
  7. The ark is placed on an ox cart and the Spirit leads the ark back to the land of Israel.
  
- C. "When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice" (1 Sam. 8:1–3).
  1. "God has no grandchildren."
  2. There is no guarantee that a godly person will have believing children because every generation needs conversion.

- D. “Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, ‘Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations’” (1 Sam. 8:4–5).
1. Israel relentlessly pursues the Canaanite religion and lifestyle surrounding them.
  2. Israel first pursued the Canaanite religion, and now they seek their political institutions.
  3. Israel was not to be a democracy, an oligarchy, an aristocracy, or a monarchy, but rather a theocracy in which God was their king.
- E. “But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them’” (1 Samuel 8:6–7).
1. Israel’s request for a king is a rejection of the entire ministry and career of Samuel.
  2. The rejection of Samuel is also a rejection of the God he represented to the people.
  3. God is like the father in the parable of the prodigal son by letting the son go to pursue his own wicked inclinations.
  4. The worst kind of judgment God can bring is to leave us to our own sinful natures.
  5. God gives Israel her request for a king, but has Samuel warn the nation of the negative consequences.
  6. Despite the sinful origin of the monarchy in Israel, God works through this institution to bring His chosen king, from the tribe of Judah, whose kingdom has no end.
- F. The word *monarchy* means “one chief,” “one ruler,” or “one sovereign.”
- Israel’s request for a king is a rejection of the entire ministry and career of Samuel.

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- G. “According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:8–9).
- The beginning of the monarchy is the beginning of the radical corruption of the Jewish nation.
- H. Samuel warns the nation of the consequences of choosing a king.
1. The king would establish a draft and conscript Israel’s sons.
  2. Commoners would be recruited as state workers.
  3. Labor and agricultural taxes would be imposed.
  4. Servants and possessions would be confiscated by the king.
- I. God chooses a tall and handsome hero from the tribe of Benjamin as Israel’s first king named Saul.
1. In Genesis 49:10, Jacob prophesied that kings would come from the tribe of Judah .
  2. Centuries later, God chooses another Benjamite (whose name is also Saul), to spread the gospel.
  3. The first Saul ends in disgrace, whereas the second Saul becomes the apostle to the Gentiles.
- J. Saul enjoys great popularity and military victories at the beginning of his career.
1. Arrogance is Saul’s fatal flaw.
  2. He refuses to wait for Samuel to offer the sacrifices and abrogates the responsibility of the priest to himself.
  3. God rejects Saul and chooses a man after His own heart to be king and replace the house of Saul.
  4. Thereafter Saul’s career declines into misplaced vengeance and violence.
  5. Saul shrinks in fear before Goliath as David slays the giant in the strength of God.

6. Saul spends the remainder of his life with David's death as his primary goal.
7. David begins his remarkable career fleeing for his life from the hand of Saul.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Who was the last judge of Israel (1 Sam. 7:15)?
2. Compare Hannah's song with Mary's Magnificat (1 Sam. 2:1-11; Luke 1:46-55) and note any similarities or dissimilarities. In what other ways does Dr. Sproul say that Samuel is a type (anticipation) of Christ?
3. Why did Eli's daughter name her son Ichabod (1 Sam. 4:19-22)? Who brought the ark of the covenant back to Israel (1 Sam. 6)?
4. According to 1 Samuel 8:1-3, do godly parents guarantee godly children? What must happen in each generation if a family will continue to be faithful to the Lord?
5. Israel was supposed to be a people holy unto the Lord and separate from the surrounding nations. What does their request for a king "like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5), say about whether they wanted to be like or unlike the Canaanites?
6. Why were Samuel and the Lord angry at Israel's request for a king (1 Sam. 8:4-9)? How does the Lord respond to their request (8:10-22)?
7. What kind of judgment does God's answering the request of Israel represent? Is it better to be disciplined by the Lord, or to be given over by Him to our sin (Rom. 1:18-32)?
8. God always planned to have a king in Israel, but it was to be His king not one like that of the other peoples (Deut. 17:14-20). Was Saul this type of king? What was his fatal flaw and why was he finally rejected as king (1 Sam. 15)?
9. Fill in the blank: King Saul and the apostle Paul were both from the tribe of \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Sam. 9:1-2; Phil. 3:1-5).
10. What happens to Saul's reign after he is rejected as king? What was his primary goal regarding David?

## DISCUSSION

1. Since "God has no grandchildren," what is the responsibility of Christian parents to their children regarding the things of God? What is the responsibility of the church to our young people, and how do you fit into that responsibility?

2. Even if a family like Benjamin's has a history of wickedness (Saul), God is often pleased to call members of this family to Himself (Paul). How has God shown Himself gracious to your family throughout the generations?
3. Does Samuel's warning about the wrong kind of king have anything to say about modern governments? Why or why not?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bergen, Robert. *1, 2 Samuel*

Davis, Dale Ralph. *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*

Davis, Dale Ralph. *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*

## 15

# David

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

David is the only individual in Scripture who is declared to be a man after God's own heart. This most famous king of Israel was a brave warrior, a daring vigilante, a passionate poet, a soothing musician, and a brilliant king. Yet this mighty man of God was also a vicious fighter, a lustful adulterer, a selfish murderer, and a distant father. Despite his complexities and contradictions, David never loses his heart for repentance. David is among many Old Testament characters that are full of passions that lead them to both the heights of glory and the depths of corruption. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the dramatic life of David.

### SCRIPTURE READING

2 Samuel

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the chief characteristics in the life of David.
2. To contrast the lives of Saul and David.
3. To explain the designation of David as a man after God's own heart.

### QUOTATIONS

*David's life is narrated as pivotal in the history of salvation. David's name occurs nearly eight hundred times in the Old Testament, and another sixty times in the New. David's name is taken up a thousand years later as a title for Jesus, "son of David." And David's*



*name is honored and revered still—Christians and Jews commonly name their children David. No other name from the extensive list of Hebrew kings has anywhere near the prominence of David. In fact, no other life in the biblical record (with the exception of Jesus), is given such extensive and detailed attention. The effect of this sustained narrative treatment is to immerse us in the human condition—this is what is involved in being a human being, created and called, judged and saved by God—all the complexity of glory and difficulty involved in our human condition.*

—Eugene Peterson

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. David was the original Renaissance man with many dimensions and many contradictions.
  - 1. When he was good he was very good, and when he was bad he was very bad.
  - 2. David was among many Old Testament characters that are full of passions that lead them to the heights of glory and the depths of corruption.
- B. The reign of Saul ended in ignominy, defeat, and embarrassment.
  - 1. David lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:17–27.
  - 2. David grieved the death of the man who relentlessly sought to murder him.
- C. David was a child prodigy who demonstrated great gifts and faith at a young age.
  - 1. He killed a lion and a bear while shepherding his father’s flock.
  - 2. He was indignant against Goliath the Philistine for mocking God and the armies of Israel.
  - 3. He convinced King Saul to let him fight Goliath.
  - 4. He entered battle with only a sling, five stones, and the Lord.
  - 5. Goliath mocked David as a dog and blasphemed his God.
  - 6. David replied that Goliath comes with human weapons, but he comes with the Lord of hosts.
  - 7. David slayed Goliath and became an instant hero to the people of Israel.
- D. David was one of the greatest warriors of the Old Testament.
  - 1. He lived as a fugitive from King Saul in the wilderness.

2. David was similar to Robin Hood who gathered the outcasts and disenfranchised of society around him as a marauding band of warriors.
  3. At times he was a vicious and cruel guerilla fighter.
  4. David was called “a man after God’s own heart.”
- E. David had the heart of a poet and musician.
1. The poet laureate of Israel wrote many of the psalms, revealing his deep longing for intimacy with God.
  2. He was invited to the palace to play the lyre and calm the evil spirit within the tortured soul of Saul.
  3. David composed music for the court and the worship of Israel.
- F. David was the supreme symbol of kingship in the Old Testament.
1. He won a brutal civil war against the supporters of Saul’s family and is revealed as God’s choice for Israel’s king.
  2. The golden age of Israel was during the Davidic monarchy.
  3. David conquered the surrounding nations, extended Israel’s boundaries from Dan to Beersheba, and began a period of great prosperity in Israel.
  4. David was a very capable administrator and skillful diplomat.
  5. He established his capital at Jerusalem, the “city of peace.”
- G. David was also an extraordinary sinner.
1. He was blinded by his lust for Bathsheba and committed adultery with her.
  2. David ordered the death of her husband, Uriah the Hittite.
  3. He took Bathsheba as his wife after murdering Uriah.
  4. Nathan the prophet confronted David with his sin through a parable.
  5. David promised vengeance against that evildoer in his kingdom.
  6. Nathan responded by saying, “Thou art the man!”

H. David was exceptional at repentance.

1. Repentance was the key difference between David and Saul.
2. David was deeply aware of his spiritual bankruptcy and need for God's grace.
3. He composed Psalm 51 to lay himself bare before a holy God and show that he truly was a man after God's own heart.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. How does David anticipate Christ's teaching, that we are to love our enemies (2 Sam. 1:17-27)?
2. Read 1 Samuel 17. What is David most concerned to promote in his battle against Goliath? What qualities does he display that indicate he will be a fit king for Israel?
3. According to Dr. Sproul, David is like which English literary character?
4. Fill in the blanks: Although David was a great and mighty \_\_\_\_\_, he also had the heart of a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_ as seen in his composition of song and verse. David was also called a man after \_\_\_\_\_ own heart.
5. What book of the Bible contains a large number of David's own written compositions?
6. List the facts that Dr. Sproul gives proving David was the supreme symbol of kingship in the Old Testament.
7. Who was the most well known prophet who prophesied during the days of David (2 Sam. 7:1-3)?
8. What is the key difference between David and Saul, according to the lecture?
9. How could David be called a man after God's own heart if he was guilty of murder and adultery?

## DISCUSSION

1. David loved his enemy Saul and grieved his death. Do you find it hard to love those who hate you? What can you do to show love towards those specific individuals who are causing you difficulty?

2. When Nathan told his parable, David quickly pointed out the sin of another person before he noticed his own. Are we prone to take more notice of the sins of others than we are of our own? How can we be sure to first take the log out of our own eye before we take the speck out of the eye of another person (Luke 6:41-42)?
3. Read through Psalm 51 and discuss how we can appropriate it for use in our own repentance.

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bergen, Robert. *1, 2 Samuel*

Davis, Dale Ralph. *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*

Davis, Dale Ralph. *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*

# Solomon and the Temple

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The kingdom of Israel and the house of David reached their greatest heights during the reign of Solomon. After securing his throne, Solomon secured his place in history as the wisest man that ever lived. His building projects were numerous, his treasury was massive, and the temple he built was unprecedented. Yet at the pinnacle of his wisdom and power, Solomon allowed his heart to drift away from the Lord. He chose to be devoted to his numerous foreign wives and their gods, rather than the God of his father David. The consequences for the kingdom were disastrous. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the rise and fall of King Solomon.

## SCRIPTURE READING

1 Kings 1-11

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the characteristics of Israel's golden age under David and Solomon.
2. To trace the impact of prosperity, intermarriage, and idolatry on the heart of Solomon.
3. To link the decline of pure worship in Solomon's reign with the division and collapse of the United kingdom of Israel.

## QUOTATIONS

*Solomon's covenant with God illustrates the primacy of each individual's relationship to the Lord. Certainly the Bible teaches that God makes covenants with groups like Israel*

*and the church, but it specifically teaches that the Lord also desires communion with individuals. Those who seek God's presence and help can indeed receive the wisdom they need to do God's will and serve God's people.*

—Paul House

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The kingdom of Israel was in its golden age under David, a tarnished era under Solomon, and an age of rust under the rest of the kings.
- B. David's son Adonijah assumed he would inherit the throne and made himself king while David was still alive.
  1. Adonijah secures the support of Joab, the army commander, and other former supporters of David, to make his claim on the throne.
  2. David had already sworn the throne to Bathsheba's son, Solomon.
  3. David lends his support to Solomon as the heir to the throne, and the people of Jerusalem respond with joy.
- C. David commissions Solomon as king urging him to be obedient to the law of God and insure the Davidic line of monarchs.
- D. "Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem. The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD. Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places" (1 Kings 3:1-3).
  - This is ominous foreshadowing of the descent of Solomon and the nation into religious syncretism.
- E. The name of Solomon is inextricably linked to profound wisdom and insight.
  1. According to Scripture, he is declared to be the wisest man who ever lived.
  2. He is traditionally the author of the Song of Solomon, many proverbs, and a portion of the Psalms.
  3. Aristotle declared, "In the brain of the wisest of men, always resides the corner of the fool."

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- F. Scripture truthfully records the good and evil dimensions of each saint's character.
1. Solomon demonstrated a deep devotion to the things of God at the beginning of his reign.
  2. Solomon exceeded the administrative and construction glories of his father David.
  3. Solomon strengthened the treasuries, initiated ambitious public works and building projects, and empowered the military.
  4. All of Solomon's great accomplishments are tarnished by his descent into idolatry.
- G. The Lord comes to Solomon and asks what he wants from the hand of God.
1. Solomon humbly admits his youth and inadequacy and asks for wisdom to govern God's great people.
  2. Solomon was a young man who had married Pharaoh's daughter in order to cement the political relationship between Israel and Egypt.
  3. Although he was worshipping at pagan altars and had married a foreigner, Solomon is still humble enough to ask God for wisdom.
- H. The Lord grants Solomon the great wisdom he requests and the riches and honor that he does not request.
- The Queen of Sheba came to witness the wisdom and splendor of Solomon because he was internationally known for his insight.
- I. The honor fell to Solomon of fulfilling his father's dream of building a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem.
- A treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre, was crafted to secure building supplies from Lebanon.
- J. Solomon demonstrates his great devotion and piety before the Lord upon the completion of the temple at the dedication ceremony.
- K. Solomon's fade from glory begins with his multiple marriages.
1. He violates the law of God by marrying foreign women.
  2. His multiple pagan wives turn his heart away from devotion to God and turn it towards idolatry.

3. He builds several pagan altars and worships many pagan gods.
- L. The Lord judges Solomon by tearing the kingdom away from him and giving it to his servant.
- M. Solomon instituted the *corvée* amidst his massive building projects.
1. *Corvée* is slave labor that Solomon imposed to complete his building projects.
  2. This imposition of labor on the people alienate them from their once unequivocal support for the house of David.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Right before David's death, which of his sons claimed the throne of David without his approval, and who sided with this son (1 Kings 1:5–10)? Who does David appoint as his successor, and who supports this son (vv. 28–53)?
2. What is the condition for having a son of David and Solomon on the throne of Israel and not in exile (1 Kings 2:1–4)?
3. Solomon is considered traditionally the author or contributor of which books of the Bible?
4. Summarize the accomplishments of Solomon, king of all Israel (2 Chronicles 1:14–17; 8)? Why was God pleased to bless Solomon (1:7–13)?
5. How long did Solomon spend building the temple (1 Kings 6:38)? How long did he spend building his own palace (7:1)? What does this difference say about his priorities? According to Dr. Sproul, what does 1 Kings 3:1–3 add to this understanding of his priorities, and what does it foreshadow?
6. What violations of the Law lead to the decline of Solomon's glory (1 Kings 11:1–8)? What does God do in response to Solomon's disobedience (vv. 9–43)?
7. What foolish decision did Solomon make that alienated the people of Israel from the Davidic king (1 Kings 5:13–18; 12:1–4)?

## DISCUSSION

1. Consider Solomon's life and discuss this question: Does a good decision made today guarantee a good decision will be made tomorrow? How can we be sure that we are making decisions according to the wisdom of the Lord?



2. Solomon seemed to have been concerned more for his own glory than for the kingdom of God. What are some of the ways that we manifest a love for our own kingdoms over and above God's kingdom? How can we encourage one another to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33)?
3. We may not be tempted to worship other gods, but today we are all prone to worshipping money, power, fame, sex, and more. What tempts you to turn your devotion away from God and unto idolatry?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Davis, Dale Ralph. *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*  
House, Paul. *1, 2 Kings*

# The Divided Kingdom

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The glorious and grand reigns of David and Solomon quickly faded during the reigns of succeeding kings. During the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, a split occurred between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom from which Israel never recovered. The subsequent history of the divided kingdom is a gradual descent into idolatry, defeat, and national destruction. Rejecting all the warnings of God's prophets, both kingdoms were eventually conquered by foreign nations and the inhabitants taken out of their homeland into exile. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the history of the divided kingdom.

## SCRIPTURE READING

1 Kings 11–2 Kings

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the causes of the division of the nation of Israel.
2. To identify the significance of Jeroboam's idolatrous leadership.
3. To trace the subsequent histories of the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.

## QUOTATIONS

*The writer of Kings was concerned to demonstrate the historical reality of God's faithfulness to his promises to David. He presents an unbroken dynasty maintained in Judah through about three and a half centuries. The book ends on this note of hope, that*

*even during the Exile and under foreign domination, divine favor still attended David's descendants. The gospel writers are concerned to trace the Davidic ancestry of Jesus and his rightful claim to the title "son of David," heir to the kingdom that God would erect as a consequence of his promises to David.*

—Raymond Dillard & Tremper Longman

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The glories of the reigns of David and Solomon were quickly reduced to dust during the reigns of subsequent kings.
- B. Jeroboam was chosen by God to lead the northern Israelites away from the reign of the house of David.
  - Jeroboam was in charge of Solomon's forced labor corps.
- C. Ahijah the prophet meets Jeroboam and gives him the Word of the Lord through an object lesson.
  1. Old Testament prophets often performed a concrete action to portray an impending action by God.
  2. Ahijah the prophet tore his garment into twelve pieces and gave ten pieces to Jeroboam as a symbol of the ten tribes he was to rule over.
  3. Because of God's love for David and His promise of an enduring dynasty, the house of David was left one tribe over which to rule.
- D. The nation of Israel was divided into two parts.
  1. The northern kingdom was called the kingdom of Israel with its capital at Samaria.
  2. The southern kingdom was called the kingdom of Judah with its capital at Jerusalem.
- E. Rehoboam succeeded his father, Solomon, as king.
  1. Jeroboam led the northern tribes in a request for Rehoboam to lessen the forced labor requirements on the people.
  2. The king of God's people was never to be autonomous and oppress the people. He was to be subject to Yahweh and the king's law.
  3. The history of Israel's monarchy is of one monarch after another arrogating unlawful authority for themselves.

4. Rehoboam rejected the request of Jeroboam and the people and promises a *more* oppressive reign than that of his father.
  5. The northern tribes rebelled against Rehoboam's rule and make Jeroboam their king.
- F. Jeroboam ruled over the northern kingdom of Israel, and Rehoboam and the house of David retained authority over the southern kingdom of Judah.
- Jeroboam establishes two pagan shrines with golden calves and leads the people into idolatry.
- G. After the division, the northern kingdom lasted approximately 200 years.
1. There were twenty kings with nine different dynasties during the northern kingdom's history.
  2. The house of Omri was one of the most significant dynasties because they established a rival capital at Samaria.
  3. Omri was a brilliant administrator, but also exceedingly wicked in leading Israel deeper into idolatry.
- H. Ahab was one of the most significant and evil kings in the line of Omri.
1. Ahab's wife Jezebel was known for her wickedness and determination to convert Israel to the worship of pagan gods.
  2. God raised up a line of prophets, spearheaded by Elijah, to confront the evil in the northern kingdom.
- I. The southern kingdom maintained some stability with some godly kings and occasional reforms.
- The southern kingdom lasted 350 years with twenty kings from the one dynasty of the house of David.
- J. In 722 BC the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrian army, and the people were taken away into exile.
- K. In 586–587 BC the southern kingdom fell to the Babylonian army, and the people were taken away into exile.
- L. Defeat and darkness falls upon the people of God in exile.

- M. Amos prophesied regarding the “booth of David” which had fallen, but predicted that one day it would be restored.
- The greatest Son of David would one day come to claim his throne and his kingdom would last forever.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. What object lesson did the prophet Ahijah perform for Jeroboam and what did it mean (1 Kings 11:26–40)? Were such object lessons a common way for the prophets to communicate their messages?
2. What motivated the ten northern tribes of Israel to rebel against the Davidic king (1 Kings 12:1–24)?
3. To whom was the king of God’s people supposed to subject himself (Deut. 17:14–20)? Would Rehoboam’s arrogance (1 Kings 12:1–15) become typical or atypical of the kings of God’s people under the old covenant?
4. Fill in the blanks: Dr. Sproul states, that after Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into two parts. The northern kingdom of \_\_\_\_\_ lasted \_\_\_\_\_ years after the division and its capital was \_\_\_\_\_. The southern kingdom of \_\_\_\_\_ lasted \_\_\_\_\_ after the division and its capital was \_\_\_\_\_.
5. What did Jeroboam do that would become indicative of all of the kings of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12:25–33)?
6. According to Dr. Sproul, what were the high points and low points of Omri’s reign in the northern kingdom (1 Kings 16:21–28)?
7. Who were Ahab and Jezebel, and who was raised up to prophesy against them?
8. What empire conquered the northern kingdom and exiled its people? In what year did this happen? What empire conquered the southern kingdom and exiled its people? In what year did this happen?
9. Does Amos 9:11–15 view exile as the last word for God’s people? What does this prophecy signify, according to Dr. Sproul?

## DISCUSSION

1. Is it a new thing for young people to ignore the wisdom of their elders (1 Kings 12:1-15)? If you are an older person, how can you form relationships with young people in your church in order that they might be willing to receive your wisdom? If you are a younger person, how can you best seek the wisdom of an older brother or sister in Christ?
2. Do you think God still judges nations with decline and even exile as He did with Israel and Judah? Is it possible to know for sure when He does this today? Why or why not?
3. Are you ever tempted to doubt that God will keep His promises? How does God's faithfulness to David's line (Amos 9:11-15) encourage you to trust Him at His Word?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Davis, Dale Ralph. *2 Kings: The Power and Fury*  
House, Paul. *1, 2 Kings*

# Elijah

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The career of Elijah is one of the most dramatic and significant among the prophets in Scripture. His life is characterized by miracles, wonders, memorable showdowns with the enemy, and deep attachment to the God he served. He was sent by God to northern Israel during the dark days of the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. His message of truth, and call to worship the true God alone, would be a message repeated for ages to come. When sin and idolatry abound in any land, the message of Elijah needs to be heard in every generation. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the remarkable life and ministry of Elijah.

## SCRIPTURE READING

1 Kings 17–2 Kings 13

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the timeless message of the prophet Elijah.
2. To define the multiple roles prophets played during the years of the divided kingdom.
3. To highlight the major events in the life of the prophet Elijah.

## QUOTATIONS

*For the dramatic suddenness, the exceeding boldness, and the amazing character of it, there are few of a like nature in sacred history. Unannounced and unattended, a plain man, dressed in humble garb, appeared before Israel's apostate king as the messenger*

*of Jehovah and the herald of dire judgment. No one in the court would know much, if anything, with the keys of heaven in his hand. Such are often the witnesses to His truth which God has employed. At His bidding they come and go: not from the ranks of the influential and learned do they issue. They are not the products of this world system, nor does the world place any laurels on their brow.*

—A.W. Pink

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The last prophecy of the Old Testament refers to the prophet Elijah and the day of the Lord.
  1. “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction” (Malachi 4:4–6).
  2. The Lord promises to send his prophet Elijah before the great day of the Lord.
  3. Modern Jews leave a chair empty during the celebration of the Passover for the coming of Elijah.
  4. John the Baptist denied that he was Elijah.
  5. Jesus identified John the Baptist with the prophecy from Malachi in Matthew 11:14 and 17:10–12.
  6. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah.
- B. Elijah ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire and did not die.
  1. He is anticipated as the herald of the coming Messiah because he did not die.
  2. This is the role that John the Baptist plays in the spirit of Elijah’s ministry.
  3. Elijah appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration.
  4. Moses personified the Old Testament law and Elijah personified the Old Testament prophet.
- C. The prophetic office emerges in importance with the career of Elijah.
  - Elijah is sent by God to northern Israel during the dark days of the wicked King Ahab.



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- D. Many Christians mistake prophets as little more than fortunetellers or predictors of the future.
1. The primary task of the prophets was to be a “forth-teller.”
  2. The prophets spoke the absolute truth to the king and the people.
  3. The prophets were often lonely, despised, brutalized, persecuted, and murdered because of their unique calling as the conscience of the people.
  4. The prophets also prosecuted the nation for violating the covenant made at Sinai and warned of the impending punishment.
- E. Elijah was described by King Ahab as the “troubler of Israel.”
- God brings judgment for Ahab’s sins by answering Elijah’s prayer and imposing a severe three-year drought on the land.
- F. Elijah challenges Ahab and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18.
1. Elijah reassigns the blame for Israel’s trouble on Ahab and his idol worship.
  2. Ahab’s wicked queen, Jezebel, had been importing priests of Baal into the land of Israel.
  3. Elijah challenges the power of Baal and his priests on Mount Carmel asking how long they would waver between two faiths.
  4. Elijah challenged the religious syncretism of Israel.
  5. Elijah was the only prophet of God, and 450 priests of Baal accepted Elijah’s challenge on Mount Carmel.
  6. The priests of Baal cry out in vain for their god to bring fire down from heaven.
  7. Elijah rebuilds the altar of God, summons the people, and three times orders the altar soaked with water.
  8. He prays that the Lord will show Himself to be God. Instantly fire from heaven descends and consumes the wood, stones, and sacrifice.
  9. The people fall on their faces and cry out, “The LORD, he *is* God; the LORD, he *is* God” (1 Kings 18:39).
- G. Miracles surround the life of Elijah, including confronting Ahab and raising a child from the dead.

1. Elijah and John the Baptist both called the king and the people to repent and follow the law of God.
  2. The church is called to utter prophetic criticism when the nation strays from the law of God.
- H. When sin and idolatry abound in any land, the message of Elijah needs to be heard in every generation.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Which prophet's ministry marked the emergence of the prophetic office in all its significance in Israel?
2. According to Dr. Sproul, what was the primary task of the prophet? Were prophets in ancient Israel more likely to be beloved or hated?
3. According to Ahab, who was the "troubler of Israel?" Who was the "troubler," according to Elijah (1 Kings 18:17-19)?
4. Summarize Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40). Why do you think the prophet uses so much water in preparation of his sacrifice?
5. Why is Elijah significant in Malachi 4:4-6? How is this prophecy fulfilled in the lifetime of Jesus (Matt. 17:1-13; Luke 1:5-17)?
6. In the transfiguration, what did Moses personify? What did Elijah personify? Why would God have these two figures appear with Jesus at that time?
7. According to Dr. Sproul, how does the church serve a prophetic role today?

## DISCUSSION

1. According to Hebrews 1:1-4, should we expect prophets like Elijah to be ministering today? Why or why not?
2. God granted Elijah a great victory over the prophets of Baal, even though, humanly speaking, he was outnumbered. Has the Lord ever granted you success against overwhelming odds? What were the circumstances?
3. In what practical ways can your local church serve your local community as a prophet in warning of God's judgment and preaching His grace?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Davis, Dale Ralph. *2 Kings: The Power and Fury*  
House, Paul. *1, 2 Kings*  
Pink, A.W. *Elijah*

# Isaiah

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Isaiah was the most cultured and sophisticated of all the prophets. He played the role of an ambassador, had access to the royal court, and was an advisor to four different kings of Judah. Yet this prophet is best known as the Prophet of the Redeemer for his many vivid descriptions of the coming Messiah. No other prophet speaks as frequently and clearly about the coming King, Servant, and Conqueror. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the life and words of the prophet Isaiah.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the difference between the major and minor prophets.
2. To describe the life and mission of the prophet Isaiah.
3. To identify the messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah.

## QUOTATIONS

*There is a grandeur about Isaiah not found elsewhere—even in the most majestic of the rest of Scripture; a majesty full of glory and of solemnity, plain alike in the revelation vouchsafed to him and the language in which he was inspired to express it. But with the grandeur went a stern resoluteness, that if the glory does not win us to the life of obedience, if visions of the coming King, the sin-bearing Servant and the liberating*

*Anointed Conqueror will not suffice, then maybe the unmistakably horrible rewards of disobedience will drive our wayward hearts to tremble at the word of the Lord.*

—J. Alec Motyer

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The canonical prophets are those prophets whose writings are included in the canon of Scripture.
- B. The Old Testament includes the writings of the major prophets and the minor prophets.
  1. The books of the major prophets are longer than those of the minor prophets.
  2. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel comprise the major prophets and all the other prophetic books comprise the minor prophets.
- C. Most of the prophets ministered during the eighth and seventh centuries BC.
  - The judgment of God was imminent upon the people during these centuries.
- D. Isaiah was the most cultured and sophisticated of all the prophets.
  1. Isaiah played the role of an ambassador, had access to the royal court, and was an advisor to four different kings of Judah.
  2. Isaiah received his call to the prophetic office in approximately 740 BC, which is the same year that the city of Rome was probably founded.
- E. Isaiah is commissioned in the sixth chapter of his book.
- F. “And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people: “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.” Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed’” (Isa. 6:9–10).
- G. Isaiah is given the mission to speak the truth, but he is told at the beginning of his ministry that the people will not listen and the nation will be destroyed.
- H. “Then I said, ‘How long, O LORD?’ And he said: ‘Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land’” (Isa. 6:11–12).
  1. Isaiah is called to pronounce judgment on the people, but his book is full of hope and promises of restoration for the people of God.

2. God promises to preserve a remnant or holy seed to partake of His redemption.
  3. Isaiah is best known as the Prophet of the Redeemer.
  4. Isaiah is the most frequently quoted prophet.
  5. The Messiah is most clearly pictured in the book of Isaiah.
- I. Isaiah gives King Ahaz the opportunity to receive a sign from the Lord, but the King refuses.
1. The Lord gives a sign anyway (Isa. 7:10–14).
  2. “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).
- J. Isaiah gives another messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9:2.
1. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.”
  2. Into a climate of doom God brings light and hope.
  3. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this” (Isa. 9:6–7).
  4. During a time of national crisis and defeat the Lord promises to raise up a son of David to establish universal, lasting peace.
- K. Isaiah also prophesies of the Messiah in 11:1–5.
1. The Messiah will reign in righteousness and equity.
  2. The son of David to come will uproot the wicked and restore justice.
  3. The results of the Messiah’s reign are found in 11:6–9.
  4. This passage is written in poetic language yet forecasts the cosmic deliverance of His people and the entire earth.

5. This cosmic redemption will be accomplished by the one who is to come in justice.
- L. The grand redemption accomplished by the Messiah is described in Isaiah 61.
1. Jesus retired to the wilderness to prepare for His mission and ministry.
  2. He returned and entered the synagogue and read the text from Isaiah 61.
  3. Rabbis sat down to teach. After Jesus read the text he sat down and said, “This day these words are fulfilled in your midst” (Luke 4:21).
  4. “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me” (Isa. 61:1a).
  5. The word *Messiah* means “Anointed One” and translated into Greek the word becomes *Christos* or, “the Christ.”
  6. Isaiah promises healing for the brokenhearted, liberation for the captives, and a restoration of the ruins.
  7. God is not finished with Jerusalem and promises its restoration.
  8. When John the Baptist asks Jesus if He is the Messiah, Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 to highlight the fulfillment of the prophecy.
- M. Isaiah 53 prophecies the central work of the Messiah.
1. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:4–5).
  2. Isaiah provides an almost eyewitness account of the crucifixion.
  3. This prophecy of the servant who will bear the sins of His people, was fulfilled in every detail by Christ.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. What is the difference between the major prophets and the minor prophets? Who are the four major prophets whose writings are contained in the Bible?
2. During what centuries did most of the canonical prophets minister?

3. Isaiah is perhaps the most well known of all the canonical prophets. What kind of message was he called to preach to the people of Judah (Isa. 6:9–12)? What were the prospects for its success among the people?
4. Fill in the blanks: Isaiah is best known as the Prophet of the \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ is most clearly pictured in Isaiah.
5. What hope does Isaiah give throughout his book, even as he is prophesying judgment (Isa. 10:20)?
6. Dr. Sproul discusses the messianic prophecies found in Isaiah 7:10–14; 9:1–7; and 11. What do these words from the prophet tell us about the Messiah and His ministry?
7. Which portion of the book of Isaiah does Jesus read at the beginning of His ministry in Luke 4:16–21? Describe the scope of God’s redemptive purpose in the chapter that Jesus reads from in Isaiah.
8. Where do we find the prophecy of the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah? How does Jesus fulfill this prophecy (see 1 Peter 2:21–25)?

## DISCUSSION

1. According to Isaiah, the entire nation was to suffer the effects of God’s judgment, with even the righteous people enduring some of the tribulation because they lived among the others. Should they have expected to escape suffering? Should we expect to escape suffering? What hope do we cling to as we suffer for the Lord’s sake?
2. What steps can we take to better understand the poetic imagery that is found throughout the prophetic books?
3. Isaiah 65:17–25 describes the new heavens and earth that will mark the consummation of God’s salvation. What are you most looking forward to in this coming eternal state?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah*  
Sproul, R.C. *The Holiness of God*, pp. 22–48



# Jeremiah

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The story of Jeremiah is one of courage, faithfulness, and devotion. Defying the popular image of the prophet as a mean and abrasive demagogue, Jeremiah's heart broke with grief as he delivered the message of God's judgment. Appropriately he has earned the nickname of the Weeping Prophet. Enduring the scornful attacks of the false prophets and his own friends, Jeremiah faithfully delivered the Word of the Lord as his nation collapsed around him. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the life and words of the prophet Jeremiah.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Jeremiah–Lamentations

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To summarize the life and call of the prophet Jeremiah.
2. To summarize Jeremiah's message of repentance.
3. To identify the enemies and attacks against Jeremiah's mission.

## QUOTATIONS

*It has often been remarked that Jeremiah's life was finally a failure. He was alone for most of his ministry. It seemed that no one gave any heed to his words. He was dragged off finally to live his last days in exile against his own will. He was a failure as the world judges human achievement. But a more balanced assessment of him would be that his*

*very words of judgment saved Israel's faith from disintegration, and his words of hope finally helped his people to gain hope in God's future for them.*

—J.A. Thompson

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The story of Jeremiah is one of courage, faithfulness, and devotion.
  1. Jeremiah was given the unenviable task of announcing God's judgment on His people and the city of Jerusalem.
  2. The nickname of Jeremiah is "The Weeping Prophet."
  3. Jeremiah wept over the destruction coming against his nation.
- B. Jeremiah was approximately 20 years old when he was called by God to be a prophet.
  1. Jeremiah was the last prophet of Judah before the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people to Babylon.
  2. "Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations'" (Jer. 1:4-5).
  3. Jeremiah's ministry lasted approximately fifty years.
  4. Jeremiah was from the tribe of Benjamin and was appointed to be a prophet to the nations.
  5. Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin and was appointed to be an apostle to the nations.
- C. "Then I said, 'Ah, LORD God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.'" (Jer. 1:6).
  - Jeremiah, like Moses, was a reluctant prophet.
- D. "But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, I am only a youth; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.' Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant'" (Jer. 1:7-10).

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- E. Jeremiah's mission was similar to Isaiah's in bringing a message of judgment and destruction against the people of God.
1. The message of both prophets was that God was going to pull down so that He could build, plant, and restore.
  2. Jeremiah was called particularly to the priests and religious guilds of his day more than the royal court.
- F. "The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 'Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD'" (Jer. 7:1-4).
1. One of the roles of the Old Testament prophet was to be a reformer.
  2. The prophets were innovative revolutionaries.
  3. Old Testament worship degenerated into ritualism, formalism, and syncretism.
  4. Repetition in Hebrew literature indicates emphasis.
  5. Jeremiah rebukes the people for putting their trust in the temple building and not in the Lord.
  6. Jeremiah invites the people to go to Shiloh and view the destroyed site at which the sanctuary once resided.
  7. Jerusalem will look like Shiloh after the judgment of God.
  8. There was no more incendiary message Jeremiah could have delivered to the priests than the destruction of the temple.
- G. "O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me" (Jer. 20:7a).
1. If God deceives a man, then that man is deceived.
  2. Jeremiah realizes he cannot fight God. God has overwhelmed him, and yet he suffers at the hands of his people.

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3. “For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, ‘Violence and destruction!’ For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long” (Jer. 20:8).
  4. Every single day Jeremiah endured the reproach and the derision of his own people.
- H. “If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot” (Jer. 20:9).
1. The threat and abuse from his people was often too much for Jeremiah, and he wanted to abrogate his role as a prophet.
  2. Yet the Word of the Lord burned within him and he had to speak the Lord’s message to the people.
  3. “Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers. Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!” (Jer. 20:13–14).
  4. Jeremiah pours his heart out before God as he struggles with his calling as a prophet.
- I. “Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right. Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the LORD” (Jer. 23:9–11).
1. The false prophets hindered and opposed the message of Jeremiah.
  2. Jeremiah cried out for God to address his cause and crush his enemies.
- J. “I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully” (Jer. 23:25–28a).
- God promises to deal with the false prophets and calls Jeremiah to continue to faithfully preach the Word.

- K. Jeremiah prophesied of the coming Messiah and new covenant.
- “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: The LORD is our righteousness.” (Jer. 23:5–6).
- L. Jeremiah prophesied of the coming judgment, but also of the coming restoration.
1. He bought a field to symbolize his hope and confidence that God’s people would be restored to the land after the exile.
  2. God would raise Jerusalem again out of the ashes.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the account of Jeremiah’s call in Jeremiah 1:4–10 and the account of Moses’ call in Exodus 4:10–17. How do the responses of Moses and Jeremiah to God’s call resemble each other?
2. Jeremiah prophesied from 626 BC until a little after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Read the oracle of coming judgment in Jeremiah 4. What words does Jeremiah use in verse 23 to describe the coming judgment? How do these words evoke the first chapter of Genesis? What is Jeremiah communicating to the people of Judah with this language, and how is the coming destruction of Jerusalem comparable to a return to the unformed state of creation?
3. According to Jeremiah 9:12–14, why is God bringing judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem?
4. Read the parable of the potter in Jeremiah 18:1–12 (compare Jer. 26:2–3), and then read Jonah 3:4–10. How is the principle found in verses 7–10 of Jeremiah’s parable illustrated in the book of Jonah?
5. Compare Jeremiah 23:5–6 with Isaiah 11:1–16. What are the similarities between the two prophecies? About whom do both prophets speak?
6. Read the prophecy of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34. When will God establish the new covenant according to Jeremiah? Why is God going to establish a new covenant? How does Jeremiah emphasize discontinuity between the old and new covenants in verse 32? How does he emphasize both continuity and discontinuity in verse 33? What is the central promise of the new covenant in verse 34?

## DISCUSSION

1. How is the new covenant not like the old covenant? How is it *like* the old covenant? How do Hebrews 7 and 8 help us understand Christ's relationship to the new covenant?
2. In his book *The Christ of the Prophets*, O. Palmer Robertson argues that the prophetic oracles of judgment were primarily intended to produce repentance. He claims that the prophetic word "does not primarily involve prediction regarding future events" (p. 26). With Jeremiah's parable of the potter in mind (cf. Jer. 18:1-12), evaluate Robertson's premise.
3. Jeremiah 29 is a letter written by the prophet to the Judeans who had been sent away from their homeland into exile in 597 BC. In verse 7, Jeremiah instructs the exiles to seek the peace of Babylon and to pray for it as well. As Christians, we too are in one sense away from our homeland (Phil. 3:20) living as pilgrims in various earthly nations. How does Jeremiah's letter to the exiles inform us in our own earthly pilgrimage?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Kidner, Derek. *The Message of Jeremiah*  
Thompson, J.A. *The Book of Jeremiah*

# The Exile

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The exile was the greatest crisis for the people of God during the Old Testament period. In the years before the exile multiple reformations and periods of spiritual renewal occurred in Judah followed by spiritual collapse and backsliding. Prophet after prophet came to the people warning them of the destruction to come, but consistent repentance in Judah was absent. As God withdrew His hand of protection from His people, the mighty empires of the ancient Near East trimmed down the land and people of Judah until complete destruction came in 586 BC. The exile seemed to be the end of the kingdom of God and the failure of God's covenant with the patriarchs. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the events leading to the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the exile.

## SCRIPTURE READING

1 and 2 Chronicles

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the geo-political significance of Palestine.
2. To assess Judah's military threats after the fall of Israel in 722 BC.
3. To identify the pattern of spiritual reformation and backsliding characteristics of Judah in the years before the exile.

## QUOTATIONS

*The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.*

—2 Chronicles 36:15–16

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The exile was the greatest crisis for the people of God during the Old Testament period.
  - Old Testament history is divided into the pre-exilic era, the exile, and the post-exilic era.
- B. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC.
- C. The southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BC.
- D. The years between 722 BC and 586 BC were years of great crisis in Palestine.
  1. Palestine was of enormous geo-political significance in the ancient world.
  2. Located between the edge of the Mediterranean Sea and the Fertile Crescent, Palestine served as a land bridge between the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.
  3. Israel and Judah were caught in the middle of the great campaigns among the larger empires of the Syrians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians.
- E. The collapse of the northern kingdom of Israel left Judah without a buffer zone against the raids of the Assyrians.
  - The defeat of the Syrians in the north left Judah without another ally.
- F. Sennacherib of Assyria raided towns in Judah and laid siege against Jerusalem as early as 705 BC.
  - God intervened for His people in response to their repentance and prevented the fall of Jerusalem to the Assyrians.
- G. Multiple reformations and periods of spiritual renewal occurred during these years in Judah, followed by spiritual collapse and backsliding.
  1. Hezekiah led a spiritual reformation, but also formed an alliance with the king of Babylon for military protection.



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2. The prophets condemned alliances with foreign nations because God was not being trusted to deliver His people, and the alliances with pagan nations led to pagan worship.
- H. Manasseh succeeded his father, Hezekiah, as king of Judah and became the most wicked king in the history of Judah.
1. He set up pagan images throughout the towns of Judah and within the temple of God itself.
  2. Manasseh was brought to repentance in his old age.
- I. Amon succeeded his father Manasseh as king of Judah and perpetuated his father's sins until his assassination.
- J. Josiah ascended to the throne of Judah in 637 BC and enacted the greatest period of reformation in the southern kingdom's history.
- K. "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. . . . And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left" (2 Kings 22:1-2).
1. Josiah ordered the rebuilding and repair of the temple which was damaged from several attacks against Jerusalem.
  2. A scroll was found in the temple which was probably a lost portion of the book of Deuteronomy.
- L. "When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, 'Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us'" (2 Kings 22:11-13).
1. The purity of worship was a focal point of Josiah's reformation.
  2. The loss of purity in morality is usually preceded by a loss of purity in worship.
- M. The Battle of Megiddo occurred in 608 BC.
1. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt was on a campaign towards the Euphrates River, but Josiah took his army out to meet him.

2. Josiah insisted on fighting the Egyptians and was killed.
  3. The prophet Jeremiah lamented the death of Josiah.
- N. Jehoahaz was supposed to reign after Josiah, but Pharaoh Neco deposes him and replaces him with King Jehoiakim.
- Jehoiakim continued the wickedness of Judah by even burning one of the prophetic scrolls of Jeremiah.
- O. The Battle of Carchemish occurred in 605 BC between the Babylonians and the Egyptians.
1. Nebuchadnezzar deported a portion of Judah's population as part of his victory in the area.
  2. Daniel and his companions were most likely part of this deportation.
- P. King Jehoiachin of Judah was deported to Babylon in 597 BC along with the nobles, craftsmen, and elite of Judah.
1. The poor and peasants were left in the land of Judah.
  2. The prophet Ezekiel was brought to Babylon in this deportation.
- Q. Zedekiah became the last king of Judah as a puppet king of the Babylonians.
1. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and his reign was terminated.
  2. Zedekiah's sons were murdered in front of him, he was blinded, and then he was deported to Babylon.
  3. The city of Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord were destroyed and left in ruins.
- R. The exile lasted from 586 BC to 536 BC.
1. The people were taken from their land and lived as captives in Babylon.
  2. The Persians soon defeated the Babylonians, and under a decree from King Cyrus approximately 50,000 Jews, were allowed to return and rebuild their country.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. Read 2 Kings 17:7–23. Summarize the author's explanation of the reason for Israel's judgment.

2. Read the descriptions of the Israelite kings in 1 Kings 15:26, 34; 16:25, 30; 22:52; and 2 Kings 3:2. How is this description similar to the description of the Israelites found throughout the book of Judges (See Judges 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). What does God do in response to the action described in the book of Judges? How is this judgment similar to the punishment that befell Israel at the time of the exile?
3. When Moses described the curses that would fall upon Israel if they broke the covenant, exile was listed among the judgments. Read Leviticus 26:33 and Deuteronomy 28:64. How is the judgment of exile described by Moses?
4. Read Ezekiel 37:1–14. What imagery does Ezekiel use to describe Israel in exile? What imagery does Ezekiel use to describe Israel's restoration from exile?
5. Read the record of Hezekiah's invitation in 2 Chronicles 30:1–31:1, which was written after 722 BC. According to verse 6, did any Israelites remain in the north after the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians? Read Luke 2:36. To what tribe is Anna said to belong? Is this a northern tribe or a southern tribe? Read Acts 26:7. What does Paul say here to Agrippa concerning the tribes of Israel? In light of all these texts, were the ten northern tribes of Israel completely lost in 722 BC?

## DISCUSSION

1. Most of the prophetic books of the Bible center around the events of Israel's exile and restoration. Some are pre-exilic prophets; some are exilic prophets; and some are post-exilic prophets. What does this fact reveal about the importance of the exile in the history of Israel?
2. The books of Chronicles were written after the exile to Israelites who were returning to the land or who had already returned to the land. The Chronicler's objective is to demonstrate continuity with the past. Given this, how do the genealogies in the first chapters of 1 Chronicles contribute to the author's objective? Would post-exilic Jews have considered these chapters as dry as many Christians today consider them to be? Explain.
3. The Old Testament occasionally describes the restoration of Israel from exile in terms of a new exodus (see Hos. 2:14–15; Isa. 10:24–26; 11:15–16; 41:18–19; 43:19–21; 44:3–4; Jer. 16:14–15; Ezek. 20:33–38). Do the gospels present Jesus as the one who leads the new exodus? If so, is there a sense in which the exile continued even after many Israelites returned from Babylon? How does Nehemiah 9:36, written after the return to the land, contribute to the discussion? Is there any sense in which Israel continues in exile after rejecting Jesus' claims?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Allen, Leslie. *1, 2 Chronicles*

Pratt, Richard. *1, 2 Chronicles*

# Ezekiel

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Ezekiel was one of the most significant prophets in Israel's history. God called him to prophesy as the people of God languished in defeat and apathy in Babylon. As the exiles struggled with the question of whether or not God had abandoned them, Ezekiel proclaimed a message of restoration. Their dry bones would live again and they would have a new life, a new breath, and a new response to his Word. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the uniqueness and power of the prophet Ezekiel.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Ezekiel

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To summarize the life and call of the prophet Ezekiel.
2. To describe Ezekiel's mission as a watchman to God's people.
3. To identify the significance of Ezekiel's message in the valley of dry bones.

## QUOTATIONS

*[Ezekiel's] prophetic experiences, symbolic actions, and oracular pronouncements derive from encounters with God that have affected his entire being but were all directly related to his ministry. What other prophets spoke of, Ezekiel suffers. He is a man totally possessed by the Spirit of Yahweh, called, equipped, and gripped by the hand of God. Ezekiel is a "sign, portent" (12:6, 11; 24:24, 27), carrying in his body the oracles he proclaims and redefining the adage, "The medium is the message." Furthermore, he is a*

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*profound theologian, exposing the delusions of his audience and reintroducing them to the God of Israel.*

—Daniel Block

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The question asked by the Judean exiles was, “How does one sing the praises of their God in a foreign land?”
  - 1. Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets to the people in exile.
  - 2. The exiles struggled with the question of whether or not God had abandoned them.
- B. The book of Ezekiel functions as a theodicy.
  - 1. A *theodicy* attempts to explain why God allows evil and problems in this world.
  - 2. Ezekiel was attempting to give a justification of the justice of God.
- C. Ezekiel carried the dual identity of prophet and priest.
  - 1. The priest encouraged the people in their worship services.
  - 2. The prophet rebuked the people for unrighteousness.
  - 3. Ezekiel was born into a priestly family, but at the age of thirty God consecrated him as a prophet.
- D. The opening vision of the book is a glorious description of the chariot-throne of God.
  - 1. The elements of the tabernacle represented heavenly realities.
  - 2. The chariot-throne vision is the outward manifestation of the throne of God.
  - 3. God addresses Ezekiel from the judgment throne and gives him a message of judgment.
- E. “‘But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.’ And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe” (Ezek. 2:8–10).
  - 1. This vision is characteristic of apocalyptic literature, which employs signs, symbols, and numbers to convey a divine message.

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2. Ezekiel is commanded to eat the scroll which is covered with a message of lamentation, mourning, and woe.
- F. “And he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.’ Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey” (Ezek. 3:1-3)
1. The irony of the scroll was that it was a message of judgment, but it tasted as sweet as honey.
  2. The Word of God, even its words of judgment, is sweet and excellent to the human soul.
- G. Ezekiel labors as a watchman for his people among the exiles as Jeremiah labors as a prophet in Jerusalem.
1. The purpose of Ezekiel’s mission was so that the Israelites would know that Yahweh was Lord.
  2. “That they may know that I am the LORD” occurs sixty times in the book of Ezekiel.
  3. This phrase is similar to the Psalmist’s call to “be still and know that I am God.”
  4. Both of these statements are a strong call to be silent and listen to the Word of God.
- H. In chapter 37, Ezekiel also offers his people hope of the restoration.
1. Ezekiel is transported to a valley full of dry bones.
  2. God asks his prophet if the bones can live and Ezekiel responds, “O Lord God, you know.”
  3. God commands Ezekiel to prophesy to the dry bones and gradually the bones come together, muscle covers the skeletons, and they are given skin.
  4. Ezekiel preaches to the wind and the wind gives the lifeless bodies breath.
  5. The valley of dry bones is now filled with living, breathing bodies and form a great army.
  6. The Lord declares the army to be the whole house of Israel.

- I. God is not going to leave His people in exile.
  1. They will have new life, new breath, and a new response to his Word.
  2. There will be an end to captivity and a regeneration of his people.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the following verses in Ezekiel: 6:14; 25:11, 17; 26:6; 28:23, 24, 26; 29:9, 16, 21; 30:8, 19, 26; 32:15; 33:29; 35:15; 36:38; 38:23. What is the common refrain in these verses? What does this indicate about Ezekiel's purposes in the writing of his book?
2. Chapters 8–10 of Ezekiel deal with abominations occurring in the Jerusalem temple in the years preceding the exile. What kind of abominable practices are occurring according to Ezekiel 8? How will God respond according to Ezekiel 9? What significant event does Ezekiel see in chapter 10?
3. Read Ezekiel's oracles of judgment against Judah and Israel in Ezekiel 16 and 23. What kind of imagery does Ezekiel use to describe the sins of the nation? What is the purpose of the graphic and shocking language he uses?
4. In Ezekiel's oracle of judgment against Tyre (26:1–28:19), there is a section (28:11–19) that some have seen as a veiled reference to the fall of Satan. What language in this oracle might give rise to such an interpretation? Could it be rather that the fall of the king of Tyre echoes the story of man's primeval fall in Eden? Why or why not?
5. In Ezekiel 40–48, the prophet sees a vision of a restored temple. There are some who believe that this is a prophecy of a literal temple that will be rebuilt at some point just before the Second Coming of Christ. Read Ezekiel 45:15, 17, and 20. What kind of sacrifices does Ezekiel describe in these verses as being part of the restored temple ritual? Can such sacrifices be instituted now, in light of what is taught in Hebrews 10:1–18?

## DISCUSSION

1. How do the four symbolic actions described in Ezekiel 4:1–5:17 illustrate the seriousness of sin?
2. The language of Ezekiel in chapters 16 and 23 is notoriously graphic. When, if ever, is such language appropriate in preaching today?
3. There are five main interpretations of the temple vision in Ezekiel 40–48.
  - The vision describes the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.



- The vision describes a literal temple in God's future kingdom.
- The vision is a prophetic reference to the church.
- The vision describes a restoration that was partially fulfilled immediately after the exile, but completely fulfilled in the church age or in a future millennium.
- The vision is apocalyptic literature describing general spiritual truths in highly symbolic language.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Block, Daniel. *The Book of Ezekiel* (2 vols.)

## 23

# Daniel

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Defeated and far from their homes, the people of God languished in their exile while in awe at the power of their enemies. Into their despair God sent the prophet Daniel and his companions. The stories and visions in the book of Daniel reminded the exiles that it was not Babylon, but God, who raises up and puts down kings and kingdoms. God had not abandoned or forgotten them, but rather He was still full of mercy and power. Daniel's encouraging message was that the future of the Israelites was in the hands of God and not the Babylonians'. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul explains the meaning and purpose of the book of Daniel.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Daniel

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the themes and original message of the book of Daniel.
2. To describe the historical background of the book of Daniel.
3. To discuss the role of Daniel at the court in ancient Babylon.

### QUOTATIONS

*The Bible . . . is not interested in presenting its readers with an abstract understanding of the nature of God. We have little in the Bible that resembles modern systematic theology; certainly there is no listing and description of his attributes. God reveals himself in relationship with his people. We can see this in the dominant metaphors of*

*God in the Bible. He is king, warrior, shepherd, husband, father, and mother, assuming that his people are his subjects, his soldiers, his sheep, his wife, his children. As we will see, the book of Daniel utilizes some of these metaphors of relationship in support of the overall theme of divine sovereignty; but here I wish to draw attention to the fact that his sovereignty is not described abstractly in this book, but in the midst of the historical process, in the nitty-gritty of life.*

—Tremper Longman III

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The lives of the Israelites that were deported to Babylon are reminiscent of the life of Joseph.
  - 1. Joseph lived faithful to God as an exile in Egypt.
  - 2. Joseph's gift to interpret dreams advanced his position in a foreign land, as Daniel's gift does the same for him in Babylon.
- B. King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream in chapter two that troubles him greatly.
  - 1. None of Babylon's wise men are able to interpret the dream.
  - 2. Daniel receives the content and meaning of the dream from God and proclaims it to the king.
  - 3. The king saw an image of a man made of metals in his dream.
  - 4. The image of the man is eventually smashed to pieces by a rock which grows into a great mountain and fills the earth.
  - 5. Each of the metals represent an earthly kingdom.
  - 6. The gold represents Babylon, the silver the Medo-Persian empire, the bronze the Greek empire, and the iron the Roman empire.
  - 7. The stone is the kingdom of God which will eventually destroy all earthly kingdoms and spread across the whole earth.
- C. Nebuchadnezzar erects a giant image in chapter 3 and demands everyone bow down before it in worship.
  - 1. Daniel's companions refuse to bow down and worship the image, and remain faithful to their God.
  - 2. Nebuchadnezzar threatens to throw them into a fiery furnace asking, "Who is the God who will deliver you from my hands?"

3. Nebuchadnezzar will find himself in the hands of their God in chapter 4.
- D. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship the image and are willing to die for their faith.
1. The king orders the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. The men who are commanded to throw the Israelites into the furnace, are consumed themselves.
  2. The king is shocked to see Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace with another person that looks like a “son of the gods.”
  3. This is most likely a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ who comes to the furnace before he goes to the cross.
  4. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are not burned, and neither do they even smell like smoke.
  5. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges their God as the true God.
- E. Nebuchadnezzar has another dream in chapter 4 which Daniel again interprets for him.
1. Because of his pride, the king is driven from his kingdom and lives as an animal in the wilderness for a time.
  2. Again Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the God of heaven.
- F. Nebuchadnezzar is followed by Belshazzar as king of Babylon.
1. Belshazzar is filled with pride and arrogance and holds a wild, orgiastic, and drunken feast.
  2. He uses the golden vessels from the temple in Jerusalem during his party.
- G. A hand appears against the wall of the palace and writes a coded message.
1. The message is: “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.”
  2. The Babylonian magicians cannot interpret the message.
- H. Daniel is summoned to interpret the message for the king.
1. Daniel interprets the message that God has weighed Belshazzar’s kingdom and has found it falling short.
  2. Belshazzar’s kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.

- I. “That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old” (Dan. 5:30–31).
- J. Historians state that the Persian army rerouted Babylon’s underground aqueduct and marched under the walls and conquered the city on the night of this drunken feast.
- K. The stories of Daniel declare that God raises and puts down kings and kingdoms.
- L. A message of the book of Daniel is that the future of the people of God is in the hands of God and not the Babylonians.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read chapter 1 of Daniel. In what ways did Daniel and his companions avoid compromise with the pagan Babylonian culture? How did they avoid compromise while respecting the civil authority?
2. Compare Nebuchadnezzar’s dream vision (2:26–45) and Daniel’s night vision (7:1–14). What are the similarities between the two visions? What is Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream? What does this dream communicate to Daniel and to God’s people?
3. How do the events of Daniel 2 reveal important differences between the living God of Israel and the false religion of the Babylonian magicians and astrologers (see especially verses 27–28)?
4. Many see a prophecy of the second coming of Christ in Daniel 7:13–14. John Calvin, on the other hand, argued that this prophecy looked forward to the ascension of Christ. In Daniel’s vision, is the one like a son of man coming toward heaven or earth? What evidence in the text itself supports your answer?
5. In Daniel 8:16 and 9:21, the angel Gabriel appears to Daniel to explain his visions. The only other place in Scripture where the angel Gabriel appears is in Luke 1:19 and 1:26 where he announces the births of John and Jesus. What does Gabriel’s appearance in Luke’s gospel suggest about the relationship of the birth of Jesus to the visions of Daniel?

## DISCUSSION

1. Read Romans 13 and Daniel 3. Is the disobedience of Daniel and his companions to the king of Babylon in conflict with the principle of Romans 13? If not, why not?

2. There are a number of places in the New Testament where Jesus speaks of “the coming of the Son of Man.” If Jesus is alluding to Daniel 7:13–14, how might this affect our interpretation of Matthew 10:23 and 16:27–28, for example? Do the parallels to Matthew 16:27–28 in Mark 8:38–9:1 and Luke 9:26–27 shed any light on the discussion?
3. Daniel 11:2–12:3 contains some of the most minutely detailed prophecies in the entire Old Testament, and 11:2–35, at least, have already been fulfilled to the last detail. Many critical scholars consider this to be evidence that 11:2–35 was written *after* the events it claims to foresee. What presuppositions cause critical scholars to come to this conclusion? What is it in their presuppositions that is flawed?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Duguid, Iain M. *Daniel*

Young, E.J. *Daniel*

# Ezra and Nehemiah

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah complete the historical record of the Old Testament. They recount the story of the exiles' return to their homeland in a climate of national celebration. Ezra led a group of exiles to rebuild the temple of the Lord and Nehemiah led a group to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Yet both leaders understood that reconstructing buildings would not restore the nation's fortunes or God's blessings. Spiritual reconstruction was just as important as building reconstruction. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the historical context of Ezra and Nehemiah.
2. To identify the unique missions of Ezra and Nehemiah.
3. To describe the physical and spiritual obstacles of Ezra and Nehemiah in completing their missions.

## QUOTATIONS

*[Ezra and Nehemiah were] aware of the special call and task of the returned exiles to serve the Lord in accordance with the prescriptions of his law. They were an elect group with a special mission to serve the Lord in the context of a pure religion. It is amazing that such a small, poor group of people could have become the foundation for*

*the development of one of the largest religions of modern times, Christianity. But in the religion of the Lord it is not numbers but purity of the heart that counts. This purity of heart is clearly discernible in the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah. Their piety, their devotion to God, and their sense of the living relationship with God stand out clearly.*

—F. Charles Fensham

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah complete the historical record of the Old Testament chronicling the return of the exiles.
- B. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were probably originally combined into one book.
- C. Both books were written in a climate of national celebration as the Jews returned to their land to restore the temple and the walls of Jerusalem.
  - The exiles rejoiced over the downfall of their conquerors, the Babylonians, and the issuing of the decree to return to the land.
- D. “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” (Ezra 1:1).
  - It is the sovereign work of the Lord that moves Cyrus to issue the decree.
- E. “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 his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem’” (Ezra 1:2–4).
  - Ezra leads a group of exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of the Lord that was destroyed by the Babylonians.
- F. “And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David, king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, ‘For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.’ And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid” (Ezra 3:10–11).
  - This is an occasion of uninhibited celebration among the people.



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- G. “But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away” (Ezra 3:12–13).
- The older generation wept because they remembered the glory of Solomon’s original temple and knew that the second temple could never compare with the first temple.
- H. The work was frequently interrupted and hindered due to harassment from neighboring peoples.
- In Ezra 6, the temple is finished and dedicated and the Passover is celebrated.
- I. Ezra spent much of his career admonishing the people to repentance and covenant loyalty.
- The people still adopted pagan practices even after the exile.
- J. The book of Nehemiah recounts the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.
- K. “The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah. ‘Now it happened in the month of Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the capital, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire”’” (Neh. 1:1–3).
1. Nehemiah enjoyed the prestigious position of cupbearer to the king, but is concerned regarding the plight of his people and the homeland.
  2. Nehemiah grieves over Jerusalem and is then moved to prayer.
- L. “And I said, ‘O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people for Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned”’ (Neh. 1:5–6).
1. Nehemiah does not ask God why he let the exile happen, but rather prays from a broken heart a prayer of adoration and confession.
  2. Nehemiah acknowledged that God was keeping the covenant when he executed His curses against the people for their sins.

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- M. Nehemiah first sought the permission of God and the gift of God to rectify Jerusalem's despair before he spoke to the king.
- N. The king notices the grief on Nehemiah's face as he serves as the royal cupbearer.
1. Nehemiah is afraid the king will think he is not appreciative of his position in the palace.
  2. Nehemiah tells the king that the city of his fathers lies in ruins.
- O. Nehemiah prays and asks the king if he can return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city.
- The king grants Nehemiah's request, and he leaves for his homeland.
- P. Nehemiah and his envoy are given a rite of safe passage through the empire back to Jerusalem.
1. Neighboring peoples threaten and harass the work of Nehemiah.
  2. The workers on the wall hold a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other hand.
- Q. Nehemiah launches a spiritual reformation to rebuild the nation and its loyalty to God.
- R. "And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign . . ." (Neh. 13:28–30a).
1. Nehemiah expelled a priest for breaking the covenant.
  2. Nehemiah knew that if the nation was to be revived then faithfulness and purity would have to characterize the priests and the people.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Ezra 1:1 concerning the return of the exiles from captivity. What does this verse teach us concerning the power and sovereignty of God?
2. Why is there both joy and sorrow upon the completion of the temple foundation in Ezra 3:12?
3. Read Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 13:26–27. Why were these post-exilic leaders so strict about intermarriage with pagans? What did Moses say in Deuteronomy 7:1–4?

4. How does Nehemiah 8:1–8 help us to understand the nature of biblical preaching?
5. Read Nehemiah 9:5–38. List some of the ways that God has manifested His grace to Israel throughout her history.

## DISCUSSION

1. Ezra commands the Israelites to put away pagan wives (see Ezra 10). How do we reconcile this with God's hatred of divorce?
2. In Nehemiah 9:2, we read that the Israelites confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers. Why would the Israelites confess the sins of their fathers? Does this practice remain a legitimate practice today? Why or why not?
3. The canonicity of the book of Esther has been discussed among Jews and Christians for millennia. Some argue that it should not be included in the canon because it contains no explicit reference to God, it is not cited by the New Testament, and it contains excessive violence. How should we respond to such arguments?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Fensham, Charles F. *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*  
Jobes, Karen H. *Esther*  
McConville, J.G. *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*

# Amos and Hosea

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The last twelve books of the Old Testament are known as the minor prophets. They are known as minor, not because they are less significant, but rather because they are shorter in length. The minor prophets delivered powerful messages from God to His wayward people. The prophet Amos focused primarily on the justice of God with less attention on God's mercy. The prophet Hosea focused primarily on the mercy of God with less attention on God's justice. Both of these prophets transmitted the Word of the Lord to the people and pleaded with them to return to the faith of their fathers. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the prophecies of Amos and Hosea.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the primary themes of the books of Hosea and Amos.
2. To identify the significance of the day of the Lord for Amos.
3. To describe the significance of the names of Hosea's children.

## QUOTATIONS

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

—Hebrews 1:1-2

*To be a prophet is both a distinction and an affliction.*

—Abraham J. Heschel

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).
  - 1. This verse has been frequently cited by those promoting social activism and reform.
  - 2. The prophet Amos was intensely concerned with righteousness in the civic and private arena.
  - 3. Amos focuses primarily on the justice of God with less attention on God’s mercy.
  - 4. Hosea focuses primarily on the mercy of God with less attention on God’s justice.
  - 5. Amos and Hosea were both prophets in the 8th century BC.
- B. “For three transgressions of (Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, etc.), I will not revoke the punishment” (Amos 1:3–2:3).
  - 1. Amos delivers a series of judgment prophecies against the evil nations surrounding Israel.
  - 2. Amos’ Israelite audience would cheer on the prophecies of judgment against its enemies.
- C. “For three transgressions of (Judah, Israel) and for four, I will not revoke the punishment” (Amos 2:4, 6).
  - 1. Amos’ Israelite audience would be caught off guard at the specter of judgment coming against them.
- D. “The day of the LORD” is a primary theme in the book of Amos.
  - 1. The people of Israel looked forward to the day of the Lord’s deliverance with great expectation.
  - 2. Zechariah looked forward to this day when he sang, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68).
  - 3. The day of the Lord would be a day of salvation for Israel.

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- E. “Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord: ‘In all the squares there shall be wailing, and in all the streets they shall say, “Alas! Alas!” They shall call the farmers to mourning and to wailing those who are skilled in lamentation, and in all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through your midst,’ says the Lord” (Amos 5:16–17).
- The Lord will not “pass over” the people in judgment as He did in Egypt, but now he will “pass through” them and bring judgment.
- F. “Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it” (Amos 5:18–19)?
1. This is a dark description of the day of the Lord full of judgment and not deliverance as the people anticipated.
  2. Amos also speaks of a remnant that will escape judgment and enjoy the favor of God.
  3. The day of the Lord will be joy to the righteous and sorrow for the unrighteous.
- G. The incarnation of Jesus in the New Testament is also described as a visitation.
1. Jesus’ ministry was a joy to those faithful to the covenant and sorrow for the disobedient.
  2. Jesus declared judgment against those who were not ready in their day of visitation.
- H. Amos from the southern kingdom incurs the anger and reproach of those in the northern kingdom.
1. “And Amaziah said to Amos, ‘O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom’” (Amos 7:12–13).
  2. Amos defends the call on his ministry.
  3. “Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, ‘I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel’”” (Amos 7:14–15).

4. The two types of prophets in Israel were the generic prophets for hire and those supernaturally called and gifted by God.
  5. Amos makes known that he has a supernatural call on his life.
- I. Amos receives several visions regarding Israel's coming judgment.
1. "And the LORD said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb line.' Then the LORD said, 'Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them'" (Amos 7:8).
  2. The prophets frequently used object lessons or strange behavior patterns to illustrate their prophecies.
- J. The central motif in the book of Amos is the need for social righteousness.
1. God is concerned about the immorality, social injustice, and religious apostasy practiced by His people.
  2. He despises their external religious activities because they are oppressing their neighbors.
  3. God laments the lack of justice in the courts at the gates.
- K. The prophet Hosea focuses more on the mercy and redeeming love of God.
- L. God commands Hosea to marry a prostitute as a dramatic prophecy for His people.
- M. "When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, 'Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD'" (Hos. 1:2).
- Hosea's marriage to a prostitute would symbolize the Lord's marriage with Israel.
- N. "So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the LORD said to him, 'Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel'" (Hos. 1:3-5).
- The name of Hosea's son prophecies of Israel's coming defeat.
- O. "She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, 'Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all'" (Hos. 1:6).

- The name of Hosea's daughter prophesies that the Lord will no longer have mercy on His rebellious people.
- P. "When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the LORD said, 'Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God'" (Hos. 1:8).
- The people God had redeemed from Egypt and drawn unto Himself are now declared no longer the people of God.
- Q. God commands Hosea to divorce Gomer in chapter two to symbolize God's divorce of His adulterous people.
- R. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' . . . And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. . . And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people;' and he shall say, 'You are my God'" (Hos. 2:14–16, 19–20, 23).
- S. God will restore His bride to Himself and call His people by His Name.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the oracles against Israel, Judah, and the nations in Amos 1:3–2:16. What are the similarities in these oracles? Are there any differences in the kinds of crimes for which each is punished?
2. Many ancient Near Eastern nations believed their gods to be local deities. What do the oracles against the nations in Amos 1–2 say about Israel's view of God? Is the God of Israel a local deity?
3. Read the oracle of judgment in Amos 4:1–13. What refrain is repeated over and over again in this oracle? What does this refrain indicate about God's purpose in sending judgments upon Israel? How has Israel's attitude resembled that of Pharaoh at the time of the exodus (see Exodus 7–12)?
4. The day of the Lord was, in the mind of the Israelites, the time when God would go into battle against His enemies and defeat them on behalf of Israel. Given this standard way of thinking, what is surprising about the way Amos speaks of the day of the Lord in 5:18–27?



5. Read Exodus 6:6–7 and then read Hosea 1:9. In light of the Exodus passage, why is Hosea 1:9 such a fearful prophecy?

## DISCUSSION

1. Amos uses striking language in 8:9 to describe the coming destruction of Israel by Assyria in 722 BC. Is the language here descriptive of a literal darkness, such as the darkness that fell upon Egypt just before the exodus? Is the language here figurative language symbolizing an “earth-shattering” judgment? Give reasons for your answer.
2. One of the main themes in the book of Amos is the mistreatment and oppression of the poor by the wealthy and powerful. Is such oppression and mistreatment a cause for God’s judgment today? Should this theme remain an aspect of the church’s preaching today? Why or why not?
3. Read the prophecy of restoration in Amos 9:11–15, and then read James’s reference to this prophecy at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:13–21. According to James what events have signaled the (at least initial) fulfillment of Amos’s prophecy? How do such events fulfill a prophecy concerning Israel’s restoration?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Boice, James Montgomery. *The Minor Prophets*

McComiskey, Thomas E. *The Minor Prophets*

Stuart, Douglas. *Hosea-Jonah*

# Joel, Micah, and Habakkuk

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The minor prophets wrote books shorter in length, but no less colorful or dynamic than those of the major prophets. Messages of judgment, encouragement, cursing, and blessing fill the pages of these divine messengers. Joel warned a rebellious people of an unstoppable invasion and spoke of the outpouring of the Spirit to come. Micah pleaded with the people to repent of their covenant violations and to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. Habakkuk queried a sovereign God as to why He allows misery to spread and the wicked to prosper. The messages of these minor prophets are just as significant for modern believers as they were for their original listeners. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the prophecies of Joel, Micah, and Habakkuk.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Joel, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To define the categories of major and minor prophets.
2. To identify the significance of the day of the Lord for the prophets.
3. To summarize the primary messages of Joel, Micah, and Habakkuk.

## QUOTATIONS

*Orthodoxy is correct belief. Orthopraxy is correct action. Through the prophets God calls the people of ancient Israel and Judah to a balance of right belief and action. This,*

*of course, remains the very balance that the New Covenant requires as well. What God wants of Israel and Judah is, in a general sense, the same as what he wants of us. The Prophets can serve constantly as reminders to us of God's determination to enforce his covenant. For those who obey the stipulations of the new covenant (loving God and loving one's neighbor), the final, eternal, result will be blessing, even though the results in this world are not guaranteed to be so encouraging. For those who disobey, the result can be only curse, regardless of how well one fares during life on earth.*

—Douglas Stuart

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The distinction between the minor and the major prophets is length and not significance.
  1. The major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) are longer in length than the minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).
  2. Both the major and minor prophets are of equal inspired importance.
- B. The “day of the Lord” is a popular motif in the book of Joel.
  1. “Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them” (Joel 2:1–3).
  2. Joel describes a scene of great suffering and cosmic upheaval.
- C. Joel issues a call for repentance to avert disaster:
  - “‘Yet even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster” (Joel 2:12–13).
- D. The Lord promises to bring a “latter rain,” restoration, and blessing if the people return to Him.

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- E. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes” (Joel 2:28–31).
1. This passage was significant for the early church on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit descended in tongues of fire and the church began to speak in other tongues.
  2. The believers were accused of drunkenness for such a strange behavior.
  3. The apostle Peter defended the manifestation of the Spirit on the believers by citing this passage from the book of Joel.
  4. The outpouring of the Spirit was part of the Lord’s promised restoration.
- F. Micah was an important minor prophet who prophesied of the coming redeemer.
1. “Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace” (Micah 5: 1–5a).
  2. Out of the small and insignificant village of Bethlehem will come the one whom God will anoint as king.
- G. Micah spoke simply and succinctly regarding the Lord’s wishes for His people:
- “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).
- H. Micah identifies the essential core of what God requires of His people.
- I. Man is called to do justly or to love righteousness.
1. Justice is not defined by judicial precedent or political expediency in Scripture.

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2. Justice is defined by righteousness in Scripture.
- J. Man is called to love mercy.
1. Another translation is “to love loyally.”
  2. This same word is often used to describe God’s faithful covenant love for His people.
  3. Micah declares that our relationships must be marked by loyalty, faithfulness, and mercy.
- K. Man is called to walk humbly with God.
1. Christians are called to live their entire lives *coram deo* or, “before the face of God.”
  2. We are to live in subjection to His sovereign authority.
- L. Habakkuk was another minor prophet who brought his burden before the Lord.
1. “O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you ‘Violence!’ and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise” (Hab. 1:2–3).
  2. Habakkuk asks the Lord why He allows the wicked to triumph and evil to fill the land.
  3. Habakkuk knows the Lord is too holy to look upon these calamities, yet He allows them to occur.
- M. “I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint” (Hab. 2:1).
- Habakkuk petitions God for a theodicy, that is, an explanation for why He allows evil, and he is determined to wait for the answer.
- N. “And the LORD answered me: ‘Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay’” (Hab. 2:2–3).
1. It is easy to become impatient and contentious with God when He delays fulfilling His promises.
  2. The Lord reassures Habakkuk that His Word will surely come to pass at the appointed time.

- O. “I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me” (Hab. 3:16a).
- Habakkuk trembles and is overwhelmed with awe as the Lord speaks to him.
- P. Habakkuk is reassured by the Lord’s promise that “the just will live by faith,” that is, the righteous will trust God’s promises.
1. “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:17–18).
  2. Habakkuk is moved to proclaim that though everything is lost and his circumstances grow more grim, he will praise the Lord and trust in Him.
  3. “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the LORD, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places” (Hab. 3:18–19a).

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Joel’s prophecy begins with a description of a locust plague (1:2–12). Commentators debate whether Joel is describing a literal locust plague or using figurative language to describe an invading human army. In your opinion, which view is best supported by the text and historical situation?
2. Read Numbers 11:29. Does Joel foresee the fulfillment of Moses’ wish in Joel 2:28–29? When is Joel’s prophecy fulfilled according to Acts 2:14–21?
3. Micah 5:1–6 is the fifth in a series of seven oracles of blessing. This fifth oracle speaks of the coming of the Messiah. From which city will the Messiah come? Who else was born in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16:1–13)? When is Micah’s prophecy fulfilled according to Matthew 2:1?
4. Read the indictment of Israel in Micah 6:1–8. What are the specific charges that God is bringing against Israel?
5. In the book of Habakkuk, the prophet understands why God is punishing His people, but he doesn’t understand why God is using a wicked nation as His instrument of punishment. What is Habakkuk’s first protest (1:2–4)? What is God’s response (1:5–11)? What is Habakkuk’s second protest (1:12–21)? What is God’s second response (2:2–20)? Will Babylon go unpunished? What is Habakkuk’s final response (3:17–19)?

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## DISCUSSION

1. Like many of the prophets, Joel describes the judgment that is about to come upon Israel using language that describes cosmic disruption (Joel 2:10). These prophecies were fulfilled in the historical judgments of Israel and Judah in the eighth century and sixth century BC. These historical judgments did not involve the literal disruption of the heavens, indicating that the prophetic language was figurative language. How should these facts influence our interpretation of New Testament prophecies that use similar language?
2. How would you use the messianic prophecy in Micah 5:1–6 to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to a Jewish person? The apostle Paul used the Old Testament to prove to the Jews that the Messiah was to suffer and be raised (Acts 17:2–3). How would you use the following texts to prove this: Psalms 2, 16, 110; Isaiah 52:13–53:12? What other Old Testament texts would you bring into the discussion?
3. The prophet Habakkuk was dismayed that God would use the wicked Babylonians as an instrument of judgment against His people even though they deserved judgment. Might God still be using wicked nations as instruments of judgment today? Might God have used a Hitler, a Stalin, or a bin Laden? Would we be able to know this as certainly as Habakkuk knew that God used Babylon? Why or why not?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Boice, James Montgomery. *The Minor Prophets*  
McComiskey, Thomas E. *The Minor Prophets*

# Characteristics of Wisdom Literature

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The wisdom books of the Old Testament are some of the most popular writings in all of Scripture. Combining wisdom and poetry this genre includes the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. As engaging and popular as these writings are it is important to learn how to interpret these books properly in order to enrich our understanding and enjoyment of this portion of God's Word. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the characteristics of wisdom literature.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Proverbs

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To define the meaning of philosophy for the ancient Hebrews.
2. To identify the books comprising the wisdom literature of the Bible.
3. To identify the different types of parallelisms in Hebrew poetry.

## QUOTATIONS

*The Christian who reads Proverbs can develop a new appreciation for the significant contribution of the book to the New Testament view of Jesus and what it means to follow this man who both taught wisdom and embodied wisdom in his person. Wisdom is not to become the forgotten voice of the Old Testament, nor is it only to be treated in*



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*Old Testament studies, Bible studies, and sermons from the gospels and New Testament letters, can do much to restore this long neglected subject of wisdom to the life of Christian communities.*

—Paul E. Koptak

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. It is an important principle of biblical interpretation to identify the different literary forms that are present in Scripture.
- B. The poetic books are some of the most popular books in the Old Testament.
  - The Jews identified the Psalms, Proverbs, and Job as the poetic books.
- C. The wisdom literature of the Bible includes the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
  - The book of James in the New Testament is sometimes characterized as a wisdom book.
- D. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament focuses on philosophy.
  1. The philosophical focus of the wisdom literature is not like the theoretical speculations of the Western philosophers.
  2. The meaning of the word *philosophy* is the “love of wisdom.”
  3. The primary focus of Jewish philosophy was not speculative theories, but rather, “How can one live a godly life on a daily basis?”
  4. The fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom for the wise Jew.
  5. Jewish wisdom did not seek cleverness, but rather the ways of the Lord.
- E. The study of English poetry includes examining meter, stanza, rhythm, and rhyme.
  1. Many of these characteristics are also present in Hebrew poetry.
  2. Wordplays and puns also characterize Hebrew poetry.
- F. Parallelism is the primary literary device in Hebrew poetry.
  1. Parallelism is a literary device in which two or more statements (verses, couplets) are presented in some form of parallel relationship.
  2. Examining only one line of a parallelism can result in a misinterpretation of the text.

3. The parallel statement amplifies or explains the initial segment.
- G. Synonymous parallelism occurs when two statements deliver the same message in different words.
1. “I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things” (Isa. 45:6c–7).
  2. Each statement provides a contrast (light/darkness, well-being/calamity) to accentuate God’s creative power over all things. Each statement makes the same point.
  3. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13).
  4. The parallel second statement amplifies the first segment.
  5. “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24–26).
  6. Each parallel statement amplifies and develops the thought in the previous statement.
- H. Antithetical parallelism occurs when two statements deliver a message by means of a contrast.
1. The parallel second statement is the opposite of the first statement.
  2. “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1).
  3. A single message is delivered through two opposite statements.
- I. Synthetic parallelism occurs when the second statement builds upon or completes the first statement.
1. “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23).
  2. The second statement is not synonymous or contrasting with the first statement, but rather a new statement is being introduced.
- J. Understanding Hebrew poetic devices will help guard against faulty interpretation and develop our appreciation of this form of God’s revelation.

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## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Proverbs 1:2–7. According to these verses, what is the purpose of the Proverbs? What does true wisdom presuppose, according to verse 7?
2. Compare and contrast “woman wisdom” and “woman folly” as described in Proverbs 9:1–18.
3. Read Proverbs 24:30–34. What is the means by which the author gains wisdom in these verses?
4. Read Proverbs 5:1–23; 6:20–35; and 7:1–27. How does each text warn against adultery? What is the end result of adultery?
5. What are some of the characteristics of a good wife according to Proverbs 31:10–31? How do these qualities differ from what many men are looking for in a wife?

## DISCUSSION

1. Read Proverbs 26:4–5. How does this text illustrate the fact that proverbs are general observations, rather than absolute promises or commands that obtain under every circumstance? How is such a misunderstanding of proverbial wisdom concerning health, wealth, and suffering (e.g. Prov. 3:7–8; 8:17–21; 10:24–25) demonstrated in the words of Job’s three counselors (e.g. Job 4:7–11)? What is the danger of applying general principles as if they were absolute promises or commands (Prov. 26:7–9)? What other general proverbial principles have been misinterpreted as absolute promises or commands?
2. Wisdom is mediated through several means in the book of Proverbs: observation/experience, traditional instruction, learning from one’s mistakes, and direct revelation. Having read through Proverbs, provide examples of each type of mediated wisdom.
3. Read Luke 11:49–51 and compare it to Matthew 23:34–36. The comparison seems to indicate that Jesus is using the phrase, “the wisdom of God” in Luke 11:49 as a self-designation. How does Jesus manifest the wisdom of God?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Longman, Tremper, III. *How to Read Proverbs*  
Waltke, Bruce K. *Proverbs* (2 vols.)

# Psalms

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Psalms is one of the most treasured books in Scripture. It has been a constant source of comfort for the saints during times of trial, suffering, and danger. Serving as the prayer book for the Israelites, the Psalms is a collection of 150 prayers, songs, and poems expressing in beautiful form the dramatic experiences of a godly life. Divine truth, rich poetry, and emotional realism converge to create the masterpiece that is the Psalter. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the Psalms.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To highlight the importance of the Psalter in the history of the church.
2. To explain the acronym A.C.T.S. as a tool for prayer.
3. To identify the various literary genres present in the Psalms.

## QUOTATIONS

*The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express the same delight in God which made David dance.*

—C. S. Lewis

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*Prayer in the sense of petition, asking for things, is a small part of it; confession and penitence are its threshold, adoration its sanctuary, the presence and vision and enjoyment of God, its bread and wine.*

—C.S. Lewis

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Psalms provide us with excellent examples of how to pray.
  - The Psalter is a collection of 150 prayers that were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
  
- B. The book of Psalms (or the Psalter) is one of the greatest treasures of the Christian church.
  1. The Psalter has always played a central role during periods of revival and renewal in the history of the church.
  
  2. Martin Luther called the Psalter the “little Bible” for the great scope of biblical themes that it includes.
  
  3. The Psalter is the most frequently cited book in the New Testament.
  
- C. The acronym A.C.T.S. helps to remind us of important elements to include in our prayers.
  1. *Adoration* psalms are prayers that praise and rejoice in the character of God.
  
  2. *Confession* psalms are prayers of contrition and repentance from sin.
  
  3. *Thanksgiving* psalms are prayers expressing gratitude for God’s blessings.
  
  4. *Supplication* psalms are prayers requesting God to bless or act on behalf of a saint.
  
- D. The Psalter is a unique collection of individual prayers and private conversations between the saints and God, but also the corporate hymn book of the people of God.
  - The Psalter is also known as the prayer book of the covenant.
  
- E. There are several unique literary genres among the Psalms.
  
- F. *Praise* psalms occur frequently throughout the Psalter.
  1. The chief purpose of Old Testament worship was to offer a sacrifice of praise.

2. "O LORD, our LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:1).
  3. "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!" (Ps. 150:6).
  4. The Psalms repeatedly proclaim that the great works of the Lord make Him worthy of praise.
- G. *Wisdom* psalms are also a popular genre in the Psalter.
1. The book of Psalms is both wisdom and poetry.
  2. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away" (Ps. 1:1-4).
  3. The Psalter opens with a wisdom psalm that contrasts the transience of the wicked with the enduring nature of the righteous.
- H. Laments are one of the most common literary forms found in the Psalms.
1. Laments were usually occasioned by persecution, illness, death of loved ones, grief, loss, or pain.
  2. Expressions of grief and lament appear frequently throughout Scripture.
  3. Jesus was known as a "man of sorrows" who lamented over Jerusalem saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate" (Matt. 23:37-38).
  4. "Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you! Do not hide your face from me in the day of distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call! For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. My heart is struck down like grass and has withered; I forget to eat my bread. Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh. I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places; I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop. All the day my enemies taunt me; those who deride me use my name for a curse" (Ps. 102:1-8).
  5. A psalmist's feelings of abandonment by others and by God are frequently recorded in the psalms of lament.

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- I. Several messianic psalms appear in the Psalter and throughout the Old Testament.
    1. *Messianic* psalms are often couched within royal psalms.
    2. The people of Israel looked for the anointed king who would go up into Zion and manifest the reign of God over His people.
    3. Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted psalm in the New Testament.
    4. “The LORD says to my LORD: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’” (Ps. 110:1).
    5. Royal authority will be given to the one who is David’s son as well as David’s lord.
    6. “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ‘As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.’ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” . . . Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (Ps. 2:1–7; 10–12)
    7. The kings of the earth launch an international conspiracy against the Lord’s anointed king.
  - J. Psalm 22 played a significant role during the crucifixion of Jesus.
    1. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” (Ps. 22:1).
    2. Jesus recites Psalm 22:1a to God the Father from the cross.
    3. “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ‘He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!’ Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

- For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots” (Ps. 22:12–18).
- K. Penitential psalms model prayers of confession for us.
1. David penned Psalm 51 after Nathan confronted him with his sin of adultery.
  2. “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me” (Ps. 51:1–3).
  3. Psalm 51 is a strong example of what true contrition is in the life of the believer.
- L. Imprecatory psalms are one of the most controversial genres within the Psalter.
1. The saints inspired by the Holy Spirit call down curses on their enemies.
  2. “Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?” (Ps. 139:21).
  3. The imprecatory psalms reveal this life’s realistic struggle with evil and how it is despised by the righteous.
- M. Thanksgiving psalms often reflect the saint’s joy in the law of God.
1. Psalms 19 and 119 celebrate the sweetness and excellence of the law of God.
  2. Prayer is often inspired by meditating on the law of God.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. There are several types of Psalms including, praise, lament, imprecatory, thanksgiving, wisdom, and royal psalms. Read and classify each of the following Psalms in one of these categories:
  - Psalm 22
  - Psalm 145
  - Psalm 110
  - Psalm 40
  - Psalm 1
  - Psalm 137



2. Read Psalm 2. How is the rebellion of the nations described in verses 1–3? What is God’s response in verses 4–6? What decree does God make in verses 7–9? How is the reign of the messianic king described in verses 10–12?
3. Read Psalm 16:8–10. How does Paul prove that this Psalm could not be referring to David and must be referring to Jesus (Acts 13:32–39)?
4. What similarities are there between Psalm 22 and the events surrounding the crucifixion of Christ?
5. Why does David refer to the messianic king as “my Lord” in Psalm 110:1? How does Psalm 110:2–3 describe the authority of the messianic king?

## DISCUSSION

1. John Calvin described the psalmists as prophets. Why do you suppose he described them in this manner?
2. The Psalms of Lament are often very bold in their complaints against God (for example, Psalms 22:1–2; 71:20; 102:9–11). Are Christians to express themselves to God in this way? Why or why not?
3. Read Psalms 35, 69, and 109. These are three of the most intense imprecatory psalms in the Psalter. How do we reconcile Christ’s command to love one’s enemies with the imprecatory psalms? Should Christians pray imprecatory psalms today?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Grogan, Geoffrey. *Prayer, Praise & Prophecy: A Theology of the Psalms*

Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 1–72*

Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 73–150*

Longman, Tremper, III. *How to Read the Psalms*

# Ecclesiastes

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Ecclesiastes is one of the most difficult books in the Old Testament to interpret. Similar to twentieth century existential writings, the book explores the implications of living in a world apart from the eternal. This is a relevant question because every human being has asked themselves why they exist and labor each day. Ultimately it is an eternal God who gives meaning to our temporal and otherwise meaningless existence. One day our lives will be evaluated not by a temporal, but rather, an eternal judge. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the book of Ecclesiastes.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify some of the literary characteristics of Ecclesiastes.
2. To compare Ecclesiastes with other historical philosophies.
3. To imagine the meaninglessness of the temporal apart from the eternal.

## QUOTATIONS

*Jesus Christ is the one who redeems us from the vanity, the meaninglessness under which Qohelet suffered. Jesus redeemed us from Qohelet's meaningless world by subjecting himself to it. Jesus is the son of God, but nonetheless he experienced the vanity of the world so he could free us from it. As he hung on the cross, his own father deserted him (Matt. 27:45–46). At this point, he experienced the frustration of the world under curse*

*in a way that Qohelet could not even imagine. As a result, Christians can experience deep significance precisely in those areas where Qohelet felt most oppressed. Jesus has restored meaning to wisdom, labor, love, and life. After all, by facing death, Jesus conquered the biggest fear facing Qohelet. He showed that for believers death is not the end of all meaning, but the entrance into the very presence of God.*

—Tremper Longman III

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The book of Ecclesiastes expresses the wisdom of God in a climate of prevailing skepticism.
  - Ecclesiastes is one of the most difficult books of the Old Testament to interpret.
- B. There is much debate regarding the authorship of Ecclesiastes.
  1. The book is attributed to “the Qoheleth” or “collector,” “teacher,” or “preacher.”
  2. Loose tradition links the book with Solomon as the author.
  3. Another argument is that the book is a “foil” or contrast with traditional wisdom literature in order to deliver a unique message.
- C. There are similarities between Ecclesiastes and twentieth-century existential writings.
- D. A cyclical view of the universe is a common theme in the book of Ecclesiastes.
  - The universe has no beginning or end, but is locked in an endless recurrence of the same events and themes.
- E. “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (Ecc. 1:2).
  1. This figure of speech expresses an idea to the superlative degree.
  2. Vanity in this verse refers to the utter futility of life.
- F. Two recurring phrases in the book are “under the sun” and “under the heavens.”
  1. Under the sun refers to the earthly domain and under the heavens refers to the domain of God.
  2. The realm of God has a completely different perspective than the realm of man.
  3. The foundation of secularism rejects the eternal and asserts we live only in this world’s space and time.

- G. Ecclesiastes explores the implications of living in a world apart from the eternal.
1. “What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” (Ecc. 1:3).
  2. The writer asks what profit is all our labor if our labor perishes with us in the end.
- H. “A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecc. 1:4–9).
- Every human being has experienced the threat of deep cynicism and skepticism, asking ourselves why we exist and labor each day.
- I. Qoheleth examines various pursuits in order to find a purpose for his existence.
1. He experiments with hedonism, which argues that the purpose of life is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.
  2. Physical pleasure becomes the narcotic of choice for people who have no hope.
  3. The apostle Paul agreed, that if Christ has not been raised than we should eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die (1 Cor. 15).
  4. The end result of hedonism is either boredom or frustration. The Qoheleth finds this philosophy meaningless, as well.
- J. The temporal finds meaning under heaven as everything has its appropriate season.
1. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace” (Ecc. 1:1–8).
  2. The godly know what is appropriate in the right season.

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- K. God is a God who is intimately acquainted with human suffering and the gospel is proclaimed to those acquainted with grief.
- The people of God are those who are there for those, at their point of pain.
- L. “Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness” (Ecc.3:16).
- M. Ecclesiastes explores the folly of seeking meaning through riches, knowledge, fortune, fame, and everything else the world offers.
- N. Death comes to all, but God is the answer to all of the questions that people suffer.
- O. “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them;’ before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain” (Ecc. 12:1-2).
- P. “Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.”
- Q. The primary conclusion of the book of Ecclesiastes is found in 12:13-14:
- “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecc. 12:13-14).
- R. The conclusion of our work, pain, and joy is: “fear God and keep his commandments.”
1. Our lives will be evaluated, not by the temporal, but by the eternal judge.
  2. God will one day say to us, either, “Depart from me I never knew you,” or, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”
  3. Receiving the commendation of our Creator will give meaning to all our work, pain, and joy.
  4. Everything we experience in our lives counts, and nothing is futile under the heavens.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. When the author of Ecclesiastes says, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (1:2), what does this tell us about the life in this fallen world? How does Paul, in Romans 8:20–23, add to this perspective of Ecclesiastes?
2. If Ecclesiastes 1:1–2:23 expresses the problem of pessimism, what is the solution to the problem, found in 2:24–3:22?
3. What are some of the problems with “life under the sun,” as found in Ecclesiastes 4:1–10:20?
4. Read Ecclesiastes 9:7–9 and compare that text with 2:24, 3:12–13, 5:19, and 8:15. What is the basic message found in all of these passages?

## DISCUSSION

1. Some scholars argue that the words of “the Preacher” are unorthodox and thus are used by a separate narrator, the actual author of Ecclesiastes, in order to highlight the orthodox nature of his teaching. Others argue that the book is an apologetic essay defending the life of faith by pointing out the grimness of the alternative. Which view resonates more deeply with your reading of the book?
2. Regarding the Hebrew word translated “vanity,” David Hubbard says that it “stands more for human inability to grasp the meaning of God’s way than for an ultimate emptiness in life,” and, it “speaks of human limitation and frustration caused by the vast gap between God’s knowledge and power and our relative ignorance and impotence.” How might such an understanding of this word help you grasp the message of Ecclesiastes?
3. What advice might the author of Ecclesiastes have offered Job?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Longman, Tremper, III. *The Book of Ecclesiastes*

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# Job

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The book of Job speaks to all people everywhere because it addresses the question of why there is suffering in the world. The book contains the wrenching story of a man who had virtually everything taken away from him and yet remained faithful to his God. Job's story raises important questions regarding the goodness of God and suffering that are relevant for modern readers. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul explores this profound book of Scripture.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Job

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the literary style of the book of Job.
2. To discuss the relationship between the goodness of God and the suffering of the world.
3. To discuss the role of suffering in the life of the Christian.

## QUOTATIONS

*The center of Job's test is that the anguish caused by God's apparently unreasoned anger threatens to break his moral resolve. Desperately he gropes for some way out of this dark abyss. By vigorously lamenting his bitter feelings, he comes to grips with his anguish and*

*channels his mind to seek some resolution to his predicament. . . . By focusing on God as his Witness and his Redeemer, Job makes bold statements of trust in God (16:19; 19:25–27). Finally, with an avowal of innocence he places his destiny in God’s hands and demonstrates that a person’s moral resolve can grow stronger even amid the worst adversity. Job thus stands as the prime example of how an upright person can maintain his own integrity even when overwhelmed, for no apparent reason, by the most painful suffering.*

—John E. Hartley

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The book of Job speaks to all people everywhere because it addresses the question of why there is suffering in this world.
  1. Why is it that we live in a world created and governed by a good and powerful being and yet there is so much evil and suffering?
  2. This is the most profound question for Christianity to answer.
- B. The setting for the book of Job is the patriarchal period.
  1. Some scholars do not believe Job was an actual historical person because of the book’s emphasis on poetry and wisdom.
  2. The literary structure of Job bears a strong resemblance to a drama with scenes, acts, and dialogues.
- C. “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east” (Job 1:1–3).
  - Job was a man of enormous wealth, who most likely surpassed the wealth of Abraham.
- D. “His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did continually” (Job 1:4–5).
  1. Job was very wealthy, but he was also godly and devout.
  2. Wealthy men that pursue godliness are rare.
- E. “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before



the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, 'From where have you come?' Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?' Then Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.' So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD" (Job 1:6-12).

- F. Satan reports with satisfaction his roaming and subjugation of the earth's inhabitants.
- Satan charges that Job serves God only because he is blessed.
- G. "Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you'" (Job 1:13-15).
- Job's servants are slaughtered and his livestock are plundered.
- H. God's relationship to the problem of evil is raised in these passages.
1. The patriarch Joseph acknowledged that God was working in his circumstances despite the evil actions of his brothers.
  2. *Concurrence* is when the righteous will of God operates along with the evil intentions and actions of men to accomplish a good purpose.
- I. The Sabeans, Chaldeans, Satan, and the will of God, are all involved in this drama and conflict between righteousness and wickedness.
1. Evil men are responsible and will be judged for their evil deeds even though God uses their deeds for His own good purposes.
  2. Satan cannot move against Job in the least until God permits him to do so by removing his hedge of protection away from his servant.
- J. *If* there is a simple answer in the book of Job, to the question of why we suffer, it is: "for the glory of God."
1. Jesus was confronted with the question of human suffering in John 9.

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2. The disciples ask if the man was born blind because of his own sins or the sins of his parents.
  3. Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3).
- K. There is not always a one-to-one relationship between sin and suffering in an individual's life.
1. A suffering person is not always being punished for their sins, yet there would be no suffering in the world if there was no sin.
  2. Sometimes people suffer as a consequence of their fidelity to God.
  3. Other times people suffer for their sanctification, and their pain becomes the crucible for greater holiness.
  4. Still other times, God allows us to suffer in order to chasten and discipline us because He loves us as His children.
- L. Job's friends come to him in his suffering to give him counsel and advice.
1. They mistakenly link Job's suffering with sin from which they believe Job has not sought repentance.
  2. Job maintains his innocence and integrity.
  3. Elihu preaches platitudes to Job without sensitivity.
  4. Job's wife encourages him to "curse God and die."
- M. "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me'" (Job 38:1-3).
- God asks Job where he was when he set the universe on its course and set and established all its ways.
- N. "And the LORD said to Job: 'Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.' Then Job answered the LORD and said: 'Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further'" (Job 40:1-5).
- Job is silenced by God's interrogation.
- O. "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 'Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Will you even put me in the

- wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?” (Job 40:6–8).
- Every Christian is confronted with the question of whether or not they are willing to justify themselves by condemning God.
- P. “Then Job answered the LORD and said: ‘I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. “Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. “Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.” I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:1–6).
- Job repents of his mistrust amidst his pain.
- Q. God never answers Job’s question as to why he must suffer.
1. God instead gives the manifestation of Himself.
  2. Knowing God leads us to trust Him.
- R. The final scene of the drama is the restoration of Job’s life, far greater than what it was originally.
1. The message of the New Testament is that, unless we are willing to be buried with Christ in His sufferings, we will never take part in His exaltation.
  2. Those who join Christ in His death will participate in His resurrection.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Job 1:1–5. How do these verses describe Job? What kind of person is he?
2. The name *Satan* means “adversary.” How is Satan’s nature revealed in 1:6–12?
3. Compare the lament in Job 3:1–26 with those in Jeremiah 20:14–18 and Psalm 88. What are some of the common features in these laments?
4. Read Eliphaz’s first speech in Job 4:1–5:27 and compare it to his final speech in 22:1–11. How does his estimation of Job change between the first and last speech?
5. Traditionally, commentators have understood Job 19:23–27 to be a reference to the final resurrection of believers. Some disagree, however. What evidence is there in the text itself that supports the view that it refers to bodily resurrection? Does Job 14:12 shed any light on your answer?

## DISCUSSION

1. Many people speak and think of Satan as if he is omniscient and omnipotent. How would you respond to someone who understood Satan's power in this way?
2. In God's response to Job, he speaks of Behemoth (40:15–24) and Leviathan (41:1–34). Many commentators argue that these words are referring to the most fearsome land animal and sea creature respectively. Some suggest that Behemoth is the hippopotamus and that Leviathan is the crocodile. Others say that the language used to describe these two creatures goes beyond any earthly creature and that therefore God is speaking figuratively of something else. Some suggest that Behemoth stands for death and that Leviathan stands for Satan. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these views based on the descriptions found in the text itself.
3. In God's response to Job (38:1–41:34), does God explain to Job the reason for his suffering? Does God even mention Job's suffering? What is the basic point of God's response to Job? In light of this, what does the book of Job offer as an appropriate response to our own suffering?

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Hartley, John E. *The Book of Job*

Thomas, Derek W.H. *Calvin's Teaching on Job*