

S T U D Y G U I D E

DUST *to*

An Overview of the Bible with R.C. SPROUL

GLORY



S T U D Y G U I D E

Dust to Glory

An Overview of the Bible

R.C. Sproul



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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 104:24, 31

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?”

-
- 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.

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

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.

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.

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.

- 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

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 scape-goat 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*

13

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

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*

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.

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 Hilkiyah 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*

22

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

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.)

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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 Chislev, 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).

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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.

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)?

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 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.

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- 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.

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

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.

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- 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.

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- 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.
 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*

The Intertestamental Period

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Gospels open the New Testament with the announcement that the fullness of time had come and God was about to reveal His Messiah to the world. The coming of the promised Redeemer ended a four hundred year period of silence between the Old and New Testaments. God brought His people from an old to a new covenant and the words of the prophets began to see their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the Intertestamental Period.

SCRIPTURE READING

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the historical period between the Old and New Testaments.
2. To outline the major empires that controlled Palestine during the Intertestamental Period.
3. To track the evolution of Judaism during the Intertestamental Period.

QUOTATIONS

The four hundred years between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ were important years in the history of Israel. During this time, the nation witnessed the fall of the Persian Empire, the rise and fall of the Greek Empire, and the rise of the Roman Empire. But Israel did not witness these events from afar. The crises and suffering experienced during these years led to the production of numerous writings. In these writings, the

hopes of the Jewish people are expressed. They look forward to the coming of a Messiah, one who would judge their enemies and establish the kingdom of God forever.

—Keith Mathison

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Gospels open the New Testament with the announcement of the pleroma, which is the “fullness of time”.
 1. The history of redemption reaches a period of fruition with the advent of Christ in the New Testament.
 2. The Old Testament recounts the long period of time in which God was preparing the world for the coming of His Son.
- B. The historical record of the Old Testament closes approximately four hundred years before the opening events of the New Testament.
- C. The reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem was completed in 445 BC under the leadership of Nehemiah.
 1. The small post-exilic Jewish nation struggled to survive in the ancient Near East.
 2. Palestine continued to be a hotly contested geo-political land-bridge between the major military powers.
- D. The Persian Empire remained the dominant power in the Ancient Near East until 331 BC when it was conquered by Alexander the Great.
- E. Alexander the Great had completed his conquest of the Persians at the age of 24.
 1. Alexander was the son of Philip of Macedon and the pupil of the Greek philosopher Aristotle.
 2. Aristotle was the pupil of Plato and Plato was the pupil of Socrates.
- F. Aristotle emphasized unity and a search for the system that would unify all branches of knowledge.
 - A large host of scientists and philosophers accompanied Alexander in his conquest of the ancient world to help Aristotle advance his studies.
- G. Throughout his empire, Alexander emphasized Hellenism, which was the spread of Greek language and culture.
 1. Alexander’s empire would be unified in language, customs, and philosophy.

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2. The New Testament was written in Greek due in large part to the successful Hellenization of the ancient world.
- H. Alexander died in 327 BC in Babylon and his kingdom was divided among four generals.
- I. Eventually the Grecian empire was divided between the two dynasties of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.
1. The Ptolemies ruled Palestine and Egypt and the Seleucids ruled Syria and Asia Minor.
 2. Ptolemy I annexed Palestine in 320 BC.
 3. Palestine was taken by Antiochus III (223–187 BC) for the Seleucids in 198 BC.
 4. Antiochus accelerated the process of Hellenization in Palestine.
- J. The process of Hellenization was fiercely opposed by conservative Jews.
1. The Hassidim or “the pious ones” fought in vain against the growing Greek influence on the Jews.
 2. Many groups struggled to maintain the purity of their traditions including the Pharisees who appear frequently in the New Testament.
 3. The Pharisees or “separated ones” were to be zealous for the covenant and obedient to every aspect of the law.
 4. The Pharisees degenerated into self-righteous legalism and ritualism by the time of Christ.
- K. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC) became king of the Seleucids in 175 BC.
1. Epiphany means “manifestation” and Antiochus IV Epiphanes was considered to be the “manifest god”.
 2. Antiochus was driven to insanity in his latter years.
- L. Antiochus IV Epiphanes fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of the “abomination that makes desolate” (Dan. 9:27).
1. Antiochus IV Epiphanes inaugurated a radically anti-Jewish program in Palestine and was nicknamed Antiochus Epimanes which means “insane” or “madman”.

2. Antiochus made observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, and possessing a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures each a capital offense.
 3. Antiochus had a pig sacrificed on the sacred altar in the Jerusalem temple in 167 BC.
- M. The Maccabean revolt began in 164 BC.
1. A devout Jew named Mattathias who had five sons rose up in protest against the abominations of Antiochus.
 2. The Maccabean family launched a guerrilla war against the forces of Antiochus.
 3. After the death of Mattathias, leadership of the revolt fell to his third son Judas “the Hammer” Maccabeus.
 4. The Maccabean revolt succeeded in securing concessions from Antiochus including religious freedom and opening the temple for religious ceremonies.
 5. The reopening and rededication of the temple is still commemorated today in the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.
- N. The Jews secured their freedom in 142 BC from foreign powers and remained independent until 63 BC.
1. The Romans conquered Palestine in 63 BC under the command of Pompeii.
 2. Pompeii was a member of Rome’s first great triumvirate.
- O. An Idumean chieftain named Herod the Great was appointed as a local king over the Jews in 40 BC.
1. Herod the Great founded a dynasty and rebuilt the Jerusalem temple.
 2. Herod was appointed by Marc Anthony and Octavius or Caesar Augustus.
- P. The New Testament opens with the Jewish people languishing under the domination of the Romans and an oppressive king.

BIBLE STUDY

Although no inspired books of Scripture were written during the Intertestamental period, many other non-canonical books were written. Some of these are contained within the Apocrypha. These books are not inspired Scripture, but like other merely human writings, they can be helpful for understanding the historical and religious developments that occurred during these four hundred years between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New. Among the most helpful of these books for understanding the historical developments are 1 and 2 Maccabees. Those interested in the religious and literary developments of this era may also want to read some of the other apocryphal books such as Tobit, Judith, or the Wisdom of Solomon.

DISCUSSION

1. Is it important for Christians to have some understanding of the events that transpired in the four hundred years before Jesus was born? Is it necessary? Why might it be helpful to the interpretation of the New Testament?
2. The apocryphal books were formally declared to be part of the canon by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546. The Westminster Confession of Faith, on the contrary, states that these books “are no part of the canon of the scripture” and that they are to be used no differently “than other human writings” (I:3). The Belgic Confession says regarding the Apocrypha: “All which the church may read and take instruction from, so far as they agree with the canonical books . . .” (Art. VI). Is it appropriate to publish these apocryphal books with the biblical books as was done, for example, in the Geneva Bible and the 1611 King James Bible, even if they are published in a separate section apart from the Old and New Testament books? Why or why not?
3. The Reformers rejected granting the apocryphal books a canonical authority they did not and do not have, but they did not disapprove of the reading of these books. Many Protestants, however, seem to have gone beyond rightly rejecting their canonical status and have ignored these books completely. How may Christians use books, such as those in the Apocrypha, rightly today?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

de Silva, David A. *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance*
Hayes, John H. and Sara Mandell. *The Jewish People in Classical Antiquity*
Helger, Larry R. *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*

John the Baptist

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist is one of the most significant figures in the New Testament. He was given the charge of preparing the people for the coming Messiah and announcing the imminence of the kingdom of God. Through a ministry of preaching and baptism in the wilderness, John prepared hearts for the ministry of Jesus and condemned the religious authorities for their hypocrisy and hard hearts. Turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to their fathers, John the Baptist revived the prophetic ministry of Elijah and fulfilled Malachi's prophecy of a coming prophet. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the character and career of John the Baptist.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 3, 11, 14:1-12; Mark 1; Luke 1, 3, 7; John 1, 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the role of John the Baptist in the story of redemption.
2. To interpret Malachi's prophecy of the return of Elijah the prophet.
3. To describe the message and means of John the Baptist's ministry.

QUOTATIONS

John's interest is in the Christ and in nothing less. . . . He brings out the greatness of the one who was to come by referring to his own personal unworthiness. He was not worthy to loose the thongs of the great one's sandal. Loosing the sandal was the task of a slave;

a disciple could not be expected to perform it. There is a rabbinic saying: "Every service which a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for his teacher except the loosing of his sandal-thong." John selects the very task that the rabbinic saying stresses as too menial for any disciple, and declares himself unworthy to perform it. He is unworthy of the most menial of tasks for the one who was to come after him. Humility could scarcely take a lower place.

—Leon Morris

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Jesus identifies John the Baptist as the most important prophet under the Old Covenant.
 1. "I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28).
 2. John, as one under the Old Covenant, was part of the period of preparation before the breakthrough of the kingdom of God.
 3. Those who live under the New Covenant enjoy a greater state of blessedness than any of those who live under the Old Covenant.
- B. One of the most under-appreciated figures in the New Testament is John the Baptist.
 1. Only two of the four gospels recount the birth of Jesus, whereas all four discuss the coming of John the Baptist.
 2. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:1-4).
 3. Mark opens his gospel by discussing the significance of John the Baptist.
 4. John is mentioned more frequently than Jesus by the ancient pagan historians.
- C. The appearance of John was very significant because the voice of prophecy had been silent for four hundred years until his coming.
- D. The prophet Malachi spoke of the coming of John in the last prophecy in the Old Testament.

1. “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 4:5–6).
 2. The prophets spoke frequently about a coming day of the Lord in which there would be an outpouring of God’s wrath for the wicked and redemption for the faithful.
 3. Malachi prophesied that before the Day of the Lord an Elijah would come to the people.
- E. After an absence in prophecy for four hundred years, John the Baptist came out of the wilderness dressed and preaching in the manner of the prophet Elijah.
- John’s simple message was to repent for the kingdom of God was at hand.
- F. The message of the Old Testament prophets was that the kingdom of God will come some day; whereas John’s message was that the kingdom was at hand or very near.
1. John declared that the axe was laid at the root of the tree invoking Isaiah’s image of judgment against the unrepentant (Isa. 6).
 2. John also declared that God’s winnowing fork was in His hand and that He would separate the righteous and the wicked as the grain is separated from the chaff.
 3. John sounded the alarm that God’s kingdom was near and its establishment would mean the redemption of the repentant and the judgment of the wicked.
- G. John issued a call for repentance and baptism in the Jordan River.
1. Faithful Israelites demonstrated their allegiance to the covenant through circumcision.
 2. Gentiles who wanted to join the covenant community were required to make a profession of faith, undergo the rite of circumcision, and be baptized.
 3. John as a Jewish prophet called for his Jewish listeners to be baptized and cleansed from their sins as common Gentiles.
 4. The Jewish authorities protested that they had Abraham as their father and did not need to be cleansed through baptism.
 5. Jewish commoners submitted to baptism and repented of their sins.

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- H. “And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, ‘I am not the Christ.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’ So they said to him, ‘Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” as the prophet Isaiah said’” (John 1:19–28).
1. John is asked by the authorities if he is Elijah and he says he is not.
 2. “And the disciples asked him, ‘Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?’ He answered, ‘Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands’” (Matt. 17:10–12).
 3. According to Jesus the prophet Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist.
 4. John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of the coming of Elijah.
 5. “But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb’” (Luke 1:13–15).
 6. John the Baptist leaped in Elizabeth’s womb when she met Mary thus giving witness to Christ even before his birth.
 7. “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:16–17).
 8. Elijah’s prophetic ministry was revived in the mission of John the Baptist.
- I. The most important aspect of John’s mission was to bear witness to Jesus the Messiah.
1. Jesus had John baptize Him despite his reluctance.
 2. Jesus had no sin of His own, but submitted to John’s baptism in order to fulfill all aspects of the law.
 3. John played a very significant role in the history of redemption.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Matthew 3:2. What are the two key parts of John the Baptist's message?
2. In Matthew 3:3, John the Baptist quotes Isaiah 40:3, which is part of a prophecy of future restoration in which Isaiah portrays the coming salvation of Israel in terms of a new exodus. By quoting this passage, what is John saying about the coming of Christ?
3. Compare Matthew 3:4 and 2 Kings 1:8. Who does John resemble in his style of clothing? How is this important in light of Malachi 4:5–6?
4. Compare Luke 3:3 with Acts 19:5. Is John's baptism identical to Christian baptism?
5. Read Luke 3:7–14. What is John's warning to those who fail to repent?

DISCUSSION

1. As we have seen, Malachi 4:5–6 prophesied that Elijah would come before the day of the Lord. John dressed like Elijah (Matt. 3:4), but was he Elijah? Read Jesus' statement in Matthew 11:14 and compare it to John's statement in John 1:21. How does Luke 1:17 help us to reconcile these statements?
2. When we recall the historical context of John's ministry—centuries of prophetic silence—how would first-century Jews view his ministry? What might they see as the significance of his words and work? How did John understand his own ministry?
3. In the Old Testament era, several prophets looked forward to a future outpouring of the Spirit. The prophecy of Joel 2:28–32 is particularly significant in this respect. What did John teach regarding the fulfillment of these prophecies (see Matt. 3:11)? How was his ministry related to the fulfillment of these prophecies?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Sproul, R.C. *John* (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary)
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

The Birth of Jesus

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

It was a great shock to many that God sent His son as one born of a virgin peasant girl outside of Jerusalem. Many were expecting the Messiah to be a great military or royal figure. However Jesus came not only to die, but also to live. His life began in very humble circumstances when an angel of the Lord came to a poor Jewish teenager and informed her that she would bear the Son of God. This was the beginning of the humiliation of Christ. A life that descended from glory was lived in service and sacrifice to restore many to glory. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the birth of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2:20; John 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To emphasize the identity and mission of Christ as the second Adam.
2. To highlight the role of miracles in the birth and life of Jesus.
3. To identify the role of the Holy Spirit in the divine conception of Christ.

QUOTATIONS

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found

in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

—Philippians 2:5–11

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. It was a great shock to many that God sent His son as one born of a virgin peasant girl outside of Jerusalem.
 - Many were expecting the Messiah to be a great military or royal figure.

- B. Jesus came not only to die, but also to live. He came to be the second Adam.
 1. The second Adam would accomplish what the first Adam failed to accomplish.

 2. Jesus' mission was to be in submission to all the requirements of God.

 3. Jesus took on a human nature and was born the son of a woman and as a son of David.

 4. Jesus grew in favor with God and man, learned obedience, and expanded His understanding of His mission.

- C. The birth of Jesus begins the humiliation of Christ.
 1. The One who was equal with God did not jealously guard His position, but rather emptied Himself to take the position of a servant.

 2. To accomplish His glorious ascent to heaven, Christ first had to experience His descent to earth.

- D. “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be” (Luke 1:26–29).
 1. Mary has been chosen by God for a profound and special blessing.

 2. She is troubled because she is surprised by the visit of an angel of God.

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- E. “And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end’” (Luke 1:30–33).
1. The Magnificat seems to show that Mary had an extensive understanding of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming Messiah.
 2. At the very least Mary understood she would become the mother of a king.
 3. Most likely Mary understood she was going to give birth to the Messiah who would restore the throne of David and defeat Israel’s enemies.
- F. “And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’” (Luke 1:34).
- Mary wondered how she would have a baby if she was not sexually active with a man.
- G. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly” (Matt. 1:18–19).
- Mary’s pregnancy is an apparent embarrassment to Joseph, so he resolves to end the betrothal privately.
- H. “But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’” (Matt. 1:20–21).
- Matthew’s gospel is quick to connect the birth of Jesus with Isaiah’s prophecy of a virgin bearing a child named Immanuel.
- I. The testimony of Scripture is clear that the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth were miraculous.
1. The virgin birth of Christ has been attacked by many who refuse to believe the Scriptural account.
 2. The life of Jesus is ablaze with miracles. His earthly life begins and ends with a miracle.
 3. Nineteenth-century liberalism advanced scholarship that de-mythologized the supernatural career of Jesus and cast Him into a human figure.

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- J. The virgin herself was the first one to struggle with believing in the virgin birth:
- “And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God’” (Luke 1:35–37).
- K. The angel reassures Mary by telling her the child will be conceived within her by the power of the Holy Ghost.
1. The word structure here is very similar to the opening verses of the creation account in Genesis 1.
 2. The Spirit hovered like a bird over the primordial waters to bring forth life upon the opening of creation.
 3. The Spirit will overshadow the virgin to bring forth life in her womb.
 4. The angel points Mary to Elizabeth as an example of God’s supernatural power over the womb.
- L. The New Testament emphasizes what is impossible with man is possible with God.
1. It was not impossible for a virgin to bear a child through the power of God.
 2. It was impossible for the grave to hold the sinless Son of God.
- M. “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:38).
1. Mary’s statement is sometimes called Mary’s fiat or command to the angel to bring about the conception.
 2. St. Thomas Aquinas understood this statement to mean Mary’s surrender to the will of God.
 3. Despite her fear, Mary’s will is surrendered to God’s plan.
- N. “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered” (Luke 2:1).
1. God utilizes the decree of the most powerful man on earth to sovereignly accomplish the birth of His Son.
 2. Jesus is born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy regarding the birthplace of the Messiah.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Matthew's gospel begins with the statement: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1). How does this statement connect the birth of Jesus to the promises of the Old Testament?
2. Read Isaiah 7:14. What does Isaiah prophesy here? Compare Isaiah's prophecy to the statement of its fulfillment in Matthew 1:21–23. Since "Immanuel" means "God with us," what does this say about the significance of Jesus' birth?
3. Read and compare the announcements of John the Baptist's birth in Luke 1:13–17 and Jesus' birth in Luke 1:30–33. What are the similarities and differences? In particular, what difference is evident when you compare verse 15 and verse 32?
4. In light of the many Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming restoration of Israel, what is the significance of the announcement in Luke 1:32?
5. Read Luke 2:1–7. How did God providentially oversee the fulfillment of Micah 5:2 in these events?

DISCUSSION

1. In the nineteenth century, many liberals rejected the doctrine of the virgin birth (or more properly, the virgin conception). How is the acceptance of this doctrine intimately connected to one's view of biblical authority? How is the acceptance of this doctrine intimately connected to one's view of miracles? How are the two related?
2. Some reject the doctrine of the virgin birth, saying that Jesus could not be fully human if He had only one human parent. How would you respond to this objection? Are Adam and Eve relevant to the discussion? If so, how?
3. What are some of the differences between the way the birth of Jesus is handled in the gospel narratives and the way it is handled in contemporary concepts of Christmas?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Sproul, R.C. *John* (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary)
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*
Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*

The Early Years of Jesus' Life

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Little is known regarding the early years of Jesus, but what the Scriptures make clear is that from birth Jesus was a very unique child. The birth of Christ caused many to break out in song as they rejoiced upon the arrival of the Messiah. Mary sang the Magnificat celebrating God's rescue of the lowly and His humbling of the mighty. Simeon willingly faced death, content in the fact that he had seen the Christ. Jesus' visit to the temple at the age of twelve made it clear even to His parents that their son was born to fulfill the messianic mission. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the early years of Jesus' life.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1-2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the major characteristics of the gospel genre.
2. To explain the significance of the Magnificat.
3. To explain the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy.

QUOTATIONS

Long before Jesus began his public ministry, Luke revealed that he was aware of his unique relationship to God. Already at the age of twelve he knew that he was God's Son and that he possessed a unique calling.

—Robert Stein

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. God has given us four gospels or four accounts of the life of Christ in Scripture.
- B. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels.
 - John is a non-Synoptic gospel.
- C. The Synoptic Gospels offer the reader an overview or “synopsis” of the life of Christ.
 - 1. John’s gospel focuses on Jesus’ teaching and primarily on the week of His passion.
 - 2. The Gospels are not complete biographies of Christ.
 - 3. There is little information in the Gospels regarding the childhood of Jesus.
 - 4. Luke’s account of Jesus’ visit to the temple at the age of twelve is the only event recorded between Christ’s infancy and His ministry.
- D. The Gnostic gospels written in the second century included spurious accounts of Jesus as a child to fill in the details from these lost years.
 - 1. Jesus creates live birds from the mud in one of the Gnostic gospels.
 - 2. The church rejected the credibility and orthodoxy of the Gnostic gospels at an early date.
- E. Luke extensively researched his material in the writing of his gospel.
 - Tradition suggests Luke interviewed Mary for the composition of his gospel which explains her prominent role in the gospel of Luke.
- F. Songs play a prominent role in Luke’s gospel including the Song of Zechariah, the Magnificat of Mary, and the Song of Simeon.
 - 1. Songs play a significant role in the Old Testament including the Song of Moses, the Song of Miriam, and the Song of Deborah.
 - 2. Military victories or festival celebrations were often occasions for the composition of a song.
 - 3. The celebration surrounding the birth of Jesus inspires several songs.
 - 4. God’s people will sing a new song on the day of victory according to the book of Revelation (Rev. 5:9–10).

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- G. There are more stories of Jesus' encounters with women in the gospel of Luke than in all the other Gospels combined.
- H. "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed'" (Luke 1:46–48).
1. The motif of the humble and shunned servant girl who is transformed is also present in the Magnificat.
 2. Mary deeply rejoices because she has been noticed or regarded by God in her lowly estate.
 3. All who receive the mercy of God have been noticed by the Prince and are raised up from their lowly estate.
- I. "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate" (Luke 1:49–52).
1. Mary envisions the rulers of this world reigning with arrogance and oppression in the face of the powerful majesty of God.
 2. God looks with judgment upon the rulers of this world and pulls them down from their seats of power.
- J. "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. 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 1:53–55).
- Mary understands the birth of her child to be the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham.
- K. "Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25).
1. "The Consolation of Israel" was one of the titles of the Messiah.
 2. Isaiah had issued the prophetic call of, "Comfort, comfort my people" (Isa. 40:1).

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- L. “And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ‘Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel’” (Luke 2:26–32).
1. Simeon recognizes Jesus as the consolation of Israel and therefore the Messiah.
 2. Jesus was brought to the temple to be circumcised, named, and as the first-born He was dedicated to God.
 3. The offering of two birds that Joseph and Mary give at the temple indicates their deep poverty.
 4. Simeon can die in peace now that he has seen the Messiah.
- M. “And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed’” (Luke 2:33–35).
1. Luke probably interviewed Mary in order to write his gospel account.
 2. Mary most likely remembered this prophecy from Simeon about her heart being pierced as she stood at the foot of the cross.
- N. The prophetess, Anna, also greeted Jesus’ parents and spoke about Jesus to many at the temple.
- O. “Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day’s journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances” (Luke 2:41–44).
1. Families traveling to Jerusalem often traveled in caravans with the men separate from the women.
 2. Joseph probably assumed his son was with Mary and she assumed Jesus was with Joseph.

3. Joseph and Mary discover they accidentally left their son back in Jerusalem.
- P. “And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him they were astonished. And his mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress’” (Luke 2:45–48).
1. Jesus was sinless, but Mary questions His obedience here.
- Q. “And he said to them, ‘Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’” (Luke 2:49).
1. From an early age Jesus was keenly aware of His messianic mission.
 2. The remainder of the Gospels reveals the story of Jesus’ mission.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Mary’s song (the Magnificat) in Luke 1:46–55. In what ways does Mary speak as the representative of Israel? How does Mary describe God in this song? How is Mary’s song similar to the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1–10?
2. After the birth of John the Baptist, we read Zechariah’s benediction in Luke 1:67–79. How does Zechariah tie the redemptive roles of John and Jesus together here? According to Zechariah, who is Jesus?
3. Read the account of the angel’s announcement to the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth. How does the angel of the Lord identify the newborn child in verse 11?
4. When Jesus is brought to the temple, a man named Simeon takes the child up in his arms, blesses the child, and then the parents (see Luke 2:25–35). What does Simeon say about Jesus in his blessing of Him? What does he say in his blessing of the parents, and how do his words compare to Isaiah 8:14–15?
5. Read the account of Jesus at the temple in Luke 2:41–51. What is revealed in this story about Jesus’ awareness of His mission? How is Jesus’ uniqueness revealed to those around Him even at this young age of twelve?

DISCUSSION

1. In modern biographies, authors spend a lot of time talking about the childhood of their subject. Why do the authors of the Gospels say so little about Jesus’ childhood?

2. In Luke 2:52, we read that Jesus “increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” In 1 Samuel 2:26, similar language is used to describe Samuel, and in Proverbs 3:4 similar language is used to describe a son who follows the instruction of father. What, then, is this text in Luke telling us about Jesus in His human nature?

3. In the ancient world, women were not given a place of prominence. How do the first two chapters of Luke emphasize the role of women in the early years of Jesus’ life? Why is this important?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Scripture records three occasions in which the voice of God spoke from heaven pronouncing Jesus as the Son of God. The first pronouncement occurred at Jesus' baptism, which was also the moment that Jesus was anointed by the Spirit and commissioned as the Messiah. Immediately after His baptism, the same Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. In the desolate barrenness of the Judean wilderness, Jesus endured the full assault of Satan against His identity as the Son of God. His Father's pronouncement would be of paramount importance as Jesus did battle with the Evil One with the Word of God hanging in the balance. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the baptism and temptation of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 3:13–4:11; Mark 1; Luke 4:1–13; John 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the second Adam motif of the New Testament.
2. To discuss the relationship between temptation and the integrity of God's Word.
3. To describe the wilderness temptations of Christ.

QUOTATIONS

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

—Hebrews 4:15–16

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Gospels do not give any information regarding Jesus' life between the ages of twelve and thirty.
- B. Jesus presumably grew up with Joseph and Mary and learned the trade of a carpenter.
 1. Jesus frequently used agricultural images in His teaching, but He most frequently used images related to stonemasonry.
 2. First century carpenters were builders who worked more with stone than wood.
 3. Jesus was probably quite strong and muscular because of His trade.
- C. Jesus willingly submitted to every element of the law of God during His life including the rite of baptism.
 1. The Holy Spirit descended as a dove upon Christ at His baptism as a symbol of His ordination or divine commissioning.
 2. God spoke audibly from heaven and declared Jesus to be His Son at His baptism.
 3. The same Spirit that anointed Jesus at His baptism drove Him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for forty days.
- D. An important motif of the New Testament is that Jesus, the second Adam, will succeed where the first Adam failed.
 - Jesus experienced a period of testing in the Judean wilderness before the commencement of His public ministry.
- E. The Judean wilderness was a very desolate, dry, and rocky territory with only a few rabbits, snakes, scorpions, and birds.

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- Jesus was driven by the Spirit into this territory to be alone for His period of temptation and trial.
- F. Adam underwent his time of testing in a gorgeous and lush paradise with the freedom to eat from all the trees except one.
- Jesus underwent his time of testing in a desolate wilderness amid a forty day fast.
- G. Adam had the support of Eve during his testing, but Jesus was all alone in the wilderness.
- H. Satan’s point of attack against Eve was to raise questions regarding the veracity and trustworthiness of the Word of God.
- I. “And the tempter came and said to him. ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread’” (Matt. 4:3).
1. Satan’s point of attack against Jesus in the wilderness was against the words of God at His baptism, “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased.”
 2. Jesus understood the words of the devil as an attack against the Word of God and therefore responded with the Word of God.
 3. “But he answered, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”’” (Matt. 4:4).
 4. Jesus, the second Adam, would succeed where the first Adam failed by obeying every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God.
- J. “And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, ‘To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve”’” (Luke 4:5–8).
1. Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world without the suffering of the cross.
 2. Jesus rebuked Peter later for suggesting any course of action that led away from the cross and its suffering.

- K. “And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone’” (Luke 4:9–11).
- Satan quoted Scripture in order to continue his attack against the Word of God.
- L. Jesus demonstrated that one portion of Scripture must not be set against another portion of Scripture.
1. Scripture is the most important interpreter of Scripture.
 2. “And Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Luke 4:12).
- M. “And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13).
1. Satan departed and the angels of God ministered to Jesus in the wilderness.
 2. God’s Word is shown to be true in that He does guard the righteous with His angels.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the account of Jesus’ baptism in Matthew 3:13–17. How does the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1–9 begin to be fulfilled in the baptism of Jesus? Compare the language of Matthew 3:17 and Isaiah 42:1. If Matthew’s words echo Isaiah’s words, what does that say about Jesus?
2. Compare the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1–11 with the temptation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. What are the similarities and differences between the two?
3. Who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt. 4:1)? Why might this be significant?
4. Read Matthew 4:3 and 4:6. What is Satan attempting to get Jesus to doubt? What did God say in Matthew 3:17?
5. What is the same in all three of Jesus’ responses to Satan in Matthew 4:4, 7, and 10? To what does Jesus appeal in order to overcome Satan’s temptations?

DISCUSSION

1. In Matthew 4:8–9, Satan offers to give Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world if Jesus will fall down and worship him. Were these kingdoms Satan's to give? What do the following passages contribute to the discussion: John 12:31; 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4?
2. Matthew seems to draw a number of parallels in the early chapters of his gospel between the life of Christ and the early history of Israel. The baptism and temptation of Jesus, for example, echo in some ways the events of the exodus and wilderness wandering. If these parallels are real, what is Matthew attempting to teach us about Jesus?
3. What are the similarities and differences, if any, between John's baptism and Christian baptism? How would such similarities and/or differences influence our understanding of the practice of Christian baptism?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Sproul, R.C. *John* (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary)
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*
Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*

Jesus' Inaugural Address and Public Ministry

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Jesus' call on His disciples to follow Him was much more extraordinary than may at first appear. Jesus lived His life as an itinerant rabbi traveling from place to place teaching in synagogues and in the outdoors. As His disciples traveled with Him they witnessed supernatural healings and listened to liberating teaching. Yet the life to which Jesus called them was neither glamorous nor rewarding according to what this world values. Therefore He pronounced His beatitudes or blessings upon those who weep, mourn, hunger, and are persecuted in this life. For the momentary trials they would endure in this life would be nothing compared to the glory they would be given in the kingdom to come. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses Jesus' inaugural address and public ministry.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 4:12–7; Luke 4:14–6; John 2–4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe Jesus' appropriation of the messianic mission.
2. To discuss the difference between an apostle and a disciple.
3. To describe Jesus' revolutionary teaching in the Beatitudes.

QUOTATIONS

The Beatitudes come like a bolt out of the blue for any who think of religion as a sad and miserable affair. Maybe “religion” is. But the kingdom of God is quite different. In participating, we are the way God meant us to be, and so it is inevitably the happy life. And that is what “blessed” means: made happy by God. It is as if Jesus is saying that life in the kingdom with him is a life of profound joy, a joy that no person and no circumstance can take away. And this blessedness is not reserved for some nebulous future. It is for now! It is the mark of those who have really surrendered to the King and tasted his grace, although of course there is a future to rejoice in too.

—Michael Green

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil and then He returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.
 1. Jesus begins His public ministry with extraordinary teaching.
- B. “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read” (Luke 4:16).
 - Jesus functioned as an itinerant rabbi without a settled location to teach or sleep.
- C. “And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor’” (Luke 4:17–19).
 1. People sat on the floor in a synagogue in order to listen to a rabbi’s teaching.
 2. The rabbi would sit on a chair or bench in order to explain the Hebrew text and the worshippers would sit at his feet.
 3. Jesus read the text from Isaiah and then sat in the posture of a teaching rabbi in order to explain the text.
- D. “And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’” (Luke 4:20–21).
 - Isaiah 61 is the job description of the Messiah, and Jesus points to Himself as fulfilling that role.

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- E. “And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’ And he said to them, ‘Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, “Physician, heal yourself.” What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’ And he said, ‘Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown’” (Luke 4:21–24).
- This is a dramatic moment in Jesus’ life because He identifies Himself with the Messiah’s mission.
- F. Jesus selected His disciples at the beginning of His Galilean ministry after spending a complete night in prayer.
1. A disciple and an apostle are not the same office in the New Testament.
 2. Jesus chose many disciples or “learners” to follow Him in His teachings and travels.
 3. From His disciples He chose a select group of twelve to be His apostles or representatives that would speak for Him.
 4. An apostle has the authority of an ambassador representing a greater sovereign in order to speak or negotiate in his name.
- G. “And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan” (Matt. 4:23–25).
1. This is the setting Matthew gives immediately before Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount.
 2. Jesus preaches the Sermon after He has identified Himself as the One who is anointed to bring comfort to those who mourn, freedom to those held captive, and healing to the diseased and broken.
- H. “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’” (Matt. 5:1–3).
1. The Old Testament prophets delivered their messages through oracles of weal and woe.

2. Jesus adopts the form of a weal oracle to deliver statements regarding God's blessing or beatitudes.
3. Jesus speaks not of a superficial happiness, but rather a joy found deep in the soul.
4. Jesus turns the platitudes of this world upside down by celebrating those who mourn, the poor, the meek, the hungry, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted.
5. Jesus as the Messiah is pronouncing the fulfillment of God's promise to comfort His people as prophesied in Isaiah 40.
 - I. For each pronouncement of blessedness He attaches a promise for the future.
 - The prerequisites for blessedness run in dramatic contradiction to this world's values.
 - J. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).
 1. The trend of nineteenth-century liberalism was to remove the supernatural and miraculous elements from the life of Christ.
 2. Jesus was portrayed strictly as a great ethical, yet human, teacher.
 - K. The One who preached the Sermon on the Mount is not just sharing His wisdom, but is also declaring who will inherit the kingdom of God and who will not.
 1. He pronounces a blessing upon those who are persecuted for the sake of His name.
 2. Jesus is not just sharing facts in the Sermon, but is also revealing Himself and the kingdom He will establish.
 - L. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'" (Matt. 7:21-23).
 1. This warning of exclusion is the climax of the Sermon on the Mount.

2. Many on the last day will feign intimacy with Jesus and claim they accomplished much for Him.
 3. Jesus will declare that He never knew them and cast them away.
- M. The ultimate test for citizenship in Jesus' kingdom will not be if you know Jesus, but rather, *does He know you?*

BIBLE STUDY

1. In Luke 4:14–30, which describes Jesus' rejection in Nazareth, Jesus reads from Isaiah 61:1–2 while in the synagogue. The prophecy in Isaiah speaks of the salvation that the Messiah will bring in terms of the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:1–12). What is Jesus saying to the people of Nazareth in His reading of this Isaiah prophecy?
2. Read the account of Jesus' early Galilean ministry in Matthew 4:23–24. How might the actions of Jesus described here indicate a foretaste of the coming of the kingdom? How might these events indicate a foretaste of the reversal of the curse that fell upon mankind at the time of the Fall in Eden?
3. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus says that He has come to fulfill the law and the Prophets. Read Matthew 11:13. According to this verse, what did the law and the Prophets do “until John”? Does this shed any light on how we understand the meaning of “fulfill” in 5:17? How do these verses underscore the fact that everything the Old Testament foreshadowed and symbolized became a reality in Christ?
4. Read Jesus' words on anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and the love of one's enemies in Matthew 5:21–48. What does each announcement have in common? What does this commonality say about the authority of Jesus?
5. In Matthew 6:1–18, Jesus instructs his hearers on the subjects of giving, prayer, and fasting. What do his instructions on each of these three topics have in common?

DISCUSSION

1. In Matthew 6:25–34, Jesus speaks to His disciples on the subject of anxiety and worry. He tells them that they should not worry about food or clothing because God will provide. Are Jesus' words a blanket condemnation of all worry and/or anxiety? Are there any examples of “godly” anxiety in Scripture? In the life of Jesus? Does it depend on how we define anxiety?

2. What does it mean for Christ's disciples to seek first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33)?
3. Jesus warns His disciples about judging in Matthew 7:1–5. What three reasons does Jesus give to explain why we should not judge? How has this text been abused in our day?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Carson, D.A. *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*

Ferguson, Sinclair. *The Sermon on the Mount*

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*

Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*

Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

The Teaching of Jesus: Parables

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Jesus was considered extraordinary in His day because He spoke with authority. Even those who reject Christ as Lord and Savior today still hold His teaching in high regard. Profound content was made clear with illustrations and the parable was His favorite form of illustration. He used parables as riddles to trap His opponents or simple tales to encourage His disciples. His teaching revealed the mysteries of the kingdom to His followers and concealed its glory from the hard hearted. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the teaching of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 10–12; Mark 2–3; Luke 10–15

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To explain how Jesus taught with authority.
2. To define the literary device of the parable.
3. To identify important principles in interpreting parables.

QUOTATIONS

The parable form comes through in the Old Testament and was part of the teaching repertoire of the Jewish sages. So, by using the parable form, Jesus claims to be a teacher in the wisdom tradition of the Old Testament. We are to sit at His feet and listen to His authoritative teaching.

The parable suited Jesus' purpose for other reasons. It offered glimpses of realities that people were not prepared to understand in their entirety. Parables both revealed truths about the kingdom of God and at the same time shrouded it in mystery. The parable was the ideal teaching vehicle for subjects beyond human comprehension. Parables speak to us in a poetic language of picture images. The parables teach us about things we don't know by comparing them to things we do know in our everyday experience.

—Tremper Longman III

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. “When they heard these words, some of the people said, ‘This really is the Prophet.’ Others said, ‘This is the Christ.’ But some said, ‘Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?’ So there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why did you not bring him?’ The officers answered, ‘No one ever spoke like this man!’” (John 7:40–46).
- B. Jesus was known for being one who spoke and taught with authority.
 1. He did not speak lightly, but rather with substance.
 2. “So Jesus answered them, ‘My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority’” (John 7:16–17).
- C. The content as well as the manner of Jesus’ teaching was considered extraordinary.
 1. Even those who reject Jesus as Lord and Savior acknowledge Him as a master teacher.
 2. Jesus was particularly known for His parables.
- D. Parables are rare in the Old Testament, frequent in the Synoptic Gospels, and entirely absent in the gospel of John and the rest of the New Testament.
- E. Parables need to be distinguished from other figures of speech.
 1. Similes and metaphors offer a comparison between two things.
 2. A hyperbole is an intentional exaggeration to underscore or emphasize a certain point.
- F. A literal translation of the word *parable* is “something thrown alongside something else.”

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- G. The most important rule in interpreting a passage of Scripture is context, and a very important element in dynamic teaching is illustration.
- Jesus' principle form of illustration which He threw alongside His declarations of truth, were parables.
- H. Jesus taught long parables such as the parable of the lost son and the parable of the good Samaritan," but also shorter ones such as the parable of the blind leading the blind.
- I. Parables can often function as a riddle in situations of conflict in order to trap one's opponent in a debate.
1. The Pharisees debated among themselves who was their neighbor and therefore who they were required to love.
 2. Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan in order to surprise the Pharisees in their thinking.
- J. "And he said, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that 'they may indeed see but not perceive, and my indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven'''" (Mark 4:9-12).
1. The parables served the dual purpose of concealing and revealing the secrets of the kingdom of God.
 2. As in the day of Isaiah God had visited His day of judgment against those who did not want to hear His Word and therefore it was concealed from them.
- K. There are important principles to remember when interpreting a parable.
- L. A parable is not normally an allegory.
- Every element in a parable does not represent something else.
- M. Most parables are designed to present one single point.
- N. Many parables demonstrate the "rule of three" such as the parable of the prodigal son with three characters and the parable of the good Samaritan with three men who encounter the robbed man.
- The "rule of two" is often employed to draw a contrast in a story such as the conflict between the elder son and the prodigal son.
- O. A comparison using the phrase "how much more" is also often used in the parables.

- The judgment of the unjust judge is set in contrast to the judgment of Almighty God.

P. The primary motif of the parables is the kingdom of God.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the parable of the sower and the seeds in Mark 4:3–20. Is the focus of the parable on the sower, the seed, the soil, or the harvest?
2. Jesus tells a number of parables to reveal truths about the kingdom of God. Read each of the following short parables and name the one point about the kingdom that each reveals:
 - The Growing Seed (Mark 4:26–29)
 - The Wheat and the Weeds (Matthew 13:24–30)
 - The Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31–32)
 - The Leaven (Matthew 13:33)
 - The Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
 - The Pearl (Matthew 13:45–46)
3. Read the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37. Keeping in mind that the Jews viewed Samaritans as half-breed, unclean people, what is the significance of Jesus' teaching in this story?
4. The parable of the barren fig tree is found in Luke 13:6–9. Does this parable shed any light on Jesus' words in Matthew 21:18–22? If so, what is it?
5. Read the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9–14. What kind of prayer is Jesus warning us against?

DISCUSSION

1. In Mark 4:10–12, Jesus indicates that one of the reasons He uses parables is in order that some might not understand. Why does Jesus purposely conceal His teaching from some and not from others?
2. What relevance do the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (Matt. 13:31–33) have for our eschatology—our understanding of the last things?
3. Read Deuteronomy 26:13–15. What is the difference between what God commands His people to do here and what the Pharisee does in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14)?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bailey, Kenneth E. *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*

Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*

Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

Interpreting Parables

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

An important aspect of the mission of Christ was to seek and save the lost. The lost He sought were the unrighteous, the outcasts, and the spiritually bankrupt. Reaching out to such sinners attracted the scorn of the Pharisees and the shocked looks of the self-righteous. Hoping to explain His heart for the lost, Jesus told a series of parables recorded in Luke 15 designed to convey the Father's joy when even a single sinner is found and restored. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul interprets the parables of Jesus recorded in Luke 15.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 15–21

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To defend the variety of themes and formats among the gospel writers.
2. To explain Jesus' purpose in telling the parables of Luke 15.
3. To highlight the central theme of the parables recorded in Luke 15.

QUOTATIONS

Jesus' parables often have an unexpected or surprise element in them. Most parables project a familiar world, but then introduce some radically unfamiliar element, something unexpected. It is this surprise element which provokes a hearer into a reexamination of his worldview, and thus which is the 'main point' of the parable.

—Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The parable of the prodigal son is grouped by Luke in his gospel with two other parables about something lost and then found.
- B. The gospel writers will often arrange their material with different approaches, but the content is faithful to the original teachings of Jesus.
 - 1. Critics attack the text of the Gospels for repetitions and variant arrangements of the material.
 - 2. The gospel writers used various approaches to communicate their material including geographical, topical, and chronological formats.
 - 3. Modern writers and preachers also repeat important material in various formats and arrangements.
- C. “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them’” (Luke 15:1–2).
 - 1. The depraved and the outcasts flocked to Jesus’ teaching, but the religious establishment condemned Him and His teaching.
 - 2. Jesus gives a series of parables to express His mission to the lost and unrighteous and His rebuke of the self-righteous Pharisees.
- D. “So he told them this parable: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance’” (Luke 15:3–7).
 - 1. Jesus actively sought out the lost and those in need and drew them to Himself and did not passively wait for them to come to Him.
 - 2. It is important that the church does not lose the part of its mission to go out and actively seek the lost.
- E. “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:8–10).

- Jesus reiterates His theme: when the lost are sought and found then it brings great rejoicing.
- F. “And he said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living’” (Luke 15:11–13).
1. A “far country” is always the place we prefer to go to sin so that we do not ruin our reputation in front of those who know us.
 2. The son quickly wastes what it took years for the Father to earn.
- G. “And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything” (Luke 15:14–16).
1. The son’s degradation is especially poignant for a Jewish audience that considered the pig to be unclean.
 2. We often only seek the voice of God when we hit bottom.
 3. The prodigal’s father had given him everything, but he despised the gifts of his father. Now no one will give him anything.
- H. “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’” (Luke 15:17).
1. Spiritual revivals have often been called “awakenings” as people have been roused from their sleep to the things of God.
 2. The son does not come to himself by himself, but rather is awakened by the Holy Spirit.
- I. “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants’”” (Luke 15:17–19).
- The son acknowledges his sin and his unworthiness to even be his father’s son.
- J. “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20).

- The father does not stand back with a scowl and a condemning look, but rather runs to him.
- K. “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate” (Luke 15:21–24).
- The father gives the son everything the son does not deserve.
- L. The Pharisees are represented by the older brother in the story.
- “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ‘Your brother is back.’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the calf we were fattening and has prepared a great feast. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’ The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve worked hard for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the finest calf we have’” (Luke 15:25–30).
- M. The father points the elder brother to the significance of his son’s return and also highlights the self-righteousness of the Pharisees.
1. “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you and I are very close, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’” (Luke 15:31–32).
 2. Jesus told this parable to explain why He fellowshiped with sinners and to explain that He came to seek and save the lost.

BIBLE STUDY

1. The parables of Luke 15 are set within the context of Jesus’ conflict with the Pharisees about associating with tax collectors and sinners. How do each of the three parables in Luke 15 contribute to the overarching theme of good news for outcasts?
2. Compare the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:4–7 with Ezekiel 34:4–24. What themes in Ezekiel does Jesus pick up on in His parable? What are the similarities and differences between Ezekiel 34 and Luke 15?

3. What are the points of similarity and dissimilarity between the parable of the lost sheep” (Luke 15:4–7) and the parable of the lost coin (Luke 15:8–10)? Do any of the differences have potential theological significance?
4. Read the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32. Who is represented by the younger brother? The older brother? The father? How does this parable address the problem expressed in Luke 15:1–2?
5. What is the difference between the attitudes of the father and older brother respectively toward the younger brother’s repentance? How does Jesus use this story to invite the Pharisees to adopt God’s attitude toward the repentant?

DISCUSSION

1. Read the parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18:12–14 and Luke 15:4–7. Many scholars note the differences between the two versions and devote considerable energy to figuring out which version is closer to the original parable as spoken by Jesus. Is there any reason to suppose, however, that Jesus could not tell similar stories over the course of his three-year teaching ministry?
2. In the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4–7), what, if anything, is the significance of the 99 sheep who need no repentance? Is Jesus saying that there are humans who do not have any need to repent? Is He making a more subtle point about the difference between those who are obviously sinners and those who outwardly meet the standards of Scripture?
3. If the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son represents the Pharisees, why are the comments about the elder brother essentially positive? How does this help us to see that not every detail of a parable has theological significance?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bailey, Kenneth E. *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*
Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

The Miracles of Jesus

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The New Testament is often rejected as authoritative and inspired because of its numerous accounts of miracles. Miracles often accompany a new revelation of God in the Scriptures, and therefore it is not surprising that many miracles accompanied God's greatest revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus appealed to His miracles as credentials of His Messiahship and signs that He was endorsed and blessed by God. The resurrection of Christ was the greatest miracle of all forever proving the identity of Jesus. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the miracles of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 8–9, 14–15; Mark 5–7; Luke 8–9; John 5–11

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the relationship between miracles and divine revelation.
2. To identify the role of miracles in the life of Jesus.
3. To explain the use of the word “miracle” in the New Testament.

QUOTATIONS

It is my observation that Jesus is the ultimate embarrassment to philosophy. Acknowledged to be no less than a great teacher, religious genius, and man of fearless compassion, his life is co-mingled with such astounding events that it has become fashionable to try to keep Jesus human by editing out all taint of the miraculous from

the records. This attempt to distinguish the Jesus of history from the divine Christ of faith has not succeeded and seems to involve an intellectual dishonesty that does not hesitate to rewrite the data to support a preconceived theory. For the question ‘who was Jesus?’ can hardly be answered by assuming at the outset that he was no more than a gifted rabbi, thereby justifying or ignoring or reinterpreting anything that smacks of the supernatural.

—James Gustafson

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Rudolf Bultmann believed the gospel accounts of Jesus’ miracles were mythological stories.
 - The New Testament is often rejected as authoritative and inspired because of its numerous accounts of miracles.
- B. A multitude of miracles tend to accompany a new and significant revelation of God in the Scriptures.
 1. Numerous miracles accompanied the life of Moses in order to assist him in his monumental calling.
 2. Several miracles accompanied the lives and ministries of Elijah and Elisha.
 3. The greatest cluster of miracles occurs with the advent of Christ.
- C. Nineteenth-century naturalism denied the existence of miracles and twentieth-century neo-liberalism rejected their historical reality.
 1. Form Criticism examines the Scriptural text and seeks to identify the literary forms in which the text appears.
 2. Miracle stories demonstrate a unique plot pattern of affliction, healing, and resulting amazement.
 3. The first century believers were not primitive and gullible people, but were rather struck with amazement at the deeds of Christ.
 4. Christ’s enemies during His ministry claimed Christ performed His miracles by the power of Satan.
- D. Nicodemus understood that Jesus would not have been able to do what He did if He was not from God.
 1. The extraordinary nature of miracles would be lost if they were a common occurrence.

2. Everything that occurs in this world is by the power of God, but there is a difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary operation of the power of God.
- E. Jesus appealed to His miracles as credentials of His Messiahship.
- F. “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Heb. 2:1–4).
1. God bore witness to the identity of Jesus through miracles.
 2. “The primary function of the miracle in the Bible is to be the credit of the Proposer” (John Locke).
 3. Miracles prove the truthfulness of the one who is performing them and prove that He is endorsed and blessed by God.
- G. The word “miracle” does not occur in the New Testament, but rather the three words: “signs”, “powers”, and “wonders”.
1. *Wonders* are works that arouse a sense of awe.
 2. *Powers* are extraordinary superhuman abilities.
 3. *Signs* are events that manifest the activity of God.
- H. The resurrection of Christ was the greatest sign proving the identity of Jesus.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Luke 8:22–25, the account of Jesus miraculously calming the storm. What does this episode reveal about Him? How might this have challenged what the disciples thought they knew about God’s Messiah?
2. Read Matthew 12:38–40; 16:1–4; and Luke 11:16, 29. What are the people really asking for in these verses and why? Had they not been given what they asked for already? What do these verses reveal about these people?
3. After reading Luke 2:34 and 11:30, how can Jesus Himself be considered a “sign”? What did His presence signify?

4. What was a major purpose of Jesus' miracles (see John 2:11; 3:2; 10:25, 38; 14:11; and Acts 2:22)?
5. Building off of the previous purpose, what was the intended result upon the witnesses of His miracles (see Matt. 11:20–24; Luke 10:12–15; John 20:30–31)?
6. Read John 7:2–5. What purpose did Jesus not factor in when performing miracles?

DISCUSSION

1. Why is it important to see that Rudolf Bultmann's ideas on the subject of miracles are wrong? What is at stake?
2. Why is the resurrection of Jesus so central to His role as Messiah?
3. Considering all of what Scripture says about Jesus' miracles, what was the purpose and function of the miracles performed by the apostles?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Sproul, R.C. *John* (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary)
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*
Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*

The Caesarea-Philippi Confession

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is the central figure in the New Testament and in all of the Scriptures. He is the son of man, the son of God, and the long awaited Messiah. Yet Jesus maintained a certain subtlety regarding His identity while on earth and distanced Himself from the common messianic expectations of the time as a political and military figure who would bring deliverance from Rome. It was rather only to those closest to Him that He revealed His true identity and mission. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the Caesarea-Philippi confession.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 16; Mark 8; Luke 9:18–27

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To define the Messianic Secret.
2. To define the names of Jesus and Christ.
3. To identify and define the titles of Jesus given in the Gospels.

QUOTATIONS

Jesus did not ask this question to seek information. He was perfectly aware of what other men were calling Him. What He wanted was to prepare the Twelve for the question of all questions. What was their conception of Him? Had He succeeded in imparting to them any understanding as to His identity and mission? They had observed Him for

possibly three years. But had they discerned Him? That there was something unusual about Jesus was evident in their replies to His first question. But that was not enough. If the Twelve shared only these popular ideas about Him, then He had failed. But the time had arrived when He needed to know. And so, perhaps with baited breath, Jesus put to them the supreme question. “But whom say ye that I am?”

—Herschel H. Hobbs

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Jesus Christ is the central figure in the New Testament and in all of the Scriptures.
 1. *Jesus* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means “the Lord saves”.
 2. *Christ* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew title *Messiah*.
- B. The “Messianic Secret” is Jesus’ subtlety regarding His messianic identity.
 - Jesus most frequently referred to Himself as the “Son of Man.”
- C. The messianic expectations of the first-century Jews were of a military conquer or political leader who would drive the Roman forces from Palestine.
 1. Many Jews of Jesus’ day sought to establish an independent nation with the Messiah as their king.
 2. Jesus was reluctant to identify Himself with the messianic title because of all the immediate political expectations placed upon it.
- D. “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’” (Matt. 16:13).
 - Jesus directs this important question to His disciples.
- E. “And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets’” (Matt. 16:14).
 1. Jesus’ ministry seemed to resemble John the Baptist’s message so some people believed John had risen from the dead.
 2. Jesus was also identified as Elijah due to Malachi’s prophecy of the return of Elijah (Malachi 4:5–6).
 3. The most popular opinion was that Jesus was a great prophet.

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- F. “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’” (Matt. 16:15).
- Jesus now directs this very important question directly to His disciples.
- G. “Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt. 16:16).
- Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.
- H. The three titles of “son of man”, “Christ”, and “son of God” are all ascribed to Jesus in this passage.
1. The title “son of God” is granted to those who demonstrate obedience to the Father for sonship is identified by submission.
 2. Jesus identified the Pharisees as sons of the devil because they obeyed the Evil One rather than the Father.
 3. The title “son of man” is an allusion to the heavenly vision recorded in Daniel 7 in which one like the son of man comes to judge the earth.
 4. By referring to Himself as the son of man Jesus could maintain the secret of His messianic office and claim divine authority.
- I. “And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven’” (Matt. 16:17).
- The Holy Spirit illumined the mind of Simon so that he could identify Jesus as the Messiah.
- J. “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18–19).
1. The Roman Catholic church bases its belief in the papacy on this passage.
 2. Protestant churches usually interpret this passage to mean that the church will be built upon Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ.
- K. “Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ” (Matt. 16:20).
1. The fundamental mission of the church is to declare that Jesus is the Christ.
 2. Jesus encouraged others to keep His messianic mission a secret during His ministry.

- L. “From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you’” (Matt. 16:21–22).
- Peter cannot see Jesus as the Messiah and as the suffering servant.
- M. “But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man’” (Matt. 16:23).
- Jesus recognizes Peter’s words as another attempt by Satan to deter Jesus away from the cross.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Matthew 16. This passage begins and ends with references to the fact that no one but the disciples knew Jesus’ true identity. The middle portion contains Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ, which prompts Jesus’ promise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. What does this passage teach about the kingdom?
2. According to Matthew 16 and other passages, what misconceptions of Jesus’ identity were circulating at this point in Jesus’ ministry? How does Peter come to an accurate conception of Jesus as the Christ?
3. It has been suggested that the “rock” (v. 18) on which Jesus will build His church is Peter, Jesus, Peter’s confession, or Peter as a type for all believers. Which view(s) do(es) the text most clearly support?
4. What is the relationship between Jesus building His church on “this rock” and His giving the keys to “you” (in Greek, the “you” is singular)? Why would this have been important to the early church (for whom the Gospels were initially written)?
5. What is the significance of the titles that Peter ascribes to Christ in Matthew 16:16? How does Jesus fulfill the requirements of each of these roles?
6. What is the Old Testament background for the title “son of man” (see Dan. 7:13–14)? Why did Jesus use this title most often to refer to Himself?

DISCUSSION

1. Why does Jesus warn His disciples about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16:5–12? What were the primary characteristics of their teachings? How are these ideas present among us today?
2. In what sense does the church prevail against the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18)? What kind of authority does the church have on earth to bind and to loose (v. 19)?
3. In Matthew 16:21–23, Peter goes almost immediately from true confession to rebellion and deceit. What does this say about the nature of man—whether or not we’ve had the truth of God’s gospel revealed to us?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

The Transfiguration

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The glory of God is a theme of supreme importance in the Scriptures. When Jesus was incarnated as a man He set aside the glory He had always enjoyed at the throne of His Father and humbled Himself. He humbled Himself to take on the flesh of a man and humbled Himself even further to suffer and die as an innocent sacrifice for sinners. He was then exalted in His resurrection and ascension and today sits beside His Father interceding for His people. Yet the glory Jesus exudes currently was exhibited briefly to Peter, James, and John one day during Christ's earthly ministry. He gave these three a vision of the coming glory of the kingdom that they never forgot. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the transfiguration.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 17–20; Mark 9–10; Luke 9:28–36

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the meaning of the word *glory* in the Scriptures.
2. To understand the trend of humiliation and exaltation in the life of Christ.
3. To assess the significance of the transfiguration of Jesus.

QUOTATIONS

[This] event gives insight to these privileged disciples about where God's plan is headed. Jesus is not just a meek Galilean teacher, nor should he be seen as someone who merely calls on us to love one another, perhaps the most popular current image of Jesus. He is

not the equal of Moses, Mohammed, or Joseph Smith. These current popular perceptions of Jesus are a major distortion of who he is. He is the glorified and chosen one of God, who one day will manifest himself with all the glory that the mountain scene revealed.

—Darrell L. Bock

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Hebrew word for glory is *kabod*.
 - 1. The root of the word *kabod* implies “heaviness” or “weightiness.”
 - 2. The word conveys the idea of supreme importance or dignity in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- B. The Scriptures speak frequently regarding the glory of God.
- C. Jesus set aside His glory to be incarnated as a man and to enter His humiliation.
 - 1. The progress of Jesus’ ministry moves from humiliation to exaltation.
 - 2. The birth, rejection, and passion of Jesus were all parts of Jesus’ humiliation.
 - 3. The resurrection and ascension were parts of Jesus’ exaltation.
- D. Despite a general trend from humiliation to exaltation in the life of Jesus there are moments when the glory of God is truly displayed in the life of Christ.
- E. “And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them” (Matt. 17:1-2a).
 - 1. A *transfiguration* is a metamorphosis or transformation.
 - 2. Jesus’ transfiguration is a temporary display of the glory of God.
- F. “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light” (Matt. 17:2).
 - 1. Saul was blinded by the glory of God that is described as brighter than the noonday sun (Acts 9).
 - 2. The human eye winces to look into the brightness of the sun.
 - 3. Mark declares that Jesus’ garments became whiter than any fuller or launderer could make them (Mark 9:3).

4. Jesus' glory was not simply a reflected glory.
 5. Moses was privileged to see the back of God's glory in Exodus 33 and the Israelites could not bear to look at his unveiled face afterwards.
 6. Amidst the disciples' fears regarding the days to come, God gives them a vision of the glory of His Son.
- G. "And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified" (Matt. 17:1–6).
1. Moses represents the law and Elijah represents the prophets for both of these spoke of the coming of Christ.
 2. A voice from above tells the disciples to listen to Jesus.
 3. Jesus touches them and tells them to stand up.
 4. This is a turning point for the disciples and they proceed with Jesus on to Jerusalem.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Exodus 33:17–34:9. Why does Moses' face shine? How does this compare to the reason Jesus radiates glory? Why would this be significant for Israelites who were trying to verify Jesus' claims?
2. Look back at Matthew 17:1–8. Peter's reverence for Moses as the mediator of the law and for Elijah as a preeminent prophet is evident in his desire to build them tabernacles. How could Peter have known that this desire was inappropriate? What does this reveal about Peter's understanding of Jesus' identity? What does the Father's response reveal about Jesus' identity itself?
3. Closely examine Matthew 16:24–28, the prelude to the transfiguration. Is Jesus' coming in His kingdom the same as His coming in the glory of His Father? Why or why not? Do you think that Jesus has already ascended to the throne as king of the universe?

4. Shortly after the transfiguration, the account of Jesus and the temple tax is recorded (Matt. 17:24–27). How does Jesus identify Himself as the royal son of a greater kingdom while at the same time submitting to earthly authorities? What does this suggest to Christ’s followers in every age, who live as sojourners in the midst of the tension between this world and the world to come?
5. Matthew 19:13–15 records the famous event of the little children being received by Jesus. What does this passage plainly teach? What is it about children that Jesus wished to commend to those present?

DISCUSSION

1. Compare Moses’ and the disciples’ reactions to seeing God’s glory. How are they alike? How are they different? How does God respond to them in light of their reactions?
2. How do your views on whether or not Jesus has already ascended the throne of heaven, that God’s kingdom is already underway, affect the way you live, the way you perceive blessing and suffering, and the nature of spiritual warfare?
3. In light of Matthew 20:20–28, what is to characterize leaders in Christ’s kingdom? How does Jesus provide the perfect model of this through His life (and death; see Isa. 50:4–11; 53:10–11)?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

The Triumphal Entry

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The triumphal entry was one of the greatest moments in the life of Jesus. Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey amidst shouts of “Hosannas!” and royal proclamations, it seemed like Jesus was going to finally fulfill the role of the Messiah and overthrow the enemies of the people. At last Jesus would use His powers against the Roman oppressors. Yet if these were the expectations of the crowd they were bitterly disappointed a few days later. For Jesus had indeed come to defeat the enemies of His people, but He would do so through suffering rather than the sword. Misunderstanding Jesus’ mission, the crowd’s shout of “Hosanna!” would change to “Crucify him!” a few days later. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the triumphal entry.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 21–25; Mark 11–13; Luke 19; John 12–17

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the significance of the triumphal entry in the ministry of Jesus.
2. To define the meaning and symbolism of the word *hosanna*.
3. To discuss the relationship between the Apocrypha and the Scriptures.

QUOTATIONS

Formerly, during His public ministry, Jesus had, as a rule, refused to be openly honored as Messiah. Now, however, the moment has arrived when He is going to announce Himself as the promised King in the centre of the Holy Land so that the people can

finally take sides for or against Him. Nevertheless He is not going to appear with outward power, but will enter the holy city as Prince of Peace.

—Norval Geldenhuys

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The New Testament assigns great significance to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
- B. “And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, saying, ‘Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” you shall say this: “The Lord has need of it”’” (Luke 19:28–31).
- C. The triumphal entry was one of the first occasions in which Jesus identifies Himself with Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah.
- D. “This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ‘Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”’ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’” (Matt. 21:6–9).
 1. A dignitary is given honor when we roll out a red carpet for him.
 2. Jesus was honored by people placing their garments on the donkey so that He could ride comfortably.
 3. Garments and palm branches were laid down before the donkey’s path as a gesture of honor to Jesus.
- E. The crowds shouted “Hosanna!” as Jesus entered the city.
 1. The term can indicate exaltation or adoration.
 2. Palm branches were also traditionally known as “hosannas” and used to celebrate a great victory.
 3. The people were celebrating Jesus as the king who would bring them victory over their enemies.

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4. The crowd's shout of "hosanna" would be replaced with "crucify him" a couple days later.
 5. The people's expectations of a military victory over the Romans were not met and they turned their anger against Jesus.
- F. "As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples'" (Luke 19:37–39).
- Jesus was a threat to the religious establishment and the religious leaders feared His popularity with the crowd.
- G. "He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out'" (Luke 19:40).
- Jesus' kingship has cosmic significance whose rule extends over the entire earth.
- H. The procession of the triumphal entry begins by going down the Mount of Olives, around the Kidron Valley, and into the gates of Jerusalem.
- The people believe Jesus has come to conquer for His kingdom.
- I. The Apocrypha is a collection of books written during the Intertestamental Period that are not canonical or inspired books, but do have important historical value in helping us understand the New Testament.
1. "I, Esdras, saw upon Mount Zion a great people whom I could not number and they all praised the Lord with songs. And in the middle of them there was a young man, higher in stature than them all. And upon every one of their heads he set crowns. He was higher than the others which I much marveled at. So I asked the angel and said, 'who are these my Lord?' who answered and said to me, 'these be they that have put off the mortal clothing and have put on the immortal and have confessed the name of God and now are they crowned and receive the palms.' And then I said unto the angel, 'what young man is it that sets crowns upon them, and gives them palms in their hands?' And he answered and said to me, 'It is the Son of God whom they have confessed in the world.' And then began I greatly to commend them that they had lived so strongly for the name of the Lord" (II Esdras 2:42–47).
 2. The people do not wave the palms here, but rather receive them in their hands from the Son of God.

3. The martyrs receive the symbol of victory in their hands and a crown upon their heads.
4. The Scriptures confirm that those who participate with Christ in His humiliation will also participate with Christ in His exaltation.
5. The King who enters Jerusalem in triumph promises to share the inheritance of His kingdom with all of those who confess His name.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What was the battle context in which Zechariah 9:9 was written? In what sense was the triumphal entry into Jerusalem an act of war?
2. What actions and words of the crowd indicate the people's expectations of Jesus in His role as the Christ? What actions and words of Jesus in Matthew 20:17–21:17 indicate Jesus' own conception of Himself and His role? How do these ideas about His mission clash (or not)?
3. The crowd who welcomed Jesus did so by quoting from Psalm 118:26 and relating the words to Jesus. What in Psalm 118 should have indicated to the crowd that Jesus was going to be exactly the kind of Christ He turned out to be: a rejected, crucified Savior?
4. How does 2 Esdras 2:42–47 (quoted in the outline), while not inspired, nonetheless help us in understanding this event (the triumphal entry)?
5. How did Jesus' cleansing the temple challenge the very ideals of those who welcomed Him and thought He was going to defend Israel (Matt. 21:12–17)? Why was Jesus angered at what was occurring on the temple grounds?

DISCUSSION

1. According to the text, the people believed Jesus to be a prophet, but the chief priests and scribes wanted to kill Him (Matt. 21:11, 46). How did Jesus' presence challenge the chief priests and Pharisees? How did Jesus' kingship threaten their way of life? How does His kingship threaten your way of life?
2. Matthew frequently calls attention to the fact that Jesus' life fulfills scriptural prophecies regarding the Messiah. Remembering that the early church was in the midst of suffering, how do you think they gained confidence in Christ through this knowledge? Does this knowledge give you confidence that Jesus is the Christ?

3. Read Matthew 23:25–26. How are Christians often guilty, like the Pharisees of washing, the outside of the cup while leaving the inside of the cup full of self-preservation and self-indulgence? In what ways do you strive to look good on the outside while secretly hiding selfish motives?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*

Sproul, R.C. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke*

Sproul, R.C. *John* (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary)

Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*

The Cross

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Romans made thousands of people victims of crucifixion. Such a brutal and horrific manner of death sent a strong message to those who would consider defying the power of Rome. This imperial muscle flexing was done with efficiency and indifference to the plight of its victim. Jesus of Nazareth was just another victim for the soldiers. None of them realized that the very man they were cursing by nailing Him to a tree was taking the curse of sin upon Himself. The death of Jesus is central in the history of redemption. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the crucifixion of Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 26–27; Mark 14–15; Luke 22–23; John 18–19

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify various perspectives on the crucifixion of Christ.
2. To discuss the forsakenness of Christ on the cross.
3. To describe the role of God the Father in the crucifixion of Christ.

QUOTATIONS

Death by crucifixion was one of the cruelest and most degrading forms of punishment ever conceived by human perversity, even in the eyes of the pagan world. Josephus described it as “the most wretched of all ways of dying,” and the shudder caused by the cross as an instrument of execution is still reflected in the English word “excruciating.” Yet in the Roman provinces crucifixion was one of the customary means of preserving

public order, and the history of turbulent Judea is punctuated by accounts of men being crucified. So unimportant was the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth—from a Roman point of view that Tacitus—in his review of the troubles in Judea, comments, “Under Tiberius nothing happened.”

In Christian perspective the cross of Christ is the focal point of the gospel. Here God dealt definitively with the problem of human rebellion and made provision for the salvation of men . . . The account of Jesus’ crucifixion thus became the center point of the joyful tidings proclaimed by the church, in the conviction that the message centering in the cross was empowered by God to overturn the note of offense and the objections of human cleverness and to bring men into the experience of redemption.

—William L. Lane

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Crucifixion was the normal method of executing criminals in the Roman Empire.
 1. Thousands of people were executed through crucifixion, but only one victim of crucifixion has their death celebrated internationally each year.
 2. Jesus’ crucifixion is significant because it was the death of a king and His death provided an atonement for sin.
- B. Pilate viewed Jesus’ death as the elimination of a revolutionary.
 1. The religious leaders viewed Jesus’ death as expedient to reinforce their religious authority.
 2. The Roman soldiers viewed the crucifixion of Christ as just another death, although the commander confessed his belief in the Son of God.
 3. Few witnesses realized that Jesus was satisfying the demands of God’s justice against sinners on the cross.
- C. “And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’ Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, “I am the Son of God.”’ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way” (Matt. 27:37–44).
 - The gospel writers label the mocking of the crowd as blasphemy because Jesus was deity.

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- D. “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matt. 27:45–46).
1. Why would Jesus who was the perfect Son of God cry out from the cross that God had forsaken Him?
 2. Jesus is quoting Psalm 22 with these words.
- E. Jesus did not simply *feel* forsaken, but rather He truly *was* forsaken by God.
1. Jesus had to bear in Himself the full measure of divine punishment in order to satisfy the demands of God’s justice.
 2. Jesus became the most obscene thing in all of creation on the cross because concentrated on Him was the corporate wickedness of every man.
 3. The punishment of hell and the full measure of divine forsakenness was placed upon Jesus.
- F. “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (Gal. 3:1).
1. Paul proceeds to discuss the relevance of the crucifixion for the Galatian believers.
 2. “So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’ But the law is not of faith, rather ‘The one who does them shall live by them.’ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (Gal. 3:9–13).
- G. Paul elaborates on the significance of Christ’s death by referring to Jewish law rather than Roman law.
1. God outlined a series of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.
 2. The disobedient were hung on a tree as a curse; and Christ took this curse upon Himself.
- H. The Day of Atonement featured two significant symbolic acts.
1. A lamb was slaughtered to make atonement for sins.

2. The sin of the covenant community was transferred to the scapegoat which was released outside the camp.
- I. Paul looks at the cross of Christ as satisfying the curse of the law because Jesus becomes the curse.
 1. The symbolic acts of the Day of Atonement foreshadowed the work of Christ.
 2. Jesus was not stoned in accordance with Jewish law because such a death would not fulfill the law of God.
 - J. Jesus was handed over to the Gentiles in accordance with the prophets' words.
 - K. Jesus was crucified at Golgotha outside the walls of Jerusalem just as the scapegoat bearing the sins of the people was sent outside the camp.
 - L. Darkness descends on the land as Jesus expires on the cross.
 - M. The priests blessed the people of Israel with the following blessing.
 1. "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).
 2. The supreme blessing for the Israelites was the favorable gaze of God.
 3. The ultimate promise for the Israelite was the hope of one day seeing God's face in all His glory.
 - N. God the Father turns the lights out and turns His back on His Son as He has become the incarnation of human sin.
 - Jesus cries out regarding the forsakenness He feels as He experiences the full agony of God's abandonment and hell.
 - O. Jesus declares, "It is finished" and, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit," as His last words.
 - In the midst of His abandonment Jesus trusts His Father and drinks the cup of divine wrath for us.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What use did the blood of lambs and goats have under the old covenant? Consider the following verses in your answer: Ex. 24:8; Lev. 8:22–24; 14:14, 25; Zech. 9:11. What use does blood have in the new covenant (see Jer. 31:31; Matt. 26:27–29)?

2. Read Exodus 16; John 6:35; and Hebrews 9:13–15. What is the significance of the particular elements Jesus chooses to use during the Last Supper?
3. Much of John 19:1–16 is portrayed in what is called “dramatic irony.” Something is considered “ironic” if there is something the writer and reader know about a character that makes the events recorded more significant. Since you, the reader, understand John’s previous portrayal of Jesus as the eternal God who has become flesh, ask yourself what is ironic about:
 - a) the way Jesus is dressed in verses 1–3?
 - b) the charge made against Him in verse 7?
 - c) Pilate’s question in verse 9?
 - d) Pilate’s claim to power in verse 10?
 - e) who is sitting on the judgment seat in verse 13?
4. How is Jesus’ greatest moment of humiliation also a great moment of triumph? How does the cross fulfill the promise found in Genesis 3:15?
5. What do the dramatic events that occur in connection with the death of Jesus recorded in Matthew 27:50–53 symbolize?
6. What did Jesus mean with His words “It is finished”? What was “finished” at that time? What, consequently, was begun?

DISCUSSION

1. Looking over John 19 and remembering that the author’s reason for writing his gospel is so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name,” how does this chapter accomplish this goal?
2. Why does the announcement of betrayal shock Jesus’ disciples? How was Judas able to blend in with the other eleven over the course of His ministry?
3. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prays, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Consider an area of your life—both corporately as a church and individually as one member of the body—in which this prayer could or should apply.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*
France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*
Sproul, R.C. *John* (St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary)
Sproul, R.C. *The Truth of the Cross*
Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

The Resurrection

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The horror of the crucifixion crushed any lingering hopes among the disciples that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. Their despair was so powerful that they refused to believe the reports that Jesus had indeed risen from the grave. The reports of the women and the open tomb were suggestive, but it was too painful for them to get their hopes up again. Only the physical appearance of Jesus Himself and His rebuke about their refusal to believe finally convinced them that Jesus had indeed conquered the grave. The resurrection revived their faith in Him as their Messiah and gave them hope that they too would conquer the grave through Him. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the resurrection.

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20–21

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the significance of the Valley of Gehenna in Jewish thought.
2. To describe the reaction of the disciples to the resurrection of Jesus.
3. To discuss the appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

QUOTATIONS

Our Lord . . . deliberately staked his whole claim upon his resurrection. When asked for a sign, he repeatedly pointed to this sign as his single and sufficient credential

(John 2:19; Matt. 12:40). The earliest proclaimers of the gospel conceived witnessing to the resurrection of their Master as their primary function (Acts 1:22; 2: 32; 4:33; 10:41; 17:18). The lively hope and steadfast faith that sprang up within them they ascribed to its power (1 Peter 1:3; 1:21; 3:21). Paul's whole gospel was the gospel of the risen Savior.

—B.B. Warfield

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The resurrection is part of the exaltation of Christ, but probably not the beginning.
 - The nadir of Christ's humiliation is His death on the cross.
- B. The bodies of most victims of crucifixion were tossed into the burning garbage heap outside the city.
 1. The Valley of Gehenna became associated in the Jewish mind with hell.
 2. Garbage was dumped at Gehenna every day and therefore it became a place where the worms did not die and the fires would not go out.
- C. The body of Jesus was not brought to Gehenna, but placed in the tomb of a rich man secured by Joseph of Arimathea.
 - Isaiah prophesied regarding Jesus' burial saying "and they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death" (Isa. 53:9a).
- D. The resurrection is a central feature of the exaltation of Christ.
- E. "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:1-3).
 1. The belief in the resurrection does not rest simply on the idea that there was an empty tomb.
 2. The belief in the resurrection is based on eyewitness accounts recorded in the New Testament.
- F. "While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen'" (Luke 24:6a).
 - The announcement of Jesus' resurrection is one of the most dramatic in all of Scripture.

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- G. “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.’ And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them” (Luke 24:6b–11).
1. People living in first-century Palestine were not naïve and superstitious simpletons.
 2. The disciples initially rejected the resurrection report of the women who went to the tomb.
- H. “But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened” (Luke 24:12).
- The disciples are nevertheless curious enough to investigate the reports of the women.
- I. “That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (Luke 24:13–16).
1. Jesus was not unrecognizable to these two disciples, but rather the Spirit of God withheld them from identifying Jesus.
 2. The hopes of the disciples were completely dashed on the day of the crucifixion.
 3. The grief of the disciples hindered their ability to recognize Jesus after His resurrection.
- J. “And he said to them, ‘What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?’ And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’” (Luke 24:17–18).
- Cleopas is shocked at his fellow traveler’s apparent ignorance of recent events in Jerusalem.

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- K. “And he said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to him, ‘Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel’” (Luke 24:19–21a).
- These disciples grieve because their expectations of a Messiah as a military hero have not been met.
- L. “Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see” (Luke 24:22–24).
- These disciples do not believe the report of the women because they did not see Jesus Himself.
- M. “And he said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25–27).
- Jesus shows these two men how all of the law and Prophets spoke about His coming.
- N. “So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:28–31).
- As the disciples shared a meal with Jesus their eyes were briefly opened and they recognized Him before He vanished in front of them.
- O. “They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’” (Luke 24:32–36).
1. Most moderns consider the resurrection of a dead man to be impossible.

2. Jesus bore the sins of others in His death and not His own.
3. The Scriptures declare that it was impossible for death to hold Jesus.
4. Death could not hold Jesus in the grave, and the Father could not conceal His sinless son in hell without raising Him to life again.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Why is it so important to authentic Christian faith to believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Given that the disciples had been told by Jesus Himself who He was and what would happen to Him, why do you suppose the disciples were so slow to believe He had risen from the dead?
2. Examine the three supernatural appearances detailed in Luke 24:1–49 (the angels at the tomb, Jesus on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus in Jerusalem). What do the messages in each instance have in common? Are there any significant differences?
3. After Jesus' resurrection, the Jews spread a rumor that Jesus' body had been stolen and that the disciples had fabricated the resurrection story (see Matt. 28:11–15). What evidence in this passage refutes this rumor? In Luke's account, how many witnesses attested to the fact that Jesus' body had been stolen? How many witnesses attested to the fact that He had risen from the dead? How reliable were the witnesses?
4. How can Jesus claim all authority and power under heaven and earth after His resurrection (Matt. 28:18)? Why is this truth especially important as the disciples (and, by extension, the church) receive the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20?
5. What does it mean that Christ Jesus is “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)?

DISCUSSION

1. What is ironic about the despair of the men on the road to Emmaus? How does their despair indicate that they misunderstood much that Jesus had taught them? In what ways does your thinking reflect their own?
2. What are the strongest arguments you know against the bodily resurrection of Jesus? How do you respond?
3. According to Jesus, the Old Testament teaches about Him, even addressing His death and resurrection. As you read the Old Testament, do you look for these elements? What does Luke 24:45 suggest is necessary to properly understand the Scriptures? If you believe this verse, how would it change your approach to Bible Study?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*

Stein, Robert H. *Luke*

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*

The Ascension

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The hearts of the disciples were filled with sorrow upon Jesus' announcement that He would depart from them. They had walked with their Lord since the beginning of His ministry and the thought of His absence only provoked grief. Yet the ascension of Jesus into heaven was necessary so that He could prepare a place for them and then they could be reunited. The Holy Spirit would dwell within them in the meantime and minister to their hearts as a down payment of their future inheritance. Appreciating these promises and filled with hope regarding the future, the disciples were filled with joy and moved to rejoicing as Jesus ascended to heaven. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the ascension.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the grief and fear of Jesus' disciples at the Last Supper.
2. To detail Jesus' promises to His disciples at the Last Supper.
3. To describe the purpose of Jesus' ascension.

QUOTATIONS

The significance of the ascension is often overlooked in the modern church. We have special celebrations and holidays (holy days) to commemorate the birth (Christmas), the death (Good Friday), and the resurrection (Easter) of Christ. Most churches, however, make little or no mention of the ascension. However, the ascension is a redemptive event

of profound importance. It marks the moment of Christ's highest point of exaltation prior to His return. It is in the ascension that Christ entered into His glory.

—R.C. Sproul

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. John 14 is one of the most popular chapters in the Bible.
 1. “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going” (John 14:1–3).
 2. Jesus originally spoke these words in a context of fear and confusion among the disciples.
- B. “When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’” (John 13:31–35).
 1. Jesus forecasted His departure into death in the upper room, but His disciples failed to understand.
 2. Jesus told them to not let their hearts be troubled because He knew they would be crushed with grief by the humiliation of His death.
 3. Jesus assures His disciples that if they were living with a false hope regarding the resurrection of the dead then He would have told them.
 4. If we truly believed Jesus left us to prepare a place for us, our longing for heaven would increase and our whole view of heaven would change.
- C. “I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart” (John 16:1–6).

- The pain of Jesus' departure was the focus of the disciples on the night of the Last Supper.
- D. Luke provides two accounts of the ascension. One at the beginning of Acts and the other at the end of his gospel.
1. "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:4–11).
 2. "Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God" (Luke 24:50–53).
- E. The significance of the ascension is often forgotten.
1. The disciples rejoiced greatly and praised God continually upon the ascension of Jesus to heaven.
 2. The disciples were able to rejoice because they came to an understanding of why Jesus left and what He would be doing for them.
- F. Jesus ascends to His heavenly throne for His coronation.
1. He is invested as the king who conquered death on our behalf.
 2. The ascension is a cause for rejoicing for all Christians because our king reigns from now on for us.
 3. The task of the church is to make the invisible reign of Jesus Christ visible by our fidelity, celebration, and joy.

4. Jesus will return to consummate the establishment of His heavenly kingdom on earth.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Many people believe the resurrection of Christ is the high point of redemptive history. After studying the event known as the ascension, you might rethink this. Focusing on Acts 1:1–11, who is present in this scene? When did it take place? Where were they? What does it say about the progression of the gospel? How does the book of Acts detail the fulfillment of these words?
2. What did the Father promise in Acts 1:4–5? What power was to be received with the promise? What was the purpose for this power? How was the promise related to Jesus' ascension (compare John 16:5–16)?
3. Examine Jesus' response to the apostle's question about the kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:6). Of which kingdom did the apostles speak? On what did Jesus refocus their attention? Did Jesus say or imply that the kingdom actually would be restored to Israel?
4. Where did Jesus go when He ascended? According to Luke's gospel account (24:50–52) of this event, the disciples rejoiced at His leaving. Why would they do that? Could it be connected to where Jesus was going and why (John 14)?
5. It has always been a point of Christian doctrine that Jesus retained His resurrected human body when He ascended, though many Christians today make the mistake of associating heaven with all things ethereal (and thus that Jesus did not continue on in His physical body). What do the "men in white robes" say happened to Jesus' body? Given the rumors about the whereabouts of Jesus' body, why was this information included?
6. The two men in white (probably angels) seem to reprove the apostles for staring into the sky after Jesus. Explain their statements. If Jesus is coming back in the same way He left, why shouldn't the apostles stare after Him? Why do you think the men emphasized to the apostles that Jesus was coming back?

DISCUSSION

1. How does the formation of the church begin the period of the restoration of the kingdom? Through what means does the kingdom's restoration continue today? What event will complete the kingdom's restoration? Is it possible for the church to usher in the kingdom's full restoration just prior to Christ's return? Why or why not?

2. The ascension is important because it marks the beginning of the spread of the gospel and the promised empowerment of God's people. Do you perceive yourself as a fully empowered Christian? What can you do to stop disbelieving who the Bible says you are in Christ?

3. Why do the disciples feel compelled to choose another disciple to replace Judas (Acts 1:22b)? What is the qualification they seek in the man to replace Judas?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Dawson, Gerrit Scott. *Jesus Ascended*

Johnson, Dennis E. *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*

Kistemaker, Simon. *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*

Pentecost

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to His disciples came upon the early believers on the day of Pentecost. Henceforth the church was empowered and gifted to fulfill God's purposes on the earth. The pouring out of the Spirit on all believers was the fulfillment of a prophecy made by Joel several hundred years before the day of Pentecost. Yet one of the earliest distributions of the Spirit occurred in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses to the other elders of Israel. The Spirit that came upon Old Testament believers on limited occasions for specific ministries was finally given to all of God's people on the day of Pentecost. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the day of Pentecost.

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 2–9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the Old Testament background for Pentecost.
2. To discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.
3. To discuss the role of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost.

QUOTATIONS

The New Testament church begins with the 120 who await the coming of the Holy Spirit. When he comes, he opens the floodgates by addressing Jews “from every nation under heaven” (v. 5). In all the different languages of these nations, the Holy Spirit

through the mouths of his people presents the message of the wonders God has done. From these thousands of Jews who have come from numerous places, God adds three thousand to his church. God's truth is no longer confined to the city of Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, the church becomes worldwide.

—Simon Kistemaker

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The day of Pentecost was a significant event in the history of redemption closely connected to the ascension.
 1. “Touching His human nature Jesus is no longer present with us. Touching His divine nature He is never absent from us” (Christian creed).
 2. Jesus promised not to leave His disciples comfortless, but promised to send His Spirit to them so that He would be with them until the end of the age.
- B. “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language? . . .’ And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others mocking said, ‘They are filled with new wine’” (Acts 2:1–10, 12–13).
 - People were amazed because they could understand foreign languages as their own language.
- C. “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh”’” (Acts 2:14–17a).
 - In order to understand the supernatural phenomenon that occurred at Pentecost it is necessary to examine the Old Testament.
- D. “And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down” (Num. 11:1–2).

- The Israelites begin to complain about their circumstances in the wilderness.
- E. “Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.’ Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it and ground it in handmills or beat it in mortars and boiled it in pots and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste for cakes baked with oil. When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell with it” (Num. 11:4–9).
1. God provided the large body of Israelites that came out of Egypt with manna in the wilderness to eat.
 2. The Israelites begin to rebel in their hearts by longing for the foods they ate in Egypt even though they had lived in slavery there.
- F. “Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased” (Num. 11:10).
- God was angry that Israel had forgotten that He had led them out of Egypt in love with a mighty hand.
- G. “Moses said to the LORD, ‘Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, “Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,” to the land that you swore to give their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say “Give us meat, that we may eat”’” (Num. 11:11–13).
- Sometimes Israel’s leadership became so frustrated with the people that they asked God to take their life to be rid of them.
- H. “I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness” (Num. 11:14–15).
- Moses asks God to take his life rather than to lead the people anymore.
- I. “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that

you may not bear it yourself alone. And say to the people, “Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, ‘Who will give us meat to eat?’”” (Num. 11:16–18a).

1. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant and a charismatic leader.
 2. Moses’ leadership was exercised over the people by the power of God through an anointing of the Holy Spirit.
 3. Old Testament believers enjoyed many of the benefits of the Holy Spirit.
 4. Leaders had a special anointing of the Spirit that empowered them for ministry.
 5. Kings were anointed, prophets were inspired, and priests were consecrated all to symbolize the power of the Spirit.
 6. God decides to spread out the spirit that was upon Moses to the other leaders of Israel.
 7. At Pentecost the Spirit is spread even further to the whole community of believers.
- J. “And say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, “Who will give us meat to eat? For it was better for us in Egypt.” Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall not eat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before him, saying, “Why did we come out of Egypt?””” (Num. 11:18–20).
- God will punish the Israelites with such an abundance of meat that they will quickly grow sick of it.
- K. “But Moses said, ‘The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, “I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!” Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?’ And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Is the LORD’s hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not’” (Num. 11:21–23).
- The Lord reminds Moses that nothing is too difficult for Him.

- L. “So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it. Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’ And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, ‘My lord Moses, stop them!’” (Num. 11:24–28).
- The people realized that prophesying was an outward manifestation of the Spirit’s anointing.
- M. “But Moses said to him, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!’” (Num. 11:29).
1. This prayer of Moses later became a prophecy written down by the prophet Joel.
 2. The Old Testament believers received the Spirit only as a temporary empowerment for ministry.
 3. At Pentecost all believers receive the Holy Spirit to dwell within them always.
 4. Every believer under the New Covenant has been empowered by God the Holy Spirit.
 5. All believers are empowered by the Spirit with gifts, but not all have the same gift.
 6. The New Testament church is a charismatic church in that it has been empowered by the Spirit with the gifts it needs to spread throughout the entire earth.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What is the Old Testament background of Pentecost (see Deut. 16:9–12)? How does knowing this background make this day appropriate for the birth of the Christian church and the anointing of the Spirit?

2. Acts 2 makes clear the broad scope of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as well as the worldwide scope of the gospel's advance. In verses 4–11 and 21, what indications are given for this expansion of the work of the Holy Spirit and the gospel?
3. How do the events described during Pentecost show a reversal of the confusion of speech that occurred at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11)? How are the blessings of these reversals continued in our day?
4. In Peter's sermon, he explained the signs they witnessed in terms of Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled in the work of Christ. What fulfillment of Joel's prophecy is described in verses 14–21? What fulfillment of David's prophecy is described in verse 22–39?
5. What is the reaction of the Sanhedrin to the preaching of Peter and John? How do Peter and John respond in Acts 4:19–20? How does this inform our practice of obedience toward those in authority over us?

DISCUSSION

1. In light of the Great Commission (Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:18–20), how does the event of Pentecost apply to your role in the ministry of the Christian church in our day?
2. How does Acts 2:23, 36 show the compatibility of God's sovereign purposes and human responsibility for their actions? Though Christ willingly offered Himself as a sacrifice, in what way are we personally responsible for His crucifixion?
3. How did the early believers give powerful testimony to the resurrection of Christ according to Acts 4:32–37? What actions can the church take today to give testimony to the resurrection of our Lord?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bruce, F.F. *The Book of Acts*

_____. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*

Johnson, Dennis E. *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*

The Expansion of the Church

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Acts of the Apostles could easily be given the title of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit's power at Pentecost sent shockwaves throughout the early church in Jerusalem and in surrounding regions. The Spirit empowered the apostles to preach the gospel in Judea, Samaria, and gradually throughout the ends of the earth. Such rapid expansion of the early church led to significant questions regarding the role of the Gentiles and the Mosaic law. Luke's account in Acts is the story of the Holy Spirit leading, guiding, and protecting Christ's church in its earliest years. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the expansion of the church.

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 10–18

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To emphasize the primacy of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.
2. To identify and describe the four primary groups in the early church.
3. To identify the pattern of growth of the early church.

QUOTATIONS

These twelve have seen and heard Jesus and now tell others about him (compare John 1:1). Filled with the Holy Spirit, they begin to proclaim the Good News in Jerusalem (see Luke 24:47). Then they preach the gospel in the Judean and Samaritan countryside, and eventually they take it to Rome. Rome was the imperial capital from which all roads

extended, like spokes in a wheel, to the ends of the then-known world (cf. Isa. 5:26, “the ends of the earth”). In the third gospel, Luke directs attention to Jerusalem, where Jesus suffers, dies, rises from the dead, and ascends. In Acts, he focuses on Rome as the destination of Christ’s gospel. From Rome the Good News reaches the entire world.

—Simon Kistemaker

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Acts of the Apostles may be better entitled the Acts of the Holy Spirit.
 - The primary character in the book is the Holy Spirit who leads and guides the early church as it expands.

- B. The book of Acts was written by Luke as the second volume in the history of Christ and the early church.

- C. The book of Acts follows the outline of church expansion that Jesus detailed right before His ascension.
 1. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

 2. Jerusalem is located in the center of Palestine.

 3. Jerusalem was located in the province of Judea.

 4. Samaria separated Judea in the south from Galilee in the north.

 5. The apostle Paul spreads the gospel to the Gentiles throughout the Roman world.

- D. “And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1b).
 - Persecution initially causes the church to scatter beyond Jerusalem.

- E. “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).
 - Common church members traveled to local regions teaching the Word of God.

- F. Philip preached the Word in Samaria and encountered a sorcerer.
 1. “But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the great-

est, saying, 'This man is the power of God that is called Great.' And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:9-17).

2. The gospel advances into Samaria to the great surprise of the Jerusalem church.
- G. "At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God" (Acts 10:1-2).
 - Cornelius, a Gentile, is identified as a god-fearer in Acts.
- H. The early church had to face the question of how various groups would fit into the church.
 - The Jews, the Samaritans, the god-fearers, and the Gentiles were four groups that were a part of this debate.
- I. The early church began with Jews at Pentecost.
 - The Jews filled with the Spirit at Pentecost became the nucleus of the first century church.
- J. The Samaritans began to believe the gospel and be baptized even though the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.
 - The apostles accepted them into the church and laid their hands on them so that they too received the Holy Spirit.
- K. The god-fearers were Gentiles who had been partially converted to Judaism.
 1. The Jews required the god-fearers to adopt Jewish doctrines, undergo a purification bath, and be circumcised.
 2. Non-circumcised god-fearers were treated as second-class members of the community.
 3. Cornelius was a member of the god-fearers.

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- L. “So Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power’” (Acts 10:34–38a).
- Peter proceeds to summarize the life and ministry of Jesus.
- M. “While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God” (Acts 10:44–46a).
1. A smaller version of Pentecost happens for the Gentiles to show their equal inclusion into the church.
 2. The Jews were shocked that uncircumcised Gentiles were receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- N. “Then Peter declared, ‘Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days” (Acts 10:46b–48).
- Peter argued that if God did not withhold His Spirit from the Gentiles neither should the church withhold baptism which was the sign of the New Covenant.
- O. The gospel expands to the Jews, Samaritans, and god-fearers in the early chapters of Acts and then is brought to the Gentiles by Paul in his missionary journeys.
- The Ephesian believers also experience a form of Pentecost (Acts 19) to reveal God’s inclusion of them into the church.
- P. Luke details the story of the gospel reaching all four groups of people in the book of Acts.
- Q. The fiercest question in the early church was regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church.
- Christ became the hope of Israel and the Gentiles.
- R. The Spirit goes before the apostles to open the eyes of the Jews, Samaritans, god-fearers, and the Gentiles.
1. Pentecost is an explosion of divine redemptive power on the world and church.
 2. The hidden mystery of God’s church filled with His Spirit is unleashed on this day.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Why was the repentance of Cornelius so significant (Acts 10), and why does Peter feel compelled to explain his actions (chap. 11)?
2. What great natural calamity did the early church face in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27–30)? How did the early church address this crisis? How do their actions inform our own as the church in the world today?
3. How does Paul identify Jesus as the pivotal figure in Israel's history in his sermon at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41)? What is his point in doing so?
4. What dispute leads to calling the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15? How is the issue resolved? Why does the council cite Amos' imagery regarding the restoration to justify their decision (see Amos 9:11–12)?
5. Why are Paul and Silas accused of “turning the world upside down” in Acts 17:6? In what specific ways does the gospel turn the world upside down today?
6. How does Paul in his speech to the Athenians identify truths in their culture? How does he explain the fact that all truth is God's truth? How does he draw their attention to the truth in the gospel? Why did his hearers end up scoffing at him?

DISCUSSION

1. What is more difficult for you: to witness to your family and friends, or to a stranger? Why?
2. How are Gentile Christians urged to limit their freedom in Acts 15 for the sake of peace and unity with Jewish believers? Give an example of when it is necessary for one believer to limit his freedom for the sake of another believer.
3. Notice the unique signs and wonders that accompanied the apostolic preaching of the gospel throughout the book of Acts. How did this give credibility to the apostles' message and work in establishing the church?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bruce, F.F. *The Book of Acts*

_____. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*

Johnson, Dennis E. *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*

The Conversion of Paul

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The office of the apostle held great authority in the early church. The men chosen for this position had to meet very specific requirements because the New Testament apostle was God's agent of revelation who proclaimed the Word of God. Paul did not meet some of the apostolic requirements the church established, but he did receive a direct and immediate call from Christ, which gave him apostolic authority. That famous call came on the Damascus road when God converted the great persecutor of the church into the Apostle to the Gentiles. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the conversion of Paul.

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 19–28

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the requirements for being an apostle in the early church.
2. To describe the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus.
3. To discuss the significance of Paul's conversion in his evangelism.

QUOTATIONS

No single event, apart from the Christ-event itself, has proved so determinant for the course of Christian history as the conversion and commissioning of Paul. For anyone who accepts Paul's own explanation of his Damascus-road experience, it would be difficult to disagree with the observation of an eighteenth-century writer that "the conversion and

apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation.”

With no conscious preparation, Paul found himself instantaneously compelled by what he saw and heard to acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one, was alive after his passion, vindicated and exalted by God, and was now conscripting him into his service. There could be no resistance to this compulsion, no kicking out against this goad which was driving him in the opposite direction to that which he had hitherto been pursuing. He capitulated forthwith to the commands of this new master; a conscript he might be, but henceforth also a devoted and lifelong volunteer.

—F.F. Bruce

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Luke possibly wrote the book of Acts to give the church a defense of the apostleship of Paul.
- B. Matthias was chosen by the other apostles to replace Judas who had committed suicide after he betrayed Christ.
- C. There were three requirements established for apostleship.
 - 1. The individual first had to be a disciple.
 - 2. The individual had to be an eyewitness of the resurrection.
 - 3. The individual needed to have a direct call from Christ.
- D. The prophets of the Old Testament competed with the false prophets to proclaim the truth.
 - 1. An important test for a prophet in the Old Testament was his ability to articulate the circumstances of his call by God to the prophetic office.
 - 2. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos are zealous to record the events surrounding their call to the prophetic office.
- E. The apostles of the New Testament occupy an office that parallels the office of the prophet in the Old Testament.
 - 1. The New Testament apostle is God’s agent of revelation who proclaims the Word of God.
 - 2. Paul was not a disciple or an eyewitness of the resurrection in the same manner as the other apostles.

- F. Paul did receive a direct and immediate call from Christ, which gave him apostolic authority.
- The apostolic authority was confirmed by the other known apostles although his authority came from Christ Himself.
- G. “But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1–2).
1. Paul had a reputation in the Christian church as a scourge of the Christian community.
 2. Paul had studied under Gamaliel who was the leading teacher of his day and was the Pharisee of Pharisees.
 3. Luke gives a detailed account of Saul’s conversion in Acts 9 in order to show how God transformed him from a persecutor of the church to an apostle of the church.
- H. “Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” (Acts 9:3–4).
1. Saul was blinded by the shining light of God’s glory.
 2. The Lord repeats Saul’s name twice as a sign of intimacy.
 3. Saul is not asked why he persecutes the church, but rather Christ Himself because the church is the body of Christ.
 4. Anyone who assaults the church assaults Christ Himself.
- I. “And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting’” (Acts 9:5).
1. Goats were attached to carts to prompt oxen to move forward.
 2. Paul was kicking against the goads by attacking the church of God.
- J. “‘But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus

named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And he said, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ And the Lord said to him, ‘Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.’ But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name’” (Acts 9:6–14).

- Ananias reacts in fear to God’s command to go meet Saul.
- K. “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name’” (Acts 9:15–16).
1. Paul frequently referenced his conversion and his calling to preach the gospel and suffer for the name of Christ.
 2. Paul used the story of his conversion in his testimony before King Agrippa in Acts 26.
 3. Paul was obedient to the call placed on his life until the day he was beheaded by Emperor Nero in Rome.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Saul (later to be renamed “Paul”) was an accomplice to the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58) and had persecuted the disciples of Christ with great zeal. How does Acts 8:1, 3 and 9:1–2 give us insight into his pre-conversion character? Why do you suppose Saul took this initiative in persecuting Christians?
2. In Acts 9:3–5, who appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus? In verses 5–8, how did his disposition and plans begin to change? What had he gotten theologically wrong up to this point?
3. What purposes of God for Saul’s conversion are revealed in verses 15 and 16? How were these predictions fulfilled later in Paul’s ministry (Acts 22:21; 25:13)?
4. Moving on to the ministry of Paul in Acts 19, how does he engage in spiritual warfare in Ephesus? Why does Paul experience victory over the powers of darkness and the sons of Sceva experience defeat? How or why does this serve to extol the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 17)?

5. What miracle does Paul perform in Troas (Acts 20:7–12)? What is the common message in each of the following stories (1 Kings 17:17–24; Luke 8:40–56; Acts 9:36–43)? What purpose do these miraculous events serve?
6. What were the charges for which Paul was arrested in Acts 21:27–29? In what sense were the charges true, and in what sense were they false?

DISCUSSION

1. Comparing Acts 9, verses 1 and 4, we see that persecuting Jesus' disciples is the same as persecuting Jesus. What does this say about the way Jesus views His church? How does this apply to any persecution that we experience as His disciples?
2. Acts 9:31, 35, and 42 refer to the continuing multiplication of the church. In addition to the unique miracles performed by Christ through the apostles in the latter two verses, what four characteristics of the church are identified in verse 31 as accompanying the multiplication of the church? How can you apply these characteristics in your own life? In your church?
3. What are Paul's circumstances in Rome at the end of the book of Acts? How does he endeavor to take advantage of his circumstances for the sake of the gospel?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bruce, F.F. *The Book of Acts*

_____. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*

Johnson, Dennis E. *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*

Romans

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The book of Romans is one of the most treasured and studied books of the Pauline corpus. God has used this great epistle in the lives of many of His followers to bring repentance and faith. Some of those who have been so influenced are men such as St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley. The apostle Paul explores the depths of human wickedness, God's gracious initiative, and the consequences of His endless love for His people in this systematic presentation of the gospel. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the book of Romans.

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To appreciate the significance of the book of Romans in church history.
2. To outline Paul's presentation of the gospel in the book of Romans.
3. To discuss the practical implications of the gospel for daily living.

QUOTATIONS

It is commonly agreed that the "Epistle to the Romans" is one of the greatest Christian writings. Its power has been demonstrated again and again at critical points in the history of the Christian church. Augustine of Hippo, for example, was converted through reading a passage from this letter, and thus began a period of the greatest importance for the church. It is not too much to say that at a later time Martin Luther's

spiritual experience was shaped by his coming to grips with what Paul says in this epistle. The Reformation may be regarded as the unleashing of new spiritual life as a result of a renewed understanding of the teaching of Romans. Again, John Wesley's conversion was triggered by hearing Luther's Preface to Romans read, a preface, of course, inspired by the epistle. Nearer to our own day it was Karl Barth's coming to grips with the message of the book that ended an era of sterile liberalism and ushered in a more fruitful period of biblical theology. But Romans is not for great minds only. The humble believer also finds inspiration and direction in these pages. Romans is not an easy book. But it has always yielded rich dividends to anyone who has taken the time to study it seriously, and it does so still.

—Leon Morris

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Great theologians have been one of God's great gifts to the church.
 1. St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards were men of great learning, deep faith, and passionate devotion to the Word of God.
 2. These great theologians would all agree that the apostle Paul was the greatest theologian that ever lived.
- B. Paul was not just a great thinker, but also a missionary, pastor, and an evangelist.
 - He had a great understanding, a pastor's heart, and a passionate zeal to win people to Christ.
- C. Many theologians believe the book of Romans is Paul's magnum opus and his attempt to succinctly put forth the whole counsel of God regarding salvation.
 1. The book of Romans was instrumental in the conversions of St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley.
 2. Romans was known in the sixteenth century as the book of the Reformation.
- D. The central theme of Romans that Paul discusses is the imputation of God's righteousness by faith.
- E. Paul establishes the universality of man's guilt in the opening chapters of the epistle.
 1. All of mankind stand before God's righteous tribunal and are declared guilty.
 2. Justification by faith is the only avenue of salvation for the unjust.
- F. Paul explains that God has revealed Himself to everyone through the creation, and therefore, none can claim ignorance of the Almighty.

1. The universal response of the human race to God's general revelation is to suppress, stifle, and corrupt His revelation into some form of idolatry.
 2. All humans tend to worship the creature or creation rather than the Creator Himself.
 3. Mankind has also ignored God's inner revelation or human conscience regarding right and wrong.
 4. Jews disobeyed the written Law of God, despite having it written down for them in Scripture.
 5. All men, Jews and Gentiles, have fallen short of the glory of God.
 6. By the works of the law no man will be justified because no man obeys the law completely.
- G. But now a different righteousness is revealed from heaven which is the righteousness of God given to those who have faith in Christ.
1. Abraham is given as an example of one who was declared to be righteous by faith aside from any works.
 2. Those who are justified have peace with God and have access into His presence.
 3. The journey of sanctification immediately begins for the justified.
- H. The life of the believer is a battle to put to death the works of the flesh and to walk in the new life of the Spirit.
- I. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).
- J. Paul explains the theme of divine election in chapters 9-11.
1. Paul uses Jacob as an example who was chosen for the kingdom of God on the basis of God's election and not on Jacob's works.
 2. It is the divine prerogative to give or withhold mercy according to the good pleasure of God's counsel.
- K. Paul breaks into praise and doxology as he contemplates the depths of God's mercy and love.

- L. Paul discusses the role of gospel preaching as God's means for saving the world in chapter 10.
 - Believers are blessed to be participants in expanding the kingdom of God.
- M. Paul discusses the role and hope of Israel and his people's reaction to the gospel in chapter 11.
- N. The remaining chapters of Romans focus on the practical implications of the gospel for daily living.
- O. Believers are encouraged to have their minds transformed, to pray without ceasing, and to be charitable to others.
 - Believers are to submit to authorities because they are established by God.
- P. Paul closes his epistle to the Romans with personal greetings to many of those he knew in the Roman church.
- Q. The book of Romans is simple enough for a child's understanding and yet can keep the greatest theologians busy for a lifetime.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What can all people learn from creation according to Romans 1:19? But how do all fallen people respond to the general revelation of God? What is God's response to such people according to Romans 1:24–32?
2. The key verses of the first chapter of Romans are 16–17. If the gospel is the power of God towards those who believe, does that limit its effects to the non-Christian? How is the gospel the power of God in the life of the believer?
3. How does Paul expose the self-righteous elitism of the Jews in Romans 2? How does Paul define the true servant of God's kingdom in verse 29?
4. How does Paul seek to challenge his readers' thinking on such topics as the law, righteousness, justice, faith, and sin in Romans 3:21–31?
5. Make a list of the gifts we have been given if we have faith in Christ according to Romans 5:1–11. According to verses 12–21, what was imputed to us in Adam? What was imputed to us in Christ?
6. What is the stumbling block over which the Jews stumbled in their quest for salvation? How are both Jews and Gentiles saved according to Romans 10? What needs to happen for people to call on the Lord according to verses 14–15?

DISCUSSION

1. Read Romans 7. What was the power the law had on an individual before that person received God's grace? How does Paul describe sin as his behavior and not his primary identity in verses 14–25? Is this a good description of you today?
2. What is the analogy Paul gives in Romans 11 to explain how the Gentiles became part of the people of God? What warning does he give them regarding unbelief?
3. How do Romans 12 and 14 show us the practical implications of our justification in regards to our daily work, thoughts, gifts, relationships, and enemies?
4. Why does Paul command believers to live in obedience to authorities in Romans 13? How does the command to love summarize our obligations to God and others according to this chapter?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Moo, Douglas. *The Epistle to the Romans*

Sproul, R.C. *Romans* (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary)

1 and 2 Corinthians

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The city of Corinth was one of the greatest commercial and entertainment centers on the Grecian peninsula. The city was also known throughout the ancient world as a center of prostitution and licentiousness. A struggling church was established here by the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. Yet it was not long before the apostle heard disturbing reports about the Corinthian congregation. The church had splintered into several factions and had become divided over such issues as church discipline, food sacrificed to idols, tongues, and the resurrection. The Apostle to the Gentiles wrote words to the Corinthians to guide and instruct that are still important for the church today. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses 1 and 2 Corinthians.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 and 2 Corinthians

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the commercial and geographical significance of Corinth on the Grecian Peninsula.
2. To summarize Paul's instructions regarding the problems in the church at Corinth.
3. To discuss Paul's defense of his ministry in 2 Corinthians.

QUOTATIONS

Corinth was the biggest city Paul had yet encountered, a brash new commercial metropolis. . . . It squeezed nearly a quarter of a million people into a comparatively

small area, a large proportion being slaves engaged in the unending movement of goods. Slaves or free, Corinthians were rootless, cut off from their country background, drawn from races and districts all over the empire . . . a curiously close parallel to the population of a twentieth-century "inner-city." . . .

Paul had seen the Christian church grow and flourish in the moderately-sized cities he had found in Macedonia. If the love of Christ Jesus could take root in Corinth, the most populated, wealthy, commercial-minded and sex-obsessed city of Eastern Europe, it must prove powerful anywhere.

—J.C. Pollock

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, an extraordinary pastor, and a profound theologian.
- B. Paul was also a task theologian who could apply the deep truths of theology to the unique problems of the early church.
 - 1. Paul wrote letters to deal with the real problems churches encountered.
 - 2. Paul wrote about Christ's return to the church in Thessalonica and the confusion of the Judaizers to the Galatians.
- C. The epistles of the New Testament are generally arranged according to length from the longest to the shortest.
- D. Paul received very troubling reports about the church in Corinth during his third missionary journey.
 - 1. The early church was not as pure and pious as we often believe.
 - 2. The infant church was often immature and ignorant of the things of God.
 - 3. The letters from Christ to His infant church in the book of Revelation are generally not complimentary.
- E. One of the most troubled churches from the beginning was the church in Corinth.
 - 1. The city of Corinth built by the Romans was the commercial, entertainment, and immorality capital of the Grecian peninsula.
 - 2. The Corinth of Paul's day had a population of 500,000 people.
 - 3. Corinth was known internationally as a licentious city full of prostitution and idolatry.
 - 4. Paul and Apollos were significant leaders in the church at Corinth.

- F. The Corinthian church was riddled with corruption and confusion.
1. The church was divided by factions and groups paying allegiance to individual leaders.
 2. One church member was having a very public incestuous relationship with his father's wife and he was not being disciplined by the elders of the church.
 3. Christians were taking other Christians to court for lawsuits.
 4. The celebration of the Lord's Supper was being abused in the church at Corinth.
- G. Paul gives a brilliant exposition of the identity of the church to address many of the problems in Corinth.
- H. Paul discusses the role of charismatic gifts in the church because they were being abused by the church in Corinth.
- The primary point of 1 Corinthians 13 is that the gifts of the Spirit should only be exercised in love for the mutual edification of the entire church body.
- I. The apostles received their authority from Christ Himself and established churches in which they appointed elders and deacons.
- The apostles did not appoint additional apostles.
- J. Gifted teachers and leaders in Corinth were claiming apostolic authority apart from the church government originally established by Christ's apostle.
1. Individuals claimed authority and precedence over others on the basis of the alleged superiority of their spiritual gift.
 2. Paul wrote at least two, probably three, and possibly four or five letters to the church in Corinth to discuss unity in the body of Christ.
 3. Many scholars have unsuccessfully attempted to locate the "harsh letter" that Paul wrote to Corinth and refers to in the rest of his Corinthian correspondence.
- K. Many of the issues Paul addressed in his letters to Corinth were not resolved immediately and continued to linger for decades.
- Near the end of the first century, Clement, the bishop of Rome, exhorted the Corinthian church to read again the letters Paul wrote to them many years earlier.

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- L. A debate surrounding the resurrection of Christ was one of the most serious controversies in the Corinthian church.
1. Paul gives a spirited defense of the resurrection of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15.
 2. The great hope for the Christian is his participation in the resurrection of Christ.
 3. Paul explores what it would mean if Christ had not risen from the grave and concludes that believers would be the most miserable of men if Christ has not risen.
 4. Paul affirms the resurrection of the dead by stating that corruptible and mortal bodies will be changed at their resurrection into incorruptible and immortal bodies.
- M. Second Corinthians is Paul's most personal and autobiographical letter.
- N. Paul is drawn into a defense of his ministry by his critics.
1. "I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. . . . I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? . . . I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little" (2 Cor. 11:1–3, 5–7).
 2. Paul took a moment to boast about his credentials as an apostle against those who claimed to be super-apostles in Corinth.
 3. "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in

toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands" (2 Cor. 11:22–33).

4. Paul is not bragging about his conquests, but rather saying he has poured himself out intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically for the Corinthians.
5. Paul sets out a defense of his ministry before his critics, and says judge me from my labor.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What was the basis of the divisions in the church at Corinth? How does Paul attack the nature of these divisions by discussing the foolishness of the cross?
2. What immorality does Paul rebuke in the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 5? How does Paul want the Corinthian church leaders to handle this sin?
3. How does Paul refute the idea in the Corinthian church that our physical bodies do not matter and therefore neither does sexual immorality (see 1 Cor. 6:9–20)? How does Paul link worship, freedom, and obedience in this passage?
4. What stern warning regarding the Lord's Supper does Paul give in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34? How does Paul counsel the Corinthians regarding their approach to the Lord's Supper in this passage?

DISCUSSION

1. How does Paul define love in 1 Corinthians 13? How does contemporary culture define love? How does Paul's emphasis on love speak to the various issues in the Corinthian church? In your church?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 15. What are the consequences for believers if there is no resurrection of the body? What are the details Paul gives regarding the resurrection body believers will receive upon Christ's return?

3. What does Paul teach about the heart of a giver under the New Testament in 2 Corinthians 9:6–10? How will God respond to a faithful giver?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Barnett, Paul. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*

Hodge, Charles. *1 & 2 Corinthians*

Morris, Leon. *1 Corinthians*

Prison Epistles

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul endured a lifetime of persecution and periods of imprisonment. Yet even as he suffered for proclaiming the gospel, the apostle still contributed to the growth of the church by writing letters to the congregations of the first century. Four of these letters written from prison have been designated collectively as the Prison Epistles. The apostle's letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon contain some of Paul's richest theology and best wisdom for godly living. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the Prison Epistles.

SCRIPTURE READING

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the significance of Paul's call to continual rejoicing in his epistle to the Philippians.
2. To identify the role of the cosmic Christ theme in Paul's letter to the Colossians.
3. To discuss Paul's doctrine of the church in his epistle to the Ephesians.

QUOTATIONS

The outcome of the period of imprisonment is not difficult to assess, even though there may be some questions as to whether Paul was released or not. In spite of his confinement at Caesarea and at Rome, Paul's ministry was not ended. Through his assistants and

friends, who are mentioned in the salutations of his epistles, he maintained constant communication with contemplation, out of which came the priceless revelation of the Prison Epistles. His appeal to Caesar brought Christianity directly to the attention of the Roman government and compelled the civil authorities to pass judgment on its legality. . . . In the decade of the Gentile mission from AD 46 to 56, and in the four years of Paul's imprisonment, the church came out from under the banner of Judaism and formed its own ranks as an independent movement. It was now ready for even greater advances in missionary expansion.

—Merrill C. Tenney

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The apostle Paul endured a lifetime of persecution and periods of imprisonment.
- B. Paul wrote four letters during one of these imprisonments that have been designated collectively as the Prison Epistles.
 - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are known as the “Prison Epistles.”
- C. Philippians is known as the “Epistle of Joy” because of Paul’s emphasis on rejoicing despite one’s circumstances.
 1. Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit that should be evident in every believer’s life.
 2. Believers suffer the tribulations of this world, but still have lives characterized by joy.
 3. Paul expressed a contagious joy regardless of his circumstances and called the Philippians to do the same.
 4. The Philippians are urged to rejoice because the One who began the redemptive work in their souls will be faithful to complete it.
- D. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account” (Phil. 1:21–24).
 1. Paul longed to depart and be with Christ, but he also longed to continue ministering to the churches.
 2. Paul did not label this current life as entirely bad, but he knew the life to come would be even better.

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- E. “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:5–11).
1. The Christian church is called to emulate Christ in His humility.
 2. Christ emptied Himself of His prerogatives and dignity and became a servant on our behalf.
- F. “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: for getting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:7–14).
1. “The chief business of the Christian is to press into the kingdom of God.”
—Jonathan Edwards
 2. Paul is focused on moving away from the past and towards maturity in the kingdom of God.
- G. The Epistle to the Colossians has received less attention in the church, but is one of Paul’s great masterpieces.
1. The Colossians were in danger of a heretical invasion and conquest by an early form of Gnosticism.
 2. The Gnostics were a group of mystics who believed that they had special knowledge regarding spiritual things.
 3. Gnosticism was a syncretistic religion comprised of elements of Oriental philosophy, Dualistic religion, Greek philosophy, and Christian belief.

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4. Gnostics believed Jesus was more like an angel than a son of God, and they were involved in the worship of angels.
 5. In order to combat this heresy, Paul emphasizes the supremacy of Christ over all other beings.
- H. Colossians is a revelation of the cosmic Christ who is not just the redeemer of men or the Jewish Messiah, but the very expression or God Himself and the Lord of the universe.
1. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:15–16).
 2. The universe was created by Him, for Him, and is held together through Him.
 3. The Christian faith cannot be compartmentalized and privatized, but must always acknowledge the cosmic supremacy of Christ.
 4. Paul knew proclaiming the authority of Christ would result in suffering, but he also knew participating in Christ’s sufferings would mean participating in Christ’s resurrection life.
- I. Paul probably wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians as a circular letter which would be read in several different congregations.
1. Ephesians reviews many of the themes found in Romans.
 2. Paul discusses the nature of the church as the body of Christ and as the company of the elect.
- J. The doctrine of predestination is discussed by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.
1. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:3–6).
 2. God’s elects His people unto salvation according to the good pleasure of His will.
 3. God’s plan of predestination for believers was established before the foundation of the earth and was accomplished entirely by God’s grace.

4. “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:1–10).
- K. Paul describes the life of the Christian in the latter chapters of Ephesians and what it means to be imitators of God and to walk in the Spirit.
1. Paul describes the practical implications of the gospel for the husband-wife, parent-child, and master-slave relationship.
 2. Paul alerts the Ephesians to the threatening schemes of the Evil One.
 3. Believers are to put on the full armor of God in their efforts to stand firm against the Devil’s attacks and be imitators of God.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do those who try to earn their salvation lose according to Paul in Galatians 3:1–5? What was the somewhat unexpected purpose of the law revealed here?
2. How can we live our lives differently because we have become sons rather than slaves (cf. Gal. 3:24–4:7)? How had the Galatians lost their spirit of joy according to Galatians 4:15?
3. How does alienation characterize those who are outside of Christ (Eph. 2:11–12)? How does the work of Christ bring oneness and peace (Eph. 2:13–18)? What are the three metaphors Paul uses to describe God’s people in Ephesians 2:19–22?

4. How does being a member of God's kingdom change the relationship between spouses (Eph. 5:21–33), children and parents (Eph. 6:1–4), and slaves and masters (Eph. 6:5–9)? How does our relationship with the Devil and evil forces change (Eph. 2:2–3; 6:10–20)? Why is each piece of the armor of God necessary for our warfare?
5. Read Philippians 3. How does Paul define true joy? How does Paul warn the Philippians about the threats to their joy? Why does Paul warn against legalism (vs. 2–3) and license (vs. 18–19) in this chapter?

DISCUSSION

1. Why is Paul so thankful and joyful about the Philippians in chapter one? What common experiences did they both share? Who do you have a similar relationship with in your life?
2. What are the reasons why Christians should reject legalism according to Colossians 2:6–23? Why is legalism ineffective for growth and sanctification?
3. What request does Paul make of Philemon regarding the slave Onesimus? How does forgiveness and redemption characterize this story? In what ways do you imagine this letter was countercultural in Paul's day?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bruce, F.F. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*
Fung, Ronald Y.K. *The Epistle to the Galatians*
Luther, Martin. *Galatians*
O'Brien, Peter T. *The Epistle to the Philippians*
O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*
Sproul, R.C. *The Purpose of God: An Exposition of Ephesians*

1 and 2 Timothy

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The letters from the apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus are known as the Pastoral Epistles. Paul wrote these letters to give these two young pastors instructions regarding doctrine, administration, and false teachers. These letters also reveal a very personal side of the apostle. Paul knew the days of his martyrdom were approaching so he took the opportunity to shepherd the hearts and minds of the next generation of church leaders. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the Pastoral Epistles.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the purpose of the Pastoral Epistles.
2. To discuss the qualifications Paul outlines for church leaders.
3. To identify the significance of the Apostolic Tradition.

QUOTATIONS

The Pastorals provide insight for dealing with contemporary problems of heresy, divisiveness, and leadership difficulties. They are not a collection of rigid rules for church organization, but they are guidelines providing direction for facing problems and church needs.

The Pastorals are realistic. They present the churches Paul founded with all their needs, weaknesses, and shortcomings. However, they also present the mighty power

of God as a prescription to human failure, and they show this divine power at work in the lives of people.

The Pastorals provide encouragement. Despite the likelihood that Paul was facing death as he wrote 2 Timothy, he remained steadfastly optimistic. He was lonely, but he was vigilant, irrepressibly a preacher, and confident in the Lord. The Pastorals provide a picture of the early church as it faced error, greed, and moral turpitude. Despite these shortcomings there is a clear sign of anticipated victory and hopeful moral restitution. churches today need a heavy dose of such realism and encouragement.

—Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are known as the Pastoral Epistles.
 - Paul gives instructions regarding the ordering and administering of the local church in these letters.
- B. Paul traveled throughout the Roman Empire establishing churches and appointing believers to leadership.
 1. Timothy was probably appointed to leadership over the church in Ephesus after Paul's departure.
 2. Timothy was mentored as Paul's apprentice.
 3. Second Timothy is a very personal letter to Timothy as Paul approaches the end of his life.
 4. Paul emphasized the importance of pure doctrine to Timothy and urged him to guard against the false teachers infecting his congregation.
 5. Paul saw no artificial division between pure doctrine and practice.
- C. "This saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:1-7).
 1. The qualifications Paul outlines for church leadership seem unattainable.
 2. Paul is most likely using a literary device here called a *panegyric*.

3. A *panegyric* is a public oration celebrating the life of a well known person.
 4. Nobody in a congregation demonstrates these qualities without fail, but they are the qualities to which an elder or deacon should aspire.
 5. The church has long debated the meaning of Paul's requirement that an elder be the husband of one wife.
 6. Some have interpreted the statement as a prohibition against one who is divorced or a widower who remarries.
 7. Probably the best interpretation is that Paul is placing a requirement of monogamy on the elders and deacons of a church.
- D. "Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:8–11).
- Those who desire to be leaders in the church must aspire to these character qualities.
- E. Paul wrote 2 Timothy near the end of his life.
1. Timothy was a young disciple of Paul who replaced John Mark.
 2. Timothy continued with Paul on his missionary journeys and John Mark wrote the gospel of Mark.
 3. Paul wrote 2 Timothy as his final instructions to continue his work after his death.
- F. "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people" (2 Tim. 3:1–5).
1. Paul predicts that the church will backslide into false teaching and immorality.
 2. The church will have the outward appearance of religion, but lack a core of truth and substance.

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- G. “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from who you learned it” (2 Tim. 3:10–14).
1. Paul encourages Timothy to preserve the Apostolic Tradition which was a body of knowledge and practice handed down by the apostles to succeeding generations.
 2. Ancient Israel was likewise commanded to teach each new generation the law and the great things God had done in the nation’s past.
- H. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).
1. This is an important text for the self-testimony of the Bible.
 2. The Bible authenticates itself as the very Word of God and requires the validation of no man to be true.
 3. The origin of all Scripture is from the mind of God and not man.
- I. “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:1–5).
1. Paul’s apostolic charge to Timothy is to preach the Word with faithfulness, courage, perseverance, and patience despite the suffering that will come.
 2. The false prophets are those who preach to the itching ears of their listeners and proclaim only what the people want to hear.
- J. “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:6–8).

1. Paul was most likely beheaded during the reign of Emperor Nero shortly after writing these words.
2. Paul poured out his life and made himself a living sacrifice for the praise of Christ and the benefit of others.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What do you think the Thessalonians were worried about regarding those who had died in Christ? How does Paul comfort and instruct them in 1 Thessalonians 3:13ff.?
2. What encouragement does Paul offer the Thessalonians amidst their persecution in 2 Thessalonians 1:3–12?
3. How were the false teachers abusing the law of Moses in Timothy's church? What does Paul mean by saying that the law is not for the just or righteous in 1 Timothy 1:9? What do the just have if not the law according to verse 11?
4. What instructions does Paul give to men and women regarding worship in 1 Timothy 2:8–15? How can we apply his instructions to the modern church?
5. The letters to Timothy and Titus are commonly designated the "Pastoral Epistles" because they are addressed to individuals with pastoral duties. Titus was one of these individuals. In Titus 1:6–9 Paul outlines the qualifications for elders. What are an elder's personal and family life to be? What are the sins and vices from which an elder must be free? What are the virtues he must possess?

DISCUSSION

1. What does Paul teach Timothy about money in 1 Timothy (see chap. 6, for example)? What do you think were the false ideas about money being circulated in Timothy's church?
2. What are Paul's concerns as he approaches his death according to 2 Timothy 3–4? What does this reveal about the Apostle to the Gentiles?
3. Read Titus 1:16 and compare it to Titus 1:1. Can we consider a person a believer who claims to believe but who is continually disobedient to the commands of God? Why or why not? How does it affect the assurance of your salvation when you are in sin (Ps. 51)?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Guthrie, Donald. *The Pastoral Epistles*
Knight, George W., III. *The Pastoral Epistles*

Hebrews

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

No other book in the New Testament integrates the gospel with the Old Testament better than the book of Hebrews. The unknown writer of this epistle is relentless in his effort to reveal Christ as greater than the prophets, angels, Moses, and the Levitical priests. In fact all the ceremonies, sacrifices, and offices of the Old Testament foreshadow the person and work of Jesus Christ. In light of so great a salvation, the Hebrews are encouraged to run the race before them in faithfulness and perseverance. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the book of Hebrews.

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the debate surrounding the authorship of Hebrews.
2. To identify Christ's order of priesthood.
3. To explain the role of the lapsi in early church history.

QUOTATIONS

There is, indeed, no book in the Holy Scriptures which speaks so clearly of the priesthood of Christ, so highly exalts the virtue and dignity of that only true sacrifice which he offered by his death, so abundantly treats of the use of ceremonies as well as of their abrogation, and, in a word, so fully explains that Christ is the end of the Law.

—John Calvin

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Hebrews integrates the world of the Old Testament with that of the New Testament.
- The excellence and preeminence of Christ is emphasized throughout the book of Hebrews.
- B. “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. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs” (Heb. 1:1–4).
1. Many consider Hebrews to be an extended sermon or homily on the superior excellence of Christ.
 2. Hebrews demonstrates some of the highest literary quality in the New Testament.
- C. The early church debated extensively whether or not Hebrews belonged in the canon of Scripture.
1. Early church leaders included Hebrews in the canon of Scripture believing it was written by the apostle Paul.
 2. Modern Bible scholars do not believe Paul wrote Hebrews because of the literary differences between Hebrews and the Pauline epistles.
 3. The authorship of Hebrews is widely debated yet unresolved.
- D. It is also unknown to whom the book was written and amidst what circumstances.
- E. Some have argued the purpose of Hebrews was to counter the Judaizers or the Gnostics.
- Others have suggested the purpose was to inspire perseverance amidst persecution.
- F. Hebrews may have been written to address the problem of the first century lapsi.
1. The *lapsi* were the Christians who renounced their faith upon persecution and who were not faithful unto death.
 2. Hebrews may have been written for this group to encourage them to persevere and remain faithful to Christ even unto death.

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- G. Hebrews describes Christ as the greatest revelation of God and the brightness of the glory of God.
1. The majesty of the invisible God was revealed in the wilderness by the shekinah cloud that hovered over the Tabernacle.
 2. The brightness of God's glory outshines the sun.
 3. The Son of God is the brightness of the glory of God and the exact image of His person.
 4. The greatest manifestation of the invisible God was the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- H. Christ is described as greater than the angels in order to counter the Gnostic heresy that made Christ out to be nothing more than an angelic being.
- Christ is the creator and lord of the angels.
- I. Christ is compared with the old covenant and its mediator Moses.
- Moses was a faithful servant in God's house, but Christ is the lord of the house.
- J. Hebrews discusses the superiority of Christ's priesthood.
1. Old Testament sacrifices needed to be repeated continuously.
 2. Old Testament sacrifices and rituals were signs of better realities to come.
 3. The best and real sacrifice was made by Christ one time and does not need to be repeated.
- K. Priests were required to be Levites in the Old Testament.
1. Jesus was born into the line of Judah.
 2. Jesus' priesthood is from the order of Melchizedek.
 3. The priesthood of Melchizedek is described as greater than the priesthood of the Levites.
- L. Jesus is shown to be superior to the prophets, angels, Moses, and the Levitical priesthood in the book of Hebrews.
- M. The writer of Hebrews urges his readers to move on from the elementary teachings of the faith and grow into maturity.

- The Hebrews are encouraged to persevere and remain faithful amidst persecution and false teaching.
- N. The Hebrews are reminded of the rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness.
1. Their disbelief caused them to fail to enter God's rest.
 2. None can escape God's judgment if they neglect "so great a salvation" as we have in Christ.
- O. All religions are not equal and salvation is only to be found in faith in Jesus Christ.
- P. Hebrews 11 celebrates those in the Old Testament who persevered and lived by faith.
- Q. The Hebrews are encouraged to persevere in faith until the end.

BIBLE STUDY

1. What is God's greatest means of speaking to His children in the latter days according to Hebrews 1:1–3? What honors has God given Jesus that make Him greater than the angels according to Hebrews 1?
2. Why does Jesus qualify to raise believers up as His brothers and sisters (Heb. 2, 5)? How did He become like us? How do we become like Him?
3. What was the rest promised to the people of God in the wilderness (Heb. 3–4)? Why did they fail to receive it? What is the new place of rest promised to the people of God? How is it possible for us to fail to receive it?
4. How is the priesthood of Melchizedek superior to that of the Levites (Heb. 7)? Why is it significant that Jesus comes from this line of priests?
5. How is the new covenant superior to the old covenant in the following areas: priesthood, sacrifice, intercession, sanctuary, promises, forgiveness?
6. What privilege have we been granted through the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19–22)? How should we live in response to this privilege?

DISCUSSION

1. Why is the spiritual growth of the Hebrews stalled according to chapter 6? What is the writer's desire for the spiritually sluggish Hebrews? How might this speak to our lives today?

2. What role does the faith chapter of Hebrews 11 play in the writer's argument? After reading the book of Hebrews, who can we conclude are those who receive God's approval?
3. How does the author of Hebrews contrast two mountains in Hebrews 12:18–24? What is the significance of this contrast for believers?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Lane, William. *Hebrews*

Owen, John. *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*

General Epistles

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude are known as the General Epistles. These letters were most likely written to circulate among several congregations and not a specific church. It is difficult to determine the audience for whom some of these letters were originally written, but each of these books are relevant for the modern church. The author of Hebrew's celebration of Christ, Peter and Jude's call to faithfulness, and John's call to love one another are messages that still need to be heard by the church today. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the General Epistles.

SCRIPTURE READING

James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the book of James as an example of New Testament wisdom literature.
2. To explain the role of suffering in the epistles of Peter.
3. To identify the heresy John refutes in his epistles.

QUOTATIONS

Such evidence as survives from the last four decades of the first century reveals that the churches were “by heresies distressed” as well as “by schisms rent asunder.” Digressions from truth occurred in every direction and constant vigilance was necessary if the Christians were to keep their faith pure.

Five short epistles, 2 Peter, Jude, 1, 2, and 3 John, were written to cope with these trends toward false doctrines within the church. Controversy was not their sole aim, nor was their subject matter devoted entirely to attacking heresy. Their approach was positive rather than negative, as their outlines will show. They were, however, all colored by the dangers of the times, in which the church was threatened quite as much by the subtle infiltration of paganism into its thinking as by the frontal attacks of persecution from without.

—Merrill C. Tenney

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude are known as the General Epistles.
 - These letters were written most likely to circulate among several congregations and were not written to a specific church.
- B. The book of James is considered to be the only New Testament example of wisdom literature.
 1. James exudes a style that harkens back to Jewish wisdom literature.
 2. The author of the book of James was probably also the brother of Jesus.
 3. James presided over the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15.
 4. He apparently did not believe in the messianic mission of Jesus originally, but later became a leader in the Jerusalem church and was known as James the Just.
- C. The book of James cites aphorisms that reflect the teaching of Jesus more frequently than any other New Testament epistle.
 - It is possible that James records some of Jesus' teaching that was not recorded in the Gospels.
- D. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:1–8).

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1. The purpose of our struggles is sanctification and our posture towards our struggles is wisdom.
 2. Jewish wisdom emphasized practical advice on how to live a godly life.
- E. James emphasizes the role of works as the natural expression of our faith.
1. Believers enjoy a royal liberty to obey Christ as they are not under the law.
 2. The freedom of the Christian is not a license to sin, but rather a freedom to walk in the Spirit in obedience to Christ.
- F. James particularly warns against the perils of an ungoverned tongue.
1. The tongue is like the rudder of a great ship which as a small component it can steer the entire vessel.
 2. The tongue is also compared to a spark that ignites a forest and an animal that cannot be tamed.
- G. James encourages his readers to remember that the continual prayers of the righteous do not go unheeded by the Lord.
- He closes his epistle reminding his readers that believers must be people of their word.
- H. Peter encourages his readers to remain faithful amidst persecution in his two epistles.
1. The health-and-wealth gospel is a betrayal of the truths of Scripture.
 2. Believing in Jesus does not guarantee immediate prosperity and health.
 3. The question for the believer is not *if* they will suffer, but rather *when* will they suffer for the sake of the kingdom.
- I. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3–5).
1. God has given us a new birth that comes with a heavenly inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and guaranteed.
 2. Believers rejoice in a heavenly treasure, promise, and inheritance rather than an earthly reward.

3. “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:6–9).
1. The purpose of our sufferings is not to destroy us, but rather to refine our souls.
2. God is using our pain for our purification and sanctification.
- J. “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Peter 4:12–14).
 - God is not punishing us when we endure affliction, but rather promises His presence amidst our tribulations.
- K. A primary theme in the epistles of John is loving one another within the body of Christ.
- L. John is also concerned like Peter about the invasion of heresy into the church.
 - He warns the church against the spirit of the antichrist that is already working within the world.
- M. John is writing against the heresy of Docetism which as an offshoot of Gnosticism denied the human nature of Christ.
 1. Some of the Greeks believed matter and human nature were evil and that God would never take on human flesh.
 2. It is important that Christians affirm the deity and the humanity of Christ as Savior.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Why is it important to James to emphasize good works in 2:14–26? How can we reconcile these verses with Paul’s words in Galatians 3:10–14 and Romans 3:21–22?

2. Many have identified the book of James with the genre of “wisdom literature” found in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, making it very proverbial in its application. Others have claimed that this book is formal doctrinal teaching, like Ephesians or Romans, making its application very straightforward. How do these two views affect the meaning of James 3:1 and the rest of the chapter as it focuses on the tongue and the heart it reveals?
3. In 1 Peter 1:3–4, Peter tells us something about our hope. Why do believers have hope? What kind of inheritance do believers have? In verses 5–9 he address the problem of enduring through trials. Why are believers able to greatly rejoice even in the midst of trials and suffering?
4. What were the false teachers saying about the second coming of Christ according to 2 Peter 3? Why does Peter discuss the Flood in this passage? What is God waiting for before the Last Judgment?
5. Read 1 John 1:1–4. Why do you suppose it was important for John to open his letter in this manner, discussing as he does, the fact that the “Word of life” was not merely seen or heard but “touched with hands”?

DISCUSSION

1. How does Peter describe the identity of Christ and believers using temple imagery in 1 Peter 2:4–12? What responsibilities come with the identity believers have been given? Similarly, what does it mean in 2 Peter 1:4 to share God’s promises and His divine nature? How should remembering our inheritance impact our daily living?
2. In 1 John 1:9, the author says in effect that if we confess our sins to God, He, being faithful and consistent, will do what is right (just), He will “forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Why do you think that this is “right” for God to do? What do you think God is being faithful to when He does forgive sins?
3. Why can believers rejoice in the destruction of the wicked that Jude describes? What role do the wicked play in God’s plan of redemption?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Kruse, Colin G. *The Letters of John*
Moo, Douglas J. *2 Peter, Jude*
_____. *The Letter of James*

Introduction to Revelation

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Eschatology is the study of the “last things” or end times. It is one of the most exciting, but also one of the most difficult fields of theological study. The book of Revelation is one of the most important resources we have for understanding eschatology. Even though its symbols, characters, and events can be difficult to understand, its pages contain God’s encouragement for His people during times of persecution and trial. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul introduces the book of Revelation.

SCRIPTURE READING

Revelation 1–3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To show the significance of eschatology and apocalyptic literature for God’s people.
2. To identify four common approaches to the book of Revelation.
3. To examine the evidence available for dating the book of Revelation.

QUOTATIONS

In some ways, Revelation is the outworking of what Jesus told Peter, “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). If these words from Matthew comprise the still photograph, the Book of Revelation is the movie. In a day when the visual and cinematic take precedence over the written word, the genre of Revelation seems particularly suitable.

Revelation is a book of pictures designed to appeal to the visual senses. As we turn over

its pages, we are meant to be overwhelmed by its descriptions of the Savior. Noting, that the prevailing command in the book is not “Listen!” but “Look!” we are being introduced to the idea that Revelation is about pictures as well as about words.

—Derek Thomas

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. *Eschatology* is the study of the “last things” or end times.
 - 1. Eschatology includes study of the *parousia* or “appearing” of Christ, the rapture, resurrection, the antichrist, heaven, and hell.
 - 2. The *eschaton* is the last age highlighted by the consummation of the kingdom of God.
 - 3. It is difficult to establish a scholarly consensus regarding prophecies of the end times.
- B. Eschatological prophecies are presented in Scripture in many figures and symbols known as apocalyptic literature.
 - 1. The book of Revelation is also known as the apocalypse.
 - 2. *Apocalypse* means “revealing” or “unveiling”.
 - 3. Some scholars have argued apocalyptic literature was written in code during times of persecution in order to secretly communicate.
- C. The best method for interpreting the symbols and signs of apocalyptic literature is to interpret them in light of the rest of Scripture.
- D. There are many schools of thought for interpreting the Apocalypse including premillennialism, postmillennialism, amillennialism, post-tribulationism, midtribulationism, and pre-tribulationism.
- E. There are four primary approaches to the book of Revelation.
 - 1. *The Preterist* view argues the prophecies of the book focus primarily on events of the first century and particularly the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - 2. *The Futurist* view argues the prophecies of the book will be fulfilled near the second coming of Christ and therefore have not yet occurred.
 - 3. *The Historicist* view argues the prophecies of the book are chronologically being fulfilled over the course of church history and will be climaxed with the return of Christ.

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4. *The Idealist* view argues the prophecies are symbols of the ongoing struggle between God and Satan throughout church history.
- F. The interpretive approach one adopts for reading the book of Revelation will affect one's understanding of the book.
 - G. Evangelical scholars generally agree that the book of Revelation was written by the apostle John.
 - John was the last of Jesus' original twelve disciples and the only one to die a natural death.
 - H. Establishing the date of composition for the book of Revelation is a very significant question that will affect an interpretation of the book.
 - I. The traditional date of the book of Revelation was the late 90s AD.
 1. Some modern scholars have argued the book was written in the 60s AD.
 2. Dating the book of Revelation before or after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD has a significant impact on an interpretation of the book.
 - J. There are two types of evidence scholars examine in order to date a piece of writing.
 1. External evidence examines information outside of the document for establishing a composition date.
 2. Internal evidence examines the information provided by the document itself for establishing a composition date.
 - K. There is significant external evidence that helps scholars date the book of Revelation.
 - Ireneus dated the book during the reign of Domitian who ruled in the last decade of the first century.
 - L. The book of Revelation also provides internal evidence that helps scholars establish a composition date for the book.
 - There are many chronological references in the book of Revelation.
 - M. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near" (Rev. 1:1-3).

1. Two time references are included in this passage.
 2. John is recording events that are near and will soon come to pass.
 3. Various scholars have interpreted these words in a very strict or loose manner.
 4. The relationship between the destruction of the temple and the composition of Revelation is difficult to resolve.
- N. “This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction” (Rev. 17:9–11).
- Some interpreters believe this passage forecasts the rise and fall of Emperor Nero and his persecution against the church.
- O. The book of Revelation has been a source of encouragement for the people of God during periods of persecution throughout the ages.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Who are the individuals involved in transmitting the book of Revelation according to Revelation 1:1–2? To what audience was this writing originally directed?
2. What is the promise and the warning Revelation gives regarding itself in Revelation 1:3 and 22:18–19? How does this affect our doctrine of Scripture (what parameters does it provide)?
3. John describes Jesus as the “ruler of the kings of the earth” in Revelation 1:5, and the Father is described as “Alpha and Omega Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come” in 1:8. How may these descriptions have been interpreted by the original audience who were enduring political persecution for their faith? How might these descriptions of God influence your perception of suffering?
4. How does John describe each member of the Trinity in Revelation 1:4–8? Since seven is commonly thought to be a symbolic number in Semitic culture indicating perfection, why might John have described the Holy Spirit as “seven spirits” or the “sevenfold Spirit”?
5. Reading through all seven letters found in Revelation, how does Christ Jesus commend and rebuke each of the churches mentioned therein?

DISCUSSION

1. How does Jesus' self-identification in Revelation 1:17 compare to the Father's identification in Revelation 1:8? How are they different and similar? Also compare this to Jesus' self designation in Revelation 22:12–13. What does this indicate about the identity of the Father and the Son?
2. What are the promises Christ gives to those who overcome in each of the churches? How are the promises simultaneously a present reality and a future expectation?
3. In Revelation 5:10, what roles do those who are purchased by the blood of the Lamb fill? How might this give meaning to your Christian identity and service?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Beale, G.K. *The Book of Revelation*

Johnson, Dennis E. *Triumph of the Lamb*

Pate, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*

The Christ of Revelation

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The triumph of Jesus Christ and His kingdom is the story of all of Scripture. Nowhere is this message as clear as in the book of Revelation. John describes Christ as the victor over the grave in chapter one, the vengeful harvester in chapter fourteen, and the divine conqueror in chapter nineteen. Yet perhaps John's most surprising image of Christ occurs in chapter five where the Savior is depicted as a slain lamb. Only the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is worthy to open God's scroll of judgment against the wicked. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the Christ of Revelation.

SCRIPTURE READING

Revelation 4-11

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the Old Testament background of the book of Revelation.
2. To explain John's vision of heaven in Revelation chapter five.
3. To highlight the theme of Christ's victory in Revelation.

QUOTATIONS

The purpose of the Apocalypse is to encourage and comfort believers in their struggle against Satan and his cohorts. The book divulges that in this conflict between Christ and Satan, Christ is the victor and Satan the vanquished. Even though Satan and his army wage war against the saints on earth, who endure suffering, oppression, persecution,

and death, Christ is victorious. It is Christ who encourages his people to withstand the onslaughts of the evil one, for they too will reign with Christ and will be seated with him on his throne. Jesus extends comfort to all believers, for God sees their tears and wipes them away. God listens to their prayers and in response he will influence the course of history. Saints who die in the Lord are called blessed, for their good deeds are not forgotten. The blood of martyrs will be avenged; saints clothed in white apparel are present at the wedding of the Lamb; and they will reign with Christ forever.

—Simon Kistemaker

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The book of Revelation is full of allusions and references to the Old Testament.
- B. A proper understanding of Scripture incorporates both Testaments and sees the New Testament as a fulfillment of the Old Testament.
- C. The triumph of Christ and His kingdom is a central powerful theme in the book of Revelation.
- D. “After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’ At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’” (Rev. 4:1–8).
 1. John uses imagery very common in the Old Testament.
 2. John’s vision is very similar to Ezekiel’s vision of God’s chariot throne in Ezekiel 1.
 3. The words of the four living creatures is very similar to the words of the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision in Isaiah 6.

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- E. “And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created’” (Rev. 4: 9–11).
- F. John is given a vision of the inner chamber of the heavenly sanctuary in Revelation 4 and 5.
- G. “Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals” (Rev. 5:1).
1. Most texts in the classical world were written on one side of a scroll.
 2. Ezekiel was commanded to eat a scroll of judgment written on both sides (Ez. 2:8–10).
 3. The double sided scroll John sees in Revelation 5 is also probably a scroll of judgment written against the wicked.
- H. “And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’” (Rev. 5:2).
1. Some commentators have argued the book of Revelation was written as a drama with acts and scenes.
 2. The drama of one worthy to open the seals on the scroll opens up the rest of the book of Revelation.
- I. “And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it” (Rev. 5:4).
- The suspense of events builds without anyone worthy to open the scroll.
- J. “And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals’” (Rev. 5:5).
- The elder refers John back to the Old Testament because the promise of royalty was given to the tribe of Judah.

- K. “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song,” (Rev. 5:6–9a).
1. John is expecting to see a powerful lion, but instead he sees a lamb that had been slaughtered.
 2. A new song of worship is sung to celebrate a new work of redemption.
 3. The Lamb is worshipped because He alone is worthy to open the scroll.
- L. “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ and the elders fell down and worshiped” (Rev. 5:9–14).
1. Regardless of the method one adopts to interpret the book of Revelation it clear the Lamb has won the greatest victory.
 2. The Lamb owns the book of life that contains the names of those whose futures are sealed in Him.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Chapters 4 and 5 are a prefix to the terrible judgment oracles that follow in the book of Revelation. It is as if God wants to assure John’s audience that things are in order in heaven, regardless of the apparent state of things on the earth. How might 4:2 assist such believers as they endured the judgment of worldly rulers?
2. Notice the anthem of praise in Revelation 4:11. What is the activity of God that is extolled in these verses? According to John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16–17, what person of the Godhead did the Father use to do this work?

3. Contrast the fate of the righteous with the fate of those on the earth in Revelation 6 and 7? What are the symbols John uses to communicate this contrast?
4. Why is the image of the saints washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb an appropriate description of conversion (Rev. 7:14)? What are the blessings the saints enjoy as a result of this washing (vv. 15–17)?
5. How are the two witnesses of Revelation 11 an appropriate symbol of the witnessing church throughout the ages? How does John forecast the ultimate victory of the church?
6. How does the theme of “now, but not yet” frequently get played out in Revelation regarding the triumph of Christ, the victory of the saints, the defeat of Satan, and the establishment of God’s kingdom?

DISCUSSION

1. Imagine that you are observing the scene in Revelation 5:11–14. How might your attitude toward worship change if you knew this assembly joined with you each time you lifted up praises to the Lord? Though we can hardly believe it, who does Hebrews 12:22–24 indicate that we participate with as we worship? How might this affect the way you participate in private and corporate worship?
2. What does John mean in Revelation 11:15 when he writes that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord? How will the triumph of the kingdom impact (anticipated first in the church’s life) politics, economics, art, families, culture, and technology?
3. The first eleven chapters of Revelation detail the world’s persecution against the church. The last eleven chapters of Revelation reveal the final conflict between Christ and Satan. Why do you think the book is structured this way?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bauckham, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*

Beale, G.K. *The Book of Revelation*

Johnson, Dennis E. *Triumph of the Lamb*

Mathison, Keith A. *From Age to Age*

The Glory of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Death is the common enemy of all mankind. Man was created from the dust and can only anticipate death and a return to the dust apart from divine intervention. The resurrection of Jesus offers believers a new hope. Rather than being created from the dust and returning to the dust, Christians can joyfully look forward to conquering the grave and rising to glory. Only those who participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can look forward to an eternal citizenship in the glorious New Jerusalem. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the glory of God.

SCRIPTURE READING

Revelation 12–22

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the hope of glory that believers in Christ share.
2. To examine the promises of glory detailed in the book of Revelation.
3. To define the relationship between God and His people in the New Jerusalem.

QUOTATIONS

*For behold, the winter is past
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come.*
—Song of Songs 2:11–12

O LORD, our LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens . . . When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

—Psalm 8:1, 3–4

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. “Dust to dust and ashes to ashes” is a common recitation at funerals.
 - 1. The life of the redeemed endures beyond the dust and moves from dust to glory.
 - 2. The perspective of the New Testament is that believers enter a far greater existence and glory upon death and do not simply return to the dust from which they were created.
 - 3. We need to keep the destiny and hope of our faith in front of us lest we become attached to the passing things of this world.

- B. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (Rev. 21:1).
 - 1. The sea in Hebrew literature was traditionally the image of conflict and chaos.
 - 2. The Hebrews had not developed a coastal trade because of a rocky coastline and because they were barraged by strong winds and marauders from the sea.
 - 3. Rivers, streams, and springs are images of life and blessedness in Hebrew literature.
 - 4. The absence of the sea in the new heavens and new earth symbolizes the absence of tumultuous conflict.

- C. “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away’” (Rev. 21:2–4).
 - 1. These are the blessings for which the people of God can look forward to with joyful expectation.
 - 2. The threat of death hangs over the head of every human.

3. One day the last enemy, death, will be destroyed.
- D. The Christian can rejoice in the knowledge that through Christ's victory over the grave death is defeated.
- Jesus rose from the grave as a demonstration of God's same promise of resurrection to the believer.
- E. The image of God wiping away our tears permanently is one of Scripture's most powerful descriptions of God comforting us and forever removing our sorrows.
1. God will remove our pain and discomfort and then make all things new.
 2. God will not destroy the old, but rather redeem, renew, perfect, and glorify the old.
 3. God will not destroy the earth, but rather restore it to perfection.
- F. John is commanded to write down the visions he sees because the trustworthy words of God need to be preserved for future generations.
- G. "And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment . . .' Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:5-6; 9-11a).
1. The old Jerusalem was a city of dust whereas the New Jerusalem will be a city adorned with the glory of God.
 2. John gives a detailed description of the glories of the New Jerusalem in chapter 21.
- H. The prevalence of symbols in apocalyptic literature is to point to a reality greater than itself.
- John's description of the New Jerusalem is breathtaking yet still falls short of the reality he is trying to describe.
- I. "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev. 21:22).
1. The temple represented the presence of God amidst His people in Jewish thought.

2. The temple is an outward manifestation of the reality of God Himself.
- J. “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev. 21:23).
1. The sun is a source of light and warmth to the earth.
 2. The brightness, brilliance, and warmth of the Lamb is greater than the sun itself.
- K. Man is overwhelmed in Scripture when the glory of God breaks into his life.
1. Man was destined for glory when he was formed from the dust.
 2. Those who put their faith in Christ will one day partake of God’s glory.
- L. The life story of the redeemed is not dust to dust, but rather dust to glory.

BIBLE STUDY

1. How does Revelation 12 introduce the second half of the book? How is the conflict in the heavens translated into a conflict on the earth?
2. Contrast the sealing of the righteous in Revelation 7 with the marking of the unbelieving by the beast in chapter 13. What is the significance of these signs?
3. Why is the symbol of the wedding feast in Revelation 19:7 an appropriate image to celebrate Christ’s victory with the saints over Satan? How does the great prostitute provide a striking contrast with the bride clothed in white?
4. Revelation 20:10 describes the future of the Devil, the Beast, and the False Prophet. How might the knowledge that the anti-Christian forces of the world (both political and religious) as well as their ringleader the Devil himself, will be destroyed bring comfort to those enduring severe persecution in the first century? Read Revelation 6:9–11. How is the scene in chapter 20 an answer to their prayers? How might this encourage the church in any age when it finds itself persecuted?
5. How is the Holy City described in 21:2? How might the preparations of a wedding help you grasp what John is saying using this imagery? Where will the Holy City be located?
6. Compare Genesis 17:7, Exodus 6:7, and Leviticus 26:11–12 to Revelation 21:3. The three Old Testament passages affirm the ultimate blessings of the covenant. How might this hope comfort you in times of despair and give you confidence for the future? How does Revelation 21:3, when compared to the Old Testament passages, show God’s faithfulness?

DISCUSSION

1. Notice how Revelation 21:6–7 links taking freely the water of life and overcoming. How does this contrast to the list in 21:8? What does this indicate about the nature of true believers in Christ? Look over the list in 21:8 and consider the culture you encounter every day. What will be missing from it if this passage is fulfilled?
2. Read Revelation 21:9–24 and think of the most exquisite jewelry you have ever seen. According to 21:27, who will inherit this city? How would this challenge the original audience to examine their own faith? What is the connection between God’s choosing and our obedience?
3. What is the exhortation of the Spirit of God and the church, Christ’s bride, in 22:17? What are you doing to “Come!” to the spiritual feasts of God for you? What do you do to flee from them? How can you use the material in the concluding chapters of Revelation to challenge those around you to come to the One who gives the water of life freely?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bauckham, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*
Beale, G.K. *The Book of Revelation*
Johnson, Dennis E. *Triumph of the Lamb*
Mathison, Keith A. *From Age to Age*

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