

Lecture 2- Why Study Old Testament History? (I)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...

2 Tim 3:16

Key Terms

“Large part,” “to us,” imagination, redemptive history

Lecture Objectives

- Outline the important role that narratives play in our understanding of God’s character and his work in history
- Discuss the implications of the fact that God’s revelation is inextricably connected to its historical content.
- Describe how this impacts today’s Christian life and ministry.

Preliminary Questions

- Some would suggest that much of the Bible is just parable and that these “parables” should primarily be understood “theologically” and not “historically.”
 - * What do these people mean?
 - * Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - * If you agree with the statement, how would you support it?
 - * If you disagree, how would you respond?

Why Study Old Testament History? (I)**Introduction**

Old Testament historical narratives are a large part of God’s Word

- OT is 77% of the Bible
- Narratives make up 40% of the OT
- 2 Tim. 3:16 “All scripture is God-breathed...”

OT historical narratives are God’s word to us

- Rom. 15:4 “Everything that was written in the past was written to us...”
- 1 Co. 10:11 “These things happened...to us”
- There are dangers in mere exemplary teaching.

I. These are Stories that Capture the Imagination**A. Stories provide vicarious experience**

1. Job search illustration—by experience we truly know something
2. Importance of illustrations

Why do you think God gave so much of his word in the form of story? How can narrative challenge us in ways propositional statements (like the epistles) can’t?

B. Stories enable us to grasp truth

1. Children’s books
2. Proposition: Human strength is no match for God’s strength, thus we need not fear human opposition if God is with us.
 - a. 1 Sam. 17:4

1) Economy of physical description is common in biblical literature. The

detailed description makes a point.

- 2) Saul— head and shoulders above the other Israelites, but he is fearful.
- 3) David asks a theological question 1 Sam. 17:26.
- 4) David tries on armor but trusts in God.
- 5) David confronts Goliath “The whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.”
- 6) “Forehead” and “grave” sound similar in Hebrew.

3. Illustration of man to his bride—experience is important

4. A made up story illustrates a truth, but it does not establish a truth

II. Stories that Recount Redemptive History

History is the stage of God’s activity and the stage of revelation.

A. Christianity is a historical religion.

1. Christianity involves the in-breaking of God into history. This was necessary if he was to redeem real people with a real problem involving real sin.
2. Jesus can pronounce truth and illustrate it by a parable.
3. The historicity of the Bible is vital, because Christianity is more than a code of ethics or a lifestyle.
 - a. Star Trek illustration
 - b. J.R.R. Tolkien’s ‘Lord of the Rings’
4. God has acted in history in a revelatory and a redemptive fashion.
5. Christ is the climax, but we do not truly understand Christ unless we understand the way in which he has been foreshadowed.

B. God is a historical agent.

1. G.B. Laird in *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* stressed the importance of history to the NT writers.
2. Since the Enlightenment, it has been common to rule God out of historical discourse.
3. Common view: Historical explanation can involve only natural causation or human causation.
4. Biblical view: God involves himself directly and indirectly in history.

Why do so many Christians focus on the NT at the expense of the OT?