

Lecture 3- Why Study Old Testament History? (II)

*Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious!
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.
All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you,
they sing praise to your name."
Selah
Come and see what God has done,
how awesome his works in man's behalf!
Ps 66:1-5*

Key Terms

Reveal Christ, verifiability, Bible & our understanding

Lecture Objectives

- Outline the important role that narratives play in our understanding of God's character and his work in history.
- Discuss specific ways that the fact of God's revelation of himself in history ought to encourage and challenge your Christian life and service.

Preliminary Questions

- In the review section of this lecture, Dr. Long states that God is not only the creator but also the key actor on the stage of history. If God is the key actor, how does that help you make sense of current events? How does it help you understand the place of God's people in the world?
- How might the study of the Old Testament narratives be used to deepen and strengthen the people of God around the world today?

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Review

- Stories that capture the imagination.
 - Stories that recount redemptive history.
 - God is a historical agent. Exodus 15:1-ff. Song of Moses
 - God is not only the creator of time and space, the stage of history, he is the chief actor in that realm.
 - Isaiah 64:4
 - Psalm 66:1-5
 - Revelation 15:2-4
 - God acts and interprets those acts.
 - History is "His story."
- I. These are Stories that Capture the Imagination
- II. Stories that Recount Redemptive History
- III. Stories that Reveal Who Christ Is
- A. Jesus is the climactic chapter of a much larger story.
1. The OT narratives provide essential background for understanding who Jesus is.
 2. In Jesus we have the quintessential self-revelation of God and the supreme act of salvation.
 3. Movie illustration
 4. Chris Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the OT*, Principal of All Nations Christian

College in England

“If we were to jettison the OT we would lose most of the meaning of Jesus Himself. For his uniqueness was and is built upon the foundation of the uniqueness of the story that prepared for him.”

B. Jesus himself learned from the larger story

1. The OT was Jesus' Bible.
2. Wright-When reading the OT realize
 - “These are the words he read, these were the stories he knew, these were the songs he sang...”
 - “In short, the deeper you go into understanding the OT, the closer you come to the heart of Jesus.”
3. Often we have a docetic (stressing the divinity of Christ at the expense of his humanity) view of Christ

Can you give examples of this docetic view of Christ seen in the contemporary church and life of believers?

4. There is something mysterious about the Incarnation
5. Lk. 2:52, “Jesus grew in wisdom...”
6. Jesus saw both aspects of the Messiah: reigning king and suffering servant
7. “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” Ps. 2 and Is. 42—royalty and suffering.
8. Wright- “The OT tells the story which Jesus completed; it declares the promise which he fulfilled; it provides the pictures and models which shapes his identity; it programs a mission which he accepted and passed on; it teaches a moral orientation to the world which he endorsed, sharpened, and laid as a foundation for obedient discipleship.”
9. We should give OT study a high priority

IV. Stories that are Often in the Center of Debate Over Biblical Authority

A. Historical narratives can be checked

1. Historiography (the writing of history) claims to make reference to the real world
2. Fiction is unconstrained by outside points of reference
3. The truth and accuracy of historical accounts can sometimes be checked
 - a. Mary Decker v. Zola Budd- even with video tape, interpretations vary
4. In the Bible we have interpreted history
5. Trial cross examination: examine internal consistency, external checks with archaeology, etc.

B. Historical narratives can be challenged

1. Internal evidence
 - a. Scholars question the coherence of the story of Saul's rise to power. Dr. Long says, “No!”
2. External evidence
 - a. Archeology-questions about Jericho story
 - b. Archeology itself requires interpretation
 - c. Bryant Wood is questioning Kathleen Kenyon's conclusions

Summary

- OT History important:
 - for drawing us in and capturing our imagination

- for recounting redemptive history
- for revealing who Christ is
- for defending and assessing the authority of the Bible
- Scholar's letter to Dr. Long, "I struggle with matters of faith and history..."
- The problem is not with the Bible, but with our understanding
- Dr. Long's nickname "The Smiling Assassin"