

Core Seminars—How to Study the Bible

Class 4: The Old Testament



“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction ...” (Romans 15.4)

I. The Old Testament: Parts and Organizations

How To Study the Bible Schedule

- I. Section One: First Things
 - a. What is the Bible & is it Reliable?
 - b. The Inductive Study Method
- II. Section Two: Anatomy of the Bible
 - a. Studying the Old and New Testaments
 - b. Genres I: Narratives and Histories
 - c. Genres II: Poetic and Wisdom Writings
 - d. Genre III: Gospels/Epistles & Prophetic/Apocalyptic Literature
- III. Section III: Interpretive Tools
 - a. Purpose and Context
 - b. Structure and Parallels
 - c. Linking Words
 - d. Repetition
 - e. Using Commentaries & Other Resource
 - f. Studying hard and familiar passages

II. Two Key Themes:

A. Jesus in the Old Testament:

B. Old Testament Covenants:

III. Rules of the road for interpreting the Old Testament^{*}

1. An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.
2. An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.
3. Narratives record what happened-not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.
4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.
5. Most of the characters in Old Testament narratives are far from perfect and their actions are, too.
6. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in the Scripture.
7. *All* narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (cf. John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.

8. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.

9. Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it).

10. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.

12. Promises in the Psalms and Proverbs are not to be taken as contractual obligations, but are instead representative of the blessings of faithfulness and curses of sin.

13. Old Testament Prophecies typically have multiple horizons of fulfillment and they are rarely exhaustively understood.

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