

Introduction to the Bible Week 3

Old Testament: The Law and the Prophets

Editors note:

- *italics (lower case or ALL CAPS) show what students should write in their student outline*
- **bold (including bold italics and bold ALL CAPS) shows what appears in the student outline**
- regular text is used for lecture notes; ALL CAPS are used for emphasis

Looking back on last week's readings, was there questions? (check the homework for their written questions)

Again, I'll ask you, what is the Bible?

The Story of God's Loving Pursuit of Rebels in Jesus Christ

Romans 3:21 (have the students open to this)

The gospel has witnesses: the Law and the Prophets, which are the Old Testament scriptures. In other words, the Law and the Prophets of the OT are *a body of evidence* for the Gospel.

The Law and the Prophets *prepare you for the grace of Christ* by showing you your sin and God's mercy toward you.

Your faith in the grace message is well-founded. Once again in this class, we will see that the Bible is about Jesus Christ, as Jesus Himself taught His disciples in the passage below:

Luke 24:27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Jesus is in all the scriptures, not just here and there. "Moses" is the law. Even in the Law, we will see not just commands, but redemptive patterns of how God will rescue those who break His rules.

Just as we saw Jesus in OT narratives last week, we will see Him tonight in the Law and in the Prophets. We'll start with the Law:

The Law

God gave Moses over 600 laws, including the 10 commandments, for the Jewish people to obey.

Timeline: *Just before the Wilderness Wanderings*

Bible books: *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy* (the first 5 books of the OT together are often called “The Law”).

Let’s be real clear at the beginning:

Both in the Old Testament Law and in our lives today, salvation is offered as a gift through the means that God prescribes. Obedience to God’s commands has never been a means of personal salvation. People have always been saved by putting their faith in God and his provision for forgiveness.

NOTE to teachers:

Grace PRIOR to the Law: Genesis 15:6

Grace AFTER the law was given: Psalm 51:1,2,16,17; Habakkuk 2:4

The Law is a “contract” between God and Israel:

“The Mosaic Covenant”

A covenant is a contract—in this case between a King (God) and his people (Israel). To put it most clearly, the law is *like a renter’s lease*. If Israel wants God to protect and prosper them, they need to abide by the terms of the landlord. The law has nothing to do with how to earn heaven.

Protection & blessing: "If you fully obey the LORD your God by keeping all the commands I am giving you today, the LORD your God will exalt you above all the nations of the world. You will experience all these blessings if you obey the LORD your God..." – Deuteronomy 28:1,2

The blessings are things like protection from enemies, prosperity, health, and crop success.

“But if you refuse to listen to the LORD your God and do not obey all the commands and laws I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overwhelm you...” – Deuteronomy 28:15

The curses are things like disease, crop failure, and enemy invasion.

The Law is a “teacher” for individuals

The law is a good thing that you need or you would be unaware of some essential truths. Sure, it is painful to learn these truths, but essential to seeing your need for God’s solution.

1. The Law reveals God’s character

God is *holy* (Lev. 19:2, Exodus 33:20)

The law teaches you how different (holy, “a cut apart”) God is from you in every way.

2. The Law reveals the human condition before God

Humans are *sinful* (Isaiah 59:1; Jer. 17:9)

The law probes deep, exposing not merely sinful behaviors, but sinful motives for good behaviors. The law teaches you how short you fall from God's moral standard. Otherwise you would conclude you are a decent person relative to other human beings. The painful exposure of the law prepares the way for Christ by showing you that your problem with God is beyond your ability to do anything about it on your own.

The context of the law: Exodus 19:4-6

The Law follows redemption. That is, the Law does not lead to redemption (freedom). God already freed them from slavery in Egypt (redeemed by Passover lamb's blood).

The Law sets Israel apart as a holy nation. Following the Law could help their condition, but not their acceptance or status.

The content of the law: Exodus 20:1-17

Exodus 20:1-3 (read)

Idolatry is the sin behind every sin.

Idolatry is the worship of other gods than the God of the Bible. Idolatry is not limited to literally bowing before physical images. To love anything God has made more than God is idolatry. As Mark Driscoll says, "when a good thing becomes a God-thing that's a bad thing."

Romans 1:25

Notice that it is one or the other: you worship the Creator or the creature. We are worshippers by nature. It is just matter of what we worship.

Exodus 20:14-17

Notice the concern shift from a relationship with God to *Human rights*.

Read 20:17 "You shall not covet..."

You break this command whenever you break any of the others

That's because we you are not content with God, not satisfied with His provision, you crave (covet)

something else, which is what idolatry essentially is.

The heart of the law: *profound love*

Deut. 6:5 “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

Be honest! You love the Lord with some of your heart, some of your soul, some of the time. I know that about myself. I am dedicated to me with all my heart and have only limited devotion or even concentration on God.

Leviticus 19:18 love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

Be honest! You love those who are nice to you, but never as much as you love yourself. A neighbor is any human being around you. He is not saying merely that you don't kill or hate that person, but love him as yourself.

Wow! I'm caught! Are you starting to feel the pain of exposure? If so, that is one the greatest things you could ever experience-the “heart wound” of God that will lead you to His grace. No? Then I have failed utterly to explain the law to you (or you have stuffed your ears). If you get it at all, you will probably be offended by how God through the Law pulls the rug out from under any sense of self-righteous moral complacency.

Israel's reaction to the Law: Exodus 20:18-20

Israel reacted to the lighting and thunder with *misplaced fear*. They seemed to fear those phenomena and seek distance, but God wanted them to have a proper fear of Him. To fear God is to have a respectful awe, to realize He is a holy God who could rightly judge you. But as the Exodus goes on to show, God very much wants to dwell with the His people (29:45,46). He does not want them to remain at a distance. As we will see next, God reveals in the sacrificial system how they can approach Him.

3. The Law reveals God's solution: the Old Testament Sacrificial System

Atonement: *a covering for sin*.

The Law provided a way for individuals their sins atoned for:

“...bring a bull with no physical defects to the entrance of the Tabernacle so it will be accepted by the LORD. Lay your hand on its head so the LORD will accept it as your substitute, thus making atonement for you.” – Leviticus 1:3,4, and chapter 16

A closer look at the Tabernacle:



See Hebrews 9:1-7

Read though this passage and explain the Most Holy place and the ark.

Jesus and the Tabernacle:

Heb. 9:6, 7 (read)

The priests of the OT offered *continual offerings*

Heb. 9:11,12 (read)

Jesus' *once and for all* offering

There no longer needs to be any offering. His offering of Himself is His finished work.

The barrier that the veil represented is over now because of Jesus. You can come in through Him!

The sacrificial system that the Law prescribed reminded them of their need for a sacrifice:

Heb. 10:1-4 (read)

animal sacrifices had no actual effect

That is why they had to keep being offered—the problem of alienation from God was still there.

The benefits for you from Jesus' sacrifice:

Heb. 10:19-23

confident access to God

This confident access is based on the blood of Jesus—not anything on your part. The blood makes it possible to be honest about your sin and approach God any time—not just when you feel you have had a good day.

For an excellent treatment of the sacrificial system see:

<http://www.xenos.org/teachings/nt/hebrews/gary/index.htm>

Old Testament: Poetry and Wisdom

Bible books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon

Timeline: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon were mainly written during the life of David and Solomon. Some Psalms were written as late as the 5th century BC (after the Babylonian exile). The story of Job takes place during the time of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob).

We saw Jesus in the law. Now we will see Jesus in the Prophets.

Old Testament: Prophets

Bible books: *Isaiah to Malachi*

Major (longer) prophets: *Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel*

Minor (shorter – not less important!) prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Timeline: *Divided Kingdom to return from Exile (760-460 BC)*

What is a prophet? *God's spokesperson.*

As a *foreteller*, a prophet speaks a message about what God will do in the future.

Isaiah 46:9,10 “And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God—I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me. Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.”

The prophets also reaffirmed God’s promises to Abraham and David.

Daniel 2:44, 7:14

While Daniel 2:44 illustrated the kingdom tied to David, 7:14 show that the kingdom promise is related to the nations/peoples of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

That king is Jesus (Mark 14:62)

As a *truth teller*, a prophet speaks forth a message for the present time.

The word “Prophecy” means “to speak forth.” Through the prophets, God spoke directly to his people about their behavior, their spiritual state, and his relationship with them. Prophets called the people and their leaders to account for their actions.

Examples of those who challenged power: Elijah (Ahab) and Nathan (David)

The Problem of Idolatry

Jeremiah 2:11-13 (read)

Idolatry begins with accusing God (“what injustice did they find in Me?
(this is like the serpent casting suspicion on God’s goodness in Gen. 3))

Idols leave you empty (“broken cisterns”)

Jeremiah 6:13-14 (read)

Idols keep you in denial (“peace, peace, when there is no peace)

Ezekiel 16:15-22 (summarize)

[Idolatry is] *using God’s gifts to get away from Him*

Israel used the gifts of God to desert God the giver.

Hosea 6:4-6

religious worship can be an idol

Israel was going through the outward motions of religious worship
INSTEAD OF loving God. They must have thought they could get

something from God or get Him in their debt by doing these things.

You will either worship the uncreated God or worship some created thing (Romans 1:25). There is no possibility of you worshipping nothing.

When there is idolatry, there is almost always materialism and social injustice, since unmet human cravings will lead to taking from or hardening your heart to other people.

The Problem of Materialism and Social Injustice

Isaiah 1:16, 17

The evil of doing nothing

What is the evil in vs. 16 that they need cease from and be cleansed of? Their neglect of justice for the widow and the orphan (1:17). They were guilty of doing nothing. This is what I am guilty of. How about you?

Isaiah 2:7-9

Seeking control through the idol of material wealth

Here Isaiah links their accumulation of silver, gold and chariots with idolatry. They trusted in their money and defense budget (chariots), rather in God. God forbade the accumulation of horses and gold Deuteronomy.

This is the essence of idolatry: false points of reliance, “functional saviors” (in their case, chariots for war) that are other than your “professed savior” (God). You may say your trust is in God, but what you actually trust in? You find out when you are threatened.

The Prophets looked ahead to the “New Covenant” *brought by Jesus.*

Jeremiah 31:31-33

Instead of being merely an external code that exposed, *the law will be internalized* (“I will put My laws in your hearts”) and people will have a more personal relationship with God (“They shall know Me”).

Ezekiel 36:25-28

Freedom from idols

God will cleanse you from idols by giving you a new heart from His Spirit who comes from the work of the coming “David” (37:24,25), who is Jesus.

God's Spirit is Jesus-focused, is made clear in John 16:13, 14 (the Spirit glorifies Jesus).

Sample prophecies from the book of Isaiah (740 – 680 B.C.)

The book of Isaiah has two major sections:

The Book of JUDGMENT (chapter 1-39)

The Book of COMFORT (chapters 40-66)

Isaiah 1:1-4; 10-23

Hatred of the Holy One masked by religious formalism

You may wonder, who are these people that hate God in verse 4? Who is that He calls called Sodom and Gomorrah in verse 10? Isaiah tells us that they are very religious (“the multitude of your sacrifices” in verse 1 and “appointed feasts” in verse. 14). They are devoted to the rituals of Israel. But they are clearly hiding behind these outward acts. God is “weary” (1:14) of their feasts. Here again, we see religion as substitute for knowing God personally.

Isaiah 2:12-22

Judgment is coming for the proud

The proud” are the people we have been reading about: religiously dutiful idolaters who are too proud to cry for the mercy God is ready to give. But their religious rituals will be of no help against His coming judgment.

Mercy is offered (1:18) But how?

The passage we are going to look at next show us how God will give mercy.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (read)

“The suffering servant”

A blameless substitute that atones

He will “sprinkle” the nations (52:15).

By his death, many are justified and bore the sin of many (5:13:11, 12). Jesus died in order to take away our sin (like we saw in John 1:29, that Jesus the “lamb of God”).

The servant (“he”) is distinct from Isaiah’s people (“us”)

Isaiah's people have sin that are bore by the servant. This person dies (see "cut off out the land of the living" in v. 8) FOR the transgression (sin) of the people. Clearly, the "servant" is an individual distinct from the people

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHER, BUT THERE WON'T BE TIME TO TEACH: In other parts of Isaiah, the term "servant" is used to refer to the Jewish people collectively: And He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory." (Isaiah 49:3) But in that same chapter, the term "servant" refers to an individual who is distinct from the people: "And now the LORD speaks—he who formed me in my mother's womb to be his servant, who commissioned me to bring his people of Israel back to him. The LORD has honored me, and my God has given me strength. 6 He says, 'You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth'" (Isaiah 49:5).

The NT applies this prophecy to Jesus (1 Peter 2:24)

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHER: This detailed prophecy precisely matches what we know about the events surrounding Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. The authors of the New Testament recognized this and referred to it often (compare Isaiah 52:13 with Philippians 2:9, 52:15 with Romans 15:21; 53:1 with John 12:38 & Romans 10:16; 53:4 with Matthew 8:17; 53:5 with 1 Peter 2:24; 53:9 with 1 Peter 2:22, etc.) And remarkably, we have copies of this prophecy that predate the crucifixion by 160 years.

This promise that a servant will come and die for the sins of the nations is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless the world through one of his descendants.

New Testament Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets

Now we have come full circle. Let's re-read Romans 3 in light of all that we studied tonight.

Romans 3:19-28

Read **19,20**

Is your mouth closed?

Or are you still saying, "but I did this good thing?" "Shut up!" says the law. You have no claim on God. If you understand the law, you are silent except to plea for mercy. (Like the tax collector in Luke 18)

Do you think your works have a claim on God?

Have you let the law give you the knowledge of your sin?

This is painful knowledge. It wound the heart. But now you are ready for

the amazing grace of God. This work of the law continues to expose sin all your life and drive back again and again to the mercy of Jesus. Let it do that!

vs. 24 “Justified as a gift by His grace”

A new status given by God

To be justified” is to be made right with God, to be seen as righteous in His eyes. Not only are you forgiven, you are given the family status of Jesus. All this is “a free gift by His grace.”

“Redemption”

A new freedom

Redemption means to be bought out of slavery. Later in the letter to the Romans (5), Paul explains the dynamics of freedom from sin. This is great news for us who feel the enslaving, addicting power of idolatry!

vs. 25 “propitiation in His blood”

a “propitiation” is a “*sacrifice that satisfies.*”

Propitiation *presumes God’s WRATH.* It presumes that God requires justice. As a propitiation, Jesus turned the wrath of God from you by absorbing that wrath Himself.

Jesus was a substitute for you who bore the judgment you rightly deserved.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.

2 Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

What great witnesses the Law and the Prophets are! I hope your confidence in God’s gift of His righteousness apart from law (Romans 3:21) was strengthened by our study tonight.

Assignment:

Bible Reading Assignment #3 and “Why Believe the Bible?” due next week