

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament History, Literature and Theology

Lecture 1

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Introduction

Let's take some time to pray together and then we will get started on the things that we need to do for this day. But let's pray first:

“Our gracious heavenly Father, as we begin this term together, in this class, in this room, with each of us sharing the study of your word, we pray that your Holy Spirit would indeed work deep in our hearts, Lord. We pray that you would draw us ever closer to you; we pray that we would have a more profound sense of who you are, and how you have worked in the lives of your people literally for millennia, but also in the lives of your people this day. Work in our hearts, our Father; teach us, encourage us when we need encouragement, and challenge us and rebuke us when we need those things. And we'll offer you the thanks in the name of Christ our Savior. Amen.”

Now, if you've got your 3x5 card all filled out as I say at the bottom of this, please hang on to it because I'm probably going to forget to collect it at the end of class; that's usually how these things go. Let's look at the objectives for the day. If you've got that piece of paper in front of you, it says, “Liturgy for the Day.” I'm going explain that in a moment, but we're going to start by reading Psalm 86:10-11. If you happen to have a Bible, it never hurts to bring it to a Bible class! It is always a clever idea to do that. As you're going to find out, the Bible is the major text for this particular class, so I would encourage you to have it along at any rate.

Lord willing, we're going to start every class with a Psalm. I'm a profound believer in reading the Psalms. We will either read or sing a psalm in every class that we start, God willing. So, here we are at Psalm 86 - only a snatch of it. Let me start at verse 10 (speaking of God) - "For you are great and do marvelous deeds. You alone are God." Verse 11 is really our punch line for this class. "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart." Literally it means, “a heart together.”

“Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.” Let's just do verse 11 once more. "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name." So, put that in your heads. By the way, it wouldn't hurt to memorize some of these things that we work on, not that I'm ever going to test you on it, but they might come in handy for yourselves.

Liturgy means “the work of the people of God.” Those of you that come from liturgical churches know this. Therefore, as you talk about doing liturgy, it's not that stale dead thing that's out there that you'd like to get away from in order to wave your hands and clap your hands. Liturgy means you're working, and your mind is working. I'm hoping that not only today (I've called this “Liturgy for this Day”), but in every class that we engage in, we are going to think of what we are doing as worship.

I know that you've heard this before, because you've been at Gordon now for a semester, and some of you for more than a semester, but, study is worship. Study is worship. In fact, I would suggest, and I'm quoting Stan Gaede, this is not my own thought, "The Holy Spirit is never so active as when we are using our minds." Keep that in mind as you're studying. Here's my little tiny bit of advice; I'm going to say it over and over again in this class: When you open your scriptures to do your assignment for the day, take it as an assignment from God the Holy Spirit. All right? Let him speak to you, pray that he will. Don't have your devotional life way up here somewhere, and then, oh no, I have to study Genesis 5-15 right now. It all works together. Study and worship go together. There's a very interesting Hebrew word, it's *avodah*; you'll study it when you read Dr. Wilson's book. It means “work,” and it also means “worship.” *Avodah* means both work and worship. The Hebrew Bible has the right concept here as we're thinking about these things.

Class Procedures

All right, so we have a little liturgy for this day. We have to get through some practical things there on the sheet in front of you. Then we're actually going to start

talking about the nature of the Old Testament, but first let's do some practical things - issues of class procedures, and I'll introduce our TAs in a moment.

You're going to find out that I'm a stickler for starting on time. In fact, I'm obsessively compulsively always early, unless something horrible happens, but I will be starting on time. If you need to talk to me and don't like to get up and walk over to the third floor of Frost, come here early, because I'll, generally speaking, be here at least 20 minutes before class starting time. But we will start on time, and we'll start with announcements. So, if you're not on time, you might miss fairly important announcements. So try and be here on time.

I try rather hard to learn your names. Thank heavens there's only 43 of you in this class. This is going to be a whole lot better than my 120-some classes, and I'll make an effort at it. Help me out because it's one thing to recognize you in class, and it's another thing to see you over in Lane. Sometimes people all look alike - have you noticed that? Just help me out. Introduce yourself over and over and over again and we'll get there.

If you have questions as we're talking along, please feel free to ask them. I'll be asking you questions from time to time. Please feel free to ask questions because that's the way this stuff will really come alive for you. So, questions are perfectly in order. I may take the opportunity to redirect our conversation because we do have some things we have to cover, but if your questions aren't answered, there is always e-mail and there are some open forums. Your syllabus will tell you about the open forums.

Just a little bit on classroom etiquette, which I probably don't have to say, but I'm going to say it just in case. It's not nearly so bad with 40 in class; 120 is a different story. I encourage you to bring your laptops to class. As you'll find out, all the lecture outlines are on Blackboard. Download them ahead of time, and bring them in your laptop to class. It'll make your absorption of the material more easy, and you'll be able to listen more, rather than furiously writing every last thing I'm saying. What's on the Power point is generally speaking on Blackboard in that lecture outline. Bring it along, bring your laptop. But having said that, I'll just tell you my experience. It's really kind of funny

when I'm talking about something really serious, and in the back row behind a laptop, two people burst out in gales of laughter, and I'm thinking, what I said is not really all that funny. There must be something else on that laptop. So, laptop etiquette runs something like this: please keep focused in the class. I wander around when I teach, just to check from time to time, in terms of what happens to be on your laptop, or what your thumbs are doing, in case your texting somebody somewhere along the line. If you're having conversations, I sure hope they have to do with what we're talking about in class. I may ask you, and then you'll have to divulge what that happened to have been.

9:10 in the morning isn't nearly as bad as 8:00. But let me give you two pieces of advice. First one - make sure you're here faithfully for the rest of the semester. This is your mother speaking: go to bed early. It is as simple as that. Go to bed early, as opposed to the rest of the dorm. Secondly, this is from one of my former students 15 years ago, she said, "I learned to make breakfast dates with somebody in the class and that way, we both got to class on time." So if that works for you it's courtesy of Kristin.

Well, let's carry on. The office hours should be listed in the sheet and also in the syllabus. Let me emphasize a couple of things in that regard. Please note that I'm not on campus on Thursdays. There may be exceptions to this. I will be reading email. Lunch in Lane means I will be available if you want to have a further conversation over a meal. Email me and we can set something up. That is always an option as well. I don't just go there and sit and wait for people, this has to be something we have to arrange ahead of time.

Ok, Matt, I know you need to leave so... (Matt, the TA, speaks).

Good, thank you, I would urge you to attend the review sessions not just the ones before the exam. It's just another way of studying, it's a devoted hour, it's going to help you immensely.

Ok, any questions so far on this pragmatic stuff we've been talking about?

Introduction to Our Study

All right, let's carry on with Old Testament, History, Literature and Theology. By the way, this text that I have in front of you is a very interesting kind of thing. It's a commentary on the book of Habakkuk, of all things, from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Now we will not spend a lot of time talking about this, but what I want to emphasize is this: notice that folks back then, middle of the second century B.C or first century B.C. were interested in studying Scripture, at least that particular community, and they're not talking only about Psalms, or Deuteronomy or Isaiah. In fact, they probably were; they have left commentaries on those, but they were taking care to even talk about Habakkuk, of all things. So that is just to get us going.

You'll also find out that I often like to engage our interest with some questions as we start, so here's a multiple choice question. In fact, guess what, it might be one you have on your first test: Why is Israel called, "The Testing Ground of Faith"? Let's go through them and see what you think is the right answer.

Option 1) It was the place where God gave the Torah, which demanded obedience,

Option 2) The Israelites were called to this land because of its rich abundance of resources to see if they would continue to remember the Lord in spite of their plenty.

How about 3) It is situated in the land bridged between large powerful countries, and its agricultural productivity and thus economic security is dependent on marginal amounts of rain and dew.

Option 4) It's not really a testing ground of faith because the main places that the Israelites' faith was tested were in Egypt and Babylon.

Got the options? Who's going for the first one? Be brave and bold. Ok, about 4 people going for the first one. The second one? Ok, looks like 8, or 9. Anyone going for the third one? Here's 3, 4, 5, ok. How about the fourth one? This is fairly evenly distributed. How many of you are not voting? There's always some people who don't vote. I understand that. Well, guess what, the 3's have it. So, give yourself a couple of points here. And in about a week, we're going to figure out why this works the way it works. It is indeed precariously positioned. And God choose to plant his people in a

situation that was both geo-politically vulnerable, and also agriculturally precarious. And therefore that will be a way in which their faith is tested. The covenant blessings and curses are tied right into the land. It is fascinating.

Course Objectives

Ok, well, that gets us kind of started here. Now, what I want you to do is take two minutes and turn to the person next to you and say, "Why are you here?" It can be as bland as "Oh, I have to take this class." But talk. Why are you here? Talk to the person next to you. (discussion)

Now, you know you could have cheated and looked down at the objectives. But before we do that, let me just draw your attention on this "Liturgy for the Day" to not only the course description, but also the paragraph that follows that. I don't mean to insult your intelligence, but I'm going to read this to you:

"First Testament (and I'm going to talk about First Testament in a minute) History and Teaching are presented in the context of cultural, geographical, and literary backgrounds of the Ancient Near East." Do you get the impression that this is sort of an inter-disciplinary endeavor here? "Literature, Archaeology, History, Geography, etc etc." All of that is going to feed how we think about what we will be doing for the next three months. What this means is your core curriculum courses are indispensable as you think through the wider context. Don't ever think "I can't wait to get the core out of the way." Have you heard that around here now and then? "Getting the core out of the way" is a horrible expression! Excise it from your vocabulary. The core curriculum is designed for us all to be thinking more inter-disciplinarily.

This course also includes the study of key theological themes foundational to New Testament and western culture. I hope you like the word "theology" because it has everything to do with living.

Finally, that second paragraph, "Instruction in this course is founded upon the conviction that biblical text is revelation from our Sovereign God who has chosen in his mercy to reveal himself..." This is a profound theological statement - I hope you are

getting that. Please don't walk out of here saying "Oh, I didn't study theology." You will have, if you're studying. At any rate... "who has chosen in his mercy to reveal himself to humankind through his activity in history, through his scriptures, and supremely in the person of Jesus the Messiah. In each of these means of revelation we perceive the supernatural intervention of God into the natural order of which he is both Creator and Sustainer." Think through that. I hope this is not the last time you look at this statement because it does indeed indicate what it is we're supposed to be doing.

Have you had a chance to look at Calvin and Hobbs? Can you see it from back there? Lying in bed, the conversation unfolds: "I wonder what man was put on earth for. What's our purpose? Why are we here?" The answer is: "tiger food."

All right, why are we here? Well, here are the objectives that I've tried to work out; they're on the sheet in front of you. It puts them into some particular categories. I hope that together, I pray that together... in fact, that was my prayer at the beginning, that we'll foster an increasing love for God. If that's not happening, please come to talk to me. This is not just an academic course in which you want to get a 4.0. Let's foster an increasing love for God, and an appreciation for God's revelation in Scripture. It is terribly important as you approach the rest of your lives; perhaps you know that already.

In addition to that, I am hoping we will integrate biblical studies with other disciplines. I hope you will see it happen to a degree. I hope we put together some ideas in terms of how to live.

#1. There's lots and lots of very practical stuff in the Old Testament or the First Testament. Things that have to do with justice, things that have to do with the way we interact with each other - we'll be talking about those things. This ought to have ways of shaping who we are, how we live in community, especially in community at Gordon College. We'll talk about some of those things as we talk about social Torah.

By the way, I forgot to ask in the beginning: How many of you have read the entire Old Testament all the way through? This is remarkable! There are seven people that I counted right here, usually, in my class of 120- whatever it is, there are two or

three. So thank you and keep reading, because the First Testament has everything to say about how we understand our lives, our responsibilities, the choices we make as we're living in this particular culture which is, as you know, a "like, you know, whatever, like, you know, like yeah" culture. (That's deemed to be a substantive statement, especially if you attach "yeah" on the end of it with a certain amount of emphasis.) There's more to say!

Theological Foundation for New Testament Study

Then, of course, there is an obviously foundational connection to New Testament. I've got a quote in a moment from a really excellent book, which you're going to see the title of in a second, which I think will put together for us just the beginning of how we want to think about the foundations for New Testament.

Here we go, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* is written by an excellent scholar, F.F. Bruce. Let me read through this. It's posted on Blackboard, so you don't need to copy all this slavishly either, but notice what he's saying of how vital the Old Testament is. "In Jesus, the promise is confirmed." Promise to whom? That's not a rhetorical question. Promise to us? If it is a promise to us, it is one that is confirmed. How about the original promise way back earlier on? Good. Don't worry, I love putting people on the spot. But you may ask me questions and I'll also say I don't know. Good. That's the starting point. There are some promises made to Adam and Eve too, but I'm thinking particularly of the covenant with Abraham which is then reiterated to the rest of the patriarchs and then certainly to Israel as well. "Covenant is renewed." Well, that's also an Abrahamic kind of thing, isn't it? We'll have a lot to say about covenant.

"Prophecies" - oh goodness, there's going to be a whole lot of these. In Jesus there are manifold prophecies that are fulfilled. "The law is vindicated." The law is not going to have this kind of bad name. In fact, what does it say in the Gospel narratives when it talks about Jesus being baptized? "He came to fulfill all righteousness," and Jesus will indeed be one who keeps the Torah.

"Salvation is brought near." There is lots we can say about salvation as well. We

often, when we use the term, “Jesus saves,” and “Jesus is the source of my salvation,” we think of it pretty lightly. But think about all the things we're saved from: guilt, sin, the consequences of sin, and you can go right on down the line. But also think of the things we're saved to: a new relationship with God, no longer alienation, new relationships with each other, and we could go on. Salvation is a rich concept.

“Sacred history has reached its climax. The perfect sacrifice has been offered and accepted.” You're going to wonder why we spend so much time studying Leviticus. It is so that we can understand what it is that Jesus has done.

And then, in relationship to that, “the great high priest over the household of God has taken his seat at God's right hand.” This is not the end of it, “the prophet like Moses is raised up, the son of David reigns, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated.” What wonderful and profound themes are here. All of these focus on Jesus (and Jesus would fulfill them) as they are articulated in the Old Testament.

“The Son of Man has received from the ancient of Days.” Where's that figure coming from? Does anybody know? The book of Daniel. Good; Daniel chapter 7, where you have this remarkable vision. Daniel has a dream vision and he sees the Ancient of Days sitting on the throne; that's God. The Son of Man comes into his presence and Son of Man is given glory, power, dominion - all these things that indicate He is deity. Of course, when Jesus chooses that name for himself that has some very interesting implications.

“The servant of the Lord,” this is straight out of Isaiah, chapter 53, “having been smitten to death for his people's transgression, bore the sin of many, accomplished the divine purpose, has seen the light after the travail of his soul, and is now exalted and extoled and made very high.” The gospel is right there in Isaiah 53, along with many other places. So, again, just in terms of one of our objectives, this unpacks what we mean when we say, “Jesus has saved me from my sin.” There is a whole wonderful theological heritage underlying that.

The Name of This Text

Well, just a couple of things to push this forward a little bit further; now I'm picking up right from the lecture outline, as it starts on the sheet of paper that I handed out. On the second page, do you see something that looks like this? "What should we call this text and why?" (Again, from here on in, if you like to do things this way, download these, it'll work best for you.) You've grown up with Old Testament as the title for this and I'm not going fuss if you keep on calling it the Old Testament; I will as well. But when you call something "old," what does that mean to you? So you're actually drawing on my original idea, aren't you? But, first, let's take it away from our Testament, and just say, "old." What does that imply?

By the way, I'm not 60 yet - I'm getting there, but yesterday in the mail, I got this ugly piece of paper that said "ballet for senior citizens." Can you imagine I was slightly insulted at the point? I don't feel like a senior citizen yet. Most people when they think old they think, eh, getting over the hill a little bit.

And that often seems to be the subtext when we use the word "old," especially when we use "old" in contrast with "new." And therefore, the tendency is to say that "old" means that we just don't have to pay attention to it anymore. It's obsolete. It's out of date. I don't use Facebook, so I'm obsolete, I guarantee that. But there are some places where "old" is not entirely bad. I think one of the things you may want to be thinking about, as one of the things Nick was saying. "Old" here means original, first, the foundation on which the new is based. That might help us a little bit.

Names are important. We live in an area where there is a fairly extensive Jewish community, and perhaps you come from a context where there is likewise a fairly extensive Jewish community. For their sakes, maybe referring to this as Hebrew Bible, or First Testament, might be a little less derogatory, but again, make your own choices. You'll hear me saying First Testament quite often.

That does bring us to another way of referring to this, and it comes right out of the Jewish community. In Judaism, when they think of the Hebrew Bible, or what we are calling the First or Old Testament, they have a name for it that is an acronym. That's what

TaNak is, an acronym, sometimes spelled Tenak, But the whole point is the T stands for “Torah,” the N stands for “Nebi’im” which means “prophets,” and the K or Kh stands for “Ketuvim” or “writings.” Next time, Lord willing, we will talk about the different genres of this text and we’re going to talk about the four breakdowns in terms of our English understanding of the Bible. As you are thinking about the three parts of scriptures, think of these, and then let me just give you a little bit of a clue. Within the section called *Nebi’im* which is the prophets section, we actually have historical writings and the writings of prophets. Am I making sense with that? We normally think of Torah, as the first five books of Moses; history and prophets are together; followed by Psalms, writings and poetry. The Hebrew Scriptures put together the history and the writing prophets and the reason they do it is because in the historical books, the ministry of the prophets is very evident and includes Elijah, Elisha, Samuel, Gad, Nathan and so on.

Why Study This Text? Overview

This is all by way of introduction. What did some of you say when you were asking each other, “why are you here?” Anybody want to venture a synopsis of what you heard in that little discussion ten minutes ago? Why are you here? Why are we here? Why are we studying this text?

Well, I have some reasons for you. I’m well aware that, as we have a class of this size, there are different reasons for being in this class. And some of them may well be exalted. Others may be, “I’ve got to take it because it’s part of a core requirement.” I understand that. Even if that’s your point right now, God works with different people at different times, and no one here will impose on you what you have to feel and believe, but let me suggest even if you’re not interested in the life application, life transforming issues right now, simply functioning as a member of western society, knowing your heritage, is a pretty good reason for taking Old Testament. Goethe, and this is in paraphrase and translation, Goethe said, “if you don’t know 3000 years of your heritage, you’re living hand to mouth.” (He was a German poet.) So, simply, in developing your understanding in cultural literacy, it’s fairly important in terms of knowing the First

Testament. I'm going to come back to that in a moment.

The second basic reason we study Old Testament is that it really does indeed shape our worldview. Now, you've been in CCC for an entire semester so you know all about worldviews. We all have them. The issue is whether or not they are coherent, whether they hang together, whether they really do indeed shape, in a cohesive way, how we function. So, our perception of ourselves, our society, our world, our history, our conduct, and our decisions, all these things can be shaped by what we do, what we study, what we take in, in terms of the manifold amount of excellent stuff in the First Testament.

That, of course, leads us to, "Foundational for understanding the relationship between God and human kind," which, of course, culminates in Jesus as he's revealed to us as the Word in flesh. But all these other things are important too.

Cultural Literacy

And just to pique your interest, for those of you who may not be terribly interested in two and three yet, let's do some things with our basic cultural literacy issues. Reading over First Testament narratives, we can understand a good deal over our western cultural heritage. Did you know that? Maybe that's not so true now, because in the last 20-30 years, we've lost any connection. I shouldn't say that. That's really overstating it, but we've lost some connection with our long cultural heritage.

But we're going to have a tiny cultural literacy quiz. This is tiny. What's Rembrandt's subject here? How do you know? Ok, that's good. If you know the basic details of the narrative, you can put that one together, can't you, because Genesis 22 is all about that dramatic scene where the angel stops Abraham at the last minute before his knife slashes Isaac's throat as the sacrificial burnt offering.

Let's try another one. What's the one on the left? Does anyone want to guess? Let's pick it apart a little bit. What are these? You can say it, don't be ashamed. These are wings. So who is this?--an angel of some sort. Now what? It gets a little bit more tricky doesn't it? Because... Okay, Sarah, go ahead. Yes, it's Jacob wrestling, isn't it? But part of the challenge is, and that's why this one is a little trickier, in Genesis 32, Jacob initially is

wrestling with a man. In fact, the text says over and over again "man." But then once it's over what does Jacob say, "My goodness, I've seen God face to face." But then what does Hosea say about it? He's wrestling with the angel. So it's all a little bit challenging.

What about this one? Yes. Who's who and how do you know? (student speaks) Now, switch that around a little bit, because who's known for being a harp player? Yes, David, is the one here. Right? Which is interesting because what do we see? All we see are his hands on the harp. If that's David playing the harp, who's this? Saul. And how do you know that? In addition to the fact that we've got David playing the harp? What's in Saul's hand? A spear. Do we know this narrative by any chance? It's probably not one of the ones you grew up in Sunday school with. You did David and Goliath, I bet, in Sunday school. What's going on here? Saul's been plagued by an evil spirit from the Lord, hasn't he? We know that this is causing him a horrifying dementia basically, and David is brought in to his presence to play the harp. Of course, Saul is jealous, he's paranoidly jealous of David and he's occasionally out to get him and the spear is Saul's weapon of choice initially.

Fascinating. Let's do one more; we have time. I like this one. Do we have any music majors in here? You are? Good. Anybody can name one [musical composition by G.F. Handel]? Handel's "Messiah." Excellent that's the one we'd come up with, right? Anybody want to take a guess at who else might be the subject of one of Handel's oratorios? An Old Testament character? Well, here's the Messiah. See the fine print? Guess what? There are more than four. Samson, Jephthah. Who's Jephthah? He's one of the judges, isn't he? Yes, so is Samson. Also Israel and Egypt, Saul, Solomon, Esther, Belshazzar, Joshua, Deborah, Joseph and his brothers, Nabal, Gideon, Judas Maccabeus which is not in the First Testament. Handel composed oratorios on all these things. Isn't that fascinating? His audience would've appreciated them when he was writing by the way.

All right, lots to do in terms of culture here, but of course that's only the basic foundations. Are you ready to carry on, have you had enough culture quiz for now? Not

just visual art forms, musical masterpieces, major works of drama and literature. Read John Milton, read Shakespeare. The whole language of those people is absolutely infused with biblical language. Obviously our principles of jurisprudence. The very fabric of our language, maybe not so much now again. There's been kind of a seismic shift in culture in the last generation or so. But if you have grandparents who have grown up in the church, listen to them some time, the way they talk reflects the Bible. My grandmother who died at the tender age of 99, and was a believer for 80 of those years, spoke Bible. She could be talking about cooking in the kitchen and it came out with just this biblical cadence and biblical language. Her very language was infused with this stuff. So you want to be educated? Let's enjoy this class together, but, that's not all.

Theological Foundations

Some basic theological foundations, and these are the ones we will expand a little bit from what I said earlier. Sometimes we have this notion that we know God best by knowing Jesus, and I'm not in any way discounting that, not a bit, because, of course, the Word made flesh is what all the First Testament is really looking forward to. But having said that, you get an incredibly profound sense of who God is by studying First Testament. All you need to do, for example, is read the Psalms because the Psalms tell us all about God's compassion, his love, his forgiveness, his justice, and his wrath. The attributes of God are just there, full force when you read the Psalms, and we see them throughout the First Testament. God and his holiness, God and his majesty, and so as you're reading your assignments for this class, pray that God will indeed reveal more of himself to you through the text that you're reading.

We also learn a little more about who we are. As a matter of fact, on Friday we'll spend a little time with this, no, I'm sorry, that's next week we going to do this. Hopefully we'll have a little extra time to think about the things that are so much part of our lingo, if you've grown up in the church. Yes, we know we are created in the image of God, but sometimes that just flows off a little too easily without our giving full thought to what that really means. What it says in terms of our capacities, and our potential for choosing,

for knowing, for feeling, for appreciating beauty, all those things. If you ever want an interesting thing to read, especially Melanie as a musician, there's a splendid book by George Steiner called *Real Presences*, which talks about aesthetic experiences, especially music. It talks about the other artistic forms as well, but especially music, and the way we experience music, and the capacity we have to appreciate music. It really does speak about as Steiner says, "a Real Presence." Music is something that transcends the mundane here and now. There's something profound about music, and that testifies to a Creator of these wonderful aesthetic forms that we have. So, image of God, fellowship and communication, and communion, I should say, with him.

Of course, it's in the Scripture of the First Testament that we learn of the tragedy of the fallen nature of humankind. In fact, as you study the narratives of the Israelites, my suspicion is you will be like every other class of First Testament students I've had. We read through Numbers and Judges and we sort of sit back on our heels and say, "Wow! that sounds just like me." Ok? We really gain an appreciation for how desperately we need salvation when we read some of these narratives in the First Testament. The state of corruption and alienation from God, of course, leads us to the whole idea of the covenant. The covenant, as we'll say later on, is God's instrument for restoring the relationship between fallen humankind and himself. So, those are going to be our theological concerns.

Final Reasons for Studying

So, let's just do two more things. We're stopping a little bit early today, for which you'll probably be thankful. That will only happen one more time this semester unless something untoward takes place. But two more reasons - and we're going to go to the New Testament for these. So if you've got your Bibles, turn to 1 Corinthians 10. Paul's doing something typically Paul here. Those of you who have had New Testament know that Paul was trained as a rabbi, which meant that he knew First Testament scriptures inside and out, backwards and forwards, and knew how to make all kinds of connections and inter-connections among those Scriptures. Paul isn't just coming at it from

somewhere else. Paul is infused with the word of God, as someone who is trained in a rabbinical background. So, notice what he says in chapter 10 - I'm going to actually read verses 1-13. If you have grown up in a church which emphasized memory, I bet you've memorized verse 13. Let's see what precedes it.

"I don't want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our forefathers, [in other words, the Israelites], were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea." Of course, that is bringing back images of what great experience? Under the cloud, though the sea? Of course, it's the Exodus experience, which is the defining experience for all of Israel's history. As we're going to see, that is the defining experience that also provides the paradigm for what we experience in our Passover lamb, who was Jesus. At any rate, let's keep going.

Verse 2, "They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea," kind of reiterating this and using that fascinating term "baptism," in terms of going through the waters of the sea. "They all ate the same spiritual food [which was manna], drank the same spiritual drink. They drank from that spiritual rock that accompanied, and that rock was Christ." There's a rabbinic study, I shouldn't say study but say Midrash or treatment of Scripture, which actually talks about the rock that we will encounter when we read Exodus, the rock following the people. Ok? Now, that's going to be the basis, maybe, for what Paul says when he says, "that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered over the desert." If you know your narratives, you know that, but notice verse 6. "These things occurred as examples." This is an expression he's going to use twice – the Greek word is literally "types." "These things occur as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things, as they did." In other words, when we read these texts, again, we're supposed to be reading them and absorbing them and saying "wow, I think I'm supposed to learn something from what the Israelites are doing." They're examples for us.

There's a word that I'm going to keep using over and over in this class so you might as well get used to it now, it's "adumbration." Adumbration is a foreshadowing.

We're going to see multiple foreshadowings. Sometimes within the First Testament itself, but often times in the First Testament looking forward to Jesus. At any rate, "these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things. Don't be idolaters as some of them were, as it was written, the people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan rivalry." This is of course that tragic situation where they made the golden calf. "We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did and in one day 23,000 of them died," a horrifying incident. Verse 9, "We should not test the Lord." Now that one isn't quite as heinous. Most of us would like to say, "Oh, well, I'm not an idolater. I'm not engaged in sexual immorality." Although chances are, if you read the Sermon on the Mount, we are. But at any rate, "testing" is a little bit closer to home, and then look at verse 10, "and don't grumble as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel. All these things serve as examples for us," which is exactly what Paul says at verse 11. "These things happen to them as examples, and are written down as warnings for us," because, of course, we are human beings and we need warnings.

Verse 12, "So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" and then the verse which I suspect a number of you have memorized, "No temptation has taken you, but what is common to man, but God is faithful, he will not let you [or us] be tempted beyond what we can bear, when we're tempted, God will provide a way out so that we can stand up under it." But notice the preceding context for that promise of God's faithfulness to rescue us from the overpowering nature of temptations, because we get tempted just as the Israelites did.

Well, that's the first thing to think of in terms of another reason for studying the First Testament, coming straight out of Paul--and it's a sobering one, right? And as you read that, it is a sobering reason. Another one as well - and here I'd like you to turn to 2 Peter 1. Another marvelous chapter to study, to memorize I would suggest. But let me simply read this, and I'm going to go beyond verses 3 and 4, although they are a great starting point. Peter says, "God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness." I'm going to stop with that because it's really easy to just read past that.

One of the things I'm going to encourage you to do this term is take your stained glass window glasses off when you read Scripture, and stop and really think about what you read. "God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness." Those of you who have had New Testament, I hope you chewed on this when you were studying it. That's pretty remarkable. And God is indeed trustworthy so we have to presume that when he says this, it's true. Everything we need, even in the context in which you and I live, which is a trap in terms of our trying to be godly. "He has given us everything we need for life and godliness." But notice how it works. It's not just handed there – "through our knowledge of him who called us" - our knowledge of him – "by his own glory and goodness." Then verse 4, "Through these he's given us his very great and precious promises." Got it? "Great and precious promises." It's focused, there's a source for this life and godliness business. "He's given us his great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." In other words, Christ in us. That's what we're promised, Christ in us, the Holy Spirit indwelling as well. "So that through them we may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption the world caused by evil desires."

Now, I'm going to keep reading because there's a very practical statement that Peter makes at this point. This is kind of the Peter counterpart to Galatians 5, and the fruit of the Spirit, you know: love, joy peace, etc. Look at this one, this list. "Make every effort to add to your faith, goodness." That's an exercise. That's a matter of, when you're faced with choices, choosing what's right as opposed to what's wrong. When all the people up on the hill decide on Friday night to do something they ought not be doing, you decide not to do it. "Add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge." It takes a ton of work to do that. Possibly what we're engaged in this next semester here. "To knowledge, self-control." Ouch. All of us need a little exercise of that. Peter is saying, add these things. God just doesn't give you a little blank check in the great and precious promises. There are expectations that go along with it. "To self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness,

love.” This is a challenging little list and I hope that together we’ll engage in unpacking some things that will help us along these lines.

The book of Proverbs, for example (and Dr. Hildebrandt can tell you all about the book of Proverbs), has some very practical things to say about choices that we make, character building issues. At any rate, let me finish this, "For if you possess these qualities in an increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Sometimes we feel ineffective and unproductive, and we will be unless we are really keen on exercising some of these things. “But if anyone doesn't have them, he's near-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he's been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” What a tremendous promise! Let's take it seriously.

Any questions? With the exception of the 26th of January, which is a Monday, this is the last time we'll stop early. Questions? Comments? Splendid, see you on Friday.

Transcribed by Jenny Machado and Ted Hildebrandt
Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt
Final edit: Elaine Phillips