



Connect to the Bible

Leader's Guide

Week 3

Topic week 3: Open the Bible – OT History, Poetry, and Prophecy

PREWORK: Before Class read the full leader's guide and watch the videos on the website. Note the time of the videos so you can plan well.

Study these teaching points covered in the video (*Refer to the participants guide week 3*):

Teaching Points

1) The books of history

- The importance of the 12 tribes, the entry into the promised land, and the allocation of land.
- The nature and purpose of the judges
- Why the Israelites wanted a king, and the progression from Saul→David→Solomon.
- The building (and importance) of the Temple
- The divided kingdom and the respective defeats by Assyria and Babylon.
- The exile, the return, and the rebuilding of the Temple

2) The books of poetry

- How to read Job, and the message it conveys
- What the Psalms represent, and how to incorporate them into worship
- The purpose of the wisdom literature

3) The books of prophecy

- De-mystifying the prophets and the language
- Explaining the arrangement and the importance of understanding who they are speaking to.
- Examining the major themes for those times and the Christological significance.

Speaker: Pastor Shawn Allen

Transcript****

Welcome back. My name is Shawn Allen and we are continuing into week three of our overview of the whole Bible. We did an overview, we did the Torah, and now we're going to try to complete the rest of the Old Testament today. It's going to be a very fast lesson and we'll see what we can do. The first thing I wanted to do was put up a timeline to help put everything into perspective. So, if you look along the top, this first part was what we talked about previously. This is the Creation, here is the flood and then the ancestral history. We start with Abraham and we followed through up to this red line last week. That takes us through Moses and the

Exodus out of Egypt. And we get right up to the edge of the Promised Land. We will start today with Joshua entering the promised land. We will go through a period of Judges into the monarchy and then down here, this is important because I'm not sure everybody grasped this. At some point, the nation of Israel divides, there's a fight between them and they divide into the nation of Israel, which is the Northern kingdom, and the kingdom of Judah, which is the Southern kingdom. We'll talk about both of them. Here, about 586 BC, we'll see the Babylonian capture and the exile followed by their return and the rebuilding of the temple. Notice this red line right here, that's where the Old Testament cuts off, about 400 BC. And from there up to about the birth of Christ, we really don't have writings in the Bible. There is the Apocrypha, which I mentioned last week, which covers some of that time period, but it isn't included within the Canon of the Old Testament or the New Testament.

Let's start with the history, with Joshua – the sixth book. And I want to step back to something I said last week, because I don't think I did it justice. I was talking about how the Nation of Israel was moving towards the promised land and they lost faith. And they had to wander for 40 years. I want to explain that a little bit better. What happened was they got to the border and they sent spies and they sent a member of each of the 12 tribes in to see the land. And they saw the land was wonderful and fruitful, but they also saw there were people there and they came back and they lost faith that God, as their leader, would prevail and give them the land that He promised. They decided to say the land was unfit. They complained of problems to disparage the land – with the exception of two, Joshua and Caleb. The people were upset and pushed back but Joshua and Caleb said, “no, God is behind us. We can do this.” And the people didn't want to go. But God said you will get to the Promised Land, but this generation who lost faith will not get to go. And so that was the 40 years of wandering around.

Now Joshua, who was faithful, gets to go into the Promised Land. He takes over after Moses and becomes the new leader of the nation of Israel. In the book of Joshua, the first part is the entry into the Promised Land and the defeat of the people who are there. The second part is the ordering of the land. The Promised Land is divided amongst the 12 tribes of Israel. It is determined where each one of them has their land. It ends with the renewal of the covenant from Exodus and then Joshua's death.

That takes us through the establishment of the nation of Israel in the Promised Land. The next period, of about 300 years, is covered by Judges. The judges were the leaders, not in the legal sense of what we think of today. They were leaders. And what would happen was Israel wouldn't follow what they were supposed to do. They wouldn't clean out all the people that were there in the land before them. They would start to worship their other gods and God would get angry with them. And they would eventually be overtaken by another group. Then they would repent and say, “why did we do this? We should have been faithful.” And God would raise up a judge, a leader, who would then bring them back to righteousness. And as soon as things got going well, they would turn around and do the same thing again. It was a

cycle and that's what's happening within this period of Judges. Here are some of the names from Judges during that time – Debra, Gideon, Samson.

Then we get to 1st and 2nd Samuel. Samuel was the last judge and Israel wanted a King. Israel forgot that they had the King of Kings – that God was their leader. They wanted a human King. Everybody else had one, all the other people have Kings, why can't Israel have a King? Samuel said, “this is a very bad idea.” But they didn't listen. They demanded a King, and God said, “ok, you can have it.” At that point is the start of the monarchy. Here they transitioned from the judges to a monarchy. The first King is Saul and he was only King for a short time. He lost faith with God and was replaced by David. That is a very brief way of talking about David, who's one of the most important people in the entire Bible; but unfortunately, we can't cover all that today. But this is how we got to the monarchy and David becomes the King and this all happens in 1st and 2nd Samuel.

We then move to 1st and 2nd Kings. David's son, Solomon becomes the King and Solomon is known for his wisdom. He requested wisdom and was a very good King. He also built the temple, where they would worship. This was a very important part of the nation of Israel. But Solomon also lost faith with God. He had many wives, many of them were foreign and he started following foreign gods. And so, it was prophesied that his kingdom would ultimately be divided. And that's what happens at the end of his reign. There's an individual named Jeroboam and Jeroboam revolts against Solomon in his rule. Eventually the kingdom is divided. Jeroboam has 10 of the 12 tribes and Rehoboam who was Solomon's son has the other two. So now the 10 tribes are the Northern kingdom of Israel. And the other two tribes are the Southern kingdom of Judah. They were at war and they fought each other. This was not a friendly separation; this was a really ugly time in the history of the Nation of Israel. 1st and 2nd Kings tells the story back and forth of both kingdoms. Most of the kings were awful, every once in a while, there'd be a great king that would rise up and get everybody focused and righteous. And then that king's son or grandson would completely fall apart. Again. During this time we see two of the most famous prophets, Elijah and Elisha. They are both prophets to the Northern kingdom of Israel. We would assume that Israel is the kingdom that does the better of the two, just because of the current state of Israel. That's actually not true. In 722 BC, Syria defeats the Northern kingdom of Israel. Everyone disperses and it wipes them out. And that's really the last we hear of them. About 150 years later, we continue to follow the Southern kingdom of Judah and they're eventually defeated by the Babylonians. At that point, they destroyed the temple and they take the kingdom of Judah into exile. They take them away and that's known as the Babylonian exile. Then they are living in another area outside their homeland, this begins the Babylonian exile. This lasts 50 years, until the Persians, led by Cyrus defeat, the Babylonians. And Cyrus was a different leader. He gave the people he ruled a little more autonomy and he said they can go back and build their temple.

This takes us from 1st and 2nd Kings to the beginning of the Babylonian exile. Next we come to 1st and 2nd Chronicles. This is written later and is a compilation of everything that happened.

When you read 1st and 2nd Kings, and 1st and 2nd Chronicles, you'll see the exact same stories. Sometimes there's little variations between them, but they're telling the same story. It does at the end, briefly mention Cyrus's decree that allowed them to go back home.

Next is Ezra and Nehemiah. This begins with the decree of Cyrus allowing them to go back to Jerusalem and these books follow their return and the rebuilding of the second temple. Nehemiah becomes the Jewish governor and builds a wall. This takes us to the end of the chronological history of the Old Testament. They have returned home, they have been able to rebuild their temple. But they're not as strong as they once were. The nation has been divided and they've been defeated several times. I want to mention two books, Ruth and Esther, they're two of the absolute best books in the Bible. The reason I left them out is because they're both self-contained stories. They're not necessary for the chronology that we're doing. And in order to tell the stories, it would take far too long, but I highly recommend you check out both of those books. They are phenomenal. And that takes us to the end of the 12 books of the history section.

The next section is the five books of poetry, or wisdom books. This section has the widest variety of writing. They're not necessarily tied to the nation of Israel. These books of wisdom are Job and Proverbs, and then love poetry, which is Song of Songs (sometimes called Song of Solomon). Next is the temple liturgy, which makes up the majority of the book of Psalms. We are going to briefly talk about two of those today. Unfortunately, we don't have time for them all. The first one I want to talk about is Job. Job is one of the most read books of the Bible, even for many people in literature, outside of people who study the Bible who were either Jewish or Christians. It's become pervasive within the culture because this is the book that really focuses on suffering. The problem of suffering is one of the most significant questions in theology. Why does God allow suffering? And the explanation for this is called a theodicy. A theodicy is an explanation of why there is still suffering. Job doesn't necessarily answer this, but it does give some really good information. It also addresses what I think is a really bad teaching about why we're suffering. Job is a very successful person who probably lived during the time of Abraham. Satan says to God, "you know, Job who's not only successful, but he's very faithful to God? He's only faithful because you've made his life so easy. If his life was terrible, he would disown you in a heartbeat." And God said, "that's not true, but I'll let you try, let you see." Over a series of events Job loses his children, he has health issues, there's a lot of terrible things that happen to him. And Job starts to ask "why are these terrible things happening to me?" So of course, whenever you're down, you get a couple of friends that show up and give you terrible advice. Well, this is what happens to Job. Some of his friends show up and there's this cycle of writing of Job saying, why is this happening to me? And then his friends explaining to him. What his friends say is what I would call Retribution Theology.

They're saying, "God blesses those that are good. And he curses those that are bad. Therefore, if bad things are happening to you, Job, it must mean you're a bad person." Job disagrees, he's not saying he's perfect, but he's also saying he really didn't do anything to deserve this. And he

keeps demanding an interview with God. He wants to talk to God to explain himself. At the end of the book, Job gets his interview with God and it doesn't go near as well as he would want it to. He doesn't get the explanation. What he gets is God explaining that He alone is wise and that He alone understands the why of everything—not Job. He understands this and he repents and he's blessed by God. He questioned God. Oftentimes we hear about the patience of Job. If you read it, Job, doesn't seem that patient, but he never curses God. He just questioned him. The two things I think you can take from Job that are so important are 1) God is wise. God understands. God knows. You know, sometimes we think why is He doing that? He doesn't get it. He does! And 2) He rejects that if we suffer, it's retribution for sin. He says your friends who told you that were incorrect. And that's a pervasive teaching. We see it in the news even today and hear people say that still. In the New Testament, in the example of John 9:2, the disciples ask Jesus regarding a blind man, “who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind?” And Jesus says “neither of them. He was born blind so that God could be glorified through him.” So, I want you to take from the story of Job, both the understanding of God's wisdom in our suffering, but also that it is not a punishment.

The second book, we'll talk about is Psalms. This is a book that's historically all over the place, because it doesn't have a set time period. If you rely on the titles, it could range from Moses to the time period that they returned after the exile. But I think that's all irrelevant, don't get bogged down in the historical application. Just appreciate the Psalms for what they are. They're not the teachings of God. They're the prayers of the people. And I think when you grasp that, you see how valuable they are. Because when we pray, there are times, when we are praying to God when everything is great. “Thank you so much. This is wonderful. My life is a blessing.” And there's times when we're saying, “why God, why is this happening to me? Why are things going wrong? Why am I suffering all of this?” And those are captured in the Psalms because the people who were praying these were just like us and they had laments and they had joy. In the Psalms there are songs, hymns of joy, hymns of lament, of thanksgiving, of confidence, of trusting God. All of these things reflect how we pray to God today. If you want to deep dive, find a great resource to walk through. But if you just want to read the Psalms my advice would be this: Don't sit down with it like it's a book and you're going to go through 20 today. You'll lose the impact of them. Take one at a time and just write it, read it, and think on it and figure out how does this apply? Maybe you're not under attack from another nation, but how can I apply this to my life? And I know you'll see how rich the Psalms can be.

The final section is the prophets. There are 17 books of prophecy – five major and 12 minor. They're divided based on size, not importance. Here's a quote from Martin Luther. He says “the prophets have a queer way of talking like people who instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make heads or tails of them or see what they are getting.” The prophets can be difficult and sometimes they can be confusing. And it makes me feel better to think that even Martin Luther who studied the Bible, his whole life and was one of the preeminent theologians of all time says he struggles with it too. Sometimes it's tough and that's okay, you can push through this. But this is God talking to

His people. This is God selecting individuals and talking through them to give advice to His people. The prophets were not popular in their time, as you might expect, because usually what they were saying was “here's what you're doing wrong here. Here's what you need to fix. And here's what's going to happen if you don't fix it.” They were not well liked but they cover the whole history. They are not ordered chronologically, and they also do not always clarify which nation they are speaking to. Sometimes they were prophesying to Israel and sometimes to Judah. This is another example of when it would be helpful to have a study Bible where at the beginning of each book there's an explanation. These explanations tell you where the prophets prophesied, who they were, who they were talking to, the time period, etc. It also helps you understand this information in the timeline of Kings or Chronicles. Some of them overlap and were happening at the same time. Most of these were oral pronouncements that would then be written down by either the prophet or a scribe. It's important to know that these are not the only prophets. As I mentioned earlier, we have Elijah and Elisha who maybe are the two most famous. They don't have their own books. There are also examples of female prophets in 2nd Kings 22:14 and Judges. This is also where we see the majority of the prophecies about Christ, about the coming of the Messiah. There's so much rich information in them, I wish we could go through each one. We can't, but I did want to give you an overview of the role that the prophets serve.

Finally, as we close out the old Testament, I want to ask “why do we read the old Testament?” Sometimes I think it's easy to start with the New Testament. What we know starts with Jesus. Well, the story of God's creation and redemption is a complete story. It's the entire history. You know, if you start and only read the New Testament, you're only reading the second half or really, the final third of a book. You're missing everything that led up to that. The other thing to remember is these are the teachings of the early church. As we saw in the very first week, all scripture is God-breathed. When Paul says that in Timothy, this is what he's talking about. These are the scriptures that he's referring to. When you see in Luke that Jesus goes in the Temple and reads the scroll of Isaiah, this is the Old Testament. Everything wasn't reset at the birth of Christ. God didn't say, “Everything is messed up. Erase and start over.” This is a part of the story too and if you leave it out, you really miss the richness of the whole thing. The Old Testament predicts the coming of the Messiah, the coming of Christ, and finally the overall teaching of faith and repentance. And it is just as applicable today. I always would read through and think, “why can't the Nation of Israel get it right? They keep losing faith. They keep screwing up. Then they repent. Things would get good again and then they do the same thing.” We see this same cycle in our own lives and in the lives of people we know. It's important that all of this is as applicable to our own lives, as much as it was to them.

That was a very fast overview in three weeks of the old Testament, there is a lot of information there. There's a lot of cultural differences that can make it difficult, but I really hope that this has given you an incentive to reach back and really dive into it, to get the fullness of the Bible. Thank you.

Class timeline:

	Estimated time
1. Introductions	15 min
2. Teaching Video	Pastor Shawn Allen, 24 min
3. Discussion Questions	20 min
4. Takeaways	1 min
5. Prayer	1 min
6. Invitation for next week	1 min

1.Introduce the content and video for this class (in your own words):

This week contains a tremendous amount of information; it represents over half the Bible. It begins with the entry into the promised land. The histories cover the next 900-1000 years; stopping about 300 years before the birth of Christ. The prophecies overlap this period, and are often best read contemporaneously with the corresponding portion of the histories. These books represent the God speaking to the Israelites though various individuals. Finally, while some of the poetry can be read contemporaneously (many of the Psalms); the books of poetry often cover larger conceptual ideas, unbound from specific historical events.

2.Play the teaching video.

3.Discussion questions (*See page 32 &33 in the participants guide*)

1. Why do you think the Psalms might teach us how to pray?
2. The Israelites worshiped actual idols (such as the golden calf). What are modern examples of idols in our lives?
3. The Prophets sought to correct the actions and behaviors of the Israelites and bring them back into relation to God. How can reading their words apply to our lives 2500+ later?
4. Can you find a place in the writings of the Prophets where they prophesy about the coming of the Messiah?

4. Closing / takeaways in your own words:

- Same as previous week regarding the Bible all being one story.
- Helps put the people and stories they know within that context.
- The failings of the Israelites are not unique, not are we immune from similar failings within our own context and culture.
- God promised them a Messiah that would redeem them; and we have it with Jesus.

5. Close in prayer Use the PRAY model as we teach them to pray:

P = praise – praise God for who He is and what he has done. Use attributes to describe Him.

R = Repent – helps us confess any sins and change the way we think or feel

A = Ask – petition your request for this group to our Father in Heaven including their understanding of the Bible

Y = Yield – Submit to God’s will and let go of our will.

PRAISE	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
REPENT	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
ASK	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread." "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
YIELD	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

6. Invite them back next week to learn about

In week 4 of Connect to the Bible, we will be learning about the Synoptic Gospels! Come back next week to hear about the first three books of the New Testament.