



# ***Introducing the Old Testament***

Week 3

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## ***Overview of this week***

- ❖ Wisdom literature in the Old Testament
- ❖ Job
- ❖ Continuing the story -- three books
  - Joshua
  - Judges
  - Ruth



## **Wisdom literature**

- ❖ Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and some Psalms
- ❖ Common in the ancient cultures
  - Discussions and collected sayings
  - Practical and philosophical
- ❖ The way of wisdom
  - The way of the righteous or the way of the wicked
    - Wise/upright v. foolish/unfaithful
    - The narrow way or the broad way



## **Biblical Wisdom**

- ❖ Biblical wisdom is learning to walk in the shadow of God's moral will
  - Proverbs 1:7 (fear? => reverence that leads to obedience)
- ❖ Recurring themes
  - Theodicy
    - the problem of evil and suffering
  - The retribution principle
    - Wise behavior is rewarded; foolish behavior is punished
  - Practical social commentary
    - What we want to teach our children – esp. Proverbs
    - Application of the OT law



## ***Job -- Framing the story***

- ❖ God and his court
- ❖ The Accuser – Satan
- ❖ Job the blameless
  - “There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”
  - A rich man – rich with life (age, family, animals)
- ❖ The wager
  - Who makes a wager with God?!
- ❖ “The life of the inside”
  - What does God want? What is he interested in?



## ***Job & the Problem of Evil***

- ❖ Theodicy – the problem of pain & suffering
  - The problem is often stated this way: If God is good and all-powerful, how can there be suffering? Either he isn't as good as we think or not as powerful.
- ❖ Job's friends are not hesitant in offering explanations for the suffering Job endures!
  - If you've suffered, it is because you have sinned
  - The retribution principle
- ❖ Job turns the retribution principle on its ear!
- ❖ What explanation do you offer? What explanation does the Bible offer?



## **Job & the Problem of Faith**

- ❖ How would we respond to such suffering?
- ❖ Jobs' wife: "Curse God and die."
- ❖ Job's response (1:21-22) to loss of family and property
  - "'Naked came I from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'" In all this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrong-doing."
  - Note – after the infliction of boils, we are told "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." ??
- ❖ The mystery -- Will Job hold on to his faith?



## **Joshua**

- ❖ Two misconceptions about the purpose of the book
  - Not a biography of Joshua
  - Not a history of the military conquest
- ❖ The book shows how God went about keeping his promise to deliver the land to Israel (from Hill & Walton)
  - God instructs Israel to enter the promised land
  - God has terrified the occupants of the land
  - God brings them across the Jordan
  - Circumcision is required for rededication
  - The commander of the Lord's army appears (Chapter 5)
  - God-given strategies
  - God-given victories
  - Defeat when God's instructions have not been carried out
  - Distribution of the land and covenant renewal



## Judges

### ❖ Key theme – CYCLES

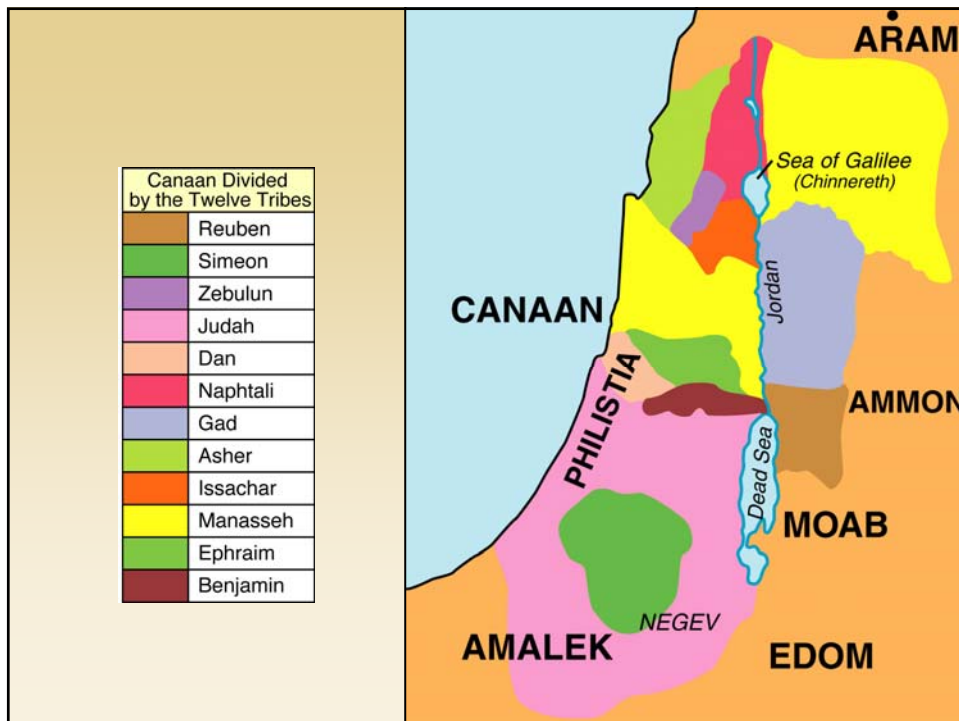
- Seven cycles – over a few generations, the people turn away from God, God raises up a new, righteous judge, the people turn back to God and the cycle starts all over

### ❖ Outline

- Israel fails to complete the conquest of Canaan
- The seven cycles
- IN the final chapters, Israel has been unable to build a just, God-fearing community
  - The last verse – “In those days there was no king in Israel, all the people did what was right in their own eyes.”

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## **Ruth**

- ❖ Set in the time of the judges
- ❖ A short story of love, devotion, and redemption
  - *Ruth's faithfulness* is all the more stark because of the *Israelites' unfaithfulness* in the time of the judges
- ❖ Though Ruth is a Moabite she becomes David's grandmother
  - The people of God are constituted by their faith in God, not by their race . . . or anything else.
- ❖ Key verse 1:16
  - "Where you go, I will go . . . Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."