



Introducing the Old Testament

Week 6

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Overview of this week

- ❖ Ecclesiastes
- ❖ Proverbs & Song of Solomon (aka song of Songs)
- ❖ Reading the prophets
- ❖ The pre-exilic prophets

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Ecclesiastes

- ❖ Jewish tradition, led by the Pharisees, came to see Solomon as Qoheleth
 - An old, still wise, Solomon repents of his apostasy and writes of the fruitless path he had taken
- ❖ It is more likely that the author is unknown, though he may be looking back to Solomon in finding the teachings of Qoheleth.
- ❖ We are also unsure of when it was written.
- ❖ We do know that some Jewish groups wanted to remove it from the canon
 - Remember Martin Luther and the book of James!



The Strange Worldview of Ecclesiastes

- ❖ Our worldview provides our answers to the most important questions:
 - Who are we?
 - Where are we?
 - What is the problem?
 - What is the solution?
- ❖ Ecclesiastes is a stark look at a life lived without God => a god-less worldview
- ❖ Ecclesiastes forces us to confront the question of what really matters in life.
 - The burden of the gods!



What really matters in life?

- ❖ Qoheleth (the Teacher) begins and ends his teachings
=> life is meaningless!
 - Without God, life IS meaningless
 - Eat, drink, and be merry
 - Live for the moment
 - Amusing ourselves to death (Neil Postman)
- ❖ With God, life is full of meaning and purpose
 - The Westminster confession
 - Our purpose is to know God and enjoy him forever!
 - Nothing matters more than our relationship with God!



Is there truly right and wrong?

- ❖ Without God, we are left with moral relativism and the use of power
 - Eccl 3:18-21
- ❖ Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes
 - “I see no reason for attributing to a man significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or to a grain of sand.”
 - “Doesn’t this squashy sentimentality of a big minority of our people about human life make you puke?”
- ❖ Peter Singer – Bioethics professor at Princeton
 - Proposes that there be a period (28 days?) after a child’s birth during which the parents can decide whether or not the child should be killed.



Why is Ecclesiastes in the Bible?

- ❖ Sometimes it is easier to explain what something is not, than to explain what it is!
- ❖ The book shows us the absurdity of a god-less life.
- ❖ Ecclesiastes shows us again that we can be completely honest in our relationship with God!
 - We aren't afraid to confront the attractiveness of of a life dedicated to "eating, drinking, and making merry!"



Proverbs & The Song of Solomon (Hill & Walton)

- ❖ Proverbs
 - The literary legacy of Israel's wise teachers
 - Principles, not promises
 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
 - Wisdom leads to an understanding of the retribution principle. (*But remember Job!*)
- ❖ Song of Solomon
 - The goodness of humanity
 - The dignity of human affections
 - The sanctity and virtue of human sexual expression in marriage
 - Some suggest that it is an extended allegory of the love between God and his people – but this has probably been overdone.
 - Always start with the plain meaning!



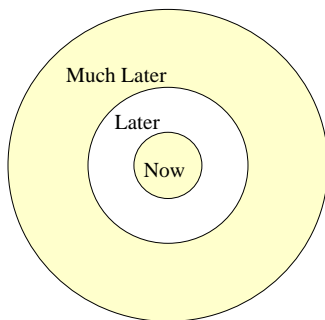
Confronting the Prophets

- ❖ Weird? . . . Confusing? . . . Repetitious?
- ❖ God talks back!
 - God speaks to Israel through the words of the prophets
- ❖ The transcendent, emotional God!
- ❖ We move from God's mighty acts to God's mighty words.

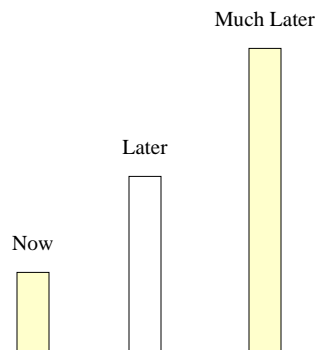


God, the Prophets, & Time

The Straight-on View



The Side View



These differing timeframes get all mixed up!



The Pre-exilic prophets

- To Israel: Amos & Hosea
- To Nineveh: Jonah & Nahum
- To Edom: Obadiah
- To Judah
 - Joel
 - Isaiah
 - Micah
 - Zephaniah
 - Jeremiah
 - Habakkuk



Hosea

- ❖ A prophet in the north (Israel) during the last half of the eighth century (ca. 750 – 715 BC)
- ❖ The story of Hosea's marriage to Gomer is an allegory, telling us of God's relentless love for Israel, despite Israel's apostasy (turning from God)
- ❖ The exclusivity of marriage and the exclusivity of the covenant
- ❖ Hosea 11:8-9



Jonah

- ❖ A prophet to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria (they wiped out the Northern kingdom in 721 BC)
- ❖ Set in the first half of the eighth century BC
- ❖ Is it history? an allegory? a parable?
 - Biblical miracles and the whale
- ❖ The story
- ❖ A few teachings
 - God's compassion extends to all
 - The God of second chances
 - Jonah's anger that Nineveh wasn't destroyed!



Isaiah (means "YHWH will save")

- ❖ The dominant prophetic voice in the last half of the 8th century, c.a. 740-700BC. (a prophet in Judah)
- ❖ Many scholars suggest that the book of Isaiah is the work of Isaiah and 1 or 2 much later authors
 - Chapter 44 names Cyrus of Persia 200 yrs before his time. If this is a true prediction, it is the only naming prediction in the OT.
 - Notice the change in emphasis begins in chapter 40.
- ❖ Regardless of authorship – all of it is canonical!
- ❖ Some themes in Isaiah (the theologian of the OT)
 - God is the holy Savior of Israel, trustworthy and incomparable
 - The remnant theme – a purified nucleus of a renewed, chosen people
 - The suffering servant of the Lord (Jesus as a remnant of one)

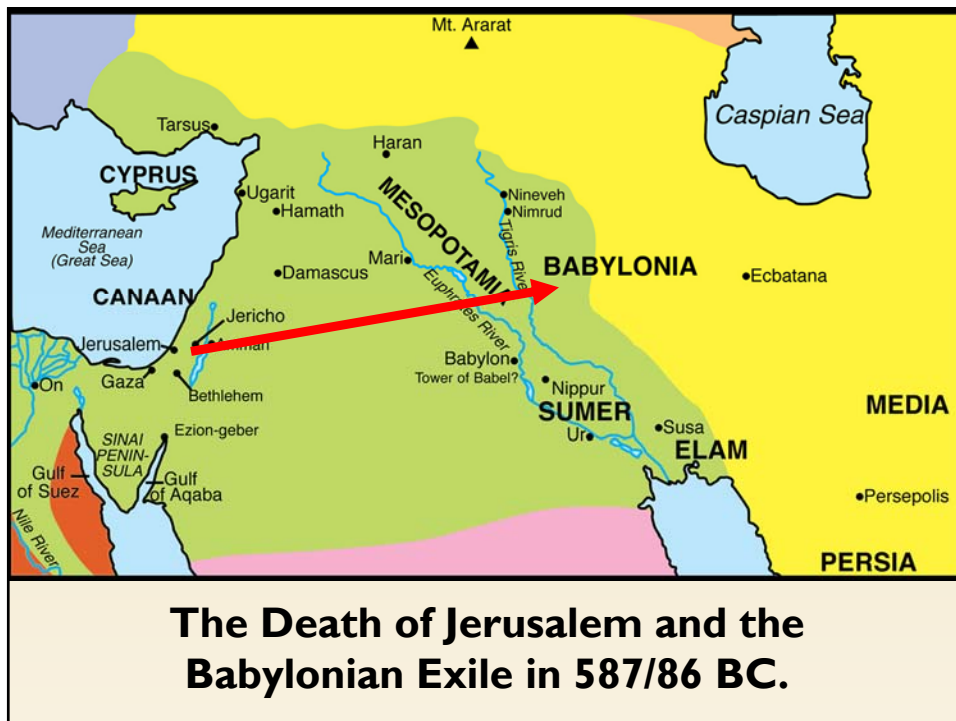


Jeremiah

- ❖ A prophet in Judah in the decades before and the decade after the exile
 - We know more about him than most other prophets
- ❖ Little discernible structure to Jeremiah
 - A collection of little books and oracles
- ❖ Some of Jeremiah's themes
 - The holy, sovereign God brings judgment on Israel
 - God offers a message of hope for a restored Israel
 - Jeremiah 31:31-34: the new covenant, a vision of God's kingdom and the hope for all humankind!
 - The law is carried in the heart
 - Back to the journey of the inside!
 - The Potter's house and the balancing scales of judgment

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The Death of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile in 587/86 BC.



Old Testament Timeline

