

“Poetry and Prophecy”

How to Study the Bible

Various Scriptures

The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

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Sig Tragard: We don't have any music, so I don't know if you want Don to hum, or anything.

Jeff: We'll get him to hum in just a minute. All right. Don, do you want to sing a solo, or something like that?

Don Maurer: I don't know. I should sing something from Abba, (*Laughter*), because two weeks ago on the recording, “AB-BA.”

Jeff: Oh, no!

Don: I thought Jeff,, why don't you just admit that you're really a closet Abba fan? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: You know, I'm just gonna go ahead and pray. (*Laughter*)

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this day and for the blessing of change in the seasons and for the summer that we enjoy, and Lord, the fellowship that we have one with another. We ask that You'll bless us not only here but in our local congregations. And Father, we pray that as we are here, and as You knit your hearts together in various ways, we pray that You'll minister to each one of us.

Father, we think about Kevin, and how he is and has been struggling with various illnesses, and now to have this news laid upon him. Lord, we pray than ask that You'll bear him up. And yet the testimony is that You already have, and we're thankful for that. We're thankful for the simple faith that he has, and for the understanding that You have indeed scooped him up and made him Your own. And Lord, we pray that You'll continue to bear witness with his spirit that he is Your son. And we pray, Father, that as long as he lives that will be unwavering.

Father, we're thankful for what we heard from Paul. And Lord, we're thankful that his son and that his son's friends are okay. Lord, we think about that situation and how it could have been much worse and yet wasn't. And we're thankful that it wasn't and that things worked out as they did. And Lord, we trust that You'll teach through this. And we trust that You'll receive the praise. And Lord, we are thankful for the outcome.

Lord, we gather together and we hear of all sorts of events—things for Aservo and the Blessing Board. And Lord, we just ask that You will bless these organizations and their work. Father, it's important, and we pray that You will work through them.

Father, as we gather together today we're mindful that there are many who are on our hearts and our minds who are dealing with illness and disease. Lord, we just ask that You will comfort them and bless them. And Lord, we turn them over to You because where else would we turn? Lord, as we come to You now and ask Your blessing upon our study we pray it in Jesus' blessed name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: You know, I think that Christians are a peculiar people. I was thinking about Matt. Christians are peculiar because we'll praise God for the thing that just happened. And the world would come in and say, “Praise God for that? Why would you praise God for that?” And Christians are in some ways just peculiar about the way they think about

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things. And I think it’s because when you have a sovereign God it’s a little easier to be peculiar like that.

But you know what that word means; it means that you’re all strange. (*Laughter*) No, it doesn’t; it means that you’re worth something, right? It’s from the word *pecuniary*.

Paul Sedlock: Jeff, it just opened my eyes up, you know. We see the dark side of things; we’re always struggling with that. But it just stopped me in my tracks and actually made me see the blessings.

Jeff: Yeah. And that’s a good reminder; I’m glad you mentioned that to us.

Okay. Well, today we’re going to continue to look at interpreting the Bible. And we’re taking a closer look at some different genres. And the last time we were together we looked at the genre of law. And so we’re going to look today at the genre of poetry.

We talked a lot about the genre of law the last time. And I thought we had a pretty good discussion. I don’t know if anything was left over from our last discussion or not. But I figured I would open it up and give you a chance to resurrect anything we talked about. You know, this is the place where we can do it. We talked about modesty and immodesty and how to judge those sorts of things.

Ted Wood: What were you talking about?

Jeff: We talked about law the last time.

Sig: Do you have any questions?

Jeff: I just used examples of modesty and immodesty; do you remember? How do you judge what’s modest in terms of length of dress, and so on?

David Miller: We also talked a bit about poetry.

Jeff: I did?

David: Yes.

Jeff: Where did we leave off then? Oh, we left off at metaphor and simile; I have a mark there. Okay. Thank you; that’s good to know. All right; there we go. I should look at my own notes. Anything else? All right; let’s get started.

Ted: What did you determine about modesty?

Jeff: We determined how to be modest in modesty.

Ted: I think the real challenge is calling it out. I was in a situation at church the other day. It was a woman leader; a deacon. The situation was that her skirt was halfway up from her knees, and I found it distracting. One way to look at that is that I’m a very old man; therefore I need to get my act together. But I just wish that wouldn’t happen.

Jeff: Well, we talked a little bit about trying to determine what’s modest. We used it as an example. And how does one do that?

For instance, we basically said this. I don’t remember what it was now, guys; do you remember? I said something that it has to be from the pelvic bone, two feet in length or 2-1/2 feet in length. So if it’s not that long then it’s not modest. How do we make that determination and say that’s modest?

So in the process of talking about law this might be a good thing to mention as well. I mean, there’s a general equity with the law. This is an entirely new thing from the last time, but it plays an important role in what we were discussing.

There is a general equity of the law from the Old Testament to the New Testament. And when we talk about a general equity we mean that there is basically a carry-over. We’re not theologians such that we say that the laws of the Old Testament must be

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applied today in exactly the same way as they were then. That would be theonomic, and I think that would be out of step where most of us are in terms of the way we view the use of the Old Testament law. Yet there is a general equity in terms of how we apply Old Testament law to our situation today.

We oftentimes think in various ways about that, but I think in a way like this. Think of the rebellious son. The rebellious son is rebellious, and the parents can't do anything with him. And so what were you told to do in the Old Testament? You were told to stone him to death.

What's the modern equivalent to that? Well, I'll tell you what my modern equitable equivalent to that has been. My son probably wouldn't be excited about me telling this. But I remember a time in his life when I would say he was being rebellious. And so what I did was that I said that the general equity of the law is “to take away our life. And so I'm going to take away everything enjoyable about your life. And I'm going to do that for what is for you a lifetime—nine months.” (*Laughter*) And so I removed his enjoyable life for nine months and took everything away from him—you know, the general equity of the law.

How does one come to apply the law? Well, the confession that we use in Reformed circles is that the general equity is pretty much the standard. Anyway, yes?

David: I was thinking that a good question to ask one of these young ladies about the dresses is if your motive is to draw attention to yourself, you've succeeded. If the purpose is to glorify God, you might want to re-think that motive.

Jeff: Yes. All right, let's go on. I think we did talk about language the last time we were together. I think we came to questions. Mike?

Mike Davis: Jeff, just a final comment before we move on. A thought before we move on from that is that it's hard for a man to address a young lady or a woman in that regard.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mike: And as I see it Scripturally, it's up to the older women to do that.

Jeff: Yeah.

Mike: And so we can talk about it all day long, and it really is an issue. And yet we need to encourage our wives. We need to encourage the older women to do their job in that regard. I hope that makes sense.

Jeff: It makes perfect sense So just in terms of hermeneutical questions, or questions of interpretation, there are a few that you would ask when you come to a poetic section. What is the poet saying? Is he re-stating something in the first line? Is he contrasting something in the second line? That would be part of the parallelisms that we talked about. Is there a step move? Is there a step parallelism—a step up, a step down? Is there something patternesque, like a.-b.—Oh, boy! (*Laughter*)

Don: You can't get away from it. (*Laughter*)

Transcriber's Note: Refer to beginning of document.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Is there a pattern involved here? What's going on? And the reason why I want to remind you of this is because when we look at prophecy one of the things that we notice—and this is what I said to you before—is that genres have a tendency to bleed into teach other. And so when you think about poetry you don't just think that poetry has these characteristics and nothing else. For instance I showed you that poetic characteristics can bleed over into the Gospels. And they can certainly bleed

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over into prophecy. And so when we look at prophecy we’ll see many of the same things that we noticed in poetry in prophecy. So let’s look at prophecy for a minute. Yes, Don?

Don: They can bleed into historical narratives too.

Jeff: Yeah, absolutely.

Don: A lot of people think that Genesis 1 and 2 must be metaphorical because parts of it are poetic. Well, that’s not necessarily true. Just because it’s poetic doesn’t mean that it’s not history. So there are a lot of places where genres bleed into each other. Historic and prophetic sections can be poetic as well.

Jeff: Mm-hmm. Yes, absolutely. There are two types of prophecy. One is *foretelling* and the other is *forth-telling*. So when we think about prophecy I think we have a tendency only to think about one type of prophecy, and that is foretelling. And foretelling is when you have a prophet who tells you something about the future. And so I think we have a tendency to think very narrowly about prophecy. If it’s prophecy, it’s future.

And yet that’s not always the case. And that’s certainly not always the case with the Old Testament prophets. Oftentimes the Old Testament prophets were doing what we call forth-telling. Forth-telling is what they were often doing. And what is forth-telling? It’s when they took an existing Scripture and applied it to their own day. So foretelling is when they’re telling the future. Forth-telling is when they’re taking an existing document and applying it to their own time.

For instance, one of the things that you’ll find is, you’ll find that oftentimes the prophets will take Deuteronomy and the curses of Deuteronomy and they will apply them to Israel. They’ll tell Israel, “This is what you’re doing.” And it will look very much like the curses. And they’ll say, “This is what you’re going to inherit,” and then it will be the curses. So at that moment they are forth-telling, applying Scripture.

Today, when we think about preaching from the pulpit, I think the preacher is forth-telling. He’s taking the Scriptures and he’s applying them. But when we look at the prophecy of the Old Testament we have to look at it and determine whether or not in the historical moment they’re looking at, is this foretelling? For instance, is Isaiah in chapters 39, 40, and so on,— I’ll just stop and say this for a minute, because this is one of the things that we have to contend with.

You take Isaiah. And in Isaiah you have chapters 1-39, and then chapters 40-66. And 1-39 seems to be a contained unit. Why? Because when you get to chapter 40 it looks as if they are freed from exile. And yet 1-39 was a prediction that they were going into exile.

And so liberal scholars will look at this and say that there are two different Isaiahs here. There’s 1 Isaiah and 2 Isaiah. Nowadays there are plenty more Isaiahs because they splice these things up even further. But in the beginning there was this idea that basically said that there are two Isaiahs—two different authors under one name.

And why? Well because 1-39 looked like an entirely different setting. It looked like pre-Exile. And the prophet was applying verses to them, telling them, “You are going into exile.” And 40-66 looks like a return. In fact, chapter 40 is that great comfort passage. “*Comfort, comfort My people,*” right? It now looks like they’re out of exile.

I mean, if you’re liberal you’re not going to think, hey, maybe this guy can tell the future. Maybe it’s still pre-Exile and he’s actually telling them what is to come after the Exile, which is what I think. It’s one author and different segments of history are being

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produced by this one man. And so you have to look at the text, and you have to ask yourself what’s going on in each text?

For instance, in 1-39 we have some very, very clear forth-telling—applying Deuteronomy and other law to the people of God. And then we have some foretelling—telling of the future. “You’re going to come back from exile. And when you do,”—that sort of thing, okay? So we’ve got to make that discernment when we look at prophecy.

And that’s oftentimes difficult. I don’t know about you guys, but when you get into prophecy sometimes you feel like you get into the weeds. You look at it and you’re like, what in the world is going on here? And so what I would encourage you to do when you look at prophecy is, I would encourage you first of all to—well, let me get to the end of this and then I’ll give you something.

First of all, when you look at prophecy look for some of the same kinds of parallels because it’s going to be in poetic language that you’re going to find a lot of what’s going on.

So for instance take Isaiah 45. Here are some synthetic parallelisms: 45:4 and 5: *“For the sake of My servant Jacob and Israel My chosen, I call you by your name. I name you, though you do not know Me. I am the LORD and there is no other; beside Me there is no God. I equip you, though you do not know Me.”*

I won’t go any further. But you can see there are some ideas that appear here that are really contrasted with one another, and some are comparing with one another. Verse 4: *“I call you by your name.”* And verse 5: *“I equip you, though you do not know me.”* So there’s this idea of a contrast, right? *“I equip you; I name you, even though you do not know me.”* *“I am the LORD; there is no other. Besides Me there is no God.”* And so again you have another parallelism. *“I am the LORD and there is no other; besides Me there is no God.”* Again, just another kind of parallelism that you need to look for.

And what are we saying there? When it says, *“I am the LORD and there is no other,”* and *“Besides Me there is no God,”* it’s not saying two different things. It’s saying the same kind of thing. They’re comparing, contrasting, stepping in one direction or another.

Take a look at Jeremiah 31 for a minute—Jeremiah 31:21. *“Set up road markers for yourself; make yourself guideposts. Consider well the highway and the road by which you went. Return, O virgin Israel; return to these, your cities.”*

And so you have step parallelism. Not only are they to set up markers, but they’re to consider well the highway and return. So there’s a step movement that goes through that text. There’s a progression of sorts.

And it’s almost the case that you can just pick any place out in Scripture. Look at Jeremiah 30 verse 12 for instance; we’ll just pick that out of the hat. *“For thus says the LORD: ‘Your hurt is incurable, and your wound is grievous.’”*

So what do we have there? We have a parallelism. *“Your hurt is incurable and your wound is grievous.”* In one sense we’ve got basically a comparison going. We could say that it’s a parallelism that just re-states. In this particular one the first line may tell us a little bit more than the second line. But I think in terms of its poetry we’re actually supposed to see something that’s more synonymous: *“Your wound is incurable; your wound is grievous.”* Yes?

Ted Wood: So therefore—and I agree with this—there’s not a hurt separate from the wound.

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Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: Incurable is not separate from grievous.

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: The preacher might say, “Well, there are two things going on here. There’s the hurt and there’s the wound, and we’re going to talk about how they differ.”

Jeff: Yeah. I think that would be to misunderstand the poetry of the Scriptures.

Ted: And I was also looking for that Jeremiah passage—31:21—there’s prophecy: there’s foretelling and there’s forth-telling.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Going on at the same time.

Jeff: Yes, that’s exactly right.

Ted: I mean, you might see it as a foretelling. But there’s plenty of stuff you can work on.

Jeff: Yes, and especially when you have a curse going on, because the curse really is the application of written Scripture. But the prophets are oftentimes saying, “This is coming.” And so there’s a prophecy there. “I’m telling you what’s coming.” This is no longer conditional; this is actually on its way.

But you know, you can just pick a number of places. Jeremiah 46 verse 7: “*Who is this, rising like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge?*”

So you have two lines there. “*Who is this, rising like the Nile?*”, and “*Like rivers whose waters surge?*” Rising and surging, you know—the Nile and rivers. You’ve got a parallelism; you’ve got the same thing going on.

And that can enlarge a bit. You can probably take verses 7 and 8 together and bring those together. Yes, you actually can. “*Who is this, rising like the Nile?*” And then look in verse 8: “*I will rise; I will cover the earth.*” Isn’t that interesting!

So you have “rising,” and then “I will rise.” So you actually could probably extend the parallelism and think about 7 and 8 going together. Let’s just look at this for a minute. Verse 7: “*Like rivers whose waters surge.*” And then look at verse 8: “*Like rivers whose waters surge.*” Yeah, definitely.

And then look at what you have right in the middle—verse 8, the very first line: “*Egypt rises like the Nile.*” So all of a sudden you’ve got two lines, and then two lines and a middle line. Egypt is who we’re talking about here. Oh, that’s really interesting!

Now look, we just picked that out of a hat and said look; let’s see if we can just trace through this. And we’re obviously able to see parallelisms.

Now it’s really easy to see when you have something like “*Who is like the rising of the Nile,*” and He said, “I will rise,” right? That’s kind of a helpful thing; you can recognize that.

Then you go in a little bit. Now you almost have an a.-b.-c.-b.-a. pattern. “*Who is this rising like the Nile?*”—a.—can be compared to—jump down to verse 8—can be compared to “*I will rise.*” That’s your a. prime.

And then what about your b.? “*Like rivers whose waters surge*”—there’s your b. And then verse 8: “*Like rivers whose waters surge*”—there’s your b. prime. And then your c.: “*Egypt rises like the Nile.*” So there’s your chiastic formulation. But you have this parallelism.

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So begin to just read. And how do you begin to do that? Well you just read the Scriptures, and you just keep your eyes open for things that look like that. And once you begin to do that you’ll begin to develop a habit of reading where your eye catches those things, and then you can begin to develop them—you know, that sort of thing. Yes, Matt?

Matt Kail: I’m just intrigued by *“Return, O virgin Israel.”* Clearly there was idolatry and there was adultery, that dynamic. But from the Old Testament witness, once a woman loses her virginity there’s no way that it can be restored.

Jeff: Right.

Matt: So is this possibly a foretelling of the time of the cross, where we’re washed in the blood of the Lamb, that we’ve confessed our sins and now we’re forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness? How can they say, “Return, O virgin Israel,” when we’re not a virgin anymore? Of course some of us are thinking about a song by Madonna, but that’s a different story. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Well, you know, this is a sticky point, right? This is a good place to stop and maybe go back a minute. I want you to see that Matt raises a problem, and I’m confident that I’m not going to be able to resolve this for you. But this is a really good place to remember that there are some difficulties when you interpret Scripture.

We have these Old Testament laws. For instance Deuteronomy 24 is maybe one of the places that’s on Matt’s mind, where you have a man and a woman who are married. And the man divorces his wife for some uncleanness. And then he gets rid of her. But he may not marry her again.

And here’s the difficulty, right? The difficulty is that God gives His people a certificate of divorce and yet seems to take them back. How is that possible? Well, when we use the Old Testament law to try to understand what’s going on between God and His people I think we’re going to always lose something in the mix.

And I’ll tell you why we’re going to lose something in the mix. It’s because God uses the language of divorce to send His people into exile, but He never really divorces them. He never really finally cuts the cord between Him and His people. He’s using imagery, the imagery of divorce, when He sends them into exile. But He never lets them go fully and finally.

I think that’s the difficulty. And I think a lot of people have stumbled over that. That’s my way of thinking about it—that He never really cuts the cord between the two. But it’s the difficulty of applying the law to a prophetic portion of Scripture. And how do I equal these two out? That is what Matt is saying. They’re not a virgin people. Jeremiah describes them as “whores.” This is a whoring people, you know? And so He gets rid of them. And now He tells them, “Return, O virgin people.” And again I think that’s just another way of talking about how God views His people more than a description of those people in actuality. And I’ll open it up to you for a minute to see if you want to comment on any of that. Yes, Matt?

Matt: I just want to say too that in studying Scripture sometimes these questions arise and we don’t really come to a definitive answer.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: And that’s part of the beauty of God’s word. We’re supposed to ponder and flesh it out, and talk amongst one another and engage with the text, rather than just to say, “Oh yeah; there’s another—“

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Jeff: Yes. And it just goes to show you that the Scriptures are always much deeper than we’ll ever be able to get to the bottom of. I agree; that’s good.

Sig: Are there books that help us understand this that were written at the time of Jeremiah or Isaiah that say, “Here’s how I understand Isaiah?”

Jeff: At the time of Isaiah?

Sig: At the time of Isaiah.

Ted: There was a Jewish commentary written about Isaiah to resolve all the issues. It was out of the *Jerusalem Press*. (Laughter)

Sig: I’m serious.

Jeff: Well, there were rabbis commenting on Scripture. They had the Babylonian Talmud which was during the Exile. But a lot of that is unfaithful. A lot of that is so oriented toward a works righteousness that it’s just not reliable.

David: Many Jews tended to want to turn their religion into a formula. When we try to do that we kind of solidify it.

Jeff: I didn’t hear the first part of what you said; I’m sorry.

David: People want to turn their religion into a formula.

Jeff: Oh yes, a formula.

David: And when we do that they solidify it, and they’re not able to hear what God is saying.

Jeff: Yes; I agree. We’re prone to want to do that, aren’t we?

Ted: You know, those of us who have been divorced with children realize that you’re never truly divorced, no matter what the court says; it’s a constant issue. I’ve just taught Exodus for a year-and-a-half. The thing that struck me is that the law presents an unresolvable problem every time, because the covenant with Abraham starts off by saying that the LORD says, “You are to walk blameless before Me.”

Jeff: Right.

Ted: I looked the word up in the Hebrew; that’s what it means.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: Blameless. Again, the law in Exodus is given for the sacrifice for sins. But also for the Levites there is washing of hands, there is anointing with oil. I mean, it goes on and on. It’s not simply the sacrifice of animals. There’s one thing after another to make you right. So the only conclusion that any serious Jew can make is that at the end of nearly all of this, was that there is no hope for all the days that I’m given.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: There really is no hope. I cannot wash enough, sacrifice enough. There’s not enough blood, there’s not enough anointing oil. There aren’t enough Nazirite vows; there is just never enough. And you would have to say, “I’m not even going to think about it. The punishment is more than I can bear.”

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: You would have to say that God will have to provide the solution that I do not see at this time.

Jeff: Well, OI think that they could see it. I mean, think about this, and feel free to disagree.

Ted: I disagree.

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Jeff: But think about it. Here’s Abraham, right? And in Genesis 17 it’s “Walk before Me and be blameless.”

Ted: Blameless.

Jeff: Blameless.

Ted: “And I will be your God and you will be My people.”

Jeff: Yeah. And then Ephesians 1. We were chosen in Him to be blameless—“*holy and blameless,*” right?

Ted: But Abraham did not see the solution to that problem.

Jeff: I think he did in chapter 22, when he sees that God will provide the sacrifice. And Hebrews 11 says that he had an understanding that God would raise his son from the dead.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: Abraham had the sacrifices but not the sacrificial system. He had the sacrifices. And the sacrifices pressed him forward to the Genesis 3:15 Messiah. That’s the way I would see it.

Ted: I just think they would have had a very inexact or vague idea in Abraham’s mind or any other Jew’s mind.

Jeff: Well let me ask you a question.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: All Noah has in chapter 5 is what we have in Genesis 3:15—the promise of One who would crush the head of the serpent, even though the serpent would strike His heel. And Noah names his son “Rest,” thinking this is the one—

Don: Lamech.

Jeff: Sorry. Lamech names his son Noah, thinking that maybe this is the son who will provide the rest that was promised. So there was an idea that even in Genesis 5 there was this understanding that God had promised a Redeemer so some kind who would be a Person that would redeem us from the curse.

Ted: And I would say that if that had really grabbed Noah or any of the other patriarchs so fully in their minds, they would have recited that, just like we recite some of Ephesians. All of our conversation and our thoughts are wrapped around the Redeemer. We get it; we understand it; we have a well thought out theology of it. He doesn’t say, “What does that mean?”, or this kind of thing.

Jeff: Yes, but remember what Jesus says in John 8.

Ted: Sorry.

Jeff: No, no, no; I think this is important. I’m not just picking a quarrel with you. I think this is important because if the gospel was the gospel in Genesis, as Paul says in Galatians 3,—that the gospel was preached to Abraham,—then Abraham would have known that the gospel was preached to him. And that’s why, for instance, Jesus says in John 8 that “Abraham in Genesis 22 saw My day and rejoiced.” There are all these indications that Abraham knew the gospel, which is why Paul comes along and says that the question is really why the law?, because Abraham received it by promise. So why then did the law come along? That’s all I’m saying.

I totally agree with your first statement. Did you say that the law was an irreconcilable problem?

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Ted: Yes, it’s an irreconcilable problem when you’ve done all the right blood sacrifices. You still have to do washings; there have to be anointings; there has to be this and that. It goes on and on and on.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And people don’t take it seriously because they say, “Well, God will find a way to sort this out.” Well no; the consequences of that is death, period.

Jeff: Yes. And the thing that you’re pointing out is, even the sacrificial system itself was bound up in the law, right?

Ted: Absolutely.

Jeff: Does everybody kind of grab what we’ve been talking about right now so far? I’m going to say something else.

Sig: Smarty Pants has a question.

Jeff: Don?

Don: Not a question but a comment. It seems to me that a lot of people particularly in Jesus’ day didn’t get it, and Jesus chided them for it.

Jeff: I totally agree with you. But it’s not that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and those guys didn’t get it. When you start to see clearly in Jewish writings that they don’t get it is when you get after the Exile, and you get more toward the inter-Testamental writings. All of a sudden in those writings you begin to get a very clear sense that there’s a works righteousness developing. And in the inter-Testamental period this grows into Jesus’ day. So I don’t think for instance that the patriarchs didn’t get the gospel. I don’t think Isaiah missed the gospel. And he was eighth century. I think that it’s later where the gospel gets lost. It was getting lost; that’s why they were thrown into exile, and so forth; there’s no question about it. But the gospel wasn’t lost to the Israelite people in the main, both to leadership—prophets and people—until a little later in the game, I think.

Matt: Is it possible that all that stuff that Don talked about was to show that it is impossible for a human being, now and in Paul’s day, it is impossible to be right with God. But God does the impossible. He restores we who were adulterers. And now He has restored our virginity to us.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: The New is hidden in the Old. They didn’t know the whole gospel. They did not know that it was Christ. But here are Abraham and Isaac on the mountain. And Abraham says, “There’s no way that this is going to turn out; it’s impossible.” But nothing is impossible with God.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: And then this highlights depravity—how big a deal sin is. I too much take for granted God’s forgiveness.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: And the Old Testament just highlights it. We don’t deserve it; it’s just because of His grace.

Jeff: Yes. And to your point, one of the things that I think we also have a tendency to do today is that we have the tendency to distance ourselves from the law which makes the gospel so necessary. It’s like Ted was saying: the law always makes the gospel feel necessary because the law was so oppressive. But today, like you’re saying, we easily distance ourselves from the law. We’ve got this easy gospel; it’s no big deal, you know?

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Let me say a couple of things quickly before we close out here. First of all, notice that there is history and fulfillment here. Just take a look at Amos for a really quick second—Amos chapter 9 and verse 11. This is an interesting one. *“In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it, as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name, declares the LORD who does this.”*

Now oftentimes dispensational folks will say that this is the rebuilding of the temple; this is the reinstatement of the sacrifices, and so on; this is the heart of that. But when you look at the New Testament in Acts chapter 15, the interesting thing is that James says in verse 13, *“Brothers, listen to me. Simon has related how God visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree.”* This is Amos. *“Just as it is written: ‘After this I will return and I will rebuild the tent of David that is fallen.’”* In other words, it’s the church that’s the fulfillment of this passage. The church isn’t sort of an in-between thing, so that the prophetic clock stops so that God takes Israel and puts them on the shelf and deals with the church. After He’s done dealing with the church then He’ll deal with Israel again. No, this text seems to say that the fulfillment of Amos 9 is the church.

And you can see the same thing in Isaiah 7:14 with the Virgin Birth and Matthew 1:21. And you can see all of that; those are just basic things. But some of these things that are sort of ho-hum are kind of theologically rattling. I think Bill has something.

Sig: Bill Obaker.

Jeff: Bill Obaker.

Bill Obaker: So it’s interesting—the correlation with regard to proper Biblical reading and understanding, and how the errors in doing so impact the world. For example, the history of what was going on drove Truman to trade with Israel because it was necessary for his understanding of end times.

Jeff: Yeah, right.

Bill: This is not just student stuff. I think it affects history.

Jeff: You better believe it; yes, 100%. Don’t

Don: With what bill is saying along those lines, it dramatically affects how you interpret prophecy in general. For example, is Revelation all future? Or did most of it occur and we’re just waiting for 21 and 22? Is that the future aspect? What about Ezekiel 40-48? Does the church fulfill that? And how do you understand God’s relationship to the Jews? Is there a church in the Old testament as well as the New? All of those things affect how you interpret prophecy.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. Well let me give you one last thing, and I’ll let you go here. One of the things I would say to you in terms of how to read prophecy is this. If you just turn to Isaiah, Isaiah is one of the most beloved prophetic books. But it still doesn’t change the fact that it’s a difficult book to read. Chapter 6 is easy to read. Obviously chapter 9 has all of that stuff about a Child being born. You know, there are some narrative portions here that are just really great. But the oracles are oftentimes really difficult, and sometimes we get lost in the midst of them.

So I guess what I would say to you is that if you didn’t want to read it with any help at all, the best thing to do is just to sit down and work through it and divide it up. Take a notebook, take a sheet of paper, and just walk yourself through. From here to here is all

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oracle, and you know that. From here to here is all historical narrative. And you just kind of parse the book apart.

And then what you do is that you can then take, for instance, a look at chapter 1. We start with an oracle. You look, and basically the oracle goes all the way through chapter 3 and chapter 4. And then in chapter 5 the Lord says, “Let me sing you a song.”

So now you’ve got a song in chapter 5. And then in chapter 6 you have a vision. And this is the vision of Isaiah—the commissioning of Isaiah. And then in chapter 7 you have the historical narrative of Isaiah and Ahaz.

So what you do is, you could say that from 1-4 I’ve got an oracle. In chapter 5 I have a song. In chapter 6 I have a vision of Isaiah being called. In chapter 7 I have historical narrative. Some of that even runs over into chapter 8. In other words, what you begin to do is that you begin to lay out the book for yourself so that you know what you’re dealing with. And then you can begin to group the oracles and say, okay; what’s going on in this oracle? I know that this oracle is three or four chapters long.

And one of the things that I would say to you when you look at an oracle that’s three or four chapters long is this: look for two things. Look first of all for how the law is applied in the oracle, and how grace comes through. And if you look for those two things—law and grace—I think what you’ll begin to see is how the law is applied and what they did that was wrong, and how it is that God is going to redeem them despite what they do because of His gracious mercy toward them. And I think that when you understand an oracle from that vantage point you can then begin to work into why this nation is mentioned or that nation is mentioned. But at least when you look at the oracle from that perspective—law and grace—you’ll get a better idea of what God is doing with His people—how He’s treating them, why He’s treating them this way, what He’s doing despite their disobedience, and so on.

And then obviously the songs and the historical narratives and all that are understood in a little bit of a different way. But they provide natural dividers between some of the oracles that I think are helpful in that regard. Okay, so we’ll pick up some more genres the next time.

Why don’t we pray? Father, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given. And Lord, thank You for prophecy. Lord, as we just touch on some of these things we just pray, Lord, that as we open up Your word that we’ll find it more enjoyable and easier and even more challenging, not just in the reading of it, but challenging to our own perspective. And Father, we just ask that You’ll do this for Jesus’ sake and our good, and we pray it in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)