

[Note: Four of the lessons in this series were presented in early 2010. The other lessons were developed later and added so that the series has a lesson or sermon for each of the first seven books of the Old Testament. I have found Walter Kaiser, Toward an OT Theology, a helpful resource. Some of the materials in these lessons are taken from that work. --Bob Young]

Genesis: Word of God's Promise

Genesis: Choose Blessing

Here is an amazing thing—people choose to live an “unblessed life”. Who would make such a decision? Why would we make decisions that work against our good?

Our view of the word of God is too limited. We are so “New Testament”. We honor, but do not honor, the Old Testament, Romans 15:4. Do we understand and appreciate the power of the word of God? What are the themes that give the OT-NT continuity? Covenant, love, promise, blessing....

OT Series focused on the choices we make. General themes are choose blessing, freedom, holiness, obedience, life, service, victory

First lesson in series: Choose to receive the blessings of God; Choose to be a blessing. This lesson is primarily from Genesis. Two purposes: (1) remind us of the Bible stories in this section of the Bible; set them in order and sequence, (2) then also to say something significant about how this section of the text holds together and flows, with plot, and storyline, moving ahead, stopping, a reflection of life.

God is a promising God who accomplishing his will by creating, sustaining, and fulfilling his promises.

He promises to bless. This is his intention, purpose, and goal. Definition: to praise, to speak well of, and thus to bring into reality the blessing.

→Pre-patriarchal: preparing for the promise

→Patriarchs: provisions for the promise

→Mosaic (Ex/Lev/Num/Deut): people of promise, experiencing freedom, holiness, obedience, and life.

→Joshua/Judges: the place of the promise, serving God, victory

The WORD of God: Plan and Promise

-1- Word of Creation, 1-2

-2- Word of Blessing, 1:22-28, 2:3ff

-3- Word of promise, 3, 9, 12 (God's solutions to the first three crises)

- Adam/Eve_SEED: garden/seed (Gen 3:15); climax of creation and sin's entry
- Shem_descendants: climax of sin stories (Noah).
- Abraham/all nations (heir, inheritance, heritage); climax/explanation of the scattering
- Abraham (12), Isaac (26), Jacob (28), Judah (49)

- 4- Word of revelation, how God will be seen?
 - God lets himself be seen (18:1).
 - All three patriarchs experienced God's impact in their lives (12:7; 17:1; 18:1; 26:2-5,24; 35:1,7,9).
 - Theophanies (angel of Lord 16:7)
 - God speaks through dreams and visions

- 5- Word of assurance, I will be with you.
 - 21:20, with Ishmael; 21:22; 26:24, 28; with Joseph.

Thus we have the story of a God of promise, accomplishing his will and purpose. Nothing is too hard for him; he works the bad for the good.

The appropriate response of the people who see God is to choose the blessing of God rather than to choose one's own path to blessing.

Exodus: People of God's Promise

Exodus: Choose Freedom

[Additional resource, Walter Kaiser, *Toward OT Theology*, chapter 7]

The people of God are the people of the promise.

In spite of 400+ intervening years, the continuity of the story hardly misses a beat.

Exodus 1:7 is a clear allusion to the blessing theme in Gen. 1:28 and 35:11.

But the seed is no longer a family, but a people—a nation.

Previously, God appeared to AII as El Shaddai, but he will now be Yahweh, Ex. 6:3. This is above all a promise of presence. I am, I was, I will be. I will be with you. That promise, I will be with you, is based on the nature of God revealed in the early chapters of Exodus.

The point is that there is continuity between the promise and the covenant. Covenants do not just come out of nowhere; there is promise which provides basis.

My firstborn, my son (Ex 4:22-23)

The 12 sons multiplied and became a great nation. Moses' first act as appointed spokesman is to command Pharaoh to let the people go (Ex. 4:22-23). Yahweh is a Father because he brings a nation into being, and that is what fatherhood is all about. Dt. 32:6.

In this time, monarchs often claimed to be sons of a god, but that the entire nation could be a son is unique to Israel. Israel's sonship also expresses relationship. This is not mere citizenship, membership as in a guild, of a disciple of a teacher. This is a family relationship. Israel is not a family in an adopted sense or in some ethnic, political, or social unity. It is formed, saved, and guarded by God the "father" of the family.

As sons, Israel must imitate God, become like him. The son will show respect for the father and gratitude, doing what the father commands.

Further, Israel is the firstborn, with special privilege, preeminence.

My people, my treasured possession (Ex 19:6)

Israel has become a nation, a people. God delivers his people through plagues, which are not mere punishment for Egypt, but are salvific for both Egypt and Israel, that they might know that God is God. The plagues have an evangelistic tone (Ex 8:22). Egypt's gods are no gods at all. But only Israel chooses to follow God.

Thus Israel's status becomes "the choice or treasured possession" (Ex. 19:5). The basic idea is that of property, but the opposite of real property. This is property, possession, treasure which can be moved. Israel becomes God's "movable treasure". Israel's value comes from God's love and affection which he sets on her, and not from any other source. Israel's value is that someone of surpassing value has claimed her.

Israel is holy, in the sense of being set apart.

The idea is that God takes Israel to be his people (Ex. 6:7); and he will be their God. The third part of the promise is that he will dwell in their midst.

His name is "I am the God who will be there" (Ex. 3:14). This is not mere name, but is promise of dynamic, active presence.

My royal priests (Ex 19:3-6)

The treasured possession will also become royal priesthood. This is better hyphenated—king-priests.

The entire world belonged to God, and in the midst of the nations he had placed Israel, and gave her a special task. Their special status as God's personal possession is wrapped up in their universal priesthood. They were to be mediators of God's grace to all of the earth, even as all nations of the earth were to be blessed through Abraham. This is not originally NT, this was God's OT plan, but Israel blew it. (Although it is difficult to distinguish God's foreknowledge and advance planning in view of Israel's rejection of their role.) Check out Isaiah 40ff, Mal. 2:7. Unfortunately, Israel declined the privilege of being a nation of king-priests in preference to the representation of Moses and Aaron. This contraindicated God's promise and plan.

My holy nation (Ex 19:6)

Israel was to be a different kind of nation. They did not keep the law so that God would be their God, God was already their God. The law merely regulated the relationship to God, to worship, and to society.

The God who "tabernacles" among his people (Ex 29:43-46)

Now the plan is clear—the promise formula complete

I will be your God

You will be my people

I will dwell in the midst of you

The tabernacle is just that because God will dwell in the midst of his people.

The purpose of the tabernacle is clear: Ex. 25:8.

God's presence is central: his face, his appearance, his presence, his glory, his angel, his name.

The passage that connects these divine presence concepts is Exodus 33, when God allows his goodness to pass before Moses.

Thus is made available genuine freedom, holiness, obedience and life.

But sadly, Israel failed to grasp the meaning and challenge.

Application: what does this say to us today?

Leviticus: Purity--a Two-Way Promise (God promises, the people promise)

Leviticus: Choose Holiness

Introduction

Holy Nation

Kingdom of Priests

What does "holiness" mean?

The people and holiness

Lev 1-7 Offerings and sacrifices, why?

Peace offerings

Sin offerings

Various expiatory offerings

Lev 10 Sin of Nadab and Abihu

Lev 11-15 Purity and impurity

Lev 16, 23 Jewish feasts and sacred days

The principle: the holiness of God—the holiness of the people

[NT: 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:9-10; 3:15; 4:1-6; Titus 2:11-15]

Exodus 32:13

Leviticus 11:44-45

Leviticus 20:7-8

Leviticus 21:8

Leviticus 22:31-33

Special Study of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10)

Strange fire, not authorized

Not commanded

Did not glorify God

What does holiness mean? Consider the anointing oil and special oils for the Tabernacle.

Discuss verse 20

Numbers: Participating in the Promise

Numbers: Choose Obedience

Introduction

The people and obedience

The importance of obedience (Why is it important?)

Examples of disobedience

Outline of the Book

1-10 Final days at Sinai
Census (numbering)

11-21 Marching toward Moab
Miriam and Aaron murmur against Moses
The Twelve Spies
Rebellion against Jehovah
The rebellion of Korah
The disobedience of Moses: water from the rock
The bronze serpent

22-36 In Moab
La rebellion de Balaam
Census (numbering)
The selection of Joshua as successor to Moses
Various details of the division of the land
Various regulations

Lesson: The problem of the rebellions

How many rebellions can you count?

What are some of the points of similarity?

What do these narratives say about God and his nature? In what sense are these stories a revelation of God?

What reasons are advanced to explain the rebellions?

Make a list of lessons with applications for our lives today.

Deuteronomy: The “Place” of God’s Promise

Deuteronomy: Choose Life

[Additional resource, Walter Kaiser, *Toward OT Theology*, chapter 8]

In an interesting continuation, Deuteronomy serves to establish the works that follow—providing foundations and understandings through the times of Joshua, the Judges, and the Kings. One of the points of continuity is the multiplied references to the “place” that God will choose to dwell, or where his name will dwell.

The Exodus to the Exile is dominated by three programming statements: Deut 31, Josh 23-24, and 2 Sam 7 (Moses’ final farewell, the last speech of Joshua, and the divine announcement to David when he contemplates building a house for God). These lead to speeches by leading actors and summary statements.

Deut 31 → Josh 1 and Josh 12
Josh 23-24 → Judges 2:11-23 and 1 Sam 12
2 Sam 7 → 1 Kings 8, 2 Kings 17

Inheriting the land

Sixty-nine times in Deuteronomy, the pledge that Israel would “possess” or “inherit” the land is repeated. How does one relate this idea to the “movable treasure” of God that Israel was to be? Israel becomes the promised people and Canaan the Promised Land.

The land can only be Israel’s because it is God’s and he can give to whomever he pleases for as long as he pleases. Lev. 25:23 says “the land is mine, and you are only strangers and sojourners with me”. In other words, Israel never was granted the land outright, but only as a place she could cultivate and live as long as she served God. The text seems to distinguish “possession” and outright ownership.

Implications: how do we understand the NT concept of inheritance?

Rest in the land

One of the provisions of God is that the land will provide “rest”. This is a special OT concept, and God calls it his rest (Ps 95:11, Isa 66:1). Rest is not one of the promises to the patriarchs, but appears first in Deut 12:9, where it appears it was already known in the oral tradition of God’s people.

Rest is where the presence of God stops and where God dwells. Without the presence and dwelling of God, there is no rest. Understanding how the promise of rest can reappear (Josh. 21:44-45, 2 Sam. 7:1,11; 1 Kings 8:56) demands that we understand the OT concept of fulfillment. Each generation received its share of the completion of the single plan of God, and that was their fulfillment.

The emphasis of Josh 21:43-45 is on the promised word which has not failed Israel, but Israel must yet decide whether to retain her privilege of remaining in the land.

Implications: how do we understand the NT concept of rest?

God's chosen place in the land

God will select a place in Canaan after he helps Israel "possess" the land and find rest, just as he had done in the past. He will cause his name to dwell there. God is both transcendent in that his permanent place is in heaven, yet he is immanent in his dwelling on earth, as he tabernacles among his people.

God will thus be the power that enables Israel to conquer the land.

Implications: how does God choose to dwell among us?

Summary

The key to this progression from promise to people to place is the concept of possessing the land as a rest into which Israel enters by faith, as a place that God will dwell. Israel will be marked by "good" if she continues to receive the "good" prophetic word that God sends to instruct and correct.

The application for us is interesting. We have also sought to make Christianity a matter of place, limiting the presence of God. We have failed to understand the OT concept of rest as it is applied by the Hebrew writer, thinking almost exclusively of Sabbaths or Sundays.

Joshua: Promise, Presence, and Pact

Joshua: Choose Faithfulness

Introduction

The people and the Land of Promise

Outline of the Book

1-12 Conquest of the land

1:1-8 Instructions for Joshua

2, 6 Jericho

3 Crossing the Jordan

7 Sin among the people

8-12 Additional conquests

13-22 Division of the land among the tribes

23-24 Final words of Joshua: renewal of the covenant

23 Exhortations

24 Farewell discourse

24:14-28 Charge of Joshua to the people

Sample Study--Joshua 1-7: The land will not be conquered until we are conquered

- Living in the presence and power of God
- The influence of sin on the entire people
- Making a decision to follow God

Judges-2Kings: Problems with God's Promise

Judges-2 Kings: Choose Principles

The word of God's promise, his efforts to identify and establish a people of his promise in a place of rest where they can assume their priestly role in telling the nations about God's promise—we know now that this did not happen with the Israelites.

The reasons that it did not happen is the subject of this last lesson in the brief OT series.

Establishing points of continuity between OT and NT—

Genesis: The Word of Promise: Choose Blessing

Exodus: The People of the Promise: Choose Freedom

Leviticus: Purity and the Promise: Choose Holiness

Numbers: Participating in the Promise: Choose Obedience

Deut-Josh: The Place of the Promise: Choose Life

Joshua: Renewing the Pact of the Promise: Choose Faithfulness

Judges-2Kings: Problems with the Promise: Choose to live by Principles

Many problems can be identified; we will treat three that take center stage in the book of Judges as we complete this series.

Must understand how the book of Judges is constructed: prologue, cycles, and epilogue

The prologue and the epilogue introduce and summarize the problems—the middle section illustrates them.

→Lack of Leadership (2:7; 17:6; 21:25)

To follow the promise takes a leader who knows the promise, understands the promise, can communicate to the people the nature of the promise.

The problem of lack of leadership

No one takes Joshua's place, no one remembers Joshua; no one rises to the top and says here is what God wants

There is no king in Israel; all do what is right in their own eyes

→They forgot the story, 2:10

→They forgot the Lord, 2:10