

An Aerial View of the Old Testament, (Part 2)

Selected Scriptures

November 11, 2007

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Well, I encourage you tonight as we begin our second part of an aerial view of the Old Testament to put on your running shoes and fasten your seat belts because my goal is to finish the Pentateuch tonight, Judges, Ruth, and make it to the eighth chapter of 1 Samuel. We'll see how far I get. There, I've committed myself.

When you study the Old Testament, you discover that there are essentially nine major movements or scene changes if you will in the Old Testament. If you get these nine, then you understand essentially the flow of Old Testament history. First of all, you have universal dealings covered in Genesis 1 - 11, from creation, either 10 or 20,000 B.C. down to as low as 4000 B.C. depending on whether or not you believe there are gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, to Abraham, 2166.

The second movement or scene is the patriarchal period, Genesis 12 to 50, covering from 2166 to 1804, the death of Joseph.

You have the slavery in Egypt covered in Exodus 1, from the death of Joseph to the exodus in 1446.

The fourth scene is the exodus itself under Moses covered in Exodus 2 through the end of Deuteronomy, from the exodus in 1446 to forty years later, the wilderness wanderings. They show up at the edge of the Promised Land in 1406 B.C.

The conquest and division of Canaan is the next part, the next movement. It's covered in the book of Joshua from those forty years, the end of those forty years of wandering in 1406, down to about 1350 or so when the generation that came with Joshua dies, as we'll see tonight.

We enter then the period, the darkest period in Old Testament history, the period of the judges described in Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel 1 - 8, and it goes all the way to the establishment of the monarchy in 1051.

The sixth great movement is the monarchy itself, that is, when there was a king in Israel, covered from 1 Samuel 9 all the way through Kings, and Chronicles gives us a different perspective of it. You have two sort of sub-movements within the monarchy. You have a period of time when all twelve tribes were ruled by one king, that's the united monarchy. And then you had a split in the kingdom into the north and the south, Israel and Judah. And that's the divided monarchy covered in 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings. And the period of the monarchy officially ends in 586 when the southern kingdom Judah is carried off captive largely into Babylon, followed of course then of course by the Babylonian exile.

This really isn't described for us in the Bible, but the prophets prophesied during that time, and we get glimpses into that time from Ezekiel, Daniel, and certain psalms. It lasted from the first incursion by Nebuchadnezzar into the land when he took Daniel in 605 B.C. down to Cyrus' decree that they could repatriate the land, return to their land from Babylon in 538.

And the last period in Old Testament history is the restoration period covered in Ezra, Esther and Nehemiah. It runs from the decree by Cyrus in 538 to repatriate the land, send the Jews back to their own country, down to the 400's. And there's some debate about when that is, (1414 to, or excuse me,) 414 B.C. down to 400 B.C., somewhere in that range.

So, there you have the nine movements of Old Testament history. We finished last time in the fourth great movement, the exodus under Moses. You remember I shared with you that essentially when you look at the journey from Egypt to Canaan, the trip itself took three months to get from Egypt down to Canaan. But then they spent nine plus months there at Sinai covered in the book of Exodus, and then Leviticus talks of events of one month when the law is given. Numbers, you have the wilderness wanderings, 38 years and nine months; Deuteronomy, two months at the edge of the land for forty years. So, there's your forty-year journey. We're going to talk about how that breaks up tonight.

So, they spend (the point I want you to see here is they spend) a great deal of time at Sinai, and during the time at Sinai after coming out of the land, 400 years of captivity, they arrive at Sinai, spend the better part of a year there. During that year, there are two very important things you need to remember. God gave two systems to Israel which are absolutely crucial to understanding the Old Testament. These two systems occupy the bulk of the last part of Exodus, the entire book of Leviticus, the first 10 chapters of Numbers and in Deuteronomy, it's recapped for us.

Two systems, the first system that God gave them is the sacrificial system. God set up for His people Israel a system of sacrifice. That system we can capture in six foundational truths. If you understand these truths, you understand the sacrificial system. First of all, God commanded it of every person. This is the way to approach God. In Leviticus 1 - 7, God prescribed five kinds of sacrifice. All five were to be a part of the worship of every Israelite. In addition, four of the five were to be a part of the national or corporate sacrifices for the national feasts. The only exception was the trespass offering. Each of those served a distinct, individual purpose.

Now I know you can't read all of that, but notice (in the right), in the left hand column, there are the sacrifices - the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, and it has several subcategories, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. Each one had specific designations as to what animals could be offered, and I've laid those out for you here. I'll print these up again this week. I'm not going to take time to go through all of this. But I want you to see that there are these five sacrifices for every Israelite. What God was telling His people is that you must approach Me only through sacrifice. That's an absolutely crucial point. God prescribed sacrifice of every person. In addition to these individual sacrifices, four of these, all but the last one on this list, the trespass offering, were to be nationally offered as well.

When you look at the list of national sacrifices, here is what was prescribed. You can see that every day, two lambs were offered for the nation. On the Sabbath, two lambs offered every Sabbath. Every new moon, you had seven lambs, one ram and two bulls, and on and on it goes. When you look at the total of what was offered in the nation; this is not for individuals now, this is just for the nation, for the national sacrifices, in a given year, 101 bulls, 31 rams, 24 goats and

1,051 lambs every year that Israel practiced the law of God for a total of 1,200 animals offered as the national sacrifices every year in addition to all of the individual sacrifices that were prescribed.

It's incredible, but God commanded this to show His people that they could not ever approach Him apart from sacrifice.

A second foundational truth about the sacrificial system is: that the sacrifices were for God, very important that you understand this. They were not primarily for the worshipper. It was about God. When you look at how it's described over and over again in the book of Leviticus, and I've given you a list of references here, the offerings are described as an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the Lord, an aroma that soothes the just wrath and anger of God against the sin of man. Understand that the sacrifices were for God, to soothe, if you will, His wrath. That animal died as a substitute as we'll see in a moment.

A third foundational truth: not only did God command it of every person, the sacrifices were for God, but to be accepted, they must come from the heart. It wasn't about the fact that you showed up at the temple and offered an animal. God was not satisfied with perfunctory duty; instead, it had to come from the heart. He puts this a number of ways throughout the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel said to Saul, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."

God is unimpressed with sacrifice. He's commanded you to do it as a demonstration of how you can approach a holy God, how sinful man can approach a holy God, but understand that He is not satisfied with the outward performance without the heart, a heart given over to obedience to Him. The prophets over and over again chastised the people of God and tell the people that God is literally sick of their sacrifices. So, the sacrifices must come from the heart.

The fourth foundational truth about the sacrificial system is that the animal sacrifices were always substitutionary, that is the animal died as the substitute for the worshipper. Now this is

foundational to understanding the sacrificial system. In Leviticus 1 - 7, one thing stands out, that's where those sacrifices are given, the five we've talked about. One thing stands out and that is they are offered in the place of the sinner. If you look at the events as they're described there in Leviticus, the order of events, this is how they flow. If you were an Old Testament believer, this is what you would have done.

The worshipper first brought his offering, a physically perfect animal to the forecourt of the tabernacle. This was referred as drawing near, that is, drawing near to God. The worshipper then laid his own hands upon the offering, a physically perfect animal, and he laid his hand upon that offering implying that it represented him. And then the worshipper with his own hand slays the animal, slaughters the animal. And then as the blood pours out of that animal, the priest catches that blood in a bowl. He walks from the entrance to the tabernacle (or the temple later), he walks to that altar of burnt offering there in the picture, and he splatters the blood against the altar.

Then the priest takes and burns the specified portion (and that varied depending upon the sacrifice that was being offered), he burns the rest of that animal that's supposed to be burned on the altar. A fire is kept burning there to consume that altar. And of course in the case of the burnt offering, the entire animal was consumed. Then the remainder of the animal, whatever part was specified by God, was eaten by the priests or by the priests and their families or in the case of the peace offering, by the priest and the worshipper as kind of a meal of fellowship together with God as it were.

The point though of the entire process of the sacrificial system, and especially the laying of the worshipper's hands on the head of the animal, made it clear that that animal that you're about to kill is dying in your place. You, as it were, are transferring your guilt to that innocent animal. And then you kill it with your own hand, it was a demonstration that that animal was dying, the innocent for the guilty.

The fifth foundational truth about the sacrificial system is that animal sacrifices were never the basis of forgiveness. Understand the blood of bulls and goats can never (the writer of Hebrews

says), take away sin. It was never about those animals. Animal sacrifices were never the basis for forgiveness.

Instead, the sixth foundational truth that I have here on my little list is that animal sacrifices were pictures of the coming human sacrifice of Christ. They were offered in anticipation of that. You say did the Old Testament believer understand that? Well, that's a question we'll get to later in our study in the next few weeks when we look at the message of the Old Testament.

Now with this sacrificial system came a group responsible for administering it, it was the priests. The role of the priests, you remember they were from, entirely from the tribe of Levi, and they were descendants of Aaron. They were supported by the tithes or taxes of the people, and they were spread throughout the land. They lived in 48 cities evenly scattered throughout the twelve tribes, four priestly cities in each tribe, each region.

And they essentially had two responsibilities. One was maintaining the sacrificial system. By David's time, you remember (that there were) the priests were divided into 24 divisions. And so if you were a priest, you only served at the tabernacle, or later after the temple was constructed at the temple, for two weeks a year or one month every two years. There's some debate as to how it was allocated, but either two weeks a year or one month every other year. That was your work at the tabernacle or at the temple. The rest of the time they lived in those Levitical cities spread throughout the land of Israel, and their primary responsibility was teaching the Bible to the people. Deuteronomy 33:10 says, "They shall teach their ordinances to Jacob, and your law to Israel." In addition, the sacrificial element, "they'll put incense for you and whole burnt offerings on your altar".

So, the priests were intended both to maintain this sacrificial system and to teach the Bible to the people. Understand the heart and soul of the Old Testament sacrificial system was this - to point to the coming human sacrifice of Christ. Those lambs were innocent; they died at the hands of the guilty. That was the picture (as the writer of Hebrews says), of all that that system was about. If you understand those principles, you have the big picture of the Old Testament sacrificial system that was given by God to Israel at Sinai. And the message, don't ever forget the message

of the sacrificial system. The only way that you and I as sinful people can ever approach a holy God, a thrice holy God, is through sacrifice. And those animals weren't it. They merely pointed to the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ. And by the way, that hasn't changed, has it? It's still true today. The only way a sinful human being can approach a holy God is through the sacrifice of His Son, the innocent dying in the place of the guilty.

Now a second system that God gave Israel at Sinai in addition to the sacrificial system was the Law, the Law of God. Now this is a big topic and one we could spend weeks on. I have done that and probably will do that at some point in the future, but we're going to spend just a few minutes on it here together. Let me give you the sweep of the Law of God. First of all, when you look at classifying the Mosaic Law, the Law given by God to Moses and to the people of Israel at Sinai, you can break up that Law into three categories, the moral laws in Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments, the civil laws, Exodus 21 to 23, and the ceremonial laws, Exodus 25 and following. Now that's a bit neat and tidy, there is overlap. I'm not saying there isn't overlap in the various categories; there is, but that gives you some feel for the different layers or categories of laws.

Now there are two different ways you can look at laws, the laws given to Moses or the way the laws were expressed. There are ordinances, the Hebrew word is "mishpatim", and there are commands, "devarim". The ordinances are case laws; if this happens, then this must be done. If this happens, then this must be done. Those are called ordinances or case law. Then you have commands, these are apodictic laws. You shall do this or you shall not do this. Those are two different ways of looking at these laws.

When you look at the case laws, and that's where a lot of Christians can easily get sort of misled, they start looking at the case law. The "if this happens, then this happens", for example the "lex talionis", the eye for an eye type command. And they get confused about how to apply that in any sort of Christian sense. Let me just give you the big picture.

When you look at the case laws, the ideals that are embodied in those case laws are these. The punishment ought to fit the crime. When we look at an eye for an eye, that sounds vindictive, but

you've got to put yourself back in Old Testament times. In Old Testament times, if you stole something it was not uncommon for both of your hands to be chopped off in pagan cultures around the children of Israel. The punishment didn't fit the crime, but God gives His people a law code where the punishment fits the crime, an eye for an eye if you will. In other words, the punishment should fit the crime.

It also communicates, the case law, the sanctity of human life. As you read those "if this happens and if this person is injured while there's a fight", what you see supported in the law is the sanctity of life.

A third principle you see in the case law is "restitution or compensation". By the way, there were no prisons in ancient Israel. There was either death for some offenses or there was compensation and restitution. And God says there needs to be appropriate compensation if you have not taken the appropriate measure to protect the lives and property of others.

And finally, the ideals in the case laws have built into them a way to prevent the abuse of the system, just as we do in some ways, our whole jurisprudence system is built to protect against abuses, to realize that abuses can happen on both sides, on both law breakers and those enforcing the laws because they're all fallen sinful human beings. There was in the case of Israel the prevention of that abuse of the system.

So, when you look at the (case laws or at the) law of God, here are two summary principles. The ethical principles of the Ten Commandments are still incumbent on the New Testament believer. The Old Testament case laws are not directly applicable to us, but they do illustrate ethical principles that are relevant today. For example, we don't have flat roofs on which we have places to relax, and if we don't put up a fence somebody falls off, our roofs here you can't even get on if you want to in Dallas. I've tried to get on my roof, and I can't, it's too steep. But in ancient Israel, that was a factor. You reclined in the cool of the evening on the top of your house, and if you didn't make adequate preparation to protect the well-being of those who were up there with you and they fell off, then you were responsible for that. So the principle applies in our day while

the particular case law may not, the principle that we are to adequately protect the welfare of others on our property is the principle that transcends time.

Now, when you look at the moral law, let me remind you the aspects of the Mosaic Law. Three aspects, ceremonial, that's all of the sacrificial system and the tabernacle and the priests and all of those things. Then you have the civil or judicial law, this is if somebody breaks this law, you killed them. You know here's how the government of the nation is to run. And then finally you have the moral law, those timeless principles that reflect the character of God and that are binding on all people in all time that never change.

When you talk about the moral law, and that's where I want to dwell for just the next few minutes, we're going to leave the other law, and by the way let me just comment that those other elements of the law have been transferred. Today the civil element of the Mosaic Law has been transferred according to Romans 13 to secular government. Secular government now has the responsibility for the punishment of evildoers, Romans 13 says. They're appointed as God's ministers to reward the good and to punish the evil. The ceremonial law, all of those sacrifices and all of that system, Paul tells us has been perfectly fulfilled in Christ. In Colossians, he said those things were the shadow (I love this image), those things were the shadow, but the body is Christ. If you go out on an evening and you see a shadow, it tells you something about the person who's casting it, but it doesn't tell you much. So when the body shows up, you don't need the shadow anymore, and that's what was true with all of that ceremonial law.

But what about the moral law? Well the moral law was based on the character of God, it was written according to Paul in Romans 2, on man's conscience from the beginning of time. It was codified at Sinai as part of the Mosaic legislation. It is affirmed by Christ and the New Testament authors as continuing, but it was never meant to justify. The law was, you remember in Galatians, a tutor to drive man to Christ, to help him realize his sin. You can never ever, no one was ever justified on the basis of keeping the law. It was an arrow, if you will, pointing us to Christ. It still serves a purpose for unbelievers. It awakens their consciences to their sin before God. It drives them to Christ as I just mentioned, and it leaves them without excuse and

condemned before God. In Romans 3:19 and 20, he says that's the very purpose the law serves. The law leaves everyone guilty and condemned before God unless they repent.

What about once you become a Christian? Does the moral law have any purpose? It does serve a purpose for believers. It provides a guide for our obedience, and it certainly produces gratitude in our hearts that we do not have to keep it as a way of earning the favor of God because that would be impossible.

The moral law of God is most concisely summarized by two commands, the command to love God with our entire being and to love others as ourselves. And let me just stop here and say, when we think of sin, we tend to think of things like murder, lying, sexual sin, coveting. And those are sins. But do you realize that the law of God is encompassed in those two great commands? Love God and love others. That means that at any moment in your life and mine that you have failed to love God with your whole being, and any moment in your life that you have failed to love others as you love yourself, perfectly, at any moment like that, you have been sinning, and so have I. What that really means is there is never a second in my brief life on earth that I have not broken the law of God. Christ on the other hand never had one second when He failed to love God perfectly and when He failed to love others as Himself. He perfectly kept the law of God, and I get His righteousness.

Now the moral law of God is summarized by those two commands, love God and love our neighbor. It's outlined by the Ten Commandments. When you look at the Ten Commandments, here's how you ought to interpret them. Each command is not only external, but it's spiritual or internal. Each command forbids wrong thoughts and actions, but it also demands right thoughts and actions. It's not enough just not to do the negative; you have to do the positive. And by the way, I think that's why God gave us two positive commands, keep the Sabbath and honor your father and mother. By giving us positive commands, He reminds us that the positive of the negative commands we're responsible to keep as well.

The third principle is that each command has a core theme or message that summarizes many of God's laws. Think of it as an outline. Take for example the commandment: no other gods, you

shall have no other gods before Me. I've just sort of illustrated here how that command can be legitimately applied. The thought forbidden is allowing anything within the heart that takes the place of devotion or worship due to the true God. That's the thought that's forbidden. The act forbidden is having any object of worship in addition to or in place of the true God.

The positive act commanded is acknowledging Yahweh or Father, Son and Holy Spirit as Jesus taught us to call God, to be the only true God and knowing Him as our God seeking to lead others to the worship of the true God. That's the act commanded in the first commandment. What about the thought commanded in the first commandment? Adoring, loving, desiring, fearing, believing Him, trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in Him, giving all praise and thanks and obeying and submitting to Him and seeking to please Him in everything we do. That's what's included in the first commandment. Now when you start understanding the commandments like this, you realize that there is not a single human being who has ever kept one of the commandments, much less all of them.

Now, just to give you an overview of how the laws are built, I've got a pyramid here that illustrates how they're built. You have those two great commands, love God and love others. Flowing out of those two great commands, the commands to love God are encompassed or outlined for us in the first four Words. When I say words, remember the commandments in Hebrew are just one word, so they're the Ten Commandments or the Ten Words. So you have love God, that's outlined for us in the first four words. You have love others, that's outlined for us in the last six Words or the last six commandments. And then you have all the commands of God that pertain to God under that. So, I want you to see this sort of foundation that they flow from. All of the commands in the Bible about God flow from the first four, or are outlined by the first four commandments, and ultimately they go back to love God with your whole heart. So, I just want you to see how they relate to each other.

Now just briefly, let me take you through the essence of the Ten Commandments, the essence. In each case I have (and this is my own sort of interpretation), I grant that to you. But in each command, there is a theme, there is a point. And then I have included a little short, pithy expression that we taught our girls as sort of a summary when they were young of each

commandment. So, the first commandment, you shall have no other gods before Me, the theme is the person of God, the command essentially is this. We are to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God. And I taught my girls that the essential message of this first commandment is there's only one God.

The second commandment, the theme is the mode of worship. You shall not make for yourselves any graven images. It's talking about how we worship God. We talked about this at length when we went through the worship series. And essentially, this second command says that God is to be worshipped and He is only to be worshiped in the way that He prescribes to be worshiped. Again as I taught my girls, I said the summary of this second commandment is He tells us what He's like in the Bible. There's only one God, and He tells us what He's like and how He wants us to respond to Him in the Bible.

The third commandment, the theme is attitude toward and treatment of God, or you could say the glory of God. We're not to take the name of the Lord our God in vain. The essential command here is: God is to be feared and treated with the greatest reverence and respect. For my girls, it was respect and honor God.

The fourth commandment, the theme has to do with our time or the priority of God in our lives. Everyone agrees by the way except 7th Day Adventists that the fourth commandment has changed in some way. God is the Lord of our time, and He has prescribed that we devote most of our time to working. That is part of this command, remember. Six days you shall work, and that we set aside time to worship Him. And in the New Testament, we're told that that day is to be Sunday, the Lord's day. So, we worship God on Sunday.

The fifth commandment has as its theme authority, all authority, not just parents, but all those who are in authority. God has put people over us in a position of authority, and they are to be honored. And for our kids of course, the most significant part of that was honor your father and your mother.

The sixth commandment has as its theme the commands that it covers human life. The principle is that life is divinely given and must be respected and preserved. Both the lives of others by the

way, murder, but also even doing what's necessary and reasonable to preserve and protect my own life. This becomes very practical by the way.

When I was teaching this the first time many years ago, I was smitten in my conscience because in Los Angeles, you have to develop a certain attitude about how you drive and how you get along on the freeways or you never get anywhere. At least that was the excuse I gave myself. And so I had this nasty little habit of the car in front of me driving too close to me. Some of you will catch up with that in a minute. And so as I was studying this, I was smitten in my conscience because I realized that it's not enough just not to take somebody else's life, I shouldn't endanger them. I have to do what I can to preserve my own life reasonably and to preserve the lives of others. I shouldn't put other people in danger because of my desire to get somewhere in a hurry.

The way we summarize for our girls who are in no danger of immediately murdering someone, although at times it could sound like it, is take care of other people, take care of other people.

The seventh commandment, the theme is of course sexuality and the sanctity of the marriage relationship. The principle is that God has given us the gift of sexuality and He insists that it be enjoyed in keeping with His design and intention in both body and mind. And again for our children, the summary was our bodies belong to God, laying the foundation for as they matured explaining more of what that meant.

The eighth Word, the theme is personal property. God has distributed material wealth according to His own sovereign purposes, and He demands that we respect the property of others and that we be wise stewards of our own. Take care of your own things and the things that belong to others.

The ninth command, the theme is our speech; the Bible has so much to say about our speech. This merely covers that sweeping point in one outline point to remind us. The (theme of it is God demands or rather the) essence of it is God demands the maintaining and promoting of truth in our speech. Encapsulated for young minds, it was always tell the truth.

And the tenth command has to do with our life circumstances. God demands that we be content with and grateful for our condition, our circumstances and our estate. An old word, but has the idea of everything pertaining to us. Be happy with what God has given us.

Those are the commands of God, the timeless moral principles of God, and God spoke those commands with His own voice from Mount Sinai in the hearing of the people. God then wrote them down on tablets of stone twice for Moses after he broke the first set. And those were kept in the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle and later in the temple as a reminder of God's expectations on the people of Israel. That is the law of God.

What should our attitude as Christians be to God's law? Psalm 1:2 puts it like this. The righteous man "delights in the Law of God, and in His Law he meditates day and night." Psalm 119:97, "O how I love Your Law, it is my meditation all the day." And Paul, the New Testament apostle, in Romans 7:22 says, I delight in the law of God in my inner being. This is how the righteous think about God's prescriptions for life.

After a year, Israel leaves Sinai in Numbers 10:11. They've been at Sinai from Exodus 19 all the way through Exodus, all the way through Leviticus and to Numbers 10:11. At that point, they pick up camp, and they leave. The glory cloud, that manifestation of God's glory, that brilliant blazing light by day cloud, and a pillar of fire by night that leads the nation from Sinai down in the south end, you see the lower arrow here marking the area where Mount Sinai is, up to where you see the upper arrow at the edge of the Promised Land, at the edge of Canaan.

And you remember that (ten or excuse me) twelve spies are sent into the land to spy it out to see exactly what needs to be done to capture it. Remember that God Himself had spoken to these people. God Himself had brought them out of Egypt with a strong arm, with all of the plagues that He poured out on the land. God Himself had promised them this land, He had promised Abraham this land hundreds of years before, and now they come to take the land and twelve men go in to spy it out. And here's what they came back with. There were two reports. There was a minority report, and there was a majority report.

Joshua and Caleb, the minority, the two of the twelve spies, came back, and they said the land is fruitful. The majority report, the other ten, says the land devours its owners.

Joshua and Caleb said the people are strong, the majority report said the people are stronger than us. Joshua and Caleb said some of them are big, the majority report said all of them are big. The minority report said the Anakim are there, the majority report said the Nephilim are there. So where did they end? Joshua and Caleb said let us go up now, but the majority report said we are not able to go up.

Imagine seeing what they saw and refusing to believe that God could defeat the people of Canaan. I'm afraid our faith is often every bit as weak. Turn to Numbers 14. I want you to see the interchange on this one, Numbers 14:1. After the report 14:1 says,

Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. [Why would they be weeping? Well read on.] “All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is Yahweh bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword?’” [We came all this way just to be killed in battle.] “Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? So, they said to one another, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.”

... Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. Joshua ... Caleb ... tore their clothes, ... they spoke to the congregation ... saying, The land which we passed through to spy out ... [it's] ... a good land. If the LORD is pleased with us, He will bring us into this land, He will give it to us--a land which flows with milk and honey. ... [Don't] rebel against the LORD; and ... [don't] fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them. But all the congregation said to stone them with stones.

[And then God shows up] “Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of the meeting to all the sons of Israel.”

The LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people spurn Me? How long will they not believe in Me, despite all of the signs which I have performed in their midst? I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.” [Moses, always concerned about God’s glory, says LORD, if you do that, the Egyptians will hear. And they will say that You weren’t able to do what You said You would do. If you slay,]

Verse 15, “... if you slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of your fame will say, ‘Because the LORD could not bring this people into the land which he promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.’”

And he recites what he learned about God’s character, and he says pardon them, and the Lord says all right, I’ll do that, but let it be known that all of those older than 20 except Joshua and Caleb and you will die. And of course, Moses also was not able to go into the Promised Land, but he survived to the edge.

So, forty years of wilderness wanderings, this is a picture of where that generation died. They lived and died over a forty year period, everybody older than 20, because they would not believe God, all of them except Joshua and Caleb. And then Moses leads a new generation to the edge of Jordan, on the east side of Jordan opposite Jericho, the border of Canaan. There he conquers the kings of the Transjordan, and over a two month period in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reconfirms the covenant with that new generation, those 20 and younger when the incident I just read to you occurred. Moses reconfirms God’s covenant, His law. He views Canaan from a distance, and then he dies. And that’s Deuteronomy.

What are the lessons from the wilderness wandering from us? The New Testament uses it in two ways. One, to warn us of the danger of accommodating sin in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, and in Hebrews 3 - 4, the danger of unbelief. Believe God.

Now that brings us to the fifth of the major movements in Old Testament history, the conquest and division of Canaan. It's the book of Joshua. Joshua was the author of this book; the theme is the conquest and division of the land. They enter the land. They conquer the Promised Land. They divide it up, and then the last two chapters of the final charge of Joshua before his death.

Why is Joshua in the Bible? To show how Yahweh's promises to Israel were fulfilled in giving them the Promised Land and to show that Israel failed to fully obey God and possess the land as they were supposed to, and ultimately to provide us with a spiritual lesson. And this is the lesson. God's people can overcome the world and take possession of their promised spiritual inheritance, for us our sanctification, provided only they trust God's strength, they believe His promises and obey His commands. You can displace the Anakim in your life by believing God and what He said He will do in clearing your life of the enemies of His.

Joshua takes over for Moses at the age of 90, and Joshua's mission is very simple. Twofold: destroy the Canaanites, the armies of the Canaanite alliances, which means that each of the cities now are going to be fighting individually and have no way of standing against 2 million Israelites. Some people are troubled by the fact that God told Joshua to kill all the inhabitants of Canaan. I like what one Old Testament writer says, he says Yahweh was removing a cancerous growth from the human race, and the nation of Israel was simply the scalpel in the hand of the God of the universe. Destroy the Canaanites and conquer, divide and dwell in the land of Canaan.

In seven years, the Canaanite armies are destroyed, the ability of the population to defend itself is broken, and the land is left ready for Israel. Joshua challenges them to possess the land, and then he divides the land up among the twelve tribes. Couple of notes about the division of the land that you see on the overhead, or on the screen. You'll notice that Simeon is not given its own land. It's only given cities in Judah because of the sin in the days of the patriarchs. Levi gets no

portion because of the same incident but their Levitical cities, and they're given to God as their portion, as His portion.

Joseph gets a double portion, so his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh both get portions in the land. But tragically, wherever they went, the children of Israel failed to do what God had commanded. After the back of the Canaanites was broken, they were supposed to go in and slowly and gradually drive out the inhabitants of each of their regions. And none of them did that successfully. Joshua then dies.

We read this in Joshua 24:31, "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and those who had known all the deeds which the Lord had done for Israel." Sad thing, isn't it? The next generation did not serve God. What a terrible warning for us as parents - the second generation.

At some point shortly thereafter, Israel turns from her God and enters the darkest period in Old Testament history, the period of the judges. This is covered for us in the books of Judges and Ruth. It began in 1390 with the end of the division of the land, and this period runs all the way to 1051 when the monarchy is formed and Saul becomes Israel's first king. This is the period of the judges.

Here's how to describe that period. Essentially, the two major issues: there was no national leader, and there was no central government. The result, it's put this way in several places in Judges, Judges 17:6 is one of them. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." Every tribe did what it wanted, and even every clan within the tribe did what it wanted as well. No central government, instead each tribe formed its own government, and these tribes were often at war with each other. No king, everybody does what's right in his own eyes. There was widespread apostasy and degeneracy which brought a cycle of judgment.

Why is Judges in the Bible? Essentially, it surveys Israel's history from the death of Joshua to the days of Samuel, and it serves as an apologetic to Israel of why she needed a national ruler or

leader, a king. Before Judges, you had Moses and you had Joshua, national leaders. And after the judges, you have kings, national leaders. When you had no king, when you had no national leader, when you had no central government; it was the darkest time in Israel's history.

A brief outline of Judges, you can see that there is a sort of selected history in the center of this, of the various judges. In the end of the book of Judges, in the epilogue as I've called it here, in 17 - 21, you see two gross and tragic examples; one of the religious apostasy of the nation, her idolatry, and the other of the moral decay when the Levite's concubine and the slaughter of Benjamin. Two terrible incidents that showed just how far Israel had sunk. If you want to get a sense of the period of the judges, hold your nose and read those passages. It's how far, how deep the nation had gone.

There were two tragic sins that characterized the period of the judges. Because Israel failed to drive out and destroy the Canaanites, two sins would dog them the rest of her history as a nation: intermarriage and idolatry. And she was particularly susceptible, Israel was, to Canaanite religion, the religion that was in the land, the people that she failed to drive out. She intermarried, the people of Israel intermarried with the people and developed a fascination with Canaanite religion.

Its main gods were El, Asherah and Baal. Their worship is called Baal worship because he was the primary god or lord, the lord of the storm and the rain. Their places of worship were elaborate temples, but there was no single central sanctuary. So you could worship Baal anywhere. Originally you did it on hills or high places, and then usually at each of those spots a pillar or a pole or some other symbol marked the sites, and you see that as you read through the Old Testament.

Their worship was especially sexually centered and particularly exhibitionists. And I'll say this in as vague of terms as I can, but essentially Baal and Asherah were regarded as voyeur deities whose own libidos were excited by viewing orgiastic rites or sacrificial acts of brutality or blood-letting. They were on raised platforms, the worshippers were, so the deities could get a better

view. Their prescribed worship involved sacrifices, religious prostitution, and child sacrifice on occasion.

It was a terrible, awful religion that infected the people of Israel for most of her history, in fact, until the Babylonian captivity when she was purged of it once and for all. You say well what was the appeal of such a gross kind of idolatry? Well it's really the inherent appeal of all idolatry, two basic appeals: self-centered gratification and self-rule. Self-centered gratification taking various forms: violence and brutality, sexual fulfillment, financial prosperity. Remember Baal was the god of storms, they lived in an agricultural society so being in good with the god of storms was good for your crops; self-centered gratification and self-rule. If you look at Jeremiah 5, you discover that idolatry is always connected to hard-hearted self-will. To rely on idols is in reality to rely upon yourself instead of God, that's the appeal. I can make my own rules, I can adopt my own god, the one I like, the one whose rules I like. Romans 1:21 says the person who pursues idolatry has first made a deliberate choice.

So, because of intermarriage and because of idolatry, because of no king, there was a cycle that set in in Israel. This was always the cycle of the judges. There was sin. There was suffering of the people, the oppression that came from outside entities. There was the supplication of the people saying God deliver us, and God sent salvation through a judge. In grace, God raises up local deliverers to protect individual cities and tribes from attack. Remember these are not national judges, these are local, regional or tribal judges.

When you look at the judges of Israel, and again I don't expect you to get all of that, you can see the major ones I've put in bold there in the fourth column. What I want you to notice though is that the years of oppression as you go down this chart increase, and the years of freedom decrease. There is a pattern that sets in where it gets, there's a downward spiral that occurs. These cycles involve more sin and more suffering and less time of freedom and salvation.

Now there's some overlap remember because the judges were local deliverers, but when you look at this, it was a time of awful defeat and decline for the nation. The transition from this

period of the judges to the monarchy is in 1 Samuel 1 - 8 because the last judge and the only national judge is a man named Samuel.

When you come to the book of Samuel, there are several things you have to understand. Politically, it is written to record the establishment of the monarchy, to serve as an apologetic from Samuel explaining why they had one dynasty to begin with, Saul, and then immediately changed dynasties to David. Why did that happen? He defends David and shows that David was not seeking the throne; he was not a conniver pulling the throne away from Saul and Jonathan. Instead, this was God's doing, and he took every measure not to offend or incur into the authority of Saul. To record the rise of the prophetic office along with the office of king, spiritually 1 Samuel tells us that God alone was the supreme king. Any government had to function under His authority. And theologically, it shows us the need for and points to David's greatest Son, the perfect King, Jesus Christ.

Essentially, Samuel can be outlined like this. First Samuel 1 - 7 is Samuel, Saul is 8 to 15, and David is 16 to 31. Samuel, as a national judge, sets Israel on the path of blessing. But when he grows old, the nation, not anxious to go back into the period of the judges, demands a king. It's important to understand that God had already promised to give Israel a human king. Several places you see that. The Pentateuch indicated that there would someday be a human king. Deuteronomy gives instructions for how the kings were to rule in Deuteronomy 17. Yahweh even commanded Samuel to give them a king, so why was it wrong? Why was it sinful as they're told? Because they demanded a king prematurely without divine consultation, because they desired a king for the wrong reason, they wanted to be like all the other nations, because they chose a king based on all the wrong criteria, and it was in essence, God Himself says, a rejection of Himself as their King.

Samuel says look, if you get a king here's what you're going to get, here's what comes with the package. You're going to get a military draft, you're going to get conscription of servants for the court, you're going to get confiscation of large parcels of land, heavy taxation to pay for the bureaucracy, the loss of personal property and oppression. That's what you can expect with kings. But they got them because this was God's plan and purpose. But understand that even

though Israel had kings from this point forward, Yahweh was always King in Israel. The human kings were not autonomous; they were under the law of God. In fact, Deuteronomy 17 said they had to make their own copy of God's law and read it every day. They were accountable as well to a new spiritual leader that arrives on the scene, one called the Prophet. Samuel was the first, but there were many to follow who kept the kings spiritually in line. There were burrs under the saddle of Israel's kings reminding them that they were not autonomous, that they lived and ruled under God.

Now, before we leave the period of the judges, there's one other thing to consider and that's Ruth because the narrative that occurs in Ruth occurs during the period of the time of the judges over about a ten-year period somewhere. We don't know when, somewhere during that dark time in Israel's history. I end here because this is where hope and grace comes in. During that darkest period in Israel's history, we find Ruth, a Moabitess, coming in and becoming part of the people of God. There's a great story there, and we don't have time to look at it, but let me just give you the significance of Ruth.

Why is Ruth in the Bible? Number one, to encourage God's people to remain loyal to Him even during the worst of times, the times of unfaithfulness. Stay loyal. Naomi's husband and her family did not, they moved contrary to the will and purpose of God out of Israel to Moab. And she buried her husband. She buried the rest of her family and moves back to the land with only her daughter-in-law. Remain loyal to God even during times of unfaithfulness.

Secondly, Ruth is there to trace the genealogy of David. This is amazing to me. Read the New Testament, and you discover that Ruth, the Moabitess, was his great grandmother. She was in the line of Jesus Christ.

But Ruth is there I think, maybe most of all, to show the redeeming work of God, even during the darkest time of Israel's history. God is always at work to redeem for Himself out of humanity a people for His own. That's why we're here, that's why you're here.

What should you learn from all of this we've surveyed tonight? It really dovetails beautifully with what we studied this morning. Turn to Romans 15. Romans 15, and I end with this passage. Romans 15:4, what do we learn from all of that? Romans 15:4, "whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instructions, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Desire for the promises God has made to us, and the certainty that He will fulfill what He's promised, just as He did with His people. However unfaithful they were over however long a period of time, God Himself was always faithful. And He will be to us as well.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for our study tonight, we have truly simply flown across the tops of these magnificent books. So much to be learned, but I pray that you would use this study to give us a sense of the flow of the history of the Old Testament, to give us a sense of Your sovereign and providential work in the affairs of humanity.

And Father, encourage us again with what we read, strengthen our hope that You will fulfill the promises You've made, even as you did to a faithless and sinful people like Israel.

Father, we rejoice in who You are as we've seen it displayed tonight, in your holiness that we can never measure up to, and in your grace that meets us in the place of our sin and redeems us and makes us Your own just as You did with Ruth.

Father, we thank you and praise you in the name of our perfect sacrifice, the Lord Jesus.

For it's in His name we pray. Amen.