

The History Books (Cyprus Training: week 1, session 7)

Why Story? (The Importance of Narrative)

Scripture doesn't contain just teaching & instrn, but also (even primarily) stories: *true* stories, but nonetheless stories!

Why? Narrative = basic, concrete, engaging, memorable: it reflects the complexities of life.

Above all, v appropriate: the gospel = not *firstly* what we should believe or should do, but what God has done

What makes a story? Setting, Characters, Plot...

- initial situatn: often a problem/task for main character
- developmt & twists: progress/setbacks, helpers/opponents
- resolution (unless it's a tragedy)
- stories w/i stories (the whole Bible = one overarching story; Great sagas: Abr, Jacob, Joseph, Saul/David, Xt, Acts; each w individ sub-stories; also tiny cameos)
- stories have *content* (what's in it?), *thrust* (what's the main pt[s]?), & *purpose* (what is the author aiming to do/achieve?)

How are we to benefit from & rspd to Bible Narrative?

Teaching we believe & rspd to, *cmds* we obey, *promises* we trust; what are we to do with *narrative* (=almost 1/2 of Scr!)?

- Stories shape our view of the world.
- Key to Bible Narr: **It's all about God**: Keeping his promises; calling for loyalty; rescuing his people in their mess when they cry out to him; delaying judgment; yet also carrying out his threats (he will not tolerate idolatry);

- Spotlight on **the human condition & the human heart.**
- A good story invites identification w its characters; provides **examples good & bad** (Rahab; Ruth & Boaz)
- Always ask: “Why are you telling *this* story in *this* way?” (Does the author approve, disapprove etc.). Often subtle.

What is in the Historical Books?

v. approx...	2000 BC	1500 BC	1000 BC	500 BC	BC/AD
	Abraham	Moses	David	EXILE	Christ
	“PROMISE”	“COVENANT”	“GOD’S KING”	“JUDGMENT”	

Analysis: 29 major sections over 10+3 books (~1000yrs! or 800)

Joshua: “God Gives His People the Promised Land”

Entering, 1-4 ♦ Conquering, 5-12

Dividing, 13-21 ♦ Retaining, 22-24

Judges: “God’s Flawed Rescuers”

Failure & Pattern, 1-3_{v6} ♦ The Judges, 3_{v7}-16 (Othniel,

Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson) ♦

Lawless times, 17-21 (Micah’s Idols & New Sodom)

Ruth: “God Provides” (for Naomi, & for Israel)

1st & 2nd Samuel: “The Rise & Fall of King David”

Samuel: king-maker, 1Sam.1-7 ♦ Saul: failed king, 8-14

David: chosen one (his rise & Saul’s decline), 15-31

David becomes king, 2Sam.1-8 ♦ David’s Fall, 9-20

More from David’s Reign (failure, exploits, faith), 21-24

1st & 2nd Kings: “From Glory to Exile”

The Rise & Fall of Solomon, 1Ki.1-11

The Torn Kingdoms, 12-22; 2Ki.1-17 (focus on the North)
Last Days in the South, 18-25

1st & 2nd Chronicles: “The Fortunes of King & Temple”

[the same history from a different perspective]

From the Archives, 1Chr.1-11 ♦ David’s Reign, 10-29

Solomon’s Reign, 2Chr.1-9 ♦ Southern Kingdom, 10-36

Daniel 1-6: “Staying Faithful to a Sovereign God”

(in Exile in Babylon)

Ezra: “The Exiles Return”

The Initial Return, 1-2 ♦ The Temple Rebuilt, 3-6

Ezra’s Return, 7-8 ♦ Intermarriage Addressed, 9-10

Nehemiah: “Rebuilding”

Rebuilding Walls, 1-6 ♦ Reforming the Community, 7-12

Esther: “Unseen Protector” *(the Jews who didn’t come home)*

Excl. Daniel, a total of 249 chs, 7018vv => 30% of the O.T.

Sum up most of it in 2vv: **Jer.32v22-23** (& rest = **Ez.9v9b-10**)

OT overview: Neh.9v23-31; (cf. in prospect: Deut.4v25-31)

Observations

The overarching story: **(i) Sin spoils evth again!**

Recapitulation of A&E in Eden...: A good land... vomiting them out; From Golden Age (Solomon) to Ruin (586BC).

The story of the human race on a smaller scale. (i)...

Understand the terrible signif of the **Exile**: as if they’d never escaped from Egypt, as if Joshua had never brought them into the promised land, as if David had never sat on the

throne. As if Abr had never left Ur of the Chaldees...
Demonstrates the need for moral transformn (law on heart)
But **Return** => Sin isn't the Last Word (yet the return from
exile proves swth underwhelming: really, they're still in exile)

(ii) But God is in ctrl, wkg out his unfolding plan.

Joshua completes #1-3 Gen.12 agenda: Nn, Relnshp, Land.
Judges ff: the need for & provision of a king. (who ult'ly
disappoints) => The Need for a King (a certain sort of king!)

(iii) Individual lessons... & e.g.s

- Dark days call for courage, faith & obedience
- God is in ctrl, even when things seem desperate

Look out for narrator's comments, repeated words & themes,
climax/punchlines, contrasts, key dialogue, allusions, irony.
Beware the temptation to spiritualise/allegorise.

Learn from e.g.s but beware the "Moses-is-me" syndrome;
the heroes are likely pointing fwd to J!

Translate 'cross-culturally' (give out my "**Narrative h/o**")

Where do we see Jesus? Foreshadowed in key leaders...

- Joshua: leading his people into the Promised Land
- Samson?! Whose greatest singlehanded victory = in death
- David: chosen by God (contrast Saul the 'human' choice),
surprising deliverer; rejected but ultimately crowned
- Solomon: wise & exalted
- Elisha: bringing life, blessing
- Hezekiah faith, Josiah's zeal to obey,
- Nehemiah, master builder? (Matt.16v18)