

He Gave Us Scripture: Foundations of Interpretation

Lesson 8

Modern Application &
Old Testament Epochs

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

When it comes to applying the Old Testament to our day, we should never return to the past, but we should also never forget the past.

II. Epochal Divisions (1:58)

Significant theological changes are the basis for identifying epochal divisions.

Each epoch is a period of time characterized by substantial and long-lasting transitions in Old Testament theology.

A. Variety (3:36)

Theologians have found different ways to divide the history recorded in the Old Testament.

Theologians don't always agree on epochal divisions because Old Testament theology developed in different ways at different times.

B. Outline (8:09)

A popular way to divide history into epochal divisions is by associating each epoch with one of God's covenants.

Six major divine covenants in the Old Testament:

- Adam (Genesis 1-3; Hosea 6:7)
- Noah (Genesis 6:18; 9:9-17)
- Abraham (Genesis 15:18; 17:2)
- Moses (Exodus 19-24; Numbers 25:13)
- David (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89, 132)

- New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31; Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6-12)

These covenants represent times when God moved mightily in history, and they introduced long-lasting theological emphases.

C. Implications (13:40)

The divisions of the Old Testament make it clear that God wanted his people to apply theological themes in different ways at different times.

Once God commanded a new way for sacrifice in worship, he expected his people never to return to the old ways.

Christ's sacrifice has superseded every earlier form of sacrifice (Hebrews 8:13).

The Old Testament is not irrelevant; rather we live in a different epoch.

As people living under the new covenant, we follow Jesus, the great Son of David, as he leads his people into war against the forces of evil.

III. Epochal Developments (22:50)

Earlier and later Old Testament epochs have theological differences that reflect the organic development of a single growing faith.

A. Characters (24:00)

Throughout Scripture, the same two characters, God and Satan, are engaged in the great conflict between good and evil.

The forces of good are led by God, the supreme Creator-King.

The forces of evil are led by the creature Satan who resists the spread of God's glory.

B. Storyline (30:45)

The storyline of Scripture is a unified, all-encompassing narrative of how God is spreading his glory in order to obtain endless praise.

Major “chapters” in the Bible’s story:

- Adam: Adam and Eve were to expand the boundaries of God’s holy garden by filling and subduing the earth.

- Noah: Human beings were to oppose corruption as they filled and subdued the earth.
- Abraham: Abraham's family was to lead humanity into conflict with Satan and his followers.
- Moses: God established Israel and moved them to spread his kingdom throughout the earth.
- David: David's dynasty would rule over God's people and lead them into further conflict with the nations that served Satan.
- New Covenant: The Messiah will make all things new, reigning over the earth with God's people.

Each of these stages of history contributes cumulatively to the developing, unified storyline of Scripture.

C. Authors (36:07)

Old Testament authors frequently applied earlier epochs to later audiences.

1. About the Past (37:35)

All Old Testament books deal primarily with the past.

Moses wrote the Pentateuch during his covenant epoch, but his books reported events that had taken place in the past.

Old Testament books written during David's covenant epoch also took their audiences into the past.

2. For the Present (40:05)

Authors of Scripture wrote for their own contemporary audiences.

Biblical authors wrote about the past in ways that built bridges to the lives of their original audiences.

Modern Christians need to connect biblical writings about the past to ourselves.

D. Connections (44:43)**1. Backgrounds (45:31)**

Old Testament authors showed the relevance of the past by explaining the background of their audiences' current experiences.

Biblical authors used backgrounds in ways that revealed God's approval or disapproval of historical figures.

2. Models (48:40)

Old Testament authors presented models for their original audiences to imitate or reject.

Example: battle for Jericho (positive model)

Example: battle of Ai (negative model)

The connections that the author of Joshua drew to his audience can help modern Christians determine details for our own situations.

3. Anticipations (54:45)

Biblical writers frequently pointed out how events from the past were very similar to the situations their audiences faced.

Foreshadowing: An author presents earlier details of a story in ways that anticipate later details.

In modern application, our task is to extend the bridges built by biblical writers for their original audience to our modern lives.

IV. Conclusion (57:49)

Review Questions

1. Describe various ways theologians have divided Old Testament history and explain the reasons for this diversity.
2. List and explain the major divine covenants in the Old Testament.

3. What are some key reasons why New Testament believers should never apply the Scriptures as if they live in earlier periods of history? Include some biblical examples with your answer.
4. Describe the two main characters behind the Old Testament epochal developments. Who are they, what are their main purposes, and how are they working to accomplish their goals?

5. Explain the developing storyline of Scripture, and explore how each stage of biblical history contributes to the overall, unified narrative.
6. Why did Old Testament authors frequently apply earlier epochs to the audiences of their own time?

7. What types of connections did biblical authors draw between the past and the present, and how should modern audiences respond to these connections?

Application Questions

1. How does knowledge of the epochal divisions of the Old Testament affect your understanding of Old Testament theology?
2. Abraham believed God's covenant promise and remained faithful to God. What are some specific ways you can demonstrate faithfulness to God in your present circumstances?
3. How can you apply the teachings of the Old Testament to your life without living as if you were in the past?
4. Scripture is essentially the story of the spiritual conflict between God and Satan. How should this reality influence the way we approach the Bible?
5. What are some of the challenges you have encountered when interpreting the teachings of the Old Testament? How did you deal with these challenges?
6. Should we *always* take into account the Bible's single, unified storyline when we interpret the Bible? Why or why not? Cite some examples to support your position.
7. How are the principles of the Old Testament guiding you in your present ministry and circumstances?
8. Does knowing the circumstances and struggles of people in the Old Testament help you when you face difficulties in your own life? Explain your answer.
9. How can concentrating on what God did in the past help you apply the Scriptures to your present circumstances?
10. What ministries are you currently engaged in, and how are you helping others connect the Old Testament writings to our modern world?
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Abraham – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

Achan – Israelite who secretly kept plunder from the defeat of Jericho and brought a curse on Israel; as a result, he and everything associated with him were destroyed

Adam – The first man; husband of Eve; man with whom God made the covenant of foundations in which humanity was to fill and subdue the earth

application – Appropriately connecting the original meaning of a biblical document to contemporary audiences in ways that impact their concepts, behaviors and emotions

berith – Hebrew term (transliteration) most commonly translated "covenant"; also spelled "*berit*"

Canaan, land of – Region given to Abraham and his descendants as an inheritance in his covenant with God; encompasses present-day Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Jordan, the adjoining coastal lands and parts of Egypt and Syria

covenant – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

David – Second Old Testament king of Israel who received the promise that his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

empirical – Based on or proven by observation, experience, or experiment rather than on theory or abstract principal

epoch – A distinct period of time in history; in theology, a period of time established by divine revelation and characterized by a substantial and long-lasting transition that distinguishes it from other periods of time

foreshadowing – Literary device in which certain events hint at or point to future events that will occur later in the story

Moses – Old Testament prophet and deliverer who led the Israelites out of Egypt; man with whom God made a national "covenant of law" and who administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites; also appeared with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration

new covenant – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

Noah – Man who built the Ark and survived the Flood; God made a universal covenant with him that promised the enduring stability of nature

palaioō – Greek term (transliteration) meaning "to make or become old, outdated, or worn out by time" or "to declare obsolete"

Pentateuch – First five books of the Old Testament

qum – Hebrew verb (transliteration) meaning "establish" or "cause to arise"; often used to describe the confirmation of something that already exists