

Friday Lunch Bunch

Session 1: OT Themes and Events

October 13, 2023 • Rev. Doug Gray
First Congregational Church, Salt Lake City

I. Intros and Prayer

- a. Welcome
- b. The enormous contribution of the Hebrew Testament
- c. The critical events of the OT
- d. The major themes of the OT
- e. Pray

II. Two Watershed Events of the OT

- a. Everything is either running towards these events or running away from them
- b. Exodus (Most popular dates in the 1400s or 1200s BC)
 - i. God rescuing His people out of slavery
 - ii. Led by Moses
 - iii. The giving of the Law on Mount Sinai
 - iv. The bringing of the Hebrew people into the Promised Land
 - v. Traditionally, authored by Moses—there are many voices though!
 - vi. Importance: The Exodus is the defining event of the Jewish people and faith—marked by The Passover—in the same way that the Crucifixion and Resurrection are defining for Christians.
 - vii. Importance: Shows God's grace (Exodus 20:1–2)
- c. Exile
 - i. Northern Kingdom (722 BC)
 1. Northern Kingdom includes all tribes except Judah & Benjamin
 2. Assyria takes away these ten northern tribes of Israel.
 3. Send in another group of people to be in their place
 4. These become the Samaritans — only the Books of the Law are authoritative)
 5. The original ten tribes never return to the land *en masse*
 6. Prophets leading up to this include Amos and Hosea
 - ii. Southern Kingdom (586 BC)
 1. Take the best and the brightest away into Exile in two waves
 2. 586 BC is the date of the destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple
 3. Lasts for 70 years
 4. The people of God are first called "Jews" while in Exile
 5. Prophets leading up to this include Isaiah and Jeremiah
 6. Prophets during the Exile include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Esther also reflects the time of the Exile.
 7. Ezra and Nehemiah are the story of the Exiles coming home and rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple
 - iii. Importance: The Exile was an existential crisis for the Jewish people. How can God love us and let this happen? God says we are a chosen people and then did God "unchoose" us? How do we stay faithful in the midst of suffering? How do we retain our identity without our land and our Temple?

III. Two Major Themes

- a. Covenant
 - i. Promise
 - ii. Agreement
 - iii. Relationship
 - iv. Not a contract...a covenant.
 - v. Examples: God's covenants with Noah (Genesis 11), Abraham (Genesis 12), David (2 Samuel 7); and David's covenant with Jonathan (1 Samuel 18)
- b. *Hesed* (pronounced with a heavy, throaty "he" sound)
 - i. Sacrificial love
 - ii. Love that puts the other person first
 - iii. Love that counts the cost and pays it anyway
 - iv. Translated as *steadfast love, lovingkindness, mercy*
 - v. Hosea 6:6–8 — "I demand *hesed* and not sacrifice"
 - vi. Micah 6:8 — "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love *hesed*, and to walk humbly with your God."
- c. Covenant Cycle
 - i. Step One: God says "I love you!" We exist with God in a warm and open relationship.
 - ii. Step Two: Humans forget or fall away from God. Sin introduces distance between humanity and God.
 - iii. Step Three: God sends someone or some event to remind humans of that distance and how that's not the way it's supposed to be.
 - iv. Step Four: God makes a way home for humanity, by making atonement that restores the relationship.
 - v. Back to Step One: We experience God's "I love you!" again
- d. Every verse of scripture—Old and New Testament—reflects one of these steps**
- e. The Covenant Cycle is the rhythm of the OT, and the rhythm of our lives
- f. The Covenant Cycle is powered by God's *hesed* for us, and *hesed* calls us into that right relationship with God

IV. Psalm 23 — Spending time with one of the greatest chapters of the Bible

V. Conclusions

- a. We need the earthiness and humanity of the OT.
- b. We need to see that God's love and grace come to the people even though they are squirrely and stubborn.
- c. We need the questions and struggles of the OT—how are we to be faithful when it seems like the world is coming unglued? Where is God when we suffer? How can we live better, more God-directed lives?
- d. We need to see that God makes a way for us to always come home! And to know, no matter how far we feel like we have moved away from God, really all we have to do is turn around—God is with us all along!