

THE BIG PICTURE OF SCRIPTURE THROUGH THE MAJOR AND MINOR PROPHETS

Week 1 – Big Picture? Prophets? WHY?

January 23, 2024

Class blurb: Why are Genesis and Revelation considered the bookends of the Bible? The Bible is one story/one narrative which unfolds throughout Scripture. By understanding a broad overview of God's message through the 17 prophetic books based on God's covenants with Israel, you will grasp the overarching story line of the entire Scripture.

The 17 books that we'll be viewing from a broad overview and from God's perspective, have been labeled as the prophetic books in Scripture. WHY? To prophesy is simply to speak prophecy. *Prophecy* is "a message from God." So, to prophesy is to proclaim a message from God. The one who does this is, therefore, a Prophet. A Prophet can either forthtell a message from God or foretell a message from God about an event or events in the future. Since only God knows the future, any authoritative word about the future must of necessity be a prophecy that is a message from God.

Have you heard the term "metanarrative"? That word, "metanarrative" is not in Scripture. The word, "metanarrative" means "grand narrative." And, when applied to Scripture, "metanarrative" is the overarching story line that gives context (the setting, the surroundings, the conditions), meaning, and purpose to the entire Bible. A metanarrative is the "big picture" that unites all themes and individual accounts.

The Bible clearly teaches the metanarrative – the big picture of Scripture. The Apostle Paul wrote in Eph. 1:9-10, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, that God ... *having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself¹⁰ regarding His plan of the fullness of the times to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.* With inserting the meanings of some of the words/phrases, Eph. 1:9-10 reads as God ...*having made known to us the mystery* ("mystery" – something that was hidden...not made known in the past) *of His will* (what God has already determined), *according to His good pleasure* (God's kindly intent, benevolence, delight, desire) *which He purposed* (determined) *in Himself,* ¹⁰ *regarding His plan* (under God's authority, rulership, management, control) *of the fullness of the times,* (the completeness of the times in God's plan toward which the world is moving; everything in history fitting together) (Regarding this plan, it is God's intent/purpose) *to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.* This passage in the NT speaks of a divine will, a purpose, a timetable, a fulfillment, and a unity...which has already been laid out for us in the OT...from eternity past... within Almighty God's plan and purpose!

We are going to FOCUS on how the message of God through the Prophets in the 17 prophetic books fits into the Big Picture of Scripture and impacts the world!

We need to know God's intent in His message. We need to know what He is saying and WHY!

As we are studying the prophetic books, and because so many have asked me over the years to teach Isaiah, without commentaries or Bible notes at the bottom of your study Bible, let's turn to Isa. 1:1-4.... !!!! THE question to ask: What led up to this point in Israel's history and WHY? What do I need to read in Scripture that leads up to the book of Isaiah?!!!!

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IF we know the metanarrative of Scripture...if we know Who God is...if we know about the unconditional covenant God made with Israel through Abraham...then we can tackle Isa. 1:1-4 in addition to the other 16 prophetic books.

There is a **backstory** to Isa. 1:1-4. Let's spend time grasping the backstory to comprehend how the 17 prophetic books fit into the overall narrative of the Bible.

While the Bible is divided between the OT and the NT, the entire Bible tells a single, unified story. Re: the OT and the NT, the story line that begins and continues in the OT, that same narrative continues from the Prophet Malachi in the OT to the Gospel of Matthew with 430 years in between! Matt. 1:1 – The first verse in the first chapter of the first book in the NT tells us... *This is the book of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.* The story line from the first five books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets continues into the NT!

The backstory of the 17 prophetic books:

- God created the heavens and the earth and man and woman, and "it was good," ... "it was very good." God has a plan and a purpose from eternity past.

Isa. 14:24 - *The LORD of armies has sworn, saying, "Certainly, just as I have intended, so it has happened, and just as I have planned, so it will stand.*

Jer. 29:11 – God spoke these words to Israel (read the verse in its context, it's setting) - *For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for prosperity and not for disaster; to give you a future and a hope.*

Rom. 8:28 - *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

Eph. 1:9-10 - *He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, ¹⁰ regarding His plan of the fullness of the times, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.*

- God gave Adam and Eve everything other than permission to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Gen. 3, Adam and Eve rebelled against God; They disobeyed God. They offended God!! That rebellion/that offense caused all of creation to become alienated from its Creator.
- BUT there's HOPE! God's plan can never be thwarted. IMMEDIATELY after man sinned, God IMMEDIATELY promised the solution for sin through the One Who would come – “the Seed of the woman” (a woman does not have a seed; a woman has an egg). A supernatural birth is revealed in Gen. 3:15!
- In Gen. 3:15 – God put enmity/a “blood feud” between Satan and mankind. The result: spiritual warfare (II Kings 6:15-17)! This battle unfolds throughout Scripture and looks forward to “the Seed of the woman,” Whom we read in this verse would one day in the future crush the head of serpent, while the serpent would bruise the heel of “the Seed of the woman.”
- From Gen. 3:15 we have the UNFOLDING of the PROMISE-PLAN. And, from Gen. 3:15 through to Revelation 20, the battle rages! Spiritual warfare is intensifying in our world today which certainly speaks of the big picture!
- Back to Eden? Not yet!!! God drove Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23-24). Humanity fell into a downward spiral. Sin led to death and continues to lead to death. In Gen. 4, Cain killed his brother Abel.

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- In Gen. 6:5, we read, *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.* God sent a flood over all the earth that purged the planet. Gen. 6:8 - *But Noah found favor/Noah found grace (unmerited favor) in the eyes of the LORD.*
- Though the world was purged, sin continued to exist in the hearts of Noah and his expanded family (Gen. 9-10). God intervened and scattered them throughout the earth.
- Genesis 11:10-32 traces the family line of Shem, one of Noah's three sons, to a man named Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, modern day Iraq.
- God's plan of redemption begins to take definite shape in Gen. 12 when He made specific promises to Abram. Abram was a Gentile man whose father, Terah, served/worshipped other gods (Josh. 24:2). Gen. 12:1-3 is a hallmark, a mark of authenticity, that establishes the groundwork for understanding the Bible as a whole – the big picture. Gen. 12:1-3 - *Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation (a great nation of people; a specific ethnic people group; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'*

- God unilaterally and unconditionally promised Abram land, seed (a great nation of descendants & the Seed – the Messiah Who will bless all the families of the earth), and blessings through the Abrahamic Covenant which was “cut” (Gen. 15:12-21). The Abrahamic Covenant is a unilateral/one-sided agreement (on God’s side alone [Gen. 15:12-21]). The covenant cut with Abram was/is an unconditional covenant. God obligated Himself to deliver the promises. Heb. 6:13 - *For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear an oath by no one greater, He swore by Himself*, The deliverance of God’s promises through the Abrahamic Covenant is not dependent upon the obedience of Israel.

- God chose Abram, through God’s sovereign choice...through His absolute authority. God chose Abram to father the physical lineage, the children of Israel, through Jacob...the lineage/the nation of Israel...that would ultimately bring about the redemption for the entire world through the Messiah!

- God created the nation of Israel as an instrument of blessing for the world (Gen. 18:18) through Abram’s grandson, Jacob. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel...who was the father of the 12 tribes of Israel (Gen. 43:10)! God chose Israel to share the truth of the one true God to the Gentiles in the world.

- God’s promises to Abram are reiterated throughout the Bible as a reflection of God’s work and as an expression of His love for all people. God’s promises were not given to Abram because of his righteousness, but in spite of Abram’s sinfulness. This theme of undeserved divine favor is woven throughout Scripture.

- Following their deliverance from bondage to slavery in Egypt, under Moses, God, the King of the universe (Psa. 103:19) gave the children of Israel His law which reflects God’s holiness and exposes man’s sinfulness (Rom. 7:7).

- At Mt. Sinai, when God gave the children of Israel His commandments (a total of 613) and instructed them to build a sanctuary that He may dwell with them (Ex. 25:8), the Redeemer had not as yet arrived.

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- God established the sacrificial system through which the children of Israel could approach God through atonement – a covering for sin (not a removal of sin) through the substitutionary sacrifice of a blood sacrifice through spotless animals, without blemish.

- Deut. 7:6-8 - *For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your*

fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- Following 40 years of wandering in the wilderness because of doubting God, Joshua led the second generation of the children of Israel into the land which He had already given them. Deut. 1:8 - *See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.*

- Applicable only to the children of Israel, in Deut. 28-29 we read of God's physical blessings and curses. They would be blessed if they followed Him faithfully. If they did not, they would be cursed. Ultimately, if they rebelled, they would be banished from the land of promise for a time of judgment (Deut. 28:64).

- God promised the nation of Israel the land through the Abrahamic Covenant. The fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant will be realized during the Millennial Kingdom in the future. Yet, God made total enjoyment and guaranteed habitation of the land of Israel contingent on Israel's faithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 28:64)

- In Deut. 30:1-6 – we are given a future look at Israel... *Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, ² and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. ⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

- Judges 2:7-12 - *So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua.... ⁸ Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was one hundred and ten years old. ⁹ And they buried him...¹⁰ When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ¹² and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger.*

- God was Israel's King. In I Samuel 8, the children of Israel demanded a king like the other nations, like the Gentiles. They longed for a king...other than God! God told Samuel to

forewarn the people re: a human king! Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin (not the correct tribe according to the prophecy in Gen. 49:10) was that king. Saul, was an unfaithful king!

- Upon Saul's death, David, a shepherd, Jesse's son, from the tribe of Judah was anointed as the King of Israel, a united kingdom, and reigned for approx. 40 years.
- God's promise to Abraham of a seed included multiple descendants and "the" Seed – the Messiah. Through the Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:8-16) which is an outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised that David's lineage would last forever and that his kingdom would never pass. *Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.*
- *There will be a time, when someone from the line of David will again sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem and rule as king on earth as prophesied. This future king is Jesus (Lk. 1:32-33 - He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."*
- Upon King David's death, his son Solomon became King of the united kingdom of Israel. Solomon became disobedient. He married foreign women (700 wives and 300 concubines) with different beliefs and worshipped their gods and constructed altars to these gods.
- Following Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam, with greater harshness and intensity than his father, ruled the kingdom. A civil war ensued and the kingdom was split in two. The southern kingdom, Judah, was home to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin with Jerusalem as its capital city. The southern kingdom was known as "Judah." The northern kingdom, comprised the other ten tribes, with Samaria as its capital city. The northern kingdom was known as "Israel."
- All the kings of Israel were evil. They did not follow the Mosaic Covenant. Their kings were not descendants of King David/of the tribe of Judah. They led the people in worshipping other gods. Of the 20 kings of Judah, all descendants of King David, 8 of the kings *did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.* (I Kings 12 through II Kings 25) Manasseh who was "depraved" repented at the end of his days and could be considered the 9th righteous king (??).
- Reforms were short-lived and judgment was soon to come in accordance with Deut. 28.
- Israel had been created by God and chosen to be a witness of the one true God of Israel to the world, the nations/the Gentiles who believed in many gods.
- God sent Prophets to remind the people of why God had created and chosen them. The Prophets told the nation of Israel to return to God and to turn from their idolatry. The Prophets reinforced God's promises to Israel which looked forward to their restoration through the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:24-27).

And so, we have the backstory of why God called the Prophets...why the 17 prophetic books were written.

CONSIDER: the Bible is...

- ...a history book about Israel – an historic supernatural book about Israel’s history.

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- ...a prophetic book about Israel beginning with Abraham and moving into the future (Isa. 66:22 – God told Israel, *For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me, says the LORD, So shall your descendants and your name remain.*
 - ...Jesus was born in Israel.
 - ...Jesus ministered in Israel.
 - ...Jesus died in Israel.
 - ...Jesus rose from the dead in Israel.
 - ...Jesus will return to Israel.

This is important for us to know because the 17 prophetic books are addressed TO Israel – and to the Gentile nations – ABOUT Israel.

Gen. 12:3 – “I will bless those who bless you and curse him who curses you and through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” WHY is this labeled as a “hallmark passage”?

Gen. 18:18 - WHY did I make a big deal out of this verse? Israel – an instrument of blessing FOR THE WORLD?

QUESTIONS:

Get to know one another.

Have you read...studied the prophetic books?

If not – why not?

What was new to you? What impacted you and WHY?

What are your questions?

What do you understand about Israel?

What do you understand about Israel through understanding the backstory?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread Week 1’s handout with the Bible references.

In knowing the backstory in today’s lesson, how do you understand Isa. 1:1-4? What are your observations? What are your questions?

Perhaps begin a journal and note your observations and your questions.re:

Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 18:18

God’s promises to Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 18:18; Deut. 7:6-8)

Terms that are new to you and cross reference.

What will you share from today’s study with others?

Read Week 2's handout when you receive it.