

UNDERSTANDING THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

REVIEW:CHRIST THE KEY

REVIEW: CANONICAL CRITICISM

STORIES WITHIN THE STORY

OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES



NARRATIVES - WHERE ARE THEY?

- **Narratives make up more the the Bible than any other literary type.**
- **As discussed in Week 2, the gospels are primarily narrative - as is the book of Acts (again, we'll get to that later).**

NARRATIVES - WHERE ARE THEY?

- **The following books in the Hebrew Scriptures are predominantly narrative in content and structure: Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Jonah, and Haggai.**
- **Exodus, Numbers, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Job are also full of narrative material.**

“It is our presupposition that the Holy Spirit knew what he was doing when he inspired so much of the Bible in the form of narrative. We think it is obvious that this type of literature serves God’s revelatory purpose well. How it serves his purposes and how we are to make good and proper use of it in our service to God is what this chapter is about.”

– FEE AND STUART

NARRATIVES - WHAT ARE THEY?

- **Narratives are, first and foremost, stories.**
- **The term *narrative*, more than the term *story*, denotes the complex and crucial import of biblical writings. When we speak of the biblical narrative, we are talking about one overarching story containing several detailed intricate smaller stories.**

NARRATIVES - WHAT ARE THEY?

- **All narratives have a plot and characters. The biblical narrative has smaller stories with characters and individual plots and a major plot with God as the central character.**

EXEGETESIS - DIGGING DEEP

NARRATIVES - THREE LEVELS

- **Top Level - the whole universal plan of God worked out throughout creation; sometimes this is referred to as redemptive history.**
- **Middle Level - Israel's major story - Call of Abraham, Patriarchs, Egypt, Moses, Promised Land, Exile, Restoration**
- **Bottom Level - Individual stories that make up the other two levels.**

God's Grand Narrative

Israel's Story

Creation

Redemption

Individual Stories





NARRATIVES: WHAT THEY AREN'T

- **Not just stories about people who lived a long time ago - stories about what God did to and through those people.***
- **Not allegories filled with hidden meanings (or numerologies).**

NARRATIVES: WHAT THEY AREN'T

- **Old Testament narratives do not always teach directly - they allows us to place ourselves in the story and learn from it.**
- **Each individual story does not necessarily have a moral of its own.**

NARRATIVES: KEYS TO INTERPRETATION

- **Read the narratives with an eye to illustration of doctrines and ideas taught directly elsewhere. In this way we judge their lessons for us.**
- **Narratives tell what happened - not what should have happened. Sometimes they are negative examples for us to not repeat. Their lessons can be explicit or implicit.**

NARRATIVES: KEYS TO INTERPRETATION

- **All narratives are selective and incomplete. They are written for a specific and limited purpose, and should not be stretched beyond their own bounds.**
- **Seek to understand the context of the story.**
- **Always look for God in the narratives. God is always the hero.**

NARRATIVES: TWO EXAMPLES

- **Joseph Cycle - Explicit**
- **The Book of Ruth - Implicit**

HERMENEUTICS - APPLICATION

NARRATIVES: FINAL WARNINGS

Be careful not to...

- Allegorize
- Decontextualize
- Read Selectively
- Falsely Combine
- Redefine
- Use Extracanoninical Authority
- Moralize
- Personalize

GUIDING THOUGHTS FOR APPLICATION

- **A healthy application of individual stories in service to the larger narrative - not to our agendas.**
- **Finding solace and understanding in the shape of our own stories within the narrative.**
- **Helping us to always look for the redemptive arc - in our own stories and the stories of others.**

