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OT 625 Historical Books of the Old Testament

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I. General Description

This course seeks to strengthen the student in the "Inductive method" of biblical study, and to direct this interpretive approach to the Historical Books of the Old Testament.

II. Course Objectives

A. Methodology. The emphasis will be upon the observation and interpretations of books as wholes. By the end of the course, the student should be able to do the following:

1. As regards observation:
   a. Survey books as wholes, including:
      (1) Identifying the general materials of the book (biographical, ideological, historical, etc.) and the specific materials, giving a brief title to each chapter whereby the contents of the chapter may be recalled by association;
      (2) Locating the major units and sub-units in the book and identifying the main structural relationships operative between these units (MBS, pp. 49-55);
      (3) Asking a few interpretive questions based upon each major structural law observed;
      (4) Identifying the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole;
      (5) Locating data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, occasion for writing, recipients, etc.;
      (6) Noting other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.
   b. Survey of individual chapters/segments, including:
      (1) Giving a brief title to each paragraph of the segment whereby its contents may be recalled by association;
      (2) Locating the major groupings of paragraphs (units) within the segment and the main structural relationships operative between these units;
      (3) Asking a few interpretive questions relating to each major structural relationship observed;
      (4) Identifying the key verses of strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole;
      (5) Identifying the literary form(s) employed in the segment (MBS, pp. 68-71).
   c. Observe the details of individual paragraphs and verses, including:
      (1) Noting the important and/or difficult terms, sentence structure, and the relations between sentences and groups of sentences (MBS, pp. 39-49);
      (2) Asking detailed interpretive questions based on these observations.

2. As regards interpretation:
   a. Answer the most significant questions raised in the observation of paragraphs and verses, including:
      (1) Identifying the most significant questions asked, based upon importance, difficulty, and interest;
      (2) Noting the types of evidence available for answering each interpretive question (MBS, pp. 105-66), and employing this evidence to answer each question selected.
b. Integrate the answers to the questions in a progressive fashion so as to synthesize first the paragraph, then the chapter/segment, and ultimately the book as a whole. This synthesis involves, inter alia, the answering of the questions raised during the surveys of segments and of books.

3. As regards evaluation and application: Find the truths or principles which are transcultural, and relate them to appropriate contemporary situations.

4. As regards correlation: Relate the theology of the book to the teaching of other biblical materials by the same author, to the Old Testament as a whole (or, with New Testament books, to the New Testament as a whole), and finally to the Bible as a whole, thus moving toward a biblical theology.

B. Content. The student should be able to do the following:

1. Think through the contents of each book of this course without recourse to the printed text;
2. Identify significant passages in the Historical Books and interpret them contextually;
3. Demonstrate the importance of a sound methodology for interpretation, including specific examples from the Historical Books.
4. Describe thoroughly the meaning and development of major themes in the Historical Books, citing individual passages and other specific data to support conclusions;
5. Discuss the historical and religious background of the Historical Books, demonstrating a general knowledge of critical problems regarding the Historical Books and an ability to use this data in the interpretation of the Historical Books.

C. Attitude. The student should:

1. Appreciate the value of sound methodology for the interpretation of the biblical materials, resulting in a desire to apply the inductive method to other biblical books;
2. Desire to make the Historical Books the object of intensive and creative study throughout life;
3. Intend to employ seriously the Historical Books in preaching and teaching within the context of the church.

III. Course Texts

A. Required Texts:

- Revised Standard Version of the Bible or New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
- Biblical Resources for Ministry by David R. Bauer

B. Collateral Texts:

- Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard Childs
- Old Testament Introduction, by Werner H. Schmidt

IV. Course Requirements

A. The completion of the following lessons in writing, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. All lessons are to be handed in at the end of the class period on the day designated. No late papers will be accepted save in cases in which permission is granted by the instructor based on emergency.

B. Punctual attendance at all class sessions. Because of the importance of class attendance, and because of government regulations regarding student loans, a record of attendance will be taken at each class session. Absence at more than two class sessions will result in final grade penalty, and absence at more than four class sessions will result in loss of credit for the course. Exceptions may be granted based on emergency, in consultation with the instructor.

C. A careful reading of the assigned portions of the required and collateral texts.
D. Viewing of videotapes dealing with a review of method for those students who have not previously taken the second IBS course.

E. A final examination based on the objectives of the course.

V. Course Evaluation

A. Assignments - 75%
B. Final Exam - 25%

VI. Lessons

   Read the entire book through at one sitting several times.
   1. Identify the general specific materials of the book, giving a brief title to each chapter.
   2. Locate the main units and sub-units in the book, and identify the major structural relationships operative in the book as a whole.
   3. Ask a few interpretive questions regarding each major structural relationship observed.
   4. Identify the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole.
      Give reasons for each selection in terms of structural significance.
   5. Note data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, recipients, unity of the book, etc.
   6. Note other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.

Lesson 2. Survey of Segments as Wholes. Joshua 1:1-18
   Survey Joshua 1:1-18, following these steps:
   1. Give a brief title to each paragraph whereby its contents may be recalled by association.
   2. Locate the main units and sub-units within the segment as a whole, and the major structural relationships operative in the segment as a whole.
   3. Ask a few interpretive questions based on each major structural relationship observed.
   4. Identify the key verses or strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole.
   5. Identify the literary form(s) employed in the segment.
   6. Note other major impressions relating to the segment as a whole.

   Examine Joshua 1:5-7 in terms of a detailed observation. Do independent study only. Use MBS, pp. 31-36, 40-49, 72-79 as a guide. Ask interpretive questions relating to each observation made. If you can, make use of the Hebrew. See handout on detailed observation.
   1. Identify the two or three most significant questions raised.

   Use the exegetical determinants outlined in MBS, pp. 135-65, to interpret Joshua 1:5-7.
   Interpret the passage by selecting two or three of the most important questions raised in your detailed observation of the passage and by employing the exegetical determinants to answer these questions. See handout on interpretation, and keep the following suggestions in mind:
   1. Attempt to determine which exegetical determinants are relevant to the question being answered.
2. Begin with the most important determinants, and try to bring their evidence to bear on the interpretive question being answered.

3. Using inferential reasoning, indicate the possible conclusion or conclusions to which each piece of evidence points. These conclusions, or inferences, should point toward possible answers to the interpretive question. At the close of study, list the various pieces of evidence; if more than one is possible, indicate the data supporting each possibility. If evidence is conclusive, indicate your conclusion.

4. Make periodical summaries of your findings.

Lesson 5. Survey and Interpretation. Joshua 3-12.

1. Survey this section, employing the suggestions under Lesson 2 (omit paragraph titles).

2. Interpretation. Interpret this section (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive question, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions:
   a. Identify the major elements surrounding Israel's crossing of the Jordan in chs. 3-5. What is the meaning and function of each? According to these chapters, what was the purpose behind the crossing of the Jordan in this fashion?
   b. What is the meaning of 5:13-15, of 8:30-35, and of 9:20? How does each of these passages function within the section and illumine the section as a whole?
   c. Identify and analyze the salient features of Israel's attacks upon the cities of Jericho and Ai in chs. 6-8 and of Israel's attacks upon the kings in chs. 9-11. Note especially the ways in which the contrasts in each of these units (i.e., in chs. 6-8, and in chs. 9-11) illumine the meaning and purpose of these accounts.

   a. According to chs. 3-12, what specific factors were responsible for the conquest of the land?
   b. Explore the theological significance of the conquest of the land, according to this narrative.


1. Survey this section, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).

2. Interpretation. Interpret this section (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more of the following interpretive questions.
   a. What is the meaning of the account regarding Caleb's allotment (14:6-15; 15:13-19)? Why did the writer thus draw special attention to this allotment?
   b. Note the tension between those passages which indicate that the conquest (and possession) was complete and those passages which indicate that the possession was yet incomplete (some of these passages are found outside the section). What is the meaning of this tension, and why did the writer allow this tension to stand?
   c. Examine the account of the altar at the Jordan in ch. 22. What was the crucial issue? Why did the writer include this account, and why did he place it here in the book?

   a. Examine the relationship between this account of the distribution of the land (chs. 13-22) and the account of the conquest of the land (chs. 3-12). Specifically, what is the meaning of this relationship? Why this relationship? Implications?
   b. What major theological issues emerge in this account of the distribution of the land?


1. Survey this division, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).
2. **Interpretation.** Trace the thought of this division. What are the major themes which emerge in these chapters, and what is the meaning of each? In the course of your study, pay special attention to the contrasts that are employed.

3. **Synthesis.**
   a. How does Joshua 23-24 climax the book? How does this climax illumine the Book of Joshua as a whole?
   b. What is the function of the summary statement in 23:1-24:13 in the Book of Joshua as a whole?

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**Lesson 8.** Synthesis of Joshua.

1. Examine the person, or character, of Joshua as it is presented in this book. How does the writer relate Joshua to Moses, and what is the meaning of this relationship?
2. What is the meaning of each of the following concepts in the Book of Joshua: rest; possess/possession; inherit/inheritance?
3. What is the theology of "the land" in the Book of Joshua?
4. What theological purpose (or purposes) stands behind the composition of the Book of Joshua?

**Lesson 9.** Survey of Books as Wholes. The Book of Judges.

Survey the Book of Judges, employing the steps outlined in Lesson 1.


1. Survey this segment, employing the suggestions under Lesson 2.
2. **Interpretation.** Interpret this section (or a portion of it) on the basis of one or more structural relationships, interpretive questions, major issues, or strategic areas identified in your survey. Or answer one or more on the following interpretive questions:
   a. Examine the contrasts within ch. 1, and explore the meaning of these contrasts. Why these contrasts?
   b. According to 2:1-5, why was Israel unable to drive out the inhabitants of the land? Analyze this paragraph, indicating its meaning, the reason why this explanation was included here, and the implications of this paragraph.
3. **Synthesis.**
   a. How does this segment illumine the meaning of the Book of Judges as a whole?
   b. How does 1:1-2:6 relate to the Book of Joshua?


1. Survey this segment, employing the suggestions under Lesson 2.
2. **Interpretation.** Trace the Logic of this segment. Identify the major elements found in 2:6-3:6; and investigate the meaning of each. Why did the writer wish to emphasize these elements?
3. **Synthesis.**
   a. How does this passage illumine the meaning of the Book of Judges?
   b. How does the remainder of the Book of Judges illumine this passage?


1. Survey this section, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).
2. **Interpretation.**
   a. Examine carefully the character of Gideon, as it is presented here. Be creative, and (given the limitations of time) be as thorough as possible. Be careful to cite evidence for each assertion made.
1. Survey this section, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).
2. Interpretation. Examine carefully the character of Samson, as it is presented here. Be analytical, creative, and relatively thorough. Be careful to cite evidence.
3. Synthesis. What major themes in this story, and what is the meaning of each? In the process note the major theological truths that emerge from this story and their relation to one another.

1. Evaluation. Having interpreted Judges 13:1-16:31, evaluate the Samson narrative. Write a brief statement (short paragraph) indicating as specifically, precisely, and concretely as possible the main truth or truths in the Samson narrative (taken from Lesson 13, especially part 3), and critically evaluate these teachings in order to determine if they can be taken over and directly applied or not with rational (i.e., evidence and arguments). If the teachings themselves cannot be directly applied, indicate implications from those teachings that are applicable.
2. Application. Ask a series of applicatory questions on the basis of your evaluation of this passage. In light of your circumstances (and the circumstances of those under your ministry), how would you answer these questions?

1. Survey this division, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).
2. Interpretation.
   a. What are the major elements in each of these stories (i.e., the incident of Micah and the Danites in 17:1-18:31; and the incident of the Benjaminites in 19:1-21:25)? What is the meaning of each of these major elements? What is the meaning of each of these stories?
   b. What is the relationship between these two stories? How do they illumine one another? Why are they thus placed here together?
   c. Interpret 21:25. How does this final statement function in (and illumine) the Book of Judges?
4. Evaluation and Application.
   *Evaluation: write a brief statement (short paragraph) indicating as specifically as possible the main teachings in this material, and critically evaluate those teachings in order to determine if any of them can be taken over and directly applied or not, with rationale (i.e., evidence and arguments). If the teachings themselves cannot be directly applied, indicate implications from those teachings that are applicable.

1. What is the meaning of the recurring casual cycles found throughout 3:7-16:31? Why these recurring cycles?
2. What is the relationship between the so-called major or charismatic judges (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Japhthan, and Samson) and the so-called minor or juridical judges mentioned throughout the book? Why this relationship?

3. What theological purpose (or purposes) stands behind the composition of the Book of Judges?

Survey the Book of I Samuel, employing the steps outlined in Lesson 1.

1. Survey this division, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).
2. Interpretation.
   a. Note the contrasts between Hannah and Samuel, on the one hand, and Eli and his sons, on the other. What is said regarding each of these parties, and what is the meaning of the differences between them? Why did these differences exist? Why did the writer contrast these parties in the way he did? Implications?
   b. Examine carefully the character of Samuel, as it is presented throughout this division. Be analytical, creative, and relatively thorough. Be careful to cite evidence. What is the meaning of this presentation of Samuel? Why this presentation?
   c. According to this division, what circumstances surrounded the rise of the monarch in Israel? What do these circumstances imply regarding the nature and the character of the people? According to this material, was the emergence of the monarchy a positive or negative development? Why?
3. Synthesis. What are the main contours of a theology of the community of faith which is presented in this material?
4. Evaluation and Application.
   *Evaluation: write a brief statement (short paragraph) indicating as specifically as possible the main teachings in this material, and critically evaluate those teachings in order to determine if any of them can be taken over and directly applied or not, with rationale (i.e., evidence and arguments). If the teachings themselves cannot be directly applied, indicate implications from those teachings that are applicable.
   *Application: Ask a series of applicatory questions on the basis of our evaluation of this passage. In light of your circumstances (and the circumstances of those under your ministry) how would you answer these questions?

1. Survey this division, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).
2. Interpretation.
   a. Examine the character of Saul in this material (use also the relevant material in 7:3-12:25). What is the meaning of this presentation of Saul? Why did Saul develop the way he did? Why did the writer present Saul in this way?
   b. Investigate the contrast between Saul and David in this division. What are the differences between Saul and David, and what is the meaning of these differences? Why was David anointed king in place of Saul? Implications?
3. Synthesis. According to this material, what causes one to be acceptable to God, and what causes one to be unacceptable to Him?

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Lesson 20
Survey of Books as Wholes. The Book of II Samuel.
Survey the Book of II Samuel, employing the steps outlined in Lesson 1.

Lesson 21
Survey and Interpretation. II Samuel 7:1-29.
1. Survey this segment, employing the suggestions under Lesson 2.
2. Interpretation. Using the key verses or strategic areas which you have identified in your survey of the segment as a basis, interpret this segment. What is the meaning of this segment? Why did the writer include it here?
3. Synthesis. How does this segment function within II Samuel 1-10, and within the Book of II Samuel as a whole? How does this segment illumine the entire division in which it is found?
4. Evaluation and Application.
*Evaluation: write a brief statement (short paragraph) indicating as specifically as possible the main teachings in this material, and critically evaluate those teachings in order to determine if any of them can be taken over and directly applied or not, with rationale (i.e., evidence and arguments). If the teachings themselves cannot be directly applied, indicate implications from those teaching that are applicable.
*Application: Ask a series of applicatory questions on the basis of your evaluation of this passage. In light of your circumstances (and the circumstances of those under your ministry) how would you answer these questions?

Lesson 22
Survey and Interpretation, and Evaluation and Application. II Samuel 11-12.
1. Survey this section, employing the suggestions under Lesson 5 (1).
2. Interpretation. Trace the flow of thought in this material. Explore carefully the character and consequences of David's sin. What was the basis and nature of David's forgiveness?
   a. What does this passage teach regarding sin and forgiveness?
   b. How does this passage function in the Book of II Samuel as a whole, and how does it illumine the book as a whole?
4. Evaluation and Application.
*Evaluation: write a brief statement (short paragraph) indicating as specifically as possible the main teachings in this material, and critically evaluate those teachings in order to determine if any of them can be taken over and directly applied or not, with rationale (i.e., evidence and arguments). If the teachings themselves cannot be directly applied, indicate implications from those teaching that are applicable.
*Application: Ask a series of applicatory questions on the basis of your evaluation of this passage. In light of your circumstances (and the circumstances of those under your ministry) how would you answer these questions?

Lesson 23
Survey and Interpretation, and Evaluation and Application. II Samuel 13-20.
Survey the Book of Kings, employing the steps outlined in Lesson 1.

Trace the flow of thought, and interpret I Kings 3:3-15; and 11:1-13. What is the meaning of each of these passages? How do these passages relate to one another, and how do they illumine the portrait of Solomon as presented in the Book of I Kings? Evaluate and apply the teachings of this material.

Identify the major structural features in Ch. 8. Using these structural features as a basis, or point of focus, interpret Solomon's dedication of the temple. How does ch. 8 illumine the surrounding context?

Lesson 27. Interpretation. I Kings 16:29-22:40
1. Study the Elijah narrative, using the skills you have developed in observation, interrogation, interpretation, and evaluation and application.
2. Prepare to enter into class discussion on the meaning of this material, and its function within the Book of Kings as a whole.

1. Survey these segments, employing the suggestions under Lesson 2.
2. Interpretation. Using key verses and strategic areas you have identified, interpret 25:1-30. What is the meaning of this segment? How does this segment bring the book to a climax? Why did the writer thus bring the book to a climax?
3. Synthesis. How does this segment function within the entire corpus of Joshua-II Kings? How does it illumine this material as a whole? Why placed here? Implications?
4. Evaluation and Application.
*Evaluation: write a brief statement (short paragraph) indicating as specifically as possible the main teachings in this material, and critically evaluate those teachings in order to determine if any of them can be taken over and directly applied or not, with rationale (i.e., evidence and arguments). If the teachings themselves cannot be directly applied, indicate implications from those teaching that are applicable.

*Application: Ask a series of applicatory questions on the basis of your evaluation of this passage. In light of your circumstances (and the circumstances of those under your ministry) how would you answer these questions?

Lesson 29. The Book of Ruth (final exam).
1. Apply the suggestions of Lesson 27 to the Book of Ruth.
2. This study should indicate your skills in inductive Bible study, and should represent a synthesis of previous studies in the Historical Books insofar as they relate to an understanding of the Book of Ruth.
3. Note strengths and weaknesses in your understanding and application of method.
VII. Select Bibliography

In addition to general Introduction and Theologies of the Old Testament, the following studies may prove helpful:


In the third lecture, the historical books are analyzed, including the story of how the Israelites conquered the promised land. In the fourth lecture, the prophetic books are examined, including an analysis of the content and literary style of their messages. Finally, the poetic books and the focus on wisdom are discussed. GOALS. 1. Ability to articulate the themes of the Old Testament. 2. Ability to summarize the content of each book of the Old Testament. 4 Essentials of the Old Testament. 2. Identify two allusions to the OT that you have seen in the New Testament that help you understand Christ’s nature and/or ministry. How do they make a difference in your understanding of who Jesus is and how you live out your life as his follower? 3. What are the four major elements of God’s plan?