

# HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE



Presented by  
Dr. Jon Korkidakis MDiv, DMin.

## Old Testament Narratives – Study #7

- Before looking at the role of narratives in the Bible I wanted to give you the basic mapping of the Old Testament.

THE HEBREW CANON (TeNaK)			
LAW (TORAH)			
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy			
PROPHETS (NeBAIIM)			
FORMER PROPHETS	LATTER PROPHETS		
	Major Prophets	The Twelve	
Joshua	Isaiah	Hosea	Nahum
Judges	Jeremiah	Joel	Habakkuk
Samuel	Ezekiel	Amos	Zephaniah
Kings		Obadiah	Haggai
		Jonah	Zechariah
		Micah	Malachi
WRITINGS (KeTHUBIIM)			
POETRY	MEGILLOTH (5 Little Scrolls)	History	
Psalms	Ruth	Daniel	
Job	Esther	Ezra – Nehemiah	
Proverbs	Lamentations	Chronicles	
	Song of Solomon		
	Ecclesiastes		

## Old Testament Narrative

- Narrative is the most dominant form of literature in the entire Bible. For example:
  - Over 40% of the Old Testament is narrative
  - The Old Testament constitutes 75% of the Bible
  - The following OT books are largely or entirely composed of narrative

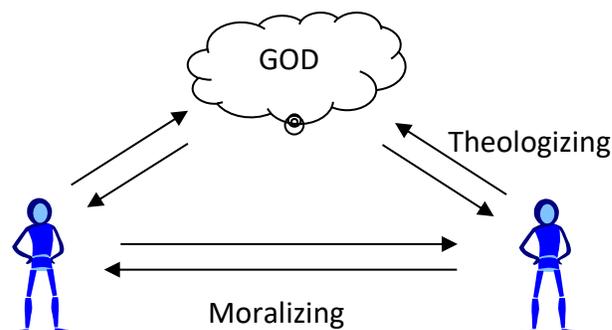
Genesis, Exodus, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, Haggai.

- In the New Testament, Narratives are found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Revelation.
- The more we know about how stories work, the more that we will enjoy and understand large portions of the Bible.

## The Purposes of Narratives

- a. To cause the reader to share an experience
- b. To cause the reader to be an active participant or spectator
- c. To teach a point or lesson in a memorable and/or exciting way

Special Note: The point or lesson invariably deals with God, man, and the world and the various relationships between them. Stories are fundamentally theology, not history. We need to remember - God is the hero of every story!! Not the characters of the story. To make the character the hero, we moralize the story, and miss the lesson God intended for us.



Below are some key points to remember. God as the Central Figure

1. Every biblical story has a horizontal element, and a vertical element. The horizontal is the human component of the story; the vertical is God's.
  - Look at the way the 10 Commandments are shaped

- Look at the Great Commandment – Love God (vertical), Love others (horizontal)
2. Most non-biblical stories are either devoid of the vertical element or leave it nebulous and mysterious.
    - Look at Star Wars for instance – What is the Force? Never really defined, except in very nebulous terms, or even given an origin etc.
  3. Biblical stories are primarily focused on the vertical aspect.
  4. The horizontal element is the one we relate to most.

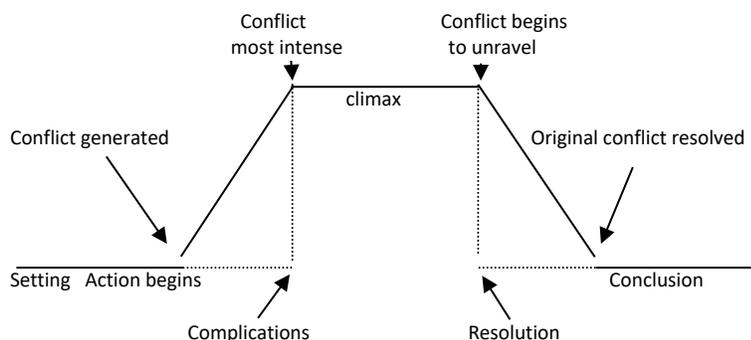
<sup>15</sup> For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. <sup>16</sup> So I urge you to imitate me. (1Co 4:15-16 NLT)

5. Because of this, the tendency to moralize a story is tempting and easy.
6. The dangers in moralizing are many, but one to note is that even our strengths can become a weakness, therefore derailing our best moral and spiritual intentions.
7. Without the vertical, idolatry will continue to flourish, and hope eventually evaporates.
  - Jesus always started with the horizontal but moved the story to the vertical
  - Our messages should be shaped that way – this is the great tension

Moralizing a story actually leaves God out of the story. (e.g. We hear the phrase, "Dare to be a Daniel.")

Stories are recorded selectively to make a point. Therefore, it is important to ask why each part of a story is recorded the way it is, and sometimes to ask why certain seeming important facts are left out.

### The Structure of Narrative



## The Basic Ingredients of a Narrative

### a. Setting

- i. Physical setting
- ii. Temporal (time) setting
- iii. Cultural setting

### b. Character(s)

- i. They may be portrayed by direct description by the storyteller
- ii. They may be portrayed by other characters' response to them
- iii. They may be portrayed by the character's words or thoughts
- iv. They may be portrayed by their own self characterization
- v. Their actions may provide a clue to their character

### c. Plot

- i. The arrangement of the events
- ii. The heart of the plot: CONFLICT!
  - a. Physical conflict
  - b. Character conflict
  - c. Moral or spiritual conflict
- iii. The structure of the plot
  - a. Progression through conflict
  - b. Crisis or climax
  - c. Resolution or closure

### d. Types of Biblical Narrative

- i. Heroic
  - a. Joseph story
  - b. Ruth story
  - c. Judges stories
  - d. David and Goliath
- ii. Epic
  - a. The Exodus
  - b. The Conquest
  - c. Story of the Four Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)
  - d. The whole Bible
- iii. Comedy (known as "social drama")
  - a. Daniel in the Lion's Den
  - b. David and Goliath
  - c. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego
- iv. Tragedy
  - a. Samson
  - b. King Saul
  - c. Adam and Eve

## Narratives

1. They usually do not directly teach a doctrine.
2. They usually illustrate a doctrine that is taught elsewhere in Scripture.
3. Records what actually happened.
4. What people are and do, are not necessarily a good example for us.
5. Most of the characters are presented realistically as imperfect, even though there will be certain scenes where they represent commendable faith, values, or morals.
6. The lesson is often not explicitly stated. We are left to our understanding of what is right and wrong.
7. All narratives are selective. The events and the data are purposeful for the point of the story.
8. Narratives have particular, specific purposes. Often, not all the theological or Biblical issues are answered.
9. Teaching may be either explicit or implicit
10. Remember, God is ultimately the hero!