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Week 6: Old Testament Narratives

1) Should we try to imitate the first Christians in the book of Acts? Why or why not? If so, how much?

Yes, we can endeavor to follow particular examples of the first Christians in the book of Acts. There are two examples seen from the text that we can try to emulate: the first example is to share with others about Christ so the Church would increase so it can grow and develop. Acts illustrates "the geographical expansion of the Church from Jerusalem, Samaria, and Judea and to the ends of the earth" (Fee & Stuart, pg. 116). The purpose of all believers and the Church is to continually spread the Gospel since it is our duty and responsibility to bring as many people into the Kingdom as possible; the second example is Barnabas, who was filled with the Holy Spirit and full of faith.

Barnabas sold off his land to financially support the Church in following Christ. He stood up for Paul by vouching for him since the believers feared that Paul would persecute or have them killed when he began to preach the Gospel after his conversion. Barnabas and Paul frequently traveled together on mission trips until a dispute caused a rift between them where they parted ways, but he kept faithfully serving and ministering. These Christ-like traits we see in Barnabas are good examples for us to try to follow. Ananias and Sapphira are an example that we should refrain from imitating. For both of them lied to the Apostles and, most of all, the Holy

Spirit when they kept part of the proceeds of the land. As a result, they both were struck dead. It was an implied lesson for the people in the early Church and today.

2) Why are the books of the Christian Bible in a different order than the books of the Jewish Bible?

The arrangements within the Christian Bible and Jewish occurred during the early church. Brettler explains that the Bible's order and structure is important in understanding it, which has to do with how Christians and Jews view the covenant from Jeremiah 31:31-32. The Christian perception of this verse is that the New Covenant refers to Jesus, which is greater than the Old Covenant with Moses. In other words, the New Covenant supersedes the Old because it is greater being rooted in Jesus. Because of this, Christians do not see the Mosaic Covenant as being authoritative. In contrast, Jews believe the Mosaic Covenant still applies today (Brettler, Kindle Location: 141-149). The Jewish Bible follows the tripartite structure in modern times, unlike in ancient times, where the Bible went according to the order of the Septuagint (the Greek-speaking Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt), dividing it into four parts when the scriptures were translated into Greek. There are two primary reasons that the early Christians maintained the Septuagint arrangement: first, it was customary for Greek to be spoken instead of Hebrew and dependent on Greek translation; second, the books concluded with the prophets with the advent of Christ in fulfillment of the prophecies and Christian objectives which Brettler points out (Brettler, Kindle Location: 178-197). The Catholic Bible also contained additional non-canonical books, the Apocrypha, which is still in use today. Within the Protestant Bible, the Apocrypha was removed after the Reformation since these books were considered non-canonical.

3) Why is it important to pay attention to the plot of the stories in the Old Testament?

The plot is the structure or framework that supports the sequence of events occurring within a story. The biblical story opens with the main character in a setting where a conflict or

an unknown situation arises until the tension within the story builds up until the climax. The climax is at the highest point of tension within the biblical narrative resulting in resolution where the reader sees the transformation within the main character. It is important to pay attention to the plot of these stories contemplating the literal and contextual meaning. How every biblical account has a motif and objective for that reason it is important to keep in mind the contextual meaning (Fee pg. 30-32). Understanding the purpose of the narrative conveys the all-inclusive meaning. The reader can misinterpret the meaning of the text when accepting the literal meaning of the verse at the wrong time or simply making their own personal interpretation (Fee pg. 93-96). As a result, the reader needs to examine the general meaning of the text taking into account what is happening within the plot considering the circumstances, geographical area (setting), environment and the historical context. All of this is vital to understand the entire plot.

4) Why is it important to pay attention to the setting of the stories in the Old Testament?

The setting of the stories in the Old Testament helps give the audience an idea of what will happen next. Usually the audience knows what to anticipate within the story based on the place being illustrated; building up our excitement and curiosity, drawing us into the narrative. Tim Mackie and Jonathan Collins from The Bible Project mentions that the setting brings to mind memories of the time and place and feelings (Time Index: 00.47 sec.- 00.57 sec.). Understanding the aspects of the setting are important to consider the historical, geographical, language and the cultural context of the time period. The audience receives pieces of the puzzle to tease out of what will occur; it is essential to focus on the main points while keeping the big picture in mind, so we do not end up misinterpreting Scripture.

Works Cited

BibleProject (2019). Old Testament Summary: A Complete Animated Overview. *BibleProject*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALsluAKBZ-c>

Brettler, M (2005). How to Read the Bible. Jewish Publication Society (3rd ed.). Print.

Fee, G., & Stuart, D. (2014). How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth. Zondervan (ed. 4). Print.