

Conquest and Kingship – Session 1 Preview Sheet

Diocesan Theological Institute - September 30, 2017

During these four Saturdays (9/30, 10/7, 10/14 and 10/21 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.) we will be studying a select group of historical books in the OT that address the conquest of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, and the eventual rise and fall of the monarchy in Israel. The Book of Joshua takes us across the Jordan into “the Promised Land” and the Book of Judges narrates a series of hostile encounters against various Canaanites led by charismatic military leaders called by God. In future classes we will be reading 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. Our study will involve a very close look at the figure of David: “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam 13:14).

Attached to this Preview Sheet is Fr. Joseph Jensen’s Concise History of Israel. It provides a very helpful context for the events we’ll be looking at during these sessions.

I have also included Preview Questions for select chapters in Joshua and Judges. These are offered to guide your reading and will serve as the basis for our in-class discussions.

I look forward to joining you in this study of Israel’s rise to and fall from power and kingship.

John McGrath

The Book of Joshua – Preview Questions

Read Joshua 1-8, 23-24

1. In Joshua 1 the Lord repeatedly admonishes the Israelites to “be firm and steadfast.” Why such insistence at this time and this place?
2. Why is Rahab an important figure in Joshua 2 (and 6:22-25)? What motivates her to act on behalf of the Israelite spies (see 2:9-10)? How is she referenced in the NT (see Heb 11:31, Jas 2:25, and Matt 1:5)?
3. Joshua 3-5 presents a very detailed account of the crossing of the Jordan river. What would be the theological intent of all of these details?
4. In their analysis of the siege of Jericho, scholars assert that the account in Joshua 6 is “more liturgical than military.” How so?
5. What military strategy was used to conquer Ai in Joshua 8? What’s the significance of Joshua holding extending a javelin in his hand during the battle? (8:18-19, 26; hint: cf. Ex 17:8-13)
6. Joshua 23 presents a farewell address by Joshua. In his old age, he wants to offer the Israelites wisdom to guide their future. What is his message to them? How would this message be especially relevant to the Israelites return from exile to whom the DH has in mind while writing this? How might this message help us today?
7. Joshua 24 has Joshua renewing the Sinai covenant with the people. Why would this be a fitting way to conclude this book? Read Deut 5:1-4. Does this offer any insight?

The Book of Judges – Preview Questions

Read Judges 2-8, 13-16

1. According to scholars, most of the stories of the judges adhere to the same pattern in narrating each account, cf. Judges 2:10-23. What is that pattern? Does it, in any way, apply to life today?
2. Notice how this pattern is present in the account of Othniel in Judges 3:7-11.
3. In reading this unusual account of Ehud in 3:12-30, keep in mind that Eglon, king of Moab, is an arch enemy and oppressor of Israel for 18 years and an ally of two other true enemies: the Ammonites and Amalekites. The story accentuates Ehud's clever tactics and the secret strategy he uses to defeat this vile, grossly overweight king.
4. The story of Deborah comes in both a prose form and a poetic version. They are similar in essentials but vary in some details. Read the prose version first in chapter 4. The good guys are Deborah, Barak and Jael. The bad guys are Jabin and Sisera. Deborah is a prophetess, a charismatic leader, and a judge in its usual sense. Barak is summoned by her to assume a "judging" role in defeating Jabin's army. Jael, a woman and not a judge, plays a grisly role in God's plan. Read the poetic version in chapter 5 next. How does it compare in your mind?
5. Read the Gideon account in Judges 6-8. Does Gideon fit the profile of a judge? What do you make of 8:27?
6. The story of Samson shows him to be less than a moral and spiritual ideal. Why then would this account be included in the stories of the judges?