

BANNED

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE



The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg

Mondays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm,

September 29 – November 3

Housekeeping

- Slides: [**frederickuu.org/fcc**](http://frederickuu.org/fcc)
- **Attendance** for FCC
- Add to **email** list?
- Insights from your studies — *or other questions/suggestions?*

Covenant

- Use **“I” statements**: *Speak from your own experience.*
- **Ask permission before sharing** other participants’ stories outside the group.
- **Step-up, step-back**: be conscious of the level of participation that you bring to the conversation. Allow everyone a chance to speak before you speak again.
- You always have **permission to “pass.”**



Upcoming Classes

- *Session 7: Introduction (to Prophetic Literature)*
- *Session 8: Isaiah*
- *Session 9: Jeremiah, Ezekiel*
- *Session 10: The Twelve*
- *Session 11: Psalms & Proverbs; Job; Five Scrolls*
- **Session 12: Rest of the Five Scrolls and Daniel**
- **Spring 2015: 6-weeks on Jesus, the Gospels, and Acts**
- **Fall 2015: 6-weeks on Paul & the rest of the NT**

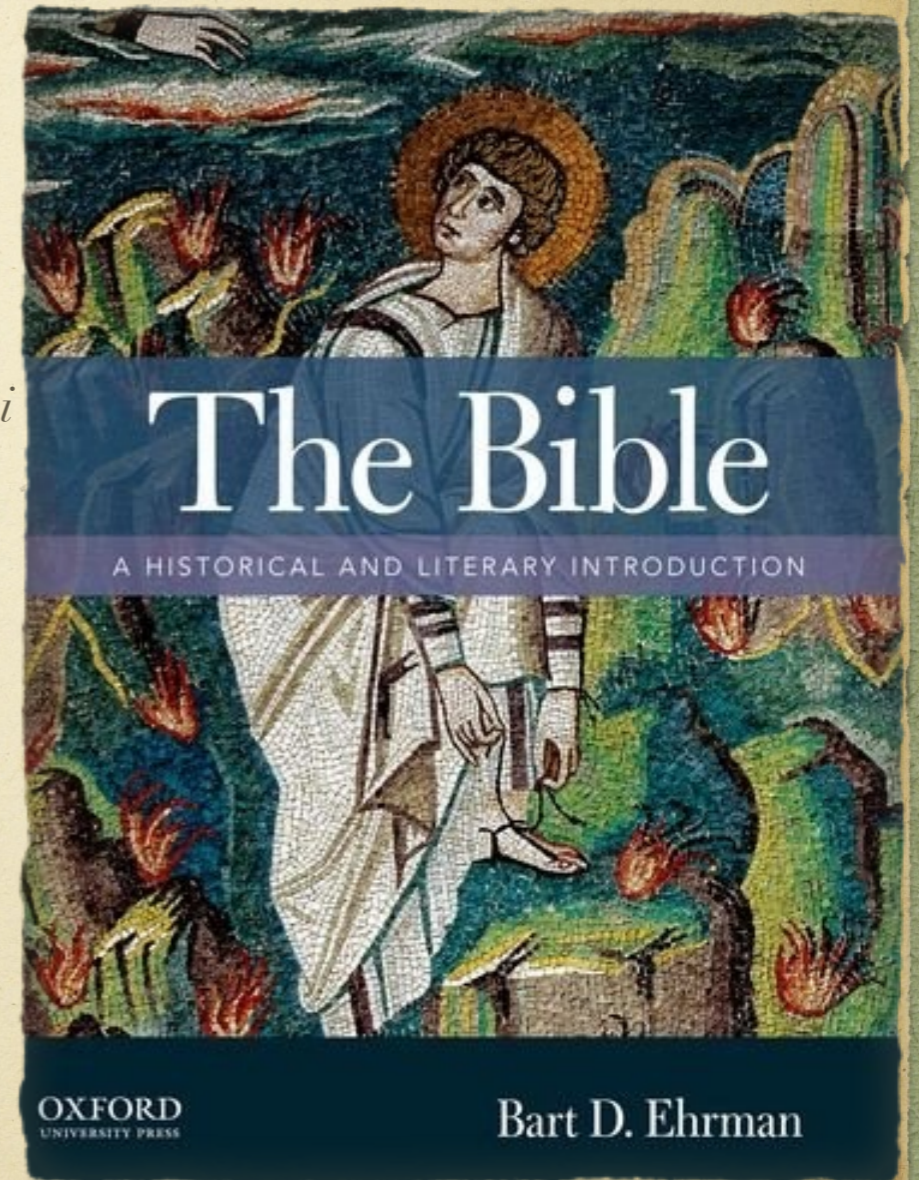
Alternately: Read primary text...*and* annotations
...*or just come to class*

Chapter 5: The Early Israelite Prophets: *Amos, Isaiah of Jerusalem, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk*

Chapter 6: The Historians and Prophets of Exile and Return: *Ezra and Nehemiah, Second Isaiah, Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Third Isaiah, Malachi*

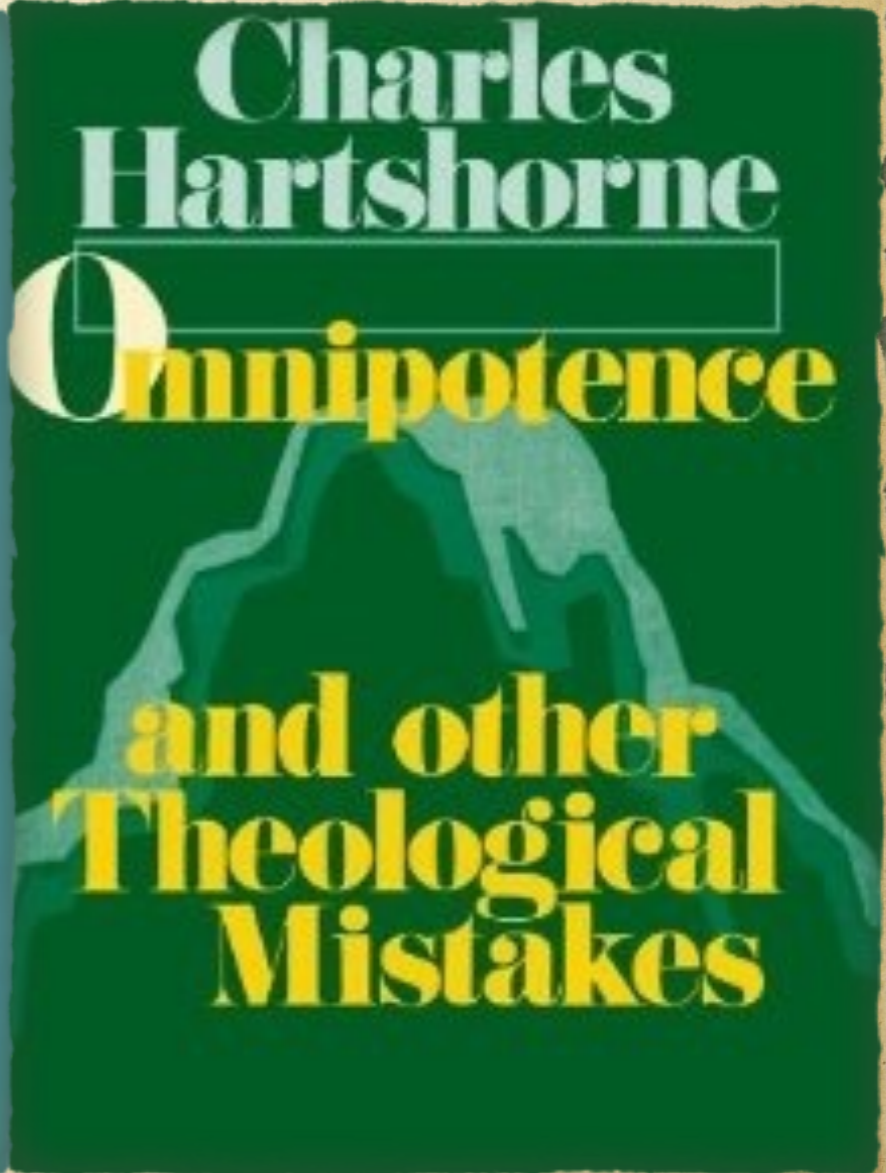
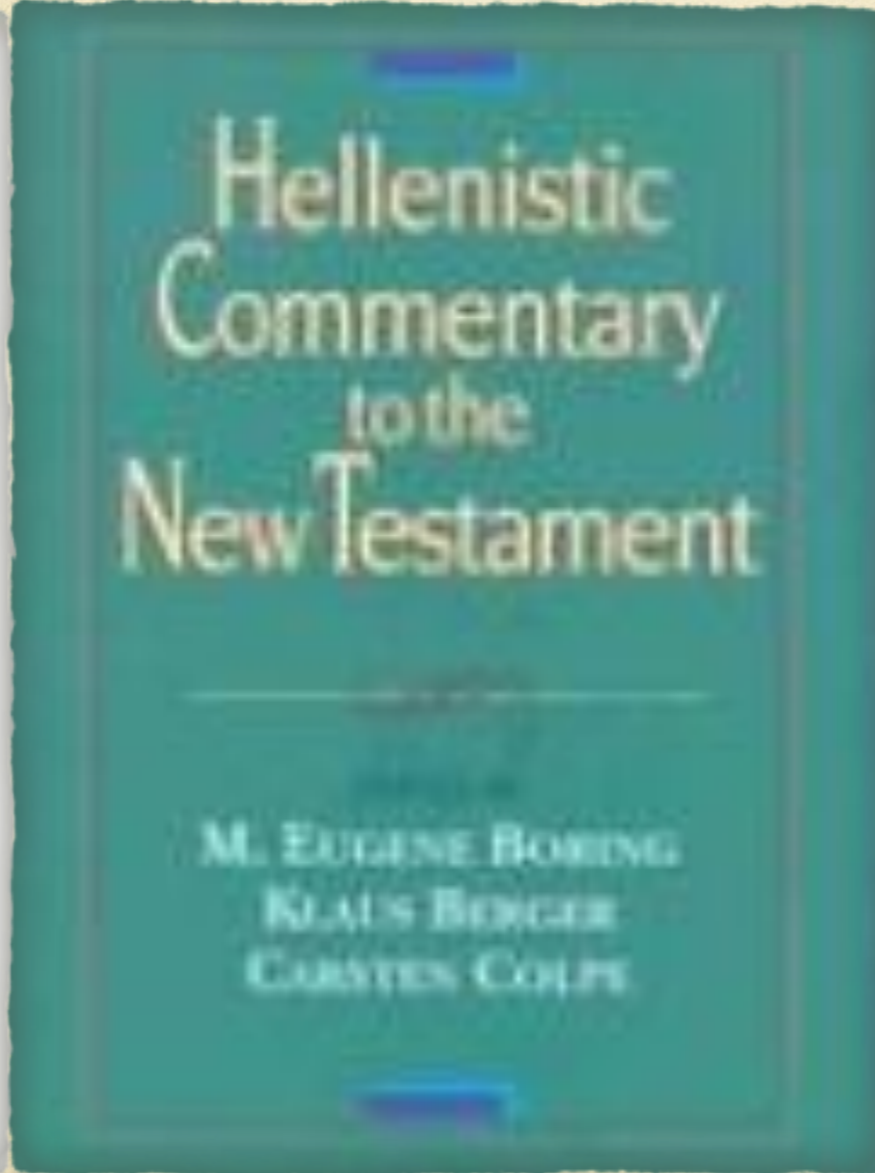
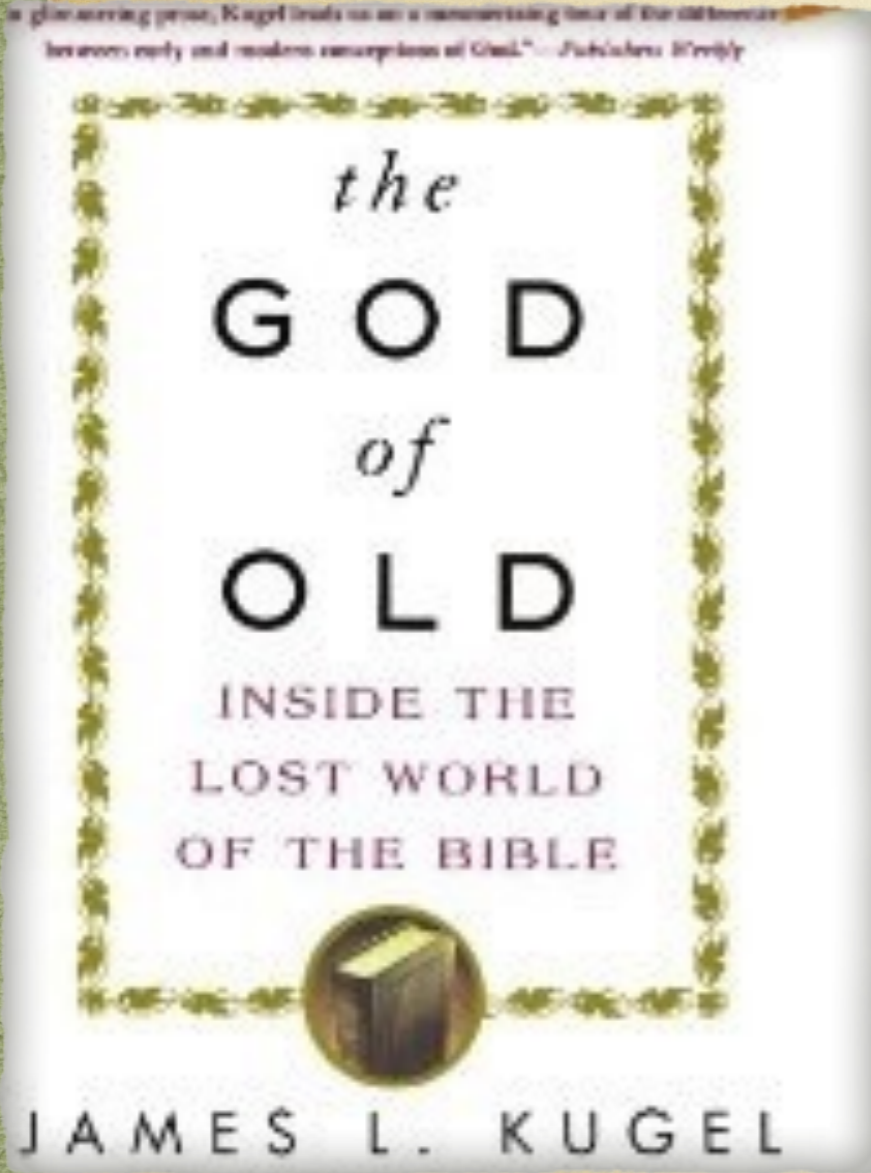
Chapter 7: Poets and Story Tellers of Ancient Israel: Psalms, Lamentations, Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Daniel, 1 and 2 Chronicles

Chapter 8: Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature: Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Selections of AL



Fall 2014

Hellenistic Influence on NT



Lamentations

- Collection of five laments
- Bewailing the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE.
- Perhaps *originally* a sample of liturgies recited on public fast days commemorating that dire event.
- *Become* “the eternal lament for all Jewish catastrophes, past, present, and future.”



Connection with Jeremiah

❧ Jeremiad: “Literary work or speech of bitter lament or righteous prophecy of doom”

❧ Jewish Title in Hebrew: “How!” after its first word.

❧ Author: probably not Jeremiah, but unclear



Temple-Monarchy Ideology shown to be false — or at least old promises in jeopardy

- All those Psalms to Zion
- All those prophetic assurances
- Cause for Lamentation



Acrostics (Lam 1-2)

Composed of 3-line strophes/stanzas

First word of each beginning with one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew "alef-bet" in sequence.

Completeness of lamentation from "A-Z"

								
Tet (T)	Chet (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V/O/U)	He (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Bet (B/V)	Alef (Silent)
								
Samech (S)	Nun (N)	Nun (N)	Mem (M)	Mem (M)	Lamed (L)	Khaf (Kh)	Kaf (K/Kh)	Yod (Y)
								
Tav (T/S)	Shin (Sh/S)	Resh (R)	Qof (Q)	Tzade (Tz)	Tzade (Tz)	Fe (F)	Pe (P/F)	Ayin (Silent)

Lamentations of a Poet (1:1-11)

1 How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How **like a widow she has become** [*“Divine divorce”*], she that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal. 2 She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has no one to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. 3 Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude; she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress. 4 The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to the festivals; all her gates are desolate, her priests groan; her young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter. 5 Her foes have become the masters, her enemies prosper, because the Lord has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away, captives before the foe. 6 From daughter Zion has departed all her majesty. Her princes have become like stags that find no pasture; they fled without strength before the pursuer. 7 Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her affliction and wandering, all the precious things that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was no one to help her, the foe looked on mocking over her downfall. 8 Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans, and turns her face away. 9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; her downfall was appalling, with none to comfort her. "O Lord, look at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!" 10 Enemies have stretched out their hands over all her precious things; she has even seen the nations invade her sanctuary, those whom you forbade to enter your congregation. 11 All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength. Look, O Lord, and see how worthless I have become.

Horrors (2:1-7, 11)

1 How the Lord in his anger has humiliated daughter Zion! He has thrown down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. 2 The Lord has destroyed without mercy all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of daughter Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers. 3 He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn his right hand from them in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around. 4 He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; he has killed all in whom we took pride in the tent of daughter Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire. 5 The Lord has become like an enemy; he has destroyed Israel. He has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds, and multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lamentation. 6 He has broken down his booth like a garden, he has destroyed his tabernacle; the Lord has abolished in Zion festival and sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest. 7 The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary; he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; a clamor was raised in the house of the Lord as on a day of festival...., 11 My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city.

Hope (3:21-24)

21 But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: 22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

Temple-Monarchy Ideology shown to be false — or at least old promises in jeopardy

➤ Act of truthfulness

➤ Unvarnished truth before God

Pray anyway with shaky hope that God hears them

➤ Act of impassioned hope

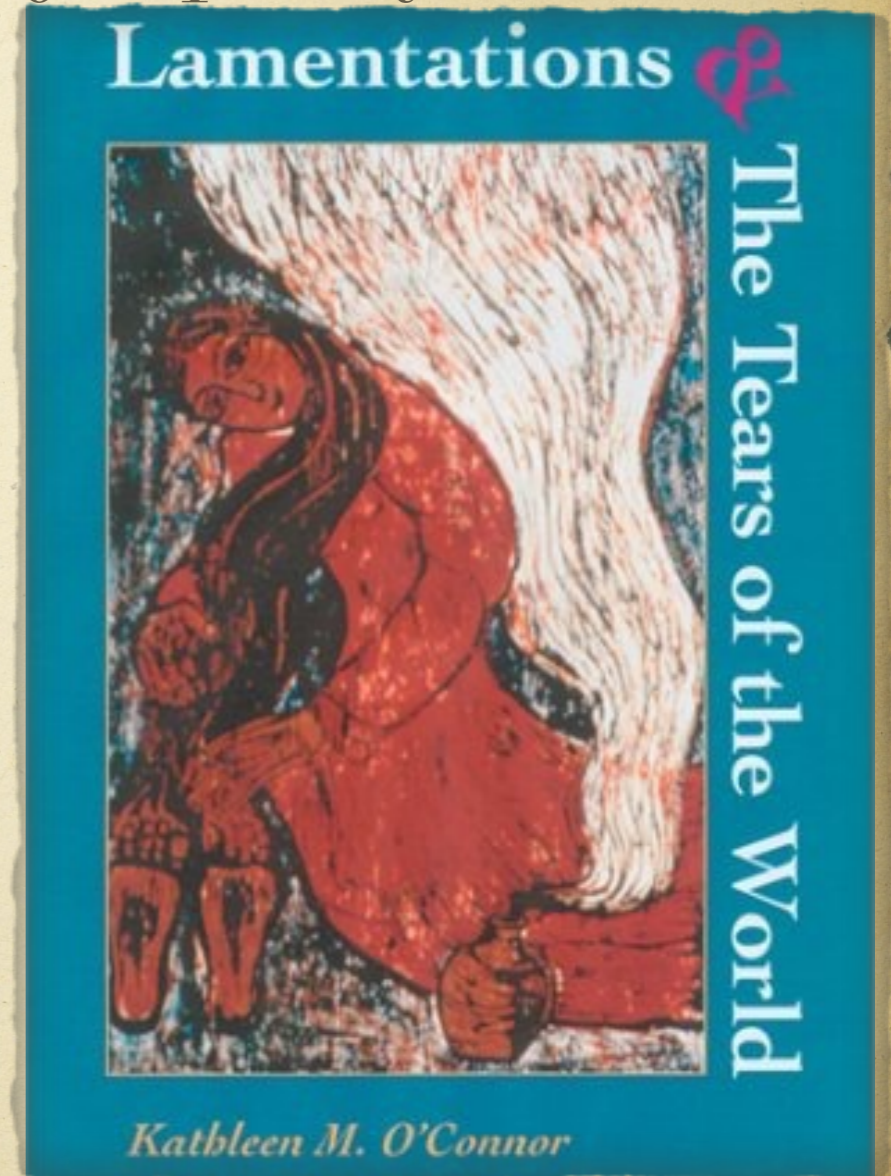
➤ Claims made on God: demands attention, beg for a future

Remain faithful (God may hide, but they stand in plain view)

➤ Wish for Justice

➤ Announce aloud and publicly what is wrong right now

Not to confess sin, but to name injustice, hurt, and anger



2002

Temple-Monarchy Ideology shown to be false — or at least old promises in jeopardy

➤ Political Act

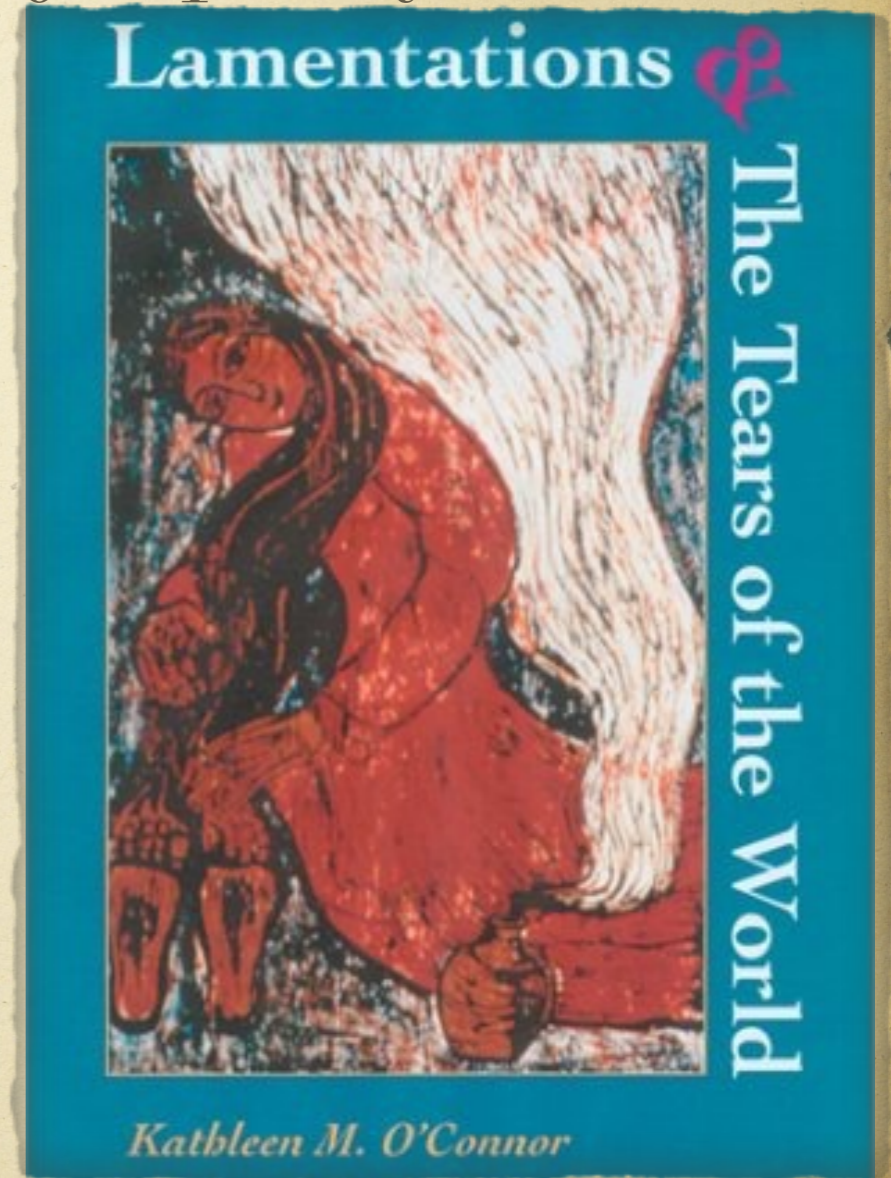
- A sign, a revelation of injury and destruction

➤ Teaching of Resistance

- Defiance: coming to grips with our own despair can unleash blocked passions — versus stoicism

➤ Tears have the power of newness

- Tears are powerful, not weak



2002

Ending (Lam 5)

- **Doxology** (v. 19): “But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations.”
- **Haunting rhetorical questions** (v. 20): “Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken us these many days?”
- **Imperative petition** (v. 21): “Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old”
- **Enigmatic acknowledgment** (v. 22): “unless you have utterly rejected us, and are angry with us beyond measure.”

Esther

- ❧ Esther: jewish orphan who becomes a Persian queen
- ❧ Mordecai – her cousin
- ❧ Haman- plots genocide against Jews



Esther

- Tale of Jewish courage amid the threats and risks of the Persian empire.
- Esther's cunning way in the empire to save the Jews.
- Public theology: maintain distinctiveness amid hegemonic power.
- Life in the Diaspora, where context often hostile to Jewishness, tempting assimilation



Esther 4:11, 16; 5:2

11 "Any man or woman who comes to the king in the inner courtyard without being called is to be put to death. Only the person to whom the king holds out the gold scepter may live. In my case, I haven't been called to come to the king for the past thirty days."

16 Even though it's against the law, I will go to the king; and if I am to die, then die I will.

2 When the king noticed Queen Esther standing in the entry court, he was pleased. The king held out to Esther the gold scepter in his hand, and she came forward and touched the scepter's tip."



Modecai - the quintessential Jew is honored (8:15;10:2-3)

“15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king, wearing royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced..... 2 All the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? 3 For Mordecai the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was powerful among the Jews and popular with his many kindred, for he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his descendants.”



"The Triumph Of Mordecai"
By Pieter Lastman (1583-1633)

Haman – the quintessential enemy of the Jews is hanged on the authority of the Persian king (7:9-10)

“9 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.”



Purim means “lots,” referring to lottery Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

- Boo, hiss, stamp feet and rattle gragers (noisemakers) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service.
- Also eat, drink and be merry.



Esther

- God is no longer an active character.
- In *Exodus*, the people cried out to God, and God rose up to deliver them. In *Esther*, neither Mordecai nor any of the Jews now in peril for their lives call on the Lord in prayer.
- The Jews have become, as it were, God's *ex-wife* now responsible for her own debts, God's *former client* now representing herself, God's *grown-up child* moved out of the house.



Ruth: Canonical Order

- Jewish: part of the Five Scrolls in the “Writings”
- Christian: follows Septuagint in putting Ruth between Judges and Samuel. The book is set in the period of the judges; however, the scholarly consensus is that the story was written much later.
- Tradition Scholarly view: Septuagint order is later development among Hellenized Jews, who rearranged a previously existing Palestinian canon; therefore, Ruth’s placement between Judges and Samuel would be secondary and derivative.
- More recent scholarship: Process more complex. Possible to speculate the book of Ruth was written and intended to be a connector between Judges and Samuel (more than a coda to Judges)

Ruth: Interpretations

- Older scholarship (historical-critical): focused on how Ruth the Moabite (foreigner) was accepted into Israel. Viewed as a challenge against the xenophobic policies of Ezra and Nehemiah —advocating an open and generous Judaism.
- Newer scholarship (literary-rhetorical): Interest now is reading Ruth on its own terms and without respect for its hypothesized context, which we don't know that much about.
- General: vulnerable, outside woman and a man of substance in the community (about socio-economics)
- Feminist: woman acts decisively to create a future for herself in a patriarchal society, where no good future was offered to her.

Scene (Ruth 1:1-5)

“1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. 3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.”

Naomi's husband and sons die, so she has only her daughter-in-law Ruth. Her sons had married (*foreign*) Moabite women, so Ruth is typically despised and rejected by Israelites.

Scene (Ruth 1:1-5)

Elimelech (male) – Naomi (female)

I

Orpah - Chilion (male)
(Moabite woman)

Mahlon (male) – Ruth
(Moabite woman)

Ruth (1:16)

➤ 15 So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die, I will die — there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"



❧ Ruth 3:4-14, "When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." 5 She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do." 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. 7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin." 10 He said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. 12 But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. 13 Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do it. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the Lord lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning." 14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, "It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."

- **Shakah** (*“lie down”*): “sleep” or “sexual intercourse” depending on context
- **Galah** (*“uncover”*): frequently in texts that prohibit incest
- **Regalim** (*“feet” or “lower body”*): common euphemism for the genitals
- **“Threshing Floors”** traditionally associated with sex for hire. (Hosea 9:1, “You have loved a prostitute's pay on all threshing floors.”)
- **Yada’** (*“know”*) frequent euphemism for sexual activity:
- **“Spread your cloak over your servant”** is another phrase with sexual overtones:



➤ Not explicit, but plenty of ambiguous/
playful language.



Ruth 4:9-10 (Success)

9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have acquired from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. 10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses."



Ruth 4:15 (Female Agency)

your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him."



Ruth 4:17

“The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

“Family (and David’s lineage...*and Jesus*) is preserved not by the wives of patriarchs but by an elderly widow Naomi and her non-Israelite daughter-in-law Ruth.”



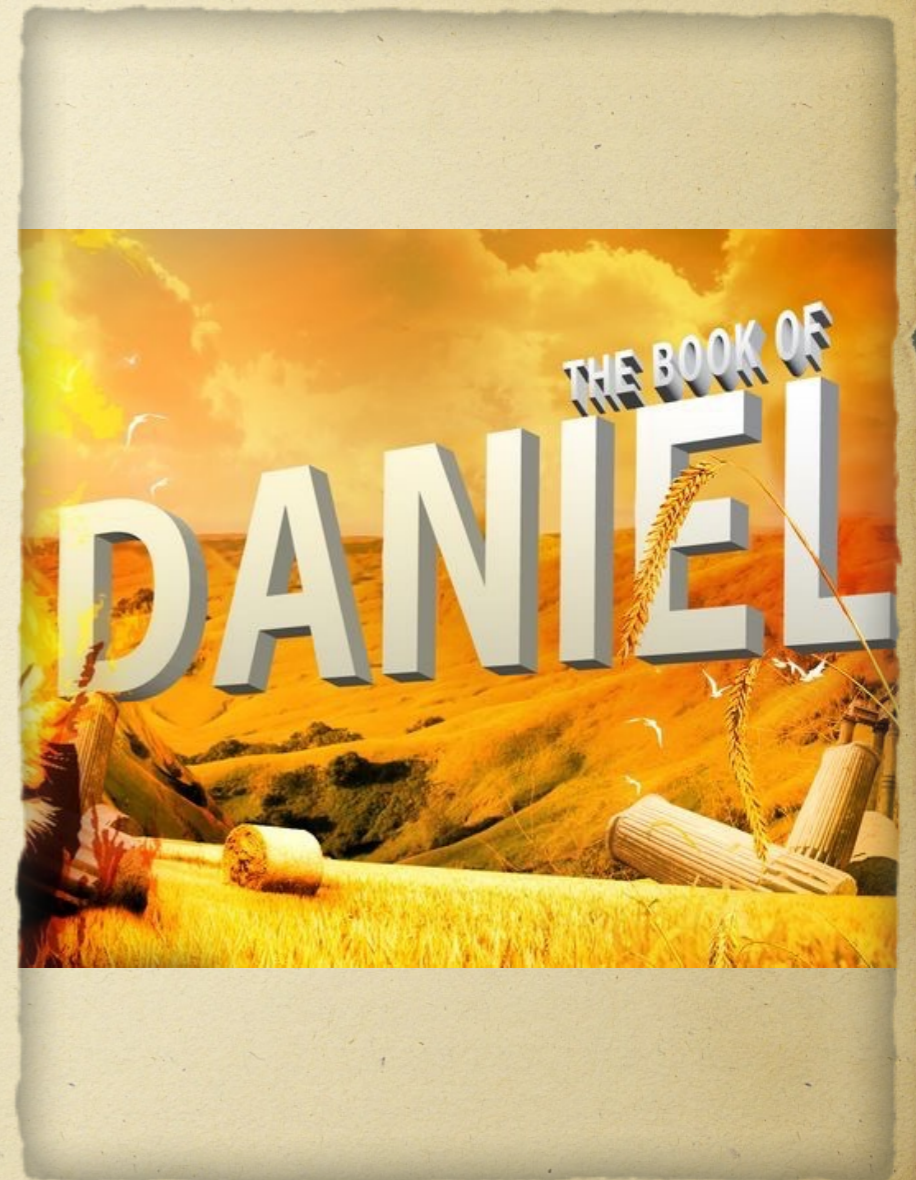
Genealogy (Ruth 4:18-22)

- “18 Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, 19 Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, 20 Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, 21 Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, 22 Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David.”
- Ruth’s ancestry can be traced to an incestuous union between Lot and one of his daughters in Genesis 19
- Boaz is descended from an illicit union between Judah and his Canaanite daughter-in-law in Genesis 38
- David was only a fourth-generation descendent of a Moabite woman. [not to mention that his son Solomon was born from his adulterous and murderous union with Bathsheba—had Uriah killed]
- In the NT, Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus adds to the list of David’s disreputable ancestors by naming Rahab (the harlot from Jericho in Joshua 2 and 6) as the mother of Boaz.
- Ruth, Tamar, and Rehab are mothers of the messianic line of kings.

➤ Name: Dani-EL (“God has judged”)

➤ Christian canonical order - Between the major prophets (Ezekiel) and the book of the 12. [Daniel signals prophetic hope in God’s future]

➤ Jewish “Five Scrolls” (Megillot) - Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther.



Structure:

Chapters 1-6: Six Narratives about Daniel & Friends

Ch. 1 The Food Test

Ch. 2 The King's Dream

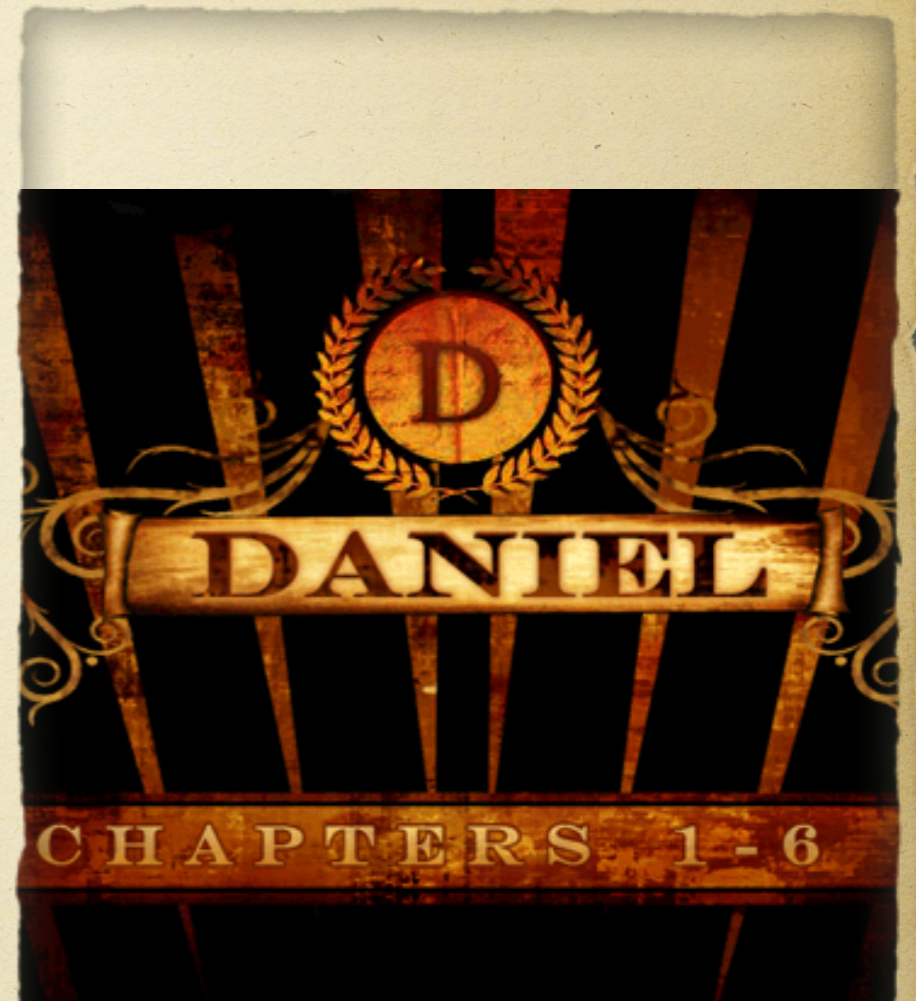
Ch. 3 Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace

Ch. 4 Nebuchadnessar's Madness

Ch. 5 The Writing on the Wall

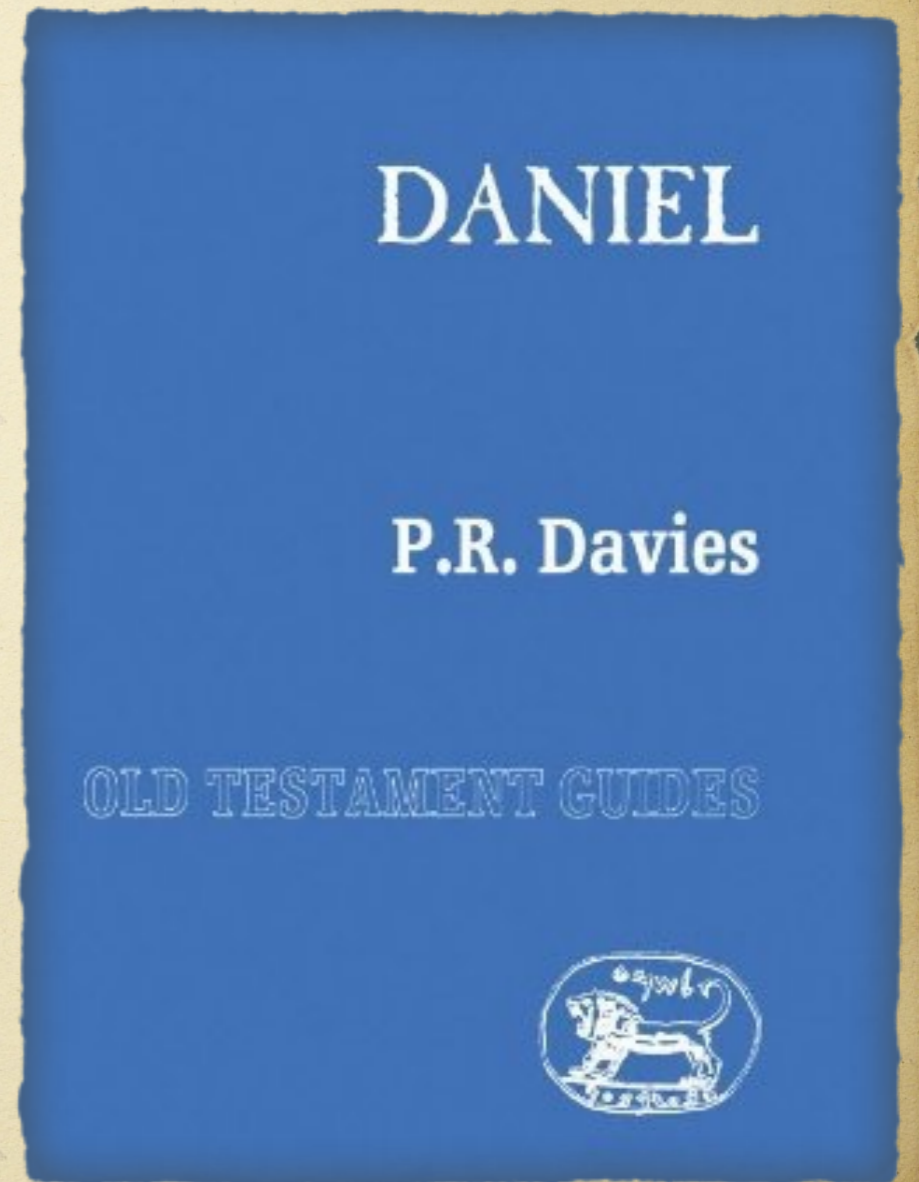
Ch. 6 Daniel in the Lion's Den

Daniel as “representative Jew” for enacting distinctive Jewish identity in presence of indifferent/hostile imperial power



Form Criticism (Daniel 1-6): Interpretation Story

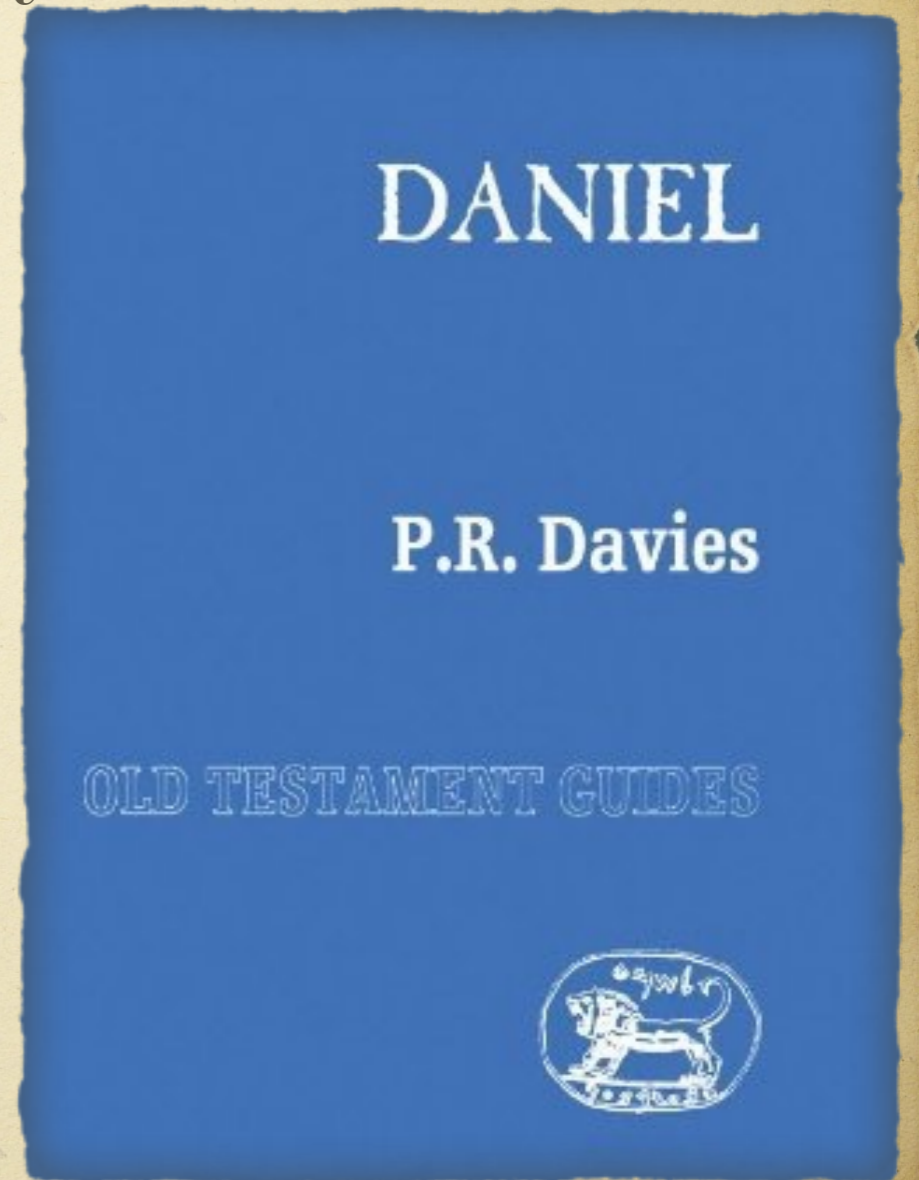
- King has a vision or dream
- Wise men of his court cannot interpret its meaning
- Hero emerges and gives the interpretation
- Hero is rewarded the king learns that the hero's god is most powerful



1998

Form Criticism (Daniel 1-6): Deliverance Story

- King issues an order that commands Jews to worship an idol
- Hero(es) discovered disobeying
- Refuse to comply with orders and are prepared for execution
- Delivered, Rewarded, Enemies punished
- King learns that the hero's god is most powerful



1998

Four Apocalyptic Visions of Daniel (Chapters 7-12)

Ch. 7 Vision of the four beasts

Ch. 8 Vision of the Ram and the She-goat

Ch. 9 Gabriel and the Prophecy of the
Seventy Weeks

Ch. 10-12 Vision of the last days



Genre: Apocalyptic Literature (Chapters 7-12):

➤ Greek: *apokalypsis* — anglicized as apocalypse/apocalyptic. (First word of the book of Revelation is *apokaluyis*)

➤ Etymologically: “unveiling, removing the cover of what has been concealed.”

➤ Genre: revelation of mysteries of the transcendent world or the future destiny of the world.



Characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature (Chapters 7-12):

- Symbolic Language - Beasts and monsters often represent evil powers.
- Particular numbers (such as 4, 7, 12) have special meanings. This symbolic language is not the same as a “code,” in which there is a 1:1 correlation between symbol and meaning. (Biblical symbols are not disposable containers for an ordinary meaning that can be stated in ordinary language.)
- Dualistic – reality is often presented in sharply contrasted opposites (*good/evil, light/dark, true/false, God/Satan*)
- End is Near –



Date and Subject Matter

Chapters	Genre	Date	Ruler	Empire
1-6	Narratives	6 th c.	Nebuchnezzar	Babylon
7-12	Apocalyptic	2 nd c.	Antiochus IV Epiphanies	Seleucid (Greek, “Hellenism”)

Alternating pattern of language

(complex “traditioning” process):

- **Narratives (1-6)** may be rooted as early as the 6th century with reference to Nebuchanezzar.
- **Visions (7-12)** - The philosopher and anti-Christian writer Porphyry (writing in the 3rd Century C.E.), proposed that Daniel 7-12 was written during time Antiochus IV Epiphanies (167-164 BCE), a Greek ruler of Palestine and Syria, known for persecution. He wanted to unify the Seleucid empire using the common culture of Hellenism.
- **Seleucid** refers to the dynasty of Seleucus, a general of Alexander the Great, that ruled Syria and Asia Minor after Alexander's death. Seleucid rule in Palestine was ended by the Maccabees in the 2nd c. BCE.

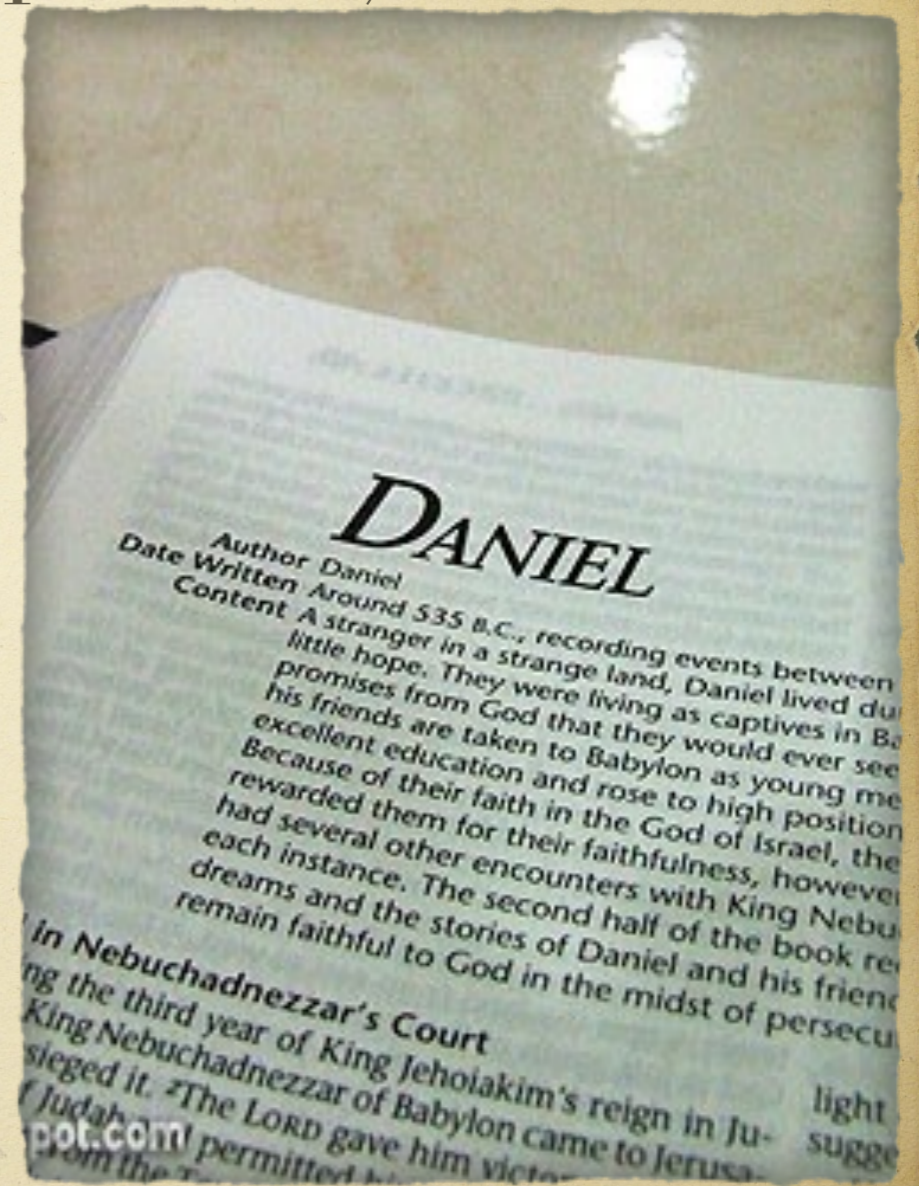
Alternating pattern of language (complex “traditioning” process):

➤ Ch. 1 Hebrew

➤ Chs. 2-7 Aramaic

➤ Chs. 8-12 Hebrew

➤ *(different from 1-6, 7-12 structure)*



The Chronicler's History: *Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles*

➤ Long scholarly assumption: Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah constitute a single book that functions as a “third history” after the (1) Pentateuch and (2) Former Prophets — each a distinctive interpretation and telling of Israel’s history from a particular perspective [*dovetails with Christian order of Chr-Ezr-Neh immediately after DH*].

➤ More recent: Ezra-Nehemiah was only connected to Chronicles in very late traditioning through its placement next to Chronicles in canonization.

➤ Complicated because Chronicles ends (2 Chr 36:22-23) by quoting (with some variation) Ezra 1:1-3a, which has led to much controversy over the unity of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah — but this may be due to the traditioning/editing process.



Ezra-Nehemiah

- Goal: Formation of the late community of Judaism according to particular interpretation of Torah
- Current form: two distinct books
- Long textual tradition (both Heb and Grk): two books are treated as one.

Ezra-Nehemiah

- Ezra: priest with proper pedigree (c. 458 BCE)
- Nehemiah: governor seeking to rebuild, with Persian support, the city of Jerusalem that Nebuchnezzar (*Babylon*) destroyed (c. 444 BCE)
- Both seek to reconstitute Judaism along a particular line of Torah obedience. Leaders are back from exile and want to re-entrench themselves back in power

Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1, 2-4)

[Framed with Darius' decree in 6:1-12]

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared: 2 "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem; 4 and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem."

➤ Framing by two Person decrees indicates the self-understanding of this literature that the restoration by the returnees enjoys Persian imperial support and approval.

Connection to other Post-Exilic Prophets

(Ezra 5:1)

“1 Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them.”

Temple Rebuilding Culminates w/ Passover Celebration (Ezra 6:19-21)

➤ Marks restoration of (legitimate?) worship in Jerusalem. Worship had been happening during the exile, but there was a group of leaders that returned from the exile that had particular ideas about what constituted legitimate worship.

➤ “19 On the fourteenth day of the first month the returned exiles kept the passover. 20 For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they killed the passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves; 21 it was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the pollutions of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel.”

Religious Perspective (Ezra 9:1-4ff): radical reform of sending away Jewish men's "foreign wives"

➤ 1 After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way." 3 When I heard this, I tore my garment and my mantle, and pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat appalled. 4 Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Political Perspective (Ezra 9 // Neh 13)

23 In those days also I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; 24 and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke the language of various peoples. 25 And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. 26 Did not King Solomon of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. 27 Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

Nehemiah

➤ Much of the book is a first-person report by Nehemiah

Sabbath Reforms (Neh 13)

another wave of reforms

“15 In those days I saw in Judah people treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys; and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day; and I warned them at that time against selling food. 16 Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of merchandise and sold them on the sabbath to the people of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17 Then I remonstrated with the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the sabbath day? 18 Did not your ancestors act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring more wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath."

Reading of the Torah by Ezra (Neh 8) another wave of reforms

➤ 1 They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. 2 Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding.... 3 He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.... 8 So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. 9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people,”

Confession of Sin (Neh 9) another wave of reforms

- Work of the priest Ezra—supported by the urban planner Nehemiah—is to create, nurture, and sustain a distinct community of Torah obedience in the midst of a Persian empire that is benign toward and supportive of such a community, so long as it adheres to the larger imperial goals and pays taxes.
- Same negotiations between distinct community and imperial hegemony we saw in Esther and Daniel

Questions raised by Ezz-Neh:
How much Jewishness is enough?

- Champions a “purity system” reading of the Torah that practices restrictiveness, but there is more than one possible reading of the Torah
- Alternative: emphasize the “debt system” that moves against restrictiveness — concerned with justice (Lev 25, year of Jubilee)

Chronicles

- Hebrew title: “The Events of the Days”
- Tanakh: last OT: after DH
- Chronicler (Chr): Conventional name for author

Chronicles: Revision of Israel's memory/history: Judaism in the Persian context

➤ from "Adam" (1 Chr 1): "1 Adam, Seth, Enosh; 2 Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; 3 Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; 4 Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth."

➤ to the brink of the post-exilic restoration in 539 B.C.E. (2 Chr 36:22-23): "22 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: 23 "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up.""

Chr vs. DH (*Source Criticism*): used Monarchal history from Kgs, but not verbatim (omits affair)

2 Sam 11:1-3 1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

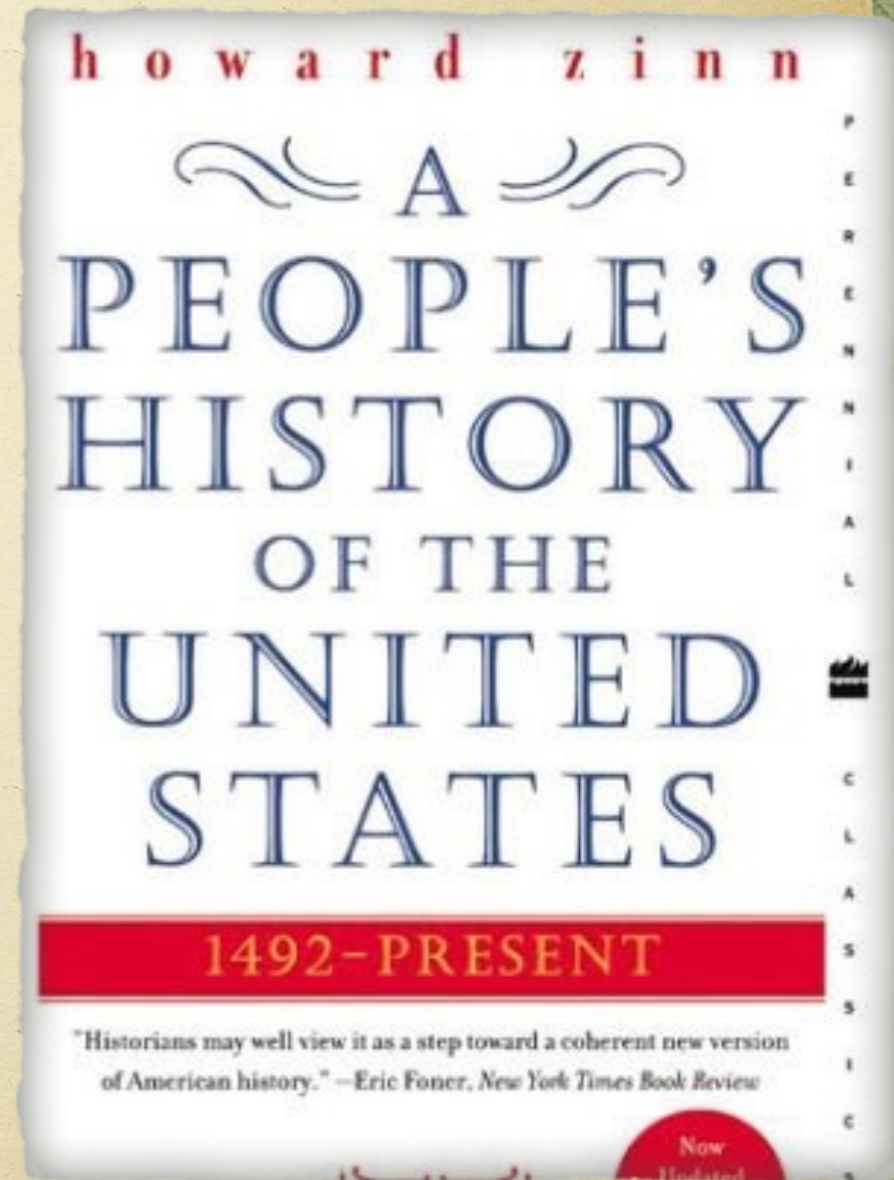
1 Chr 20:1-3 1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army, ravaged the country of the Ammonites, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Joab attacked Rabbah, and overthrew it. 2 David took the crown of Milcom from his head; he found that it weighed a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head. He also brought out the booty of the city, a very great amount. 3 He brought out the people who were in it, and set them to work with saws and iron picks and axes. Thus David did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

Revisionist History?

➤ 1 Chr 22:2-19 gets David involved with the Temple, for which there is no record in Samuel

➤ Scholarly bias: Books of Kings as more or less reliable history and Chronicles as imaginative project that is not historically reliable.

➤ More accurate: Both DH and Chr are interpretive advocacies recounting Israel's memory from a particular perspective.



Genealogy (1 Chr 1-9)

read the annotations, not the text

- Most extended genealogy of the whole Bible
- Ishmael (1 Chr 1:28-34): traces the community through Isaac, but pauses over the lineage of Ishmael (“These are the sons of Ishmael”) that also belongs to the story.

Endings: Both the Tanakh and OT end with futures,
but staged very differently.

➤ **Jewish** (2 Chronicles 36 :22-23)

➤ Focus: land & Torah:

➤ “22 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: 23 "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up."

➤ Last word: “and let him go up” signals that the process of redemption is ongoing. Cyrus has ended the exile—the return signals a note of hope

➤ reader-response: continually returning, rebuilding, looking toward God’s future.

Endings: Both the Tanakh and OT end with futures,
but staged very differently.

➤ **Christian** (Malachi 4:5-6)

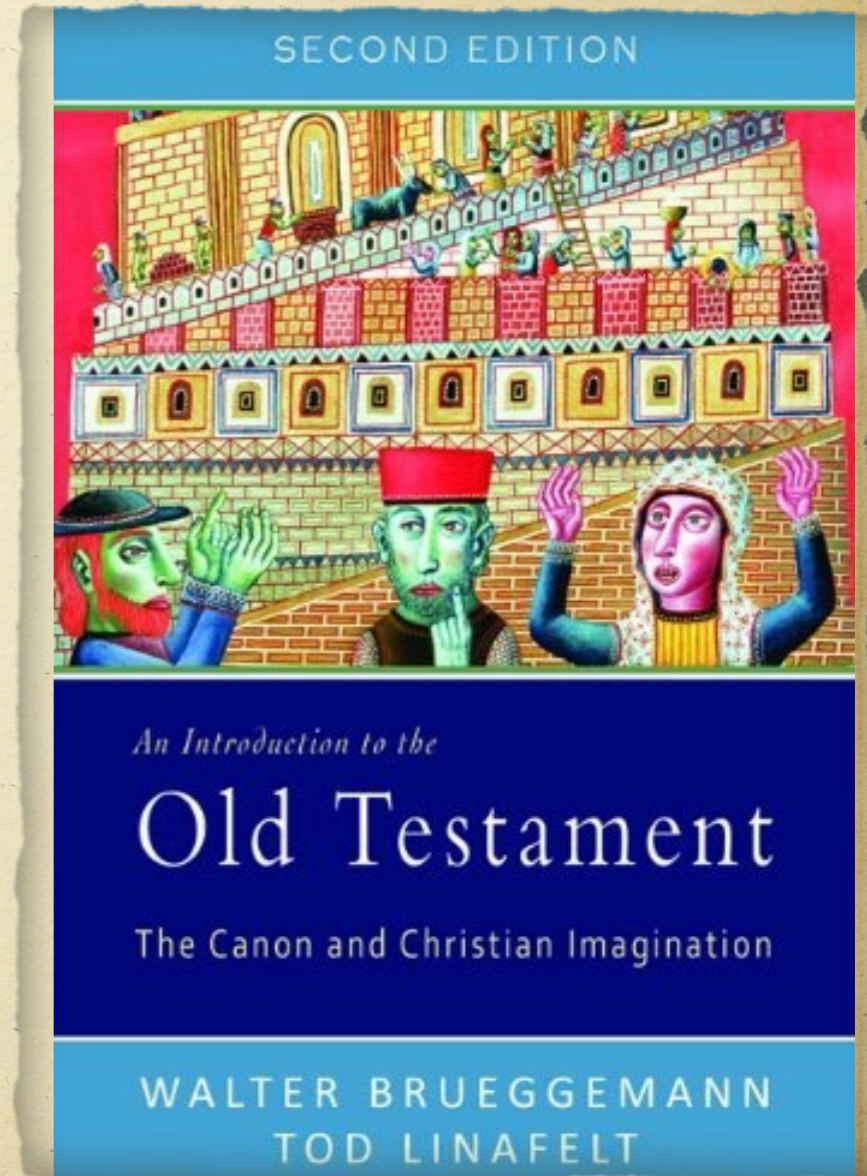
➤ Focus: Messiah for Gentiles and Israel

➤ “5 Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.”

➤ Last word: ending with a threat of curse.

Revisionist History?

- Differences must be honored, but Jews and Christians should read together as long as we are able and for as far as we can
- Both end in anticipation: God may yet do for the “peoples of the book” what we cannot yet imagine.



Upcoming Classes

- Spring 2015: 6-weeks on Jesus, the Gospels, and Acts
- Fall 2015: 6-weeks on Paul & the rest of the NT



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