

Class 5: Epoch's of Redemptive History

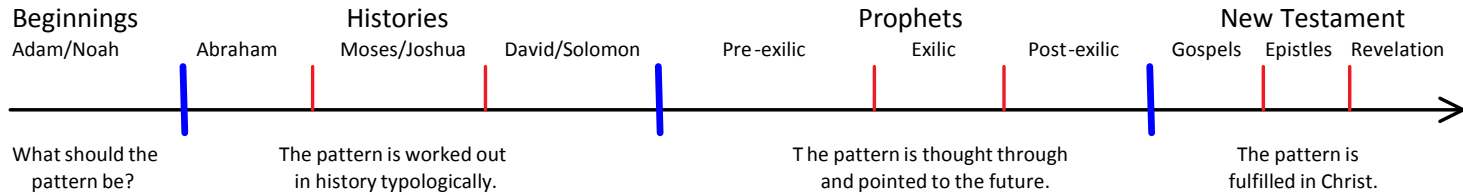
Saturday, February 1, 2014

6:06 PM

- Objectives
 - What are epochs?
 - Why should we understand the Bible in epochal terms?
 - What epochs are there in the Bible?
 - How do individual books fit into the epochal structure?
 - Why is this important?
- Review Kids Objectives
 - What is theology? (Studying God in the Bible)
 - Who is the center of the Bible? (Jesus is the center of the Bible)
 - What is the gospel? (The story of Jesus and how it applies to me)
 - What is a way to remember the gospel? (God, man, Christ, response)
 - What is typology? (A picture in history that points us to Christ)
 - What is an epoch? (A period of history that points us to Christ)
 - What four main epochs are in the Bible? (Beginnings, Histories, Prophecy, Fulfillment)
- Introduction to Epochs
 - What is the theme of this class?
 - What is Biblical Theology?
 - Biblical Theology is the study of the Bible as a whole and seeks to determine how the Bible fits together as a whole based on the Bible's own teaching. The end of Biblical Theology is to see how each individual passage fits into the message of the Bible and therefore to rightly (objective) interpret each passage's meaning to us.
 - What have we covered so far in this class?
 - We talked about Jesus being the center, theme and climax of the Bible - so we know what the story is about
 - We talked about Jesus being seen most clearly in the gospel - so we know what themes we are going to see in the Bible that point us to Jesus
 - We talked about what the Bible is (history, literature, revelation) and how typology helps us respect all three dimensions of the text - so we know how we are going to understand the Bible story
 - So we have done a lot of background to help us in doing Biblical Theology, but we haven't tried to fit the whole story together yet - we haven't done Biblical Theology yet
 - This week we are going to start to put the story together
 - There are several ways to start this and I've debated back and forth between a couple of them
 - We could start with a theme (like kingdom) and then look through the Bible to see this theme
 - As you're going through Goldsworthy it appears that he does this (although really he just assumes my lesson tonight)
 - The reason I'm not going to do this is because it does one of two things
 - It either looks only at big stories in the Bible and skips over big sections of the Bible where the theme isn't so clear
 - Or it takes forever looking at each story in the Bible
 - (or it assumes what I'm going to try to make explicit today)
 - The way I'm going to do it is to show how the Bible splits itself up into sections
 - I want to start putting the whole story of the Bible together by grouping books written at the same time with the same themes together as a unit
 - Once we have broken the text into units we can examine each unit to see how some central theme (like kingdom or redemption or recreation) is expressed and developed in each section
 - So this evening we are going to try to define and relate what I am going to call epochs (there is some debate on this term, but I think it is useful nonetheless)

- What is an epoch?
 - Question: can anyone define the word 'epoch'?
 - An epoch is generally defined as a long, somewhat undefined period of time
 - For this class: An epoch is a period of time where God utilizes one coherent story line to display his redemptive acts and point us to Christ. In Scripture an epoch works out to be a set of historically related books that are both temporally and thematically related to each other that record God's progressive revelation during that period.
 - An epoch is not the same as a dispensation as understood by classical dispensationalists. As understood by dispensationalists, a dispensation is a period of time where God revealed Himself differently and made different requirements of His people. Thus each dispensation is disconnected and somehow distinctly different. An epoch, on the other hand, is understood to be a part of God's progressive, but continuous, revelation. An epoch is not distinctly different from preceding or following epochs but is part of a continuous, progressive whole.
 - Goldsworthy: *It is now clear why the history of redemption is not simply a gradual unfolding of the truths of the Kingdom, a dawning of the light, but rather a series of stages in which the Kingdom, and the way into it are revealed. In each stage all the essential ingredients of the Kingdom are given expression, but each successive stage builds on the former until the full revelation of the gospel is achieved.*
 - Kid's Objective: What is an epoch? (A period of history that points us to Christ)
 - When we look at the simple definition, we can see that our definition of epoch is related to our definition of typology: (A picture in history that points us to Christ)
 - In fact, typology and epochs are closely related to each other, which leads us to our next objective:
- Why are we looking for epochs?
 - Question: why are we looking for epochs?
 - Implication of typology
 - Review definition: Typology is a repetitive pattern in history ordained and recorded by God that teaches an integral truth about God's redemption with each iteration expanding our understanding of the truth until it reaches its fulfillment in Christ. So typology is both continuous (repetitive pattern) and discontinuous (fulfillment/antitype).
 - Review pervasiveness: all Old Testament history is somehow typological and is fulfilled in Christ (Eph 1:10, example Matt 2:15 /Hosea 11:1))
 - If typology is a repetitive pattern, and if all of Old Testament history is somehow typological, then we should expect cycles or epochs in history
 - To define it another way, epochs are merely a term for the greater typological story in which individual types are set, the grand stories themselves are typological and therefore have some repetitive nature
 - New Testament understanding
 - Matthew 1:1 - Abraham, David, Christ
 - Epoch from Abraham to David (verses 2-6)
 - Epoch from David to exile (verses 6-11)
 - Epoch from exile to Christ (verses 12-16)
 - Conclusion: 3 Epochs (verse 17)
 - Old Testament pattern
 - As we read the Old Testament carefully, we can clearly see that there is some epochal structure to it, there are different times when different things are emphasized about God
 - For example, almost every Bible reader in the history of the world has understood the books of the Pentateuch to go together
 - Or again, almost everyone can make a distinction between the prophets in the later history of Israel from the historical narratives in the earlier history of Israel
 - As we continue to read and study the Old Testament, these divisions become clearer and the topics of each epoch become clearer
 - So, we look for epochs for three reasons
 - Our understanding of typology points us to look for them
 - The New Testament has at least some concept of looking at the Old Testament epochally
 - The Old Testament itself has a self-understanding of being epochal in nature

- What epochs are there in the Bible?



- How do the books of the Bible fit into these epochs?

- Epoch 1 - Beginnings
 - Genesis 1-11 - the history of beginning, serves as an introduction epoch to the whole Bible
 - We start with Adam who falls, but there is a promise of redemption (Genesis 1-3). Sin grows (Genesis 4-5) until a second Adam appears who provides redemption for his family from the judgment of God (Genesis 6-8). So the first epoch goes from the first Adam to the second Adam (Noah), the only problem is that this second Adam isn't any better than the first and the outcome is substantially the same (Genesis 9-11).
- Epoch 2 - Histories (Promises and Pictures of the Kingdom)
 - Sub-epoch 1 - Promises of a land and a son (God's People)
 - Genesis 12-50 - promise given to Abraham and passed down to Israel
 - Sub-epoch 2 - Fulfillment of a Land (in God's place)
 - Exodus - God redeems His people and takes them out of a hostile land, makes a covenant with them promising blessing or curses in the land, and provides for His presence to join them in the land
 - Leviticus - God shows what it means to dwell in the presence of a holy God in His land
 - Numbers - God is faithful to bring His people into the land despite their unfaithfulness
 - Deuteronomy - The Covenant is central to living in the land
 - Joshua - God fulfills the promise of land
 - Sub-epoch 3 - Fulfillment of a Son (under God's rule)
 - Judges - The land is not enough, without a king Israel does whatever she wants instead of live according to the covenant
 - Ruth - Set against the backdrop of Judges, the blessings of the king are foreshadowed and the genealogy of the king is provided
 - I-II Samuel - God's king is anointed and a covenant of offspring is made
 - I Kings - The covenant of offspring is fulfilled and a temple, joining God's people, God's place and God's rule is built
 - II Kings - The king was not enough, something better needs to happen, a line of prophets is started
- Epoch 3 - Prophets (Eschatological Recapitulation of the Kingdom)
 - The prophets see the imminent or recent destruction of the people of God and they look back at history and point toward the future calling us to see that there is a better fulfillment of what has happened in the past
 - New Captivity - Jeremiah 15:1-2
 - New Exodus - Isaiah 51:9-11, Isaiah 52:3-12
 - New Covenant - Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:25-28
 - New Nation (People of God) - Servant Song replacement (Isaiah 42), Isaiah 10:20-22, Jeremiah 23:3
 - New Creation (Place of God) - Isaiah 65:17-25, Ezekiel 36:35
 - New Davidic King (Rule of God) - Isaiah 11:1, Ezekiel 34:23-24, Jeremiah 23:5
 - New Temple (Presence of God) - Ezekiel 40-47, Zechariah 6:12-15
 - Sub-epoch 1 - Pre-exilic Prophets
 - Amos, Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah
 - Sub-epoch 2 - Exilic Prophets
 - Lamentations, Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Esther
 - Sub-epoch 3
 - I-II Chronicles, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi, Nehemiah

- Epoch 4 - Christ (Fulfillment of the Kingdom)
 - Sub-epoch 1 - Gospels/Acts
 - Matthew - Acts
 - Sub-epoch 2 - Epistles
 - Romans - Jude
 - Sub-epoch 3 - Revelation
 - Revelation
- Why is this important?
 - This isn't just some interesting, academic exercise - it is central to understanding how to interpret and apply the Old Testament to ourselves and it is central to understanding what I call 'the less clear' parts of the Old Testament
 - This is important because it means that we can't take any Old Testament story on its own, each small story is part of a bigger story and gains meaning based on its relationship to the larger story
 - Also, it means that each story should be understood in light of the development of the story through the different stages or epochs of revelation
 - So, Goldsworthy gives three rules for interpretation of Scriptural passages in the Old Testament:
 1. *Identify the way the text functions in the wider context of the kingdom stratum in which it occurs*
(In other words, we need to understand each individual story (e.g. the Mosaic Covenant) against the backdrop and in relation to the larger story (the fulfillment of the promise of land) and allow the larger story to give meaning to the smaller story and the smaller story to inform the meaning of the larger story)
 2. *Proceed to the same point in each succeeding stratum until the final reality in the gospel is reached*
(In other words, we need to then look into the other epochs to help us understand our story well and see how the themes of this story are developed through progressive revelation, e.g. when studying the Mosaic Covenant we should look back to the Abrahamic Covenant and the Noahic Covenant and look forward to the Davidic Covenant and the prophetic New Covenant to help us understand the nature of God's covenant and how it is the center of God's purposes)
 3. *Show how the gospel reality interprets the meaning of the text, at the same time as showing how the gospel reality is illuminated by the text*
(In other words, we need to continue study each individual story in relationship to its epoch and other epochs until we figure out how it is fulfilled in the gospel allowing the story to be interpreted by the gospel and allowing the story to illuminate the gospel)
 - So, epochs are useful and important because they help us define what sections of the Bible we need to relate individual stories to and help us understand the bigger themes that are progressing in Scripture so we don't 'miss the forest because of the number of trees'
 - We would all agree that each word in the Bible has been recorded for a reason, it is not in the Bible merely because it is true or an accurate record of history but it is intentionally recorded as a part of God's revelation
 - But when we are reading through Leviticus or II Kings or Obadiah it is easy to be distracted by so many details and/or lack of direct relevance to us that we might implicitly act like these stories don't have meaning for me - we lose sight of the forest for the trees
 - But, when we keep this epochal structure in mind, it helps us understand what the larger purpose of Leviticus or II Kings or Obadiah is and therefore to understand even the confusing parts in a better way - we define the forest that we are looking at so we understand where these trees fit in
 - And it allows us to find the fulfillment of these hard to study passages in Christ in ways that would otherwise be relatively challenging