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Reading Isra'el's History Books

The Bible's historical books are not primarily meant to present a history of **Isra'el**. In other words, they are not historical just for history's sake. Rather, they are meant to "become part of the continuing saga of **God's** work in the world." The byline of my commentaries is "where life and the Bible meet." Consequently, we need to become part of the story, and to do that, we need to keep in mind **three guidelines** before us as we proceed through **the Life of David**.

1. The historical books illustrate biblical truths explained more directly elsewhere in Scripture. The significance of the story needs to be explained in simple language so that the reader can understand. On the one hand, the life of **David** presents us with some of the most compelling episodes of the Bible, that we can forget the "so what" of the story. On the other hand, the theological significance of individual episodes may be explained somewhere else in the Scriptures, or not at all, leaving us hanging. Therefore, we need to be directed to those other scriptures that can give us the whole picture.

2. Historical books have three levels of interpretation: universal, national and individual. The universal level refers to the progressive revelation of **God's** Word. It starts **in the beginning (Genesis 1:1)** and ends with: **Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen (Revelation 22:20-21).** You cannot understand the micro level of Scripture if you don't understand the macro level. This is what the bible calls **the whole purpose of God (Acts 20:27 NASB). The national level** has to do with story of **ADONAI's** redemptive work in **Isra'el**. It begins with the call of **Abram** (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Dq – Terah Became the Father of Abram, Nahor and Haran**) and ends with the salvation of all **Isra'el** at the end of the Great Tribulation (see the commentary on **Revelation Ex – The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**). **The individual level** of interpretation consists of thousands of episodes that comprise the other two levels. Each individual narrative in the TaNaKh contributes to the national level of interpretation, which makes its own contribution to the universal level.

3. The Bible has a relevant message for every people group, in every place

and culture of every time period of the world. Grasping this gives us a little insight into why some things are left unanswered. Creation, for example, is presented in a way that is meaningful to an aboriginal bushman who looks up at the stars and wonders where they came from, as well as to a scientist who sees in the archaeological record distinct periods of time and the astronomer whose knowledge of deep space convinces him of design, not randomness. The basic story of creation is relevant to all cultures.[13]

Another example: the Word of **God** tells us that **God** designed marriage to be a picture of **Christ** and the Church, but doesn't spell out how we are to select a mate (other than specifying that we should be equally yoked). Bible heroes had arranged marriages (Isaac and Rebekah), women were occasionally assertive (Ruth!), and some appear as a partnership (Priscilla and Aquila). Marriage is honorable, but we aren't told how to make it happen – so this teaching can be applied equally in all cultures.

Scripture also contains an answer to a supra-cultural mystery: evil and destruction. In all societies, we see so much potential alongside so much self-destruction. The Mayans with their calendars more advanced than ours practiced human sacrifice. Brilliant minds can still be evil minds. Destructive forces seem to be at work even in our plants as anyone who has seen a blighted crop can attest! The specifics vary, but the fact remains: This world is not perfect, even though it was created as good. What happened? Without a theological degree we can easily grasp the message of **Genesis 3**: man was tempted and sinned, and the result was death. Man's work became challenging; obstacles were in the way from that point on. Simple fact: Blight wasn't in the garden of Eden, but it was outside where they were cast away. And Adam and Eve carried with them the blight of sin.

So, this side of the cross, what are we to do? As Scripture unfolds, **Genesis 1-11** spell out the problem but the solution is presented in **Genesis 12:1-3** – Abram is chosen and told to go and allow **God** to bless other people through him. Rather than sit with the problem surrounding him, Abram will become part of the solution. As the story unfolds, we see **God** narrow the choice to a people through whom a **Redeemer** will come. Promises abound that this **Redeemer** will make all things right – including a creation that groans to be set free **(Romans 8)**. But the message is equally clear that, like Abram, we are called to be part of the solution.

Making sure that all people know the real story – not the false one that was carried throughout the world and led to false belief systems, but the true story of **God's**

original plan and **the Redeemer He** sent to restore the world to that purpose – is sometimes called “missions”. But because of the priorities given in Scripture and the example of **Christ**, we know that while **God** cares about the soul, **He** doesn’t ignore the needs of the body. So when we go out to meet those temporal needs, we call it “development” or, if the need is more immediate to a crisis, “relief”.

It’s not enough to say that “the Church of **God** has a mission in the world.” Rather, “the **God** of mission has a **Church** in the world.” **He** has a purpose to restore all things to **Himself**, and we are part of it. Wherever we are, we are called to be involved in **the LORD’s** mission to the world.[14]