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OT 625 Historical Books of the Old Testament

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I. General Description

This course seeks to strengthen the student in the "Inductive method" of biblical study, and to direct this interpretive approach to the Historical Books of the Old Testament traditionally known as the "Former Prophets" namely Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, with special emphasis placed on Joshua and Judges.

II. Course Objectives

A. Methodology. The emphasis will be upon the observation and interpretations of books as wholes. By the end of the course, the student should be able to do the following:

1. As regards observation:
   a. Survey books as wholes, including:
      (1) Identifying the general materials of the book (biographical, ideological, historical, etc.) and the specific materials, giving a brief title to each chapter whereby the contents of the chapter may be recalled by association;
      (2) Locating the major units and sub-units in the book and identifying the main structural relationships operative between these units (MBS, pp. 49-55);
      (3) Asking a few interpretive questions based upon each major structural law observed;
      (4) Identifying the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole;
      (5) Locating data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, occasion for writing, recipients, etc.;
      (6) Noting other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.
   b. Survey of individual chapters/segments, including:
      (1) Giving a brief title to each paragraph of the segment whereby its contents may be recalled by association;
      (2) Locating the major groupings of paragraphs (units) within the segment and the main structural relationships operative between these units;
      (3) Asking a few interpretive questions relating to each major structural relationship observed;
      (4) Identifying the key verses of strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole;
      (5) Identifying the literary form(s) employed in the segment (MBS, pp. 68-71).
   c. Observe the details of individual paragraphs and verses, including:
      (1) Noting the important and/or difficult terms, sentence structure, and the relations between sentences and groups of sentences (MBS, pp. 39-49);
      (2) Asking detailed interpretive questions based on these observations.

2. As regards interpretation:
   a. Answer the most significant questions raised in the observation of paragraphs and verses, including:
      (1) Identifying the most significant questions asked, based upon importance, difficulty, and interest;
      (2) Noting the types of evidence available for answering each interpretive question (MBS, pp. 105-66), and employing this evidence to answer each question selected.
b. Integrate the answers to the questions in a progressive fashion so as to synthesize first the paragraph, then the chapter/segment, and ultimately the book as a whole. This synthesis involves, inter alia, the answering of the questions raised during the surveys of segments and of books.

3. As regards evaluation and application: Find the truths or principles which are transcultural, and relate them to appropriate contemporary situations.

4. As regards correlation: Relate the theology of the book to the teaching of other biblical materials by the same author, to the Old Testament as a whole (or, with New Testament books, to the New Testament as a whole), and finally to the Bible as a whole, thus moving toward a biblical theology.

B. Content. The student should be able to do the following:
1. Think through the contents of each book of this course without recourse to the printed text;
2. Identify significant passages in the Historical Books and interpret them contextually;
3. Demonstrate the importance of a sound methodology for interpretation, including specific examples from the Historical Books.
4. Describe thoroughly the meaning and development of major themes in the Historical Books, citing individual passages and other specific data to support conclusions;
5. Discuss the historical and religious background of the Historical Books, demonstrating a general knowledge of critical problems regarding the Historical Books and an ability to use this data in the interpretation of the Historical Books.

C. Attitude. The student should:
1. Appreciate the value of sound methodology for the interpretation of the biblical materials, resulting in a desire to apply the inductive method to other biblical books;
2. Desire to make the Historical Books the object of intensive and creative study throughout life;
3. Intend to employ seriously the Historical Books in preaching and teaching within the context of the church.

III. Course Texts

A. Required Texts:
Revised Standard Version of the Bible or New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
Biblical Resources for Ministry by David R. Bauer

B. Collateral Texts:
Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard Childs
Old Testament Introduction, by Werner H. Schmidt

IV. Course Requirements

A. The completion of the following lessons in writing, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. All lessons are to be handed in at the end of the class period on the day designated. No late papers will be accepted save in cases in which permission is granted by the instructor based on emergency. The first several lessons are included in this syllabus, and further lessons will be distributed later.

B. Punctual attendance at all class sessions. Because of the importance of class attendance, and because of government regulations regarding student loans, a record of attendance will be taken at each class session. Absence at more than two class sessions will result in final grade penalty, and absence at more than four class sessions will result in loss of credit for the course. Exceptions may be granted based on emergency, in consultation with the instructor.

C. A careful reading of the assigned portions of the required and collateral texts.

D. Viewing of videotapes dealing with a review of method for those students who have not previously taken the second IBS course.
V. **Course Evaluation** is based on lessons. All lessons will be read by the instructor, but about one-half of the lessons will be graded, and all will count equally toward the student's grade.

VI. **Select Bibliography**

In addition to general Introduction and Theologies of the Old Testament, the following studies may prove helpful:


The Lessons: These are the initial lessons, to be supplemented

**Lesson 1.** Survey of Books as Wholes. The Book of Joshua. (Due: Feb. 15)
Read the entire book through at one sitting several times.
1. Identify the general specific materials of the book, giving a brief title to each chapter.
2. Locate the main units and sub-units in the book, and identify the major structural relationships operative in the book as a whole.
3. Ask a few interpretive questions regarding each major structural relationship observed.
4. Identify the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole. Give reasons for each selection in terms of structural significance.
5. Note data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, recipients, unity of the book, etc.
6. Note other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.

**Lesson 2.** Survey of Segments as Wholes. Joshua 1:1-18 (Due: Feb. 20)
Survey Joshua 1:1-18, following these steps:
1. Give a brief title to each paragraph whereby its contents may be recalled by association.
2. Locate the main units and sub-units within the segment as a whole, and the major structural relationships operative in the segment as a whole.
3. Ask a few interpretive questions based on each major structural relationship observed.
4. Identify the key verses or strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole.
5. Identify the literary form(s) employed in the segment.
6. Note other major impressions relating to the segment as a whole.

**Lesson 3.** Detailed Observation. Joshua 1:5-7. (Due: Feb. 22)
1. Examine Joshua 1:5-7 in terms of a detailed observation. Do independent study only. Use MBS, pp. 31-36, 40-49, 72-79 as a guide. Ask interpretive questions relating to each observation made.
   If you can, make use of the Hebrew. See handout on detailed observation.
2. Identify the two or three most significant questions raised.

**Lesson 4.** Interpretation. Joshua 1:5-7. (Due: Feb. 27)
Use the exegetical determinants outlined in MBS, pp. 135-65, to interpret Joshua 1:5-7. Interpret the passage by selecting two or three of the most important questions raised in your detailed observation of the passage and by employing the exegetical determinants to answer these questions. See handout on interpretation, and keep the following suggestions in mind:
1. Attempt to determine which exegetical determinants are relevant to the question being answered.
2. Begin with the most important determinants, and try to bring their evidence to bear on the interpretive question being answered.
3. Using inferential reasoning, indicate the possible conclusion or conclusions to which each piece of evidence points. These conclusions, or inferences, should point toward possible answers to the interpretive question. At the close of study, list the various pieces of evidence; if more than one is possible, indicate the data supporting each possibility. If evidence is conclusive, indicate your conclusion.
4. Make periodical summaries of your findings.

**Lesson 5.** Application: Joshua 1 (Due: Mar. 1)
1. Listen to the sermon by the professor that is on reserve
2. Identify as many ways as possible that the sermon employs the fruits of an inductive study of this unit
3. What assumptions seem to govern the application of the scripture to life, as seen in the sermon. What risks are evident?