

St Mary-the-Virgin, Kenton- Lent Course 2010:
Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets
Session 1: Overview and the Pentateuch

The Point of this Course

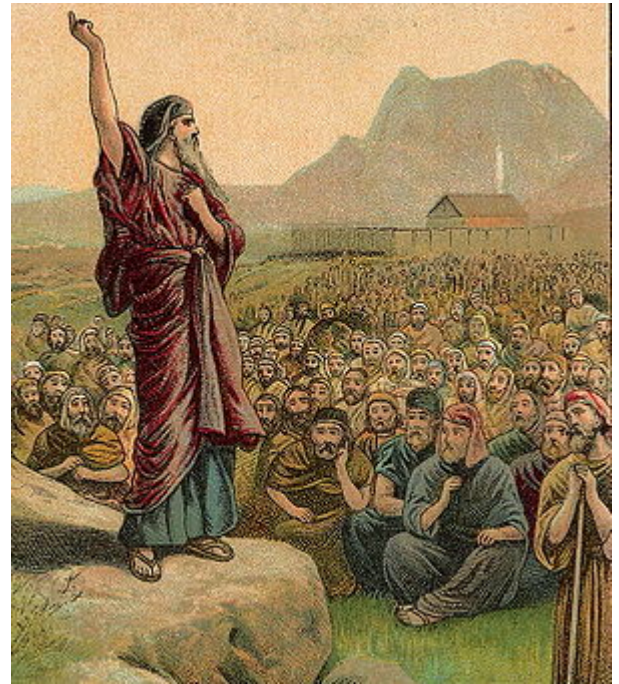
- To increase our understanding of the composition and history of the Old Testament (OT) and its fundamental importance to the New Testament (NT)
- **Why?** Because it is important for us to be able to counter ideas inside and outside the Christian community that the God of the OT is a different angry vengeful god than the good and kind God of the NT – for example in the way the morality of the OT is portrayed as irrelevant or even barbaric

OVERVIEW

- *See accompanying sheet* – The OT makes up the greater part of the Bible in terms of volume (79%) and covers a much greater span of **Salvation History** (1,200 years and longer, depending on age of Creation) than does the NT (50–100 years)
- Diverse collection of writings for different purposes, from different contexts and different times – all displaying together how God Reveals Himself to His people and setting the scene by prophecy and prefigurement for the coming of the Messiah
- Prefigurement = an ‘echo’ in the past of something to happen in the future – eg, Genesis 22, the ‘sacrifice’ of Isaac – a much loved only son is offered in sacrifice (albeit one that doesn’t take place), on wood that he has carried himself to the place of sacrifice – the OT is *full* of prefigurements of Christ
- How we get the OT is not straightforward
 - The OT ≠ the Hebrew Bible (**Tanakh** or **Masoretic Text**). They differ in number and order of books (eg, the *Tanakh* ends with 2 Chronicles; 1&2 Maccabees are absent from *Tanakh* and protestant OT)
 - Nearly all started off in Hebrew, with some Aramaic and even some in Greek
 - Translation of OT into Greek done by 70 scholars producing *Sepтуагинт* (‘LXX’) between 3rd and 1st Centuries BC in Alexandria
 - Christian Canon decided on AD350 by Council of Jerusalem – OT inc *Deuterocanonical* books
 - A number of disputed books are referred to as *Apocrypha* (‘hidden’ – implies protestant disapproval because Luther left them out) or *Deuterocanonical* (not part of the Hebrew Bible but nevertheless good to be read)
 - Latin text that forms basis of OT from St Jerome’s *Vulgate* translated from Hebrew rather than Greek – producing for example different Psalm and Commandment numberings held to by Catholics / Lutherans vs. non-Lutheran protestants / Orthodox
- Some Christians have rejected the OT – eg, **Marcion** (2nd Century) – expelled from the Church for heresy. Some modern scholars want to downplay the OT – one has suggested it should be printed only as an optional appendix to the NT!

THE PENTATEUCH

- The first five books of the OT (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) – aka **The Torah / The Law / The Five Books of Moses – the principal sacred text of Judaism** (and present in the Qur’an in a ‘corrected’ form, plus some others)



- Traditionally written by Moses – modern scholarship sees the hands of many writers in different traditions across the period to which it relates (1,200BC – 500BC)
- **Genesis (*Bereshith* / ‘Beginnings’)**
 - **God’s Revelation of Himself to His people**
 - Primeval history & the stories of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac & Jacob (+ Joseph, providing the link to Egypt and the book of Exodus))
 - The Religion of the Patriarchs (God = El / Elohim)
 - **Theme of Covenant** – a very specific ‘contract’ between God and His people. (Promise to Noah never to flood the world again. Promise to Abraham that his descendents would be as many as the stars ... in return for faithfulness and obedience) Eucharistic Prayer IV – ‘Again and again you offered a covenant to man, and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation.’
 - References / parallels in the NT
 - Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1 – the Divinity and existence before time of Christ
 - Genesis 6–9 – the Flood – purification of sin by water – Baptism
 - Genesis 14:7 – Melchizedek the priest-king offers bread and wine in thanksgiving – the Eucharist – Hebrews 7, Eucharistic Prayer I
 - Genesis 18:1 – ‘The LORD’ appears to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre. Abraham looks up and sees three men standing near to him – The Trinity
- **Exodus (*Shemot* / ‘Names’)**
 - **God’s relationship with His people – always initiated by Him**
 - Bondage in Egypt
 - Moses – ‘let my people go’; the Plagues and the First Passover
 - Escape and journey through wilderness to Sinai

- 600,000 men plus entourage
- Red Sea and then desert
- Israelites complain – God provides water and manna
- Sinai – the mountain of God and the 10 commandments, the Golden Calf
- References / parallels in the NT
 - Exodus 16 – manna in the desert vs. John 6 ‘Bread of Life’ – it was not Moses who gave your ancestors bread from heaven, but God
 - Exodus 2:13 (Moses) & Acts 7:26 (St Stephen) interrupt fighting between two Hebrews and ask why they are fighting
 - Moses goes up the mountain to commune with God and receive the Law – the Sermon on the Mount, the Transfiguration
- **Leviticus (*Vayikra* / ‘he called’)**
 - of the Levites – ie, the priests
 - a book governing laws and rituals that relate to God’s relationship to His people – especially in connexion with dietary and sexual matters
 - Chapters 1–16: **Priestly Code** re sacrifice &c – including the calendar and festivals
 - Chapters 17–26: **Holiness Code** re morality – including incest, homosexual practice and bestiality (Lev. 18:22–23 – ‘You must not lie with a man as with a woman. This is a hateful thing. You must not lie with an animal.’)
 - Leviticus 19:18 – ‘You must love your neighbour as yourself’
 - Mostly relates to Israelites only, but some relate to foreigners who are living amongst them
 - *Some* modern Christians want to dismiss the OT because of the Leviticus prohibitions that it is uncomfortable to preach (Lev. 18) but are rather fond of the more comfy bits (Lev. 19:18)
 - We don’t necessarily hold to the dietary laws, nor to circumcision (Lev. 12) – but the rules about running society as much as anything reflect ‘natural law’ – how human society is intended by God to work re morality whether you’re a Hebrew or not
 - References / parallels in the NT
 - Mark 12:31 - You must love your neighbour as yourself’
 - Matthew 19 – Discussions about divorce and remarriage, cites Moses’ Law in asserting that divorce is tolerated because of the Israelites’ hardness of heart, but remarriage is adultery
- **Numbers (*Bemidbar* / ‘in the desert’)**
 - Census or numbering of the people (hence its name in Greek / Latin / English) at Sinai
 - all aged 20+ and able to bear arms (not Levites)
 - Levites 30–50 able to serve Tabernacle
 - Construction of Tabernacle for the Ark of the Covenant so that the Lord is amongst his people on their journey
 - Giving of rules and laws for the recommencement of the journey to the Promised Land
 - Journey to Moab
 - Spies sent out into the surrounding lands and they report them to be ‘flowing with milk and honey’
 - 40 years in the wilderness after refusing to enter the Promised Land as God commands
 - Events at Moab before crossing the Jordan
 - The curse of the fiery serpents
 - A plague in punishment for rebelliousness
 - Conquest of Midian
 - Instruction to expel Canaanites from the Promised Land and re-census of the people
 - Moses warned that he would not enter the Promised Land
 - Important references / parallels in the NT
 - Numbers 21:9 – Moses’ image of a serpent that cures snakebite if gazed upon vs. John 3:14–15 – Christ is lifted up on the cross and all who gaze on him in faith are cured of sin
- **Deuteronomy (Greek: ‘the second law’)**
 - Three sermons by Moses describing the history of the time in the wilderness and giving a second *telling* of the Law, not a second law as the Greek title suggests – a review of the Covenant between God and His people
 - Chs 1–4 – First Sermon – history of the 40 years in the wilderness
 - Chs 5–28 – Second Sermon
 - Chs 5–11 – a going over of the 10 Commandments
 - Chs 12–28 – ‘The Deuteronomic Code’ – many and varied laws on how the Israelites are to conduct themselves in Canaan
 - sanctions against breaking the law, blessings to the obedient, and curses on the rebellious
 - Chs 29–30 – Reminder of the Covenant and exhortation to obey it
 - Ch 32 – The Song of Moses – quoted in Hebrews, a prophecy of the apostasy of the children of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70?
 - Ch 33 – Moses blesses each of the tribes
 - Ch 34 – The death of Moses – ‘never has there been such a prophet in Israel as Moses, the man the LORD knew face to face’
 - Many theories about who wrote it – strongest arguments can be made of all the books of the Pentateuch for its having been written by Moses – except chapter 34 which describes his death at the age of 120 ‘his eyes undimmed, his vigour unimpaired’, and his grave has never been found – which ties in with Jewish Tradition that he was assumed bodily into heaven, much like Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) (and Our Lady, as well of course as the Lord)

SUMMARY

- ***Pentateuch is a mixture that takes us historically from the Creation to the Promised Land***
- ***It also gives us the Law under which the People of God live under His Covenant***
- ***Next week – the Historical Books – not in a single block as the Pentateuch is, but a particular kind of OT literature that will take us historically from c.1,200 BC to about 100 years before the birth of Christ – a building sense throughout of who is coming – the Messiah***