

The Institute for Catechesis and Formation

Course Outline for Students



ICF 102 – The Old Testament

The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to His creation, and the story of His love for it – and in particular His love and eternal plan for the crown of creation, the human person. This course will provide a brief introduction to the origin of Sacred Scripture: its source, how the Canon was formed, and the senses in which we can interpret Scripture. The remainder of the course will focus on the Old Testament: the creation of the earth and God’s covenant of love with the human person, the fall into sin, and the revelation, over time, of God’s plan of salvation.

Texts: Walking with God, Tim Gray & Jeff Cavins (WWG)

The Bible: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>

Supplemental Reading/Additional Resources:

The Bible Timeline Chart, Jeff Cavins & Sarah Christmyer

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC): <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>

St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology: <http://www.salvationhistory.com/>

Week 1: The beginning of “In the beginning...”

Weekly Reading Before Class: WWG pp. 1-20; Genesis 1-3; Psalm 104

What is the Bible?

- The word of God
- God’s revelation of Himself to us
- God makes Himself *known* to us through a gradual process
- God reveals Himself in order to enter into a relationship with us

Biblical Authorship

Sacred Scripture is a work of God and the human person

- Divine inspiration
- Human authorship

The Canon of Scripture

Canon (Greek) – “rule”

The Church *discerns* and then *authorizes* the inclusion of books in the Canon.

Biblical Interpretation

- The sacred author’s intention
- The content and unity of the whole of Scripture
- Reading Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church
- Being attentive to the analogy of faith

The Senses of Scripture

Scripture is read on both a *literal* (what the words say) and *spiritual* level.

The *spiritual* sense is further subdivided:

- Allegorical (the Christological significance)
- Moral (the application to our lives)
- Anagogical (the meaning leading us toward the life to come in eternity)

Formation of the Old Testament

- **Pentateuch**
- **Historical books**
- **Wisdom Books**
- **Books of the Prophets**

The Old Testament is meant to be read in light of the New Testament

The God of the Old Testament *is* the God of the New Testament

Beginning in the beginning... The meaning and origins of The Story

Genesis 1 and 2 tell us about God and about the human person

God created human persons for a relationship with Him

God freely shares both His kingship (dominion over the earth) and creative power (be fruitful and multiply) man and woman

Genesis 3 explains how sin and its consequences threaten humanity's union with God

Protoevangelium (*first gospel*): Gn 3:15 – God's promise of redemption and the first proclamation of the Gospel

Sin and its consequences

The consequences of sin are still experienced by us (CCC 402-406):

- Subject to ignorance
- Suffering
- Dominion of death
- Concupiscence – the inclination toward sin

God's promise in the Protoevangelium is the defeat of sin and death; but we need a Savior to win the battle for us, and to continue aiding us (by *grace*) as we battle sin in our daily lives

Week 2: God's Covenant with His People

Weekly Reading Before Class: WWG pp. 20-57

Covenant

- The original covenant is with Adam, who breaks it because of his sin.
- God's covenant with Noah becomes a symbol of the new creation (Gn 9:1-17):
- Through His covenant with Abraham God draws humanity together

Covenants are established by both **Ritual Words** and **Ritual Actions**.

God made **three promises** to Abram which were later raised to covenants:

- Great Nation
- Great Kingdom
- Worldwide Blessing

The descendants of Abraham become God's Chosen People

- God fulfills His promise to Abraham in the Covenant with the birth of **Isaac**
- **Isaac** and **Rebekah** are faithful to God's Covenant – **Esau** and **Jacob**. God works with our weakness and sinfulness (pride, deception) to bring about good, and to ultimately transform our hearts
- **Jacob** experiences conversion in a personal encounter with God; he is given a new name, which is the name of God's elect. (Gn 32: 25-32)

Week 3: God's Law and the Economy of Salvation

Weekly Reading Before Class: WWG pp. 59-111

From Slavery to Freedom – and a foreshadowing of freedom in Christ

Moses –

- Trust in the Lord
- Willingness to undergo conversion
- Willingness to act in spite of personal weakness

The Exodus is about release from spiritual slavery more than release from physical slavery.

The plagues served to teach the Egyptians that the Lord is the true God.

The Passover – looking forward to Christ, our *Pasch* (Hebrew, *pesach*, Greek, *pascha*;

Passover) (Ex 12:1-28)

Jesus Christ is the new and definitive Passover

God's Economy (Oikonomia) – God's Household

We are God's family and therefore a part of His *household*. Because of the wounds sin creates, God's plan of salvation for us must include not only His healing (which will be ultimately fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ), but particular acts of His divine *Fatherhood*:

Decalogue, Leviticus and Deuteronomy - The Law

The Law is bound up with the Covenant (cf. Ex 19), and breaking of the Law impacted the covenantal relationship with God.

The 10 Commandments (Decalogue – *ten words*)

God's commands are oriented toward Love and the good of the human person.

The Laws in Leviticus concern cult/ritual:

The Laws in Deuteronomy restate laws found elsewhere in the Pentateuch. Many of the laws concern marriage, human sexuality and the family:

Week 4: Judges, Kings and Prophets

Weekly Reading Before Class: WWG pp. 140-170, 189-215

Entering the Promised Land

Joshua leads the people into the Promised Land fulfilling the first Abrahamic promise.

Judges begins with the twelve tribes united against the Canaanites and degrades until the period ends with civil war.

Kingdom

Saul

David

Solomon

A Fractured Nation

Northern Kingdom: Israel/Samaria

Southern Kingdom: Judah

Promise and Prophecy

- God sends the Prophets not only to foretell what is coming, but to speak truth about God and call the people back into right relationship with Him
- A prophet is not a fortune teller but a **truth teller**. Sometimes that truth is difficult to hear because it clashes with our own ideas, desires or appetites.
- The Prophets call the people of Israel back to fidelity to God and the Covenant; remind the people of God's relationship with them and His desire for an intimate closeness with them.
 - *I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God...* Ex 6:7 (cf. also Jeremiah 30:22, Ezekiel 34:31, Hs 2:25; Deus caritas est, 9)
- The Prophets prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. They offer instruction, call for repentance and conversion, and tell the people that God will fulfill His promise of salvation (Gn 3:15), with the coming of the Messiah.

Prophets Chart

PROPHETS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

| Prophet | Date and Place | Historical Context | Major Themes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Moses* | c. 1250 BC: Egypt and Sinai | Slavery in Egypt; Exodus events; giving of the Law (Exodus – Deuteronomy) | Covenant |
| Samuel* | c. 1050 BC; united Israel | Conflict with the Philistines; Israel's first kings – Saul and David (1 Samuel 3; 8; 12; 16) | Warnings about a king: the king does not replace the Covenant. |
| Nathan* | c. 1000 BC; united Israel | Court prophet of David (2 Sam 7:1-17; 12:1-25) | God's promises to David; David's errors |
| Elijah* | 9 th Century BC; Israel (northern kingdom) | Reign of Ahab (and Jezebel); mixing of idolatry (worship of Baal) with Yahwism (1 Kings 17-19; 21) | Yahweh is God. |
| Elisha* | 9 th Century BC; Israel (northern kingdom) | End of the dynasty of Ahab (2 Kings 2; 4-5; 7-9) | Miracles; God is salvation; Yahweh's kingdom is universal. |
| Amos** | c. 760 – 744 BC: Israel (northern kingdom) | Reign of Jeroboam II, a time of prosperity, political security and economic polarization (2 Kings 14:23-29) | Social injustice; liturgy without morality |
| Hosea** | c. 750-725 BC; Israel | Political instability after Jeroboam's death; rise of Assyrian power (2 Kings 15 and 17) | Covenant compared to love and marriage; covenant based on God's unconditional love |
| Micah** | Late 8 th Century BC; Judah (southern kingdom) | Reign of Hezekiah; Assyrian crisis | Abuse of political and religious power |
| 1st Isaiah** (Ch. 1-39) | c. 744 – 700 BC; Jerusalem | Reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah; political crises involving Assyria and Egypt (2 Kings 16; 18-20) | Trust Yahweh rather than human allies; Yahweh is holy and Lord of the whole earth |
| Zephaniah** | c. 640 – 625 BC; Jerusalem | Beginning of the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 21:1-22:7) | The "Day of the Lord" as a day of judgment |
| Nahum** | c. 626 – 612 BC: Judah (southern kingdom) | The Assyrian capital Nineveh was about to fall to the Babylonians | Oracle of judgment against Nineveh. |
| Habakkuk** | c. 605 – 602 BC; Judah (southern kingdom) | Babylonian vassal state (2 Kings 23-24) | Why does God allow injustice? |
| Jeremiah** | c. 626 – 587 BC: Jerusalem | From Josiah's reforms through the demise of the monarchy, the first exile, and the reign of Zedekiah (2 Kings 22:8 – 25:30) | The people must <i>turn their hearts back</i> to Yahweh or Jerusalem will be destroyed; hope for a restoration and a new covenant written upon the heart. |

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| Ezekiel** | c. 593 – 573 BC; Babylon | 597 BC – surrender of Jerusalem followed by first deportations; 587 BC – destruction of Jerusalem and more deportations. | Early oracles of judgment against Jerusalem, Zedekiah and those remaining behind. Later oracles of hope and salvation for the exiles and Jerusalem (“a new heart”). |
| 2nd Isaiah ** | c. 545 – 537 BC; Babylon | Rise of Cyrus of Persia, who conquers Babylon and permits the Israelites to return to Judah. | “Comfort my people.” Creative redemption – a new Exodus. The “Servant of the Lord” who suffers for the people. |
| 3rd Isaiah** (Ch. 56-66) | c. 537 – 510 BC; Jerusalem | Exiles return to find Jerusalem in ruins; conflicts over property rights and community membership | Who is righteous? The idea of a messianic age and kingdom. |
| Haggai** | c. 520 BC; Jerusalem | Attempts to rebuild the Temple meet with difficulties | Encouragement to rebuild the Temple. |
| 1 st Zechariah** (Ch. 1-8) | c. 520 – 518 BC; Jerusalem | (see 3-Isaiah and Haggai) | Jerusalem will be transformed by God’s presence; a messianic kingdom, based on keeping the covenant, is about to dawn. |
| Malachi** | c. 440 BC; Jerusalem | Jerusalem’s walls rebuilt under Nehemiah; religious reforms of Ezra; community led by priests | Purity of the cult; warnings against accommodation to the pagan world |
| Joel** | c. 400 BC; Jerusalem | A stable “Temple-community” has developed | This is not the end of God’s plan for Israel – look for a further unfolding. |
| Obadiah** | c. 400 BC; Jerusalem | Edomites (descendants of Esau) had sided with Babylon against Judah | Oracle of judgment against Edom |
| 2 nd Zechariah** (Ch. 9-14) | c. 400 – 200 BC: Jerusalem | A “grand restoration” has not come true; continued foreign control and oppression. | Attacks on false leaders – who should lead the community? Early Apocalyptic – looking forward to the triumph of God over evil |

* Pre-Classical Prophets – we read *about them* in the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History.

* * Classical Prophets – we read *their own words* in the books which bear their names.
The maior prophets are *italicized*.