

SESSION 6: MISSION IN THE DIVISION TO EXILE

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read Jonah 1-4; Isaiah 24, 66; Jeremiah 7; Ezekiel 38—39.

Summary of the Video: Module 3, Episode 6

We've used the word "mission" for the calling of the people of God to proclaim the kingdom but also as a summary of eschatology (the mission of God in all things). It doesn't just mean "evangelism" (though it certainly includes that).

We begin with Jonah, probably the best books in the OT on "evangelism." The story presents at least four puzzles: literality, prophetic judgment that doesn't happen, Jesus' resurrection and the sign of Jonah, the purpose of the story. It's a true story, but it's also told in a way to critique Israel for their reluctance to love their neighbors and be a "light to the nations". Prophetic words aren't meant to be taken as "no matter what, this will happen" as much as "in our relationship I'm giving you insight that I want you to respond to". Jesus' comments at least refer to the judgment of Israel for neglecting his ministry. And finally, God wants his people to share his heart for the lost.

We shift then into a discussion of final judgment in the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah). Isaiah depicts the awful judgment of God on all God's enemies (Isaiah 66). Jeremiah describes the mass slaughter of God's people who reject him and their bodies are piled in the Hinnom Valley (aka Gehenna; Jeremiah 7 and 19). Ezekiel sees the battle between Gog and Magog which itself looks forward to the final battle between God and the devil in Revelation (Ezekiel 38-39). In Isaiah 24 we see the emptiness, joylessness and lifelessness of a world without God; all good things are gifts from God, so when he is absent, all his gifts leave with him.

Where do you stand in terms of the notion of hell? Is it eternal or are judged people simply annihilated (destroyed but not tortured forever)? If all you had were these texts, you could make that case. But with Jesus (in Matthew 25) and Revelation 14, you see a comparison of ongoing experience of heaven with ongoing experience of hell, and ongoing judgment of the devil with ongoing judgment of all God's enemies.

Eternal punishment and eternal spiritual disintegration—is there a distinction between these two things? Romans 1 shows us what the wrath of God looks like. "The self-chosen unraveling" of sin and rejection of God is its own punishment and results in spiritual disintegration.

Following upon this conversation, we make explicit connections between eschatology in Ezekiel 37-48 and Revelation 20-22. The progression of their stories overlap like this: resurrection/regeneration-kingdom-final battle-new temple.

In the final two slides we contrast the teaching of the Kingdom in Mark Driscoll and Rob Bell. Each walks through key OT texts envisioning the new creation. They then bring those texts into our modern life and show each biblical image points to the satisfaction of human longing.

Do you see any validity to dispensational theology? The ways that God dispenses his grace does vary a little from person to person and era to era. But the strict differences that formal dispensationalism proposes “can be really quite unhelpful”. The relationship between the church and Israel becomes too starkly differently; in our thinking, there should be more continuity. The pretribulational rapture (the church being taken out before Jesus’ return) can do damage by pushing Christians to care less about the world and the lost and suffering.

If there’s no pain or suffering in heaven, does that mean we’ll have no memory of loved ones or our experience on earth? It’s nearly impossible for us to imagine what our experience will be like because we’ve always lived in a broken/cursed world. But God might be able to use our healed memory to transform our experience.

Terms You’ll Need to Know:

Eschatology—technically the word means “study of last things” and normally includes death, judgment, resurrection, millennium, new creation; but we want to talk about the future that God has in store for us in the ministry of Jesus, in the expression of the Spirit through the church, and with Jesus’ return.

Polemic—an argument against something.

Armageddon (with Bruce Willis and Ben Affleck)—a movie in which an asteroid is going to destroy the earth but Bruce Willis leads a team to break apart the asteroid.

Narnia—*The Chronicles of Narnia*, a series of children’s stories by C.S. Lewis; often they give insights and analogies into Christian theology; *The Magician’s Nephew* is one book in the series and describe the creation of the world of Narnia.

Annihilation—to destroy completely; in theology it refers to the notion that “hell” is not an on-going experience of punishment but rather the immediate destruction and end of those who are judged.

Eternal Conscious Torment (ECT)—the traditional view of hell which says that damned persons will exist under God’s judgment and experience the pain of separation from him forever.

Amillennial—in theology, this view holds that the “millennium” mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6 refers to Christ’s reign from heaven through the church; therefore there will not be a future “millennium” in which Christ reigns on earth, but rather when Christ returns he’ll bring judgment and immediately install the new heavens and new earth.

Shalom—the Hebrew word for “peace” which entails abundance, flourishing, new life, security and prosperity.

Tuscany—a beautiful wine region in Italy.

Croydon—a neighbourhood in London that has a reputation for being somewhat run down and dangerous.

Mark Driscoll—former pastor of Mars Hill Church in Washington (USA); Andrew Wilson mentions that he is quite different from Driscoll, most likely a reference to Driscoll’s reputation for argumentation, anger and judgmental tone (for which he stepped down from leadership).

Rob Bell—former pastor of Mars Hill Church in Michigan (USA); Andrew Wilson mentions that he is quite different from Bell; Bell endorses same-sex relationships, questions final judgment, leans toward believing all will be saved, and has pushed in other liberal directions.

Shalom aleichem—Hebrew for “Peace be upon you!”

Dispensational theology—a theological system that contends the biblical story should be broken into seven “dispensations”; each dispensation is characterized by a fairly different way that God interacted with people; mostly popular in America and through American Baptist and Brethren missions.

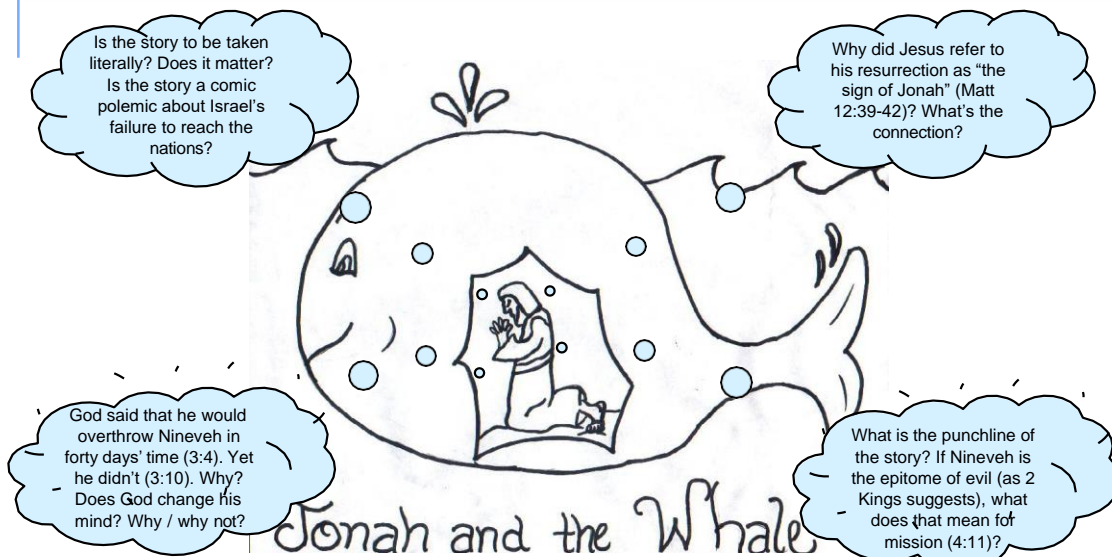
Watch Video

Watch Module 3, Episode 6 (1hr 7 minutes).

Division to Exile

- I. The Story So Far
- II. The History of Israel and Judah from the Division to the Exile
- III. God
- IV. Gospel
- V. People
- VI. Mission**

The Puzzles of Jonah

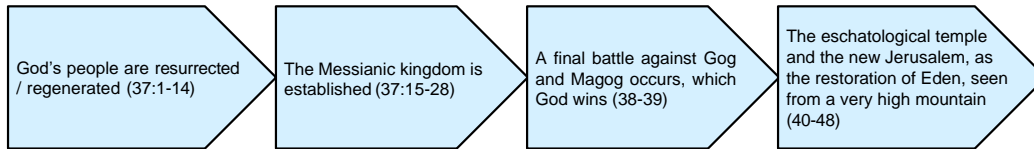


Final Judgment in the Major Prophets

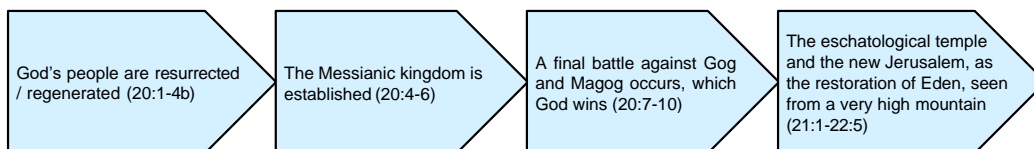
- There are several key texts in the major prophets that shape significantly the way final judgment is spoken of in the New Testament
 - Isaiah 66:24: "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."
 - The picture is of a battle against Jerusalem in which Yahweh slays the enemies of God's people (12-17). The imagery here is of heaps of corpses piled high, with bodies both decomposing (worms) and being burned (fire), as well as looking disgusting
 - Jeremiah 7:32: "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth, because there is no room elsewhere."
 - Judgment against God's people takes the form of mass slaughter, in which bodies have to be buried in the Hinnom valley (Ge-hinnom, later Gehenna) because there is no space in the city
 - Virtually identical language is used in Jeremiah 19:1-9. Ge-hinnom refers to the destruction of Jerusalem
 - Ezekiel 38-39 also describes the battle against Gog and Magog, which becomes paradigmatic for the way the final battle between God and the devil is presented in Revelation 19-20
- One further text which is significant on this, but which is not explicitly quoted in the New Testament, is Isaiah 24:1-12. This envisions destruction upon the "desolate city" within Isaiah's mini-apocalypse (Isa 24-27)
 - It describes a world of emptiness, languishing, scorching of the earth, no wine or vines, no laughter, no music, boarded-up houses, outcry and ruin

The Eschatology of Ezekiel and Revelation

The Sequence of Ezekiel 37-48



The Sequence of Revelation 20-22



Source: G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 976-980

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The Kingdom of Shalom (with thanks to Mark Driscoll)

Text	Depictions of the New Creation	New Creation Will Finally Satisfy ...
Isaiah 2:1-4	All nations gathered; everyone learns God's laws about how to live in harmony with creation and each other; peace reigns; nobody fights wars anymore	Those who read books and attends seminars about the practical matters of life, all who have buried loved ones who died in war, and veterans who live daily with the memories.
Isaiah 11:1-16	Oppressed receive justice; poor are lifted up; creation comes into harmony; wicked are judged; earth is full of the knowledge of the glory of God; everyone sings.	Those who feed the hungry, fight injustice, love their pet, think summer is the best season of the year, and loudly sing off-key when alone in their car.
Isaiah 25:6-9	A rich feast prepared by Yahweh on the mountain, with rich meat and fine wine; death swallowed up forever; all tears and reproach taken away.	Those who have always wanted to have Jesus round for dinner, sitting outside on a warm Mediterranean evening, eating gourmet food and drinking vintage wine.
Isaiah 32:1-8, 15-20; 35:1-10	Blind see; deaf hear; lame leap; mute sing; the desert becomes fruitful like a spring meadow; no more danger; all sit beside still waters in peace.	Those who care for disabled loved ones, hate corruption, have friends to dinner, savour the blossoms of spring, and love the ocean & rivers because they remind them of God.
Isaiah 60:1-22	The glory of Yahweh outshines the sun; all nations gather; unprecedented wealth; gates and doors always open; no more violence; permanent inheritance of land.	Those who see beauty in all cultures, value a dollar, and love sunrises and sunsets because they get to see it explode into colours and shadows without buying a ticket and without its defilement by some stupid corporate logo.
Isaiah 65:17-25	Weeping and crying cease; former things (troubles) do not come to mind; security of tenure means vineyards are cultivated; nobody dies young; God answers prayers before people pray them.	Those who are weary of weeping, have seen the horror of a tiny coffin, been ripped off, raped, abused, abandoned, betrayed, broke, hungry, unemployed, cheated on, lied to, gossiped about, or drawn into a scuffle.
Amos 9:13-15	The land is so fruitful that people are harvesting grapes almost before they're planted; mountains flow with wine; dilapidated buildings are refurbished; everyone has a garden with fruit trees in it.	Those who love fine wine, hate run-down blocks of flats, dislike living out of boxes, would love to own an orchard but could never afford one, and wish the world was a bit more like Tuscany and a bit less like Croydon.

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Wine and New Creation (with thanks to Rob Bell)

- Why are wine and vineyards talked about so much in the prophetic descriptions of the coming kingdom?
 - Peace and security. Vineyards take a long time to grow, so owning a vineyard that you planted is a sign that things have been peaceful for decades
 - Earthiness. The prophets are crystal clear that we are not looking forward to a disembodied state – we are looking forward to creation itself being fixed, liberated, rescued, with all its physicality
 - Joy. Wine was created “to gladden the heart of man” (Ps 104:15) and is associated with laughter and happiness (e.g. Isa 24:7-11). Hell has no wine, and no singing; the new creation is bursting with it
 - Abundance. Mountains flowing with sweet wine – Muscat, anyone? – demonstrates beautifully the utter fruitfulness, as opposed to scarcity, that accompanies the removal of the curse
- What significance does this have for biblical theology?
 - The wedding at Cana – Jesus turns water (old creation) into wine (new creation), and manifests his glory
 - New wine and old wineskins – the new creation needs new containers!
 - The Lord’s Supper – celebrate the new covenant, and proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes
 - The marriage supper of the Lamb – eternal rejoicing. “Drink up, boys, the next one’s on me, at my place”
- Do you hear the people sing, lost in the valley of the night? It is the music of a people who are climbing to the light
For the wretched of the earth, there is a flame that never dies
Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise!
They will live again in freedom in the garden of the Lord
They will march behind the ploughshare, they will put away the sword
Their chains will be broken and all men shall have their reward!
- Shalom aleichem!

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GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew’s comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. Describe how Andrew Wilson uses the word “mission.” Do you agree that Scripture would lead us to this definition? What impact does this definition have on how you approach life?

2. If, when we speak of “eschatology”, we’re speaking broadly of the Mission of God, then “judgment” would actually be part of God’s mission. How does judgment fit into the Mission of God? What does this tell you about what God is trying to do in the world?

3. Our understanding of final judgment (death, judgment, heaven/hell) develops progressively as scripture unfolds its reality. Andrew Wilson suggests that the NT understanding of final judgment draws from OT imagery and teaching. What do the portrayals in Isaiah 66:24, Jeremiah 7:32 and Isaiah 24:1-12 add to your understanding?

4. Scripture offers heaven and the new creation as the satisfaction of human longing. What longings dominate the hearts and minds of people in your church and community? What texts of Scripture speak to the fulfillment of that longing? Talk about how you would share this vision of new creation with someone who aches from longing.

5. As this module concludes, spend a few minutes discussing key things you have learned, new insights that fuel your worship, and growth areas you intend to pursue.

Meditation on Scripture

Jonah 4:2, 10-11

Isaiah 66:22-24

Putting This Session into Practice

In this session, we emphasise that all things either work toward God's mission or against it and therefore will either receive his judgment or commendation. He has tasked us with drawing people and things out of condemnation and into redemption. This week, ask the Lord to open your eyes to see people and situations in need of redemption and how you might bring the Gospel into them.