



JUSTICE – ENDINGS/BEGINNINGS – MAUNDY THURSDAY

Bible Jam Session 10– Spring



NOTE:
Spring Semester Schedule:

April 19 & 26 – Reflection Days (No Class)

Semester Completes on May 17 or 24 (TBD)

The last book in the Hebrew Bible (Canon)
is not
The last book in the Christian Old Testament.

APRIL 12, 2022
WWW.SAYVILLEUCC.ORG



ON SUNFLOWERS AND STARRY NIGHTS

by Jim Rigby, April 12, 2022

Van Gogh looked at sunflowers and night skies very differently than most of us. The artist saw an explosion of colors within the “yellow” of sunflowers and a swirling depth of colors expressed in the “black” of a starry night.

The artist wasn't so much painting what he saw objectively, but sharing what he felt intuitively. He felt an explosion of meaning in the ordinary objects all around him. He wanted to give us the gift of such sacred seeing. He used to say, “Painters understand nature and love her and teach us to see.”

Art comes from the inside out, there's no way science can do that. Science comes from the outside in, there is no way art can do that. For me, religion is finding the invisible ineffable depths of our being that can bring heart, mind and will into harmony.

Van Gogh wrote to his brother:

“That God of the clergy is for me as dead as a doornail. But am I an atheist for all that? The clergy consider me as such — be it so; but I love, and how could I feel love if I did not live, and if others did not live, and then, if we live, there is something mysterious in that. Now call that God, or human nature or whatever you like, but there is something which I cannot define systematically, though it is very much alive and very real, and see, that is God, or as good as God. To believe in God for me is to feel that there is a God, not a dead one, or a stuffed one, but a living one, who with irresistible force urges us toward love again and again; that is my opinion.”

And he further said,

“At present I absolutely want to paint a starry sky. It often seems to me that night is still more richly colored than the day, having hues of the most intense violets, blues and greens. If only you pay attention to it, you will see that certain stars are lemon-yellow, others pink or green, blue and forget-me-not brilliance. And without my expiating on this theme, it is obvious that putting little white dots in the blue black, is not enough to paint the starry sky.”

When I read any of the world’s scriptures, I listen the same way I observe a Van Gogh painting. The author isn’t trying to copy the world like a photograph, but trying to share the invisible rainbows they discern internally that most of us do not see. They are trying to share the silent symphonies they hear playing in the background most of us cannot hear.

Van Gogh said, “The way to know God is to love many things.” He also said, “I can very well do without God both in my life and in my painting, but I cannot, suffering as I am, do without something which is greater than I am, which is my life, the power to create.” From comparing the two quotes we might guess that Van Gogh was using the symbol “God” the same way he used sunflowers and starry nights- to illumine for us the beauty he could feel invisibly shining and silently singing all around us.

A Final Chapter?

1. The Bible that Jesus was familiar with, what we now refer to as the Old Testament, did not end with Malachi. In fact, it wasn't even a single volume book. Rather, it was a collection of separate scrolls that were made to be read as a unified collection.
2. Our earliest manuscripts with the order of the modern Bible are in Christian manuscripts dating to the mid-300s C. E..
3. The original design shape of the Hebrew scrolls was never lost in Jewish tradition up to this day.
4. It is likely that the re-ordering was done by Christians who were no longer familiar with the Bible in Hebrew, and had therefore lost touch with its original design shape.
5. Malachi. Why did this book eventually get adopted as the conclusion of the Christian Old Testament? It actually makes a lot of sense. Through the prophet Malachi, the God of Israel exposes just how corrupt the post-exilic generations have become after returning from Babylon. The general picture we get from the book is that the long years of Israel's did not fundamentally change the hearts of the people. They're still in rebellion against God, the temple is corrupted, and the reader is left waiting for some kind of resolution. And that's exactly what Malachi announces. The One is coming to purify Israel from all moral compromise and evil, so that a faithful remnant can emerge out of the other side. While the tone of the book is kind of a downer, it ends with a hopeful note that God will come one day to sort everything out. And that final, hopeful note is precisely what makes

6. Chronicles! Contrast Malachi with Chronicles, which is placed at the end of the Hebrew canon. This book, which is mostly narrative with genealogy and poetry mixed in, leaves a different impression.

Chronicles opens with introductory genealogies that recap the entire biblical storyline from Adam all the way to the post-exile generation. The emphasis of Chronicles is to foster hope in God's promise to David for a new king and a new Jerusalem, which will become a dwelling place for the divine glory along with a new, restored Israel.

From here, the book moves on to recount the story of the kings of Jerusalem. Again, the focus is on David and God's covenant promise of the seed that would come through his line. This promised king would build a new temple and reign over Israel and the nations.

As you read about every descendant of David, all of them fail, but there are a handful of bright-spot characters (Hezekiah and Josiah, for example) who succeed more than they fail. For the Chronicler, these narratives about the past kings from David's line serve as a prophetic pointer to what the future promised king will be like, only better!

7. Exile Had Not Ended! Israel's sin is still ongoing. There was still covenant unfaithfulness in the post-exilic community, further affirming the need for their Messiah! Exile did not purify the hearts of the people as Malachi promised. They needed a rescuing from a problem deeper than outward exile. The Chronicler lives among this "still-in-exile" community, and he composed this book to help God's people understand their true situation. Through these ancient texts, he was able to paint a picture of the future hope for which they were waiting and had not yet seen.

8. So the return from exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah didn't solve the people's problems. The decree from Cyrus is incomplete because the authors of the TaNaK were still waiting for a real return from exile and the coming of the Messianic kingdom of God. God's people need a deliverer from a deeper kind of exile than simply being ruled by Babylon. In Chronicles, the literal exile has become an image of Israel's ongoing "spiritual" exile, their slavery to evil and sin and their inability to obey the Torah. This is all representative of the human condition: home and yet not home until the kingdom of God comes. The Chronicler, and the people, are anxiously awaiting this day.

Jesus & Chronicles

This is the package deal we get when our Old Testament concludes with Chronicles! Hope, return, surprise, longing, and anticipation. We finish Chronicles with reassuring anticipation for a king from the line of David to bring about the true return from exile. He's the one who will build the new dwelling place for his people and deal with humanity's sin. The end of Chronicles and all that comes with it is yet another way that Christians can see how the Old Testament points forward to Jesus, what he said, and what he did. In John 5:39, Jesus says,

"You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me."

Some say that Jesus knew he was the fulfillment of Chronicles. What's even more beautiful is that when Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:17-21, He reads,

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Jesus is tuned into all of these core themes in the TaNaK! He identifies that he is the one to bring about the new Jubilee. Chronicles presents the hope of a promised king from the line of David (ever wonder why Matthew opens with a genealogy? Hint: it's a continuation of 1 Chronicles chs. 1-9). He is to bring about the true freedom from exile, and in the New Testament, we see that the king and redeemer we were waiting for is Jesus! The Scriptures are about him; he was steeped in them, and he came to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). We hope this reinvigorates your desire to take a renewed look at Chronicles.

Christian Old Testament

Hebrew	Protestant	Protestant Reordering
Genesis	Genesis	
Exodus	Exodus	
Leviticus	Leviticus	
Numbers	Number	
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy	
Joshua	Joshua	
Judges	Judges	
	Ruth	
Samuel	Samuel	
Kings	Kings	
	Chronicles	
Isaiah		
	Ezra	
	Nehemiah	
	Esther	
	Job	
	Psalms	
	Proverbs	
	Ecclesiastes	
	Song of Solomon*	
	Isaiah	
Jeremiah	Jeremiah	
	Lamentations	
Ezekiel	Ezekiel	
	Daniel	
Hosea	Hosea	
Joel	Joel	
Amos	Amos	
Obadiah	Obadiah	
Jonah	Jonah	

Micah	Micah	
Nahum	Nahum	
Habakkuk	Habakkuk	
Zephaniah	Zephaniah	
Haggai	Haggai	
Zechariah	Zechariah	
Malachi	Malachi (End)	
Psalms		
Proverbs		
Job		
Song of Songs*		
Ruth		
Lamentations		
Ecclesiastes		
Esther		
Daniel		
Ezra-Nehemiah		
Chronicles (End)		

The Hebrew Canon (TaNaK (8th C BCE)

1. Torah (Teaching) or Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
2. Nevi'im Prophets
3. Ketuvim Writings

Torah

Genesis	Numbers
Exodus	Deuteronomy
Leviticus	

Prophets

Former Prophets (Anecdotes about major Hebrew persons)

Joshua	Kings
Judges	
Samuel	

Latter Prophets (Exhort Israel to return to God)

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel

The Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets)

Hosea	Micah	Zechariah
Joel	Nahum	Malachi
Amos	Habakkuk	
Obadiah	Zephaniah	
Jonah	Haggai	

Ketuvim (Poetry, Theology, and Drama)

Psalms	Ruth	Daniel
Proverbs	Lamentations	Ezra-Nehemiah
Job	Ecclesiastes	Chronicles (End)
Song of Songs	Esther	



Approach to God (John 1:1, 1:3-4, 3:16-17, 12:44-46)

In the beginning was the Word,
the Word was in God's presence,
and the Word was present to God
from the beginning.

Through the Word
all things came into being,
and apart from the Word
nothing came into being
that has come into being.

In the Word was life,
and that was humanity's light—
a Light that shines in the darkness,
a Light that the darkness has never overtaken.

Yes, God so loved the world
as to give the Only Begotten One
that whoever believes may not die.
but have eternal life.

Jesus proclaimed publicly:
"Whoever believes in me
believes not so much in me
as the One who sent me;
and whoever sees me
sees the One who sent me.

A Tenebrae Service of Shadows

Please remain in the Sanctuary if you wish to pray or meditate following this evening's service.

When you are ready, you are invited to join us in the Vestry for a time of repast and community.

Good Friday

Our Sanctuary will be open from Noon – 3:00 PM for quiet prayer and meditation.

Easter Sunday

Sunrise Meditation on the Great South Bay Sayville Ferry, 41 River Road, Free Parking
We depart the dock at 5:45 A.M. Sharp

Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall from 7:00 A.M. – 8:15 A.M.

Easter Sunday Worship at 10:00 A.M.

Easter Egg Hunt on the front lawn following worship.

More information at www.sayvilleucc.org