

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 19, Imperial Assyria Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 19, Imperial Assyria, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Donald Fowler's lecture on Old Testament backgrounds explores the Assyrian Empire's influence on the Hebrew Bible. The lecture focuses on key Assyrian kings, particularly **their interactions with Israel and Judah**, highlighting the reigns of Shalmaneser III and Tiglath-pileser III, emphasizing their military campaigns and administrative innovations. **Specific events** like Jehu's submission to Shalmaneser and the Assyrian conquests of various kingdoms are examined within their biblical context. The lecture also **analyzes the impact of Assyrian power** on the prophetic messages of Amos and Micah. Finally, the lecture touches upon the significance of the Moabite Stone as a historical artifact.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 19 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Old Testament Introduction → Old Testament Backgrounds).



**Fowler_OTB_Session
19.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 19, Imperial Assyria

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture transcript on Imperial Assyria:

Briefing Document: Imperial Assyria and the Old Testament

Overview: This lecture focuses on the Assyrian Empire's interaction with the Old Testament, particularly the Northern Kingdom of Israel, rather than a comprehensive history of Assyria itself. It emphasizes how Assyrian actions and policies relate to biblical narratives and prophecies, and also cautions against interpreting God's actions solely based on current events.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Ahab as a Negative Paradigm:

- King Ahab of Israel is presented as a negative example of a ruler who was an "internationalist, a materialist, and a militarist," disregarding the Mosaic Law.
- His impressive power and military might led some to believe he was successful, even though his actions were contrary to God's will.
- Ahab's death, choosing to die in battle, is presented as an example of his ultimate failure. As the lecturer points out, "Ahab's policies were the ways of this world, and God had other ways that he wanted to relate with them."

1. Jehu's Submission and its Ambiguity:

- King Jehu, who exterminated Ahab's line and was a "ardent Yahwehist," is depicted on the Black Obelisk bowing before Shalmaneser III, an Assyrian king.
- This is highlighted as an impactful image, demonstrating Israel's subjugation, yet is complicated because Jehu was a follower of Yahweh. "There Jehu is nose to the ground on Mount Carmel, and no doubt this was a picture that had an impact on Israelites in the know."
- The lecture emphasizes that Jehu's submission, despite his devotion to Yahweh, seemingly contradicted the idea that God was on Israel's side based on appearances. It notes, "for people who interpret God through contemporary events, it must have looked as if the path of Ahab worked and the path of Jehu didn't."

- The lecture explains that even though Jehu was a Yahwehist, history proved that his policies were not effective, as the lecturer states, "If I can say to you 2,000 or 3,000 years after the fact, if I can say to you the policies of Jehu didn't really work, then that has the advantage of thousands of years to prove itself to be true."

1. **The Rise and Fall and Rise of Assyrian Power:**

- The Assyrian Empire, under Shalmaneser III, initially expanded and subdued surrounding regions, including the Kingdom of Urartu, highlighting their military power with huge numbers of captured slaves and killed soldiers.
- A significant period of weakness followed Shalmaneser's death (827-745 BC) which lasted for 60 years and was characterized by internal revolt. During this time there was a lack of Assyrian campaigns, leading neighboring nations to believe they were safe.
- This period of dormancy coincided with the ministries of prophets like Amos, Micah, and Jonah, who preached about coming judgment, which were met with disbelief because of the apparent lack of Assyrian threat. The lecturer notes, "The 60-year period of dormancy that I described is the 60-year period that covers the ministries of the prophets Amos, Micah, and perhaps Jonah."
- Tiglath-Pileser III dramatically reversed the decline starting in 745 BC, initiating a period of aggressive expansion, ultimately surpassing all other Assyrian leaders in military strength.
- The lecture notes that during this 60 year period of Assyrian dormancy, "God was probably giving his people a grace period to repent, after which God would wreck judgment on the northern kingdom."

1. **Tiglath-Pileser III and His Innovations:**

- Tiglath-Pileser III is portrayed as the greatest Assyrian king, due to his military conquests and significant administrative and military innovations.
- **Administrative Innovations:** He subdivided states (provinces) to weaken regional power, increased the number of nobles to dilute their individual influence, created a "pony express" system for rapid communication, and directly annexed conquered territories, establishing puppet governments and garrisons to prevent rebellion.

- **Military Innovations:** He implemented a policy of mass deportation of conquered populations, which numbered over 400,000 during his reign, to prevent revolts and reduce ties to homelands. Also, he built an army made up largely of soldiers from conquered territories rather than only Assyrians, to ensure the Assyrians could keep up with the high numbers of the army. The lecturer points out, "When you're ruling over people who greatly outnumber your kingdom, you have to make your army, you have to build your army and make it consist of conquered peoples from your empire."
- The lecture notes, these policies and practices were copied by subsequent empires and contributed to the length of the Assyrian Empire's success, as the lecturer states, "One of the reasons why the Assyrian Empire lasted so long, in spite of how hated they were, was because of this policy of deportation."

1. **The Moabite Stone and Ancient History:**

- The Moabite Stone, created by King Mesha of Moab, is presented as a document that is significant for a few reasons. Firstly, the Moabite language was similar to ancient Hebrew and thus the stone shows what the Hebrew language looked like at the time period. Secondly, the stone commemorates the rebellion of Moab against the northern kingdom of Israel.
- The lecturer notes that the stone was found by a missionary named Augustus Klein but that "the document which is in front of us which had survived for thousands of years could not survive the contemporary world of Augustus Klein when the villagers in the area saw that this missionary was paying so much attention to this they assumed it must have had gold inside of it so they shattered the Moabite stela to get to the gold and of course, there was no gold, but it was then reassembled."
- The lecturer concludes that the stone shows "the kind of horrific military climate that occurred at this time of war" and that it is a very helpful visual of the time period.

1. **The Fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel:**

- The lecture describes how the Northern Kingdom was systematically weakened through tribute paid to Assyria, then through rebellions, and finally through deportations.
- King Menachem had been assassinated for his willingness to pay tribute to Assyria.

- King Pekka of the Northern Kingdom formed an alliance with King Rezin of Damascus to resist the Assyrians, but King Ahaz of Judah appealed to Tiglath-Pileser for help, resulting in the devastation of the northern kingdom.
- The Northern Kingdom was reduced significantly after deportations by Tiglath-Pileser, and then finally destroyed by Shalmaneser V in 722 BC with Samaria being captured and 28,000 people deported, thus marking the end of the Northern Kingdom. The lecturer observes, "Here's the end of the Northern Kingdom, the loss of the land of the ten tribes, and it just had such a small grave marker. 722, it's over."
- The lecturer notes that despite the devastation of the Northern Kingdom, he can imagine the religious leaders proclaiming God had delivered them when Tiglath-Pileser died, and then again after Shalmaneser V died, but that these conclusions would be tragically incorrect.

1. **Sargon II and Continued Expansion:**

- Sargon II followed Shalmaneser V and continued Assyrian expansion, facing opposition from various groups including the Elamites, western city-states, and Urartu.
- He defeated a rebellion led by Yabidi of Hammat and also conquered all the way south to Gaza.
- Sargon's reign saw the Assyrian Empire grow even larger than it had before.
- Sargon was eventually killed fighting in 705 BC.

1. **Sennacherib and Future Biblical Importance:**

- The lecturer briefly introduces Sennacherib who was the successor to Sargon.
- Sennacherib only conducted eight campaigns in 24 years which was very few for an Assyrian king, also he focused on building within the empire, especially at Nineveh.
- The lecturer notes that Sennacherib's third campaign will be very significant to the biblical text and so he will pick up with that campaign on the next tape.

Important Quotes:

- "Ahab's policies were the ways of this world, and God had other ways that he wanted to relate with them."

- "There Jehu is nose to the ground on Mount Carmel, and no doubt this was a picture that had an impact on Israelites in the know."
- "For people who interpret God through contemporary events, it must have looked as if the path of Ahab worked and the path of Jehu didn't."
- "The 60-year period of dormancy that I described is the 60-year period that covers the ministries of the prophets Amos, Micah, and perhaps Jonah."
- "God was probably giving his people a grace period to repent, after which God would wreck judgment on the northern kingdom."
- "One of the reasons why the Assyrian Empire lasted so long, in spite of how hated they were, was because of this policy of deportation."
- "When you're ruling over people who greatly outnumber your kingdom, you have to make your army, you have to build your army and make it consist of conquered peoples from your empire."
- "Here's the end of the Northern Kingdom, the loss of the land of the ten tribes, and it just had such a small grave marker. 722, it's over."

Implications:

- The lecture underscores the importance of understanding historical context when interpreting biblical narratives.
- It warns against drawing theological conclusions solely based on contemporary events, as perceptions can be flawed and God's long-term plan may not be immediately apparent.
- The Assyrian Empire's brutal tactics, including deportation, are shown to be a deliberate strategy to maintain power, with long-lasting historical impacts.

This briefing document captures the main ideas, facts and themes of the lecture provided, and should be useful in understanding the historical and biblical significance of the Assyrian Empire.

4. Study Guide: Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 19, Imperial Assyria

Imperial Assyria: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What three characteristics defined King Ahab, according to the lecture, and why was he considered a failure?
2. How is King Jehu depicted on the Black Obelisk, and what is the significance of his actions?
3. What was the kingdom of Urartu, and why was it a major concern for the Assyrian Empire?
4. What was the impact of the revolt following Shalmaneser's death on the Assyrian Empire, and how long did it last?
5. What was the significance of the 60-year period of Assyrian dormancy and which biblical prophets were active during this time?
6. What does the Moabite Stela commemorate, and why is it significant for understanding ancient scripts?
7. Who was Tiglath-Pileser III, and what was his impact on the Assyrian Empire?
8. What was the key reason for the unpopularity and assassination of King Menachem of Israel?
9. How did Tiglath-Pileser III revolutionize warfare, and what were his innovative administrative strategies?
10. What was the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and what happened to the deported people?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Ahab was an internationalist, a materialist, and a militarist. Despite his impressive outward achievements, his ways were not God's ways, leading to his ultimate failure.

2. Jehu is depicted bowing before Shalmaneser III, kissing the ground in submission. This is significant because it highlights Jehu's submission to a foreign power, in contrast to Ahab's resistance, while demonstrating the failure of both political approaches.
3. Urartu was a powerful kingdom to the north of Assyria. It was a major concern because it posed a significant military challenge to Assyrian dominance.
4. The revolt severely weakened Assyria for about 60 years. It crippled their military power and resulted in few campaigns, making them a non-threat to the surrounding nations.
5. This period was a time of Assyrian weakness that coincided with the ministries of prophets like Amos, Micah, and Jonah. The lack of Assyrian threat made people unwilling to listen to warnings of future captivity, because no one had ever been taken into captivity.
6. The Moabite Stela commemorates King Mesha's successful rebellion against Israel. Its importance lies in providing an example of the script from that time period, as well as depicting a historical moment of Israel's weakness.
7. Tiglath-Pileser III was a general who became king, transforming the empire with his military genius and administrative innovations. He is responsible for the policy of deporting entire populations.
8. Menachem's unpopularity stemmed from his willingness to pay a substantial tribute to Assyria. This tribute burdened his people and led to his assassination.
9. Tiglath-Pileser III introduced mass deportation of conquered peoples and created a diverse standing army made up of conquered peoples. He also implemented a "pony express" system for communication. He divided large states into smaller ones, and reduced the power of the nobility.
10. The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BCE, and the deported people were scattered and assimilated into other populations, leading to the loss of their cultural identity.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the contrasting approaches of King Ahab and King Jehu in their dealings with the Assyrian Empire, and discuss the implications of these choices for the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
2. Evaluate the impact of Tiglath-Pileser III's administrative and military innovations on the long-term stability and success of the Assyrian Empire. Consider both the short-term effects and the long-term consequences of his policies.
3. Discuss the role of the prophets Amos, Micah, and Jonah in the context of the 60-year period of Assyrian dormancy. How might their messages have been received by the people of Israel, and what was the irony of their warnings at this time?
4. Compare and contrast the reigns of Sargon II and Sennacherib, focusing on their military campaigns, their territorial expansions, and the key differences in their approaches to ruling the Assyrian Empire.
5. Examine the factors that contributed to the rise of the Assyrian Empire and describe what led to its eventual downfall, drawing from the events discussed in the lecture.

Glossary of Key Terms

Ahab: King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, known for his internationalist, materialist, and militarist policies.

Black Obelisk: An Assyrian monument depicting King Jehu of Israel bowing before Shalmaneser III.

Deportation: The forced removal of populations from their homeland, a policy innovated by Tiglath-Pileser III.

Dur-Sharrukin: A city built by Sargon II to serve as the capital of the Assyrian Empire.

Hazael: King of Damascus who fought against the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III.

Hezekiah: King of the southern kingdom of Judah who was warned by the prophet Isaiah about an alliance with Egypt.

Hoshea: The last king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Jehu: King of Israel who exterminated the line of Ahab but still bowed to the Assyrian King.

Menachem: King of Israel who was forced to pay tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III.

Mesha: King of Moab who successfully rebelled against Israel and commemorated it in the Moabite Stele.

Moabite Stela: A stone inscription by King Mesha celebrating Moab's independence from Israel.

Nineveh: A major city of the Assyrian Empire, and capital city under Sennacherib.

Pekka: King of Israel who created an alliance with Rezin, king of Damascus against Assyria.

Rezin: King of Damascus and ally of Pekka, king of Israel, against Assyria.

Sargon II: Assyrian king who expanded the empire and moved its capital.

Sardu III: King of Urartu who was an opponent of Tiglath-Pileser III.

Sennacherib: Assyrian king who was known for building more structures and deporting more people than any other king.

Shalmaneser III: Assyrian king who broke through the Western Wall.

Shalmaneser V: Assyrian king who besieged and captured Samaria in 722 BCE.

Shamshiadad V: King who secured the throne after the revolt that weakened Assyria.

Tiglath-Pileser III: Assyrian king who revolutionized the empire through military and administrative reforms.

Urartu: A powerful kingdom north of Assyria, a major opponent of the Assyrians.

5. FAQs on Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 19, Imperial Assyria, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Imperial Assyria and the Old Testament

1. **How did the actions of King Ahab of Israel influence the Assyrians?** King Ahab, though an Israelite, was a materialist, militarist, and internationalist, and did not follow Mosaic Law. While his reign impressed the Assyrians with its worldly success and military might, his policies were ultimately not in line with God's ways. His defeat and death were in fact a symbol of the failure of these policies. Ahab's family and kingdom were very impressive to the Assyrians.
2. **What is the significance of the Black Obelisk in relation to King Jehu of Israel?** The Black Obelisk depicts King Jehu bowing before Shalmaneser III of Assyria, paying tribute. This is a powerful image that contrasts with Ahab, who never bowed to the Assyrians. Jehu, though a follower of Yahweh, demonstrates submission to Assyrian power, highlighting the complexities of faith and political reality at the time. It appears that for a time, following the ways of the world was successful, and following God was not.
3. **What was the impact of the reign of Shalmaneser III on the ancient Near East?** Shalmaneser III's reign was marked by significant military campaigns, including breaking the Western Wall and defeating the Arameans. While he achieved military success and captured many slaves and war spoils, he did not completely conquer Urartu and his death led to a major revolt that crippled Assyria for a generation and a half. The impact of the king's death was dramatic, and shows how quickly things can change.
4. **How did the period of Assyrian weakness impact the ministries of prophets like Amos, Micah, and Jonah?** The 60-year period of Assyrian dormancy, between 823 and 745 BC, coincided with the ministries of Amos, Micah, and possibly Jonah. During this time, these prophets warned of impending judgment and captivity, but their messages were largely dismissed. Since the Assyrian threat seemed nonexistent, people didn't heed the messages, demonstrating the difficulty of interpreting events from a short-term perspective. Captivity was not something that had yet been done in that time, so their warnings would have seemed strange to listeners.

5. **Who was Tiglath-Pileser III, and what made him a significant Assyrian ruler?**

Tiglath-Pileser III was an exceptional military leader and administrator who rose to power in 745 BC after a long period of Assyrian weakness. He reversed Assyria's decline and conquered much of the West, including Israel and Damascus. He is seen as the greatest military leader of the Assyrian period and also brought reforms that ensured the long lasting power of the empire. He did this through both military and administrative innovations.

6. **What were some of Tiglath-Pileser III's major innovations, and how did they impact the Assyrian Empire?** Tiglath-Pileser III's innovations included: multiplying administrative districts to weaken powerful states; attacking the power of nobles by creating more of them; establishing a rapid communication system (like a "Pony Express"); directly annexing conquered territories, and instituting a policy of mass deportations to prevent rebellions. He also innovated the use of conquered peoples within his army. These innovations stabilized and greatly strengthened the Assyrian empire.

7. **How did the Assyrian Empire expand under Sargon II, and what challenges did he face?** Sargon II continued the Assyrian expansion, conquering territories in the south, west, and north. He faced opposition from various groups, including the Elamites, rebellious city-states, and the kingdom of Urartu. He consolidated Assyrian power and moved the capital to multiple locations. His reign involved numerous military campaigns.

8. **What was the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and what role did the Assyrians play in it?** The Northern Kingdom of Israel was ultimately conquered by the Assyrians. King Hosea rebelled against Assyria, leading to the siege and capture of Samaria in 722 BC, by Shalmaneser V. Around 28,000 people were deported from the city, and the ten tribes of Israel were scattered. This marked the end of the Northern Kingdom.