

Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology

Course Introduction

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Keywords

Old Testament, History, Culture, Geography, Hebrew, Hermeneutics, Transcribing, Digital Resources, Cosmology, Teleology

Abstract

In this introductory lecture, Dr. Ted Hildebrandt outlines the foundational framework for studying Old Testament history, literature, and theology within its ancient Near Eastern cultural and geographical context. He explains how ancient linguistic features, historical treaties, and physical geography shape biblical interpretation and foster personal spiritual wonder. To ensure accessible learning, Dr. Hildebrandt highlights digital resources—including open-access translations, audio files, and student transcription projects—that lower textbook costs for students. Finally, the lecture introduces philosophical defenses for the existence of God through cause-and-effect cosmological logic and teleological arguments from design.

Outline

I. Course Introduction & Logistics

- A. Welcome and classroom announcements
- B. Recording lectures and online video availability
- C. Teaching Assistant role (Kyle Lincoln) and exam review sessions
- D. Introductory prayer and dedication
- E. Instructor contact details, location (Frost 304), and office hours

II. Core Course Themes & Framework

- A. Old Testament as historical record of God's acts rather than myth
- B. Cultural background of the ancient Near East
 - 1. Temporal gap between ancient biblical authors (1400–2000 BC) and modern readers
 - 2. Linguistic differences in Hebrew communication
 - 3. Nature of Hebrew poetry: thought parallelism vs. English rhyme and meter
 - 4. Divine accommodation and adaptation to human culture
- C. Significance of biblical geography
 - 1. Geographical familiarity enhancing textual comprehension
 - 2. Regional geography shaping worldviews (e.g., Galilee vs. Jerusalem)

D. Literary and historical backgrounds

1. Ancient Near Eastern covenant structures (e.g., Deuteronomy patterned after Hittite treaties)
2. Linguistic origin of Hebrew (~1800 BC) and contextual translation of names like Adam and Eve
3. Archaeology, comparative history, and theological themes

III. Pedagogical Goals & Personal Spirituality

- A.** Comprehensive survey of Old Testament history as a foundation for poetry and prophets
- B.** Cultivating personal spirituality and commitment to loving God
- C.** Overcoming 'idols of the mind' by exploring God's character across 1500 years of interaction
- D.** Developing a sense of mystery and awe through biblical narratives

IV. Course Materials & Digital Accessibility

- A.** Comparative analysis of Bible translations (NIV, NRSV, ESV, NLT, KJV, NKJV)
- B.** The Digital American Standard Version (DASV)
 1. Open-access digital Bible translation in PDF, DOC, HTML, and MP3 formats
 2. Design features serving visual accessibility and audio listening
- C.** Primary required textbook: Our Father Abraham by Dr. Marv Wilson
- D.** Leveraging internet publishing to eliminate financial barriers for students
- E.** Online course portal resources (syllabi, study guides, PowerPoints, and interactive quizzer)

V. Student Projects & Course Mechanics

- A.** Collaborative audio transcription project
 1. Structure: student groups of 6–7 (scribes and editor) transcribing 10-minute audio clips
 2. Global ministry purpose: serving churches and students worldwide
 3. Technical transcription methods (media player speed control)
- B.** Examination structure, weekly quizzes, and extra credit opportunities
- C.** Honors option requirements (waiving the final exam via complete transcriptions)

VI. Philosophical Arguments for the Existence of God

- A.** Addressing contemporary atheism and establishing rational foundations for faith
- B.** The Cosmological Argument (Argument from Cause and Effect)
 1. Sequential chain of causes and effects in physical reality
 2. God as the uncaused First Cause of the universe
- C.** The Teleological Argument (Argument from Design)
 1. 'Jolly Green Giant' illustration demonstrating mathematical improbability of random order
 2. Archaeological and architectural examples of design (Sinai nawamis, stone walls)
 3. Intelligent Design movement and scientific proponents (e.g., William Dembski)
- D.** Guest lecture announcement: Dr. Perry Phillips on astrophysics and creation