Module 3 AVP Transcript

When studying the historical material found in the Old Testament, it soon becomes evident that what is being written is salvation history—the spiritual reflection of God's ongoing interaction with humanity. This is not history as we understand the term today. It is the specific story of God and God's covenant people.

Studying history to learn theology goes back as far as Irenaeus (2nd century A.D.). This is done by linking Biblical text and historical drama. The narration recorded "real events" that took place in the arena of the God who is known and seen in the actions (Brueggemann 11).

The events of history are understood as part of God's divine plan for his people. While all historical accounts must take into consideration the particular biases and purposes of the author, salvation history is no different. It acknowledges its focus from the beginning. We see this in everyday experience today: when something happens to one person, a person without religious faith, he or she may see it as simply happenstance. But when the same thing happens to a person of faith, they acknowledge it as being from God; it is a way of making sense out of human experience. In the Old Testament, historical events are recounted to demonstrate the love, justice, and mercy of God.

An important transition in salvation history is in human leadership: from tribal and patriarchal leadership, to the rule by a group of leaders known as judges, and, eventually, to kings. The story of the emergence of kings such as Saul, David, and Solomon is particularly interesting. When the people first express their desire to have kings, there is initial resistance to the idea. This is because God Himself is the recognized leader of the people; there is no need for a human king.

This was not an unusual attitude. In the ancient Near East, the god of the land was considered the true king. The earthly (human) king was more like a governor who reported to the god (Matthews 628). Once the kings do appear on the scene, they are seen as special representatives of God even though they are not particularly holy, especially King David! Once again, God is seen as the driving force behind the people, despite the human failings of their leaders.

The establishment of a Kingdom has an interesting history, especially since the writers tell us that God gives in to the people in their desire for a king. The desire of Israel was to be like its neighbors. Carvalho insists that later writers (the Deuteronomistic Historian) see the monarchs as heroes, coming to the aid of a dysfunctional nation (156).

Later, as the nation is falling apart, one of the prophets will remind Israel that God is both their creator and their king (Isaiah 43:15). This statement recognizes God's power (to create) and authority (to make laws) (Smith 36). This will become very evident in Module 5 when the prophets are studied.

Works Cited


