



Narratives

The Beauty of Stories

Definition

Narratives are stories. Although from time to time we use the word *story* to describe them, we prefer the word *narrative* because *story* has come to mean something that is fictional. The Bible, on the other hand, contains what we often hear called God's *story*—a story that is utterly true, crucially important, and often complex.

Form

- Narrator/Point of View: Who is telling the story? Are they a participant? What is the bias of the narrator? What is the perspective of the narrator (the camera view)?
- Plot: What is the storyline? What starts the story? What are the elements of conflict? What is the climax? How does the story end?
- Characterization: Who are the characters? What is said about them? What details are given? Why are they important?
- Setting: What clues are given as to the importance of setting? What is the geographical background? What is the timeframe?
- Dialogue: Dialogue is the means in which OT stories develop characters and storyline. Who speaks? When do they speak? What do they say?

Function of Narratives

OT narratives are one story with one meaning, but have three levels of significance.

- The *top level* is that of the whole universal plan of God worked out through history.
- The *middle level* centers on the history of Israel.
- The *bottom level* is the hundreds of individual characters themselves.

Principles

- Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, what people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us.
- An OT narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine, but they can illustrate doctrines.

Principles

- OT narratives are selective. Each story serves to provide insight into the hand of God within the life of an individual or nation.
- In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives. Old Testament narratives are not just stories about people who lived in Old Testament times. They are first and foremost stories about what God did to and through those people.