

1 **The Bible and History**

- Module: Authority
- Lesson 34

2 **Some Recommended Sources**

- Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Evidence and More Evidence updated and combined in one volume.)
- F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?*
- Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*
- John Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*
- K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*
- Stephen Cowan and Terry Wilder, eds., *In Defense of the Bible*
- Joseph M. Holden and Norman Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*
- David E. Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*

3 **Documentary Hypothesis**

also known as the:

Graf-Wellhausen or Wellhausen Hypothesis

or

JEPD Theory

4 **The Documentary Hypothesis (DH) of the Pentateuch**

- First proposed by the German scholar Julius Wellhausen (1878).
- Denies the Mosaic authorship and historical credibility of the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy).
- The basis of Wellhausen's theory, Tyler's evolutionary view of religion, has been discredited. Other aspects have been thoroughly discredited through subsequent archaeological and historical discoveries.
- Yet Wellhausen's theory is still believed and taught by many liberal theologians and pastors.

5 **Primary Claims of the DH**

- The Pentateuch is a compilation of four separate documents written or edited by four separate anonymous authors: J, E, D, and P. (Hence it is often called the JEDP theory.)
 - Jehovist (cir. 850 B. C., time of David or Solomon)
 - Elohist (cir. 750 B. C.)
 - Deuteronomist (around the time of Josiah)
 - Priestly (during the Babylonian captivity)
- All the documents were supposedly written and or edited by anonymous individuals, up to 1000 years after the events they purportedly report.

- Claimed to all be combined into one text around 500-400 B. C.

6 **Documentary Arguments for Multiple Authors**

- The hypothesis claims that the various portions of the Pentateuch have different characteristics reflecting different authors.
 - Use of different names for God.
 - Repetitions and supposed contradictions.
 - Seeming incongruities (e.g. use of the 3rd person, account of the death of Moses).
 - Supposed anachronisms (e.g. supposed use of Aramaic words).

7 **Presuppositions Behind the DH**

- Source analysis (source criticism) takes precedent over archaeological evidence.
- “Natural” (evolutionary) view of Israel’s history.
- No literary style writing at the time of Moses.
- No elevated moral code was possible at that “early” date. (Evolutionary view of monotheism.)
- Patriarchal narratives believed to be legendary.

8 **Flaws in the DH**

- Relies chiefly on source analysis (speculation and subjective opinion) rather than archaeological (objective) evidence. (Recall our discussion of source criticism from our last lesson.)
 - We possess no extant sources outside of the biblical text. All source analysis is based on suppositions drawn from the existing canonical texts of the Pentateuch. There is wide disagreement among DH scholars as to which parts of the Pentateuch belong to which supposed sources.
 - Archaeological discoveries made after Wellhausen (1878) have proven his speculative assumptions to be in error (Wellhausen lacked most of the archaeological evidence we now possess. Later scholars have no such excuse.) Archaeology has established—
 - That literary writing in fact was in practice in the Ancient Near East (ANE) during the time of Moses.
 - That religious beliefs and practices seen in the Pentateuch were well known in the ANE during that time period.
 - That the existence of advanced law codes during that era. (e.g. Discovery of the Code of Hammurabi in 1901, dated to the 18th century B. C., well before Moses, app. 13th century B. C.)

9 **Flaws in the DH**

- Evidence of Mosaic authorship.
 - Pentateuch’s self-attestation: Ex. 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:10, 27; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:19-22, 24-26.

- Testimony of other O. T. writers: Josh. 1:7,8; 8:31, 34-35; 23:6 1 Kgs. 2:3; 2 Kgs. 14:6; 23:25; Dan. 19:11, 13; Neh. 8:1, 14; 13:1; Mal 4:4.
- New Testament testimony:
 - Jesus (Mk. 7:10; 10:3-5; Lk. 5:14; 16:29-31; Jn. 7:19, 23)
 - Paul (Rom. 10:5; 1 Cor. 9:9; 2 Cor. 3:15)
 - John (Jn. 1:17)
 - Peter (Acts 3:22)
 - Luke (Lk. 2:22)

10 Flaws in the DH

- Evidence of Mosaic authorship. (cont.)
 - External evidence:
 - Jewish tradition (e.g. inclusion in the Jewish canon)
 - Ecclesiasticus (O. T. Apocrypha) (“the law which Moses enacted”)
 - Talmud (dating from 200 B. C.)
 - Philo (1st century Jewish Philosopher)
 - Josephus (1st century Jewish historian. “five belong to Moses”)
 - Meanwhile, there is no evidence from antiquity whatsoever of any such authors/editors as J, E, P, and D. (No extant manuscripts, no references by other ancient authors. It is entirely the speculative construct of Wellhausen and his followers.)

11 Flaws in the DH

- A naturalist (evolutionary) view of Israel’s history.
 - Supposedly, religion developed from animism to polytheism to henotheism to monotheism, and that monotheism did not develop until long after the dating of the life of the “supposed” Moses. (app. 13th to 15th centuries B.C.E.)
 - The evolutionary view of religion is countered by archaeological, anthropological, and ethnological evidence.
- Archaeology demonstrates that developed moral law codes did exist prior to that time period (e. g. Hammurabi Code, 18th century B.C.E.)
- Kitchens and other O. T. scholars have demonstrated both the antiquity and reliability of the Pentateuch.

12 Flaws in the DH

- Kitchens and other O. T. scholars have demonstrated both the antiquity and reliability of the Pentateuch. For example
 - External archaeological evidence for the prophet Balaam, son of Beor (Num. 22-24)
 - Price paid for Joseph as a slave corresponds to 18th century B.C.E.
 - Egyptian names for Joseph and his wife date linguistically to the early to mid second millennium B.C.E.

- Precise parallel of the outline of Deuteronomy to that of Hittite suzerainty treaties of the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. (Time of Moses)

13 **The “Life of Jesus Movement”**

or

The Quest for the Historical Jesus

14 **The “Quest for the Historical Jesus”**

- Late 18th through the 19th centuries.
- Attempted to construct the life of Jesus w/o the supernatural aspects (anti-supernaturalism).
- A “liberal” Jesus who preached an ethical kingdom of God and the brotherhood of man, devoid of theology (e.g. Messianic and divine claims, etc.).
- All the miracles are believed to be myths.
- This first quest faltered by the end of the 19th century —
 - It was impossible to separate the theological teachings of Jesus in the earliest Gospel sources (Mark and “Q”) from the theological beliefs of the very early Christians.
 - The “liberal” Jesus of the “Life of Jesus movement” was a projection of modern theology and could not be supported historically.

15 **A Time of Transition**

- First half of the 20th century
- Seeking to distinguish the “Jesus of history” from the “Jesus of faith”.
 - Karl Barth (1886-1968):
 - The actual events of Jesus’ life are not historically accessible, unlike other historical events.
 - The actual historicity of Jesus is really unimportant. What is important is the Jesus preached and experienced today by the church.
 - Rudolph Bultmann (originator of Form Criticism) (1884-1976):
 - All that can be known about the historical Jesus could be written on a 4 X 6 card, but this lack of information was not consequential.
 - The Gospels were largely mythological. By “demythologizing” Jesus one could get to the kernel of truth in the myth.
 - It was the “Christ idea” that was sufficient for faith, not any actual historical event or person.

16 **A “Second” Quest**

- The 20th century.
- Well-known contemporary voices:

- The Jesus Seminar
- Bart Ehrman
- Developed due to the failure of the first Quest's attempt to disassociate Jesus of history from the theology of the early church.
- Assumes the Gospels are historically inauthentic, unless proven otherwise.

17 A "Second" Quest

- Resists ascribing to Jesus any theology of the early church.
- "Historical" Jesus vs. the "Jesus of History".
 - Jesus of history: the Jesus who really lived.
 - Historical Jesus: that which can be proven historically
- Myth vs. history.
 - Attempts to "demythologize" Jesus
 - Trying to find the "truth" behind the myth

18 A "Second" Quest

- Serious Problems With The Second Quest:
- It operates from a naturalistic presuppositional basis.
- It unjustifiably assumes that history and theology must be mutually exclusive in ancient texts.
- It unjustifiably assumes inauthenticity rather than authenticity of the Gospels. (In spite of considerable historical evidence of historical authenticity.)
- It improperly uses the criteria of authenticity. (See last week's lesson. Views the criteria as necessary rather than sufficient.)
- The Gospels/Acts have been shown to be of the Greco-Roman history genre, rather than myth.

19 A "Third" Quest

- "The Jewish reclamation of Jesus."
 - Jewish scholars who see Jesus appreciatively and seek to incorporate him into the fold of Judaism.
 - Jewish scholars focus chiefly on Jesus' ethical teachings.
 - Interpret Jesus in the context of Jewish thought and culture.
 - Much more respect for the Gospel record than in the second Quest.
- Jesus was a real, first century, person about whom much can be known from the Gospels.

20 A "Third" Quest

- Jesus exhibited characteristics of a first century Palestinian Jewish rabbi.

- He employed mnemonic aids commonly taught to Jewish children in their homes.
- His ethical teachings fit with those of other first century rabbis.
- Jesus believed and taught that he was the Jewish Messiah.
- Few scholars now believe that myth is a legitimate interpretive category in the study of the Gospels.

21 **Is The Bible History or Myth?**

- A materialistic or naturalistic view of the bible.
 - The bible is viewed as a collection of myths.
 - The sources of these myths:
 - Borrowed and/or adapted from surrounding cultures or religions.
 - Created out of nothing by the early Christian community to express their teachings.
- The growing consensus among biblical scholars is that the Bible's worldview is fundamentally at odds with the worldview expressed in mythological literature. (e.g. the Jewish reclamation of Jesus)

22 **The Bible vs. Myths:**

Radically Different Ways of Viewing Reality

- Common features of myth:
 - Polytheistic
 - Images in the shapes of the material world representing the gods.
 - Chaotic matter is eternal, matter is animate.
 - Personality is not essential to reality.
 - Low view of the gods.
 - Low view of humanity.
 - Conflict is the source of life.
 - No single standard of ethics. Ethics are human vs. God centered.
 - Deities are sexualized.
 - Cyclical concept of existence. History is unimportant.

23 **The Bible vs. Myths:**

Radically Different Ways of Viewing Reality

- Common features of biblical thought:
 - Monotheistic
 - Iconoclastic (God may not be represented in any created form.)
 - Absence of conflict in creation, matter is created and inanimate.
 - First principle is Spirit, not matter.

- An exalted view of God and his reliability and character.
- A high view of humanity. (The Imago Dei)
- God is the source of life
- Ethical obedience is a religious response to God.
- God is non-sexual (Sexuality has nothing to do w/God or ultimate reality.)
- History is linear. The importance of human-historical activity.

24 **The Bible and History**

- Recent Developments in Historical Biblical Scholarship:
 - Eyewitness history.
 - Gospels were once dismissed as of a different genre than ancient history.
 - Present consensus is that the Gospels are ancient historical narratives based on eyewitness accounts. (Greco-Roman biography)
 - The Jewish scholarship.
 - Dismisses the view of Jesus as myth.
 - Jesus is now seen as a real figure who exhibits true Jewish thoughts and culture.

25 **The Bible and History**

- Recent Developments in Historical Biblical Scholarship (cont.):
- The Bible and Archaeology:
 - Countless archaeological discoveries have confirmed biblical statements concerning historical events, personalities, people groups, and geographical locations and descriptions.
 - No archaeological discovery has ever disconfirmed any biblical statement. (Remember, "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.")
 - Luke, once largely dismissed, is now regarded as a first-class first century historian.

26 **What Have We Learned About the Bible?**

- We have multiple good reasons to believe the bible is God's word.
- We understand why we accept these books and not others as authoritative scripture.
- We've learned how the bible is distinct from and superior to other religious texts.
- We know we can have confidence that the text we possess accurately represents the original autographs.
- We understand how the bible is studied by scholars, the methods of biblical criticism, their strengths and limitations, and how they are often misused or abused.
- We know that the bible is not myth, but reliable historical literature.

27 **Next Week:**

- Christianity: A Faith of History