WEAVER STUDY GUIDES

The World And Times Of Jesse James

Study Guide

Family Government

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A lesson-by-lesson companion for reading, discussion, and written responses.

Downloadable classroom edition | 8.5 x 11 inches

Name / group

Date

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Using this guide

Read the corresponding chapter, then work through the themes, arguments, and Scripture references.

Write your responses before discussing the questions with others. Use the application pages to identify a practical next step.

The study material is retained from the existing lecture study guides. Added writing prompts provide space for your own response.

Print at Actual Size / 100% on US Letter paper. Single-sided and double-sided printing are both suitable. Lessons begin on the next available page; no blank pages are inserted.

Reading assignments refer to the October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition of the companion book. Online lecture links and QR codes are collected at the end.

LESSON 1

Pastor John Weaver - The World And Times Of Jesse James

Part One of Three

May 05, 2014

Read Chapter 1 in the companion book, pages 5-24 (October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition).

Major Themes

Justice and Righteousness as Foundations of Society

Without justice, society withers and dies; justice is defined by God, not man, and is inseparable from righteousness.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'Without justice, society withers and dies. And without justice, evil men increase and prosper.' He later explains that the Hebrew word for justice is the same as righteousness.

History as God's Sovereign Decree

All history is the outworking of God's eternal decree and must be studied theologically, not just historically.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'history is nothing less than the eternal decree of God coming to pass in time. So history then is God's history, and it must be studied not just merely from a historical perspective, but also from a theological perspective.'

The Danger of Judging the Past by Present Standards

It is impossible to accurately judge historical figures without understanding the world and times in which they lived.

Lecture support: Weaver argues, 'it is absolutely impossible to judge a man who lived 160 years ago by today's standards without knowing the times in which he lived.'

Government Complicity in Injustice

The federal and state governments protected and condoned Jayhawker atrocities, demonstrating how civil authorities can become agents of oppression.

Lecture support: Weaver explains that the Kansas government 'turned a blind eye to their criminal acts and the federal government condoned their raids.'

Tyranny Breeds Anarchy

When civil leaders fail to execute justice, some will take justice into their own hands, leading to anarchy.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'anarchy is often the outcome of tyranny... When the civil leaders fail to execute justice and promote righteousness, there will always be some who will seek to see that justice is done in some measure.'

The Religious Character of Jesse James

Jesse James was a professing Christian, baptized, a Bible reader, and morally upright in many respects, yet his life of crime raises questions about his faith.

Lecture support: Weaver notes Jesse's church membership, Bible memorization, and that he 'did not drink. He did not use vulgar language. And he always treated women in a gentlemanly manner.'

Key Arguments

Injustice in the Civil War Era Was Rooted in Abolitionist Extremism

The Jayhawkers' violence was not merely anti-slavery but a broader hatred of Southerners, and their crimes were protected by Radical Republican governments.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Major A.V.E. Johnson: 'to devastate the country and leave the habitations of southern men not one stone upon another.'

Jesse James Was a Product of His Times

The personal abuse Jesse and his family suffered at the hands of Union soldiers directly led him to join Quantrill's guerrillas.

Lecture support: Weaver recounts the hanging of Jesse's stepfather and the imprisonment of his mother and sister, after which 'Jesse, not 16 years old, mounted the best horse on the place and rode with all speed to the camp of William Clark Quantrill.'

Union Military Leaders Recognized the Counterproductive Nature of Jayhawker Atrocities

Union generals admitted that the outrages committed by Lane and Jennison were driving Missourians into the Confederate army.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes General Halleck: 'The conduct of these forces under Lane and Jennison has done more for the enemy in this state than could have been accomplished by 20,000 of his own army.'

Biblical Justice and Righteousness Are Inseparable

The Hebrew word for justice is the same as righteousness, meaning that without one, the other cannot exist.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'The Hebrew word for justice is the same Hebrew word that is translated righteousness in our Bibles. Do you realize that justice and righteousness are identical.'

America Is Heading Toward the Same Injustice Seen in Jesse James's Era

Weaver warns that contemporary failures in the justice system mirror the conditions described in Isaiah 59 and will lead to societal collapse or vigilantism.

Lecture support: Weaver cites recent cases of leniency toward violent criminals and says, 'They're going to keep letting murderers and rapists and kidnappers out until either society dies or society turns into vigilantes and kills them.'

Scripture References

Isaiah 59:12-15

Read at the opening to establish the theme of societal injustice when truth fails.

Proverbs 28:12

Cited to show that when the wicked rise, the righteous hide themselves.

Exodus 20:15

Referenced indirectly as 'thou shalt not steal' when questioning how a Christian could rob.

Exodus 20:13

Referenced indirectly as 'thou shalt not kill' in the same context.

2 Samuel 11-12

David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah used as an example of a believer who stole and killed.

1 Samuel 18:7

Alluded to when mentioning 'Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.'

Genesis 19

Lot's life in Sodom and his offer of his daughters used as an example of a believer whose actions are hard to reconcile with faith.

2 Peter 2:7-8

Cited to show that Lot was righteous despite his actions.

Genesis 4:9-10

Quoted to illustrate that innocent blood cries out for justice.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. How does viewing history as 'God's history' change the way we study and interpret past events?

Consider: Weaver argues that history is the outworking of God's decree and must be studied theologically.

2. In what ways can a failure to understand historical context lead to unjust judgments of people from the past?

Consider: Weaver warns against judging Jesse James by modern standards without knowing his world and times.

3. How do the biblical examples of David and Lot challenge our assumptions about what a believer's life should look like?

Consider: Weaver uses David and Lot to show that genuine believers can commit serious sins.

4. What does the complicity of government in the Jayhawker atrocities teach us about the potential for civil authorities to become agents of injustice?

Consider: Weaver details how federal and state governments protected the Jayhawkers.

5. How can we reconcile the biblical commands against stealing and killing with the actions of someone like Jesse James who claimed to be a Christian?

Consider: Weaver raises the question of how a professing believer could turn to a life of crime.

6. What are the dangers of a society where truth has 'fallen in the street' and justice is perverted?

Consider: Weaver applies Isaiah 59:14 to both historical and contemporary contexts.

7. In what ways might the statement 'anarchy is often the outcome of tyranny' apply to current events?

Consider: Weaver suggests that when civil leaders fail to execute justice, some will take justice into their own hands.

8. How should Christians respond when they see injustice in their own government or legal system?

Consider: Weaver warns that without justice, society will perish, implying a need for action.

Applications

Recognize the Theological Nature of History

Believers should study history not merely as a record of human events but as the unfolding of God's sovereign plan, learning from past injustices to discern present dangers.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'history is nothing less than the eternal decree of God coming to pass in time... it must be studied not just merely from a historical perspective, but also from a theological perspective.'

Avoid Anachronistic Judgments

When evaluating historical figures, we must understand the world and times in which they lived rather than imposing modern standards.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'it is absolutely impossible to judge a man who lived 160 years ago by today's standards without knowing the times in which he lived.'

Uphold Justice and Righteousness as Inseparable

Christians must advocate for biblical justice, recognizing that without righteousness there can be no true justice, and vice versa.

Lecture support: Weaver explains, 'The Hebrew word for justice is the same Hebrew word that is translated righteousness... without righteousness, there can be no justice. And without justice, there can be no righteousness.'

Beware of Government Complicity in Evil

Civil authorities can become agents of oppression; believers must be vigilant and not assume that government actions are inherently just.

Lecture support: Weaver details how the federal and state governments condoned Jayhawker raids, showing that 'the very government that was supposed to protect the southern people took everything from them.'

Understand the Roots of Anarchy

When governments fail to execute justice, they create conditions that lead to vigilantism and societal breakdown.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'anarchy is often the outcome of tyranny... When the civil leaders fail to execute justice and promote righteousness, there will always be some who will seek to see that justice is done in some measure.'

Heed the Warning of Contemporary Injustice

The failures of the modern justice system mirror the conditions described in Isaiah 59 and threaten societal collapse.

Lecture support: Weaver cites recent cases of leniency toward violent criminals and warns, 'They're going to keep letting murderers and rapists and kidnappers out until either society dies or society turns into vigilantes and kills them.'

Study notes

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 2

Pastor John Weaver - The World And Times Of Jesse James

Part Two of Three

May 05, 2014

Read Chapter 2 in the companion book, pages 25-42 (October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition).

Major Themes

Government Injustice as the Root of Outlawry

The lecture argues that the oppressive actions of the federal and state governments, including military atrocities and legal disenfranchisement, forced men like Jesse James into outlawry.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'Lawlessness in government produces lawlessness in citizenry... a lawless government produces, creates, and makes outlaws.' He details how the government denied protection and justice, leaving individuals to defend themselves.

The Demand for Divine Justice

God requires justice from both individuals and governments; when truth and equity are absent, society withers.

Lecture support: Weaver cites Isaiah 59:14-15 and says, 'God does demand justice... if we do not have justice in a society, society is inevitably going to wither and die.'

The Corruption of Post-War Reconstruction

Radical Republicans used the ironclad oath and ousting ordinance to seize total political control, disenfranchising and persecuting former Confederates.

Lecture support: Weaver reads from Paul Peterson's book, detailing how the oath excluded anyone who aided a Confederate, and how the ousting ordinance removed over 800 elected officials.

Vigilantism as a Response to Failed Government

Vigilantism is legally defined as organized extralegal enforcement of law when government fails to provide adequate protection, not mere anarchy.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Black's Law Dictionary: 'Vigilantism refers to the creation and enforcement of law by organized extralegal groups in the supposed absence of adequate law enforcement.'

The Personal Suffering of the James Family

The brutal treatment of Jesse James and his family by Union soldiers served as a catalyst for his later actions.

Lecture support: Weaver describes how Jesse was beaten and his stepfather hanged, and his mother abused until she miscarried.

Key Arguments

Government Atrocities Justified Self-Defense

The federal government's refusal to protect citizens and its active persecution forced individuals to take the law into their own hands for survival.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'If government fulfilled its functional role of punishing the wicked and protecting the righteous, it would not be necessary for anyone to take the law into his own hands.'

The Ironclad Oath Was a Tool of Tyranny

The oath disenfranchised and economically crippled former Confederates, making peaceful reintegration impossible.

Lecture support: Weaver reads that the oath excluded anyone who 'might have given a cup of water to a Confederate soldier' and that only 410 out of 4,290 voters were allowed to vote in Boone County.

Post-War Violence Was State-Sponsored

Even after the war, federal and state militias hunted and killed former Confederates, as seen in the 4,000 murders in southwest Missouri in 1866.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'In 1866, one year after the surrender of Appomattox, 4,000 secessionists... were murdered in Southwest Missouri.'

Jesse James Attempted Peaceful Surrender

Jesse and Frank James tried to surrender and return to farming but were attacked by federal soldiers, leaving them no choice but to fight back.

Lecture support: Weaver recounts the meeting with Major Rogers and the subsequent ambush, noting Jesse was shot in the lung and took years to recover.

The Definition of 'Outlaw' Implies Government Failure

Legally, an outlaw is one deprived of the law's protection; thus, the government itself created outlaws by denying justice.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Black's Law Dictionary: 'A person excluded from the benefit of the law or deprived of its protection.'

Scripture References

Isaiah 59:12-15

Weaver reads these verses at the beginning to illustrate how truth fails and justice is absent, paralleling the times of Jesse James.

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. How does the legal definition of vigilantism challenge our modern assumptions about taking the law into one's own hands?

Consider: Weaver explains that vigilantism originally referred to organized extralegal enforcement of law when government fails.

2. In what ways did General Orders No. 10 and 11 violate biblical principles of justice and charity?

Consider: The orders criminalized providing food or aid to family members, which Weaver argues forced people to choose between obeying God or man.

3. How does the ironclad oath illustrate the danger of using loyalty tests to disenfranchise political opponents?

Consider: The oath excluded anyone who had even given a cup of water to a Confederate, effectively silencing a large portion of the population.

4. What responsibility does government have to provide justice, and what are the consequences when it fails?

Consider: Weaver argues that when government refuses justice, it forces individuals to seek it themselves, leading to societal breakdown.

5. How should Christians respond when they are denied legal protection and justice by their own government?

Consider: The lecture implies that self-defense and extralegal justice may be necessary, but also emphasizes obedience to God's law.

Applications

Recognize that government can sin and create outlaws

Believers should understand that when government denies justice, it forces citizens into lawlessness, and the government's sin is greater because of its wider impact.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'The sin is greater, I believe, on the part of the government because government can do far more harm than an individual.'

Uphold God's demand for justice in society

Christians must advocate for true, biblical justice, knowing that a society without it will wither and die.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'God does demand justice... if we do not have justice in a society, society is inevitably going to wither and die.'

Obey God rather than man when laws conflict

The lecture implies that obeying God's law may lead to being classed an outlaw by man, but it is better than being an outlaw to God.

Lecture support: Weaver prays, 'it's a whole lot easier, Lord, to be classed an outlaw by man than it is to be classed an outlaw by the sovereign God of heaven and earth.'

Study notes

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

LESSON 3

Pastor John Weaver - The World And Times Of Jesse James

Part Three of Three

May 05, 2014

Read Chapter 3 in the companion book, pages 43-63 (October 9, 2026 opening-heading corrected edition).

Major Themes

Corruption of Government and Legal Injustice

The government, through actions like the ironclad oath, ousting ordinance, and the Pinkerton raid, acted lawlessly and created outlaws like Jesse James.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'the government that murdered their families, stole their property, drove them from their homes, tried to hunt them down and murder them, and forced them to seek justice on their terms.'

Divine Vengeance and Perfect Justice

Only God can execute perfect justice; human justice is flawed, and vengeance belongs to the Lord.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'There is no perfect justice in time and history. Perfect justice only comes at the end of the world.'

Sympathy for Outlaws as Victims of Circumstance

Many outlaws were made by bad government, and the public sympathized with them as striking back against oppressive Northern interests.

Lecture support: Weaver notes, 'most of these notorious outlaws were made outlaws by bad government' and cites the proposed amnesty bill defending the James-Younger gang.

Betrayal and Treachery

The Ford brothers' betrayal of Jesse James, shooting him unarmed, is portrayed as the ultimate act of cowardice and treachery.

Lecture support: Weaver reads the tombstone: 'murdered... by a traitor and a coward whose name is not worthy to appear here.'

The Importance of Historical Knowledge

Understanding history is crucial to avoid repeating past mistakes, especially regarding government overreach and injustice.

Lecture support: Weaver warns, 'if we do not learn the past and know what happened in the past, we are doomed to repeat it over because of our own stupidity.'

Key Arguments

Jesse James was driven to outlawry by federal atrocities

The abuse of his family by federal soldiers and the post-war persecution left him no choice but to become an outlaw.

Lecture support: Weaver details the hanging of his stepfather, the miscarriage of his mother, and the ironclad oath that prevented honest work.

The Pinkerton raid was an act of lawless revenge

The bombing of the James home, killing a child and maiming a mother, was done under color of law but was murder and arson.

Lecture support: Weaver quotes Pinkerton's letter and notes the bomb materials came from a federal arsenal.

The assassination of Jesse James was a government-sanctioned murder

Governor Crittenden offered a reward for Jesse dead or alive and conspired with the Ford brothers, who were not law officers.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'the governor of the state is offering them $10,000 to assassinate a man.'

Bad government produces bad citizens

When government acts lawlessly, it creates outlaws and destroys society; justice is essential for civilization.

Lecture support: Weaver argues, 'bad government always produces bad citizens' and 'you cannot have a civilization without justice.'

Modern parallels to the world of Jesse James

Today's government lawlessness, such as involvement in drugs and wars, mirrors the corruption of the Reconstruction era.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'It appears that lawlessness in government is becoming more and more rampant each day.'

Scripture References

Isaiah 59:12-15

Weaver reads these verses at the start, emphasizing the fall of truth and justice, which displeases God.

Matthew 24:44

Pastor J.P. Martin used this verse at Jesse James's funeral: 'Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.'

Study notes

Discussion Questions

1. How does the story of Jesse James illustrate the biblical principle that 'judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off' (Isaiah 59:14)?

Consider: Weaver uses Isaiah 59 to frame the message, showing how the lack of justice in Jesse's time displeased God.

2. In what ways did the government's actions create the very outlaws it sought to destroy?

Consider: Weaver argues that bad government produces bad citizens, citing the ironclad oath and Pinkerton raid.

3. What parallels can we draw between the corruption of the Reconstruction era and modern government lawlessness?

Consider: Weaver challenges listeners to compare the world of Jesse James to today, mentioning drugs, wars, and socialism.

4. How should Christians respond when they see injustice and lack of legal recourse?

Consider: Weaver emphasizes that vengeance belongs to God and perfect justice comes only at the end of the world.

5. What does the betrayal of Jesse James by the Ford brothers teach us about the nature of treachery and trust?

Consider: The Ford brothers ate and slept in Jesse's home before shooting him unarmed, highlighting deep betrayal.

Applications

Trust in God's perfect justice

Believers should not seek personal vengeance but trust that God will right all wrongs at the final judgment.

Lecture support: Weaver says, 'There is no perfect justice in time and history. Perfect justice only comes at the end of the world.'

Study history to avoid repeating mistakes

Christians should study the lives of outlaws and historical injustices to understand how bad government leads to societal decay.

Lecture support: Weaver urges, 'study the lives of some of these notorious outlaws' and warns that ignorance of history dooms us to repeat it.

Recognize modern parallels to past injustices

Listeners should be observant of current government lawlessness and its parallels to the Reconstruction era.

Lecture support: Weaver states, 'I believe you should have already compared the world and times of Jesse James to our day and time.'

Understand that bad government produces bad citizens

When government acts unjustly, it fosters lawlessness; Christians should advocate for justice and righteousness in governance.

Lecture support: Weaver asserts, 'bad government always produces bad citizens' and 'you cannot have a civilization without justice.'

Study notes

Personal Application and Notes

Which application will you work on, and what specific step will you take?

What Scripture or teaching will you return to as you put this into practice?

Additional notes or questions to discuss

Online Lecture Resources

Scan a code or select the lecture link in the PDF. The original lecture identifiers and destinations are preserved.

Lesson 1: Pastor John Weaver - The World And Times Of Jesse James - Part One of Three

Lecture JW01388

Open the formatted lecture online

https://weaverbiblecollege.com/transcript.php?library=weaverbiblecollege&lecture=JW01388&transcript=ai&pc_view=formatted

Lesson 2: Pastor John Weaver - The World And Times Of Jesse James - Part Two of Three

Lecture JW01389

Open the formatted lecture online

https://weaverbiblecollege.com/transcript.php?library=weaverbiblecollege&lecture=JW01389&transcript=ai&pc_view=formatted

Lesson 3: Pastor John Weaver - The World And Times Of Jesse James - Part Three of Three

Lecture JW01390

Open the formatted lecture online

https://weaverbiblecollege.com/transcript.php?library=weaverbiblecollege&lecture=JW01390&transcript=ai&pc_view=formatted

Source information

Study material: existing Major Themes, Key Arguments, Scripture References, Discussion Questions, and Applications from the corresponding Weaver Bible College lecture records. Original lecture titles and provenance are retained in those source records.

Layout upgraded September 30, 2026. Original manuscripts, study-guide data, and previous PDFs have not been changed.