



# THE BIBLE

FAST FORWARD

# Session 1

## Overview: Rulership and Dominion

### Session 1 Objectives:

- Suggest the central reason Christians misapply the Old Testament
- Clarify the basic nature of a world view
- Identify the five basic pieces of the Christian world view “puzzle”
- Introduce the purpose of the course
- List the 12 events forming the historical backbone of the OT
- Introduce the main theme of the Bible
- Identify the original role of man in God’s plan

## **I. Introduction: Epiphany in Cairo**

### **A. Teaching “Never Read a Bible Verse”<sup>1</sup> to Christians in Egypt<sup>2</sup>**

1. I had been dealing with the somewhat reckless tendency of Christians to wrench Old Testament verses out of context and claim them as promises for themselves, in this case Jer. 29:11:

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”<sup>3</sup>

2. I was explaining why it was a mistake to cite this passage as a Christian promise.

3. A frustrated Cairo Christian responded:

- a. “Are you saying the OT doesn’t apply to my life?”
- b. “Tell me one verse in the OT I can claim for myself,” she pleaded.
- c. “Tell me what application Ex. 14:14 has for my life?”
  - 1) “The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.”
  - 2) This is a “promise” she had claimed many times in her Christian life.
- d. I want you to see something about this verse just as it stands.
  - 1) Do you realize in some ways this is the opposite of what the NT teaches about God’s role when we find ourselves in a tight spot?

But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say, for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say, for it is not

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<sup>1</sup> This is an important talk on how to properly interpret the Bible. It’s available at [str.org](http://str.org).

<sup>2</sup> Focus on the Family Middle-East, Student Leadership Institute

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture references throughout this syllabus are from the *New American Standard Version* of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. (Matt. 10:19-20)

- 2) This ought to immediately alert you to a problem with the way she was using this text.
4. I went back to my hotel that night to ponder her challenge.
  - a. I read the larger passage.
    - 1) Clearly she was not interpreting it in light of the larger context.
    - 2) This verse simply did not apply to her the way she was claiming it.
  - b. But there was a deeper problem.
    - 1) What of her challenge?
    - 2) Is it true that massive portions of Scripture have no relevance or application to us as Christians?
5. As I pondered the problem, I had an epiphany regarding why there was so much confusion.
6. The next day I told the class that on the day I departed Cairo I was going to claim the verse just before Ex. 14:14 as *my own* personal promise from God:

But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.” (Ex. 14:13)

7. They all laughed and saw my error.
  - a. But what *was* the mistake?
  - b. Was this just another verse that had no relevance for Christians?
  - c. It certainly seemed I was saying that massive numbers of OT verses have no application to our lives today.

## B. The parts and the whole

1. Part of the **problem** was something that happened 700 years ago: The Bible was broken down into chapters and verses.
  - a. This is very helpful, obviously.
  - b. However, the division tempts us to treat the Bible as a collection of discrete statements.
  - c. We think of the verses as individual pieces of information which on their own—isolated from the larger narrative—have individual application to our lives.
  - d. Otherwise, “The Bible doesn’t apply to our lives.”
2. But God did not give the Bible as a collection of aphorisms—short, pithy, helpful statements—to be applied piecemeal to our lives.<sup>4</sup>
  - a. The majority of Scripture is narrative, story. Much of the rest—NT epistles, for example—is argument.
  - b. There is a flow of thought that is tied to—and therefore critical to—the meaning of each part.

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<sup>4</sup> With a few exceptions, like the book of Proverbs.

- c. We can't simply isolate a line or two and ask, "How can I stick this line into my life."
- d. Instead, we have to follow the flow of thought to know how the broader passage speaks to the particulars of our individual lives.
- 3. It's better to get into the habit of ignoring the artificial divisions (chapters and verses).
  - a. Instead, we focus on the larger narrative or argument.
  - b. We look at the flow of thought.
- 4. **The account *taken as a whole*, then, has instructive value, not necessarily the pieces standing alone.**
- 5. Meaning flows from the larger unit to the smaller unit.
  - a. The sentence helps us understand the meaning of an individual word in the sentence.
  - b. The paragraph helps us understand what the sentence means.
  - c. The chapter helps us understand the paragraph's role in the larger narrative.
- 6. **Therefore, a proper understanding of the whole is key to understanding the meaning—and the proper application of—the parts.**

This realization introduces us to a very important concept...

## II. Puzzle Pieces and World Views

### A. World view

- 1. The whole picture, taken in its largest sense, is what we call a world view.
- 2. World views are pictures of reality.
  - a. These pictures are much like puzzles.
  - b. They are made up of pieces that should fit together naturally.
  - c. When the puzzle is assembled properly, a coherent picture emerges.
- 3. If you know the big picture, then putting the parts in order is a lot easier.

### B. Problem: Piles of puzzle pieces

- 1. Most Christians have many of the pieces to the puzzle.
  - a. Some Christians, though, are missing important pieces.
  - b. Others have pieces mixed in from other puzzles.
    - 1) Reincarnation, for example, is part of a different "picture" of reality.
    - 2) There is no place in Christianity for it to fit.
      - a) It's like trying to put a carburetor on a computer.
      - b) It doesn't do any meaningful work in our system.
  - c. Both problems (missing pieces and wrong pieces) make it difficult for Christians to put the puzzle of Christianity together correctly.
- 2. Even with all the right pieces, very few Christians are able to assemble the puzzle in a coherent fashion to make sense of the whole.
- 3. Dump a box of puzzle pieces at your feet and you'll have a picture of how most Christians see their world view—a pile of pieces.

- a. Which is why we often cannibalize texts from the Old Testament claiming verses as our own in a way that destroys their original intent (as did the Christian girl in Cairo). We are looking at a piece without regard for the whole.
- b. Consequently, Christians are often confused about the Christian world view, which means they are confused about reality.
  - 1) They are living as if the world were constructed very differently than it is.
  - 2) When you get reality wrong, you have problems.
    - a) Reality has a way of getting our attention by bruising those who do not take it seriously.
    - b) Reality is what you crash into when you are not paying attention.

**C. In this course, I am going to lay out the framework of the puzzle.**

1. In these eight sessions, I want you to see the pieces clearly.
2. Then I want to teach you how the pieces fit together into a coherent whole.

### **III. Piecing the Puzzle Together**

There are two ways to assemble the framework of our puzzle...

**A. Topical (systematic) approach—5 elements**

1. **Question:** What is the phrase theologians use to describe looking at the foundational pieces of the Christian puzzle—topic by topic—in a systematic way? Systematic theology.<sup>5</sup>
2. Here is a brief look at the five main topical elements of the Christian story put in temporal (and logical) order:
  - **God**—God creates the world and is therefore the rightful sovereign over all. Everything else (including all humanity) is under His authority.
  - **Man**—Man is made noble in God's image, but rebels against his sovereign. Guilty of sedition and disconnected from his only source of life, man falls deep into slavery to sin.
  - **Jesus**—God becomes a man in Jesus. Jesus lives the perfect life of submission that man was meant to live.
  - **Cross**—Jesus dies on a cross and rises from the dead. He lays down His life to rescue man from his guilt and bondage.
  - **Resurrection**—At the end of history there will be a final resurrection of all men. Those who received God's pardon will live with Him in Heaven and enjoy the perfect life He intended for them at the first. Those who continued in rebellion will be banished to Hell—a place of misery, darkness, and eternal ruin—forever.
3. These elements represent five key areas of systematic theology:
  - a. God (theology proper)
  - b. Man (anthropology)
  - c. Jesus (Christology)
  - d. Cross (soteriology)

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<sup>5</sup> Systematic theology gives an orderly account of the basic scriptural teaching on central topics of the Bible showing how they fit together into a coherent whole or unified system.

e. Resurrection (eschatology)

This is the topical breakdown. There's also a second way to look at the big picture.

**B. Historical (biblical) approach—12 main historical events**

**Question:** What is the phrase theologians use to describe looking at the foundational pieces of the Christian puzzle as the story unfolds, step by step, through the historical record of the Bible? Biblical theology.<sup>6</sup>

1. In this approach, we chart the history of Israel in the Bible to see the unfolding story of redemption (salvation history).
2. We will spend the bulk of our time together seeing how...
  - a. The central topical elements of the Christian story of reality play out historically
  - b. The progressive revelation of the Bible unfolds from the fall (the problem) to the cross (the solution)
3. I want to show how the events, promises, and covenants of the Old Testament come to their perfect focus and fulfillment in Jesus.
4. Along the way I want to:
  - a. Identify the unifying theme of the entire Bible
  - b. List the ways in which Israel was "chosen"
  - c. Examine the basic elements of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant
  - d. Show specifically why God had to become a man in Jesus and why no other alternative way to God could possibly be sufficient
  - e. Demonstrate that the Bible presents one cohesive plan of salvation
    - 1) The Old Testament and New Testament are inseparably linked.
    - 2) Biblical Judaism and New Testament Christianity are one religion, not two.
5. Basically, **I want the light to go on.**
6. **This material can change your life!**
7. I think that when you see how the big parts fit together it will have a huge impact on...
  - a. The way you read Scripture
  - b. The way you understand God's purposes
  - c. The way you see yourself as part of the eternal plans of God
8. **Only after we understand the original intent of a portion of Scripture in its historical flow can we then determine what—if any—application the passage has for us.**

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<sup>6</sup> Biblical theology charts the progressive unfolding of God's plan and purpose from Genesis to Revelation showing how each part finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus (note Luke 24:27, 44).

## IV. Class Details

### A. For this you will need a good Bible translation.

1. The NASB (highly recommended), NIV, ESV, or NKJV
2. Steer away from the old KJV.
  - a. I only recommend the old KJV to those who are 350 years old or older.
  - b. All others would do better with a more recent translation.
3. No paraphrases. They do not provide the precision we need for study.

### B. Other recommended texts:

1. *Our Father Abraham*, Marvin Wilson (Eerdmans)
2. *A Visual Survey of the Bible*—Boa and Lorenzen (Thomas Nelson) [out of print]

### C. Making the most of our time together

1. The volume of material here may seem overwhelming. Don't let that scare you.
  - a. This extended syllabus is given as a resource to make your own study and learning more productive.
  - b. There's more in the syllabus than I plan to teach.
2. Take the course at your own speed.
  - a. I try to set a full table; you eat what you like.
  - b. I will be moving pretty fast, however. That's why it's good you have my notes.
  - c. You may also want to get the CDs or DVDs of the course.
3. Review and preview.
  - a. Review: Read each session's notes at least once through as a review during the week.
  - b. Preview: You may even want to pre-read the notes for the upcoming session if you have them.
4. **Each one teach one.**
  - a. Tell someone else, in as much detail as you can, what you're learning.
  - b. Be sure to cover the significance of that session's teaching for you.

### D. Since this is a course about biblical world view and theology, I will use the Bible as an authoritative source.

1. I won't try to prove it's God's Word. That's another task I address elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>
2. I'll entertain brief questions during the class, but not debate. Unfortunately, there isn't time to make this a public forum for competing ideas (though that would be fun).

**This brings us to the main purpose of the course: the “historical” look.**

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<sup>7</sup> See the talk “Has God Spoken?” available at [str.org](http://str.org).

## V. Purpose of this course—very concrete

### Purpose of This Course:

To give a practical, historical overview of the Old Testament emphasizing the unfolding plan of salvation as God reveals it through His covenants with the nation of Israel, and the fulfillment of those covenants in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

#### A. We will do this by charting the basic history of the nation of Israel (12 main events).

1. We will review this “Designer’s Dozen” repeatedly as we go through the class.
2. These events form the backbone of salvation history.

**Question:** What events would you say should be included in a list of the theologically most important events in the history of Israel?

#### B. Now I want to list those historical events.

1. As we go through the course, I will explain the importance of each of these events to the flow of salvation history.
2. The 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel:
  - a. The call of Abraham
  - b. The birth of Isaac
  - c. Joseph in Egypt
  - d. The Exodus
  - e. Moses gets the Law
  - f. Joshua conquers the land
  - g. The three kings of the united kingdom: Saul, David, and Solomon
  - h. The kingdom splits: Israel and Judah
  - i. The Assyrian dispersion (of Israel)
  - j. The Babylonian captivity (of Judah)
  - k. The return to the land
  - l. The coming of Messiah
3. Repeat the list explaining the motions.
4. Review as a group twice through using the motions.

An historical framework is possible because...

#### C. God has revealed Himself through history.

1. History becomes, then, **the larger picture** necessary for us to understand in order to make sense of **the parts**.
2. If you don’t understand the whole (the historical overview), it is unlikely you will properly understand what God is doing when you look at any of the parts.
3. Also, because God has revealed Himself in history, the biblical claims are uniquely testable.
  - a. We are not simply left with a mere story, as many religions are.
  - b. Rather, our story of reality is tied to things that actually happened in history.

- c. That's why Paul says of the resurrection of Christ (for example) that if the resurrection didn't really happen, then Christians should be pitied for what they believe (1 Cor. 15:16-19).
- 4. Note Wilson on the significance of the Bible as revelation in history:

The Bible is, first and foremost, God's revelation in history, and it is precisely this point that sets the Bible apart from other religious literature. The majority of the chapters in the Old Testament are either from the 'historical books' or are placed in concrete historical settings.<sup>8</sup>

Hebrew history was not a monotonous, purposeless, and eternal cycle of happenings. Nor did the Hebrews view life as a race toward death in which one desperately seeks to escape from the clutches of time....Rather, in sharp distinction, the Hebrew view of time and history was essentially linear, durative, and progressive. In short, it was going somewhere; it was en route to a goal, a glorious climax at the end of this age.<sup>9</sup>

#### **D. Many of the details of our world view can be known by observation and reflection.**

- 1. God has enabled us to discover many things about His world on our own.
- 2. He has given us sensory capabilities and rational faculties that allow us to discover, with a high degree of confidence, the way the world actually is—to discover what is true.
- 3. For example...
  - a. The universe has been designed by a powerful, immaterial being.
  - b. Man is a uniquely noble creature made for transcendent purpose, yet terribly broken.
  - c. Morality is objective, alerting us to our true moral guilt.
  - d. Jesus of Nazareth is a noble man of history who played a singular role in world events.
- 4. BTW, this is called “**general revelation**” and that which we conclude about God from general revelation is called “**natural theology**.”

#### **E. However, some things must be revealed...**

- 1. There are some things we cannot know unless God reveals them.
- 2. God must tell us what is in His mind before we can know what He thinks about certain crucial matters (1 Cor 2:11-13).

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which

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<sup>8</sup> Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham—Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989), 160.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

**3. When God speaks His mind, we are given the missing pieces of the puzzle.**

4. He gives us this information, though, little by little. That is the nature of an historical narrative.

**This fact introduces an important concept:**

**F. Progressive revelation**

1. God reveals his plan in stages, building upon earlier revelation as time passes.
  - a. It's as if with every era of revelation God reaches into the box and gives us another piece of the puzzle to connect to the previous pieces to flesh out the full picture.
  - b. This full picture will be displayed ultimately in Jesus of Nazareth, the final revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-2):

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- c. That revelation also includes the writings of those who Jesus personally trained and commissioned to clarify His revelation.

**2. This means that as a basic hermeneutical rule, we interpret the NT in light of the OT and not the other way around.**

- a. Though the inspired authors of the NT often give us insight into the OT, the NT doctrines rest upon a foundation of OT revelation.
  - b. The OT comes first, otherwise OT saints would have been largely in the dark about their own revelation because they would not have had the NT to help them interpret it properly.

**Now, what is the main point of the biblical narrative?**

## **VI. The Main Theme of the Bible**

**Question:** If someone were to ask you, "What is the main theme of the Bible?," how would you answer?

**A. What is the main theme of the Bible?**

1. Some possibilities are clearly central to the message, but not the goal God is after.
  - a. **Why not "love"?**
    - 1) **First**, God's love is not mentioned in the biblical record until the book of Deuteronomy.

## a) Deut. 7:7-8

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

b) Note that the love of God was clearly manifest earlier, but it was not identified as such.

2) **Second**, the book of Acts never mentions the love of God a single time, even though God's love is central to the motivation of the cross (John 3:16).

3) **Third**, there's also a practical problem.

a) The trouble with "love" as an over-all theme of the Bible is that it lacks clear definition for most people.

b) It is frequently characterized in sentimentalist terms, so that a lot of foolishness gets justified because of the positive emotional feeling it gives to us or expresses to others.

4) Love, then does not seem to be the central message.

b. **Why not "salvation"?**

1) Salvation is an act of rescue, of purchasing ("redemption").

2) As you will see, the rescue gained through redeeming us was not an end in itself, but was for a higher purpose.

3) The purpose is not simply to get as many people "saved" as possible.

c. **Why not "relationship"?**

1) In the biblical record, the emphasis is not individuals, except those individuals central to the unfolding of salvation history.

2) This does not mean that you as an individual are not important to God. You are.

3) It means that the Bible is not principally about you and God. If you go to the text with that orientation, you will misunderstand it and misapply it in your own life.

a) The Bible is not about God's plan for your life.

b) It is about your life for God's plan.

c) The main theme of the Bible is about that plan.

## 2. **BTW, notice where the starting point is from the perspective of "My life for God's plan."**

a. God is the emphasis.

b. This is appropriate, because God is the first player on the stage and the central player in the Christian story.

c. The story is first about Him and His larger purposes, not about our own individual lives.

- d. My mother used to tell me, **“The world does not revolve around you.”**
  - 1) That’s a truth many Christians have not learned.
  - 2) “How could God have allowed this to happen to me?”
  - 3) Because your personal comfort, happiness, and prosperity are not the central concerns of God’s plan.

**This brings us to the main theme of the Bible...**

**B. The main theme of the Bible is “rulership.”**

- 1. There are two things you need in order to have rulership.
  - a. A king and...
  - b. Something for the king to rule over
    - 1) A “dom,” a domain
    - 2) A land and a people
  - c. Simply put—kingdom. Rulership is synonymous with kingdom.
  - d. The kingdom of God—the reign of God—is the central message of the Bible.<sup>10</sup>

**Main Theme of the Bible:  
God’s rulership over His kingdom**

All things under God’s authority in proper order and relationship to Him

**2. “Why didn’t you just say ‘kingdom’ in the first place? That’s the word we’re all familiar with.”**

- a. “Kingdom” is a word that has been reduced to religious noise for most Christians.
- b. It’s a biblical word we’ve heard so often it’s lost its ability to communicate its true meaning.
- c. Substituting the word “rulership” drives home the true meaning of the phrase.

**3. Notice that this theme is evident in the very first line of the Christian story: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth” (Gen. 1:1).**

- a. The message for the world is: God is sovereign King.
- b. God is in control; He rules everything.
  - 1) Though all people and all nations have yet to take their position under God’s rule—or be placed in subjection under His rule—He is still the proper sovereign.
  - 2) Man’s rebellion never cancels out God’s ultimate dominion over all.

**4. What is the kingdom of God?**

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<sup>10</sup> God’s kingdom is specifically mentioned nearly 100 times in the New Testament.

- a. The kingdom of God is the manifestation or demonstration of divine rulership.  
Note Marvin Wilson:

As the reign of God broke out into human lives the power of the kingdom was unleashed (Luke 11:20). In Hebrew thought, the kingdom is wherever God sovereignly takes charge and rules in human affairs.<sup>11</sup>

- b. Everywhere you see the word “kingdom” you can substitute the word “rulership.” This might be expressed...

- 1) In a person’s individual life (Luke 17:21)
- 2) In power over sickness and disease (Luke 10:9)
- 3) In the submission of all the nations to God (Psalm 2)
- 4) In culmination at the end of the age (Mark 14:25)
- 5) In power over sin (Rom. 14:17)
- 6) In the submission of spiritual or physical powers to God (Matt. 12:28, Eph. 1:19-22)

#### **5. The kingdom of God is the central focus of the New Testament revelation.<sup>12</sup>**

- a. John the Baptist preached the kingdom:  
Matt 3:1-2 “Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”
- b. Jesus preached the kingdom.  
Matt 4:23 “And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom....”
- c. Paul preached the kingdom.  
Acts 19:8 “And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.”
- d. “Kingdom” is not just a state of existence (as some have mistakenly implied by quoting, “The kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:21).

#### **5. The kingdom of God is at the heart of the gospel message. To be part of God’s kingdom one must submit to His rulership.**

Now another important detail...

### **VII. God delegates authority to man who is to rule over creation as God’s vice-regent.**

#### **A. Man is God’s steward over the earth.**

1. Gen 1:26-30 “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth....Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.”

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<sup>11</sup> Wilson, 181.

<sup>12</sup> Note that “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are phrases used interchangeably in the New Testament. They are synonyms.

## 2. Ps. 8:3-9:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your hands,  
 The moon and the stars which you have ordained,  
 What is man that you take thought of him  
 Or the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than God,  
 And crowned him with glory and majesty!  
 You make him to rule over the works of your hands;  
 You have put all things under his feet,  
 All sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,  
 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea....

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!

**B. This means that all of human authority is beholden to a higher authority.<sup>13</sup>**

1. Man is not autonomous.
2. There will never be a time when each of us is not under authority.
3. This is one of the first lessons your children should learn.

**C. Key world view point: Earth was made for man.**

1. Nature is not above man (Gaia, “Mother Earth”)
2. Nature is not equal with man (“Animals have rights, too!”).
3. Rather, nature is under man.
  - a. The natural world was made for the benefit of man as his proper habitation.
  - b. He is thus given authority over it. The environment does not have authority over him.
    - 1) We do not respect nature as if it were a person.
    - 2) Our treatment of the environment is out of respect...
      - a) For the person who made nature (God, who also gave us stewardship over nature)
      - b) And also for those persons we share the environment with (our “neighbors”)
4. My point is, whatever obligations we have regarding the environment must be grounded in our world view, not in someone else’s world view.
  - a. For example, we don’t protect animals because they have rights. They don’t.
  - b. Animals are here for human beings.
    - 1) We may have obligations regarding animals in virtue of our stewardship.
    - 2) But we have no moral obligations towards animals *per se*.

**D. The problem: the fall of man**


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<sup>13</sup> This was the point of the Declaration of Independence. Even human governments are under divine authority and must answer to God for their legitimacy. Under certain conditions, the authority of a human sovereign could be invalidated, justifying revolution.

1. When man rejected God's authority (rulership) in his life, it was an act of rebellion and treason.
2. There were immediate, multiple, and devastating consequences.

**That's where we'll pick up the story at the beginning of next session.**

### **What We Learned:**

- Christians frequently misapply the OT because they do not understand the big picture and therefore cannibalize "promises" that are part of a larger narrative. Thus, they miss the main point—and the proper application—of the text.
- A world view is a picture of reality. The basic puzzle pieces of the Christian view of reality are God, man, Jesus, cross, and resurrection.
- 12 events represent the backbone of the history of the nation of Israel allowing us to trace the unfolding pattern of "salvation history" that comes to its final fulfillment in Christ.
- Because God reveals Himself in history, the biblical world view is uniquely capable of being verified, unlike other religious views.
- God reveals his plan for salvation progressively over time, the new building upon the old. This is called "progressive revelation."
- The main theme of the Bible is rulership: all things under God's authority in proper order and relationship to Him in His kingdom.
- God has delegated authority and rule over all the earth to his vice-regent and pinnacle of His creation—man.

### **For Reflection and Discussion:**

- Describe and explain the chief reason many Christians misapply OT passages.
- Define world view and explain how the parts are related to the whole.
- What is the main purpose of this course?
- Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel.
- Explain the significance of the fact that God has revealed Himself in history.
- Describe the notion of "special revelation." What implications does it have for interpreting Scripture?
- Describe the main theme of the Bible and why this choice is a better choice than other options.
- What is man's unique role in God's kingdom and what are some of the world view ramifications of his position in the created order?

## Session 2

# The Fall of Man to the Abrahamic Contract

### I. Introduction

#### A. Review last week

#### What We Learned in Session 1

- Christians frequently misapply the OT because they do not understand the big picture and therefore cannibalize “promises” that are part of a larger narrative. Thus, they miss the main point—and proper application—of the text.
- A world view is a picture of reality. The basic puzzle pieces of the Christian view of reality are God, man, Jesus, cross, and resurrection.
- 12 events represent the backbone of the history of the nation of Israel allowing us to trace the unfolding pattern of “salvation history” that comes to its final fulfillment in Christ.
- Because God reveals Himself in history, the biblical world view is uniquely capable of being verified, unlike other religious views.
- God reveals His plan for salvation progressively over time, the new building upon the old. This is called “progressive revelation.”
- The main theme of the Bible is rulership: all things under God’s authority in proper order and relationship to Him in His kingdom.
- God has delegated authority and rule over all the earth to His vice-regent and pinnacle of creation—man.

1. **Interact:** Discuss with the person next to you one or two things that stood out as significant to you from the last session.
2. Ask review questions of audience.
3. Recite the 5 elements of the Christian world view (view of reality).
4. Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel twice through using the motions.

#### B. Objectives for this week

### **Session 2 Objectives:**

- Identify the four “barriers” between man and God as a result of the fall
- Clarify the fundamental nature of spiritual warfare
- Show why we must be born again
- Itemize the core elements of the Abrahamic Covenant
- Determine if God’s promise to Abraham was to his physical seed or spiritual seed
- Determine if God’s promise to Abraham was conditional or unconditional

## **II. Genesis (“Beginnings”)—the First Critical Events<sup>1</sup>**

**A. Genesis is an account of beginnings. It answers the foundational questions of where we came from, what kind of creatures we are, and what went wrong.**

1. In the beginning, all things were in proper relationship under God’s authority (rulership) in His Kingdom.
  - a. This is what God meant when He said that everything was “good.”
  - b. Everything was just the way it was supposed to be.
  - c. God’s creation was perfect, but not immutably so. Things could change.
2. The temptation to rebel
  - a. The serpent first questions God’s command, but quotes Him inaccurately: “Indeed has God said, ‘You shall not eat from *any* tree of the garden?’” (v. 1)
  - b. The woman answers, but also quotes inaccurately: “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat of it *or touch it*, lest you die’” (v. 2).
  - c. The serpent tempts the woman.
    - 1) He contradicts God: “You surely shall not die!” (v. 4)
    - 2) He impugns God’s character: “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened...” (v. 5), i.e. God is withholding something good from them.
    - 3) **He promises the woman she will be like God:** “You will be like God, knowing good and evil” (v. 5).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some suggest that Genesis 1 and 2 give separate and opposing creation accounts. Actually, Genesis 2 is a more detailed look at one aspect of the larger creation record of the first chapter. Think of Genesis 2 as an instant replay with an isolated camera focused on God’s pinnacle of creation, man.

<sup>2</sup> This statement was only half true. They did come to “know,” that is experience, evil. This shows another tactic of the deceiver, mixing truth with untruth. A little bit of poison in what is otherwise healthy soup can be deadly.

## The Heart of Sin

Note that at its core, this temptation is about personal autonomy—the sovereign self. Man is enticed with an offer of liberty from external authority or rulership. Virtually all false philosophies and many false religions make the same appeal. It is the central appeal of humanism, secularism, and atheism—exalting ourselves over God, putting ourselves on top (pride).<sup>3</sup>

### B. The fall of man

1. First, Genesis 3 is written in the genre of history, not myth.
  - a. A myth is a fictional story that captures a deep truth about the human condition.
  - b. However, Genesis is meant to give an account of the actual historical source of man's problem.
  - c. A fictional account does not explain the origin of man's real spiritual injury.
2. Adam, representing all mankind, rebels against God's rulership by disobeying God's command.
  - a. Adam is the "federal head" of mankind and acts on behalf of all men just like a president as federal head of his nation acts on behalf of all his people.
  - b. The fall is an act of rebellion against the authority (rulership) of the sovereign.
  - c. It is God's rulership vs. man's autonomy.
3. By this single act of disobedience, Adam and Eve—and consequently all mankind—are cut off from the life only God can give.
4. The traitors are expelled from the garden and from God's presence.
5. Note the enduring consequences of sin.
  - a. It took one instant to lose rulership and thousands of years of hardship and misery to win it back.
  - b. One thoughtless act of sin can change things for the rest of your life or the lives of others.

**The consequences of this insurrection are devastating...**

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<sup>3</sup> This particular appeal, to be as God, is a foundational promise of the New Age movement and is also evident in one form or another in other Christian cults (Mormonism, Christian Science, Unity, etc.). This popular deception has its roots back in the very beginning. The serpent's crafty game plan has not changed, and many people still fall prey to the trick. It was the same sin, apparently, that led to his own initial fall.

### III. Four Barriers—Man’s rebellion isolates him from God in very specific ways

#### A. First barrier: God’s holy character—God is mad.

1. God is good and we are not.

- a. Jer.17:9

The heart is more deceitful than all else  
And is desperately sick.  
Who can understand it?

- b. Isaiah 64:6

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,  
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;  
And all of us wither like a leaf,  
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

2. Our sin incurred God’s wrath due to God’s just and holy character.

- a. Eph 2:3 “We...were by nature children of wrath....”

- b. Wrath is God’s appropriate response to sin.

- 1) God’s anger is an expression of His justice.

- 2) Justice demands that when a law is broken there is appropriate payment.

3. This message is unpopular with many people.

- a. Some people say, “I don’t think God should punish. I believe in a God of love.”

- 1) Ironically, people complain that God doesn’t do anything about evil, then in the next breath say how God would never send anyone to Hell because He’s so loving.

- 2) Is God loving or is he just?

- b. **Is God a vengeful God?** No more “vengeful” than any good, fair, noble, just judge who must pass sentence on lawbreakers.

#### B. Second barrier: Debt of sin—We owe God.

1. **Question:** What percentage of the laws governing us as a community are we free to break without any fear of retribution? None.

- a. Law, by nature, requires complete obedience.

- 1) If we are 99% compliant—“basically good”—we still must be punished for the 1% of the law we violate.

- 2) Further, the fact that we keep the law in many or even most areas does not give us “credit” so we can break the law with impunity in other areas.

b. Breaking any law makes us lawbreakers and beholden to the courts. The same is true with God. Note James 2:10-11:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

2. Because we owe perfect obedience to God’s law, we incur a debt to God every time we violate His commands.

a. Criminals must repay their “debt” to society.

b. The “certificate of debt” is our rap sheet:

1) Col. 2:14 “...having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us...”

2) Rev. 20:12 “And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.”

c. We cannot pay this debt out of our own good deeds.

1) We already owe perfect obedience to God.

2) Every good thing we might do to cover the shortfall is already owed Him.

3) We have no resources with which to pay Him back.

3. We are in a bottomless pit of obligation and there is no way for us to get ourselves out on our own.

### **C. Third barrier: Slavery to Satan—We are in total bondage.**

1. Adam surrendered rulership when he gave in to Satan’s temptation. Man now serves the devil’s interests, not God’s.

a. Details of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:6ff) imply that Satan was the current prefect over the kingdoms of this world.

1) “And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give you all this domain and its glory, for *it has been handed over* to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.’”<sup>4</sup>

2) Satan didn’t wrest rulership from God’s hand. God’s delegated representative, man, simply surrendered it.<sup>5</sup>

b. Jesus takes no exception with Satan’s claim of control.

c. Even though God is the ultimate sovereign, He has given Satan some length to his leash.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. 12:9 identifies the serpent in the garden as Satan, the devil.

<sup>5</sup> A faulty understanding of this concept can lead to error about the nature of the atonement. Some of the improper teaching of the so-called “faith movement” centers around the legal authority Satan has to rulership and the subsequent need for God to hand Jesus over to Satan as a ransom to purchase back rulership. However, Jesus takes the kingdom by violent overthrow of Satan (see Matt 11:12), not by diplomacy. See McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), ch. 7, for details.

2. Since then, mankind has willingly followed its new leader.

Eph. 2:2 “...**you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air**, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”

3. Mankind is now completely enslaved.

a. 2 Corinthians 4:4 “**The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving**, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

b. Paul was sent by Jesus to the gentiles to “**open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God...**” (Acts 26:18).

c. 2 Tim 2:26 “...that they might...escape the snare of the devil **having been held captive by him to do his will.**”

d. 1 John 5:19 “...**the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.**”

1) You wonder why things are a mess?

2) Look at who is minding the store.

4. And fallen man cooperates with Satan’s deception because he does not love the truth:

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming, that is, the one whose coming is in accord with **the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.** (2 Thess. 2:8-10)

### Spiritual Warfare

**Question:** Do you think people, in general, are aware of this captivity to Satan?

- No, people are not aware they are held captive.
  - Satan gained rulership by deception and maintains it by craftiness, deceit, subterfuge.
  - That was his strategy in the Garden and it is his strategy today:

2 Corinthians 4:4 “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

- Much of the emphasis in the church on spiritual warfare recently has been on using power encounters (“binding,” “loosing,” “casting out,” specific kinds of prayers, etc.) to counteract the evil enterprises of the enemy.
- However, the biblical record seems to suggest something different.
  - The essential character of spiritual warfare is not *power* encounters with the devil.
  - Rather, it is *truth* encounters opposing the lies and deception of the enemy.

2 Cor. 10:3-5 “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying *speculations* and every lofty thing raised up against the *knowledge* of God, and we are taking every *thought* captive to the obedience of Christ...”

- We find the same emphasis on truth in the classic passage on spiritual warfare, Eph. 6:10-20:

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

- When Paul finally asks for prayer in this passage, he doesn’t instruct the Ephesians to *pray against* the powers and principalities, but rather to *pray for* the saints to persevere and to *pray for* Paul that he might speak the truth with boldness (Eph. 6:18-20):

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

#### **D. Fourth barrier: Spiritual death—We are dead, unplugged from the life of God.**

1. Man’s soul lacks God’s spiritual life.
2. Man is born dead spiritually, incapable of reconnecting with the God who made him.

- a. Gen 2:17 “...for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.”
  - 1) There are a number of ramifications of the concept of death and the fall.
  - 2) The reality of spiritual death is our specific concern here.
- b. Eph 2:1 “And you were dead in your transgressions and sins...”
- c. Rom. 5:12 “.. through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...”

#### **E. Man reproduces after his own kind.**

- 1. Adam is:
  - a. A rebel and traitor under God’s wrath
  - b. A sinner indebted to God
  - c. A slave to Satan
  - d. Spiritually dead
- 2. The same is true for all of Adam’s offspring. **That is why we must be born again.<sup>6</sup>**

#### **Four Insurmountable Barriers of the Fall**

- One—God’s holy character
- Two—Debt of sin
- Three—Slavery to Satan
- Four—Spiritual death

#### **3. I want you to clearly see the desperate condition man is in:**

- a. We are under God’s wrath because of rebellion.
- b. We owe a debt we cannot possibly pay back.
- c. We are completely enslaved to Satan who keeps us captive through deception that we cooperate with because we don’t love the truth.
- d. We are spiritually dead, disconnected from our only source of ultimate life: God Himself.

BTW, if Jesus would have sinned, He would also be in the same predicament, unable to save anyone else.

#### **F. Man’s plight:**

- 1. Our relationship with God has been severed.
- 2. Our relationships with each other have been warped.
- 3. Our relationship with creation has been compromised.
- 4. Our individual souls have been corrupted.

“You make it so bleak!”

No, I am not *making* it bleak. I’m telling you how bleak it actually is.

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<sup>6</sup> See John 3:1-8 for Jesus’ comments on the new birth.

**G. Where did evil come from? Evil is a description of what happened when man refused God's leadership.**

1. First, something good—moral freedom—makes evil possible.
  - a. God has dignified man with the privilege of making choices.
  - b. There is intrinsic value to human liberty, even when humans use it for evil purposes.
2. Second, a mere act of power by God would not solve the problem.
  - a. The idea that God could create morally free creatures who could not use their freedom for evil is a contradiction in terms.
  - b. Man's ability to do evil is essential to the very nature of moral freedom.
3. Third, evil is not a created "thing."
  - a. Evil is a loss of goodness that resulted from man's choice to disobey God.
    - 1) Genesis 2:15-17 "...you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."
    - 2) Genesis 3:17 "Because you...ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you...."
  - b. Rejection of God's rulership is at the heart of what the Bible calls sin.
    - 1) Romans 5:12 "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."
    - 2) Romans 3:23 "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."
4. Fourth, evil is an intruder.
  - a. Man's choice resulted in an aberration, a perversion of the created order, resulting in conflicting characteristics:
    - 1) Man's dignity, by virtue of being created in the image of God
    - 2) Man's cruelty, by virtue of his fall from goodness into evil
5. **We live in a world that we crippled, and a crippled world produces crippled people and crippled circumstances.**
  - 1) Sin is the mutation that has twisted and distorted man from his original beauty.
  - 2) Sin has devastating consequences, reaching far beyond the perpetrator.
  - 3) We are naive if we think we can restrict the impact of our evil actions to ourselves.

**H. Beware of arguing that love requires the possibility of evil.**

1. This is a common approach by Christians, but it's flawed.
2. If evil makes love possible, then God couldn't love unless He was capable of evil.
3. Also, there would be no love in Heaven after the resurrection because we all would be immutably good.
4. If love is possible in either of those situations, then love does not depend on the possibility of evil.

### **The Problem of Evil: Everyone's Problem**

- When I address the problem of evil with non-Christian audiences I point out that theists are not the only ones who have to deal with this issue.
- **The problem of evil is a problem everyone has to make sense of from within his own world view.**
- Every religion and every non-religious philosophy (even atheism) must account for what seems to be an obvious feature of reality—the existence of objective evil.
  - The atheist can't just point out the problem for theists, smugly turn on his heel, and walk away.
  - If someone is anguished by personal tragedy, corruption in the church, or world events, and they reject God, they have not solved the problem. They have simply eliminated one possible answer: theism.
  - They still have to answer the question, "What do I make of that evil now, as an atheist? How do I answer the problem of evil from an atheistic, materialistic world view?"
- **Here's the real issue:**
  - Which world view has the best answer to the problem?
  - What way of looking at the world has the best resources to make sense of the challenge?
- A challenge and a response:
  - The great 20<sup>th</sup> century atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell famously asked, "How can you talk about God when you're kneeling at the bed of a dying child?"
  - Christian philosopher William Lane Craig's responded, "What is atheist Bertrand Russell going to say when he's kneeling at the bed of a dying child? Tough luck? That's the way it goes?"
    - Atheists have nothing to say. They can only emote.
    - Christians have a lot to offer when tragedy strikes.
- The answer to the problem of evil isn't atheism. The answer to evil is God, specifically, God in Jesus, on a cross, at Calvary.

#### **I. "Didn't God know this would happen?"**

1. Yes, and apparently He felt it was worth the trouble.
2. The important thing is that evil did not catch God by surprise.

## IV. God's response

### A. God's grace

1. Adam and Eve try to hide themselves.
2. God seeks them out.
3. This is the pattern continually after the fall: Man flees God; God pursues him.

### B. The curses (Gen. 3:14-19)

1. Curse on the serpent
  - a. Man at odds with his new (slave) master
  - b. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed..." (v. 15).
2. Curse on human relationships
  - a. Man at odds with his oneness with woman
  - b. "...your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (v. 16).
3. Curse regarding the woman
  - a. Man at odds with the command to be fruitful & multiply
  - b. Increased pain in childbirth: "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing. In pain you will bring forth children." (v. 16)
4. Curse regarding the man
  - a. Man at odds with command to subdue the earth
  - b. Toil and labor for sustenance: "Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life" (v. 17).

### C. Salvation promised

1. Even in God's judgment we find a promise of restoration: "...and He [speaking of the woman's seed] shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen. 3:15).
  - a. Satan will inflict damage.
  - b. But the woman's seed will strike the fatal blow.
2. The "proto-evangel," the first reference to a savior<sup>7</sup>
3. This is a veiled prophecy which looks ahead ultimately to Christ.

### D. Reconciliation with God

1. Adam renames his wife Eve, i.e. "living" or "life" (a possible expression of faith).
2. God covers their nakedness (v. 21).
3. **Key theme:** Note the death of an innocent substitute.

## V. Sin's Legacy

### A. With each generation, man's rebellion becomes more and more dramatic. The long-term consequences of man's sin becomes evident.

1. Cain murders his brother, Abel, in cold blood (Gen. 4).
2. Men are proud of their violence, boasting of their murders (e.g. Lamech, 4:23-24).

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<sup>7</sup> Everett Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 34.

3. The “sons of God” (lit. *elohim*) have intercourse with the “daughters of men” and produce giants, the *Nephilim*, the mighty men of renown. (6:1-4)<sup>8</sup>

## **B. Noah and the flood**

1. Sin infects mankind: “...every intent of the thoughts of man’s heart was evil continually” (6:5).
2. God destroys the entire human population, save for eight people.

## **C. The Tower of Babel (11:1-9)**

1. Another attempt at autonomy and rebellion against God’s rulership
  - a. An act of rebellion
    - 1) “[The tower] became the symbol of their God-defying disobedience and pride.”<sup>9</sup>
    - 2) People were uniting purposefully for evil and not for good, so God thwarted their efforts by scattering them.

Their stated purpose was to make a name for themselves, and for this reason the project displeased Yahweh, who put an end to it by scattering the builders far and wide.”<sup>10</sup>

- b. God confounded their language (“babble”), creating barriers between the nations.
    - 1) The human race thus became deeply fragmented.
    - 2) This disintegrated man’s unified effort against God...
    - 3) ...but limited the spread of truth.
    - 4) There was no sign of a coordinated plan or campaign for man’s salvation.

## **D. Transition:**

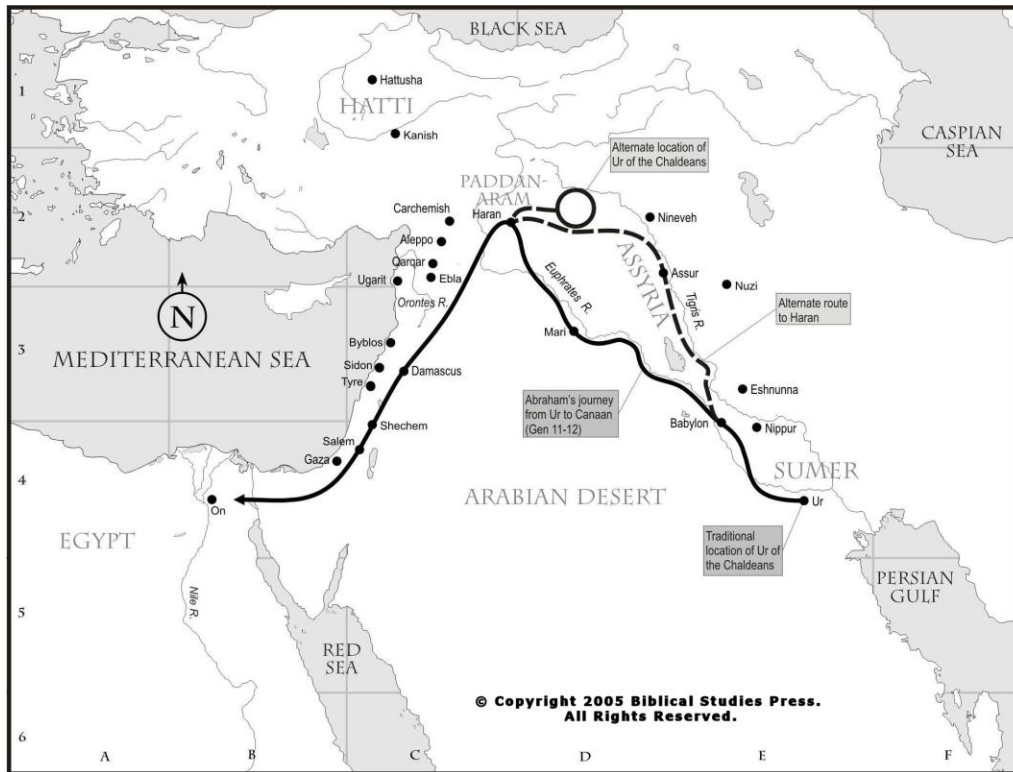
1. Unwilling to surrender and unable to escape his plight, man needs to be rescued.
2. Faced with the incredible consequences of man’s rebellion, God begins to enact a plan to restore what was lost in the fall.

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<sup>8</sup> This seemed to further inflame God’s anger (see 6:3). Jewish tradition identifies these “sons of God” as “fallen ones,” perhaps fallen angels (Goeffrey W. Bromiley, Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [ISBE]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), vol. 3, 519. However, since angels are immaterial beings and reproduction requires a real physical body (as opposed to a mere physical manifestation), the sons of God here might refer to the godless line of Cain intermarrying with the believing line of Seth.

<sup>9</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 114.

<sup>10</sup> *ISBE*, vol. 1, 382.



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## VI. First Major Historical Event: The Call of Abraham<sup>11</sup>

### A. After Babel, there appears to be little (if any) true knowledge of God.

1. Revelation is general and (according to Romans 1) adequate to condemn man for his rebellion against God, but not adequate to save him.
2. So God initiates a specific program to bring salvation to fallen mankind.

### B. God's 3-phase plan

1. God sets apart 1 man: Abram.
2. God promises to make a nation from him.
3. God commissions that man—and, by implication, the nation—to be a blessing to the rest of the nations of the world.

<sup>11</sup> The traditional view dates the time of the patriarchs at 2000-1750 BC, though the exact time is subject to debate.

### C. The Abrahamic Contract

#### 1. Genesis 12:1-3:

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

#### 2. **This is the most important passage in the entire Bible regarding salvation history. Everything else God does to rescue man is based on this covenant.**

**Question:** There are two parties in this agreement, and each has its own obligations. Who are the parties and what are their obligations?

3. **Abram’s part:** “Leave your country” (12:1). Abram must make a step of trust and respond to God’s call. This action showed incredible faith considering the prevailing theology of the time.

- a. The worship of one supreme god was virtually unknown.
- b. The religion of the land was polytheism.

**Question:** What was God’s part? When you look at these verses for yourself, what are the specific promises?

#### 4. **God’s part:**<sup>12</sup> a promise of...

- a. **A nation**—“I will make you a great nation.”
  - 1) A people
  - 2) A land
  - 3) A government
- b. **A blessing**—prosperity for that nation  
“I will bless you and make your name great.”
- c. **Protection**—promise of survival for the nation
  - 1) “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse.”
  - 2) The Jews have survived as a distinct nation through thousands of years of persecution, dispersion, captivity, and attempts at genocide. No other middle-eastern nation from this period survives today as a distinct people.

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<sup>12</sup> There are different legitimate ways of characterizing the details of this promise. Many prefer the three-fold formula of land, people, and blessing. I chose to work with the specific wording of the text and follow the fulfillment of those details through the formative period of Israel’s history. The critical thing is that all vital elements are included.

## 5. God's purpose with the Abrahamic Covenant

### a. Purpose clause:

- 1) "And so you shall be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
- 2) Lit. "*weheyeh beraka*," "And be thou a blessing."
- b. This calling and blessing are not just for Israel's personal benefit, but are a means to fulfilling God's plan for the world.
  - 1) Not "God's plan for my life."
  - 2) But "My life for God's plan."
- c. Israel was to be the divine instrument ultimately bringing salvation to the whole earth.<sup>13</sup>
  - 1) This mention of the families of the earth, the nations (*goyim* or "gentiles") probably refers to the table of nations just listed in Genesis 10 ("...and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood" v. 32).
  - 2) God's dealings with Abraham involve humanity in its widest sense.

## 6. Note the continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament:

- a. The Great Commission: "Go unto all the world and make disciples..." and "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (see Matt. 28:18-20).
- b. I have a task for you, and I will protect you and enable you to accomplish it.

## VII. Two Critical Questions

### A. First question: Are the "descendants" of Abraham literal offspring or are they spiritual descendants of some sort?<sup>14</sup>

1. Abraham wondered the same thing.
  - a. God restates His promise.

Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth....Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you. (Gen. 13:14-17)

### b. Abraham's question:

O Lord God, what will you give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?....Since you have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir. (Gen. 15:2-3)

2. God answers that citizenship into this nation of promise will be through physical birth.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In a very real sense, Israel was to become a kingdom of priests, those who stood between mankind and God as a go-between, an intercessor and a mediator (see Exodus 19:6).

<sup>14</sup> Larger issues of theology hinge on the answer to this question.

- a. “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir” (15:4).
- b. Further, the sign of the covenant, was circumcision<sup>16</sup> (17:1-11).
  - 1) Circumcision emphasizes physical reproduction.<sup>17</sup>
  - 2) It was also a vivid physical reminder that the offspring of Abraham were set apart to God.
- c. The context makes it clear that God had the physical descendants of Abraham in mind when He made this promise.

**B. Second question: Is the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Contract conditional or unconditional?**

- 1. God bound Himself by an unconditional contract (15:7-20).
  - a. God actually “cuts a contract”<sup>18</sup> with Abraham using a burnt sacrifice, according to the custom of the time.
    - 1) “These sacrifices...were to be divided, and the pieces laid one against the other, as the custom was in making a covenant, the covenanting parties always passing between them, as it were, to show that now there was no longer to be division, but that what had been divided was to be considered as one between them. Jehovah alone [passed between the divided sacrifice], since the covenant was that of grace, in which one party alone—God—undertook all the obligations, while the other received all the benefits.”<sup>19</sup>
    - 2) “Religious ceremonies involving the slaughter of a beast were associated with each treaty...A common element in the cursing formula in some treaties is: ‘Just as this [beast] is cut up, so may “X” be cut up.’ The recitation of such a formula was probably in the nature of self-imprecation. The man who recited it thus declared his expectation of the fate that would befall him if he broke his treaty obligations.”<sup>20</sup>
  - b. But God was the only signatory to the agreement. It was binding only on Him.
- 2. God further sealed it later by swearing an oath by Himself (22:16-18):
  - a. “I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your

<sup>15</sup> About allegorizing Old Testament passages, Wilson says: “The authorial intent of the passage stands in jeopardy of being compromised or entirely lost if mystical, figurative, or hidden meanings are thought to burst forth from the text without some criteria of control. That control of a passage is normally achieved when attention is given to the plain meaning of words in context (the immediate context and the rest of Scripture) within the specific historical and cultural setting.” Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham—Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989), 97.

<sup>16</sup> “The Egyptians practiced circumcision before the Hebrews began to employ this rite...But in this matter of borrowing, the Hebrews did differ from their neighbors in one significant area: The origin of their religion was rooted in divine revelation rather than pagan sources.” Wilson, 10. Also, “The circumcision commanded by God is distinct in that it takes place early in infancy and is imbued with great religious significance...This symbolic ritual represents consecration and dedication as well as spiritual purity.” F. LeGard Smith, *The Daily Bible* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1984), 32-33.

<sup>17</sup> Circumcision serves to identify the recipients of the covenant, as well as to give a concrete indication that a covenant existed.

<sup>18</sup> “Lit. *karat berit*, ‘to cut a covenant.’...The origin of this expression appears to lie in the ancient practice of slaying and cutting up sacrificial beasts at such covenant ceremonies.” *ISBE*, vol. 1, 791.

<sup>19</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Old Testament Bible History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 89-90.

<sup>20</sup> *ISBE*, vol. 1, 791.

descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all the nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

b. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that such an oath is inviolable because God can’t swear by anyone higher than Himself and He can’t lie (Heb. 6:13-18).<sup>21</sup>

3. However, though the ultimate fulfillment of the promise is unconditional, Israel’s obedience or disobedience still seems to play a role.

a. E.g., “I have given the nation into your hand; now go and take it.”

1) The final outcome is guaranteed by God.<sup>22</sup>

2) However, because the promise is fulfilled through the agency of people (the Jews, in this case) the timing of the fulfillment depends in some measure on obedience.

b. Notice the pattern:

1) **First...** God called Abraham.

2) **Then...** Abraham responded by faith.

3) This set into motion God’s irrevocable, unconditional promise.

God’s goal is unchanging from the outset: to restore His rulership over the nations. From the beginning, God is the one who acts, graciously reaching out to man.

## **What We Learned:**

### **Main Points**

- The central issue of the fall was the desire for human autonomy (the sovereign self)—a rejection of God’s rulership—an impulse that continues in fallen man and false ideologies to this day.
- As a result of the fall, man is isolated from God and faces four insurmountable barriers to reconciliation with Him:
  - One, because of God’s holy and just character, man is under the sentence of God’s wrath.
  - Two, because of disobedience, we owe a debt to God we cannot pay.
  - Three, because Adam gave in to the devil’s temptation, the human race was plunged into abject slavery to Satan.
  - Four, because of rebellion, mankind is spiritually dead, cut off from the life only God can give.
- Since Adam reproduces after his own kind, all human beings must be born again of the second Adam, Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> One may ask, “But how can a contract be one way when it’s between two parties?” Think of it more like a warranty, an unconditional guarantee. In that circumstance the guarantor makes a one-way promise, just like God did.

<sup>22</sup> “The obedience of Abraham was not a condition of the covenant but rather his response inside a religious relationship. There could be no blessings and no fellowship without obedience.” (*ISBE*, vol. 1, 792)

- God’s response to the rebellion included both cursing and grace—man’s nakedness was covered through the death of an innocent substitute, and ultimate victory over Satan was promised.
- God initiates a 3-phase plan to rescue the world: He sets apart one man, promises to make a great nation of him, and then commissions that nation to be a blessing to the world.
- The Abrahamic contract is the most important passage in the entire Bible regarding salvation history. God promises a great nation to Abram (a people, a land, and a government), that he will bless and protect, for the purpose of reaching the nations.
- Abraham’s “descendants” of promise are physical descendants who will come forth from his own loins.
- God cuts a unilateral contract with Abraham and seals it with an oath, indicating that this covenant is unconditional, guaranteed by God Himself.

### **Secondary Points**

- The problem of evil is one every world view (not just theism) must answer. The real question: Which world view has the best answer to the problem? The Christian answer is that evil is a description of what happened when man refused God’s leadership—a condition that can be both forgiven and reversed.
- The essential nature of spiritual warfare is not power encounters, but truth encounters.

### **For Reflection and Discussion:**

- What are the four specific barriers to reconciliation between man and God and what are their ramifications?
- What’s the significance of the phrase, “Each reproduced after its own kind”?
- What is the basic nature of spiritual warfare? Explain.
- Strategically, what is important to remember when answering the challenge of the problem of evil?
- In what specific ways do we see God’s redemptive actions even while He’s disciplining man for his disobedience?
- What was God’s plan to rescue the world and what were its provisions?
- Was God’s promise to Abraham given to physical descendants or spiritual descendants? How do we know?
- Specifically, how do we know God’s promise here is unconditional?

## Appendix

### Summary of Old Testament Books

- **Pentateuch<sup>23</sup>—5 books authored by Moses. Also referred to as the Law, or the Torah (Hebrew for “instruction”).**
  - **Genesis:** beginnings. Focuses on creation, the spread of the nations, the call of Abraham, and the history patriarchs.
  - **Exodus:** the exit, departure. The Jews are liberated from Egyptian captivity by Moses and are given the Law in the wilderness of Sinai.
  - **Leviticus:** pertaining to the Levites. Emphasizes both the responsibilities and activities of Israel’s priests who lead the nation in worship and holy service.
  - **Numbers:** records of the generations. Tells of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness for 40 years as a result of God’s discipline before they’re allowed to enter the promised land.
  - **Deuteronomy:** lit. “second law.” The final words of Moses and reiteration of the Law, encouraging faithfulness to God as the people enter the promised land.
- **Historical books—12 books**
  - **Joshua:** The baton of leadership is passed to Joshua who leads the military campaigns in conquest of the promised land and partitions the land among the 12 tribes of Israel.
  - **Judges:** Cycles of able rulership followed by anarchy establish a pattern of victory and defeat for Israel during the 350 years following the death of Joshua.
  - **B:** A touching story of devotion and faithfulness during the time of Judges, emphasizing God’s redemptive love.
  - **1 & 2 Samuel:** The last judge and first great prophet of Israel anoints first wayward King Saul and then the warrior King David as visible king over Israel.
  - **1 & 2 Kings:** The turbulent time of the kings of Israel and Judah, a kingdom divided after David’s son, King Solomon, dies. Eventually, both kingdoms are overwhelmed by outsiders as judgment by God for their idolatry.
  - **1 & 2 Chronicles:** Covers the same period as Kings, but is written from the priestly and spiritual perspective and gives a religious history of the Davidic dynasty of Judah.<sup>24</sup>
  - **Ezra:** Charts Israel’s “second exodus,” this time from Babylon to Jerusalem, partially under the leadership of Ezra the priest, to rebuild the temple and the spiritual condition of the people.
  - **Nehemiah:** A contemporary of Ezra, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to help fortify the city by repairing its walls in a miraculous 52 days.
  - **Esther:** Though a Jewess, Esther becomes the queen of Persia and rescues the Jews living there from certain destruction, even though it puts her own life in great peril.

<sup>23</sup> The word comes from the Greek *penta* (five) and *teuchos* (scroll or book).

<sup>24</sup> Bruce Wilkinson, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 99.

- **Major prophets—5 books<sup>25</sup>**

- **Isaiah:** Prophet to the tribe of Judah, the pre-eminent prophet of the Old Testament emphasizes the dual message of condemnation (ch. 1-39) and consolation (ch. 40-66).
- **Jeremiah:** The “weeping prophet” of the dark days of the deportation of Jerusalem by Babylon as a judgment on Israel’s apostasy. Jeremiah’s message went largely unheeded, though he lived to see many of his prophecies come true.
- **Lamentations:** Jeremiah’s song of mourning after Jerusalem’s fall to the brutal Babylonian hordes. The five-poem dirge recalls the glory of old Jerusalem, the horror of its ruin, and the continued faithfulness of God in times of blessing or discipline.
- **Ezekiel:** A younger contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel prophesies among the Jewish exiles in Babylon and promises ultimate restoration for a united Israel.
- **Daniel:** The prophet’s sweeping prophetic themes emphasize God’s control over history. A diplomat in Babylon who survived four dynasties, Daniel publicly demonstrates godly living in the midst of an ungodly culture. In the process, he gives some of the most remarkable prophetic predictions in the entire Bible.

- **Minor prophets—12 books**

- **Hosea**
- **Joel**
- **Amos**
- **Obadiah**
- **Jonah**
- **Micah**
- **Nahum**
- **Habakkuk**
- **Zephaniah**
- **Haggai**
- **Zechariah**
- **Malachi**

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<sup>25</sup> Though these books comprise about one-fourth of Scripture, their critical historic and theological importance is often missed because of neglect.

## Session 3

### Citizenship vs. Salvation

#### I. Introduction

##### A. Review last week

#### What We Learned in Session 2

- The central issue of the fall was the desire for human autonomy—a rejection of God’s rulership—an impulse that continues in fallen man and false ideologies to this day.
- As a result of the fall, man is isolated from God and faces four humanelly insurmountable barriers to reconciliation with Him:
  - One, because of God’s holy and just character, man is under the sentence of God’s wrath.
  - Two, because of disobedience, we owe a debt to God we cannot pay.
  - Three, because Adam gave in to the devil’s temptation, the human race was plunged into abject slavery to Satan.
  - Four, because of rebellion, mankind is spiritually dead, cut off from the life only God can give.
- Since Adam reproduces after his own kind, all human beings must be born again of the second Adam, Jesus.
- God initiates a 3-phase plan to rescue the world: He sets apart one man, promises to make a great nation of him, and then commissions that nation to be a blessing to the world.
- The Abrahamic contract is the most important passage in the entire Bible regarding salvation history. God promises a great nation to Abram (a people, a land, and a government), that he will bless and protect, for the purpose of reaching the nations.
- Abraham’s “descendants” of promise are physical descendants who will come forth from his own loins.
- God cuts a unilateral contract with Abraham and seals it with an oath, indicating that this covenant is unconditional, guaranteed by God Himself.

1. **Interact:** Discuss with the person next to you one or two things that stood out as significant to you from the last session.
2. Ask review questions of audience.
3. Recite the 5 elements of the Christian world view (view of reality).
4. Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel using the motions.

##### B. Objectives for this week

### **Session 3 Objectives:**

- Identify five ways the Jews were God’s “chosen” people
- Identify one way the Jews were not chosen
- Define and describe justification
- Resolve an apparent contradiction between Paul and James on justification
- Clarify the meaning of the phrase “seed of Abraham”

Reading: Gen. 15-22, Heb. 6:13-20, Rom. 4, James 2:14-26, Acts 7

## **II. The “Chosen” People—The Citizens of God’s Nation**

### **Chosen for What?**

Broadly put, the Jews were chosen to be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1-3). But what does that look like in particular? How was Israel to be a blessing? What does it mean for the Jews to be the “chosen” people? As we work through the story of God’s dealings with the Jews, certain details emerge.

#### **A. First, the Jews were chosen to be God’s witness, a light to the nations.**

1. Is. 43:10-11:

“**You are My witnesses,**” declares the LORD,  
 “And My servant whom I have chosen,  
 So that you may know and believe Me  
 And understand that I am He.  
 Before Me there was no God formed,  
 And there will be none after Me.  
 I, even I, am the LORD,  
 And there is no savior besides Me.”

2. Is 49:6b “I will also make you a **light of the nations** so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

#### **B. Second, the Jews were chosen to proclaim, preserve, and pass on the Word of God.**

1. Psalm 147:19-20 “He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation, and as for His ordinances, they have not known them.”
2. Romans 3:2 “...they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”
3. The Bible shows the progressive unfolding of God’s plan through:
  - a. **Proclamation**—direct statements of God’s truth, often by prophets
  - b. **Predictive prophecy**—declarations of what is to come<sup>1</sup>
  - c. **Pictures**—”types,” figures, representations or symbols foreshadowing things in the future<sup>2</sup>

**C. Third, the Jews were chosen to be God’s “Living Bible”—a living revelation of God’s person and power.<sup>3</sup>**

**1. They were to be a model of obedience and godliness that would function as a witness.**

- a. Deuteronomy 4:6-8: “So keep and do [God’s commandments], for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the people who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”
- b. This witness had its negative side, too: “For ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you,’ just as it is written.” (Romans 2:24, cf. Isaiah 52:5)

**2. The Jews were also a visible means for God to manifest His character in how He protected and provided for them, and also in how He punished them.**

- a. The prevailing religious perspective of the day was polytheistic henotheism.
  - 1) Tribal deities watched over the nations or peoples that worshipped them.
  - 2) The greatness of a nation’s god was evident in the general prosperity of the people and their success in battle.

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<sup>1</sup> A word of caution about interpreting prophecy: “First, the hermeneutic employed by the New Testament writers indicates that many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in ways totally unexpected by both the Old Testament authors themselves and the Jewish people of Jesus’ day. Second, the language of prophecy has a certain indefiniteness about it.” Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham—Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989), 267.

<sup>2</sup> Another warning here: “Some Christians have tried to preserve the place of the Old Testament in the church by reading Christological, allegorical, or spiritual meaning into the various texts....These interpreters often go far beyond the plain meaning of the text without clear biblical warrant. Bogged down in the quagmire of excessive spiritualization of the text, these interpreters often bypass the fundamental principle that a text must first be heard on its own terms, in its distinct literary genre, in its own Testament.” (Wilson, 114)

<sup>3</sup> Someone once said that we are God’s “living Bibles,” the only Bible that most people will ever read. Paul makes a similar statement: “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men...written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of human hearts.” (2 Corinthians 3:2-3)

b. Frequently, the God of the Jews set Himself up in a power encounter against the so-called gods of other nations to demonstrate His superiority (e.g., Elijah and the prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18).

1) Rahab guarding the Jewish spies:

**I know that the Lord has given you the land**, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. **For we have heard** how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you, **for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.** (Joshua 2:9-11)

2) David and Goliath:

Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For **who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?**” (1 Sam. 17:26)

The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” **And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.** (1 Sam. 17:43)

Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but **I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands**, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, **that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel**, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into our hands. (1 Sam. 17:45-47)

c. Yahweh’s supremacy was also manifest in the way He punished the Jews when they abandoned Him for other gods.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The “privilege” of being chosen was a mixed blessing. Along with the honor came responsibility and the inevitable discipline that came with not cooperating with God’s purposes. Note the prophet Amos’ remarks: “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2).

- 1) The Jews frequently fell into idolatry with agricultural fertility gods (e.g., Baal, Ashtoreth).
- 2) When this happened, Yahweh showed His supremacy by closing up the Heavens, bringing drought and famine to the land (note 1 Kings 16:30-33, 17:1).

**D. Fourth, the Jews were chosen to be God's priests to the world.**

1. Ex. 19:5 "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine. **And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**"
2. A priest is someone who mediates between God and man.
  - a. Genesis 18:16-33 Here we see Abraham interceding on behalf of Sodom, pleading with God for mercy on their behalf.
  - b. Genesis 20:1-18 Even though Abraham sinned by sending his wife to be with Abimelech, still he interceded effectively for this heathen king (see v. 17).

**E. Fifth, the Jews were chosen to be the people through whom the Messiah, the savior of the world, would be born.**

Rom. 9:4-5 "...who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and **from whom is the Christ according to the flesh**, who is over all, God blessed forever."

**F. However, being citizens of God's chosen nation does not mean Jews are favored for salvation.**

1. This was a common misunderstanding in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and even today.
2. Because you belong to God's community (citizenship) does not automatically mean you belong to God.
3. Physical ancestry is not enough.

**Here we come to a very important distinction...**

### **III. Citizenship vs. Salvation**

**A. Citizenship is a matter of birth**

1. **The promise to Abraham is to his physical offspring through Isaac and Jacob.**
  - a. "This man [Eliezer of Damascus] will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir" (Gen 15:4).
  - b. Gen 17:19 "Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."

- c. Abraham sends his servant to get a bride for Isaac (Gen. 24:1-8).
  - 1) He seeks a wife from his own bloodline, not from the Canaanites.
  - 2) He also forbids his servant from taking Isaac out of the land of promise.
  - 3) Notice the emphasis: literal bloodline and literal land.

**2. However, being a citizen (being Jewish) doesn't guarantee salvation.**

- a. Recurrent theme in the Bible: confusion between citizenship and salvation ("sons of Abraham," not "children of God")
  - 1) John the Baptist called the citizens (the Jews) to salvation: "Therefore bring forth fruits in keeping with your repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Luke 3:8).
  - 2) Jesus chastised Jewish leaders who were descendants of Abraham physically, but spiritually were more like Satan's children (see John 8:33-47).
  - 3) He also noted the distinction between external religion and internal piety: Matt. 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness."<sup>5</sup>
- b. Belonging to God's community does not mean you belong to God.
  - 1) Conflict of the OT:
    - a) Jews were disobedient citizens
    - b) Also not saved, characteristically (they had no personal faith)
    - c) Corresponds loosely to the unchurched of today
  - 2) Conflict of the NT:
    - a) Jews were obedient citizens in many ways but...
    - b) Still not saved, characteristically (still no personal faith)
    - c) Corresponds to religious ritual, perfunctory church attendance
- c. Contrasts between citizenship and salvation:
  - 1) Physical ancestry vs. spiritual ancestry
  - 2) Impersonal ritual vs. personal relationship: Ps 51:16-17 "For you do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it. You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."
  - 3) External sign of circumcision (Gen 17:11) vs. internal circumcision of heart: Isaiah 29:13 "...this people draws near to me with words, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."
  - 4) Attending church (mere religious activity) vs. genuine, authentic participation

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<sup>5</sup> One of history's great tragedies was that those who were children of the promise did not inherit it. "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." (John 1:11) "And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11-12).

### 3. Further, keeping the law cannot bring salvation.

#### a. The law requires perfection.

- 1) James 2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”
- 2) Gal. 5:3 “And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace.”
- 3) Gal. 3:10 “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.’”

#### b. No one is morally perfect.

- 1) Rom. 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- 2) Rom. 3:9-10 “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all, for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin, as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one.’”

#### c. Therefore, the law condemns all men, gentiles and Jews.

- 1) Rom. 3:20 “...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight.”
- 2) Rom. 3:19-20 “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God, because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”
- 3) Rom. 2:12-14 “For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law, for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves....”

#### d. Jews are lost even though they are citizens if they do not pursue salvation by faith.

- 1) Rom. 9:31-32 “But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.”
- 2) Rom. 2:25 “For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law. But if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.”
- 3) Heb. 3:17-19 “And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”

4) Rom. 9:27 “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the [believing] remnant that will be saved.’”

For the Jews, then, simply being a member of the chosen nation and keeping the Law “the best they can” does not rescue them from sin. Even the chosen citizens must exercise faith for salvation.

## **B. Salvation is a matter of faith.**

### **1. The promise came before the Law (Gal. 3:17)**

What I am saying is this: The Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

### **2. The promise does not come through law.**

- a. Gal. 2:21 “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”
- b. Heb. 10:1 “For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.”
- c. Gal. 3:11 “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident for, “The righteous man shall live by faith.”

### **3. The promise is through faith.**

- a. Eph. 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
- b. Rom. 3:27-28 “Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”

### **4. Salvation by faith is in contrast to salvation by law.**

- a. Rom. 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.
- b. Gal. 2:16 “Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law, since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”
- c. Rom. 4:13-14 “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified.”
- d. Phil. 3:9 “...and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

5. **The promise of salvation by faith applies to all who believe, Jew or gentile.**
  - a. Rom. 4:6-8 "...just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.'"
  - b. Rom. 4:16 "For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."
  - c. Rom. 3:29-30 "Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one."
  - d. Rom. 4:9-10, "Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, 'Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.' How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised."
  - e. Rom. 9:30 "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith."

**Here we need to step aside for a moment and define an important theological term.**

## **IV. Justification**

### **A. What is justification?**

1. Justification addresses the barriers of God's holy character and our spiritual debt.
  - a. Because God is holy and we are not, we are under wrath and judgment.
  - b. Because we owe perfect obedience to God, our sin creates a debt we cannot pay.
2. As such, there are two distinct aspects to justification, one that applies to guilt and one that applies to debt.
  - a. Justification is a forensic, or legal, declaration of innocence. Our sins are forgiven before God's court (legal imagery).
  - b. Justification is Christ's own righteousness, based on His active obedience here on earth, added to our account (banking imagery).
3. This is what the Reformers called the "marvelous exchange" (see 2 Cor. 5:21).
  - a. Justification is not "just as if I never sinned." It's more.
    - 1) The debt is canceled (God "justifies the ungodly," Rom. 4:5) and the account is filled ("God credits righteousness apart from works," Rom. 4:6).
    - 2) Forgiveness (negation of guilt) and righteousness (positive standing)
  - b. "Justification is a verdict that declares sinners to be righteous even while they are inherently unrighteous, simply on the basis of Christ's righteousness imputed to them."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 622.

This brings up another issue...

### B. What justification is not

1. Justification does not mean to become righteous in actual experience.<sup>7</sup>
2. This fact should be clear from the following verses:
  - a. Rom. 8:33 “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies.”
    - 1) If a person were truly blameless in his conduct, no charge could be leveled.
    - 2) Paul’ protection from being charged is based on what God has done, not on his own behavior.
  - b. Rom. 3:21-24 “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested...even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”
  - c. 1 Cor. 4:4 “For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted [“justified,” ESV]; but the one who examines me is the Lord.”
    - 1) Paul is not acquitted because he is personally blameless.
    - 2) Rather, he is acquitted by a gracious declaration of God.

The New Testament and the Old Testament use different words for this, but they mean the same thing.

### C. Two Terms: “reckon” and “justify”

1. **The Old Testament term is “reckoned.”**
  - a. Gen. 15:5-6 “And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ **Then he believed in the Lord and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.**”<sup>8</sup>
  - b. Rom. 4:20-22 “Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore also it was **reckoned** to him as righteousness.”
  - c. “Reckoned” is a banking term: “to credit to the account of.”
    - 1) God puts righteousness in Abraham’s moral bank account.
    - 2) God then sees Abraham’s wealth, not his poverty.

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<sup>7</sup> This is in contrast to the Roman Catholic view that holds justification is a process tied to our sanctification. For Rome, we are not declared righteous; we are made righteous.

<sup>8</sup> Take careful note, though, that Abraham’s faith was no passive, intellectual exercise. “To the Hebrew mind, therefore...the person of faith did more than believe in his heart or develop an attitude of trust. He stepped out into life to act on that belief.... The person of faith was one who was so committed to God that, like Abraham, he ventured into the unknown with the full expectation that God would meet him there.” (Wilson, 184))

## 2. The New Testament term is “justified.” Rom 4:1-5:

What shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified [absolved] by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned [credited] to him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies [absolves] the ungodly, his faith is reckoned [credited] as righteousness.”

## 3. That’s why Paul can say (Rom. 5:1-2):

a. “Therefore having been **justified** by faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, **and we exult in hope of the glory of God.**”

b. We are not at war with God anymore. We have sued for peace, with Christ as our attorney and advocate.

Therefore, salvation is a result of justification, which comes by faith alone and not by works.

## V. Dealing with a “Contradiction”—Paul vs. James

### A. But now it seems we have a contradiction. Here it is:

1. Rom. 3:27-28 “Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith, **for we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.**”

2. James 2:21-24

a. “**Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?** You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God.”

b. And then the kicker: “**You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.**”

3. How do we solve this problem?

### B. A clue to resolving apparent contradictions

1. A contradiction is a very specific kind of thing.

2. It occurs when one statement **negates** another statement; the first **contradicts** the second. For example:

a. “Napoleon was a big man.”

b. “Napoleon was not a big man.”

3. This seems like an obvious contradiction.

4. However, things that appear contradictory at first glance are not always at odds with each other.
  - a. The law of non-contradiction states that A cannot be not-A at the same time and *in the same way*.
  - b. If the terms in the alleged contradiction are not being used *in the same way*, then the contradiction disappears.
    - 1) "Napoleon was a big man [in history]."
    - 2) "Napoleon was not a big man [physically]."
  - c. Note that when the terms are used in a different sense, there is no contradiction.

**5. Principle: Whenever there is an apparent contradiction, always check to see if all the terms are being used in the same way.**

- a. Check any dictionary and you will see that most words have more than one meaning.
- b. To determine which individual dictionary meaning is intended among the many available, you must examine the context.
- c. This is a normal process we go through all the time in conversation without thinking about it.

**C. "Justification"—a word with two meanings**

1. Could it be that "justify" has more than one meaning and Paul is using the word in one way while James is using the word in a completely different way? Let's see.
2. We already noted what the word "justify" means in the Bible:
  - a. "Justification" means to declare righteous.
  - b. Each testament has its own way of expressing this:
    - 1) To "reckon righteous" (OT characterization)
    - 2) To "credit to the account of" (NT characterization)
3. But the word also has a second definition:
  - a. "To demonstrate or prove to be just, right or valid. To show to be well founded; to warrant."<sup>9</sup>
  - b. When we say to someone, "Justify yourself," or "What's your justification for that idea?," we are asking them to give *evidence* for what they claim.
4. The Bible uses this second meaning, too.
  - a. Rom. 3:4 "Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, 'That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.'"
  - 1) Clearly, God is not being *declared* or *reckoned* righteous.
    - 2) God is being *proved* righteous.
  - b. Matt. 12:35 "The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. **For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.**"
  - c. Note, this is not the justification of salvation.

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<sup>9</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary.*

- 1) Your words don't absolve you (1st definition).
- 2) They are an external *evidence* bearing testimony of an internal condition—either good or evil “treasure” within (2nd definition).
- d. Are they both referring to justification as in “reckoning righteous”? This would be a contradiction.
- e. Are they referring to justification as in “proving or giving evidence of something”? This would also be a contradiction.
- f. Or are they each referring to a different definition? In this case there would be no contradiction.

The answer to this question is determined by the context.

#### **D. Solving the riddle**

1. Both Paul and James cite Abraham to make their point on justification.
2. What passage does Paul cite? Gen. 15:5-6. Turn there.

And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he believed in the Lord, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

3. Hold your finger in Gen. 15 and turn to the passage James cites.
  - a. Gen. 22:12ff:

He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

In response, God repeats—and reaffirms—the original promise made years earlier...

- b. Gen. 22:16-18

“By Myself I have sworn,” declares the Lord, “because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

4. Do you know what you're holding now between your fingers—between Gen. 15 and Gen. 22? 25 years!

#### **5. Paul and James are referring to two different things happening at two different times in Abraham's life.**

- a. **Paul**, in Rom. 4, refers to Abraham's salvation in Gen. 15 where God “reckons” Abraham's faith as righteousness.

**But Abraham didn't get saved twice.**

- b. **James**, in James 2, refers to the evidence of a changed life.
  - c. Abraham proved his faith to God.
    - 1) "...now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."
    - 2) God experienced Abraham's faith first-hand. It was demonstrated in righteous behavior.
      - a) Abraham was being confirmed in the salvation he had already received.
      - b) That's why James says (2:23): "**And the Scripture was fulfilled** which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.'"
  - d. Abraham's justification in Gen. 15 manifested itself in actual righteous behavior ("works") 25 years later.
6. James speaks to the person who is all talk and no action.
- a. James 2:14 "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can **that** faith [i.e., "that kind of 'faith'"] save him?"
  - b. v. 26 (my paraphrase):

The human body without the breath of life is nothing more than a corpse. The same is true for anyone who says he has faith, but doesn't back it up with evidence. If your "faith" is by itself, it's like that corpse—no life.

- c. True salvation always proves itself with action.
    - 1) Matt. 12:35 "**For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.**"
    - 2) 1 John 2:4 "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him."
      - a) From this you can logically derive, "If you do not keep His commandments, then you do not know Him."
      - b) You cannot logically derive, "If you keep His commandments, then you can come to know Him." Works don't save you.
  - d. **Faith alone saves, but faith that is alone is not saving faith.**
7. Contrasting Paul and James:

**Paul** (Genesis 15):

"justified"  
reckoned  
credited  
state of being (position)  
absolved  
Abraham believed God's promise

**James** (Genesis 22):

"justified"  
proven  
worked out  
state of living (experience)  
observed  
Abraham obeyed God's command

Now that we understand justification, we can return to the issue of citizenship vs. salvation.

## **VI. Citizenship and Salvation—Redux**

### **A. Citizenship in the chosen nation is an external matter of physical birth (as we have seen). Abraham is the first citizen.**

1. Acts 3:25 (Peter) “It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”
2. Gen. 12:1-3 (the Abrahamic Covenant) is Abraham’s “citizenship papers,” so to speak, commissioning him to take salvation to the world.
3. Abraham was the first Jew.

### **B. Salvation in God’s kingdom—by contrast—is a matter of internal spiritual renewal based on faith.**

1. Abraham is the perfect archetype, the ideal model.
2. Gen. 15:6 is Abraham’s “salvation papers”—“Then he believed in the Lord and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

### **C. Key point: Abraham was the father of the citizens and the father of those who are justified by faith.**

1. Abraham is father of the physical seed—the citizens.
  - a. Jews are children of Abraham, citizens of the chosen nation, by virtue of their physical kinship.
  - b. They have the same flesh as Abraham.
2. Abraham is also father of the spiritual seed—those who are saved.
  - a. Gentile Christians are children of Abraham by virtue of their spiritual kinship.
  - b. They have the same faith Abraham did.
- c. Both unbelieving Jews and believing gentiles call Abraham their father, but for different reasons.

Rom 4:11-12 “[Abraham is] the father of all who believe without being circumcised [gentiles—spiritual seed], that righteousness might be reckoned to them, **and** the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision [i.e., Jews who citizens], but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham [i.e., Jews justified by faith] which he had while uncircumcised.”

### **D. Since all humans are lost—Jew and gentile—all people need salvation that comes only through faith, even the Jew.**

1. Rom. 9:27 Paul notes, “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved.’”

2. Note the distinction:

- a. “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea” (physical seed of the Abrahamic Covenant)...
- b. “...it is the remnant that will be saved” (the spiritual seed of the New Covenant).
- c. There is always a believing remnant among the Jews. Note 1Kings 19:14, 17:

Then [Elijah] said [to the Lord], “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And **I alone am left**, and they seek my life, to take it away.” The Lord said to him...”Yet I will leave **7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal** and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

Here I want to address—and hopefully clear up—a common point of confusion regarding the biblical role of national Israel and the New Testament church. Is the church now Israel?

## VII. Who Are Abraham’s True Seed? Who Are His Real “Descendents”?

**A. Now we come to a problem: Sometimes the Scripture refers to the seed of Abraham as the Jews, and other times it seems to be referring to believers in the church.**

- 1. Clearly the Jews are Abraham’s “seed,” even under the New Covenant (Rom. 9:1-5):

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- 2. However, the church also seems to be the object of the promise:
  - a. Rom. 9:6: “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. Nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: ‘Through Isaac your descendants will be named.’ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.”

- b. Gal. 3:6-9 “Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.”
  - c. Phil 3:3 “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus.”
  - d. Rom. 9:8 “It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.”
3. Consequently, some have concluded that national Israel no longer has a place in God’s program and the church is now the “new” Israel (called “replacement theology”). This is a mistake.<sup>10</sup>

**B. The concept of Abraham’s “seed” or “descendants” has a four different meanings in Scripture depending on who the text is referring to:**

- 1. One: Jews (literal, physical descendants—citizens): same flesh as Abraham**
  - a. Born as a Jew – Citizens of the chosen nation
  - b. Jews are children of Abraham, citizens of the chosen nation, by virtue of their physical kinship. They have the same flesh Abraham did.
  - c. Isaac, Gen 17:19 “Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.”
  - d. Jacob, Gen 28:13-15 “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”
- 2. Two: Believing Gentiles – recipients of the blessing**
  - a. These are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. Same faith as Abraham.
  - b. Rom 4:11-12 “[Abraham is] the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.”
  - c. Romans 4:12 “...and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

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<sup>10</sup> Note: There is no place in the New Testament that the church is called “Israel.”

- d. Galatians 3:29 “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

### **3. Three: Believing Jews – citizens of the chosen nation and recipients of the blessing**

- a. Same flesh and same faith as Abraham—the “believing remnant.”
- b. (spiritual and physical descendants)
- c. These are citizens (Jews) who are saved because they share the same faith as Abraham.
- d. They are sometimes referred to as the “believing remnant” (Rom 11:2-5):
  - 1) “Do you not know what the Scripture says about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars, and I alone am left and they are seeking my life.’ But what was the divine response to him? ‘I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’”
  - 2) “In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.”

### **4. Four: Jesus Christ**

- a. Paul refers to Jesus as the “seed” (singular) of Abraham.
- b. Gal. 3:16 “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ.”
- c. Jesus was the epitome of the believing and the source of blessing for all believing gentiles.

**With this important clarification in place (citizenship vs. salvation), the next step is the growth of the nation (a people, a land, and a government). We will also see how God works to fulfill His promise of protections in a unique and completely unexpected way.**

## **What We Learned:**

### **Main Points**

- The Jews are a “chosen” people in five specific ways:
  - First, the Jews were chosen to be God’s witness, a light to the nations.
  - Second, the Jews were chosen to proclaim, preserve, and pass on God’s Word.
  - Third, the Jews were chosen to be God’s “Living Bible”—a living revelation of God’s person and power.
  - Fourth, the Jews were chosen to be God’s priests to the world.
  - Fifth, the Jews were chosen to be the people through whom the Messiah, the savior of the world, would be born.
- However, being citizens of God’s chosen nation does not mean Jews are favored for salvation.
  - Citizenship is a matter of birth, while salvation comes only through faith.
  - The law is not a means of salvation. Rather, it condemns all men, gentiles and Jews.
- Justification is through faith alone.
  - Justification means we are legally declared innocent in God’s court.
  - Justification also means we have been credited with Christ’s righteousness.
  - It does not mean we have actually been made righteous.
- Abraham is the father of the citizens and the father of those justified by faith.
- Abraham’s “seed” or “descendants” means different things in different contexts.
  - One: Jews (physical descendants—citizens): same flesh as Abraham
  - Two: Believing Gentiles – recipients of the blessing
  - Three: Believing Jews – citizens of Israel and recipients of the blessing
  - Four: Jesus Christ

### **Secondary Points**

- The alleged contradiction between Paul and James on justification is resolved when we realize they are using the term in different ways.
  - Paul refers to Abraham’s initial salvation.
  - James refers to the outworking of Abraham’s faith 25 years later.

### **For Reflection and Discussion:**

- What specifically do we mean when we say Israel was “chosen”
- What is the distinction between being a Jew, being a chosen citizen, and being “saved”?
- Explain what it means to be reckoned righteous.
- How are Paul’s use of the word “justify” and James’ use different? Defend your contention.
- What is the main point of James 2:11-26?
- What are four different meanings to the term “seed of Abraham”?

## Session 4

### Exodus to Deuteronomy—The Mosaic Contract

#### I. Introduction

##### A. Review last week

#### What We Learned in Session 3

- The Jews are a “chosen” people in five specific ways:
  - To be God’s witness, a light to the nations
  - To proclaim, preserve, and pass on God’s Word
  - To be a living revelation of God’s person and power
  - To be God’s priests to the world
  - To be the people through whom the Messiah would be born
- However, being chosen does not mean Jews are favored for salvation.
  - Citizenship is a matter of birth, while salvation comes only through faith.
  - The law does not save, but rather condemns all men, gentiles and Jews.
- Justification is through faith alone.
- Justification means...
  - We are legally declared innocent in God’s court
  - We have been credited with Christ’s righteousness
- It does not mean we have actually been made righteous.
- Abraham is the father of the citizens and the father of those justified by faith.
- Abraham’s “seed” or “descendants” means different things in different contexts.
  - One: Jews (physical descendants—citizens): same flesh as Abraham
  - Two: Believing Gentiles – recipients of the blessing
  - Three: Believing Jews – citizens of Israel and recipients of the blessing
  - Four: Jesus Christ

1. **Interact:** Discuss with the person next to you one or two things that stood out as significant to you from the last session.
2. Ask review questions of audience.
3. Recite the 5 elements of the Christian world view (view of reality).
4. Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel using the motions.

##### B. Objectives for this week

### **Session 4 Objectives:**

- Show how the specific provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant—nation, blessing, protection—begin to be put into play
- Discuss the significance of God’s choice of Isaac over Ishmael
- Describe the threat of syncretism
- Show how slavery in Egypt was a sovereign, redemptive act of God
- Identify the basic divisions of the Mosaic covenant
- Itemize the functions of the Law
- Clarify who—Jews or gentiles—are under this covenant
- Contrast the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants

Reading: Gen. 37-47, Heb. 9:1-10, Deut. 28-30

## **II. 2nd Major Historical Event: The Birth of Isaac**

### **A. At this point in the narrative we begin to see the first fruits of God’s promise...**

I want you to see how the specific provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant—nation, blessing, protection—begin to be put into play.

### **B. Development of the nation (a people, a land, and government)**

1. Land
  - a. God defines the limits of the land.
  - b. Gen. 15:18 “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.”
2. Seed: **the birth of Isaac**

### **C. God limits the line of the inheritance of the promise.**

1. Through Isaac rather than Ishmael
  - a. Gen. 17:19 “But God said, ‘No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac, and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.’”
  - b. Gen. 21:12 “But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid. Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.’”
    - 1) Note that even if the Muslims of Arab descent have Abraham as their father through Ishmael, this does not give them any claim to the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant.
    - 2) The promise to Abraham is restricted to Isaac’s descendants.
- c. **But why not Ishmael?**

1) **Isaac's birth was a supernatural sign:** Both Abraham (100) and Sarah (90) were very old.

- a) Isaac was important as a kind of “down payment,” an “earnest” or “good faith” deposit to Abraham regarding the promise.
- b) This miraculous conception was God's way of clearly confirming for Abraham the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of a great nation long after Abraham would be gone.

2) **Selection is by God's choice (grace)** rather than by “tradition” (law)—see Gal. 4:21-31.

- a) God chooses not the first born, but the second born.
- b) God's blessing comes not by law or by any sort of obligation, but rather by His sovereign grace.

2. Through Jacob rather than Esau (Gen. 28:13-15)

- a. The promise to Abraham is further restricted to Jacob's (“Israel's”) descendants.
- b. Notice how the fullness of the Abrahamic Covenant is captured in God's promise (Gen. 28:13-15):

And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

#### **D. Protection from the spiritual pollution of syncretism**

- 1. By the third generation the chosen people are already in serious trouble.
- 2. They are syncretistic, mingling pagan idol worship with pure devotion to Yahweh.

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.

- 3. Judah takes Shua, a Canaanite, for a bride (Gen. 38:1-5), bringing her pagan gods along with her as was the custom. Later he consorts with temple prostitutes (Gen. 38:21).
- 4. Except for Joseph, Jacob's sons lack any sense of spiritual vision or values.
  - a. They are out of touch with their divine commission, more intent on getting revenge than on being a blessing (Gen. 34).

- b. Their treatment of their own brother, Joseph, showed complete lack of commitment to a divine purpose for this small chosen nation.

**E. Syncretistic mixing of religions is very popular in our culture, a kind of “smorgasbord religion” approach.**

- 1. Those in the New Age Movement love to combine the teachings of Jesus with eastern religions.
- 2. Syncretism also happens within the church.
  - a. Some Christians try to mix Christianity with reincarnation.
  - b. Some identify themselves as “Buddhist Christians” or “Muslim followers of Christ.”

So God ships them off to Egypt (Gen. 42-50)...

### **III. 3rd Major Historical Event: Joseph in Egypt**

**A. The time in Egypt is an act of God’s discipline.**

- 1. Being out of the land of promise is a disciplinary pattern.
- 2. We will see it on a much larger scale later in Israel’s history.

**B. However, the time in Egypt is also an act of God’s grace to preserve and protect the Jews.**

- 1. First, it provided physical preservation during the coming severe famine.
- 2. Second, it protected the seed of Abraham from being absorbed theologically into Canaanite culture.

**Question:** Why were the Jews safer from syncretism with the Egyptians rather than the Canaanites?

- a. The Egyptians were fiercely prejudiced and separatist.
- b. There would be no intermarriage, and therefore little opportunity for syncretism with Egyptian religion.

**C. The sovereign workings of God:**

- 1. God uses the sin of Joseph’s brothers to accomplish deliverance for His people.
  - a. It was not God’s moral will that Joseph be beaten and sold into slavery.
  - b. However, in God’s sovereign will He used this sin against Joseph as a means to fulfill His greater purpose of protecting His fledgling nation:

As for you [Joseph’s brothers], you meant evil against me [Joseph], but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (Gen. 50:20)

- 2. God may allow many evils to befall us at the hands of others.
  - a. All we have to worry about is being faithful to follow Him.
  - b. “Bloom where you’re planted,” as Joseph did.
  - c. God will work out His purposes in spite of the sins of others.

3. Note the confidence Joseph expressed that God would fulfill His covenantal promise in spite of the centuries of struggle that were yet ahead for the Jews:

Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.” (Gen. 50:24-25)

#### D. Two additional observations

1. **First**, notice that God shows mercy and longsuffering towards the pagan peoples of Palestine by delaying their judgment.

- a. God tells Abraham his children would be slaves for 400 years (Gen. 15:13): “God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.’”
- b. Even so, God will protect them: “But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions” (Gen. 15:14).
- c. Then the cryptic, “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete” (Gen. 15:16).
  - 1) God waits another 400 years for the Amorites to continue their rebellion against Him.
  - 2) When the time is right, He will judge their idolatry using Joshua’s army.

2. **Second**, notice that guidance in this 3rd generation from Abraham is primarily through circumstances rather than direct revelation (Joseph’s dreams notwithstanding).

- a. People sometimes have the impression that God was showing up everywhere during OT times.
- b. This was not the case. Instead, God worked circumstantially and providentially most of the time.
- c. Periods of special revelation and miraculous intervention are historically rare, but intense (e.g., Moses, Elijah and Elisha, the ministry of Jesus and the apostles).

### IV. 4th Major Historical Event: The Exodus<sup>1</sup>

#### A. The Abrahamic Covenant is at work in Egypt.

- 1. Though the exile is disciplinary, God still honors His promise to Abraham: a nation (people, land, government), blessing, and protection.
- 2. **Supernatural increase of the nation**, in spite of slavery (from 70 people to 600k/2 million)

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<sup>1</sup> “In the Old Testament, the greatest act by which God made himself known is the Exodus.” Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham—Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989), 161.

### 3. Supernatural protection and deliverance

a. Preservation while in Egypt for 400 years

b. The 10 plagues

- 1) The water in Egypt is turned to blood (7:14-25).
- 2) Frogs covered the land (8:1-15).
- 3) Gnats or mosquitoes (lice?) plagued man and beast (8:16-19).
- 4) Swarms of flies covered the land (8:20-32).
- 5) Pestilence fell on the Egyptian animals (9:1-7).
- 6) Boils broke out on the people and animals (9:8-12).
- 7) Hail struck people, animals, and crops (9:13-35).
- 8) Locusts devoured the land (10:1-20).
- 9) A deep darkness spread over the land (10:21-29).
- 10) The first-born were killed (11:1-12:50).

c. The Passover—Exodus 12

- 1) The blood of the lamb covered the people and protected them from the angel of death, God's agent of justice and retribution.
- 2) The Jews were to "take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it" (Ex. 12:7).
- 3) This looks very much like the sign of the cross in blood, a type—or picture—of Christ.
  - a) John the Baptist identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b).
  - b) It is no coincidence that Jesus died at Passover time.

### 4. Supernatural blessing to Abraham's children

a. Financial reward (just as God had promised, Gen. 15:14):

And I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, and it shall be that when you go, you shall not go empty handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing, and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians." (Ex. 3:21-22, cf. Ex. 2:35-36)

b. **Supernatural deliverance at the Red Sea<sup>2</sup>** in spite of the Jews' wavering faith:

Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in

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<sup>2</sup> "It is important to observe that the translation of the Hebrew *Yam Suph* ('Red Sea') is plainly incorrect. The proper rendering is 'Reed' or 'Marsh' Sea....No reeds exist in the Red Sea....The body of water that they actually passed through formed a natural barrier between Egypt and the Sinai Wilderness....To reach the Red Sea or its arm, the Gulf of Suez, the Israelites would have had to traverse a vast expanse of desert." Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 331. The exact location of the crossing is unknown.

this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.” (Ex. 14:11-13)

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it. Then the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh’s entire army that had gone into the sea after them. Not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea....(Ex. 14:27-29a)

### 5. Blessing to the nations

- a. Through all, God is teaching Israel and the other nations about His character.

For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth....But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. (Ex. 9:14, 16)

- b. God demonstrates His pre-eminence in power over the false “gods” of the Egyptians.

- 1) Many of the plagues directly or indirectly encroached on the domain of a pagan Egyptian deity.

- 2) Ex. 12:12b “...and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord.”

- c. His faithfulness to his covenant promises (*chesed*, “lovingkindness”)
- d. His holiness through His righteous acts

## V. 5th Major Historical Event: The Giving of the Law (Exodus and Leviticus)

I want you to see the Mosaic law in the proper light. It’s clear there is a lot of misunderstanding about the purpose of the Law and the role it is meant to play in the life of the Christian.

### A. The Mosaic Law is, in part, an outworking of the Abrahamic Contract.

1. It is part of the promise of “nation” (government).
2. It is a revelation of God’s character to the world.
3. It provides blessings for obedience.

### B. The three basic divisions of the Law

1. The Mosaic Law addresses three major areas of concern for the Jewish nation.
  - a. Moral conduct—directions for holy living before God, e.g., the 10 commandments
  - b. Ceremonial religious activities—liturgy of worship, the tabernacle, etc.
  - c. Civil order—structure of the government
2. However, the Torah itself is not divided into these categories.
  - a. These distinctions help us understand the content of the Law.
  - b. We must not forget that the entire law was morally incumbent on every person under the contract.
  - c. In one sense, the entire law is moral for the Jews to whom it was given.

### C. The purpose and role of the Law

#### 1. First, the Mosaic Law provided governmental structure and cultural distance from the gentiles.

- a. Part of being a nation entailed having a unifying set of laws and cultural practices.
- b. The ordinances in the Law also served as a “dividing wall” between Jews and gentiles.<sup>3</sup>
  - 1) Many of the “bizarre” customs of the Jews created a cultural barrier to prevent syncretism with pagan religions, **protecting Israel’s theological core.**

Their lifestyle was expected to be different from the polytheistic culture around them. In style of dress, in eating habits, in manner of worship, and in ethical values the Hebrews were God’s “treasured possession,” a living “kingdom of priests.”<sup>4</sup>

#### 2) Later this dividing wall was abolished in Christ:

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (Eph. 2:14-16)

#### 2. Second, the Mosaic law restrained evil.

- a. The law provided punishment for lawbreakers, thus limiting the spread of evil.

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<sup>3</sup> This resulted in the Hebrew idea that all life is sacred. Since as a people they were set apart, there was no need to identify portions of their life as “religious” and portions as “secular.” It was one unified whole, all under the domain of God. The early church did not continue this theme, though: “A double morality arose: a higher morality for life out of the world and a lower one for life in it. The affirmation of all life as sacred, which has generally characterized the synagogue, was ignored--and the Christian world became divided into clerical and lay people, secular and sacred institutions, holy persons and holy things being set over against unholy things.” W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 387-88.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, 11-12.

b. Though the law had many regulations that were relevant only to Jews, it reflected, in many places, the moral demands God makes on anyone in any culture (e.g., “You shall not murder”).

**3. Third, the Mosaic Law gave instruction on righteous, fruitful living.**

- a. Torah means “teaching” or “instruction.”
- b. Much of the New Testament teaching on sound living is grounded in the Law. The writers constantly quote from it.
- c. Obedience to the Law would be one of Israel’s “witnessing tools” to the nations:

So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” (Deut. 4:6)

**4. Fourth, the Mosaic Law helped define sin.**

- a. God has given every human being a “law within,” a rudimentary moral foundation that is adequate to condemn man for having broken it (Rom. 2:14-15):

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them....

- b. The written Law gives more clarity to sin than our conscience does.
  - 1) It illuminates God’s holy character.<sup>5</sup>
  - 2) It illuminates man’s error: “We would not come to have known sin except through the law” (Rom. 7:7).

**5. Fifth, the Mosaic Law was a “tutor” to lead us to God’s mercy in Christ.**

- a. The Law condemns us:
  - 1) Gal. 3:10 “Cursed is anyone who does not abide by all things...”
  - 2) James 2:10 “Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all.”
  - 3) Gal. 3:22a “The law has shut up all men under sin....”
- b. The Law helps us to see our need for Christ:

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore, the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (Gal. 3:23-24)

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<sup>5</sup> Curiously, most religions of the world have not been concerned with transcendent ethics and morality. “A majority of the religions that have existed upon earth have probably been far more concerned with humanity’s proper relationship to gods, demons and spirits than with ethical relationships between people. One distinctive characteristic of the religion of the early Hebrews was the ethical dimension that Yahweh required of them. [Many] associate the word *religious* with the word *moral*. But among the majority of religions it is not necessarily so.” Lewis M. Hopfe, *Religions of the World* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 3.

c. Further, the sacrifices prescribed by the law are pictures of substitutionary atonement, the death of an innocent substitute on our behalf.

## 6. Sixth, the Mosaic Law was a means of salvation by grace, not works.

a. The Law itself wasn't capable of saving anyone.

1) Gal. 2:16 "Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law, since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."

2) Gal. 2:21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

3) Heb. 10:1 "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near."

4) Gal. 3:11 "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."

5) Gal. 3:17-18 "What I am saying is this: The Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise, but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise."

b. Rather, the Law provided a way for the Jews to express faith in God's grace. It was a vehicle of grace.

1) The sacrificial system allowed for the death of an innocent substitute to temporarily cover the sins of the people.

a) The sacrificial system was an interim measure, covering sins until the Messiah came. Paul says God "passed over the sins previously committed" (Rom. 3:25).

b) Jesus' blood was the true payment, not the blood of bulls and goats (see Heb. 10:1-18).

2) Sacrifices provided a vehicle for trust so that men could still be justified by faith—trusting in God's provision.

3) The problem with the Jews' use of Law is that characteristically they did not pursue the Law by faith (Rom. 9:30-32):

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith. But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone....

## The Law—God’s Physician

The law is like a good doctor. It shows us what good health is. It identifies sickness. It directs us to a healing therapy. Ultimately, though, we each must exercise trust (faith) in the “doctor” (i.e., we must act on his advice) before the therapy will work.

### D. The Mosaic Law is in the form of a treaty.

1. It followed the form of the suzerain/vassal treaty of the Hittite overlords and their vassal states.<sup>6</sup> It contained:
  - a. A preamble giving the names and titles of the parties (Ex. 20:2a, Deut. 1:1-5)
  - b. An historical prologue setting out the previous relations of the parties (Ex. 20:2b, 19:3b-6, Deut. 1:6-4:49)
  - c. The stipulations of the treaty: loyalty and obedience to God (Ex. 20:1-17, Deut. 5-26)
    - 1) “The primary purpose of the...treaty was to serve the interest of the king. So Yahweh’s covenant served His interest...The stipulations of the treaty, then, were binding only on the vassal, and only a vassal took an oath of allegiance. **It is a unilateral treaty.**”<sup>7</sup>
    - 2) God says: “You owe me. I already did my part.”
  - d. A statement of consequences: cursings and blessings (Lev. 26, Deut. 27-30)
    - 1) Obedience brings blessings.
    - 2) Disobedience brings cursings (see esp. Deut. 29:24-28).

**Question:** So is the Mosaic covenant conditional or unconditional? Who are the conditions on?

## Why the Jews?

According to the blessings and cursings of the Mosaic covenant, then, we should be able to chart the spiritual health of the nation by its level of peace and prosperity, and whether the Jews are in possession of the promised land or not. The Jewish people suffer because they have broken God’s covenant. See also 2 Chron. 7:21-22, 24:24, 28:6; 1 Chron. 9:1; Is. 50:1; Jer. 2:17, et al.

Now I want to say something that might at first disturb you, but I hope will get you thinking more accurately about the biblical revelation: The Mosaic Covenant is not binding on gentiles (that would be most of us).

## VI. The Mosaic Covenant—Jews, not Gentiles

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [ISBE]*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 790.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Bruce Waltke, unpublished course syllabus.

**A. Covenants are contracts made between two specific parties with a specific set of provisions.**

1. A contract only governs those officially under its provisions.
  - a. God and Israel are the signatories of the Mosaic Covenant.
  - b. The Mosaic Covenant had a role of enlightening gentiles who read it, but the contract itself was never binding on them because they were not signatories.
2. A contract is a whole thing, an all-or-nothing agreement (note, e.g., James 2:11-12).
  - a. All the provisions hang together as one coherent agreement.
  - b. The Jews made no distinctions between the 10 commandments and any other imperatives of the contract.
  - c. “Ceremonial” laws were just as obligatory for Jews as “dietary” laws and “moral” laws.

**B. California vs. Vermont**

1. What Vermont laws apply to Californians? None.
  - a. If I commit murder in California I am not judged under Vermont statute because I am not under its jurisdiction, but rather under California law.
  - b. Likewise, gentiles are no more obligated to keep the Mosaic law than Californians are to obey Vermont law.<sup>8</sup>
2. However, both states have certain statutes in common.
  - a. In some cases, they face the same issues and solve them the same way.
  - b. In other cases, though, there are things that should be in any law because they represent transcendent moral truth.

**C. Universal morality**

1. In a certain sense, some morality is local.
  - a. Different states may have different speed limits.
  - b. We have a general obligation to obey governing authorities, but the specific laws vary.
    - 1) Driving over 65 mph is not always wrong.
    - 2) It depends on local statutes.
2. Some moral obligations are transcendent, though. They are universal—applicable to all people—and should therefore appear in every moral code.

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<sup>8</sup> Except when they are in Vermont. Likewise, gentiles living in Israel would have been under appropriate provisions of the Mosaic law, not because the law applied to them as gentiles, but because they were in a Jewish state ruled by Jewish law.

- a. For example, homicide is illegal in both California and Vermont because it's wrong to take the life of innocent human beings regardless of where they live.
- b. Note, murder is not wrong because it is in state statutes. It is in state statutes because it is wrong, regardless of what state (or country) one is in.
- 3. In like fashion, the Mosaic code represents the legal statutes of the Jews under the theocracy, but still may reflect moral norms that have application for those outside the nation of Israel.
  - a. Citing an obligation in the Mosaic Law (even in the Ten Commandments) is not *in itself* enough to show we are obligated to it. We are not under the jurisdiction of those laws.
  - b. However, we can glean wisdom from them when there are similar situations we face in our own lives.
  - c. We are also obliged by any transcendent moral obligation reflected in the Law given to the Jews—not because it's in the Law, but it's transcendent and therefore included in the Law.
    - 1) On my count, that would include nine of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath being excepted.
    - 2) The transcendent character of each of these except the fourth (Sabbath) are affirmed in the NT.

**Question:** How do we distinguish between “local” and universal?

**D. How do we judge if an OT rule or statute applies to us in NT Times?**

- 1. One, reflection
  - a. In many cases, the transcendent nature of the statute—the inherent rightness or justice of it—is evident upon reflection.
  - b. E.g., stealing is wrong because it's clear people have a natural right to the product of their own labors.
- 2. Two, the wording in the OT statute itself
  - a. Leviticus condemns homosexuality in this way: “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female. It is an abomination” (Lev. 18:22).
  - b. Notice that the rationale here is based on God's creation intent. God provided women to function sexually with men, not other men (see also Rom. 1:27, which makes the same argument: “...men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another...”).
- 3. Three, NT confirmation of a law's moral applicability to Christians under the new covenant
  - a. The NT is thick with instructions and commands regarding virtuous behavior and proper conduct in the family of God.
  - b. Grace does not nullify our obligation.
    - 1) We are not accepted before God on the basis of right living.
    - 2) Yet we are still required as children of God to live a holy life:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age...” (Titus 2:11-12).

### **No Sabbath? No tithe?**

In the OT, covenants have signs (Noahic Covenant, the rainbow; Abrahamic covenant, circumcision; New Covenant, baptism). The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17). Since the covenant itself is obsolete (Heb. 8:13), the sign of that covenant is likewise obsolete. Even though the Sabbath rest is analogous with the days of creation in Genesis 1, still it is an ordinance given to Jews alone.

Further, Christians observe a Sunday “Sabbath” on the first day of the week, not the Mosaic Sabbath at the end of the week (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday). Ultimately, the day is of no consequence. What matters is that Christians assemble together for teaching, encouragement, and community (Acts 2:42, Heb. 10:24-25, 1 Cor. 11).

Tithing (“tenth-ing”) was a system of taxing that provided revenue for the government and also sustained the priests and the temple (there was no separation between church and state). A Christian should no more go to Malachi for instruction on tithing than he should go to Leviticus for instruction on animal sacrifice. Tithing is not an obligation for Christians. Instead, freewill giving is the standard (2 Cor. 9:7).

#### **E. The NT use of the term “law” is multifaceted.**

1. Most frequently, it refers to the Mosaic law.
2. Generally, it refers to any system by which we gain credit through self-effort (Gal. 5:4 “...you who are seeking to be justified by law...,” e.g., by getting circumcised). This is called “legalism.”
3. A second sense of “legalism” exists whenever we elevate man’s traditions to be equal with God’s laws (see Mark 7:7-8).

#### **F. Though the Mosaic Covenant is born out of the Abrahamic Covenant, it is entirely different.**

1. The Mosaic Law does not signal the end of the Abrahamic Covenant.
  - a. It is part of a continued outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant.
  - b. However, it is very different from the Abrahamic.
2. The blessing of the Mosaic Covenant is:
  - a. Conditional: binding on Israel alone
  - b. Based on works
  - c. The benefits of the blessing are...
    - 1) Conferred on the nation of Israel as a whole
    - 2) Dependent on obedience

By contrast....

3. The blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant is:
  - a. Unconditional: binding on God alone
  - b. Based on grace
  - c. The benefits of the blessing are...
    - 1) Conferred on the individuals in the nations
    - 2) Dependent on faith

**G. The Jews are now under two covenants.**

1. God deals with Israel in light of both agreements.
  - a. An unconditional promise to Abraham to make a great nation of him, to bless him, and to use him to be a blessing to the world, and ...
  - b. A conditional agreement of blessings and curses based on the allegiance Israel owes its great King as His vassal state
2. As the history of the Jews moves forward, we will see an interplay between the Abrahamic Covenant promise of blessing and the Mosaic Covenant promise of cursing.
  - a. Salvation of the individuals is always by God's grace.
  - b. When the nation falters, however, all the people suffer, even the believing remnant.
3. God will discipline the nation for its disobedience.
4. Still, His long-term unconditional promise towards the Jews remains.

**What We Learned:**

**Main Points**

- God defines the limits of the land and the line of promise. He provides a miraculous child, Isaac, as Abraham's first descendent of promise.
- By the third generation from Abraham, the Jews have lost sight of their mission and are vulnerable to being absorbed by the pagan cultures around them.
- God delivers them from this syncretism and the coming famine by shipping them off to Egypt, where they become a large nation over the next 400 years.
- Following a miraculous deliverance from Egypt, God gives the Jews the Mosaic covenant, the Law, which served a number of functions:
  - It provided governmental structure and cultural distance from the gentiles.
  - It restrained evil.
  - It gave instruction on righteous, fruitful living.
  - It helped define sin.
  - It was a "tutor" to lead us to God's mercy in Christ.
  - It was a means of salvation by grace, not works.
- The Mosaic covenant was a contract binding only on Jews. The code represented legal statutes of Israel under the theocracy, but still reflects some universal moral norms and guidelines for wise living that have application for those outside national Israel.

- The Jews are now under two covenants. As God continues to deal with them, we witness an interplay between the Abrahamic Covenant promise of blessing and the Mosaic Covenant promise of cursing.

### **Secondary Points**

- The Mosaic Law addressed three major areas of concern for the Jewish nation.
  - Moral conduct
  - Ceremonial religious activities
  - Civil order—structure of the government
- The Mosaic Law was a conditional treaty between the great king (Yahweh) and His vassal state (Israel) providing for either blessing or cursing, depending on Israel's faithfulness.
- The history of the Jews is largely a history of unfaithfulness to their God, resulting in suffering and persecution, rather than prosperity.
- To determine if a Mosaic injunction has application for Christians now...
  - Reflect on the principle itself to see if it might be a universal.
  - Check the wording of the injunction in the law.
  - See if the NT repeats the rule as a universal principle applicable to the church.
  - Neither tithing nor Sabbath pass these tests.

### **For Reflection and Discussion:**

- What is significant about God's choice of Isaac over Ishmael?
- What challenges did the Jews face three generations removed from Abraham? How did that threaten God's purposes?
- In what way was the Abrahamic Covenant in evidence in God's dealings with the Hebrews in Egypt?
- Describe the basic structure/divisions of the Law.
- What are some of the functions of the Law?
- How was the form of the Law similar to a suzerain/vassal treaty?
- Describe the role of the Law in our lives today.
- How is the Mosaic Covenant different from the Abrahamic Covenant? How are they similar?

## Session 5

### Joshua to the Divided kingdom—Conquest to Captivity

#### I. Introduction

##### A. Review last week

#### What We Learned in Session 4

- God defines the limits of both the land and the ancestral line of the covenant. He provides a miraculous child, Isaac, as Abraham's first descendent of promise.
- By the third generation from Abraham, the Jews have lost sight of their mission and are vulnerable to being absorbed by the pagan cultures around them.
- God delivers them from this syncretism and the coming famine by shipping them off to Egypt, where they become a large nation over the next 400 years.
- Following a miraculous deliverance from Egypt, God gives the Jews the Mosaic covenant, the Law, which:
  - Provides governmental structure and cultural distance from the gentiles
  - Restrains evil
  - Gives instruction on righteous, fruitful living
  - Helps define sin
  - Is a "tutor" to lead us to God's mercy in Christ
  - Is a means of salvation by grace, not works
- The Mosaic covenant was a contract binding only on Jews. The code represented legal statutes of Israel under the theocracy, but still reflects some universal moral norms and also guidelines for wise living that have application for those outside national Israel.
- The Mosaic Law was a conditional treaty between the great king (Yahweh) and His vassal state (Israel) providing for either blessing or cursing, depending on Israel's faithfulness.
- The Jews are now under two covenants. As God continues to deal with them, we witness an interplay between the Abrahamic Covenant promise of blessing and the Mosaic Covenant promise of cursing.

1. **Interact:** Discuss with the person next to you one or two things that stood out as significant to you from the last session.
2. Ask review questions of audience.
3. Recite the 5 elements of the Christian world view (view of reality).
4. Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel using the motions.

##### B. Objectives for this week

### **Session 5 Objectives:**

- Learn the specific reason for Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness
- Outline Joshua's conquest of the land and the downward spiral for Israel during the book of Judges
- Discuss the reigns of the three kings of the united kingdom: Saul, David, and Solomon
- Introduce the Davidic Covenant
- Examine the reasons for the civil war causing the kingdom split (Israel and Judah)
- Recount the fates of the rebellious northern kingdom (Assyrian dispersion) and southern kingdom (Babylonian captivity)

### **Reading:**

Ps. 78, 79, 81, 106, Ex. 32, Num. 13

## **II. Wanderings and Recommissioning—Numbers and Deuteronomy**

### **A. The Hebrew's first rebellion (Ex. 32)**

1. Moses goes up Mt. Sinai with Joshua and is gone for 40 days.
2. The people get impatient. Forgetting all God's miraculous intervention on their behalf, they prevail on Aaron to make an idol.
  - a. "Come, make us a god who will go before us, as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (Ex. 32:1)
  - b. "...and [Aaron] made it into a molten calf and they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'" (Ex. 32:4)<sup>1</sup>
3. God's anger burns towards the Jews: "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them, and I will make of you [Moses] a great nation" (Ex. 32:10).
4. Moses intercedes for them, appealing to God's promise and His character.

Then Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You did swear by Yourself, and did say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit

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<sup>1</sup> This was probably not idolatry proper (a violation of the first commandment), but making a graven image as an object with which to worship God (a violation of the second commandment).

it forever.” So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people. (Ex. 32:11-14)

5. God relents, but still punishes the guilty.
  - a. Ex. 32:28 “...and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.”
  - b. Ex. 32:33-35:

And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin.” Then the Lord smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

## **B. The book of Numbers: 40 years wandering as judgment for Israel’s rebellion**

1. Numbers overview
  - a. Numbers records the census (the “numbers”) of the Jews immediately after departing from Sinai.
  - b. It also describes Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness for 40 years before they’re allowed to enter the promised land.
2. Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13-14), one year after the Exodus
  - a. God sends out 12 spies, one for each tribe, to scout out the promised land.
  - b. After 40 days the spies return and give a mixed report.
    - 1) They give a good report regarding the prosperity of the land: “We went into the land where you sent us and it certainly does flow with milk and honey...” (Num. 13:27).
    - 2) But 10 spies give a bad report regarding prospects of success:

Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong and the cities are fortified and very large. Moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there....We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us....The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size...**and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight**, and so we were in their sight. (Num. 13:28, 31-33)

- 3) Two of the spies encourage the people.
  - a) Caleb:

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.... If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord and do not fear the people of the land, for

they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.”<sup>2</sup> (13:30, 14:8-9)

b) Joshua: 14:6, 30, 38

c. Even so, the people lack trust (faith) that God would deliver them against such odds.

- 1) They immediately blame Moses and want to replace him with a new leader and return to Egypt (Num. 14:1-4, 10).
- 2) When the leaders try to reason with them, they threaten to stone them.

Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or **would that we had died in this wilderness!** Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” So they said to one another, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.”... But all the congregation said to stone [Moses, Caleb, etc.] with stones. (Num. 14:1-4, 10)

d. God’s anger burns again:

The Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.” (Num. 14:11-12)

a. Moses intercedes again to stay God’s hand.

Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, “Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.” But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, “The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.” Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. (Num. 14:15-19)

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<sup>2</sup> Jesus used this same phrase to encourage His own disciples who faced opposition to the Gospel (Matt. 10:26).

b. Moses prevails and the Lord pardons their iniquity, but consigns them to wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, fulfilling their own complaint in 14:2: “Would that we had died in the wilderness!”

Say to them, “As I live,” says the Lord, “just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you. Your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.” (Num. 14:28-30)

### Generational Curses?

This section contains the mysterious phrase, “...visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations” (v.18).<sup>3</sup> Verse 33 sheds some light on its meaning: “And your sons shall be shepherds for 40 years in the wilderness, and they shall suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness.”

There is a distinction here between individual guilt and corporate guilt. In virtue of the covenants, God deals with the nation of Israel as a whole. Though He does not hold individual children responsible for the sins of their individual fathers (see Ezek.18), when the nation sins, the whole nation suffers judgment, even those who did not personally rebel (Joshua and Caleb wandered for 40 years with the rest of them).

There is no justification for reading into this verse the concept of “generational sins/curses” which one needs “deliverance” from. Advocates of this view fail to notice that the active agent in this passage is God. Therefore, any actions taken against the so-called curse is an action against God Himself. There certainly is a powerful environmental influence that parents have on their children. This verse, however, is not addressing that issue.

#### 3. “Fiery serpents” (Num. 21:4-9)

- a. Again the people grow impatient and speak against God and Moses, complaining about the food and water.
- b. God sends poisonous snakes among the people and many die.
- c. When the people repent, God has Moses craft a serpent on a pole so that when it is “lifted up,” those who gaze upon it will be healed of the serpent’s bite:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard, and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.” (Num. 21:8)

<sup>3</sup> Note also Ex. 20:5-6.

d. Jesus cites this passage as an analogy (a “type”) of the cross (Jn. 3:14-15): “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.”

1) Jesus was “lifted up” (i.e., crucified, Jn. 12:32).

2) Those who look upon Him with the eyes of faith are healed from the bite of the deadly serpent (sin).

**4. What is the chief sin of the Jews while wandering in the wilderness?**

a. Heb. 3:18-19 “And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”

b. **Their sin was the sin of unbelief.**

**C. Deuteronomy—The “second Law” (actually, the second giving of the Law)**

1. Deuteronomy forms a transition from the wanderings recorded in Numbers to the conquest recorded in Joshua.

a. It includes the final words of Moses and the second giving of the Law to educate the new generation of Jews in God’s ways as they prepare to enter the promised land under Joshua’s leadership.

b. This treatment of the Law is much more pastoral.

c. Moses stirs the hearts and minds of the people as he appeals to them to be faithful to the God who rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

2. The structure of Deuteronomy bears the strongest similarity to the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. Hittite suzerainty treaties. This is powerful evidence that this book is a unified whole and not the result of multiple authors, as some critics claim.

a. The fact that it is a treaty shows the unity of the book (it was not pieced together by different authors over time).

b. It also confirms an early date contemporaneous with the events themselves, not a work manufactured centuries later.

**D. Deuteronomy marks an important transition of leadership.**

1. Moses passes the leadership on to Joshua<sup>4</sup> (Num. 27:18ff).

2. Moses gives his last discourse by giving the Law a second time to educate the new generation in God’s ways.

3. Moses dies and God buries him east of the Jordan, outside the promised land (Deut. 34:6).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Joshua was a disciple of Moses. He kept watch while Moses was alone on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:13, 32:17), and stuck tenaciously to him as a servant (33:11).

<sup>5</sup> Moses is not allowed to enter the land because of his conduct in producing water from the rock in Num. 19. Instead of speaking to the rock, as God had commanded, he struck it. Some have suggested that Moses did not err by striking the rock. In fact, that’s what he was told to do the first time God miraculously produced water (cf. Ex. 17). Rather, he erred in taking the credit for himself: “Listen now, you rebels, shall *we* bring forth water for you out of this rock?” (v. 10) There was a danger that the Jews would begin worshipping Moses rather than the Lord. In either case, God was demonstrating that His representative could not act presumptuously without being corrected.

### III. 6th Major Historical Event: Joshua Conquers the Land

#### A. God begins to fulfill His promise of giving the land.

1. God commissions Joshua to take the land, telling him to “be strong and courageous,” promising victory while exhorting faithfulness to the Law (Josh. 1:1-9).
2. Joshua sends out spies to investigate the land (2:1-21).
  - a. The spies stay with Rahab, the prostitute.
  - b. Out of faith in the God of Israel, Rahab protects the spies. They promise to spare her when they take the city. She eventually joins God’s people.
3. God miraculously parts the waters of the Jordan river, allowing the Jews to cross over into the promised land on dry ground (3:14-17).

#### B. Joshua subdues six nations and 31 kings in six years.

1. Joshua uses a divide and conquer strategy:
  - a. First he attacks military outposts in the **central highlands** on strategic routes protecting central Canaan.
    - 1) Jericho—God shows His power with the fall of Jericho (Josh. 6).
      - a) The army marches around Jericho once a day for six days. On the 7th day, the people circle it seven times, blast their trumpets, and shout.
      - b) The walls fall outward, and the city is taken (6:20).
    - 2) Ai—Achan’s sin brings initial defeat for the Jews (Josh. 7).
      - a) Israel attacks the small outpost of Ai, but is beaten.
      - b) Joshua prays to God. God tells him the failure is due to sin in the camp.
      - c) Achan admits to taking the loot from Jericho that was under the ban. Achan, his family, and all that he owns is destroyed.
      - d) The second attack on Ai is victorious.
  - b. Joshua launches a **southern campaign**, capturing a number of Canaanite cities (Josh. 10).
  - c. Joshua initiates a **northern campaign**, defeating a coalition of kings through a surprise attack. Joshua then captures and despoils all the cities (Josh. 11:1-15).
2. Joshua conquers the bulk of Canaan, but the coastlands remain. The tribes were to complete the conquest after Joshua’s death.

#### C. Joshua partitions the land among the 12 tribes (Josh. 13-24).

1. 2 1/2 tribes settle east of the Jordan: Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.<sup>6</sup>
2. 9 1/2 tribes settle west of the Jordan: Simeon<sup>7</sup>, Judah, Benjamin, Dan, Ephraim, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali and the half tribe of Manasseh.

#### D. Joshua dies

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph’s sons Manasseh and Ephraim represent his portion. Counting the Levites, that makes 13 tribes, but only 12 were given territory. The priestly tribe of Levi did not receive a definite territory but instead was allotted 48 cities distributed over the tribal areas.

<sup>7</sup> Simeon as a tribe was later absorbed by Judah.

1. Joshua gives a final challenge to the people, exhorting them to be faithful to the Lord and serve Him, which he will do even if they do not: “As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord” (24:15).
2. Joshua dies at 110 years old.
3. Joshua’s legacy: “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the Lord which He had done for Israel” (24:31).

#### **IV. Judges (300 yrs.)**

##### **A. Israel is expected to finish the job of cleansing the land in conquest after Joshua dies.**

1. “Moses had ordered [the Canaanite’s] destruction (Deut 7:2) both because of long-standing immorality (Deut. 9:5; cf. Gen. 15:16) and because of their debasing religious influence upon God’s people (Deut. 7:4).”<sup>8</sup>

For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire. (Deut. 7:4-5)

2. Even after Joshua, “the native inhabitants had not yet lost their potential for resistance. Indeed, Moses himself had anticipated a gradual occupation of the land (Ex. 23:28-30, Deut. 7:22).”<sup>9</sup>

##### **B. But the Hebrews do not drive the people out, as they had been commanded.**

1. “And it came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely” (Judges 1:28).
2. “Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you’ (2:3-4).
3. “...and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. The sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals” (2:10-11).

##### **Israel’s unfaithfulness initiates a cyclical pattern of sin that results in a downward spiral for the nation into moral chaos....**

##### **C. The following cycle is repeated seven times in the book of Judges.**

1. **Sin**—The people fall into idol worship and forget the Lord (Judges 3:7).
2. **Subjugation**—God allows an oppressor to come against Israel (3:8).
3. **Prayer**—The people cry out to Yahweh for help (3:9).
4. **Deliverance**—God raises up a Judge to rescue them (3:9).

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<sup>8</sup> *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, 834.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

5. **Rest**—A period of quiet follows, before sin starts the pattern again (3:11).

#### **D. Anarchy reigns in the latter part of Judges.**

1. There is no central government.
  - a. The phrase “there was no king in Israel” is repeated at least four times (17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25).
  - b. God was Israel’s king under the theocracy, but the Jews refused to follow Him.
2. Theme verse for this period: “...every man did what was right in his own eyes”<sup>10</sup> (17:6, 21:25)—i.e., moral relativism.

#### **E. Notable Judges**

1. **Gideon** (Judges 6-8)
  - a. The angel of the Lord appears to Gideon and commissions him to attack the Midianites and free Israel from its oppressors.
  - b. Riddled with doubt, Gideon continues to ask for confirmation through miraculous signs (Gideon’s famous fleeces).
  - c. God winnows down Gideon’s forces to 300 men who rout a Midianite army whose soldiers were “as numerous as the sand on the seashore” (7:12).
2. **Samson** (Judges 13-16)
  - a. To free the Jews from Philistine domination, God raises up Samson who has been under a Nazirite vow (he couldn’t cut his hair) from birth (13:5).
  - b. Samson has superhuman strength. In the Spirit’s power he tears a lion apart with his bare hands (14:5) and kills a thousand Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone (15:15).
  - c. Samson falls in love with the Philistine, Delilah, who cuts his hair and betrays him. When the Lord departs from him, his strength leaves him, also. Samson is captured and his eyes are gouged out.
  - d. In bondage, Samson’s hair grows back and his strength returns.
  - e. During a public sacrifice to Dagon, the Philistine leaders bring Samson out to make sport of him. Braced against the pillars of the temple, Samson topples the structure, killing himself and 3,000 Philistines (16:23-31).
3. **Samuel** (1 Samuel 1-24)
  - a. Samuel is Israel’s last judge and it’s first great prophet.
  - b. Hannah prays for God to open her womb with a child she would then dedicate to the Lord. Samuel is born and becomes the servant of Eli, the priest (1:9-20).
  - c. God calls Samuel to be a prophet, even though he was a boy (1 Sam. 3).
  - d. The people reject God from being king over them and ask for a human king instead (8:4-7).
  - e. Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel, and later anoints David to replace Saul.

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<sup>10</sup> This is the same as modern individual moral relativism in which the theme verse is “Don’t you force your morality on me...”

## **V. 7th Major Historical Event: The Kings—Saul, David and Solomon (circa 1055 BC)**

### **A. Saul, Israel's first king (1 Sam. 9-31)**

1. Samuel anoints Saul, son of Benjamin, as the first King of Israel.
2. Saul starts well, but soon reveals his true character. His dedication is half-hearted; Saul is a man-pleaser, not a God pleaser.
3. When Saul calls on the witch of En-dor to conjure Samuel's dead spirit, his fate is sealed. He is killed in battle the next day, along with his son Jonathan, David's closest friend (1 Sam. 28, 31).

### **B. David, Israel's second king, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 16 – 1 Kings 2)**

#### **1. David's rise**

- a. Samuel anoints the lad David to replace Saul as king (1 Sam. 16).
- b. David distinguishes himself by slaying Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, and leading a rout of the Philistine army (1 Sam. 17).
- c. Out of jealousy, Saul tries for years to kill David, but Jonathan protects him.
- d. When Saul dies, David takes the throne and rules well as a valiant warrior and military leader.
- e. His incredible passion for God is expressed in the many Psalms he authored.

#### **2. David's fall**

- a. David falters badly, though, by committing adultery with Bathsheba, then arranging for the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11:1-21).
- b. When confronted by the prophet Nathan, David repents (2 Sam. 12, Ps. 51), but the damage is done. Evil is promised for David's house and the child he conceived with Bathsheba dies.

#### **3. The Davidic Covenant**

- a. God promises David a kingdom that will have no end.
- b. "I will raise up your descendant after you... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-17).
- c. The immediate reference (v. 12-15) is to Solomon, who will build the temple.
- d. Yet the promise also looks to the future: "And your *house* and your *kingdom* shall endure forever. Your *throne* shall be established forever" (v. 16).

### **C. Solomon, Israel's third king (1 Kings 1-11)**

#### **1. Solomon's rise**

- a. As the son of David, Solomon is the first king to ascend the throne based on ancestry, an expression of the Davidic covenant.
- b. Solomon is known for his wisdom and writes much of the book of Proverbs. He also writes Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.
- c. Solomon is a great builder (e.g., the temple) and reigns over Israel at the height of its glory and material prosperity.

d. However, he is warned by God of the dangers of idolatry and disobedience (1 Kings 9:4-8):

As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, “You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.” But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight....And this house will become a heap of ruins....

## 2. Solomon’s fall

a. Solomon did not end well. He takes foreign wives and builds temples for their foreign gods, which turns his heart away from the Lord God and turns him towards idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-8, 33).

1) It’s hard to imagine wise Solomon falling away, but he did. Here’s why:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. (1 Kings 11:2-3)

2) This is a classic case of the kind of damage that can come from being “unequally yoked” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

b. God judges Solomon, as He promised. The kingdom would be torn away from Solomon’s line, but not until the next generation (1 Kings 11:9-13).

## VI. 8th Major Historical Event: The Kingdom Splits into Israel in the North and Judah in the South (922 BC)

### A. Rehoboam succeeds Solomon.

1. Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, takes the throne (1 Kings 11:43).
2. He disregards the counsel of the elders who tell him to ease the tax burden on the people.
3. He listens instead to the young men he grew up with, increasing taxation on his subjects (1 King 12:3-15).

### B. The kingdom splits, and Israel separates from Judah.

1. Jeroboam, a son of Solomon's servant, leads 10 tribes in revolt against Rehoboam and becomes king of Israel in the north, with God's blessing (1 Kings 11:29-38, 12:15, 20).
  - a. The precipitating reason for civil war is Rehoboam's poor leadership, specifically excess taxation.
  - b. However, God has ordained the split because of Solomon's past idolatry to Chemosh, the Ashtaroah, and Milcom. God gives Jeroboam as king over the northern 10 tribes (1 Kings 11:30-35).
2. Jeroboam immediately falls from grace.
  - a. He establishes altars of golden bulls at the extremes of his kingdom at Dan and Bethel so his subjects won't worship in Jerusalem and be tempted to turn back to Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:25-33), precipitating God's curse (1 Kings 13:1-6).
  - b. This "sin of Jeroboam" plagued the house of Israel for 200 years.

### **C. The Northern Kingdom—Israel (922-721 BC)**

1. 19 kings reigned in Israel over a period of 200 years.
2. None of the kings in Israel is righteous.
  - a. Ahab and his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 16-22) are especially wicked, aggressively introducing the worship of Baal—the supreme Canaanite god who is the storm god associated with the fertility of the land—and the worship of Asherah (or "Ashtaroah"), a fertility goddess who is the mother of Baal and numerous lesser gods.
  - b. The Israelites worshipped at the "high places," elevated sites with carved wooden poles depicting Asherah where child sacrifice was practiced along with male and female cultic prostitution in devotion to Baal.<sup>11</sup>
    - 1) God's response to Israel's devotion to the great storm God was to bring drought to the land for three years.
    - 2) The famous "duel" at Mt. Carmel between the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah on the one side and God's prophet Elijah on the other occurred during Ahab's reign (1 Kings 18).

### **D. 9th Major Historical Event: The Assyrian Dispersion (721 BC) Samaria falls**

1. Though the fall of Israel is predicted early on (1 Kings 14:15-16), God waits patiently until it fills up the cup of its iniquity.
2. Assyrian troops under Shalmaneser V and Sargon II besiege Samaria for three years until the city falls.
3. According to the tradition of Assyrian conquest, the people are scattered over the eastern Mediterranean region (the "diaspora"),<sup>12</sup> and foreigners are imported to repopulate the land, later becoming the despised Samaritans.

### **E. The Southern Kingdom—Judah (with Benjamin) (922-587 BC)**

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<sup>11</sup> Trent Butler, General Editor, *Homan Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 645.

<sup>12</sup> The diaspora was the group of Jews dispersed among foreign countries as a result of the Assyrian dispersion and, later, the Babylonian captivity and military action against the Jews by Greece and Rome. In New Testament times, diaspora Jews became the first recipients of the Gospel message preached by Paul in synagogues in gentile lands (Acts 14:1; 17:1, 10; 18:4).

1. 20 kings reign in Judah over a period of 350 years, 150 years longer than Israel.
2. Some of the kings of Judah are righteous, but most are not.
  - a. Judah's decline is more gradual than Israel's, but disobedience and idolatry continues to plague the kingdom.
  - b. The godliness of the kings of Judah is measured by their treatment of the "high places" where idolatry continues to be practiced.
    - 1) The best of kings (e.g., Hezekiah, Josiah) tear down the Asherah, destroy the high places, and restore Yahweh worship in the temple (e.g., 2 Kings 18:4, 23:1-7).
    - 2) The spiritually compromised kings (e.g., Asah, Jehoshaphat) are faithful to Yahweh, but leave the high places in tact and do not stop the people from worshipping there (e.g., 1 Kings 15:9-14, 1 Kings 22:41-43).
    - 3) The worst of the kings (e.g., Jehoram, Ahaziah) actively participate in and lead the people in idol worship (2 Kings 8:16-18, 25-27).
3. Eventually God's patience runs out and Judah comes under judgment.
4. The Babylonians, led by king Nebuchadnezzar himself, lay siege to Jerusalem and eventually overthrow it.

#### **F. 10th Major Historical Event: The Babylonian Captivity (586 BC)**

1. Judah is deported to Babylon in three waves: in 597, 587, and 582 BC.
  - a. **The first wave** occurs when King Jehoiachin is deposed.
    - 1) Zedekiah is placed on the throne, and the temple is plundered.
    - 2) 10,000 leading citizens—government officials, noblemen, craftsmen, men of valor—are taken. King Jehoiachin and Daniel are among them (2 Kings 24:12-16), along with the prophet Ezekiel.
  - b. **The second wave** is initiated when Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, foolishly rebels against Babylon, counting on Egypt to come to his aid (587-586 BC).
    - 1) Zedekiah is captured, watches as his own sons are executed, is then blinded and carried off to Babylon.
    - 2) The temple and palace are razed and the general population is deported (2 Kings 25:8-21).
  - c. **The third wave** takes place in 582 BC (Jer. 52:28-30). Only the poorest of the poor remain, left behind as vinedressers and plowmen to keep the land from growing wild (2 Kings 25:12).
2. The glory of Judah and Jerusalem is extinguished.
  - a. The temple—the last symbol of God's presence among His people—is destroyed, the city walls are torn down, and Jerusalem is razed.
  - b. With Israel dispersed, Judah captive, and the temple in ruins, God's solemn warning to Solomon (1 Kings 9:4-8) has been fulfilled.
3. Judah will not return from Babylon for 70 years (Jer. 25:11), and Israel remains dispersed to this day.

4. Both the Assyrian dispersion and the Babylonian captivity are vivid statements of Israel's unwillingness to live under God's law.

**In our next session, God brings hope in the midst of despair with the promise of a new covenant—a provision that cannot be broken, a promise that would bring life and not death.**

### **Why the Jews?—Redux**

God's promises to His people have always been tied to the land. Being out of the land is evidence of God's discipline and judgment. As a result of centuries of grotesque idolatry, God expels the Jews from the land, sending them into captivity to Babylon for 70 years. Seven centuries later the same thing would happen again, when Titus of Rome destroys the temple and scatters the Jews in a dispersion that lasts until the 20th century.

This raises a question. If centuries of idolatry resulted in a 70-year exile from the land, what sin could the Jews have committed in the first century that would justify two millennia of exile and persecution? Jesus provides this answer at the end of His ministry:

And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. They took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another and that one they killed, and so with many others, beating some and killing others. He had one more to send, a beloved son. He sent him last of all to them saying, "They will respect my son"....[But] they took him, and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone'...." (Mark 12:1-10)

## **What We Learned:**

### **Main Points**

- After receiving the Law, the Hebrews rebel against God, who consigns them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until a new generation takes the land of promise (Numbers).
- At the Jordan, Moses passes the baton of leadership to Joshua, then gives the Law a second time (Deuteronomy) to educate the new generation in God's ways.
- Joshua conquers the land and divides it among the twelve tribes.
- For 300 years after, the Jews repeat cycles of sin, subjugation, repentance, deliverance, and rest during the time of Judges.
- The nation experiences some prosperity under the three kings of the united kingdom—Saul, David, and Solomon.
- God promises that David's throne would be eternal, but his son Solomon falters badly, insuring civil war after his death.
- The kingdom splits into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.
- After 200 years of idolatry, Israel is judged with the Assyrian dispersion. 150 years later, Judah suffers a similar fate. The southern kingdom is deported to Babylon, the temple is razed, and Jerusalem is destroyed.

### **Secondary Points**

- The chief reason that Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years was their unbelief—their unwillingness to trust in their God.
- God's promises to His people have always been tied to the land. Being out of the land is evidence of God's discipline and judgment.

### **For Reflection and Discussion:**

- In what way did Moses show a deep understanding of God's character when the Hebrews sinned against the Lord?
- What did 10 spies counsel when they returned from spying out the land and why? Who opposed them and why?
- What stands out for you about the man Joshua?
- Why was it ironic that God disciplined the Jews by keeping them in the wilderness until that generation died off?
- What was the specific reason the Jews wandered in the wilderness for 40 years?
- Why did the Jews run into trouble during the time of the Judges? What pattern do we see as a result of their waywardness?
- What tribe did not receive a portion of land? Why?
- Name three significant judges. What was distinctive about their rule?
- Name the first three kings of Israel. What were their strengths and weaknesses?
- Describe the Davidic Covenant. Why is it important?
- List two significant reasons the kingdom split.
- What was the spiritual condition of Israel and Judah and how did God ultimately respond to each kingdom?

## **Session 6**

### **The New Covenant and the Return of Judah**

#### **I. Introduction**

##### **A. Review last week**

#### **What We Learned in Session 5**

- After receiving the Law, the Hebrews rebel against God, who consigns them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until a new generation takes the land of promise (Numbers). The judgment is for their unbelief.
- At the Jordan Moses passes the baton of leadership to Joshua, then gives the Law a second time (Deuteronomy) to educate the new generation in God's ways.
- Joshua conquers the land and divides it among the twelve tribes.
- For 300 years after, the Jews repeat cycles of sin, subjugation, repentance, deliverance, and rest during the time of Judges.
- The nation experiences some prosperity under the three kings of the United kingdom—Saul, David, and Solomon.
- God promises that David's throne would be eternal, but his son Solomon falters badly, insuring civil war after his death.
- The kingdom splits into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.
- After 200 years of idolatry, Israel is judged with the Assyrian dispersion. 150 years later, Judah suffers a similar fate. The southern kingdom is deported to Babylon, the temple is razed, and Jerusalem is destroyed.

1. Ask review questions of audience.
2. Recite the 5 elements of the Christian world view (view of reality).
3. Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel using the motions.

##### **B. Objectives for this week**

#### **Session 6 Objectives:**

- Show the interplay between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant as God disciplines His people
- Introduce the three great prophetic "lights" of the captivity: Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel
- Examine Daniel's amazing "70 Weeks" prophecy
- Outline the details of the New Covenant
- Discover some important principles about interpreting the OT properly in light of the bigger picture of God's covenant dealings with His people
- Discuss the 11<sup>th</sup> major historical event, the return to the land

**Reading:**

Jeremiah 31:31-33:26, Ezek. 36:24-32, Joel 2:28-32, Dan. 9

**II. Judah's Deportation****A. These were the darkest days of Judah's history.**

1. Since God's promises are tied to the land, Babylonian captivity is devastating to the Jews. Their dreams are dashed (Ps 137:1-4):

By the rivers of Babylon,  
 There we sat down and wept,  
 When we remembered Zion.  
 Upon the willows in the midst of it  
 We hung our harps.  
 For there our captors demanded of us songs,  
 And our tormentors mirth, saying,  
 "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."  
 How can we sing the Lord's song  
 In a foreign Land?

2. This discipline is a consequence of the Mosaic curses (Jer. 9:12-16):

Why is the land ruined, laid waste like a desert, so that no one passes through?  
 And the Lord said, "Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them,  
 and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it, but have walked after  
 the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them."  
 Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold, I will feed  
 them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink. And I  
 will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have  
 known, and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them."

**B. The interplay of the covenants**

1. Even so, there is an interplay of the curse of the Mosaic Covenant with the protection and blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant that you can see woven through the narrative of Neh. 9:

- a. Abrahamic Covenant

Neh. 9:21 "Indeed, forty years You provided for them in the wilderness and they were not in want. Their clothes did not wear out, nor did their feet swell."

Neh. 9:23 "You made their sons numerous as the stars of heaven and You brought them into the land which You had told their fathers to enter and possess."

a. Mosaic Covenant

Neh. 9:26-27a “But they became disobedient and rebelled against You and cast Your law behind their backs and killed Your prophets who had admonished them so that they might return to You, and they committed great blasphemies. Therefore, You delivered them into the hand of their oppressors who oppressed them...”

a. Abrahamic Covenant

Neh. 9:27b “...but when they cried to You in the time of their distress, You heard from heaven, and according to Your great compassion You gave them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors [the judges].”

a. Mosaic Covenant

Neh. 9:29b “Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments, but sinned against Your ordinances by which if a man observes them he shall live. And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen.”

Neh. 9:30 “However, You bore with them for many years, and admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, yet they would not give ear. Therefore, You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.”

a. Abrahamic Covenant

Neh. 9:31 “Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them, for You are a gracious and compassionate God.”

2. In spite of God’s severe discipline of His people, He still offers grace and encouragement to them by sending three bright lights—Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—with a promise of restoration and ultimate prosperity.

### **Prophets—Covenant Enforcers**

Considering the span of history involved, it is significant to note how infrequently God seems to speak. After God’s initial dealings with the patriarchs, He is silent for 400 years until he speaks dramatically during the lifetime of Moses. He then speaks intermittently and infrequently to selected leaders who follow. His voice is most notably present with the prophets, but their role is largely to enforce what has already been established, not to give new day-to-day advice for the people of God. The Law was intended to do that. People in the OT did not have a “conversational relationship” with God, not even the key leaders. In the OT, special revelation was special, reserved for key players in God’s program at key periods in Israel’s history.

### III. Daniel: God Is in Control of History

#### A. Who was Daniel?

1. An early deportee (605 BC under the reign of Jehoiakim)
2. A statesman
  - a. Raised in the political and religious arts of the Babylonians
  - b. Survived four dynasties: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus
3. One who demonstrated uncompromising godliness before a watching public—faithfulness that earned him a trip to the lion’s den (Dan. 6).

#### B. Daniel’s gift was an ability to interpret visions and dreams.

1. Daniel’s interpretation of the colossal image, the giant statue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2), saved his life and exalted him to a position of significant influence in the kingdom. It also gave a panorama of world history about to unfold.
  - a. Head of gold: the Babylon empire (612-539 BC)
  - b. Breast and arms of silver: the Medo-Persian empire (539-336 BC)
  - c. Belly and thighs of brass: the Greek empire under Alexander the Great (336-146 BC)
  - d. Legs of iron: the Roman empire (146 BC-5th century AD)
  - e. Feet and toes of iron and clay, crushed by a stone not made with human hands: an unusual detail suggesting the final stage of the Roman empire sometime yet in the future (though this view is subject to interpretation)
2. Daniel’s vision of four beasts (Dan. 7) describe the same empires using different imagery:
  - a. A lion with eagle’s wings: the Babylonian empire
  - b. A bear raised up on one side: the Medo-Persian empire
  - c. A leopard with four wings and heads: Alexander’s Greece divided among his four generals after his death
  - d. A beast with iron teeth: the Roman empire
3. Daniel’s vision of the “Son of Man” predicted a future, everlasting kingdom granted to a human being.
  - a. Dan 7:13-14:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

- b. Jesus referred to himself as the son of man many times in his earthly ministry, and specifically identified Himself as the “Son of Man” of Dan. 7 at His trial (Mark 14:61-62):

But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” And Jesus said, “I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

### C. The “70 Weeks” prophecy (Dan. 9)

1. Daniel also gave an amazing prophecy that appears to predict the very date the Messiah would present Himself to His people.
2. Daniel, aware that the 70 year period for captivity is coming to a close, prays one of the most sublime prayers of repentance in the Bible on behalf of his people, the Jews (Dan. 9:1-19).
  - a. First, as Israel’s representative, he confesses the sins of his nation.
  - b. Next, he praises God in spite of the fact that the Jews have been under God’s heavy hand of discipline for decades.
  - c. Finally, he appeals to God based on God’s character: His grace, mercy, and compassion.
3. While Daniel is praying, the angel Gabriel appears to him and delivers the prophecy (Dan. 9:24-26):

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood. Even to the end there will be war. Desolations are determined.

4. Notice the details:
  - a. During the period in question (70 “weeks”) there would be a complete consummation of all things (v. 24).
  - b. That period would begin with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem “with plaza and moat” (v. 25).
  - c. After 69 “weeks” the Messiah<sup>1</sup> would be “cut off” (killed)<sup>2</sup> and the city would be destroyed (v. 26).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Literally, “anointed one.” Technically, this could refer to a priest, civil leader, or a king which had been anointed in the Old Testament. However, the details of v. 24 (“to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place”) seem to clearly indicate Messianic office (see Paul Feinberg, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24-27,” in *Tradition & Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 201).

<sup>2</sup>“The ‘cutting off’ of Messiah indicates a violent death. The Hebrew word is used of making a covenant, involving the death of a sacrificial animal (Gen. 15:10, 18). The word is used of the death penalty (Lev. 7:20) and always of an unnatural, violent death (cf. Isaiah 53:8).” (Feinberg, 202).

## 5. The fulfillment

a. Which decree starts the clock ticking (the beginning—the *terminus a quo*—of the prophecy timing)?

- 1) There were four decrees to rebuild the temple, but only one fits the details of Dan. 9:25.<sup>4</sup>
- 2) It is the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah (Neh. 2:1-8) in the 20th year of the king's reign, the month of Nisan, 444 BC.

This decree alone deals with the city, the walls, and the gates. This kind of decree is required by Dan. 9:25. The former decrees were all concerned with the Temple.<sup>5</sup>

b. How long is a “week”?

1) The word translated “week” is the Hebrew word “*shabua*,” which literally means “seven,” generally taken to be a “seven” of years.

- a) 490 days are insufficient to finish the prophecy.
- b) The context always determines the units of time. Units of seven years are already in view in this passage (9:1-2) as Dan. considers the 70 years of captivity.

2) Therefore, 69 “sevens” of years equal 483 years.

3) A prophetic year, according to cultural tradition, is 360 days.<sup>6</sup>

- a) Many ancient cultures had 360 day calendars.
- b) The 360 day calendar is used in the Bible with respect to prophecy (Dan. 7:24-5, 12:7; Rev. 11:2-3 and 12:6,<sup>7</sup> 12:14, 13:5, and 11:2).

c. What date does the prophecy seem to be indicating?

1) 483 years x 360 days = **173,880 days**.<sup>8</sup>

2) Starting with the Jewish month of Nisan 1, 444 BC (the time of the decree) and adding 173,880 days brings us to Nisan 10, AD 33, four days before the crucifixion of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

d. In light of this calculation, notice what Jesus says on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44):

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace. But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you

<sup>3</sup>Note that the text does not say whether it was *immediately* after or some time later (Feinberg, 202).

<sup>4</sup>The initial command to restore Jerusalem was given by Cyrus, who freed the Jews the very year Daniel prayed (Feinberg, 190). This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that *specifically* mentioned Cyrus by name (Is. 44:26-28; 45:1-5, 13).

<sup>5</sup>Feinberg, 194.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, 215.

<sup>7</sup>42 months is 1260 days on a 30 day month, 360 day year calendar.

<sup>8</sup>This would be 476 solar years. There is no year “0.”

<sup>9</sup>This particular date for the crucifixion is contested by some. It is a likely date, but AD 30 is also widely accepted. The details of this prophecy, however, seem to give credibility to an AD 33 crucifixion.

and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

6. In a matter of days, Jesus life was “cut off,” and 37 years later the Romans turned Jerusalem to rubble.

**7. Could this be the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy? I’ll let you decide.**

8. Where is the 70th week (Dan. 9:27)?

- a. This prophecy seems to have a split fulfillment with the prophetic clock pausing at the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week.
  - 1) Dan. 9:25 is a prediction of the first coming of the Messiah.
  - 2) “The events of the 70th week are related to the 2nd coming of Messiah and His final disposition and establishment of righteousness.”<sup>10</sup> Quite possibly it deals with the reign of Antichrist (“the prince who is to come”).
- b. There are a number of reasons to suggest a time break here:<sup>11</sup>
  - 1) Intervals in the fulfillment of prophecies are not uncommon in the Old Testament.
  - 2) The six goals of the 70 weeks of Dan. 9:25 have yet to be fulfilled, though it seems clear that the details of the 69 week period have been fulfilled.
  - 3) The 70th week is treated separately from the first 69.
  - 4) The cutting off of Messiah happens after the 69th week, but is mentioned before the 70th week (Dan. 9:27 “for the one week”).
  - 5) Dan. 9:27b fits other passages that describe the events of the last half of what has come to be called the tribulation period (e.g., Dan. 7:25; 2 Thess. 2:3ff; Rev. 12, 13, 19).

## **IV. Jeremiah—The “Weeping” Prophet**

### **A. Who was Jeremiah?**

1. Commissioned during the reign of Josiah (Jer. 1) and prophesied the last 40 years of Judah until the exile
2. Characterized by steadfast and fearless rebuke of the people, though he gains virtually no “converts”
3. Persecuted greatly, receiving reproach and derision
  - a. Sensitive (“weeping prophet”)
  - b. Writes the book of Lamentations
4. Deported to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem and ended his life in exile there (Jer. 43:4-7)

### **B. Jeremiah’s message**

1. Prophesied Judah would go into exile in Babylon for 70 years (Jer. 25:11)

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<sup>10</sup> Feinberg, 207.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 212.

- a. Why 70 years? (Lev. 26:33-35):
  - 1) According to the Law, the land was to be given a “Sabbath rest” one year out of seven.
  - 2) If not, then God would give the land its rest by exiling its inhabitants.
- b. This is precisely what happened during the Babylonian captivity (2 Chron. 36:19-21). Note Feinberg:

Every year of exile represented a cycle of 7 years in which the 7th year, the sabbatical year, had not been observed. Thus, the 70 years of captivity were the result of having violated 70 sabbatical years. This would have been done over a period of 490 years.<sup>12</sup>

2. Told the people to cooperate with Nebuchadnezzar (27:4-11)
  - a. God identified Nebuchadnezzar as “My servant” (27:6).
  - b. Nebuchadnezzar is blessed because he provides sanctuary, of sorts, to Israel. He eventually becomes a believer in the God of Israel (see Dan 4).

3. Foretold the coming of the “righteous branch” of David (23:5-6):

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch. And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’”

4. Promises eventual deliverance and restoration (Jer. 30-31)

### **C. The New Covenant**

1. Jer. 31:31-37<sup>13</sup>

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord. “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

2. The details of the New Covenant:

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid*, 209.

<sup>13</sup>See also Isaiah 59:21 and Jer. 32:40.

- a. It is yet future (“...the days are coming...” v. 31).
- b. It will be something new between both Israel and Judah (v. 31), implying a reunited kingdom.
- c. It is different from the Mosaic Covenant, which has been broken (v. 32). Note also Jer. 11:10:

They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers.

- d. The New Covenant provides for:
  - 1) The Law written on their hearts (v. 33)
  - 2) A personal knowledge of God (v. 34)
  - 3) Complete and permanent forgiveness (v. 34), implying a finished sacrifice, in contrast to the sacrifices repeated daily and yearly.
- e. The New Covenant is with the Jews, but the gentiles are later “grafted in” (Rom. 11:17ff).
- f. It is an eternal covenant with Israel (v. 36-37).

- 1) At this point in Israel’s history, there is a temptation to think the Jews are no longer a nation before God (some claim this about Israel today).
- 2) I want you to note a very important reaffirmation God gives to the Jews at this time of Israel’s severe discipline (Jer. 31:35-37):

Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar. The Lord of hosts is His name: “If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares the Lord, “then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.” Thus says the Lord, “If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,” declares the Lord.

- 3) The fact of discipline and deportation does not negate God’s faithfulness to his prior promise.

## V. Ezekiel<sup>14</sup>

### A. Who was Ezekiel?

- 1. An early deportee, a contemporary of Jeremiah (c. 597 BC)
- 2. A prophet who...
  - a. Predicted judgment

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<sup>14</sup>The Hebrew name *yehezke'l* means “God strengthens” or “strengthened by God,” an appropriate name considering Ezekiel’s vital ministry.

- b. Predicted the destruction of Jerusalem
- c. Predicted restoration and consolation

**B. Ezekiel gives more detail to the New Covenant, promising national renewal, a new heart, and God's own Spirit.**

1. Ezek. 36:24-29, 33:

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers. So you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness, and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you...” Thus says the Lord God, “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt.”

2. Notice the details:

- a. God promises a national renewal and restoration to the land (v. 24).
- b. God will cleanse them and forgive them (v. 25, 29, 33).
- c. God will give them a new heart and spirit (v. 26).
- d. **God will place His own Spirit within them** (v. 27).

3. Ezek. 37: The “dry bones” prophecy predicting spiritual revival of a united Israel and Judah:

“I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it,” declares the Lord.” (Ezek. 37:14)

### C. Other references to the New Covenant: Joel 2:28-29 cf. Acts 2:14

#### 1. Joel 2:28, 32:

It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind and your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions....And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered.

#### 2. Acts 2:15-17, 21:

For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day, but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel, “And it shall be in the last days,” God says, “that I will pour forth of my spirit on all mankind....and it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

## VI. The New Covenant Summary

### A. A physical restoration and reunification for Israel and Judah

1. Jews focused on this provision for their national well-being.
2. This resulted in the separatist, nationalistic mentality that dominated Jewish thinking at the time of Christ.

### B. A spiritual restoration of Israel based on a gift that would be extended to all peoples

1. New relationship with God with a new heart based on...
2. Complete and permanent personal forgiveness
3. God’s Spirit put *within* them (not just on them, i.e., “anointed”)
4. The New Covenant was given to Israel and extended to the gentiles.
5. Though there were exceptions, the Jews were largely unaware of the significance of the New Covenant for gentiles.

### C. Taken as a whole, the spiritual provision of the New Covenant is the blessing of Abraham promised to the nations in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:3).<sup>15</sup>

1. It is often referred to in the New Testament simply as the “promise of Abraham” or the “promise of the Spirit.”

- a. Gal. 3:14 “...in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”
- b. Eph. 1:13 “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise...”

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<sup>15</sup> Understanding the details of the New Covenant is a case where the NT helps clarify the intent of the OT

- c. Eph. 3:6 "...to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."
  - d. Luke 24:49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you [i.e., the Spirit], but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."
  - e. Acts 2:33 "Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."
2. When the New Testament refers to the "true circumcision" who are the children of the promise, they are referring specifically to the promise of the New Covenant.
- a. Gal. 3:29 "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."
  - b. Rom. 9:8 "That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants."
3. The New Covenant is a covenant of forgiveness based on the work of Christ (Matt. 26:28): "...for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."
4. The promises of the covenant are received by faith.
- a. Rom. 4:16 "For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all...."
  - b. Gal. 3:22 "The Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."
- 5. Note: Extending the spiritual provisions of the New Covenant does not nullify previous promises made to national Israel:<sup>16</sup>**

Does this mean that all the blessings promised Israel may now be appropriated by believers? Does this efface the distinction between Israel and the church? The answer to these questions is a resounding no! The New Testament is careful to state in each instance what elements in the blessings promised to Israel may be transferred to the common enjoyment of Israel and the church. It is neither warranted nor in harmony with Scripture to go beyond this.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>"If God's promises were eternal, then even if historic Israel failed and suffered the curses of the broken covenant, the promise of God could not fail. There would be a remnant in whom, by way of judgment and repentance, God would honor His promises." (*ISBE*, vol. 1, 792)

<sup>17</sup> Frank Gaebelein, general editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 575.

**D. The New Covenant is new, but its provisions are not entirely novel.**

1. Forgiveness is formalized here, but David understood it hundreds of years before.
  - a. Ps. 32:2 “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity.”
  - b. Ps. 103:12 “As far as the east is from the west, so far shall I remove your transgressions from you.”
  - c. Is. 43:25 “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”
2. A circumcised heart was evidence of intimacy with God.
  - a. It was commanded under the old covenant (Deut. 10:16): “Circumcise, then, your heart, and stiffen your neck no more.”
  - b. It is a gift under the New Covenant, though predicted in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 30:6): “Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.”

**Now I want to go back to an important topic that came up in our very first session...**

## **VII. Understanding the Parts in Light of the Whole**

**A. Teaching “Never Read a Bible Verse”<sup>18</sup> to Christians in Egypt**

1. I had been dealing with the reckless tendency of many Christians to wrench Old Testament verses out of context and claim them as promises for themselves.
2. I was explaining why this was a mistake.
  - a. God did not give the verses of the Bible as discrete, individual pieces of information which on their own—isolated from the larger narrative—can be applied piecemeal to our lives.
  - b. There is a flow of thought that is tied to—and therefore critical to—the meaning of each part.
  - c. We have to follow the flow of thought to know how the broader passage speaks to the particulars of our individual lives.
3. **Therefore, a proper understanding of the whole is key to understanding the meaning—and the proper application of—the parts.**
  - a. The “whole” includes not just the paragraph, the chapter, or even the entire book.
  - b. It also includes the flow of the biblical story as God relates to Israel in light of His prior promises.

**Are you with me on this?**

So now I want to go back to an abused passage and look at it together to understand what this passage means in light of the larger context.

**B. Jeremiah 29:11:**

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<sup>18</sup> This is an important talk on how to properly interpret the Bible. It’s available at [str.org](http://str.org).

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”

1. This verse seems to show up everywhere—on bookmarks, bumper stickers, posters and pillows—cited as God’s personal promise to every believer who finds himself in a difficult or trying situation.
2. Is this the proper application of this verse?
3. We answer this question by...
  - a. Considering the big picture, in this case God’s covenantal relationship with the nation of Israel (larger context)
  - b. Reading the specific details of the account itself (narrow context)

**C. Let me ask a couple of questions:**

1. **What covenants are governing God’s interactions with His people at the time of this prophecy?**
  - a. One, the **Abrahamic Covenant**, promising protection and ultimate blessing
  - b. Two, the **Mosaic Covenant**, promising short term cursing for idolatry
2. **What is happening to the nation at this point in their history?** They are on their way to exile in Babylon.
3. **Why?** They are being judged (cursed) for breaking the Mosaic Covenant.
4. **Do they have reason to hope in the long term?** Yes.
5. **Why?** Because of God’s promise to Abraham.

**D. At this point, there are two important interpretive questions necessary to ask to unpack the meaning of Jer. 29:11:**

1. **One**, to whom is Jeremiah speaking?
2. **Two**, what are the “plans for welfare and not for calamity” he refers to that will give Jeremiah’s audience “a future and a hope”?

**E. The full context (Jer. 29:1-15):**

Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon....

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, “Build houses and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters, and multiply there and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will have welfare.”

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams

which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name. I have not sent them,” declares the Lord.

For thus says the Lord, “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. **For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.** Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.”

1. **To whom is Jeremiah speaking?** The nation of Israel in exile.
2. **What are the specific plans God has “for welfare and not for calamity to give [them] a future and a hope”?** To restore their fortunes and gather them back to the land of promise.
3. BTW, this is exactly how Daniel understands this passage 70 years later when he prays a prayer of repentance for the nation to initiate this promise (Dan. 9:1 ff).

#### **F. However, there is more in this chapter.**

1. This is not just a promise of restoration 70 years later when repentance happens.
2. It is also a promise of destruction for those of God’s people at that moment who resisted Jeremiah, who prophesied falsely, or who believed the false prophets and refused to cooperate by joining those in exile (Jer. 29:17-18):

Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine and pestilence, and I will make them like split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness. I will pursue them with the sword, with famine and with pestilence, and I will make them a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and a horror and a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them....

Why don’t we stitch that on a pillow?

#### **G. Two plans, not one**

1. In this chapter, God outlines **two distinct plans** for his people.
  - a. **One plan** for eventual “welfare and not calamity” a generation (70 years) down the line (Jer. 29:1-14)<sup>19</sup>
  - b. **A second plan** for immediate calamity and not welfare for a different group of God’s people living at that time (Jer. 29:15-32)

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<sup>19</sup> Note that Jeremiah is not passing along a promise not for individual captives (few of the individuals would still be alive in 70 years), but for the nation collectively

2. **Question:** So which of these two plans in Jer. 29 can we claim for our own personal promise?
  - a. Neither.
  - b. Neither of these promises are for us. They are both for Israel.
3. Both are completely consistent with the covenants God has made with Israel:
  - a. Blessings and cursings in light of the Mosaic Law
  - b. Ultimate restoration to the land in light of His enduring purpose in the Abrahamic Covenant.
  - c. In other words...
    - 1) Short term plans for discipline
    - 2) Long term plans for prosperity
4. Neither plan has anything directly to do with New Testament Christians.
5. **Do you see this?**
  - a. Do you see that there is nothing new in this passage?
  - b. Do you see that God is simply reaffirming His faithfulness to His chosen people during a time of extreme discipline?
  - c. Do you see how completely reckless it is, then, to isolate this verse as some kind of Christian promise of future prosperity?
6. To solidify the idea that this is not new, that God is speaking here in terms of His prior covenant relationship with the Jews, note Deut. 30:1-5 (this passage comes just after the chapters on blessings and cursings):

So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

**Now I want to give you a very strong exhortation, as your teacher...**

7. **Anyone who uses this promise in any other way is misusing the Word of God.**
  - a. And this is true of a host of other passages Christians routinely misapply in the same way.
    - 1) They ignore—or are unaware of—the larger context.
    - 2) They pay no attention to the immediate context.
    - 3) They simply grab the attractive phrase or sentence and run off with a promise that is not theirs.
  - b. We do learn something important about God’s character from passages like this and from the larger narrative that do have application to our lives.
  - c. But these specific promises are not ours. They belong to someone else.

## **VIII. 11th Major Historical Event: The Return to the Land**

(Chronicled in books of Ezra & Nehemiah)

### **A. First wave (book of Ezra), the 1st colony, c. 536 BC**

1. In 538 BC, an edict of “Cyrus, king of Persia” (Ezra 1:1-3) allows Sheshbazzar/Zerubbabel to lead nearly 50,000 Jews back to the land (Ezra 2:2, 64-67; 3:2).
2. They begin rebuilding the temple, bringing joy mixed with sorrow for the loss of the more glorious temple 70 years earlier (Ezra 3:12-13).
3. The Jews are aided by prophets Haggai and Zechariah, though opposed by the local Samaritans.
4. The temple is completed in 515 BC, 70 years after the deportation.

### **B. Second wave (book of Ezra), c. 458 BC**

1. During the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezra returns with 1,500 people, including a small group of Levites to serve in the temple.
2. Ezra institutes badly needed social and religious reforms, being zealous for the Law:

For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel. (Ezra 7:10)

### **C. Third wave (book of Nehemiah), c. 444 BC**

1. Nehemiah, as cupbearer to king Artaxerxes, was a high-ranking official in the Medo-Persian court.
2. Against much local opposition, Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days (Neh. 6:15).

### **D. A final voice...**

1. The last words of the Old Testament come from Malachi, who closes his book with these words (Mal. 4:5-6):

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.

2. 400 years of prophetic silence follow before the stillness is broken by a voice crying in the wilderness saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2).

## **What We Learned:**

### **Main Points**

- There continues to be an interplay of the curse of the Mosaic Covenant with the protection and blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant woven through the fabric of God’s dealings with His people during this period.
- In spite of God’s severe discipline of His people, He still offers grace and encouragement to them by sending three bright lights—Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—with a promise of restoration and ultimate prosperity.
- Daniel reminds the Jews of God’s control over all history.
  - He interprets two visions of Nebuchadnezzar that predict the rise of four empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
  - He gives the amazing “70 Weeks” prophecy that appears to predict the very date the Messiah would present Himself to His people.
  - Daniel promises the coming of a “Son of Man” who would preside over an eternal kingdom.
- Jeremiah brings prophecy of destruction and promise of restoration.
  - Judah’s exile will last 70 years to fulfill the “sabbath rest” of the land.
  - God plans “welfare and not calamity” in the long term for the exiled Jews.
  - But He plans calamity and not welfare for Jews who resisted Jeremiah.
  - Jeremiah promises a “new” covenant that can’t be broken, providing for an intimate relationship with God based on permanent forgiveness.
- Ezekiel predicts eventual national revival for a reunited Israel and Judah, including their spiritual renewal, and expands on the details of the New Covenant.
  - God will give a new heart and a new spirit.
  - God will place His own Spirit within them.
  - It eventually becomes clear that these provisions will be extended to the gentiles who are “grafted in” to this covenant.
- The New Covenant is the blessing of Abraham promised to the nations in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:3).
- We must always interpret the parts of the prophetic works of the Old Testament (like Jer. 29:11) in light of...
  - The big picture of God’s covenantal relationship with the nation of Israel (larger context)
  - The specific details of the account itself (narrow context)

- After the 70 years of captivity are complete, Daniel prays a prayer that initiates the return to the land under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
  - This return takes place in three waves over 90 years.
  - In the midst of significant opposition, the Jews repopulate the country, rebuild the temple, and finally restore the walls around Jerusalem.

### **Secondary Points**

- Prophets were primarily “covenant enforcers” rather than a major source of new revelation for governing the nation.
- Extending the spiritual provisions of the New Covenant does not nullify previous promises made to national Israel.
- In Jer. 29:11 God is reaffirming His faithfulness to His chosen people during a time of discipline, not offering a promise of future prosperity for Christians.

### **For Reflection and Discussion:**

- Why was it so significant that God would send Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel during this specific time of Israel’s history?
- In what way does God show through Daniel that He is in control of history? Give details.
- In what way is Daniel’s “70 weeks prophecy” one of the most incredible prophecies in the Bible? Explain how it works.
- Why is Jeremiah often referred to as the “weeping prophet”?
- What was the content of Jeremiah’s message?
- What new element does Ezekiel add to the provisions of the New Covenant? What detail does Joel add?
- Summarize the provisions of the New Covenant. Who is it for?

## Session 7

# “The Gospels: The Advent of Messiah and the Promise of Freedom”

### I. Introduction

#### A. Review last week

### What We Learned in Session 6

#### Main Points

- There continues to be an interplay of the curse of the Mosaic Covenant with the protection and blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant woven through the fabric of God’s dealings with His people during this period.
- In spite of God’s severe discipline of His people, He still offers grace and encouragement to them by sending three bright lights—Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—with a promise of restoration and ultimate prosperity.
- Daniel reminds the Jews of God’s control over all history.
- Jeremiah brings prophecy of destruction and promise of restoration, including the promise of a “new” covenant that can’t be broken, providing for an intimate relationship with God based on permanent forgiveness.
- Ezekiel predicts eventual national revival for a reunited Israel and Judah, including their spiritual renewal, and expands on the details of the New Covenant: God will place His own Spirit within them.
- The New Covenant is the blessing of Abraham promised to the nations in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:3).
- We must always interpret the parts of the prophetic works of the Old Testament in light of the big picture of God’s covenantal relationship with the nation of Israel, and the narrow context of the specific details of the account itself.
- After the 70 years of captivity were complete, Daniel prays a prayer that initiates the return to the land under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

1. **Interact:** Discuss with the person next to you one or two things that stood out as significant to you from the last session.
2. **Ask review questions of audience.**
3. Recite the 5 elements of the Christian world view (view of reality).
4. Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel using the motions.

#### B. Objectives for this week

#### Session 7 Objectives:

- Reflect on the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish expectation of the coming messiah-king

- Sketch a profile of the promised rescuer
- Discover “hints from the past” intersecting the life of Jesus of Nazareth
- Examine unique characteristics of the man that God became
- Show how the Messiah’s heralds tie up all the threads of promise when they announce the arrival of Israel’s great king, the savior of the world

**Reading:**

Luke 1:1-3:20, Matt. 1:18-2:23, John 1, Phil. 2:5-11 cf. Is. 45:21-23, Ps. 22

**C. The Unfolding Drama...**

1. Our main theme for the Bible has been God’s rulership over His kingdom.
2. Our goal has been to understand God’s rescue plan meant to establish His reign over all the kingdoms of the earth.
  - a. We have watched His plan unfold over time as He’s worked through His chosen instrument, the nation of Israel.
  - b. We’ve gone through the Old Testament and seen the pieces of the puzzle in this drama laid out before us.
    - 1) Specific promises God has made to Israel
    - 2) Things He’s told the Jews to look forward to
    - 3) Hints in the story about what was to come

**D. Setting the stage for the final act**

1. We’ve covered 11 of the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel.
2. Apart from our discussion of the big picture in the first session, we have not mentioned Jesus at all, because He does not arrive in our narrative until this point in history.
3. In this session we make a major transition.
  - a. The curtain is about to rise on the final act of our drama with the last main historical event of the nation of Israel: the coming of Messiah to fulfill God’s promises.
  - b. Now the pieces of the Old Testament puzzle are about to come together.
4. But, like any good drama, there will be some surprises.
  - a. There are things the author has placed in the story that slip by us at first.
  - b. When we look back after everything has come together, though, we see the connections.
  - c. In other words, we are going to discover some of the puzzle pieces in the *Old Testament* only after we see what happens in the *New Testament*.
    - 1) John 12:16 “These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.”
    - 2) Luke 24:27 “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

Before the curtain comes up, though, I want to say something about...

#### **E. Jewish expectation in the first century**

1. The New Covenant was initially promised to Israel.
2. This covenant had two broad provisions:
  - a. National restoration for Israel and...
  - b. Spiritual revival for Israel
3. The spiritual provision for gentiles was not clear until after Jesus' ascension (Paul spelled it out in Eph. 2).
4. Therefore, the Jewish expectation of New Covenant blessing was understood almost *completely* in nationalistic terms.<sup>1</sup>

**This should not surprise us...**

#### **F. The Jews anticipated a Deliverer.**

1. An important part of the script was the promise of a *political* rescuer for Israel, the promised King, the son of David (as per the Davidic Covenant).
  - a. Israel had repented from its idolatry and was zealous for God's Law, so it was not looking so much for *spiritual* deliverance.
  - b. Because the Jews were in the land yet still oppressed by gentile kings, they were looking for *political* deliverance.
2. This "anointed" (e.g., messiah) king was to usher in God's Kingdom.
3. He would overcome the defiant nations of the earth and ultimately bring political restoration to Israel. Note Ps. 2:

Why are the nations in an uproar  
And the peoples devising a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth take their stand  
And the rulers take counsel together  
Against the Lord and against His Anointed [Messiah], saying,  
"Let us tear their fetters apart  
And cast away their cords from us!"

He who sits in the heavens laughs,  
The Lord scoffs at them.  
Then He will speak to them in His anger  
And terrify them in His fury, saying,  
"But as for Me, I have installed My King  
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

"I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord:  
He said to Me, 'You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.

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<sup>1</sup> See Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 57, for more details.

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,  
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.  
You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
You shall shatter them like earthenware.”

Now therefore, O kings, show discernment.  
Take warning, O judges of the earth.  
Worship the Lord with reverence  
And rejoice with trembling.  
Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way,  
For His wrath may soon be kindled.  
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

4. Daniel had also predicted this eternal kingdom.
  - a. A stone not cut by human hands would crush the kingdoms of men depicted by the glorious statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, putting an end to human kingdoms and establishing a kingdom that could never be destroyed, but would endure forever (Dan. 2:34, 44).
  - b. In this kingdom, “one like a son of man” would sit on an eternal throne (Dan. 7:13-14):

I kept looking in the night visions,  
And behold, with the clouds of heaven  
One like a Son of Man was coming,  
And He came up to the Ancient of Days  
And was presented before Him.  
And to Him was given dominion,  
Glory and a kingdom,  
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language  
Might serve Him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
Which will not pass away.  
And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

5. It should not be surprising, then, that the Jews do not see what for us—in hindsight—is crystal clear.
6. What the Jews could never have guessed at the time was about to happen:
  - a. In an act of sublime humility, God Himself would visit the planet as a man.
  - b. And as a man, He would accomplish what man was supposed to have done in the first place: rule over all the works of His hand (Ps. 8).<sup>2</sup>
  - c. In the process, He would not only rescue Israel, but also a great multitude of foreigners who would be “grafted in” (Rom. 11:17).
  - d. Thus, the blessing of Abraham would go out to all the nations (Gen. 15:3).

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<sup>2</sup> The writer of Hebrews actually quotes Ps. 8 and identifies Jesus as the subject of the Psalm (Heb 2:5-9).

7. Who was this anointed king?
  - a. How would we recognize Him?
  - b. Because he would be the perfect culmination of everything that had been promised...

## II. A Profile of the Great Rescuer, the Messiah-King

### A. He would be a man...

1. The rescuer would be born of a woman.
  - a. Gen. 3:15 “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (the “proto-evangel”).
  - b. Satan would inflict damage, but the woman’s seed would strike the fatal blow.
2. He would be a descendant of Abraham (a Jew).  
Gen 12:3<sup>3</sup> “In you [Abraham, from your loins] all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”<sup>4</sup>
3. He would be from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10).

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

4. He would be a descendant of David—the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12-16 ).

I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish His kingdom...And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever. Your throne shall be established forever.<sup>5</sup>

5. This future king would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.
  - a. Micah 5:2 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah...from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler of Israel.”
  - b. The Jewish scholars at the time of Christ understood this passage to be messianic because the scribes cited this prophecy to Herod when the Magi visited him (Matt. 2:5-6).
6. The messiah-king would arrive in history 483 years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem<sup>6</sup> (Dan 9:25).

### B. But the messiah-king could not be an ordinary man...

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<sup>3</sup> See also Genesis 22:18.

<sup>4</sup> This is why Jesus told the Jewish leaders, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56)

<sup>5</sup> God reaffirms this promise during the captivity through the prophet Jeremiah (33:20-21).

<sup>6</sup> A detailed discussion of the dating process can be found in Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972), 178-181.

1. He could not be a descendant of Adam just like everyone else.
  - a. If he was born just like any other man, then He would be just like any other man...
    - 1) Under God's wrath
    - 2) Owing an overwhelming debt of sin
    - 3) Enslaved to Satan
    - 4) Spiritually dead
  - b. **This suggests He must have an unusual birth that allows him to be a full human being, but excepts him from inheriting fallenness and depravity.**
2. This King would be Daniel's divine figure, a "Son of Man" who will reign over an eternal kingdom.

### III. And Then Came Jesus...

#### A. Jesus was a man.

1. Born of a woman
 

Gal 4:4 "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."<sup>7</sup>
2. A descendant of Abraham (a Jew)
 

Matthew 1:1-16
3. A descendant of David
 

Matt 1:1 "Jesus the Messiah, the son of David...."<sup>8</sup>

Luke 2:4 "Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David."
4. Born in Bethlehem
 

Matt. 2:1 "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea."
5. Coming 483 years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem

If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes...because you did not recognize the time of your visitation. (Luke 19:41, 42, 44)

Remember I said there would be some surprises, some hints from the past we would only see clearly once everything had come to pass? Look at this...

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<sup>7</sup> See also Matt. 1:20.

<sup>8</sup> Some have noted the discrepancy between Matthew's genealogy and Luke's (3:23-38). One possible solution is that Matthew's record is Jesus' ancestry through Joseph traced to David through his son Solomon. This established Jesus' legal right to the throne. Notice the wording of v.16. Luke's account records the genealogical line of Mary herself (Eli was Joseph's father-in-law), a descendant of David through Nathan, one of his other sons. Jesus, therefore, was a natural descendant of David through Nathan and Mary, and a legal descendant of David through Solomon and Joseph (Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 316).

6. Jesus was brutally executed by crucifixion.

a. The record...

1) John 19:17-18<sup>9</sup>

They took Jesus therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

2) According to the record, on the cross...

- a) Jesus was stretched out naked.
- b) His hands and feet were pierced by nails.
- c) Gentiles (“dogs”) surrounded Him.
- d) The crowd jeered at Him.
- e) Soldiers cast lots for his clothing.
- f) He cried out in anguish, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

b. Then we discover this hint from the past...

1) Ps. 22

- a) This entire Psalm reads like a detailed first-person account of a crucifixion long before such executions were practiced.<sup>10</sup>

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?... (v. 1)  
 All who see me sneer at me.  
 They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,  
 “Commit yourself to the Lord. Let Him deliver him.  
 Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.” (v. 7-8)

I am poured out like water.  
 And all my bones are out of joint.  
 My heart is like wax.  
 It is melted within me. (v. 14)

For dogs have surrounded me.  
 A band of evildoers has encompassed me.  
 They pierced my hands and my feet.  
 I can count all my bones.  
 They look, they stare at me.  
 They divide my garments among them,  
 And for my clothing they cast lots. (v. 16-18)

<sup>9</sup> See also Matt. 27:33-56, Luke 23:33-49, John 19:16-30.

<sup>10</sup> Crucifixion was not a method of capital punishment for the Jews and was only practiced under Roman jurisprudence (*The Encyclopedia Americana*, 1960, vol. 8, 253). “The type of death pictured in Is. 53 and Psalms 22 did not come into practice under the Jewish system until hundreds of years after the account was written.” (McDowell, 170)

b) Derek Kidner says, “No Christian can read this without being vividly confronted with the crucifixion.”<sup>11</sup>

Another hint...

2) Zech. 12:10:

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that **they will look on Me whom they have pierced**, and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

7. Amazingly, Jesus was rejected by His own people, even though He was a servant who suffered for the sins of Israel, and ultimately for mankind.

a. The record...

1) John 1:11 “He came to His own and those who were **His own did not receive Him.**”

2) Matt. 20:28 “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life a ransom for many.**”

b. Then we read this hint from the past...

1) Isaiah 53 is a long passage worthy of being read completely.

2) It contains many prophecies fulfilled on the day of Jesus’ death.

Is. 53:4 Surely **our** griefs He Himself bore,  
And **our** sorrows He carried,  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Is. 53:8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away.  
And as for His generation, who considered  
That He was cut off out of the land of the living  
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

8. Jesus was raised from the dead.

a. The record...

1) Acts 1:3 “To these [apostles] He presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of 40 days...”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Both the opening and closing verses of this Psalm were uttered by Jesus on the cross (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and “He has performed it” vs. “It is finished”).

<sup>12</sup> See also Peter’s sermon on the resurrection in Acts 2:25ff.

2) 1 Cor. 15:3-4 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

b. Then Peter reminds us that David had predicted this ...

1) Ps. 16:9b-10 “My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol. Neither will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.”

2) Peter on Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2:31-32): “[David] looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ.... This Jesus God raised up again, to which we all are witnesses.”

But something even more amazing was going on...

## **B. Jesus was not an ordinary man.**

### **1. Jesus was not a regular descendant of Adam.**

a. Jesus was born of a virgin.

1) The record...

Matt. 1:18, 24, 25 “She was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph...kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son, and he called His name Jesus.”<sup>13 14</sup>

2) The hint from the past...

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son.”<sup>15</sup>

b. Also, Jesus existed before his conception.

1) The record...

a) John 1:30 “This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who has a higher rank than I, for **He existed before me.**’”

b) Remember, John was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:36).

<sup>13</sup> It seems fair to note, however, Harrison’s comment: “No evidence can be cited in favor of...Jewish expectation [of a virgin birth]. Is. 7:14 was not given a messianic interpretation among the Jews of our Lord’s time,” apparently (Everett F. Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 45).

<sup>14</sup> Jesus is the Latin form of the Greek *Iesous*. The Hebrew equivalent is *Yesua* (Jehovah saves) the same name as Joshua, son of Nun (Wilson, 181; Geoffrey W. Bromiley Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [ISBE]*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), vol. 2, 1034).

<sup>15</sup> The Hebrew word used here is *almah* (veiled), a young woman of marriageable age, and not *bethulah*, denoting a virgin maiden. Some critics, therefore, suggest that the concept of virgin was never in view here by the prophet. However, when the Hebrew scholars translated the Greek version of the Old Testament (called the *Septuagint*, or *LXX*) around 250 BC, they chose the Greek word *parthenos*, meaning virgin, in their rendering of Is 7:14, instead of *neanis* which meant a young woman. They understood this to be a prophecy of a virgin birth more than 200 years before Jesus was born. (Merrill Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 1159). Also, any young, unmarried Jewish woman living in her parent’s home would be assumed to be a virgin by very circumstance.

- 2) The hint from the past...
  - a) "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of **eternity**" (Micah 5:2).

So...He was born of a virgin, yet existing from all eternity...

## 2. **Jesus was a man...who was God.**

- a. God has been born in a manger.
  - 1) Luke 2:11 The angels at Jesus' birth: "For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ **the Lord**."
  - 2) The earliest confession of the church was "Jesus is Lord." This was a clear acknowledgment of His divinity.
- b. But we were told beforehand that God would be coming to visit this planet.
  - 1) Mal. 3:1 "Behold I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before **Me**."
  - 2) Is. 40:3-5 "A voice is calling, 'Clear the way **for the Lord** in the wilderness. Make smooth in the desert a highway **for our God**."
- c. Then came John the Baptist.
  - 1) John identifies himself as the voice of Isaiah 40:3-5, preparing the way for our God (John 1:22-23).
  - 2) Then he points to Jesus and says, "This is the One."
    - a) John 1:34 "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is **the Son of God**."

Jesus is the Son of God, and...

## **IV. The Son of God is God the Son.**

I want you to notice something important about the phrase "Son of God"...

### **A. To be the Son of God is to share the Divine nature.**

1. When anything reproduces, it always reproduces something with the same nature as itself.
  - a. If a human begets a son, that son would also be human.
  - b. If a god begets a son (as opposed to adopting a son), that son would have a divine nature.
2. So any begotten son of God would also be divine.
3. But there is only one God.
4. Therefore, the Son of God would also *be* God.
5. Jesus' claim to be the Son of God was actually a claim to deity, and the Jews knew it (see John 5:18).

### **B. Jesus was "begotten," of God.**

1. Ps. 2:7. cf. Heb 1:5, 5:5 "He said to me, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'"

2. Acts 13:32-33 “We preach to you the good news of the promise made to our fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’”

3. C.S. Lewis put it this way:

To beget is to become the father of; to create is to make. And the difference is this. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself.... But when you make something of a different kind from yourself [e.g. a bird begets a bird, but it makes a nest]... What God begets is God, just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God, just as what man makes is not man. That is why men are not sons of God in the sense that Christ is. They may be like God in certain ways, but they are not things of *the same kind*.<sup>16</sup> [emphasis added]

4. The term “only-begotten” (e.g., John 1:18) does not mean “created.”
- This belief reflects a misunderstanding of the Greek word *monogenes*, unfortunately translated “only begotten.”
  - Note that this is a *single* Greek word, not *two* words with one modifying the other.
    - There is a prefix, *mono*, and a root, *genes*.
    - Combined together, they give the word one meaning.
  - Monogenes* means “one-of-a-kind, unique, a single member of a class.”<sup>17</sup>
  - Jesus is the unique Son of God, putting Him in a unique position to reveal the Father (John 1:18).
5. **The fact that He’s a son makes him distinct from the Father. The fact that He is a son makes Him God.**

6. **Simply put, the Son of God...is God the Son.**

Another hint from the past...

7. Is. 9:6

For a child will be born to us, **a son will be given** to us.  
 And the government will rest on His shoulders [He will be king].  
 And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God** [*“El Gibor”*],  
 Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

### C. This is why the Scriptures call Jesus “God.”

- John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God **and the Word was God.**”
- Col. 1:15, 19 “And He is the image of the invisible God....For it was the Father’s good pleasure for **all the fullness to dwell in Him.**”

<sup>16</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, Macmillan, 1943), 122.

<sup>17</sup> Note the discussion in James White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1998), 201-203.

<sup>18</sup> This is the same phrase found in Jeremiah 32:17-18, “Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by your great power....O great and *mighty God*. The Lord of hosts is His name.”

3. Heb. 1:3 “And He is the radiance of His glory and **the exact representation of His nature**, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”
4. Rom. 9:5 “...from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, **God** blessed forever.”
5. Titus 2:13 “...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**,”

**D. This is why the Bible teaches Jesus is the uncreated Creator.**

1. “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3).
2. “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (Col. 1:16).

**E. This is why Old Testament texts referring to Yahweh God are applied to Jesus in the New Testament:**

**1. Every knee shall bow**

- a. Is. 45:23 “I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from my mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, **that to Me** [‘I am God,’ v. 22] every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.”
- b. Phil. 2:10 “**That at the name of Jesus** every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.”

**2. No other savior**

- a. Is. 43:11 “I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no savior besides Me.”
- b. 2 Pet. 1:1 “...by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

**3. Only one rock**

- a. Is. 44:8 “Is there any God besides me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none.”
- b. 1 Cor. 10:4 “All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ.”

4. In Heb. 1:10-11 the writer quotes from Ps. 102:25 which applied to Yahweh. He then applies it to Christ (note Heb. 1:8):

You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth....You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end.

## V. God “Steps Down” and “Gets Small.”

### A. God steps down: the incarnation.

1. There are two ways God “visits” the earth.
  - a. God visits the earth **in form**: theophany.
    - 1) God reveals Himself in some outward, physical *manifestation*, either voice or apparition—sometimes referred to as “the Angel of the Lord”—though not the very *substance* of God Himself.<sup>19</sup>
    - 2) Some examples are the Lord appearing to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre (Gen. 18:1), Moses and the burning bush (Ex. 3:2), and Jacob wrestling with a “man” (Gen. 32:24-30).
    - 3) A theophany is only an appearance.
      - a) It is not a phantom. It is real to all *appearances*, but is not in fact actual physical matter.
      - b) Theophanies are sometimes described as men
      - c) Angels can also materialize this way, which is why we can entertain angels unawares (Heb. 13:2), because we don’t realize they are not genuine human beings.
  - b. God visits the earth **in substance**: incarnation.
    - 1) Micah 5:2 says the messiah-king was to be born in Bethlehem (humanity), yet He was from everlasting to everlasting (deity).
    - 2) John 1:1,14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God [deity]....And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory [humanity]....”
2. In the incarnation, God actually **becomes** man.
  - a. More precisely, God *took on* humanity in Jesus.
  - b. God was not changed into a human.
  - c. Rather, a human nature was added to the divine nature.

### B. God gets small: the humbling (kenosis).

1. The kenosis: the choice of the Son to “empty” Himself of His divine *rights* by becoming a man, and also emptying Himself of His human *rights* by becoming a servant.<sup>20</sup>
2. Phil. 2:5-8

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

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<sup>19</sup> *ISBE*, vol. 4, 829.

<sup>20</sup> *ISBE*, vol. 3, 9.

Phillips Translation:

And, having become man, **he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal.**

**3. However, Jesus never ceased being God.**

a. Jesus laid aside only His **privileges** of deity, **not His divine nature**. He had to learn like we do, to grow in understanding and knowledge (Luke 2:52). Some contend that on earth Jesus did not make use of His own powers of deity. Others think He did.<sup>21</sup>

b. Because of His humbling and obedience, God the Father highly exalted Jesus: "...that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus the Messiah is Lord...." (Phil. 2:9-11).

4. As one of my students put it, "God, what a man! Man, what a God!"

**C. The unique union of the Divine nature with the human nature is called the "hypostatic union."**

1. Definition: In the one person of Jesus the Messiah there were two natures: undiminished deity and true humanity. Jesus was fully God and fully man.

2. Isaiah 9:6 suggests the dual nature of Jesus:

a. His humanity: "A child is born."

b. His deity: "A Son is given."

3. Jesus, however, was a different person from the Father.

a. Sometimes He spoke in reference to His deity: "I and the Father are one ['one essence,' lit.]" (John 10:30).

b. Sometimes He spoke in reference to His humanity: "...the Father is greater than I"<sup>22</sup> (John 14:28).

c. Because Jesus was human, He was submitted under the Father. Because He was one essence with the Father, He was co-equal with Him.

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<sup>21</sup> One might ask, "Then how did Jesus do all His miracles if He didn't use His divine powers?" Some suggest that Jesus worked His miracles and lived a holy life as a man filled with the Holy Spirit, just like us. That's why Jesus could say, "...he who believes in me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father...and He will give you another Helper that will be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth...." (John 14:12,16,17).

<sup>22</sup> Meaning "comparative degree," not "essence." Due to Jesus' humbling, the Father was "greater" than He was—i.e. at a higher station—for a time.

### **God in a Box: The Chalcedonian Formula**

At the Council of Chalcedon, AD 451, the church summarized the boundaries of orthodox Christology established by the four earliest church councils. The “formula” identified the four sides of a “box” containing the orthodox view: Jesus is fully God and fully man, one person with two natures.

- Jesus is fully God, condemning Arianism (Nicea, AD 325)—“God alone can save us.”
- Jesus is fully human, condemning Apollinarianism (Constantinople I, AD 381)—“That which is not assumed is not healed.”
- Jesus is one person, condemning Nestorianism (Ephesus, AD 431).
- Jesus is two persons, condemning Eutychianism (Chalcedon, AD 451).

#### **D. The Trinity**

1. The one true God subsists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
2. St. Augustine’s definition is the classic one: “So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet they are not three Gods, but one God.”
3. The term “Trinity” is a 2nd century term not found in the Bible, but is used to explain specific statements made about God that are taught in the Scripture.
4. **Consequently, the Trinity is not a problem. It’s a solution.** It brings coherence to *all* the biblical testimony about Jesus and God.
5. Illustrating the Trinity
  - a. Most illustrations fall short, sometimes promoting a heretical understanding of the Trinity called modalism.<sup>23</sup>
  - b. In the final analysis, the Trinity is a mystery.
    - 1) Excessive attempts at making it concrete almost always lead to error.
    - 2) This is a case where reason bows to revelation.<sup>24</sup>

#### **E. With all the props in place on the stage, the curtain is about to rise.**

1. Like a skilled director, God has carefully arranged the elements of His production.
2. The world awaits its promised rescuer.
  - a. He will be a man, a Jew, a son of David.
  - b. He will fulfill the hope of the fathers...
    - 1) The promise of Abraham
    - 2) The promise of the New Covenant of political restoration and spiritual renewal for Israel

<sup>23</sup> Modalism is an early heresy in the church that came out of an attempt to make the Trinity more understandable. It taught that God was one person manifesting Himself in three different ways, or modes: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a frequent misconception about the Trinity unwittingly held by many Christians (e.g., “The Trinity is like one man who is simultaneously a father, a son, and a husband. This is modalism, not Trinitarianism.

<sup>24</sup> I don’t mean to suggest the Trinity is irrational (it isn’t). Rather, it’s impossible for us to conceptualize it in concrete terms.

- c. He will provide for complete forgiveness of sins.
- d. He will give the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- e. He will be a king, reigning over an eternal Kingdom.
- f. He will be God Himself.

**Notice how each of these themes is captured in the voices of...**

## **VI. The Messiah's Heralds**

### **A. Angels**

1. Gabriel
  - a. Appears to Zacharias (Luke 1:8-20)  
Referring to John the Baptist: "He will be great in the sight of the Lord...and be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. **And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children,<sup>25</sup> and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (15-17).
  - b. Appears to Mary (Luke 1:26-38)  
And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and be called **the Son of the Most High**, and the Lord God will give Him **the throne of His father David**, and **He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.**<sup>26</sup>
2. The heavenly host appears to the shepherds (Luke 2:10-11).  
And the angel said to them, "**Today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord.**"

### **B. Zacharias**

1. John the Baptist's father (Luke 1:67-79) prophesies in Messianic terms.
2. "**Redemption for His people**," "horn of salvation," "**remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham**," "**the forgiveness of sins**," "to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death."<sup>27</sup>

### **C. Mary (Luke 1:53-55) "The Magnificat"**

1. Mary reflects back on the blessing of Abraham that was promised.
2. "He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, **as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.**" (54-55)

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<sup>25</sup> Here he quotes from Mal. 4:6.

<sup>26</sup> The angel is telling Mary, in terms she couldn't possibly mistake, that her son would be the fulfillment of God's special covenant with King David. (2 Sam. 7:12-16, Jer. 33:20-21)

<sup>27</sup> This last allusion is to Isaiah 9:1-2.

**D. Simeon (Luke 2:29-38), at the temple**

1. He identifies Jesus as the Messiah.

Now Lord, you can let your bondservant depart in peace, according to Your word, **for my eyes have seen Your salvation**, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, **a light of revelation to the gentiles**, and the glory of Your people Israel.

2. Then he adds, "...and a sword will pierce even your own soul...." (v. 35)
3. "He saw by the Spirit that the child would be the touchstone of destiny for men."<sup>28</sup>

**E. Anna (Luke 2:36-38)**

"She...continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the **redemption of Jerusalem**. (v. 38)

**F. The Magi (Matt. 2:1-12)**

"Where is he who has been born **King of the Jews**? For we saw His star in the east and have come to **worship Him**." (Matt. 2:2)

**G. John the Baptist**

1. John 1:29 Referred to Jesus as the "**Lamb of God**"
2. Mk. 1:8 Said Jesus "will baptize you with the **Holy Spirit**"

**VII. The Fullness of Time**

And so Jesus is introduced to the world.

**A. Complete fulfillment**

1. **Jesus operated in terms of divine commission.**
  - a. John 6:38 "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me."
  - b. John 8:28 "I don't act on my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me."<sup>29</sup>
2. **Jesus was utterly constrained by the covenants.**
  - a. As God He was responsible to mankind to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant.
  - b. As a Jewish man He was responsible to the Father to fulfill the Mosaic Covenant.
    - 1) Perfect obedience to the law
    - 2) A perfect sacrifice...
      - a) A lamb without blemish
      - b) Cursed and executed under the law
      - c) Making possible the complete forgiveness promised in the New Covenant

<sup>28</sup> Everett F. Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 53.

<sup>29</sup> This is not a justification for us to receive personal revelation like Jesus had. Jesus was unique in this regard.

### 3. Jesus was the fulfillment of all that was promised beforehand.

- a. Regarding Adam: the seed of woman
- b. Regarding Abraham: the blessing to all nations
- c. Regarding Moses: cursed under the law
  - 1) And Jesus understood this truth from the beginning.
  - 2) Heb. 10:5,7 “Therefore when He comes into the world He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me....Then I said, “Behold, I have come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, Oh God.”’”
- d. Regarding David: the promised eternal king
- e. Regarding Isaiah: the suffering servant
- f. Regarding Jeremiah: the provision for forgiveness and new relationship with God
- g. Regarding Ezekiel: the baptizer in the Holy Spirit

## B. Exact timing

All of creation waits as this solitary life unfolds. All of history is orchestrated for this moment when God steps out of eternity into time.

### 1. Jesus, the humble servant

- a. Born in a manger, among lowly people and gentiles
- b. Recognized by the finer side of Israel’s piety, like Simeon and Anna<sup>30</sup>

### 2. Jesus, the promised Messiah

- a. The message is clear that Jesus came into the world first of all as the promised Messiah of Israel, the future king, the promised Son of David.
- b. Gabriel, Mary, Zacharias, the heavenly host, Simeon, Anna, and the magi all center around that message.
- c. Later even the demons will be compelled to shriek this truth (Mark 1:24):  
“What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

### 3. Jesus, the Savior of the world!

Even our Christmas carols capture the excitement:

- a. “Hark the herald angels sing, ‘**Glory to the newborn King.**’ Peace on earth and mercy mild. **God and sinners reconciled.**”
- b. “Long lay the world, in sin and error pining, ‘till He appeared and the soul felt its worth. **A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks, a new and glorious morn.** Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angels voices. Oh, night divine, oh, night, when Christ was born!”
- c. “**Joy to the world. The Lord is come. Let earth receive her king.**”
- d. “**Oh come, oh come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,** who sleeps in lonely exile here until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.”

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<sup>30</sup> Harrison, 53.

- e. “Oh, little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie. Among your deep and dreamless sleep the silent clouds go by. Yet in your dark streets shineth the everlasting light. **The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**”
- f. “O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy. O tidings of comfort and joy.”

**In the next session, we will look at the man who God became, exploring the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the meaning of His death upon a Roman cross.**

### **What We Learned:**

#### **Main Points**

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Jews for the most part expected a king that would fulfill the political elements of the New Covenant, not the spiritual provisions.
  - The promised son of David would reign as king.
  - He would overcome the defiant nations of the earth and ultimately bring political restoration to Israel.
  - As Daniel’s “son of man,” He would sit on an eternal throne.
  - The Jews did not expect that God Himself would visit the planet as a man.
- The great rescuer, the messiah-king, would be a man with a specific pedigree, yet there were hints He would not be an ordinary man.
- Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the pedigree, but also fulfilled many details that were only hinted at in the Old Testament, but became obvious with their fulfillment in the New Testament.
- Jesus was the Son of God, God the Son.
  - The Scriptures call Jesus “God.”
  - The Bible teaches Jesus is the uncreated Creator.
  - Old Testament texts referring to Yahweh God are applied to Jesus in the New Testament.
- In order for God to take on humanity, He had to “step down” (incarnation) and “get small” (humble Himself).
  - He became a man by adding humanity to His divine nature.
  - He “emptied Himself” (the “kenosis”) of His divine privileges to become a servant while never ceasing to be God.
  - The unique union of the Divine nature with the human nature is called the “hypostatic union.”
- The term “Trinity” describes the one God who subsists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a solution, not a problem.
- The Messiah’s heralds emphasized the major themes of the Old Testament promises finding their complete expression in the child born in Bethlehem.
- Jesus operated in terms of the divine commission, constrained by the covenants, fulfilling all that was promised beforehand.

**For Reflection and Discussion:**

- List some of the requirements for the Messiah we find either expressed or implied in the Old Testament.
- What were some of the hints in the Old Testament that this person was going to be more than just an ordinary man, in fact God Himself?
- How did Jesus satisfy these requirements?
- What was the Jewish expectation of Messiah at the time Jesus was born? In what ways was this expectation understandable?
- What is the difference between a theophany and the incarnation?
- Explain the concept of the hypostatic union. How does our understanding of this doctrine resolve textual conflicts like John 10:30 vs. John 14:28?
- Define the Trinity. How do we know the Trinity is a true doctrine of God?
- Explain the kenosis. Where is this concept taught in Scripture?
- Describe the four basic elements of the “Chalcedonian box.” Why are each of these important?
- What stands out in the content of what Jesus’ heralds said about Him?
- In what way was Jesus constrained by the covenants?

## Appendix

### Summary of New Testament Books

- **Historical books—5 books**
  - The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. These are thematic accounts of Jesus' life written to communicate important aspects of Jesus' mission.
    - Matthew: Jesus is the Jewish Messianic ruler promised in the Old Testament bringing the kingdom of God
    - Mark: Jesus, the miracle-working man of action, the Son of God suffering for our sins and inviting us to follow Him as His disciples
    - Luke: a carefully researched historical account of Jesus, who comes in the power of the Holy Spirit to save all peoples
    - John: Jesus, the Messiah, the divine Son of God, attested to by mighty signs bringing eternal life to those who believe
  - Acts: an historical account of the first 30 years or so in the life of the early church
- **Epistles—21 books**
  - Letters written by someone with apostolic authority to a particular person, church or region, usually dealing with specific problems they were facing, or given as instruction to a young pastor (e.g., Timothy).
  - Romans; 1 and 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon; Hebrews; James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude.
- **The Revelation**
  - An apocalyptic book rich in imagery
  - It depicts the final consummation of human history and the ultimate restoration of God's rulership at the triumphant return of His Messiah, Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah.

## **Session 8**

# **The Gospels: The Final Sacrifice and the Birth of a New Order**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. Review last week**

### **What We Learned in Session 7**

#### **Main Points**

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Jews for the most part expected a king that would fulfill the political elements of the New Covenant, not the spiritual provisions.
  - The promised son of David would reign as king.
  - He would overcome the defiant nations of the earth and ultimately bring political restoration to Israel.
  - As Daniel's "son of man," He would sit on an eternal throne.
  - The Jews did not expect that God Himself would visit the planet as a man.
- The great rescuer, the messiah-king, would be a man with a specific pedigree, yet there were hints He would not be an ordinary man.
- Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the pedigree, but also fulfilled many details that were only hinted at in the Old Testament, but became obvious with their fulfillment in the New Testament.
- Jesus was the Son of God, God the Son.
  - The Scriptures call Jesus "God."
  - The Bible teaches Jesus is the uncreated Creator.
  - Old Testament texts referring to Yahweh God are applied to Jesus in the New Testament.
- In order for God to take on humanity, He had to "step down" (incarnation) and "get small" (humble Himself).
  - He became a man by adding humanity to His divine nature.
  - He "emptied Himself" (the "kenosis") of His divine privileges to become a servant while never ceasing to be God.
  - The unique union of the Divine nature with the human nature is called the "hypostatic union."
- The term "Trinity" describes the one God who subsists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a solution, not a problem.
- The Messiah's heralds emphasized the major themes of the Old Testament promises finding their complete expression in the child born in Bethlehem.
- Jesus operated in terms of the divine commission, constrained by the covenants, fulfilling all that was promised beforehand.

1. **Interact:** Discuss with the person next to you one or two things that stood out as significant to you from the last session.
2. **Ask review questions of audience.**
3. Recite the 5 elements of the Christian world view (view of reality).
4. Recite the 12 major historical events of the nation of Israel using the motions.

## B. Objectives for this week

### Session 8 Objectives:

- Explain five reasons God became a man
- Provide an overview of the earthly Ministry of Jesus
  - His two years of public ministry
  - His year and a half of private ministry
  - His passion week
- Show how the cross of Christ removes all the barriers between God and man, bringing reconciliation
- Explain how the gentiles have been “grafted in” with Israel
- Explore the New Covenant’s promise of power over sin
- Show how Jesus fulfills the three major covenants
- Describe the way the Kingdom is currently being extended in the world

### Reading:

Mark 14-16, Eph. 2, Heb. 10

## C. Jesus, the messiah-king

1. Last session we learned...
  - a. That in a profound act of humility, God Himself had stepped into history as a man.
  - b. That this rescuer—the messiah-king, Jesus of Nazareth—had arrived, inviting people into the kingdom, the active rulership of God.<sup>1</sup>
2. But who was this man?
  - a. What was He like?
  - b. What did He do?
  - c. How, precisely, did His life and then His death on a Roman cross fulfill everything required of the three central covenants of the Bible—the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant?
3. And why would God ever need to become a man in the first place?

## II. Jesus’ Mission: Why God Became a Man

1. **God became a man to identify with us.**

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<sup>1</sup> As Alistair Begg puts it, the Kingdom of God is God’s rule in action.

a. God knew everything there was to know, but He had not experienced everything.

1) When God became a man, He added a new experience.

2) The Son took on a new kind of awareness, experiencing a fallen world from inside the “skin” of His human nature.

b. IN a very real sense, Jesus walked in our shoes. The following story captures my point:

At the end of time, billions of people were gathered for judgment on a great plain before God’s throne. Most shrank back from His brilliant light, but some assembled in angry groups.

“Can God judge us?” snapped a woman as she raised an arm with a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. “How can He know about suffering?” “We endured beatings, torture, death!”

A Black teenager lowered his collar. “What about this?” he demanded, showing an ugly rope scar from the lynching that took his life.

“Why should I suffer?” said another, a pregnant schoolgirl with sullen eyes. “It wasn’t my fault.”

Far out across the plain hundreds of voices raised their complaints against God for the injustice He had permitted in their lives. God lived in heaven. What did He know about fear, torment, hunger, abuse—all they had been forced to endure in a fallen world?

So they sent forth representatives, each chosen for his extreme suffering: a Jew, a Black man, a person from Hiroshima, a horribly deformed arthritic, a thalidomide child.

They presented their case. Before God could judge them, He must endure the same anguish they had experienced.

Let him be born a Jew. Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted.

Give him a mission so bizarre even his family would reject him as mad. Let him be betrayed by his closest friends. Let him face false charges, be tried by a prejudiced jury, and convicted by a cowardly judge.

Finally, let him see what it means to suffer unspeakable anguish.

Let all he possessed and valued be taken from him. Let him be beaten and whipped while his tormentors mock and jeer. Finally, let him die a slow, torturous, and agonizing death with none to help him.

As each leader announced his demand, murmurs of approval went up from the great plain.

When the last had finished pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence. No one moved. No one uttered another word. For suddenly all knew that God had already served his time.<sup>2</sup>

c. God became man to actually experience our human condition, including our suffering and temptations.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from “The Long Silence,” quoted by Stephen Travis, *The Jesus Hope* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 61.

d. This allowed Him to identify with us in a way that was not available to Him before He took on a human nature.

1) Heb. 4:15-16 “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

2) Heb. 2:18 “For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

3) Only Jesus was tempted to the fullest because He was the only One who went the distance, not stopping half way and giving in. Temptation doesn’t reach its full intensity in us because we often capitulate.

## 2. God became a man to reveal the Father.

a. John 1:18 “No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained Him.**”

b. Heb. 1:1-3 “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **in these last days has spoken to us in His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and **the exact representation of His nature**, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”

## 3. God became a man to fulfill the Mosaic law (man’s side of the equation).

a. As man, He perfectly fulfilled the demands of the Law.<sup>3</sup>

1) John 8:46 “Who convicts me of sin?”

2) John 7:18 “The one sent from the Father is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

b. As man, He suffered the penalty and curse of the law—death. (Gal 3:10)

## 4. God became a man to fulfill the promise to Abraham (God’s side of the equation).

a. If you recall the Messiah’s heralds from last session...

1) Mary: “He had given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, **as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham** and his offspring forever” (Luke 1:54-55).

2) Zacharias: “To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, **the oath which He swore to Abraham** our father” (Luke 1:72-73).

b. Jesus: “**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day**, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56).

## 5. God became a man to usher in the New Covenant.

a. To fulfill the promise of forgiveness (Heb. 10:14-18):

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

“This is the covenant that I will make with them  
after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws upon their heart,

<sup>3</sup>“Thus, according to Matt. 5:17, the intent of Jesus was not to ‘abolish’ or ‘destroy’ the Law of Israel (i.e., to uproot or negate it through misinterpretation), but to ‘fulfill’ it (i.e., to establish or support it through correct interpretation),” (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 117).

and on their mind I will write them...”  
 He then says,  
 “...and their sins and their lawless deeds  
 I will remember no more.”  
 Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering  
 for sin.

- a. To fulfill the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit
  - 1) John the Baptist: “One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16).
    - a) Spiritual rebirth: “...baptize you with the Holy Spirit...”
    - b) Judgment: “...and with fire.”
  - 2) John 3:6 “Unless one is born...of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”
    - a) These comments should have triggered in Nicodemus a reflection on the New Covenant:

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you....And I will put my Spirit within you. (Ezek. 36:26-7)

- b) Jesus was incredulous: “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?” (John 3:10)
  - 3) John 7:38-39 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

There were three distinct “seasons”—or phases—in Jesus’ three and a half years of earthly ministry....

### III. Jesus’ Public Ministry—Two Years of Favor

1. For the first two years, more or less, Jesus experiences great public favor (except in His home town) as He presents Himself as Messiah and begins to demonstrate His Messianic authority.

- a. **Jesus presents Himself as the Messiah**, Isaiah’s “anointed” one (Luke 4:14-21): “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”
  - 1) The people are stunned, but show initial approval (“...and all were speaking well of Him...” v. 22).
  - 2) It was Jesus’ mention of gentiles that filled them with rage (v. 23-29).

And He said to them, “No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’” And He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. But I say to you in truth, there were

many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land, **and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.** And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and **none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.**”

**And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard *these things*,** and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. (v. 28-29)

**b. Jesus exercises Messianic authority, showing His rulership over the Kingdom.**

**1) He rules over Satan and his demons.**

a) Luke 4:33-34, 36:

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, “Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? **I know who You are—the Holy One of God!**...And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, “What is this message? **For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.**”

b) The demons clearly recognize Jesus’ power and authority (rulership) over them and over their ruler, Satan.

**2) He rules over deformities and disease.**

a) Jesus demonstrates His power and authority over sickness and deformities, including leprosy, blindness, lameness, and paralysis.

b) Often physical healing is evidence of Jesus’ authority to heal spiritual sickness, e.g., forgiving sins (Mark 2:10-11).

**3) He rules over the forces of the natural world.**

a) Jesus calms the storm (Luke 8:22-25). Note the result: “They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, ‘Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?’”

b) Jesus walks on water (Matt. 14:25). Note the result: “And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘You are certainly God’s Son!’” (v. 33).

c) Jesus feeds the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes (Matt. 15:36 ff).

**4) He rules over death.**

a) In a dramatic display of messianic authority, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38ff).

b) With every resurrection, Jesus proves His claim: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

c) Jesus' ultimate victory over death is demonstrated by His own resurrection.

c. **Jesus exercises divine authority by clarifying the Law** (Matt. 5-7, the "Sermon on the Mount").

- 1) The Law cannot be nullified or diminished. It must be fulfilled (5:17-19).
- 2) The Law deals with internal thoughts and motives as well as external actions (5:21, 47).
- 3) The Law demands perfection to a standard greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20, 48).

d. **Jesus announces the coming of the Kingdom, the rulership of God.**

- 1) Jesus taught that fulfillment and security were found in a life seeking God's rulership...His Kingdom (Matt. 6:31-33):

Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

- 2) "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28).

e. **Jesus calls the twelve and sends them out to proclaim the Kingdom with power and authority.**

- 1) "He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles" (Luke 6: 12-16).
- 2) "And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. **And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing...** Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere" (Luke 9:1-6).

## **IV. Jesus' Private Ministry—1 1/2 yrs. of seclusion**

**A. Jesus loses favor with the masses when He does not bow to their desire to make Him into a political deliverer.**

1. The "Bread of Life Discourse" (John 6) was the turning point.
2. Many of His "followers" abandoned Him.
3. The twelve, however, stayed. Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (v. 66).

**B. Jesus withdraws to more secluded areas (often in gentile regions) to train His disciples and prepare them for His death.**

1. Matt. 16:21 “From that time [Peter’s confession of Christ] Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”
2. Matt. 20:28 “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

### **C. Jesus clarifies key elements about the kingdom through parables.**

1. The fullness of the Kingdom would not appear immediately, but would be established at a later date (Luke 19:11-27).
2. The Kingdom would be hidden to most, but priceless to those who find it (Matt. 13:44-46).

One third of the Gospel accounts are dedicated to the final week of Jesus’ life...

## **V. Jesus’ Passion**

In light of the big picture, Jesus’ suffering accomplishes two things...

### **A. First, Jesus’ death is the final, perfect sacrifice ending the Old Covenant.**

1. The sacrifice of animals, required by God in the Old Testament, pointed to the future death of Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus’ blood provides the ultimate, final, finished, once for all, atonement for sin.
  - a. John the Baptist said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).
  - b. Heb. 10:1-2, 4; 11-14

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?...**For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But [Jesus], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, “sat down at the right hand of God,” waiting from that time onward “until his enemies be made a footstool for His feet.”  
**For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.**

### **B. Second, Jesus’ death initiates the New Covenant (Jer. 31 and Ezek. 36).**

1. Remember, the New Covenant made provision for national, political renewal of Israel *and* for spiritual regeneration.
2. Jesus initiates the covenant, offering only the spiritual benefits of the promise at this time, which are extended to all people, Jews and gentiles alike...
  - a. A new relationship with God with a circumcised heart based on...
  - b. Complete forgiveness of sin, and...
  - c. The gift of the Holy Spirit

3. Jesus at the last supper: **“This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood”** (Luke 22:19-20) “which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28).
  - a. The check was signed at the last supper.
  - b. The check was covered at the cross.
  - c. The check was cashed at Pentecost.
4. The New Covenant is the blessing of Abraham for the world...

**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law**, having become a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— **in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham** might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive **the promise of the Spirit** through faith. (Gal. 3:13-14)

For this reason **He is the mediator of a new covenant**, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, **those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance**. (Heb. 9:15)

The sacrifice of the New Covenant entailed what the Reformers called...

### C. The “Great Exchange”

First, a cultural note...

1. The “certificate of debt”
  - a. When a debt was owed in the first century—either in commerce or the “debt” owed by a criminal to society—a “certificate” of the debt was made.
  - b. When the debt was paid, it was cancelled with a single Greek word stamped upon the parchment’s face: *tetelestai* (lit., completed, done, finished, paid).<sup>4</sup>
2. We are in debt to the Father for our sins.
  - a. The certificate was our “rap sheet,” identifying our crimes—our debts—against the Sovereign.
3. According to Paul, our certificate of debt was nailed to Jesus’ cross (Col. 2:13-14):

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.<sup>5</sup>

4. In the darkness that shrouded Calvary from the sixth to the ninth hour, **a divine transaction took place**. Jesus made a trade with the Father.
  - a. Punishment adequate for the all crimes of all of humanity Jesus took upon Himself as if guilty of all.

<sup>4</sup> Archaeologists have unearthed ancient receipts stamped with the word “*tetelestai*” on their face.

<sup>5</sup> The Law wasn’t nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Rather, the decrees against us were (the violations).

- b. And just before He died, a single Greek word escaped His lips: “Tetelestai” (John 19:30).
- 1) “It is finished.”
    - a) “I have done it.”
    - b) “I have completed the task.”
    - c) **Jesus paid the debt completely.**
  - 2) Here is the trade, the “great exchange”:
    - a) Jesus takes our guilt.
    - b) We take His goodness.
    - c) That’s the trade.
    - d) It’s called the “substitutionary atonement.”
  - 3) Paul put it this way, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).
- c. Isaiah put it this way 700 years before (53:4-6):

Surely **our** griefs He Himself bore....He was pierced through for **our** transgressions. He was crushed for **our** iniquities. The chastening for **our** well-being fell upon Him, and by **His** scourging **we** are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way. But the Lord has caused the iniquity of **us all** to fall **on Him**.

The incarnation made this possible, by the way...

5. As man Jesus could die. But as God He could pay the price:

Let me illustrate...<sup>6</sup>

Harry Ironside used to tell about a young Russian soldier who, because his father was a friend of Czar Nicholas I, had been made paymaster in one of the barracks.

The young man meant well, but his character was not up to his responsibility. He took to gambling and eventually gambled away a great deal of the government’s money, as well as virtually all of his own.

In due course the young man received notice that a representative of the czar was coming to check accounts, and he knew he was in trouble.

That evening he got out the books and totaled up the funds he owed. Then he went to the safe and got out his own pitifully small amount of money. As he sat and looked at the two he was overwhelmed at the astronomical debt versus his own small change. He was ruined.

Since he knew he would be disgraced, the young soldier determined to take his life. He pulled out his revolver, placed it on the table before him, and wrote a summation of his misdeeds. At the bottom of the ledger where he had totaled up his illegal borrowings, he wrote: “A great debt! Who can pay?” He decided that at the stroke of midnight he would die.

As the evening wore on the young soldier eventually fell asleep. That night Czar Nicholas, as was sometimes his custom, made the rounds of the barracks. Seeing a

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<sup>6</sup>Adapted from an article by James Montgomery Boice.

light, he stopped, looked in, and saw the young man asleep. He recognized him immediately and, looking over his shoulder, saw the ledger and realized all that had taken place.

He was about to awaken him and put him under arrest when his eye fastened on the young man's message: "A great debt! Who can pay?"

Suddenly, with a surge of kindness, he reached over, wrote one word at the bottom of the ledger, and slipped out.

When the young man awoke, he glanced at the clock, saw it was long after midnight, and reached for his revolver to shoot himself. But his eye fell upon the ledger and he saw something he had not seen before. There beneath his writing: "A great debt! Who can pay?" was written one word, "Nicholas."

He was dumbfounded. It was the Czar's signature. He said to himself, "The czar must have come by when I was asleep. He has seen the book. He knows all. Still he is willing to forgive me."

The young soldier then rested on the word of the czar. The next morning a messenger came from the palace with exactly the amount needed to meet the deficit. Only the czar could pay, and the czar did pay.

We compare [God's law] with our own performance, and we say the same thing: "A great debt to God! Who can pay?" But then the Lord Jesus steps forward and signs His name to our ledger. Only Jesus can pay, and He does.

#### **D. This is why Jesus is the only way.**

1. He is the only one who solved the problem.
  - a. No other man did this. No other person could.
  - b. Jesus alone, the perfect Son of God, paid the debt for whoever trusts in Him so they would not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).
2. Without Him, you cannot be saved from your overwhelming guilt.
3. Without Him, every single one of us would have to pay for our own crimes...and that would take forever.

Now I want to return to something we talked about very early in this course. Do you remember those barriers....

#### **E. Through the cross, all the barriers come down...**

1. For those who trust in God's mercy, the work of the cross removes every barrier between man and God erected at the fall.
2. **First barrier:**
  - a. **God's holy character**—We are under God's wrath.
  - b. Jesus satisfied the wrath of God (**propitiation**).
    - 1) Acts 13:38 "Therefore let it be known to you that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed unto you...."
    - 2) Col 2:13 "And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions."
    - 3) 1 John 2:2 "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...."

### 3. Second barrier:

- a. **Debt of sin**—We owe God.
- b. Jesus paid our debt (**substitutionary atonement**).<sup>7</sup>

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Gal. 3:13).

### 4. Third barrier:

- a. **Slavery to Satan and to sin**—We are in total bondage.
- b. Jesus purchased us from slavery (**redemption**), setting us free from Satan and from sin.
  - 1) “...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).
  - 2) “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).
  - 3) Heb. 2:14-15:

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- 4) Paul says that those who have come to a knowledge of truth have “come to their senses and escape[d] from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26).
- 5) “If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed” (John 8:36).

### 5. Fourth barrier:

- a. **Spiritual death**—We are dead, unplugged from the life of God.
- b. In Jesus we are born again through the gift of the Holy Spirit (**spiritual regeneration**).
  - 1) “God...has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).
  - 2) “...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Eph. 2:5).

## F. The end result: Reconciliation

- 1. **We have peace with God:** “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”<sup>8</sup> (Rom 5:1).

<sup>7</sup> Since forgiveness of sins is tied to payment of a price, the notion of redemption also is an important factor in dealing with the second barrier, the debt of sin.

<sup>8</sup> The sense of peace here is not a feeling of peacefulness referred to in other texts, but the absence of enmity and conflict. Simply put, Paul is saying God is not mad at us anymore. Peace between us prevails. Because of Jesus, the Father is now on our side.

2. **We are God's children:** "...you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom. 8:15).
3. **We have an eternal inheritance:**

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance**, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you**, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:3-5)

Reconciliation with God is the doorway—the entry point—into the Kingdom, where we are all one family united not by Law, but by new life in the Spirit. The Kingdom of God is...

## VI. The Birth of a New Order—The Kingdom of God

### A. In God's Kingdom there is one family.

1. The church is now a community, a family in which all are equal in Christ (Gal. 3:28-29):

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

2. With the sacrifice of the cross, Jesus fulfilled the demands of the law, therefore **breaking down the dividing wall** and making it possible for both Jews and gentiles to partake of one blessing to all the nations (Eph. 2:11-22):

Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh....remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world.**<sup>9</sup>

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and **broke down the barrier of the dividing wall**, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might **make the two into one new man**, thus establishing peace, and

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<sup>9</sup> God is not a pluralist. All religions do not lead to God, according to Paul.

might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity...for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father [note the New Covenant emphasis on the Spirit here].

So then you [gentiles] are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together **into a dwelling of God in the Spirit** [New Covenant again].

I want you to notice something important here...

3. Though the church is currently **demographically** gentile, it is still **theologically** Jewish.
4. Gentiles have been "grafted in" to the root, the commonwealth of Israel (Rom. 11:17-18):

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches [the nation of Israel]. But if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

5. Note that there is a future for national Israel in God's Kingdom.
  - a. The message goes first to the Jews to whom the covenant was initially given, then to the gentiles who have been grafted in.
  - b. A partial hardening has come to the Jews (Rom. 11:25), but the time will come when they will look upon Him who they have pierced and will mourn for him and turn back to God (Zech. 12:10):

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

- c. "And so all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26)<sup>10</sup>

## **B. In God's Kingdom there is complete forgiveness, giving us full access to the Father.**

1. The requirements of the Law in God's court are completely met because of Jesus, and the merits of Christ are now applied to our account.
2. We live fully accepted by the Father based on the merits Jesus has earned on our behalf (Heb. 10:18-23):

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<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that every individual Jewish person will be saved, but rather that a time will come when Israel as a whole—generally speaking—will turn to her Messiah instead of generally rejecting her Messiah, as they do now.

Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way [the New Covenant, 16-17] which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

3. There is liberty from being judged by any standard of works, either Law (MC) or law (John 3:18a).
4. But there is not a hint of license, because transcendent moral obligations apply to all men as proper conduct, right living, appropriate obedience to our Sovereign (Titus 2:11-12).

### C. In God's Kingdom there is power over sin.

#### 1. The Law is "written" on our hearts.

- a. The New Covenant promised the law would be written on our hearts, that our hearts would be "circumcised."
  - 1) This does not mean we get new moral information. As human beings, our conscience bears witness to the moral code already "written" on our hearts (Rom. 2:14-15).
  - 2) It means our inner man has been transformed so we are guided not by the *external* restraint of law but by the *internal* motivation of the Spirit.
- b. Under the New Covenant, the law—an external force meant to control behavior—is not needed. The righteous person's moral impulse to be virtuous comes from within by the Spirit, rather than being forced upon him from the outside.
  - 1) Righteous people don't need the law to keep them in line (1 Tim. 1:8-11):

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

- 2) This does not mean God's universal moral requirements don't apply to us.
- 3) Rather, the indwelling Spirit gives us the *desire* and the *power* to do what is right, something the Law could never do (Rom. 8:3-4):

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for

sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

c. We have a heart of flesh, now—a circumcised heart—rather than a heart of stone.

- 1) Since the law is written on our hearts, our character is being transformed by the work of the Spirit.
- 2) New Covenant Christians do not live under the impotence of Law, but in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 7:6):

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

d. The moral code as a constraining force fades into the background as we progressively become conformed to the image of Christ.

In other words, we are...

## 2. We are “led by the Spirit.”

a. This is one of the most misunderstood and misused phrases in the New Testament.

- 1) It is only used twice (Rom. 8 and Gal. 5), both times by Paul, and in both places he means exactly the same thing.
- 2) Paul does not mean what most Christians mean when they use the phrase.
  - a) He does not use the phrase “led by the Spirit” to describe individual “promptings” or “nudges” from God that are hints we must decipher to discern His will.
  - b) This meaning is completely foreign to Paul’s flow of thought in these passages and is not found in any of his writings.

Paul means something else...

### b. Romans 8:14

- 1) Paul begins Romans 8 by explaining how the law of the Spirit of life in Christ sets us free from the law of sin and of death (8:2).
  - a) What the Law couldn’t do (bring life) God did by...
    1. Sending His Son to die for us
    2. Then giving His Spirit so we can walk in life and peace (3-8)
  - b) Every true Christian has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him (9-11).
- 2) Then, in verses 12-14, Paul writes this:

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die. But if by the Spirit you are *putting to death the deeds of the*

*body*, you will live. For all who are *being led by the Spirit of God*, these are sons of God.

3) Notice the obvious parallel between “putting to death the deeds of the body” and “being led by the Spirit.”

4) According to Paul, the Spirit “leads” us away from the bondage of the flesh into the freedom and peace of a life of godliness—what Paul calls “putting to death the deeds of the body.”<sup>11</sup>

### c. Galatians 5:18

1) In Gal. 5, Paul argues that Christ sets us free from slavery to Law and gives us the promised Holy Spirit (note 3:14) who provides real hope of righteousness.

2) A battle rages, however, between the flesh and the Spirit (17). How do we win this battle?

3) Paul’s answer: “*Walk by the Spirit*, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (16) and, “If you are *led by the Spirit*, you are not under the Law” (18).

a) Once again, the two statements in parallel mean the same thing.

b) *Walking* by the spirit, being *led* by the Spirit (and *living* by the Spirit, later in verse 24) mean...

1. Overcoming the gruesome deeds of the flesh (19-21) and...

2. Producing the fruits of the Spirit (22-23)

4) This is why those who are led by the Spirit in Paul’s sense are “not under the Law” (18). They are already fulfilling the Law by their righteous conduct.

d. Both of these passages teach the same thing about being “led by the Spirit.” According to Paul...

1) Being led by the Spirit does not mean getting nudges or promptings from God. Rather...

2) Being led by the Spirit means overcoming sin by the power of the Spirit in the New Covenant Kingdom of God.

## VII. “Thy Kingdom Come”

### A. In Jesus, the messiah/king, all the covenant provisions have been fulfilled.

1. Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic Covenant by:

a. Living a life of perfect obedience, and...

b. Offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice.

2. Jesus fulfilled the New Covenant by:

a. Providing for complete forgiveness of sin

b. Giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit

c. Giving us a new heart, and...

d. Promising to come again to restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6-7, 11)

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<sup>11</sup> Jesus promises this same freedom in John 8:31-36.

3. Jesus fulfilled the Abrahamic Covenant by giving Himself so all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

**B. In the church, the Body of Christ, God is working through Jesus' "Great Commission" to extend His Kingdom.**

1. Jesus has commissioned the church (us) to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20):

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

2. God's active rulership (kingdom) is in the process of being established in four phases.<sup>12</sup>

- a. God's reign came into the world in the person of Jesus (Matt. 12:28).
- b. By repenting of personal sin and believing in Jesus Christ, men and women are redeemed from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and they come under the reign of God's kingdom (John 3:1-21).
- c. The kingdom of God is destroying the kingdom of Satan (1 John 3:8).
- d. At the return of Christ, when He ushers in the fullness of the kingdom of God, Satan will be destroyed (Matt. 13:36-43).

3. Ultimately, full political restoration of Israel and the submission of all nations to Christ will happen at the second coming.

4. And Jesus will not return until we do our job:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (Matt. 24:14)

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<sup>12</sup> John Wimber, *Power Healing*, 100-101.

## **What We Learned:**

### **Main Points**

- God became a man in Jesus for very specific reasons:
  - God became man to identify with us.
  - God became man to reveal the Father.
  - God became man to fulfill the promise to Abraham.
  - God became man to usher in the New Covenant.
- Jesus' public ministry was divided into three phases:
  - Two years of public favor where He presented Himself as Messiah, announced the coming of the Kingdom, and performed works of power to establish his Messianic authority
  - One and a half years of private ministry training His disciples, clarifying the Kingdom, and preparing them for His departure
  - Jesus' Passion (one third of the Gospel narrative)
- Jesus' suffering on the cross accomplished two broad things:
  - It provided a perfect sacrifice to bring an end to the Mosaic Covenant.
  - It initiated the New Covenant promise of complete forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- On the cross Jesus accomplished the "Great Exchange," taking our guilt and the punishment we deserved so that we could take His righteousness.
- Through the cross, all the barriers to reconciliation with God have come down:
  - Jesus satisfied the wrath of God (propitiation)
  - Jesus paid our debt of sin (substitutionary atonement)
  - Jesus purchased us from slavery (redemption)
  - Jesus caused us to be born again in the Spirit (regeneration)
- Now in the Kingdom of God...
  - Jews and gentiles are one family, the gentiles having been "grafted in" to the promise of the New Covenant given to the commonwealth of Israel.
  - There is complete forgiveness of sin and full access to the Father.
  - There is power over sin because the Law has been "written" on our hearts and we are "led by the Spirit" to overcome sin and bear the fruits of the Spirit.
- In Jesus, the messiah/king, all the provisions of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New Covenants have been fulfilled.
- In the church, the Body of Christ, God is working through the Great Commission to extend His Kingdom.

**For Reflection and Discussion:**

- What five things did God accomplish by becoming a man?
- What were the three distinct phases of Jesus' ministry?
- What specific ways did Jesus exercise Messianic authority?
- What was the emphasis of Jesus' private ministry with His disciples?
- In what way did Jesus' sacrifice fulfill both the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant?
- What is the "Great Exchange"?
- Explain the significance of the Certificate of Debt.
- Why is Jesus the only way?
- Describe specifically how the work of the cross removes all four barriers to reconciliation with God.
- What did Paul mean when he said Christ "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" between Jew and gentile?
- Explain what it means when we say the church is currently demographically gentile, but theologically Jewish. In what sense are gentiles "grafted in"?
- What place does national Israel have in the future Kingdom? Cite references for your answer.
- What does it mean when we say the Law has been "written" on our hearts?
- What does Paul mean when he says Christians are "led by the Spirit"?
- How is Jesus' the perfect fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant?
- What is the current status of the fulfillment of the New Covenant?

