

WALKING THROUGH THE HALL OF FAME: KNOWING THE BIBLE ~ OLD TESTAMENT

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CHAPTER 1: THE IMPORTANCE AND MESSAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE IMPORTANCE AND MESSAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. The Importance

In practical usage to many Christians today, the Old Testament seems to have a “second-class citizenship” in the Bible compared to its newer counterpart. In a lot of ways the Old Testament is virtually left out of many people’s devotional lives or even teaching and preaching in our churches. One can see this evidence in these kinds of phenomena:

- "Pocket New Testaments" or New Testaments used as pew Bibles including (if you are lucky) the Psalms and maybe Proverbs.
- The noticeable "white strip" on the edges of two-thirds of the Bible, which reveal which section has been read and which has remained.
- The fact that some preachers never preach from the Old Testament.
- The way people say "Old" Testament, as if to mean that it is no longer relevant.
- The looks of bewilderment on people’s faces, followed by the frantic thumbing through the table of contents of the Bible, when the teacher announces “Haggai” as the text for the day.

God has given us **one** Bible, in **two** testaments, and this is the Word of God to us. God has given us the Bible in its entirety, and neither testament is to be considered as **all** of Scripture, and neither testament is to be considered as less than the other. That means that the Old Testament is the “inspired and authoritative Word of God” to the same extent that the New Testament is. Each testament is incomplete within itself: if the OT was all that we had, we would have the beginning of a story without its ending; if the NT was all that we had, we would have the last chapter of the story without knowing how we got there. The two parts make up one complete whole, and they are united by their history, and they are united by the same God who wrote them both and revealed Himself in both.

1. Jesus Himself accepted the OT as the authoritative Word of God.

- The only Scripture that Jesus knew was the Old Testament, and the only God He knew was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and it was this same God that He called "Father."
- *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them."* (Matt 5:17, NIV)
- *"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."* (Luke 24:44)
- Jesus looked to the OT to answer questions about God, what it means to fear God, what true life is all about, and how one should treat his brother.

- He found comfort, strength, and defense against Satan himself in the OT Scriptures
- From the Scriptures that saw His role as the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, the Prophet, the Priest, and the King.

2. The NT writers and apostles accepted the OT as the authoritative Word of God.

- Paul, *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."* (2 Tim 3:16).
- Peter, *"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Pet 1:20-21).
- Other examples: "This is what the Lord has commanded us," (Acts 13:47);
 - *"You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David,"* (Acts 4:25).
 - *"The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet,"* (Acts 28:25).
 - *"As God said to Moses,"* (Rom 9:15).
 - *"As God says in Hosea,"* (Rom 9:25).

3. The OT itself gives that testimony.

- "The word of the Lord came to [Jeremiah]," (Jer 1:2); "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea," (Hos 1:1); "The word of the Lord that came to Joel," (Joel 1:1); "The word of the Lord came to Jonah," (Jon 1:1); "Then the Lord said to Moses," (Exod 6:1); and dozens of other biblical characters.
- This shows that what was happening was a Divine/human encounter in which God revealed Himself through the medium of words to his prophets, who in turn could speak with the authority of "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel."

4. We need the OT to understand the NT correctly.

- The New Testament is an incomplete book without the Old, and without the OT much of the NT would not make sense.
 - When Jesus referred to the "new covenant," how would one know what He meant if it were not for Jeremiah 31?
 - How would we know what "redemption" meant, or "Messiah," or even "the Law and the Prophets"?
 - The OT gives the New Testament its historical background and its context to interpret the NT.
 - One must know Leviticus to understand Hebrews; or know Genesis and Exodus to understand about Abraham and Moses; or know Israelite history to understand the significance of David.
- There is much that is contained in the OT not found in the NT

- The Ten Commandments, Psalms, prophetic messages, Israelite history, and God's mighty acts toward His people down through the ages.
- It is impossible adequately to understand the NT or even to keep true to the NT faith if the OT is discarded. "The Old Testament holds the gospel to history."¹

5. It has the same basic message and theological themes as the NT.

- For example, the *presence of God*. From the beginning of the Bible, "In the beginning God . . ." (Gen 1:1) to the very end "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen." (Rev 22:21), God's presence is known. God says time and again to His people, "I will be with you," "Do not be afraid of them for I am with you," and on the first page of the New Testament the "Immanuel" is born, which means "God is with us." Jesus said that He would never leave us or forsake us, and His parting words were, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."
 - God is creator, He is gracious, loving, forgiving, righteous, just, and holy.
 - God seeks out the sinner, and His greatest desire is to draw sinful humanity into a relationship with Him.
- Humanity is created by God, made in His image, unique from the rest of creation, and gifted with unlimited potential.
 - Humanity has fallen by its own personal rebellion against God and is unable to save itself, but relies totally upon God's grace.
 - Humanity's only hope for genuine and fulfilling life only comes when one is rightly related to God.
- One does not find systematic treatises of theology in the OT (such as the book of Romans) in the OT, but theology is found in historical narrative, in prophetic speech, in poetry, proverbial sayings, or in codified Law.
 - Even though the genres may be different, the New Testament and the Old Testament are united in their basic theological message.

6. God continues to speak through it.

- The Spirit who reveals all truth speaks to individuals and congregations regularly through the pages of the OT as well as the NT.
- He brings comfort in the midst of sorrow, conviction in the midst of sin, forgiveness when people repent, direction in when people are bewildered, and challenge when they are complacent. He increases, strengthens faith, diminishes pride, and renews courage.
- Basically, whatever God's Word is supposed to do, it can do (and does) through the message and the story of the OT.

¹John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 76-78.

B. The Message

1. Revelation.

God made people for the purpose of fellowship, and to maintain this fellowship, God revealed His will to people. After humans sinned, God continued to reveal Himself in order to draw people back into fellowship with Himself.²

What we find in the Bible are the actions of God (e.g. creation, flood, exodus, judgments, etc.) accompanied by a **prophetic interpretation**, or "word of revelation" to explain the significance of what happened, the meaning of the events. Otherwise, no one would have understood that God was at work instead of the event being a mere circumstance of history.

When God reveals Himself or His will, this revelation is intended to produce an effect upon its recipients. God seeks some sort of response. He does not reveal His will to you for you to decide whether or not to obey it! He wants people to respond to his revelation. So in essence, the entire Bible is a sermon for us to obey. The response that God seeks is **faith** and **obedience**.

- Abram believed God and left his home country (Gen. 12:4).
- Moses believed God and went to tell Pharaoh to let his people go (Exod. 7:6).
- Noah believed that God would flood the earth and built an ark (Gen. 6:22).

God has been working throughout history to bring sinful people back to himself. So God's revelation is not to make people smarter, but to draw people into relationship with himself.

- Paul described this function of Scripture to Timothy, *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known **the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**"* (2 Tim 3:14-15)

From the beginning of history until today, salvation, a right relationship with God has *always* been conditioned upon the exact same things:

1. God's **grace** extended towards sinful people.
2. People responding in **faith**, or belief.
3. That relationship marked by **obedience** to God.
 - *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not of from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Eph 2:8-10)

²William S. LaSor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederic W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 8.

- Or as the hymnwriter put it, *"Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."*

One's works never saved anyone. No one was ever saved by following the Law. Obedience to the God's Law was to be a **result** of the relationship that a person already had with God. It was an outward act of an inward response to God. Salvation has always been completely by God's grace. Good works are completely of one's gratitude.

2. Progressive Revelation.

God did not reveal all of Himself or His purpose at any one time. He made a "sequence of revelations" which built onto earlier ones. The revelation becomes more clear as it nears completion. Earlier revelation is correct (as far as it went).

- e.g. mature vs. immature; rosebud vs. full flower; baby vs. full-grown adult
- **Illustration.** "Lamb"
 - Genesis 22 - Abraham saw that God would provide a lamb for the sacrifice.
 - Exodus 12 (Passover) - The lamb sacrificed must be spotless and unblemished to save God's people from death.
 - Lev. 16 (Day of Atonement) - The lamb sacrificed was for the forgiveness of sins.
 - Isaiah 53 (Suffering Servant) - The lamb that God would provide was not an actual animal, but it was a person!
 - John 1 - John the Baptist showed us that the lamb that God sent was not just any person, it was God's Son that would die for our sins!
 - Revelation 5 - The lamb who would be humiliated and slaughtered for our sins is now risen, exalted, and is worthy to receive all power and wealth, wisdom and strength, honour and glory and blessing, for ever and ever!

The writer of Hebrews states,

- *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, **but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.**"* (Heb. 1:1-3a)

God's fullest and most complete revelation of Himself came with Jesus. The nearer the revelation comes to its completion, the clearer it becomes. Therefore, the Old Testament is better understood when seen in light of the person of Jesus Christ. The Baptist Faith and Message (1963) states, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." It is best to take both testaments together to see the full significance of a passage of Scripture.

C. The Structure of the Old Testament

The Old Testament was originally written in the languages of Hebrew and Aramaic., over a time span of at least 1000 years. Jews (for certain obvious reasons) prefer the term “**Hebrew Bible**” over “**Old Testament.**” For the most part these terms refer to the same thing and are used interchangeably, with the main difference being in the order and classification of the OT books. The Roman Catholic Bible includes certain “apocryphal” or “deuterocanonical” books in the OT, but these are not received as being inspired and authoritative Scripture by either Jews or Protestant Christians.

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three main sections: the **Law** (*Torah*), the **Prophets** (*Nevi'im*), and the **Writings** (*Ketuvim*). The Jewish community has taken the first letters from each of the sections (T, N, K), and has combined them, calling their entire Hebrew Bible the **Tanak**.

1. **Law** (*Torah*)
 - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
2. **Prophets** (*Nevi'im*)
 - Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings
 - Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
 - The Twelve: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
3. **Writings** (*Ketuvim*)
 - Psalms, Proverbs, Job
 - The Five Scrolls: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther
 - Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles

D. Synopsis of Each Old Testament Book

Genesis — Beginnings, Stories of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

Exodus — Exodus from Egypt, Covenant at Sinai, Establishment of Worship System.

Leviticus — Sacrificial system, laws concerning holiness.

Numbers — Wilderness wanderings.

Deuteronomy — Second giving of the Law on Plains of Moab.

Joshua — Conquest and Settlement of Promised Land.

Judges — Repeated cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and deliverance in Canaan.

Ruth — Bright spot during period of Judges, story of David’s great-grandmother.

1 & 2 Samuel — Transition from judges to kingship; reigns of Saul and David.

1 & 2 Kings — Solomon’s reign; Divided Kingdom; End of N. Kingdom; Fall of Jerusalem.

1 & 2 Chronicles — Retelling of Israel’s history.

Ezra-Nehemiah — Re-establishment of nation and worship after the Exile.

Esther — Story of God’s preservation of the Jews during Persian period.

Job — Story of a righteous man suffering; testing the character of one’s relationship with God.

Psalms — Worship book of the Israelites; prayers of praise and lament.

Proverbs — Collected proverbs giving advice for godly living.

Ecclesiastes — One man’s struggle for finding meaning in life.

Song of Songs — Collection of love poems, displaying the beauty of love between a man and woman.

Isaiah — 8th century prophet pronouncing judgment on sinful Judah, prophecies of a future messianic king; hope for those having suffered the exile, and the Servant of the Lord.

Jeremiah — 7th century prophet prophesying the upcoming Babylonian exile, hope for return after the exile, and the new covenant.

Lamentations — Song of lament over the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel — Exilic prophet pronouncing judgment on sinful Judah, and hope for return and re-establishment of Israel.

Daniel — Exilic wiseman and his friends; exhibiting faithfulness through suffering and visions for the future.

Hosea — 8th century prophet with an adulterous wife; displays Israel’s unfaithfulness to God.

Joel — Later prophet describing the Day of the Lord.

Amos — 8th century prophet announcing judgment on the Northern Kingdom.

Obadiah — 7th century prophet announcing judgment on Edom.

Jonah — Story about an 8th century prophet who unwillingly preaches to wicked Nineveh, displaying God’s love for sinners.

Micah — 8th century prophet pronouncing judgment and hope for Judah; prophecies of a future righteous King.

Nahum — 7th century prophet announcing judgment on wicked Nineveh.

Habakkuk — 7th century prophet struggling with the problem of evil.

Zephaniah — 7th century prophet describing the Day of the Lord.

Haggai — Post-exilic prophet encouraging the people to faithfulness to God by rebuilding His temple.

Zechariah — Post-exilic prophet encouraging the people to morality; visions of God's sovereignty.

Malachi — Post-exilic prophet encouraging the people to faithfulness and righteous living.

CHAPTER 2:

**CREATION
AND FALL:**

**HOW IT WAS,
AND HOW IT IS**

CREATION AND FALL: HOW IT WAS, AND HOW IT IS

The purpose of the book of Genesis is to teach people the very basics of their faith. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the people knew very little about who they were, who their God was, and what their purpose as a people was. In the kindergarten of their existence God taught them what they needed to know by telling them the stories of their beginnings. Creation, God, salvation, family, mission, humanity, hope - each of these major doctrines has its beginnings in Genesis.

The cultures surrounding Israel were polytheistic, they worshiped many gods. Each god had a sphere of influence, and each deserved certain types of worship at special times (e.g. fertility gods for the harvest, war gods for battle). Israel had to learn the uniqueness of her God from all the other gods. She needed to learn of her Creator God, who created a good world and whose promises could be believed.

The pagan gods could be manipulated by magic, but Israel had to learn the difference between magic and faith. Magic was an attempt to manipulate a god for human purposes, but faith is submissive, trusting God to know and do what is best. Faith expresses needs and desires to God but recognizes that God is sovereign in how He responds.

Genesis was written to show how different the true God is. God's faithfulness could not be tested by one battle or one political event. Instead, God's faithfulness is shown in the promises He made and how He fulfilled them through the long course of history. The one and only God created the whole world and is, thus, Ruler of all peoples and nations.³

A. The Creation.

We seem to have two different accounts of the creation given in Genesis (Gen. 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-25), in much the same way that we have four different accounts of the life of Christ in the Gospels. Comparing these two accounts is quite revealing.

Answer the following questions based upon your assigned passage:

First Creation Account - Gen. 1:1-2:3

Second Creation Account - Gen. 2:4-25

1. What is the deity's name, and what kind of being is he?

³Dan G. Kent, "Genesis: Introduction" in *New International Version: Disciple's Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman, 1988), 1-2.

2. **By what method did God create?**
3. **What is God's relationship with humanity (i.e. how personal, etc.)?**
4. **How did humanity fit into the entire creation picture? (What is humanity's place in creation?)**
5. **What is the Lord's purpose for humanity? (Why was man created?)**
6. **Which were created first, animals or people? When was the female created in relation to the male?**

First Creation Account. (Gen. 1:1-2:3)

- Built upon a "*form and fullness*" motif (1:2, "*Now the earth was formless and empty . . .*").

<p>First God gave a form, then filled up that form</p> <p>"Form"</p> <p>1st Day - light</p> <p>2nd Day - Sky, water</p> <p>3rd Day - Land</p>	<p>"Fullness"</p> <p>4th Day - Sun, moon, stars</p> <p>5th Day - Birds, fish, sea creatures</p> <p>6th Day - Animals, plants, man</p>
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- "God" is mentioned 32 times in the account, so it is more of a statement about the God of creation than of creation itself.
- God "created" (*bara'*) three things: matter (1:1), life (1:21), and mankind (1:27), but everything else He "made" (*asâ*).
- Mankind is the pinnacle of God's creation, His crowning achievement (i.e. the top of a pyramid).
 - The man and woman were not created separately, so they hold the same place in creation.

Second Creation Account. (Gen. 2:4-25)

- God is more personally involved with His creation, getting His hands dirty in the process.
 - God "forms" (*yatsar*) man like a potter (2:7).
 - He plants like a gardener (2:8).
 - He operates like a surgeon (2:21).
- Mankind is the centre of creation (i.e. the centre of a circle), a more personal account.

The two accounts do not contradict each other; they are complementary to each other. They are each written and structured specifically to make a theological point.

Application:

What does this passage have to say about **atheism**?

- **New Age** - everything is God and everybody is God?
- **Materialism** - only things important are the things that are seen?
- **Spiritualism** - all matter is evil?
- **Atheistic evolution** - humans and nature evolved by chance?
- **Humanism** - the value of humans, and that people are lords of their own destiny?
- **Astrology**?
- **Ecology**?
- People's responsibility of **stewardship**?
- **Marriage and human relationships**?

B. The Fall. (Gen 3:1-24)

People had the minimal test and failed miserably. They sinned of their own personal choice. The people were not satisfied to have control of *most* of the garden, they had to have *all* of it. The description of that first sin is so profound, "*she took some and ate it*" (3:6). Derek Kidner makes an astute observation of this point: "*She took . . . and ate: so simple the act, so hard its undoing. God will taste poverty and death before 'take and eat' become verbs of salvation.*"⁴

The Results of Sin:

1. The Relationship with God is broken. (3:8-10)

- Before, humans and God had unending fellowship with each other. They walked together and talked together.
- But now people were afraid of God, and "they hid from the Lord God among the trees."
- They were created for fellowship with God, but because of their sin are now cut off from their purpose in life

2. Relationships with other people are broken.

- **Shame** (v.7) -- Now they have something to hide from each other, and can no longer be totally honest and open
- **Blame** (vv. 11-13) — Adam blamed Eve (and God). Eve blamed the serpent. The joy Adam first experienced with his new companion (2:23) was now resentment, and ever since people have tried to excuse themselves for their own sin. The first part of repentance is confession, or acknowledgement of one's own sin.
- **Inequality** (vv. 16, 20) God had made man and woman equal (in God's eyes they still are!). The woman was not cursed (v. 16), but what is given is a

⁴Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 68.

"description" of her situation from now on, not a "prescription" of how God wants it to be. Ever since Eden, man has dominated over woman and has made her "2nd class." But Christ has come to correct that sin, "There is neither . . . male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

3. The Relationship with Nature is broken. (3:17-19)

- The ground is cursed (vv. 17-18), and the work mankind was created to do (2:15) is now turned to toil and struggle. It now becomes a drudgery and frustration, because something has gone wrong with all of creation.
- There is now hatred between humans and animals (3:15), and this hatred could be remedied only through the peace that God could bring.
 - *“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. **The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest.** They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be fill of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”* (Isa 11:6-9)
- The people must leave Eden (vv. 22-24). Humans are alienated from their true home, and no amount of sorrow, seeking, or effort could restore the loss.

The original harmonious relationships between God, humanity, and nature were tragically broken because of the willful act of sin by the first people. In a very real way, their story is our story. The hope of Scripture is that still desires to have fellowship with His people, He still desires for people to live in harmonious community with each other, and that his people once more gain a blissful existence in their rightful home.

The rest of the story of Scripture (Old Testament and New Testament) is God’s endeavor to bring people back into that garden. We don’t see the Garden of Eden again until the book of the Revelation (Rev 21:1-5; 22:1-4), a picture of the future, when salvation will finally be made complete. In that blissful existence, humanity once more has a heavenly father, and loving family, and an eternal home.

CHAPTER 3:
THE COVENANT
WITH NOAH:
THE WORLD
IN VIEW

CHAPTER 3

THE COVENANT WITH NOAH: THE WORLD IN VIEW

A. The Concept of Covenant.

There are few concepts in the entire Bible pertaining to salvation from sin as the idea of **covenant**. The Hebrew term “covenant” (*berith*) comes from the realm of human relationships, for it was a solemn promise or oath which bound two parties together in a relationship. People could enter into covenant relationships with each other (e.g. Gen 21:27), a king could pledge a covenant with his subjects (e.g. 2 Kings 23:3), or a stronger person could impose a covenant upon a weaker person (e.g. 1 Kings 20:34). In any regard, any covenant carried the idea of seriousness, for whether promised or imposed, a covenant was a **solemn agreement**.

This idea of covenant was applied to the relationship between God and His people. At times God “promised” a covenant in which He promised to fulfill the covenant regardless of the actions of humans. The fulfillment of these would rest upon God’s own character (e.g. Gen 15:17-21). This kind of covenant is commonly called and **unconditional covenant**.

At other times, this covenant agreement was entered into by both God and the people. The people were obligated to obey the terms of the covenant, otherwise the covenant would be broken (e.g. Ex. 19:1-6). This kind of covenant is commonly called a **conditional covenant**.

There are **five main covenants** found in the OT in which God entered into relationship with humans. These covenants are interlinked with each other, and they represent how God seeks to redeem the relationships broken in the Fall in Genesis 3. Together they sum up the story of salvation in the Old Testament. *THOSE FIVE COVENANTS ARE:*

1. The Covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:8-17)
2. The Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-27)
3. The Covenant at Sinai (Exodus 19-24)
4. The Covenant with David (2 Samuel 7)
5. The New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34).

B. The Covenant with Noah.

1. God takes **sin** extremely seriously.

- The story of the Flood (Genesis 6-9) is a picture of how serious God is about sin. In a way, it is the supreme example of God’s judgment on human sin, for God was willing to destroy all of sinful humanity as well as the entire earth by a flood (6:13).

- God was “grieved” that He had to send judgment (6:6), but there was no other way to deal with the sin of humanity but to judge it.

2. God continues to love sinful people.

- Human nature had not changed after the flood, for the same thing is said of humans after the deluge as before it, “every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood” (8:21; cf. 6:5). God had resolved that people were hopeless on their own. He also resolved that He would stay with, endure, and sustain His world, regardless of the rebellion of humanity (8:21-22).
- God’s grace is always a factor with sinful people (6:6).

3. God is in the business of re-creating brokenness.

- In the flood God completely “un-created” creation, then “re-created” it afterwards. The humans and animals were placed on the earth once more, and given the same commands as in the beginning (8:15-18; cf. 1:22-28).
- God is always interested in salvation, restoration, and renewal.
- He is a God who “blesses” others (9:1).

4. God’s ultimate purpose is the salvation of all of creation.

- All of humanity and all living creatures stand before God in a covenant relationship that remains eternally valid (9:8-11). God committed Himself to all humanity and the world, displaying His covenant goodness, loyalty, and patience with creation.
- The story of salvation, even though later on it may be directed towards a more specific audience (e.g. Abraham), the covenant with Noah is a constant reminder that the entire world is always in view.

CHAPTER 4:
THE COVENANT
WITH
ABRAHAM:
STARTING WITH
ONE MAN

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM: STARTING WITH ONE MAN

A. The Call of Abraham. (Gen. 12:1-3)

The call of Abraham is the result of *God's elective grace*. There is no greater honour than to be chosen for the purpose of God. God is always the initiator in a call. A person's response to His call always determines whether or not that person's life counts in God's work. But **the privilege of election always is accompanied by the responsibility of service**. God does not choose people to make them comfortable. God chooses people in order that they may serve Him in His purposes.

1. God's call always involves an element of sacrifice. (v.1)

- Abraham had to leave his country.
- Leave his people.
- Leave his relatives.

2. God's call involves an element of the unknown. (v.1)

- ". . . and go to a land I will show you."
- Giving up the known for the unknown is always a part of the sacrifice.
- One is giving up security and replacing it with faith.

3. God's call carries a promise. (vv. 2-3)

- *A great nation.*
 - Great in number, purpose, and accomplishment.
- *God's blessing would be upon him.*
 - God would be on his side, assuring success.
 - This does not promise a freedom from trouble.
- *God would make Abraham's name great.*
 - A person's name was a statement of their character, so God would build Abraham's character to match his calling. Whatever Abraham accomplished would not be the achievement of Abraham but would be the achievement of God through Abraham. God, not Abraham, always remains the hero.
 - The people of Babel tried to acquire a "great name" independently and arbitrarily, but God would freely grant Abram a "great name."
- *God would bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him.*
 - Opposition to the people of God means opposition to God Himself.

4. God's call always involves a commission.

- “Go, be a blessing.” Election is never an end in itself, but is God's means to the end of blessing the entire world. No one can be a Christian without being on mission, for that is the reason one is a Christian.

5. God's call always involves conditions.

- Election must be responded to by *faith and obedience*.
- (v. 4) "So Abram left, as the Lord told him . . ."
- The only thing that hinders God in His plan of salvation for this lost and dying world is the lack of faith and the disobedience of His own people.

B. The Covenant with Abraham. (Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-27)

With the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 the story of salvation history has truly begun. The covenant with Abraham seals God's commitment to work through this individual to bring blessing to the entire world. From Abraham God would make a great nation through which God would bless others.

God's covenant with Abraham is ultimately God's covenant with Himself. God places Himself symbolically under a curse in order to affirm to Abraham the certainty of His promises.

THE COVENANT INVOLVED THREE MAIN ASPECTS:

1. The Promise of a relationship with God. (15:1-2, 18)

- There would be a personal relationship between he and God, a relationship which was entered into by faith.
 - *"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."*
(v.6)
- No covenant was ever automatic, for it always had to be received by faith.
- Later this relationship was achieved by the work of Christ which we accept by faith.

2. The Promise of a people. (15:4-5)

- This took an act of faith on the part of Abraham that God would give him a son and descendants.
- This is the aspect of community present here, a relationship with people.
- Later this relationship is achieved in the community of faith, the Church.

3. The Promise of a land. (15:7, 12-16, 18-21)

- The land was the means of bringing the truth to the end of the world.
- The main point was not geography, for the land was merely a provision to keep them going so they could fulfil His purposes for them.
- This was a concrete expression of a restored relationship with nature.

- Later this relationship will be achieved in "*the new heaven and the new earth.*"

This covenant ultimately was between God and Himself, for He promised it unconditionally to Abraham. God made a commitment with Himself to achieve His promise, and this brings ultimate security to salvation.

The same covenant promised to Abraham was also promised to the patriarchs after him (e.g. Isaac and Jacob). The rest of the book of Genesis is composed of three story cycles, centering upon three of the patriarchs:

- Abraham (11:27-25:18)
- Jacob (25:19-37:1)
- Joseph (37:2-50:26)

CHAPTER 5:
THE COVENANT
AT SINAI:
THE BEGINNING
OF A
NATION

THE COVENANT AT SINAI: THE BEGINNING OF A NATION

The book of Exodus centres upon two major events:

- (1) the deliverance from Egypt (chapters 1-18), and
- (2) the covenant at Sinai (chapters 19-40).

Just as the rest of the NT is a reflection back upon the crucifixion/resurrection of Christ as the high point of redemption history, the rest of the OT reflects back upon the Exodus/Covenant experience as the high point of salvation history.

- The people were redeemed from slavery.
- They were established as the people of God.
- They were given God's Law.
- Received implications for godly living.

A. The Covenant at Sinai. (Exodus 19- 24; 31-34)

According to Exod. 19:1, the Israelites arrived at Sinai about three months after they had left the slavery of Egypt. They stayed at Sinai almost a year. During the stay at Sinai God appeared to the people as He had to Moses earlier, He established His covenant with Israel, and He gave them His Law to guide the people

IN THE COVENANT-MAKING PROCESS AT SINAI;

1. God revealed what He had done for the people. (19:4; 20:1-2)

- Reminded them of their salvation accomplished by God.
 - God's Law is never given except where couched in the context of God's grace.
- Reminded them of the personal relationship with the people "brought you to myself" (19:4)
- The ultimate goal of the Exodus experience was to enter into a personal relationship with God.

2. God revealed His ultimate purpose for the people. (19:5-6)

- (1) Israel was to be Yahweh's "*treasured possession.*" (v. 5)
 - A special place in God's plan.
 - The "pilot project" in God's plan to redeem all nations.
- (2) Israel was to be "*a kingdom of priests.*" (v. 6)
 - Direct access to God.
 - Ministry to others.

(3) Israel was to be "*a holy nation*". (v. 6)

- Their mission is ultimately rooted and grounded in character.
- Holy — "set apart" for God's service.
- Exemplifying God's moral character.

3. God revealed His expectations of the people. (19:5; 20:3-17)

- Israel was obligated to God's holiness.
- One cannot be in a relationship with a holy God and not be accountable to His holiness.
- Israel's obligation - "*Now if you obey me fully, . . .*" (19:5)
 - The covenant at Sinai is conditioned upon the obedience of God's people — a **conditional covenant**.
 - For Israel to enter the covenant, it had to be of her own choice.
 - If she chose to enter the covenant with God, it had to be on *God's terms*.

The "Law" God gave was a gift of His grace. *Torah* (Law) literally means "to throw," "to cast," "to shoot." It was given "to point out," "to show the way," "to instruct" Israel how to live as the people of God. The Ten Commandments (20:3-17) were regarded as so foundational to the Israelites that obedience to them was not optional. True members of the covenant community were those who did not do the things forbidden in the Decalogue (Ten Commandments). The rest of the 613 laws in the Pentateuch were an application of the Ten Commandments to all of life: in the home, the courts, the marketplace, and the Temple.

B. The Tabernacle. (Exodus 25-40)

While at Sinai, God also gave Israel the instructions for building the Tabernacle. To understand the significance of the Tabernacle, one needs to remember its historical and biblical context. In the garden of Eden there was no need to meet God at a specific location -- constant fellowship. After the Fall, people could come before God, but only at specifically designated locations. Now that Israel was a nation, God commanded Moses to build a tabernacle so that he might be approached in worship.

The tabernacle had the form of a nomad's tent -- easily constructed, easily dismantled, easy to move. It served as an earthly dwelling place for God. and the place to go in order to meet with Him.

The Tabernacle's (1) location, (2) architectural design, (3) building materials, (4) and accessibility all highlight the fact that **a holy God dwelt in the midst of the Israelite people.**

1. *Location* -- in the middle of the camp.

- the centre of the camp, in ancient near eastern tradition was the location of the king's tent.
- each tribe had its location surrounding it.

2. *Architectural design* -- divided into different parts; different gradations of holiness
 - Courtyard (Ex 27:9-19)
 - Holy Place (Sanctuary)
 - Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies)
 - Outside the camp was the realm of the Gentiles -- unclean.
 - When an Israelite was ritually polluted, he had to go outside of the camp for a certain period of time.
 - Inside the camp was closer to the presence of God, but only Levites could approach the area immediately surrounding the tabernacle.

3. *Building Materials* -- the closer one got to the Most Holy Place, the more precious the materials.
 - Four coverings for the Tabernacle -- the outermost was the most functional, the innermost the most precious -- animal hides to finely twisted and embroidered linen.
 - Metals -- outside was bronze and silver, inside gold and pure gold.

4. *Accessibility* --
 - Outside the camp -- realm of the Gentiles and the unclean.
 - Only those who were in covenant with God and were ritually clean could move into the camp.
 - Only the Levites, who were specially consecrated to the Lord, were permitted to set up their tents in the vicinity of the Tabernacle, and they surrounded the site.
 - Even most Levites were not permitted to minister inside the tabernacle -- only the descendants of Aaron.
 - The Most Holy Place of all, the most sacred section of the Tabernacle where the ark of the covenant was kept was the most restricted place of all
 - Only the current high priest could enter, and
 - Only once a year -- on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).⁵

C. The Worship System. (Leviticus)

The Book of Leviticus answers two basic questions:

1. *How can sin be removed so people may become holy?*
 Answer: Sacrifices and offerings (chapters 1-16)

2. *How can people live holy lives to continue fellowship with a holy God?*
 Answer: Holiness code (chapters 17-26)

⁵ Raymond Dillard, and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 68-70.

1. **The worship system of Israel revealed that worship is more than a Sabbath activity.**
 - Worship is proclaiming the Lord's worth ("worth-ship").
 - It is also a response to His worth.
 - The Israelites were to worship God in a specific way on special occasions (sacrifices, holy days, vows, and offerings).
 - An appropriate response to God affected all areas of life.
 - A person should always reflect the worth of God in: eating, relations with other people, attitudes towards sexual matters, ethical issues, cultural practices.

2. **The worship system revealed that God is a holy God.**
 - He is the "wholly other."
 - His holiness and ultimate being were lost in mystery and wonder.
 - In being perfectly holy, He is "set apart," yet He is also "morally upright."
 - The Israelites experienced Him in awe, wonder, and adoration.

3. **The worship system revealed that God is present among His people.**
 - He is neither unapproachable nor inaccessible.
 - All of the regulations for worship are commands to be fulfilled in God's presence.
 - The offering of the sacrifice is always "before the Lord."
 - God is not remote from His people, but very present in their midst.⁶

4. **The worship system reveals that God expects worship to be practiced, not attended.**
 - Leviticus is both a priestly and a lay manual for sacrifice and for other aspects of dedication of life.
 - The sacrifices were "acted prayers."
 - We see the multi-faceted character of the offerings to God:
 - dedication, expiation, gift, forgiveness, communion
 - Worship is communion with God, and should not be taken lightly.

5. **The worship system reveals that God expects His people to be holy even as He is holy.**
 - All of life is sacred.
 - No area of human life rests outside of God's care, and all of it should be under His control.
 - The "Holiness Code" (chs. 17-26) shows that all of human relationships are shaped by the fact that the person belongs to the Lord.
 - No facet of life is to be "common" or "unclean," for everything should be dedicated to Him.
 - As people of a holy God, they too should be holy like Him.

⁶Ronald Clements, *Leviticus*, Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 2: 5.

Central to the Israelite worship system were the **sacrifices** and **offerings** the people were to bring to God as a part of their worship. The purpose of these was **to provide the means for communion, or fellowship, with a holy God**. They were totally voluntary, for when an individual became knowledgeable of his offense, he voluntarily will bring a sacrifice. They were like "acted prayers," an expression of what is in the person's heart. The great tragedy of the Israelite worship system was that Israel turned something very spiritual into something material, and the sacrifices became outward action; no heart action — hypocrisy. God hates perfunctory religion (Amos 5:21-24; Isa 29:13).

The ritual, up to the point of the placing of the sacrifice on the altar, was the same basic procedure for all of the offerings.

- Offerer presents the offering personally at the altar or the door of the tabernacle.(The offering represented the offerer's own life.)
- The offering was to be of superior value. (The economic status of the offerer was taken into consideration.)
- The offerer placed his hand on the head of the victim. (personal identification)
- The offerer probably confessed his sin over the offering.
- Offerer killed the animal, skinned it, and cut it into pieces.
- The priest collected the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar.
- The portion to be burned was placed on the altar.

Different offerings signified different purposes:

1. **Burnt Offering** (1:3-17; 6:8-13) — rededication or consecration
2. **Meal (Cereal) Offering** (2:1-16; 6:14-23) — dedicating the fruits of man's labours to God.
3. **Peace Offerings** (3:1-17; 7:11-21, 28-36) — communion, community offering expressing thanks and joy
4. **Sin Offering** (4:1-5:13; 6:24-30) to cover the sins of inadvertence, unintentionally.
5. **Guilt (Trespass) Offering** (5:14-6:7; 7:1-10) —to atone for unwitting sin which required restitution.

The book of Numbers is the major source of information for the experiences of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land. It tells why a journey that should have taken two weeks actually took almost 40 years (the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea, chapters 13-14).

It tells of the one sin Moses committed that prevented him from entering the Promised Land (ch. 20). Numbers basically chronicles how God leads a rebellious people — about the repeated failure in faith of the Israelites, God's deliverance by His miracle-working power, and of God, and God's divine presence displayed in the cloud and the fire.

D. Deuteronomy and Deuteronomical History.

The term "Deuteronomy" literally means "second law." This was not a second law, but it was a restatement, or a second giving of the Law. The people were about to enter the Promised Land after having wandered in the wilderness for almost 40 years. A new generation had grown up after the older generation had died out. They were to enter Canaan without Moses, their beloved leader. They were on the plains of Moab, across the Jordan River from Canaan, and they could see the Promised Land from there. Moses, knowing that he was not able to enter the Promised Land, took this occasion to remind this new generation of God's grace and love, and Israel's obligations to God even after they finally entered the Promised Land.

The book is a sermon in which Moses took the Law given at Sinai and expounded upon it, applying it specifically to this generation. Moses reminded the people how Yahweh had been faithful to His covenant, therefore Israel should be faithful to Yahweh. Yahweh always kept His promises because of His love, but He would punish disobedience, and may even punish whole generations for stubborn belief. Israel should keep his commands and requirements, out of gratitude for what Yahweh has done for them (Deut 8:1-6).

Moses described for the people the **covenant blessings** which God would bestow on the people if they were obedient to the covenant (Deut 4:15-28; 28:1-14; cf. Lev 26:1-13). Generally speaking, the covenant blessings are: life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect, and safety. He also described the **covenant curses** or punishments for disobedience to God's covenant (Deut 4:15-28; 28:15-32:42; cf. Lev 16:14-39). Generally speaking these curses have to do with death and destruction, disease and famine, defeat and deportation.

The prophets who followed Moses based their messages upon the covenant blessings and curses found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In fact the rest of the history of the OT is largely based upon the theology taught in the book of Deuteronomy.

- **Deuteronomic theology** — Those who obey God will be blessed, and those who disobey Him will be cursed.

The history of Israel chronicles how the people were obedient or disobedient to God's covenant given to them at Sinai. History is described in terms of what God has done for His people, and how His people have chosen their own destiny by their obedience or disobedience.

- **Deuteronomic history** — History told in terms of obedience or disobedience to God's covenant Law, and the resulting blessings or curses.

"And it shall come about that as Yahweh delighted over you to prosper and multiply you, even so YAHWEH will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you shall be torn from the land you are entering to possess. Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there

you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known" (28:63-64, emphasis added).

Like the Abrahamic covenant, the covenant promises would remain intact because they rest upon the character of Yahweh. The decision of participating in the covenant blessings, however, was the dependent upon the choice of the people. Obedience meant blessing; disobedience meant losing:

- their **land** ("you shall be torn from the land"),
- their **community** ("the Lord will scatter you among all peoples"), and
- their **relationship with God** ("there you shall serve other gods").

Unlike the Abrahamic covenant, possessing the land under the Sinaitic covenant was contingent upon obedience to Yahweh as expressed in the Torah (Deut 16:20; 28:59-60).

The book of **Joshua** is an account of the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. At first glance, the text looks like Joshua and the Israelites went into Canaan and completely wiped out everybody.

- "Joshua defeated the whole land" (10:40)
- "Joshua took all that land" (11:16)

But we also read that there was still very much land yet to be possessed (13:1-7). The book of Judges also tells us that the conquest was slow, difficult, piecemeal, and often accomplished by individual clans (Judges 1). It is not a case of "either-or" but "both-and." Under Joshua's leadership Israel was able to enter the land, but then it was up to the individual twelve tribes to finish taking their own allotted territory.

The period of the **Judges** has been called "the Dark Ages" of Israelite history. The reason why can best be understood by the text itself:

"After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to his own inheritance. The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel. . . . After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them." (Judg. 2:6-12)

The time was characterized by anarchy, frequent warfare, idolatry, and immorality. The people were often bloodthirsty, violent, and cruel, even while they were showing courage, faithfulness, and integrity! There is little indication that they even knew that the law of Moses even existed. They were divided, and little holding them together. Israel had a 12-tribe league that aligned themselves for the purposes of common defense and worship. The tribes, however, were hardly unified, for they were separated by geography, by the various difficulties they faced, and by a preoccupation with their own needs.

After Joshua died, there was no strong leader to take his place. So God raised up transitional leaders, called Judges, to fill in the gap between the one-man rule of Moses and Joshua and the one-man rule of the monarchy.

Eventually, under the leadership of the prophet **Samuel** the people insisted that they wanted a king, so that they could be like all the other nations.

*“So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, ‘You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, **such as all the other nations have.**’ But when they said, ‘Give us a king to lead us,’ this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: ‘Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, **but they have rejected me as their king.**’” (1 Sam 8:4-7)*

The people wanted to be like "the other nations." In doing so, they were rejecting God himself as their king. The people were missing the whole idea: **they were not supposed to be like the other nations!** They were to be different! Yahweh was to be their king! They took their eyes off of God and put them onto the world.

The Lord raised up **Saul** as Israel’s first king (1 Samuel 9-10), but he proved to be a very weak king who never unified the people. Israel’s first great king was **David**, who ruled for nearly 40 years.

David took a weak kingdom, unable to defend itself, expanded the kingdom, and made it a real power.

CHAPTER 6:
THE COVENANT
WITH DAVID:
THE
GODLY KING

THE COVENANT WITH DAVID: THE GODLY KING

A. The Reign of David.

David was able to build Israel into a first-class power. It was he who established the monarchy in Israel, and as an able military ruler, he was able to win a general peace throughout the land. *He did this in THREE MAIN WAYS:*

1. **He built a capital city -- Jerusalem.**
 - Became centre for government.
 - Eventually became the religious capital.
2. **He set up a government bureaucracy for administration.**
 - Divided the land into administrative districts, which was something Saul never did.
3. **He created a standing army for protection, and expansion.**
 - He extended the country's boundaries, so that by the time David died in 960 B.C., he ruled from Sinai to the Euphrates River.

DAVID ALSO LED THE NATION IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS.

1. **He brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, establishing Jerusalem as the nation's religious capital.**
2. **He also selected the site and made preparations for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem.**
3. **He sponsored the emphasis on singing and worship.**
 - David is responsible for many of the **Psalms** found in Psalter, the worship book of Israel.
4. **David provided the prototype for the future Messiah, the coming godly king who would reign over God's people in justice and righteousness.**

B. The Covenant with David. (2 Sam. 7:1-17)

The institution of the monarchy to Israel brought with it several problems, most notably the fact that a king could become a rival to Yahweh who was supposed to be the only ruler of his people. God sent the prophet Nathan to show that God had intervened and made a special covenant with David which sanctioned the monarchy. This initiated a new period in Israelite history and theology, for from now on the salvation that God would assure would be bound to the institution of the monarchy.

Nowhere in this passage is the term "covenant" used, but David referred to this promise as an "everlasting covenant" (2 Sam 23:5) and covenant terminology is present throughout. Other references and restatements of this covenant are found in Psalms 89, 132 and 1 Chronicles 17.

David wanted to build permanent "house" for the Ark of the Covenant, especially since David had build for himself a beautiful palace in which to dwell (2 Sam 7:1-2). God spoke to David through the prophet Nathan and said that He is not bound to one place, but can make his dwelling anywhere. A tabernacle was more fitting to describe His character. Then God keyed upon David's terms "**dw**ell" and "**h**ouse." God could not "dwell" permanently in a "house" (7:5-6), but rather, God would make a "house" (i.e. dynasty) for David (7:11). David's promised descendent (i.e. Solomon) would build a house where Yahweh's name would dwell (vv. 12-13).

GOD MADE THESE PROMISES TO DAVID:

1. **God would make David's name great.** (v. 9)
2. **God would give His people the land and rest from enemies.** (vv. 10-11)
3. **God would establish an eternal kingdom.** (vv. 11-16)

Instead of a man building a house for God, God declared that He would make a house in the midst of the people of God, consisting in a definite succession of men to bear the authority of God.

This was finally fulfilled when the "Son of David" was also the "Son of God" made his dwelling and tabernacled among us (John 1:14).

C. The Reign of Solomon.

David's son **Solomon** was the one who would eventually build the Temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. *SOLOMON IS KNOWN PRIMARILY FOR:*

1. **His great wisdom (1 Kings 3:3-28).**
 - wisdom in making judicial decisions.
 - proverbial wisdom and contemplative wisdom (much of **Proverbs**, as well as the books of **Ecclesiastes** and **Song of Songs** are attributed to him).
2. **His great wealth (1 Kings 10:14-29).**
 - He had built a beautiful Temple and a beautiful palace.
 - He built Israel into a great economic power.

But Solomon grew extremely lax in spiritual matters (1 Kings 11:1-43). He married foreign wives to seal political treaties (700 wives and 300 concubines). He let his foreign wives continue to worship their foreign gods, and he even built shrines to the foreign gods (.vv. 7-8).

"As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been." (11:4)

Under the rule of Solomon, Israel resembled the neighbouring cultures more than it did a distinctive covenant community. It had become thoroughly paganized and was repeatedly condemned by the prophets as being intolerable.

The promise to David which was originally unconditional seems to have been reinterpreted when Solomon came on the scene:

*"As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.' **But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for My name.** Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. And though this temple is now imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?' People will answer, 'Because they have forsaken their God, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them -- that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them.'" (9:4-9)*

The reinterpretation of the promise to David added the condition that the covenant would remain as long as the king remained faithful to Yahweh.

"If your sons are careful of their way and walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you will not lack a man on the throne of Israel" (1 Kings 2:4).

Because of Solomon's sin, the kingdom of Israel, once united under Saul, David, and Solomon would now be split in two.

*"The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, '**Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.** Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.'" (1 Kings 11:9-13)*

Immediately after Solomon's death, the kingdom did split in two. Jeroboam (one of Solomon's officials) led the northern ten tribes in revolt (1 Kings 12:16), and Solomon's son Rehoboam reigned in Judah in the south (1 Kings 12:17).

The people became complacent and forgot about the stipulations present in the Sinaitic covenant. The prophets came on the scene to remind the people of the moral demands of Yahweh, but the people refused to listen. The history of the Israelite monarchy (in both kingdoms) from Solomon to the exile is not a pretty one. With the exception of a few bright spots where kings were faithful to Yahweh, Israel tried its best to become "like the other nations."

D. The Future Davidic King.

God's promise to David was that his grace would not be deterred even by the sins of those on the throne. The Chronicler's account of the covenant with David stated the eternal hope that God would never be finished with His divine purpose:

*“He is the one who will build a house for me, **and I will establish his throne forever.** I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. **I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.**”*

(1 Chr. 17:12-14)

The prophets reiterated time and again this hope of a future Davidic king who would reign forever as God's representative (Isa 9:1-6; 11:1; Jer 33:14-20; 23:5-6; Ezk 34:23-24; Hos 3:5; Mic 5:2, et al.).

Certain psalms deal with the king, enthroned in Jerusalem, but how this king is described indicates that One greater than an earthly king is being referred to.

- Ps 2:7-8 — The king is referred to as “Yahweh's son” to whom God would give the ends of the earth for a possession.
- Ps 45:6 — The king is referred to as “O God,” whose throne would last forever.
- Ps 45:17 — The nations would praise this king forever and ever.
- Ps 110:1 — “The Lord says to my Lord: `Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”

These psalms singing the praises of the King are called **Royal Psalms**. They show that the Davidic king represented something greater than himself and his own reign. In some way the Davidic king was Yahweh's anointed representative. through this Davidic king God would establish His eternal kingdom. Eventually this Davidic king would be known as “God's anointed,” “**the Messiah**,” or “the Christ” (cf. Matt. 1:1).⁷

⁷William S. LaSor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederic W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 693.

CHAPTER 7:
THE
NEW COVENANT:
LOOKING TOWARD
THE FUTURE

THE NEW COVENANT: LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

A. The Role of the Prophet

All the true prophets seemed to have these certain characteristics in common.

1. They all had a definite call by God.

- This gave them credibility and enabled them to continue in such a difficult ministry despite much hardship.

2. They all received and delivered a special message from God.

- Each prophet received his message from God in a personal way, then delivered the message to the people not for the purpose of giving them information or making them smarter, but in order to draw them into a closer relationship with God.
- They were "God's mouthpiece," "spokespersons" for God calling the people back to a covenant relationship with God.
- They could speak with the authority of "Thus says Yahweh."
- They proclaimed a special word to a specific historical situation.
 - Primarily forthtellers of what was happening at that moment, rather than foretellers of the future.
 - Only 20% of all prophecy was future-oriented.
 - They announced what was going to happen if the people did not repent.

3. They all interceded on behalf of sinful people.

- They stood in the gap and interceded when the people refused to repent.
- This shows the heart of a true prophet who would speak the truth of God's judgment, yet call on God's mercy.
- They saw themselves as members of the heavenly council, seeking to advise God in His dealings with people: delay judgment, exercise mercy.

The prophetic office was probably formally established in the Mosaic period, and **Moses** is seen as the paradigm of the prophet. Since he was God's instrument in the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, Moses is considered as a "covenant mediator." When Yahweh promised that he would raise up a "prophet like Moses" (Deut. 18:17-22), the prophetic succession as a whole is probably what is meant. Therefore, God's prophets are closely tied to the covenant.

The prophets who followed Moses were primarily "covenant enforcement mediators."

God's covenant at Sinai contained not only rules to keep but punishments and benefits that God would give to them determined by their obedience or disobedience. God did not merely give His law to His people, but He also enforced it. The prophets presented the essential content of the covenant blessings and curses. What one finds, then, in the prophets is nothing essentially new, but the same message originally given by Moses. The form of the message may vary, but the content of the message was not essentially original. Their task was not to make any new points or announce any new doctrines not already present in the covenant Law. They did, however, lend detail to certain points made in the covenant.

B. Three Spiritual Crises.

After the division of the kingdom in 922 B.C. God's people were plagued with three major crises in which God sent His prophets to minister to His people.

1. The Ba'al Crisis. (9th-8th century B.C.)

The Israelites were slowly drawn into the Ba'al cult of the local Canaanite people, and through the years Yahweh worship and Ba'al worship were intermixed - **syncretism**. Soon the people no longer saw the difference between the god of fertility and the God of history! When the Israelites first entered the Promised Land, they changed from a nomadic lifestyle to an agricultural one. Some believed that Yahweh was the god of the desert, and Ba'al was the god of the farmlands. Some people even began to call Yahweh "Ba'al" (Hos 2:16). Every aspect of Israel's life -- politics, economics, religion -- was permeated with this sinful lifestyle and false loyalties. These bad habits became ingrained in their very being: "Their deeds do not permit them to turn to their God" (Hos 5:4). It was almost useless even to try to appeal to them: "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone" (Hos 4:17).

Ba'al means "lord," "master," "owner," or even "husband." He was the Canaanite storm god, the god of rain. Canaanite religion was a nature religion, tied to the seasons of the year. Ba'al was the rising and dying god. Each summer Ba'al was killed by **Mot** the god of drought and death. Ba'al's female consort, **Asherah** (Ashtoreth, Anath), would kill Mot, and the drought would be broken. Ba'al would then rise from the dead, bringing the fall rains for the crops.

Ba'al worship included the fertility rites of sacred prostitution in order to influence the gods to make the flocks, herds, crops, fields, and orchards fertile. Through this kind of worship, or "whorship," the crops would grow. *There were several reasons for the appeal of Ba'al worship:*

- (1) **Fear of survival** - the only way to get along in the world.
- (2) **Sexual immorality** - enjoying the "free lifestyle."
 - Note: Child sacrifice was involved in Ba'al worship.
- (3) **Greed** - promise for reward.
 - fertile flocks, fields, families
- (4) **Peer pressure** - the lure of successful neighbours and their farming methods.

The chief prophets God sent during the Ba'al crisis were **Elijah** and **Elisha** in the 9th century B.C. and **Hosea** in the 8th century B.C.

2. The Assyrian Crisis. (8th century B.C.)

The Assyrian empire dominated Palestine from the 9th through the late 7th centuries B.C.. This was the major enemy who was on the scene during the ministries of the 8th century prophets: **Amos** and **Hosea** in the northern kingdom of Israel, and **Isaiah** and **Micah** in the southern kingdom of Judah..

The Assyrian empire centred along the Tigris River. **Tiglath-pileser III** (745-727 B.C.) was the true founder of the Neo-Assyrian empire and by far its strongest emperor. He was a visionary with unlimited energy and pursued a consistent policy of dealing with expansion.

(1) *Collect and receive tribute from the weaker nation.*

- Give the foreign nation an underling status in which they must cooperate with Assyria.
- If they failed to pay tribute, then . . .

(2) *Invasion by Assyria and removal of king.*

- This brought a great reduction of territory and new king hand-picked by Assyria.
- Some of the nation's people to weaken the spirit of rebellion.
- If they acted unfavourably again . . .

(3) *Complete and total independence revoked.*

- All kings removed, the nation was decimated, and .
- The people were deported and scattered, and other nations moved in to weaken nationalistic identity.

Amos and **Hosea** prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel that they would be defeated by Assyria unless they repented of their ways and turned back to God. The people didn't and Assyria destroyed them in 722 B.C. and scattered the population of the 10 northern tribes throughout the known world.

Isaiah and **Micah** who were prophesying in the southern kingdom of Judah witnessed what happened to their brethren in the north. They used the example of God's judgment on the Israel to proclaim what would happen to Judah if they did not repent. During Isaiah's ministry in Jerusalem, Isaiah encouraged Hezekiah, a godly king of Judah, to remain faithful to Yahweh and stand firm against the Assyrian siege on Jerusalem, and God would protect Jerusalem from being defeated (Isa 18:3-6; 29:5-8; 37:33-35). Hezekiah placed his faith in God, and Jerusalem was miraculously spared.

3. The Babylonian Crisis. (7th-6th century B.C.)

The next major world empire was the Babylonian empire who gained control of Palestine in 605 B.C. The Babylonian emperor **Nebuchadnezzar** marched upon Jerusalem in 605 and made Judah become a vassal state to Babylon and pay a heavy tribute (2 Kings 24:1). Within a few years Judah (with the promise of aid from Egypt) revolted against Babylon and in 597 B.C. marched upon Jerusalem and took it. A large group of people were led into exile into Babylon, among them were **Ezekiel** the prophet, and **Daniel** and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego). Within a few years Judah tried to rebel again from Babylonian control, and this time

Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings 25), breached its walls, and completely destroyed the city and the Temple in 586 B.C. A larger group of Israelites were taken into exile to Babylon, where they would remain for 70 years.

The main prophets during the Babylonian crisis were **Ezekiel**, who was prophesying from Babylon, and **Jeremiah** who remained in Jerusalem. Jeremiah saw God's judgment coming on Jerusalem, and he was Judah's last chance before they would suffer destruction. Jeremiah's entire prophetic career (40 years) was tied up with the tragedy of Jerusalem. Before the first deportation of exiles to Babylon Jeremiah preached his famous "Temple Sermon" in which he prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed because of the false worship of the people (Jer 7:1-15; 26:1-24). When the first captives were taken Jeremiah wrote to them telling them to settle down for awhile (ch. 29). Even though he saw God's judgment on the immediate horizon, Jeremiah also saw hope for the future. Even though Israel had abandoned God in her sin, God had not abandoned Israel and His plans for her. In Judah's final days, Jeremiah purchased a piece of family property, proclaiming that one day, after Judah's purification by God's judgment, God would bring the people back to resettle in that land (Jer 32:1-15).

After 70 years of Babylonian captivity the Israelites were allowed to return to the land. Under the leadership of **Zerubbabel** and with the encouragement of **Haggai** and **Zechariah** they rebuilt the Temple. With **Nehemiah's** leadership they rebuilt the city wall and the society, and **Ezra's** help they re-established the worship system.

C. The New Covenant. (Jer 31:31-34)

Jeremiah did see the possibility that God would restore the covenant after the judgment on Israel's sins had been completed. Jeremiah prophesied of a day when Yahweh would establish a "**New Covenant**" with His people (Jer 31:31-34). This prophecy is probably Jeremiah's most distinctive contribution. God would not allow his people to repeat forever the cycle of sin and punishment, rebellion and failure. Yahweh would initiate a new covenant and engrave his law upon the hearts of the people, solving the old problem of chronic disobedience.

This "new covenant" would be a restatement and reworking of the covenants God had previously had with His people. However, this new covenant would take into account people's sinfulness and bring the relationship with God to an even greater depth.

1. The New Covenant, like the old, will rest upon the initiative and the authority of God.

- *"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (v. 31)*

2. The history of the broken covenant will come to an end, and a new kind of history will be inaugurated.

- The previous disobedience of the people would be turned into faithfulness.
- God's commandments would become an internal rule engraved on the heart, and it would be eternally embraced.

3. The new covenant will be new in that it will fulfil the intent of the old covenant.

- An intimate knowledge of God and obedience to his statutes would be the result.

- “No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (v. 34).

4. The new covenant will bring into being a covenant community – Yahweh’s people.

- It would not be a strict individualism, but a community enterprise.

5. The new covenant will rest upon divine forgiveness -- all of grace.

- “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (v. 34).

6. The new covenant is a hope for the future.

- “Behold the days are coming . . .”

Even though Jeremiah is the only OT figure to use the term “new covenant,” the concept was certainly not unique to Jeremiah. Other passages in Jeremiah and other prophets speak of “an everlasting covenant” which God would establish with His people (Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26; Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8). God promised to give a “new heart” and a “new spirit” to His people (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26). And He would bring a “covenant of peace” (Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26) when Yahweh’s Spirit would indwell His people (Ezek. 36:27-28; Isa 59:21; Hos. 2:18-20). The prophets saw a day in the future when God’s faithful Servant would personally embody the new covenant (Isa 42:6; 49:8) and ultimately bring other nations into this new covenant relationship with Yahweh (Isa 55:1-5).

When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper with His disciples the evening before He died He said, “This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20), pointing us to the fact that the long-awaited covenant, promised centuries before by the prophets, would now be established. In Matthew’s version of the same event, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, “**Take and eat; this is my body**” (Mat. 26:26). Long before that night in a beautiful garden, God’s creation was spoiled because someone “took and ate.” All the time God had been working out His divine plan of salvation to redeem sinful people from the consequences of their own sin.

The book of Revelation paints a picture that brings closure to the story. The Church is pictured as the New Israel who receives the salvation and blessings promised by God. (Rev 1:6; 5:10). The Church serves under the promised Davidic king (Rev 5:5) in the land which has indeed become the kingdom of God (Rev 11:15). The new heaven and new earth which God will create is pictured once more as the original Promised Land, the garden of Eden (21:1-5; 22:1-5). God is pictured as being present with His people once more in an unbreakable covenant relationship. The created world will be completely remade, and the curse will be no more. The people will have complete communion with each other, with God, and they will have free access to the tree of life. All of the relationships broken in the Fall will be completely restored, and humans will once more have a Father, a family, and a home.