



# Tracing God's Ways

An Introduction to Biblical Theology



INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



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## Tracing God's Ways

### *An Introduction to Biblical Theology*

#### INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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# Instructor's Introduction

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It is our hope and prayer that God would be pleased to use this curriculum for his glory. Thus, the intention of this curriculum is to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. May God be glorified in us as we are satisfied in him alone!

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course *Tracing God's Ways* will attempt to provide students with a comprehensive, chronological, and biblical overview of God's purposes as they are providentially unfolding in redemptive history. The course begins with creation and the garden of Eden and then progresses through biblical history by focusing on the defining events and persons in God's plan. From conception to culmination, Genesis to Revelation, the perspective this course offers on God's work is broad and integrated. The bulk of the student's labor in this course will be focused on inductive Bible study of key biblical passages and themes.

## OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to accomplish specific objectives. A student successfully completing this course should be able to:

- Magnify the worth of God in a more meaningful and personal way by treasuring him in their heart above all else. We recognize that this, the ultimate objective of the course, is impossible apart from the grace of God in the working of the Holy Spirit, who exalts the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.
- Describe what biblical theology is, and to distinguish it from other theological disciplines.

- ▶ Understand the overarching narrative of the Scriptures more fully as a result of studying it diligently throughout the course. Every lesson will compel the student to read and meditate on the Word. Our desire is to encourage students to be Bereans (cf. Acts 17:11).
- ▶ Comprehend and thoughtfully interact with the important reference work, the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. To this end the student will compose brief, biblical-theological summaries for every section they are assigned to read.
- ▶ Discuss and apply the biblical truth that is presented in the curriculum.
- ▶ Synthesize and summarize what they have learned through the course. This last objective will be accomplished by the completion of the course's final project.

## IMPLEMENTATION

As the instructor of this course, it is imperative that you are completely familiar with the curriculum. We therefore recommend that you read this entire section carefully and then skim through the rest of what is contained in this binder.

This course is designed to be taught in 12 lessons, ideally in 2 hours of in-class instruction and with approximately 2.5 hours homework each week. To achieve the kind of undistracted focus and academic rigor that maximizes learning, we recommend that this course be taught as a weeknight class. We anticipate, however, that this curriculum might be adapted for a Sunday school, small group, or discipleship setting. If this is necessary or most appropriate, we urge you to establish an expectation among your students that this course will require more concentration and commitment than a typical Sunday school class would. A tone of serious and earnest study should be set by the instructor before the course even begins.



Before the first class session, you will need to decide when and where this course will be offered. Record this information on the syllabus in the box labeled: “Course Information.” You may also want to include your contact information in this box. The schedule incorporated in the syllabus does not have assigned dates. Please write the intended dates for each lesson in the corresponding box. Once you have completed filling out the syllabus, photocopy it so that you may distribute one copy to each student enrolled in the course. The *Student’s Workbook* does not include a syllabus, so your students will not have a syllabus until you distribute one. Photocopying the syllabus is the only photocopying that is required of you by this curriculum.

During the first lesson, we recommend the following outline to structure your time:

- ▶ **Welcome / Prayer (5 min):** Greet the students as they arrive. Open the lesson by exalting God in prayer.
  
- ▶ **Personal Introductions (30 min):** Ask each student in the room to introduce themselves briefly by answering the following questions (and answer these questions yourself): What is your name? Can you tell the class a little about yourself? Why are you enrolled in this course and what are you hoping to gain from it?
  
- ▶ **Syllabus Review (20 min):** Distribute your customized course syllabus and then guide the class through it, reading each item and answering any questions that the students might have.
  
- ▶ **[Optional Exercise: A Biblical Theology Pre-Test]:** If you so choose, you may reduce the time spent in personal introductions and syllabus review in order to give your students a “biblical theology pre-test.” Setting a time limit of about ten minutes, ask your students to compose two or three paragraphs that summarize the story-line of the Bible. Have them include the most important persons and events in God’s unfolding plan, and the sovereign intentions of God that propel his plan through history. You may choose to collect these “pre-tests” from your students and return them during Lesson 12, so that they can compare their understanding of biblical theology before and after taking the course.

- ▷ **Break (5 min)**
  
- ▷ **Introduction to Biblical Theology (55 min):** Guide the class through Lesson 1, reading each section together until a question is reached. After allowing a few minutes for the students to answer each question, pause to discuss their answers. You may also choose to discuss each question immediately with the class (and not allow time for individual reflection) in the interest of time.
 

Lesson 1 is the only lesson you will take your students through without their prior preparation. For all subsequent lessons, students will work through the lesson on their own before coming to class. To prepare for Lesson 1 as the instructor, you should attempt to answer the questions yourself before consulting the suggested answers in the Instructor's Guide (where answers are suggested).
  
- ▷ **Overview of the Next Lesson / Closing (5 min):** Encourage the students to purchase the required textbooks if they don't have them already. Ensure that they understand what is required of them in preparation for the next class session. Then thank them for coming to the class and dismiss in prayer.

### *Subsequent Lessons*

As the instructor, you will be expected to do all the preparation for each lesson that is required of the students and more. We strongly recommend that you obtain a *Student's Workbook* and attempt to complete the homework on your own before consulting this *Instructor's Guide*. The *Instructor's Guide* provides our suggested answers. Some questions in this curriculum are open-ended and could be answered in different ways. You may find that the answers contained in this manual may not be the clearest or most accurate answers possible. Therefore, we encourage you to improve upon our answers if you can. It is essential to understand that **this *Instructor's Guide* is meant to be a resource; the real authority is God's Word.**

Furthermore, we have deliberately omitted lesson outlines for Lessons 2-12. Our recommendation is for you to open the class in prayer and then immediately start to discuss the integrative assignment the students have done. The discussion could then proceed through each day's study. We consider it unnecessary to lecture through the material the students will have read in the textbook—discussing student questions on the reading should adequately cover the material. **You will notice that the material in each lesson should provide you with much more material than you can cover in two hours of**

**thoughtful interaction.** This is not an oversight in design and you should not feel obligated to provide the students with answers for every question. Rather, as the instructor, your responsibility should be to focus on areas where students have questions or interest.

You will also notice that the *Instructor's Guide* has material that is not included in the *Student's Workbook* in the form of Teaching Notes at the beginning of the lesson and throughout the course, in the side margins. Consult these notes after thoroughly reviewing the lesson.

It is our conviction that the best teachers foster an environment in the classroom which engages students. Adults learn by solving problems or by working through things that provoke curiosity or concern. Therefore, we discourage you from lecturing for the entire lesson. Although an instructor will constantly shape conversation, clarifying and correcting as needed, they will probably not talk for the majority of the lesson. This curriculum is meant to facilitate an investigation into biblical truth—an investigation that is shared by the instructor and the students. Therefore, we encourage you to adopt the posture of a “fellow-learner” who invites participation from everyone in the class.

### Teaching Style

It might surprise you how eager adults can be to share what they have learned in preparing for each lesson. Therefore, you should invite participation by asking your students to share their discoveries. Here are some of our “tips” on facilitating discussion that is engaging and helpful:

- Don't be uncomfortable with silence initially. Once the first student shares their response, others will be likely to join in. If you cut the silence short by prompting the students, they are more likely to wait for you to prompt them every time.
- Affirm answers whenever possible and draw out the students by asking for clarification. Your aim is to make them feel comfortable sharing their ideas and learning, so be extremely hesitant to “shut down” a student's contribution or “trump” it with your own. This does not mean, however, that you shouldn't correct false ideas—just do it in a spirit of gentleness and love.
- Don't allow a single student or several students to dominate the discussion. Involve everyone and intentionally invite participation from those who are more reserved or hesitant.
- Labor to show the significance of their study. Emphasize the things that the

students could not have learned without doing the homework.

- ▷ Avoid talking too much. The instructor should not monopolize the discussion, but rather guide and shape it. If the instructor does the majority of the talking, the students will be less likely to interact and engage, and will therefore not learn as much. Avoid constantly adding the “definitive last word.”
- ▷ The instructor should feel the freedom to linger on a topic or question if the group demonstrates interest. The instructor should also pursue digressions that are helpful and at least somewhat relevant. The instructor, however, *should* attempt to cover the material. So avoid the extreme of constantly wandering off topic, but also avoid the extreme of limiting the conversation in a way that squelches curiosity or learning.
- ▷ The instructor’s passion, or lack of it, is infectious. Therefore, if you demonstrate little enthusiasm for the material, it is almost inevitable that your students will likewise be bored. But if you have a genuine excitement for what you are studying, your class will be impacted positively. Therefore, it is our recommendation that, before you come to class, you spend adequate time working through the homework and praying so that you can overflow with genuine enthusiasm for the Bible and for God in class. This point cannot be stressed enough. Delight yourself in God and in his Word!

It may be necessary to again stress that **this curriculum is a resource**. As the instructor, you should feel the freedom to structure the class time and to discuss through the material in a way that promotes the maximum learning and enjoyment of your students. Linger on certain questions, pursuing *helpful* digressions, examining relevant portions of Scripture, adding other supplemental material, and customizing the curriculum to fit your situation are all heartily approved.

#### *Questions or Comments?*

If you still have questions after reading this introduction and surveying the curriculum, you may contact Bethlehem College & Seminary at [info@bcmn.edu](mailto:info@bcmn.edu). We are also eager for your comments and suggestions! Thanks!



## Tracing God's Ways

### *An Introduction to Biblical Theology*

#### SYLLABUS

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#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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- ▶ Describe what biblical theology is, and to distinguish it from other theological disciplines.
- ▶ Understand the overarching narrative of the Scriptures more fully as a result of studying it diligently throughout the course. Every lesson will compel the student to read and meditate on the Word. Our desire is to encourage students to be Bereans (cf. Acts 17:11).
- ▶ Comprehend and thoughtfully interact with the important reference work, the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. To this end the student will compose brief, biblical-theological summaries for every section they are assigned to read.
- ▶ Discuss and apply the biblical truth that is presented in the curriculum.
- ▶ Synthesize and summarize what they have learned through the course. This last objective will be accomplished by the completion of the course's final project.

## 🌀 REQUIRED BOOKS (TEXTBOOKS)

- ▶ An English version of the Bible, preferably the *English Standard Version* (ESV) or *New American Standard Bible* (NASB).
- ▶ *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

## 🌀 REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to prepare for Lessons 2-12 by completing the lesson pages in a sequential order. Therefore, for each lesson a student should read the Introduction and the Lesson Objectives. Then the student should read the remainder of the lesson, answer the 20 questions contained therein, and complete all the required reading and the integrative assignment. The student may then review the discussion questions and record their own discussion question. Each lesson's workload has been divided into five daily assignments for the convenience of the student. Students will compose a brief reflection paper at the end of the course.

Students will pass this course if they attend at least 10 class sessions, complete all the assignments, and complete an adequate reflection paper. Please contact the instructor with any problems or concerns.

## 🌀 REFLECTION PAPER

Students will be required to write a reflection paper (2-3 pages double-spaced) that summarizes the story-line of the Bible, due one week after the last class session. This paper may be emailed as an attachment to the instructor or mailed to their address.

## 🌀 SCHEDULE

Lesson	Date	Lesson Title
1		An Introduction to Biblical Theology
2		God Created the Heavens and Earth
3		The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob
4		Out of the House of Slavery
5		The Throne of His Father David
6		If You Will Not Obey the Voice of the LORD
7		After Me Comes He Who Is Mightier Than I
8		It Is Finished
9		He Has Risen from the Dead
10		You Will Be My Witnesses
11		Your God Reigns!
12		Yes, I Am Coming Quickly

# An Introduction to Biblical Theology

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# 1

## 🌀 INTRODUCTION

If God's plan as revealed in the Bible were a jigsaw puzzle of many pieces, few believers today would be able to fit the pieces together. Though many believers may understand particular doctrines rather well, what is lacking is an ability to integrate these doctrines into an overarching conception of God's purposes in the world. Systematic theology is one way to make a puzzle of the pieces; biblical theology is another way and reflects, in large measure, how the Bible itself presents God's unfolding and progressing plan. This course, therefore, will introduce you to a comprehensive picture of God's ways. Together we will trace the outlines of his plan in the hope that, by following the lines of the Master, we will understand him more fully, trust him more completely, and worship him more passionately.

## 🌀 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to:

- ▷ give a preliminary description of what biblical theology
- ▷ appreciate the need for a comprehensive, integrated theology that reflects the concerns and categories of the Bible itself
- ▷ understand what makes a biblical theology possible







As the instructor of this course, you should anticipate that your students will probably not fully grasp what biblical theology is from this introduction alone. Therefore, as you read through this lesson and discuss it with your class, don't be frustrated if your students don't understand some of the more technical definitions. There will be opportunities throughout the course to discuss what biblical theology is and is not, and as we state in the lesson, things should become clearer as your students actually engage in doing biblical theology.

Discussion of the first and second question would be more productive if you were able to draw the basic salvation-history timeline on a whiteboard and fill in key events and persons as your class suggests them. In fact, throughout the course it would be helpful if you had access to a whiteboard.

We have found that most Christians have had more exposure to systematic theology (or even historical theology) than biblical theology. Therefore, you might help your students understand the nature of biblical theology *in distinction* to systematic theology, or other theological disciplines. Work from what your students know and show them how approaching the Bible from the perspective of biblical theology is different from what they have done before.

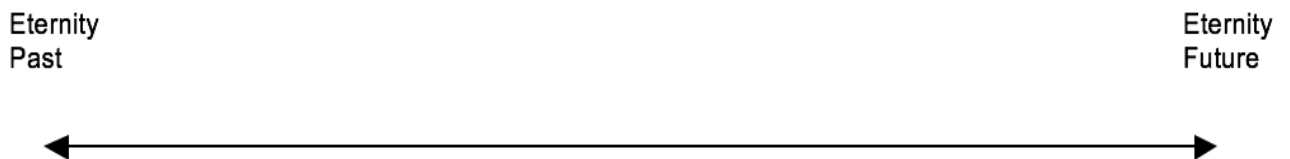
Again, in our experience, many students also do not see the immediate relevance or practicality of biblical theology. It is hard, for example, to make application after tracing the development of the themes of exile and second exodus, for example. Therefore, as your students answer Question 9, assure them that this course will eventually prove its value for daily Christian life.



### WHAT IS BIBLICAL THEOLOGY?

Many scholars have noted the difficulty in defining biblical theology. Since the nature of biblical theology is more easily grasped in actually doing it than in trying to describe it in the abstract, this entire course, to some extent, will help us come to a better understanding. Although it is difficult to define biblical theology, this first lesson will function as an introduction to what it is, and how it is different than other theological disciplines.

First, however, consider the very simple diagram below, which represents the flow of history from before the world was created to the unending, future “ages of the ages.”



1. In your opinion, what are the ten most significant events in history, considered from a biblical perspective? Plot these events on the diagram above.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

2. Is there anything that meaningfully connects the events you plotted above? In other words, is there any overarching scheme, plan, or purpose into which these events fit? If so, how do these events fit into the outworking of that plan or purpose?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

Biblical theology has been variously defined. Here is a small sampling of definitions and descriptions:

*“Biblical theology is, in effect, the study of the unity of the message of the Bible.”*<sup>1</sup>

*“Biblical theology is concerned to describe the inner unity of the Bible on its own terms. It therefore is descriptive and historical in a way that theological interpretation and systematic theology are not.”*<sup>2</sup>

*“Biblical theology is, in my opinion, the attempt to grasp Scripture in its totality according to its own, rather than imposed, categories.”*<sup>3</sup>

*“...Ideally, biblical theology, as its name implies, even as it works inductively from the diverse texts of the Bible, seeks to uncover and articulate the unity of all the biblical texts taken together, resorting primarily to the categories of those texts themselves.”*<sup>4</sup>

*“Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.”*<sup>5</sup>

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1 Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 20.

2 Craig Bartholomew, “Biblical Theology,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 86.

3 Craig Bartholomew, “Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Out of Egypt* (ed. Craig Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004), 1.

4 D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al.; Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 100.

5 B. S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 10.

*"Biblical theology is concerned with God's saving acts and his word as these occur within the history of the people of God. It follows the progress of revelation from the first word of God to man through to the unveiling of the full glory of Christ. It examines the several stages of biblical history and their relationship to one another. It thus provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of the Bible relate to all other texts."*<sup>6</sup>

*"Thus biblical theology 'is an enlargement of the dimensions of biblical science to make its character and methodology commensurate with the contents of the documents which [are] its task to interpret.' As a result, biblical theology attempts to ascertain the inner points of coherence and development within the biblical narrative and exposition. It does its work inductively from within the Bible in an attempt to bring out the Bible's own message."*<sup>7</sup>

3. After reading these quotations, underline common elements. Then list them below:

· **ANSWER.** *There appears to be four common elements in these definitions:*

- A1. *Biblical theology "uncovers and articulates" the unity of the totality of Scripture.*
- A2. *Biblical theology uses the categories and terms of the Bible itself.*
- A3. *Biblical theology is a descriptive and inductive task.*
- A4. *Biblical theology is aware of the historical and progressive nature of God's revelation.*

This is the definition of biblical theology that this curriculum proposes:

.....

Biblical theology is a theological discipline which attempts to discern the inner unity of the biblical texts, considered as a whole, and then to present this unity in a manner which is sensitive to the historical and progressive nature of God's revelation and which reflects the concerns and categories of the text itself.

.....

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6 Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 32.

7 Scott Hafemann, "Biblical Theology" in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott Hafemann; Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 16. Modified slightly.

4. After reading this definition, are there any words, phrases, or concepts that do not make sense to you? Explain.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

Admittedly, the definition proposed by this curriculum will most likely seem to be a lifeless skeleton, lacking the clarification which only the actual experience of *doing* biblical theology can provide. Therefore, an aim of this course is to put flesh on this definition in the actual practice of studying the movement of God's plan and the practice of developing biblical-theological themes.

In the meantime, we will take one more step toward defining biblical theology by contrasting it with a better known discipline: systematic theology. Here is D. A. Carson's discussion of the distinction:

*“Although both [systematic and biblical theology] are text based, the ordering principles of the former are topical, logical, hierarchical, and as synchronic as possible; the ordering principles of the latter trace out the history of redemption, and are (ideally) profoundly inductive, comparative and as diachronic as possible. Systematic theology seeks to rearticulate what the Bible says in self-conscious engagement with (including confrontation with) the culture; biblical theology, though it cannot escape cultural influences, aims to be first and foremost inductive and descriptive, earning its normative power by the credibility of its results. Thus systematic theology tends to be a little further removed from the biblical text than does biblical theology, but a little closer to cultural engagement.”*<sup>8</sup>

One way in which to quickly contrast systematic theology and biblical theology is to survey the chapters in a systematic theology textbook and compare those with the topics listed in the syllabus of this course. One such comparison would yield the following lists:

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<sup>8</sup> Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” 102-103.

Chapter Categories in Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology*	Themes to be Traced in This Course on Biblical Theology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Doctrine of the Word of God</li> <li>• The Doctrine of God</li> <li>• The Doctrine of Man</li> <li>• The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit</li> <li>• The Doctrine of the Application of Redemption</li> <li>• The Doctrine of the Church</li> <li>• The Doctrine of the Future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Temple</li> <li>• Circumcision</li> <li>• The Sabbath</li> <li>• Kingship and the Kingdom of God</li> <li>• Exile and Second Exodus</li> <li>• Atonement</li> <li>• Resurrection and the Gospel</li> <li>• The Spirit</li> <li>• New Creation</li> </ul>

\*See footnote<sup>9</sup>

5. Is the distinction between systematic theology and biblical theology clear in your mind? If so, explain it in your own words. If not, explain what is still confusing to you.

• **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

#### IS THIS DISCIPLINE "BIBLICAL"?

Perhaps the most significant passage that validates the discipline of biblical theology is the passage in which Jesus speaks to two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

Luke 24:25-27

*<sup>25</sup> And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

And shortly afterward Jesus spoke to the eleven:

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<sup>9</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002).

Luke 24:44-48

<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.”

6. According to these passages, what portions of Scripture does Jesus claim as a witness to himself?

- **ANSWER.** *It is clear that Jesus views the entire Scriptures (Old Testament) as a witness to himself. In Luke 24:27 it says, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (emphasis added). Then in Luke 24:44, Jesus refers to the entire Old Testament in its three-part division: “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” This does not imply that every individual OT verse must make an explicit reference to the Messiah, but that the entire sweep of the OT points to Jesus, his work, and the mission in his name, as its fulfillment.*

7. According to Luke’s account, to which Messianic realities does the Scripture testify?

- **ANSWER.** *Answer: As the following quotation elaborates, all of Scripture points not only to the sufferings, resurrection, and glorification of the Messiah, but also to the message that is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations. The message is characterized as one of “repentance and forgiveness of sins.” Thus, we might say that Scripture testifies to the Messianic redemption and Messianic mission.*

In commenting on Luke 24:45-47, Christopher Wright makes the following keen observation:

*“The whole sentence comes under the rubric ‘this is what is written.’ Luke does not present Jesus as quoting any specific verse from the Old Testament, but he claims that the mission of preaching repentance and forgiveness to the nations in his name is ‘what is written.’ He seems to be saying that the whole of the Scriptures (which*

we now know as the Old Testament), finds its focus and fulfillment both in the life and death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah and in the mission to all nations, which flows out from that event. Luke tells us that with these words Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures,' or, as we might put it, he was setting their hermeneutical orientation and agenda. The proper way for disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus to read their Scriptures is from a perspective that is both messianic and missional."<sup>10</sup>

8. What implications might Luke 24:25-27 and 24:44-48 have for the discipline of biblical theology?

- **ANSWER.** *As the preceding quotation asserts, these passages in Luke give biblical theology a messianic and missional orientation. We have theological warrant for reading the Old Testament as a book about Jesus and his mission. Moreover, in these two passages Jesus indirectly claims the unity and coherence of the Old Testament. We have a Christological warrant for reading the Old Testament (and all of the Bible) as a book with a unified message. This argues against those who believe that the Bible presents theologies (plural) that are irreconcilable, contradictory, or disharmonious.*

*"The New Testament writers insist that we are to read Israel's story as a witness to the righteousness of God, climactically disclosed in Jesus Christ. They insist that Israel's Scriptures, understood in the fullest and deepest way, prefigure Jesus."<sup>11</sup>*

A question that may have entered your mind is why God chose to *progressively* reveal his character and purposes in the world. John Piper suggests an answer to this very question:

*"So we know two things: one is that from eternity God planned the death of Jesus for our sins, and the other is that God rules history and so accomplishes his plans*

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, "Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology," in *Out of Egypt*, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Hays, "Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection," in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (eds. Ellen Davis and Richard Hays; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003), 233.



*without difficulty.*

*So why, then, is there a two-thousand-year history of dealings with Israel before sending Jesus into the world? God could have planned to send Jesus in Noah's day or just after the Tower of Babel or in the days of the bondage in Egypt. Why the long delay?*

We Needed Categories to Help Us Understand Jesus

*One answer is that when the Son of God comes into the world, there need to be some categories in place that make sense out of who he is and what he is coming to do. There needs to be a context for the Son of God which interprets why he is here and what he is doing. That is one of the reasons for the history of Israel and the record of the Old Testament. It gives us the context and the categories for understanding who Jesus is and why he came.”<sup>12</sup>*

Therefore, we see that the discipline of biblical theology is profoundly “biblical” not only because Jesus himself read Scripture as a united witness to his person and work, but also because biblical theology consciously mirrors God’s strategy in history and Scripture of disclosing himself by establishing categories and patterns which teach theological truth.

Biblical theology, when done correctly from a posture of faith, is also profoundly “practical.” It orients the believer toward God’s purposes in the world and, in a unique way, grounds the believer in the epic narrative of God’s faithfulness. Biblical theology has a way of expanding our vision of God and deepening our wonder at his ways of working in the world.

9. Do you agree that biblical theology can be practical? If not, why? If so, record some reflections on how you anticipate applying biblical theology to your daily life.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

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<sup>12</sup> This quotation is an excerpt from John Piper, “Draw Near to the Throne of Grace with Confidence,” an online sermon at the desiringGod website ([www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)). Throughout this curriculum we will only provide titles (and not the full web addresses) for online sermons and articles at the desiringGod website. Use the Title Index of the Resource Library to locate these resources.

## THE VIABILITY OF A UNIFYING BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

In academic discussions, it is *not* a given that a (single) biblical theology of all 66 canonical books is even possible. Some scholars want to speak only of biblical theologies (plural) of the Bible, or biblical theologies of particular books. The problem becomes most acute when relating the Old and New Testament. Can we really legitimately trace a unity that spans both testaments?

10. Before studying this issue in depth, which sentence below would you use (if any) to describe your position on this issue?
  - a. I am convinced that the Bible is a collection of interesting, but unrelated, stories and teachings. There is no unity to the entire Bible.
  - b. I am totally confused about how the different parts of the Bible relate to one another. Maybe there's some way to fit it together, but maybe there's not.
  - c. I am inclined to believe that there is one unified message of the Bible, but I couldn't tell you much about what unites the Bible other than Jesus and salvation.
  - d. I am confident that I understand the Bible's unfolding message, and could tell you how each part in the Bible's story relates to the other parts.

It is not within the scope of this curriculum or lesson to launch into a full-blown defense of a “pan-biblical theology.” Its viability will be more of a premise than a conclusion. It is hoped, however, that in actually constructing a pan-biblical theology throughout this course, you might resonate with its explanatory power and truth.

What ultimately binds the testaments together is the revelation of God in the man Jesus, the Messiah of Israel. The 66 canonical books are a collective witness to him and what he discloses of God. As Graeme Goldsworthy has asserted, “We begin and end with Christ.”

Here is his fuller explanation:

*“Because Christ sums up the whole of biblical revelation, what is revealed of him controls the way we do biblical theology. The historic event of Jesus of Nazareth is God’s fullest self-disclosure to mankind. It brings to full clarity what has been*

*present in the Old Testament as a shadow from the beginning. Although Christ is the fulfillment and the solid reality, he cannot be understood in isolation from the promises and shadows in the Old Testament. From our starting point with Christ we find ourselves moving backward and forward between the two Testaments. Our understanding of the gospel is enhanced by our understanding of its Old Testament roots, and at the same time the gospel shows us the true meaning of the Old Testament.”<sup>13</sup>*

Therefore Christ, and him crucified, is at the center of this curriculum, stretching backward to the creation (and before) and forward to endless ages of glory.

***May Jesus, the Messiah, be praised!***

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ Read the article entitled, “Biblical Theology” (pages 3-11)
- ▷ Then read the article entitled, “History of Biblical Theology” (pages 11-20)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002)
- ▷ *Out of Egypt*, eds. Craig Bartholomew et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004)
- ▷ *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott Hafemann (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002)

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<sup>13</sup> Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 76.



# God Created the Heavens and the Earth

# 2

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## 🌀 INTRODUCTION

Genocides and greed, cancer and tsunamis—all evil and suffering in this world can trace its origin to one fateful piece of fruit. Though it may seem insignificant, Adam and Eve’s decision to disobey God’s command was of cosmic and historic significance, the effects of which have rippled throughout all human existence. Though Adam and Eve were called to rule the earth in dependence on God, they failed in their commission. And God responded in judgment mingled with mercy, a pattern which will recur in Genesis 1-11 and indeed throughout biblical history.

In this lesson we will study what has been called the “primeval history” of Genesis 1-11. These chapters form the all-important backdrop for the story of God’s workings in the world. Adam and Eve, Abel, Cain, Noah, and the Tower of Babel prepare us for God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which will dominate the rest of Genesis. The flood and subsequent new creation hint at how God will redeem this world which has fallen into dreadful sin and futility.

## 🌀 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to:

- ▷ define what it means to be created in the image of God
- ▷ demonstrate the continuation of God’s blessing and the spread of sin
- ▷ understand how Genesis 1-11 prepares the reader for the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 and following





As noted in the lesson, during your discussion of this lesson and each succeeding lesson, you will have to provide the words that are missing in each of the “Tracing God’s Ways” boxes. The rationale behind leaving blanks in the Student’s Workbook is to force your students to carefully record and think about summaries of the lesson’s content as you progress through it in class discussion. Therefore, as you read each summary and fill in the missing words, you may choose to pause for student questions or comments. Don’t encourage your students to guess at these blank spaces as they encounter them in preparation. Rather tell them to wait until class discussion to record the curriculum’s answers.

There is so much material that could be considered during this lesson. We had to be very selective in designing this curriculum lest the lessons be too long and complicated. In your discussion of the content, however, we would encourage you to supplement what we’ve included with any material of your own that you deem appropriate, drawing from your own study of biblical theology and knowledge of the Scriptures. Please remember that this curriculum is intended to function as a resource, and therefore something of a “launching pad” for your own instruction of this course.

Though this curriculum will not suggest many specific teaching techniques, we do think it helpful for you, as the instructor, to reproduce a basic salvation-history timeline in your discussion of each lesson (see the beginning of Day 4 for an example.) By drawing the same timeline on a whiteboard (or overhead projector) each lesson, you will give your students some sense of the chronological flow of God’s revelation which is such an important part of biblical theology.

One final note: Some of your students may challenge the idea that God’s immediate presence was not in the garden by citing Genesis 3:8. Though we did not include our understanding of this verse in the lesson, please note that we think “the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” is a mistranslation of the Hebrew. Rather, we think this phrase should be translated “the thunderous voice of the LORD God as he went back and forth in the garden in the wind of the storm.” The verse therefore describes a judgment theophany. See Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), 155-159, for a defense of this reading.



## Day 1

### FILLING THE EARTH WITH GOD'S GLORY

#### Genesis 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

Thus begins our study of biblical theology.

All the creation accounts of the ancient Near East begin with dark, watery chaos: no land and no order. The Genesis account, however, differs from the creation stories of Egypt and Mesopotamia in at least one crucial respect. In Genesis, there is one God who creates and rules all of what he has made. He created without assistance, and he rules without rival. There is no competition in God's creation, ownership, or rule of the world. This fact is fundamentally important for the rest of the biblical story.

But why did God create the world? What is his purpose in doing so?

God created the world for the display of his glory, and God's glory is most clearly seen in his creation of and provision for man.

#### Genesis 1:26-29

<sup>26</sup> *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* <sup>27</sup> *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* <sup>28</sup> *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* <sup>29</sup> *And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."*



1. Underline each phrase that discusses man being created in God's image. What immediately follows each of these phrases? Does this provide any direction for what being created "in the image of God" might mean?

- *ANSWER. Immediately after the two declarations of man being created in God's image is recorded the charge for man to have dominion over all the earth and its creatures. This suggests that being created in the image of God is expressed in man's dominion over what God has made. This understanding is strengthened by considering what an "image" is in the ancient Near Eastern context (see Day 4, below).*

2. What relationship can you discern, if any, between verse 28 and verse 29? What additional nuance might this add to our understanding of what it means to be created in God's image?

- *ANSWER. The observation that God's commission in v. 28 is immediately followed by God's provision in v. 29 suggests that man's dominion will differ from God's dominion in at least one crucial way: whereas God is completely self-sufficient, man is dependent upon God. Man will rule the earth, but he must rule the earth by relying on God to supply what he needs. Man's dominion, therefore, is not an absolute one. Rather, man's dominion reflects God's kingly character while simultaneously reflecting a creaturely need for sustenance.*

*"Being made in the image of God signifies humans exercising dominion as God's vicereagents of creation."<sup>14</sup>*

*"Thus, the 'image of God' is primarily a functional designation; mankind is the one creature who is to relate directly to God in conscious dependence... and to reflect this relationship by exercising a godlike rule over the world. To be in the image of God thus means that 'mankind represents God so that what man does is what God himself would do' if he ruled the world directly."<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 59.

<sup>15</sup> Scott Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), 25.

3. What might it mean to say that Adam and Eve were called to a “dominion of dependence”? How might this relate to God’s glory?

· **ANSWER.** *This phrase (which originates with Scott Hafemann) aptly characterizes the nature of man’s dominion over the earth. Though man is created to rule over the earth as a reflection of God’s rule, man nevertheless must depend on God to provide what he needs (in the form of food, life, breath, and everything else). As we will see, God is glorified in man’s “dominion of dependence” because the theological maxim “the giver gets the glory” is true. God’s total self-sufficiency and overflowing provision for man highlights his own power and glory.*

In commanding the man and woman to have dominion over creation, God also blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Trace this commission throughout the book of Genesis by comparing the following list of texts. Read the wider context when necessary.

#### Genesis 1:28

<sup>28</sup> *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

#### Genesis 9:1-2, 7

<sup>1</sup> *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”* <sup>2</sup> *The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. . . .* <sup>7</sup> *And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it.”*

#### Genesis 17:5-6, 15-16

<sup>5</sup> *No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.* <sup>6</sup> *I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. . . .* <sup>15</sup> *And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.”* <sup>16</sup> *I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”*

Genesis 28:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, “You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. <sup>3</sup> God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.”

Genesis 35:10-11

<sup>10</sup> And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel. <sup>11</sup> And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.”

Genesis 47:27 (cf. Exodus 1:7)

<sup>27</sup> Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly.

4. From what you can observe in these texts, summarize the significance of this theme in the book of Genesis.

· **ANSWER.** Several observations can be made about the development of this theme in Genesis: 1) God’s commission to man to fill the earth was not revoked by Adam’s sin, but continues throughout Genesis (and the rest of salvation history); 2) God’s commission is directly given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and his descendants; 3) the theme of being fruitful and multiplying is connected repeatedly with both blessing and kingship; and 4) God’s command is based on God’s promise. Thus, God’s intentions in the creation of mankind are being initially fulfilled by Abraham’s descendants.

The Great Commission of Genesis 1:28 extends beyond the book of Genesis. Indeed it can be traced through the entire Bible. Notice a few examples of this theme in later biblical books:

Leviticus 26:3-4, 9, 14-17

<sup>3</sup> If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, <sup>4</sup> then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. . . . <sup>9</sup> I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant

with you. . . .<sup>14</sup> But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments,<sup>15</sup> if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant,<sup>16</sup> then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.<sup>17</sup> I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.

Jeremiah 23:3-6 (cf. Jeremiah 3:14-17)

<sup>3</sup> Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.<sup>4</sup> I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.<sup>5</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.<sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness.”

Ezekiel 36:8-11

<sup>8</sup> But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home.<sup>9</sup> For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.<sup>10</sup> And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt.<sup>11</sup> And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Acts 6:7

<sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 9:31

<sup>31</sup> So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

We have therefore seen in the foundational text of Genesis 1:26-28 the interweaving of two crucially important themes: first, we have seen that God's creation of man in his image was for the display of his kingly character; second, we have seen God's intention that his image-bearers fill and subdue the earth. What is the theological deduction that can be drawn from these two themes? Study the texts below.

#### Genesis 1:26-28

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

#### Psalm 72:17-19

<sup>17</sup> May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!<sup>18</sup> Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.<sup>19</sup> Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!

#### Isaiah 11:6-9

<sup>6</sup> The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.<sup>7</sup> The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.<sup>8</sup> The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.<sup>9</sup> They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

#### Habakkuk 2:13-14

<sup>13</sup> Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?<sup>14</sup> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

5. How might these passages relate?

- **ANSWER.** *The passages from Ps 72, Isa 11, and Hab 2 can all be seen as the theological outworking of God's intention in Gen 1:26-28. God created man in his image to reflect his glory, and by commanding man to fill the earth, God is signaling his desire for his own glory to fill the earth. Moreover, Isa 11 and Hab 2 teach us that this is a certain reality.*

At the end of study for Days 1, 2, and 3 (of Lessons 2-12) there will appear a shaded box, like the one below, labeled “Tracing God’s Ways.” These boxes provide summaries of what has been taught in each preceding section of the course. You will notice that there are blanks in the Student’s Workbook at key points in these summaries. In your class discussion of the lesson, your instructor will give you the words to fill in these blanks. Therefore, you may skip over these boxes in your preparation and return to them as your instructor directs in class discussion.

### Tracing God’s Ways

Being created in the image of God means that mankind has both the capacity and commission to reflect God’s dominion over creation in conscious dependence on his provision. Mankind’s commission to “be fruitful and multiply” is intended to fill the earth with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. As human beings—God’s image-bearers—spread and exercise their dominion, the display of God’s glory would also thereby spread.

## Day 2

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### FALLING FROM THE GLORY OF GOD

We have not yet considered one aspect of Genesis 1:26-29 and being created in the image of God, and that is the creation of “man” as male and female.

Genesis 1:26-27

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

6. How does the command “be fruitful and multiply” relate to God creating male and female?
  - **ANSWER.** *God’s command to be fruitful and multiply presupposes the bearing and raising of children, a task that requires both a man and a woman. Men and women are together called to reign over the earth. The fulfillment of the Great Commission of Gen 1:28 therefore requires the right ordering of sexual relationships, and as we will see below, falling from the glory of God results in a perversion of sexual relationships.*

The man and woman whom God created, however, failed to rule as God intended. Rather than subduing the creatures, the man and woman were deceived by one of the creatures, the serpent.

The account of Adam and Eve’s fall into sin is a familiar one. Reread this account with an eye toward how they failed in their commission.

Genesis 3:1-7

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,<sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not

surely die.<sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Now compare the following passages:

Genesis 2:16-17

<sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,<sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 3:1, 4

<sup>1</sup> . . . [The serpent] said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” . . . <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.”

Genesis 3:2-3

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,<sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

7. How do the serpent and especially Eve distort and contradict God’s word? Record your observations:

- **ANSWER.** *The serpent begins by twisting God’s generous provision of every tree of the garden but one into an insidious question as to whether God has provided anything at all. He then blatantly contradicts God’s promise of death for disobedience. The woman diminishes God’s provision (changing “may surely eat” to “may eat”), doesn’t identify the tree of knowledge precisely, adds a prohibition that God doesn’t mention (“touching” the tree), and diminishes God’s promised consequence (changing “shall surely die” to “die”). It is not clear whether Adam’s communication of God’s command introduced these distortions or whether Eve introduced them herself.*



The man and woman God created did not depend on God for his provision. Through the deception of the serpent, they questioned whether God's provision was really good. The serpent tempted them to doubt God's provision and his word. This is the essence of all sin: doubting God's provision and his word. God promises us good, if we will only trust him.

Without sin, Adam and Eve could enjoy God's presence. But once they dishonored God by believing the serpent and not God, God could not tolerate their sin in his presence. Since sin is a denial of God's provision and his worth, it is a slander to his glory, and God will not give his glory to another. God must judge their sin.

God's clear commitment to upholding his own glory is seen in the following passage:

Isaiah 48:9-11

*<sup>9</sup> "For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. <sup>10</sup> Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. <sup>11</sup> For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."*

The sin of Adam and Eve is repeated in every act of human disobedience. Notice the following well-known passages in the book of Romans and think about the connections that these passages have to Genesis 3.

Romans 1:21-25

*<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. <sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

Romans 3:23

*<sup>23</sup> For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .*

John Piper comments on the relationship between Romans 3:23 and 1:23:

*“This is what it means to fall short of the glory of God—to exchange it for something else. God offers us the glory of his beauty and strength and generosity and wisdom for our enjoyment, and we sniff at it and fall in love with the things he has made. He offers us himself as our infinite treasure and we trade him in on a secondhand pleasure.”<sup>16</sup>*

8. Why must God punish Adam and Eve’s sin and all human sin? In other words, what motivates God to punish sin?

- **ANSWER.** *God is compelled to punish human sin because he is committed to the preservation and display of his own glory. When humans, who were created in God’s image to exercise a dominion of dependence, doubt God’s provision and seek to provide for themselves what they judge is best, God’s glory is challenged and obscured. Therefore, to maintain his glory, God judges sin to demonstrate that he will tolerate no slander of or rival to his glory.*

In response to Adam and Eve’s sin, God exiles them from the garden. He cannot allow them to eat from the tree of life and multiply on the earth since they will no longer be exercising dominion as God intended or spreading his glory.

9. Complete the following table by listing biblical parallels describing the ways in which life outside of the garden will be a reversal or diminishment of the blessings enjoyed within the garden. The first biblical parallel is given to you as an example.

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<sup>16</sup> John Piper, “Joy Exchanged and Joy Forfeited,” an online sermon at the desiringGod website.

Life within the garden	Life outside the garden
Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth (Genesis 1:26).	I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring (Genesis 3:15).
And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth . . ." (Gen 1:28).	I will surely multiply your pain in child-bearing (Genesis 3:16).
"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18)	Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you (Genesis 3:16).
Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food (Genesis 1:29).	. . . Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you (Gen 3:17-18).
You may surely eat of every tree of the garden (Gen 2:16).	You shall eat the plants of the field (Genesis 3:18).
Out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden (Gen 2:9).	By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return (Genesis 3:19).

The dreadful effects of Adam and Eve's sin are seen immediately. Cain, called to rule over the world, is instead a slave to his own sin (see Genesis 4:7). He murders his brother, which is a gross perversion of God's good design. God shows mercy and continues to bless despite human wickedness. He provides another son for Adam and Eve.

10. What is the relationship between the two phrases in this sentence: "Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden" (Genesis 4:14)?
  - **ANSWER.** *These two phrases point to the direct relationship between God's presence and God's provision. While in the presence of God, Adam and Eve enjoyed his abundant provision. After being driven from God's presence because of their sin, Adam and Eve must (in some sense) provide*

*for themselves. This is also seen in Gen 4:14 and the judgment pronounced upon Cain, who is told that the ground will no longer yield its produce for him.*

*This link between God's presence and his provision explains why, when mankind's rebellion reaches such drastic proportions that God decides to destroy them, he does so by destroying with a flood the very habitat he has provided (Gen. 6:5-7). Humanity's ever-increasing failure to honor their Creator is thus judged by a progressive reversal of the purpose of creation itself, which was to manifest God's glory through the dependent dominion of his people made possible by his provision. An increasing alienation from God brings with it an increasing alienation from God's other provisions.<sup>17</sup>*

### Tracing God's Ways

Adam and Eve did not trust in God's provision and therefore failed in their commission. The result of their sin is that they are barred from God's presence and will therefore die. Adam and Eve's first child continues the downward spiral of human sin by killing his brother. But God's judgment is mingled with his preserving mercy.

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<sup>17</sup> Hafemann, *God of Promise*, 65-66.

## Day 3

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### THE FLOOD AND THE "TOWER"

Genesis 6 describes the worsening conditions resulting from Adam's and Cain's sin. Instead of the display of God's glory increasing as his image-bearers filled the earth, man's wickedness had grown great in the earth (Gen 6:5). This provokes God to act.

Compare the following passages. *Why* will God destroy the earth? *Why* will he never destroy it again? Underline the relevant biblical phrases.

#### Genesis 6:5-7

<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. <sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

#### Genesis 6:11-13

<sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup> And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. <sup>13</sup> And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

#### Genesis 8:18-22

<sup>18</sup> So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. <sup>19</sup> Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark. <sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. <sup>22</sup> While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

11. Has the heart of man changed as a result of the flood? Why then did God send the flood? Why won't he send another? Again, underline those phrases that support your answer.

· **ANSWER.** *A comparison of these passages reveals that man's wickedness is both the cause of the flood and the reason why God won't send another flood. The evilness of man's heart has not changed. Therefore, God must not have sent the flood in order to change the heart of man but to demonstrate his own wrath toward sin. He won't send another (at this time) because if he did not restrain judgment, he would be continuously flooding the earth. (The transformation of man's heart will not come through judgment or external means, but must come through an "inner washing" of the heart.)*

Here are the later biblical reflections of Peter on the flood:

2 Peter 3:5-9

*<sup>5</sup> For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, <sup>6</sup> and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. <sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

12. According to Peter, why might God not have sent another flood on the evil generations that arose immediately after Noah? Why would God delay his judgment, but not forgo his judgment?

· **ANSWER.** *By promising not to send another flood, God has created space in biblical history for his redemptive plans to unfold. God's desire is for people to reach repentance and salvation, which he will provide. But his delay is not slowness. His judgment will inevitably come and result in the destruction of the ungodly.*

In his judgment, God preserves one righteous man and his family. Noah is portrayed as a second Adam. The covenant that God makes with Noah sets the stage upon which the rest of human history can be enacted. But even though the creation mandate is repeated to Noah (Genesis 9:1, 7), he too fails. Compare Noah's sin to Adam and Eve's.

Genesis 9:20-27

*<sup>20</sup> Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. <sup>22</sup> And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup> Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. <sup>24</sup> When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, <sup>25</sup> he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." <sup>26</sup> He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. <sup>27</sup> May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant."*

13. Is God's blessing preserved despite Noah's failure? If so, how?

- **ANSWER.** *God shows mercy to Noah in not destroying him or his family. God's blessing continues, but now, God's blessing will be upon a certain lineage and not the others (Gen 9:25-26). This pattern is continued in the families of Abraham and Isaac, in which only certain sons (Isaac and Jacob) receive the blessing. As God had promised to Eve, there is now enmity between the "seed of the woman" and the "seed of the serpent."*

The descent of Noah's offspring into sin is similar to the descent of Adam's offspring into sin. In Genesis 1-11 this climaxes in the Tower of Babel. Read this episode—an episode underestimated in its significance.

Genesis 11:1-9

*<sup>1</sup> Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. <sup>2</sup> And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup> And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. <sup>4</sup> Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed*

over the face of the whole earth.”<sup>5</sup> And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup> Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.”<sup>8</sup> So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9</sup> Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

Now read the following comments made by John Walton on the Hebrew word translated as “tower” (Genesis 11:4):

*“The word used in the Hebrew text is generic and can be used for any sort of tower. In the Old Testament, the towers most frequently mentioned are defense towers or watchtowers. But the text is not describing an Israelite city; it is describing an early Mesopotamian city. The most prominent building in the early temple complex was the ziggurat. Most interpreters, therefore, have identified the Tower of Babel as a ziggurat, and I concur. Not only is it sociologically right for the context, even the terminology supports it. Throughout Mesopotamian literature, almost every occurrence of the expression describing a building “with its head in the heavens” refers to a temple with a ziggurat. . . .*

*...The ziggurat was a structure that was built to support a stairway. This stairway was a visual representation of that which was believed to be used by the gods to travel from one realm to another. It was solely for the convenience of the gods and was maintained in order to provide the deity with the amenities that would refresh him along the way. . . .*

*The needs and nature of the deities who would make use of a ziggurat stairway and be served in such ways reflect the weakness and distortion of deity brought about by the Babylonian anthropomorphization of the gods. It is this system of religion that was an outgrowth of the urbanization process as it unfolded in Mesopotamia, and it is this system that had as its chief symbol the towering ziggurat. The offense in this passage, then, is to be found in the beliefs that resulted in the project and what it stood for in the minds of the builders. It went beyond mere idolatry; it*



*degraded the nature of God by portraying him as having needs.”<sup>18</sup>*

14. If Walton is right about the identification and nature of the “tower” that was being built, then how might Genesis 11:1-9 relate to Genesis 1:29?

- **ANSWER.** *If Walton is right, then Gen 11:1-9 represents man’s sinful inversion of Gen 1:29. In Gen 1:29 God pronounced his intention to glorify himself by providing for man’s needs. Gen 11:1-9 is the sinful attempt of man to make a name for himself by providing for God’s (or the gods’) needs. Gen 11:1-9 therefore represents the first instance of an idolatry that will be condemned throughout Israel’s history: portraying God as though he had needs that man could fulfill (compare, for example, Isa 44:9-20; 46:1-11; 64:4).*

Biblical theologians have long recognized the significance of God’s covenant with Abraham in the unfolding purposes of God in the world. What is less recognized, however, is the way in which Genesis 1-11, and especially the Tower of Babel, prepares for the narrative of God’s dealings with Abraham. Consider the following comments about the flow of redemptive history from Genesis 1-11 to Genesis 12:

*“The primeval history concludes with the important account of the Tower of Babel. Urbanization in Mesopotamia had provided fertile ground for the development of a new paganism aptly represented in the symbolism of the ziggurat. The Tower of Babel represented the definitive formulation of a brand of paganism that pervaded the ancient Near East in which mythologized deity was portrayed as having all the foibles of humanity. In so doing, humanity remade deity in its own image. The perception of God that swept the ancient world was incapable of providing a sound basis for a relationship with the one true God. The result was the need for God to vouchsafe an accurate revelation of himself. He therefore instituted a revelatory program by means of the covenant.”<sup>19</sup>*

15. According to John Walton, why might Genesis 11:1-9 (though it precedes Genesis 10 chronologically) have been juxtaposed with Genesis 12?

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18 John Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), 372-373, 374, 377.

19 John Walton, *Covenant: God’s Purpose, God’s Plan* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 44-45.

- **ANSWER.** *Again, if John Walton is right, then Gen 11:1-9 provides an account of why God's covenant with Abraham is necessary. As we have seen from Gen 1-9, it is God's intention to glorify himself throughout the earth by providing for the needs of man, who is created in his image. Gen 11:1-9 then presents a serious distortion of the glory of God and threatens to nullify God's global plans. Therefore, God responds by instituting a "revelatory program" through his covenant with Abraham by which he will make himself truly known in all the earth.*

### Tracing God's Ways

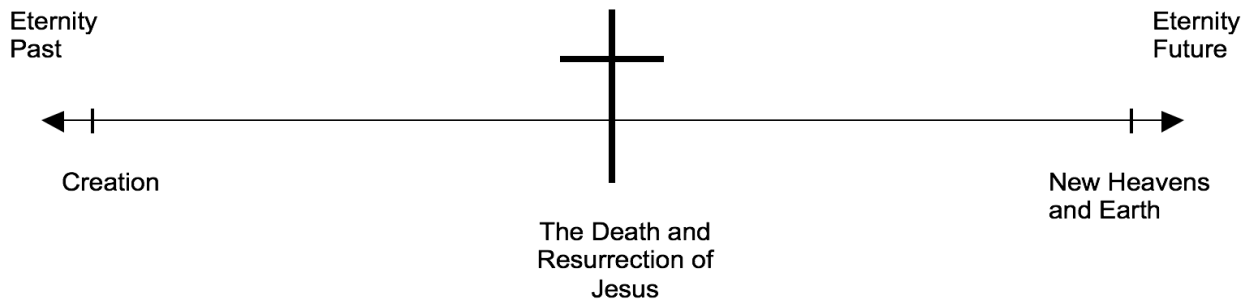
Despite the flood, the heart of man has not changed. Sin continues to spread in the world, culminating in the Tower of Babel, which represents a blasphemous misrepresentation of God's nature. Genesis 1-11 ends with the human race fractured, scattered, and in delusion about God and his relationship to the humans he has created. What will God do about this?

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE TEMPLE

This day’s study marks the first of eleven biblical-theological themes that will be traced through the Old and New Testaments. When tracing the development of a biblical theme, it is always important to keep in mind the historical chronology of salvation history, represented in the following basic diagram:



The first theme we will trace is that of the temple. Though the theme of the temple is easily traced back to the construction of Israel’s tabernacle—the precursor to the temple—we will here argue that the theme of the temple can be traced back all the way to Genesis 1-3 and the creation.

G. K. Beale notes the following parallels between the Garden of Eden and Israel’s tabernacle and temple. These parallels “reveal hints that the Garden of Eden was the first archetypal temple in which the first man worshipped God.”<sup>20</sup>

- **The Garden as the unique place of God’s presence:** “Israel’s temple was the place where the priest experienced God’s unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God.” (66)
- **The Garden as the place of the first priest:** “Genesis 2:15 says God placed

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<sup>20</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2004), 66. The page references in the bulleted list that follows also refer to this book.

Adam in the Garden ‘to cultivate it and to keep it.’ The two Hebrew words for ‘cultivate and keep’ are usually translated ‘serve and guard [or keep]’ elsewhere in the Old Testament.” (66-67) When... these two words occur together they often describe priestly service in the tabernacle (67).

- **The Garden as the place of the first guarding cherubim:** “The guarding role of the cherubim [in Eden after Adam failed] plausibly became memorialized in the tabernacle when God commanded Moses to make two statues of cherubim and stationed them on either side of the ‘ark of the covenant’ in the ‘holy of holies’ (Exodus 25:13-22).” (70-71)
- **The Garden as the place of the first arboreal lampstand:** “The ‘tree of life’ itself is a good candidate to be considered as the model for the lampstand placed directly outside of the ‘holy of holies.’ The lampstand in the tabernacle and temple looked like a small, flowering tree...” (71)
- **The Garden as formative for garden imagery in Israel’s temple:** “That the Garden of Eden was the first sacred space is also suggested by observing that Solomon’s temple was described with botanical and arboreal imagery that gave it a garden-like appearance.” (71)
- **Eden as the first source of water:** “Just as a river flowed out from Eden (Gen. 2:10), so the post-exilic temple (Letter of Aristeas, 89-91) and the eschatological temple in both Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 21:1-2 have rivers flowing out from their centre...” (72)
- **The Garden as the place of precious stones:** “Genesis 2:12 says that ‘good gold’ and ‘bdellium and onyx stone’ were in ‘the land of Havilah,’ apparently where Eden was or, at least, to which it was close. Of course, various items of tabernacle furniture were made of gold, as were the walls, ceiling and floor of the holy of holies in Solomon’s temple... Furthermore, the onyx stones decorated both the tabernacle and temple, as well as the high priestly garments.” (73)
- **The Garden as the place of the first mountain:** “The prophet Ezekiel portrays Eden as being on a mountain (Ezek. 28:14, 16). Israel’s temple was on Mount Zion (e.g., Exod. 15:17), and the end-time temple was to be located on a mountain (Ezek. 40:2; 43:12; Rev. 21:10).” (73)
- **The Garden as the first place with an eastern facing entrance:** “The entrance to Eden was from the east (Gen. 3:24), which was also the direction from which one entered the tabernacle and later temples of Israel, and would be the same direction from which the latter-day temple would be entered (Ezek. 40:6).” (74)
- **Ezekiel’s view of the Garden of Eden as the first sanctuary:** “In the light of these numerous conceptual and linguistic parallels between Eden

and Israel's tabernacle and temple, it should not be unexpected to find that Ezekiel 28:13-14, 16, 18 refer to 'Eden, the garden of God . . . the holy mountain of God,' and also alludes to it as containing 'sanctuaries,' which elsewhere is a plural way of referring to Israel's tabernacle (Lev. 21:23) and temple (Ezek. 7:24; so also Jer. 51:51)." (75)

This is Beale's conclusion to the list of parallels he identifies:

*"The cumulative effect of the preceding parallels between the Garden of Genesis 2 and Israel's tabernacle and temple indicates that Eden was the first archetypal temple, upon which all of Israel's temples were based. Some of the similarities drawn may not be as strong as others, but when all are viewed together they have a significant collective effect, pointing to Eden as the first temple in garden-like form".*

<sup>21</sup>

16. Are you convinced by Beale that we should view the Garden of Eden as a garden temple? Why or why not?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

If Beale is right about the garden temple of Eden, then it is very interesting to consider in what part of the temple Adam and Eve were dwelling.

The temple in ancient Israel had a basic tripartite structure:

1. **The outer court:** This is where the bronze altar for burnt offerings and large metal basin (the "sea") for priestly washing were placed.
2. **The nave or Holy Place:** This is where the altar of incense, table for the bread of the Presence, and the ten golden lampstands were placed.
3. **The inner sanctuary or Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies:** This is where the ark of the covenant was kept between two cherubim.

If this tripartite temple structure can even be seen in Genesis 1-3, where were Adam and Eve dwelling?

*"Because the garden in Genesis was planted in a well-watered place (Eden), it*

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<sup>21</sup> Beale, *The Temple*, 79-80.

took Eden as its name. But technically speaking, the garden should be understood as adjoining Eden because the water flows from Eden and waters the garden (see Gen. 2:10). In the same way, therefore, that a garden of a palace adjoins the palace, Eden is the source of the waters and the residence of God, and the garden adjoins God's residence."<sup>22</sup>

"If Ezekiel and Revelation are developments of the first garden-temple, which we will argue later is the case, then Eden, the area where the source of water is located, may be comparable to the inner sanctuary of Israel's later temple and the adjoining garden to the holy place."<sup>23</sup>

17. According to Walton and Beale, in which part of the temple structure were Adam and Eve dwelling? What is the primary evidence they cite?

- **ANSWER.** Walton and Beale locate Adam and Eve in what would be the equivalent to the nave or Holy Place. The primary evidence they cite is the fact that the source of water in Eden issues from the equivalent of the Most Holy Place (cf. Ezek 47:1; Rev 22:1) and flows from there to the Holy Place. And as Beale argues above, garden imagery abounded in the Holy Place (not Most Holy Place). (Furthermore, the term "image" is often used for idols in the Old Testament, which would have been put in the Holy Place.)

Though we cannot fully develop a biblical theology of the temple in the short space here, note that access to God was carefully guarded in Israel's tabernacle and temple. The sacred temple space needed to be continually purified so that the Holy God could continue to dwell with a sinful people. Eventually, because Israel had so thoroughly broken the covenant, pursued idolatry, and polluted the temple with her sins, God's glory is removed from the temple, and it is destroyed.

Given that the temple was such an important part of Israel's religion and identity, notice the following prophecy, which intriguingly speaks of an expansion of the temple's holy space to encompass all of Jerusalem:

Jeremiah 3:15-17

<sup>15</sup> And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with

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<sup>22</sup> John Walton, *Genesis*, 168.

<sup>23</sup> Beale, *The Temple*, 74.

knowledge and understanding. <sup>16</sup> And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, they shall no more say, “The ark of the covenant of the LORD.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. <sup>17</sup> At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.

Though the temple had been rebuilt under King Herod, Jesus acts in judgment against it. Notice the shocking statement that Jesus makes about the temple and his own body:

John 2:13-22

<sup>13</sup> The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. <sup>15</sup> And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” <sup>18</sup> So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” <sup>21</sup> But he was speaking about the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup> When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

18. What is the significance of Jesus asserting that his own body would be the new temple?

- **ANSWER.** As we’ve already learned, the temple was the place in which God dwelled with his people. His presence was made possible by the sacrifices that were made to cleanse the temple. By claiming that his own body was the true temple, Jesus is indicating that God would now dwell with his people through Jesus. Jesus’ sacrificial death makes it possible for a holy God to dwell with a sinful people. Jesus was also the new locus of God’s revelation.

But the shocking turns in redemptive history don't end with Jesus' bold claim to be the true temple. The New Testament repeatedly calls believers the temple of God:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

*<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? <sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

*<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Ephesians 2:19-22

*<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

Compare the following two passages:

Ezekiel 47:1, 8-9

*<sup>1</sup> Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. . . . <sup>8</sup> And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. <sup>9</sup> And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes."*

John 7:37-39

*<sup>37</sup> On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the*



Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'<sup>39</sup> Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

19. How might Ezekiel 47 provide necessary background for fully understanding what Jesus is saying in John 7:38?

- **ANSWER.** *When Jesus claims that rivers of living water will flow from the heart of the one who believes in him, he is probably drawing upon common temple imagery, as seen, for example, in Ezekiel 47. If this connection can be established, then Jesus is claiming in John 7:37-39 that the one who believes in him will be the new temple of God and that God's special, life-giving presence (the Spirit) will take up residence in the believer's heart.*

The final movement in a biblical theology of the temple is depicted in the final chapters of the book of Revelation. It is the contention of this curriculum (following G. K. Beale) that the new heavens and earth are described with temple language. Notice the following parallel:

Ezekiel 47:7-9, 12

<sup>7</sup> As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. <sup>8</sup> And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. <sup>9</sup> And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. . . . <sup>12</sup> And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."

Revelation 22:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

To further illustrate this fact, read the following description of the new Jerusalem:

Revelation 21:15-16, 18, 21-23

*<sup>15</sup> And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. <sup>16</sup> The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, <sup>12,000</sup> stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. . . . <sup>18</sup> The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. . . . <sup>21</sup> And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. <sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*

Notice four things about the description of the new city: 1) it is cubic in shape; 2) it is covered in gold; 3) it is filled with the light of God's glory; and 4) there is no temple in it. Bearing these observations in mind, read the following passages about Israel's tabernacle and temple:

Exodus 40:33-35

*<sup>33</sup> And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work. <sup>34</sup> Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. <sup>35</sup> And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

1 Kings 6:20-22

*<sup>20</sup> The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar. <sup>21</sup> And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. <sup>22</sup> And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.*

1 Kings 8:10-11

*<sup>10</sup> And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, <sup>11</sup> so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.*

20. What connections can you draw between Revelation 21 and these three descriptions of Israel's tabernacle and temple (above)? In what part of the temple structure will God's people dwell in the new earth? (Compare your answer to the answer you gave to Question 17 of this lesson.)

· **ANSWER.** *The descriptions of the new Jerusalem being cubic, covered with gold, and filled with the light of God's glory confirm that temple imagery is being used. What is striking, however, is that the parallels are between Rev 21 and the Most Holy Place. It would appear as if the Most Holy Place has now expanded to encompass the entire new earth. Believers will dwell in the immediate presence of God, a privilege not even enjoyed by Adam and Eve.*

*"...The new creation and Jerusalem are none other than God's tabernacle, the true temple of God's special presence portrayed throughout [Revelation] chapter 21. It was this divine presence that was formerly limited to Israel's temple and has begun to expand through the church, and which will fill the whole earth and heaven, becoming coequal with it. Then the eschatological goal of the temple of the Garden of Eden dominating the entire creation will be finally fulfilled. Hence, eschatology not only recapitulates the protology of Eden but escalates it."<sup>24</sup>*

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24 Beale, *The Temple*, 368.

## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ Read the article entitled, “Temple” (pages 806-811)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ Read the article entitled, “Adam and Eve” (pages 372-376)
- ▷ Then read the article entitled, “Sin” (pages 781-788)



## INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of the temple, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. Did the Fall nullify the image of God in humans?
2. Should we read Genesis 1-2 as a (primitive) scientific account?
3. Why is the creation of the marriage covenant included in Genesis 1-2?

## YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

## APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

How should biblical theology change my life?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001)
- ▷ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2004)





# The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob

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# 3

## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

The flood had not solved the problem of sin. Sin must be judged by a holy God, but the intention of man's heart was still evil from his youth (Genesis 8:21). At the Tower of Babel, men sought to perpetuate a distorted view of God's nature which prompted God to come down in judgment. But God had promised that he wouldn't judge the earth by flooding it, so what will he do?

In this lesson, we will survey the patriarchs with a particular focus on Abraham. Although Abraham had worshipped other gods in Ur, God chose to use him to bless the nations. Abraham, like Noah, is a new beginning; the covenant with him is God's answer to the Tower of Babel and the problem of sin. It is through Abraham and his offspring that God's blessing would continue and God's character be known.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ describe how Genesis 12-50 relates to Genesis 1-11
- ▷ explain the structure of covenants in the Bible
- ▷ describe how God is faithful in establishing his covenant with Abraham's offspring: Isaac, Jacob, and the sons of Jacob





As you teach this lesson and subsequent lessons, remember to invest part of the class time in reviewing the material from the previous week. This is especially important in a course on biblical theology, because you are striving to help your students understand how redemptive history flows from one stage to another.

Don't miss the opportunity to draw out the practical relevance of the covenant structure. As we will see throughout the course, the commands of God are never spoken alone. Rather, for the Christian, God's commands are always enabled by God's provisions and are always motivated by God's promised rewards. Understanding the power and motivation for obedience are crucial.

This curriculum presents a "baptistic" understanding of the relationship between circumcision and baptism, old and new covenant people. If this is not your conviction or the conviction of your church, then feel free to present your own understanding. But do it in such a way that shows the relationship between the two and the way in which the doctrine of circumcision has been developed in the New Testament.



## Day 1

### ABRAHAM AND GOD'S COVENANT

As we learned in the previous lesson, God's plan from the beginning was for the earth to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. God's glory would be chiefly on display in the benevolent rule of men and women who trusted in God to provide for all their needs.

It has been argued that the Tower of Babel, as a blasphemous distortion of God's true nature, threatened this plan. The establishment of a pagan religious system causes God to respond. He dismantles the building project, but his image in the world is already tarnished. He must restore the knowledge of his glory and he does this by means of the covenant.

Therefore, the call of Abram is a highly significant event in biblical theology. Study it by carefully reading the following passage:

Genesis 12:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Search through Genesis 12-16, looking for all the passages in which God speaks to Abram. Record them in the chart below, along with a summary of what God says:

Passage	What God Says
Genesis 12:1-3	God commands Abram to leave his country and promises descendants, blessing, fame, and protection.
Genesis 12:7	God promises to give Abram's descendants the land of Canaan.

Genesis 13:14-17	God promises to give Abram and his descendants the land of Canaan; he promises to make Abram's descendants exceedingly numerous.
Genesis 15:1	God commands Abram not to fear, tells him that he is his shield, and promises a great reward.
Genesis 15:4, 5	God promises Abram an immediate descendant from his own body and then countless offspring.
Genesis 15:7, 9	God reminds Abram that he is the one who brought him from Ur to possess the land of Canaan; he commands Abram to bring sacrificial animals.
Genesis 15:13-16	God informs Abram that his descendants will suffer 400 years in a land that is not their own; God will then bring them out of that land and back to the land of Canaan.
Genesis 15:18-21	God promises to give Abram's descendants extensive land now occupied by foreign nations.

- God's promises to Abram center on two future realities. What are these realities?

ANSWER. *The realities are descendants and the land of Canaan.*

Now read Genesis 17:1-16 slowly and carefully.

Genesis 17:1-16

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, <sup>2</sup> that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."

<sup>3</sup> Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, <sup>4</sup> "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

<sup>7</sup> And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup> And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” <sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, <sup>13</sup> both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” <sup>15</sup> And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

3. Summarize what Genesis 17:1-16 teaches about the covenant.

- **ANSWER.** God commands Abram to “walk before me” and “be blameless” (Gen 17:1). Then God changes Abram’s name to Abraham, promises him royal descendants, and promises to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan. Then God introduces circumcision as the sign of the covenant, gives instructions regarding circumcision, and promises a son to Sarah.

At first it might appear that God is retreating from the worldwide problem of sin by concentrating on an obscure individual in one corner of the world, but has God really abandoned his global interests? Examine the following verses about the universal scope of God’s blessing through Abram:

Genesis 12:3

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 18:17-18

<sup>17</sup> The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, <sup>18</sup> seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”

Genesis 22:18

<sup>18</sup> ...in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

Genesis 26:4

<sup>4</sup> I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed . . .

Genesis 28:14

<sup>14</sup> Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 41:57

<sup>57</sup> Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

4. What do these verses teach us about God’s intentions toward the nations? (And why might this last verse have been included in this list?)
  - **ANSWER.** *The repetition of the refrain “in you and your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” clearly indicates that God’s covenant with Abraham was made with the nations in view. God’s intention is to bless the nations, but to do it through his own revelatory program. The last verse demonstrates an initial fulfillment of God’s intention to bless the nations through Abraham’s descendants. Joseph is able to exercise a benevolent rule in providing for people’s needs because God is with him.*
5. Why would God enter a covenant relationship with Abraham? Couldn’t God have blessed Abraham apart from a covenant?
  - **ANSWER.** *As we’ve suggested in the previous lesson, the covenant was a “revelatory program.” Though God could have blessed Abraham with*

*descendants and land apart from the covenant, this formalized relationship displayed God's sworn commitment to meet Abraham's needs. In other words, by entering into a covenant with Abraham, God was putting his faithfulness and provision on the line. By fulfilling the promises of the covenant, God shows himself to be trustworthy and sovereign, like one of the great kings of the ancient Near East (except that God is, of course, a king of kings). The covenant added to Abraham's (and his descendants') assurance that God would meet their needs and bless them.*

It is of fundamental importance to remember this pithy truth, often repeated by John Piper: "The giver gets the glory!"<sup>25</sup>

### Tracing God's Ways

Abraham is graciously called as the agent through whom God will bring blessing to the world. God's covenant with Abraham is addressing the problem of sin that was introduced in the fall and had spread through the world. The purpose of the covenant was to reveal God as the sovereign, self-sufficient, supplier of all things.

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<sup>25</sup> This last phrase has been adapted from Hafemann, *God of Promise*, 26.



## Day 2

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### THE COVENANT STRUCTURE

Covenants were well-known arrangements in the ancient Near East and they would have been a familiar historical reality for ancient Israelites. Covenants of this time period are of two general kinds: covenants between equals (known as partnership treaties) and covenants between inequals (known as suzerainty treaties). The covenant Abraham makes with Abimelech (Gen 21:32) is an example of the former. The covenant God makes with Israel is patterned after the latter.

Here is what a suzerainty treaty between a king and his vassals typically looked like:

I, King Hammurabi of Mesopotamia, in my conquest of your land have graciously spared your lives and am generously allowing you to become my subjects. Therefore, it will be your duty to pay me taxes and show me loyalty. You must not enter into treaties with my enemies. If you do these things, your country will prosper and I will protect you. If, however, you ally with my enemies and rebel, I will certainly destroy you and your land.

6. In examining this fictitious treaty, what component parts can you identify? How is this ancient covenant structured?

· **ANSWER.** *There are three basic parts to this fictitious treaty: first, Hammurabi enumerates the things he has already done for the inhabitants of the land (the historical prologue or covenant provisions); second, he spells out the terms for the vassals (the expectations or covenant stipulations); third, he describes the consequences of covenant loyalty and disloyalty (the blessings and curses).*

In making a covenant with Israel, the LORD adopted this well-known arrangement to suit his own purposes and to reveal his character.

Study the following passages in Genesis, comparing their structure to the common structure you discerned in other ancient Near Eastern covenants:

Genesis 15:1

<sup>1</sup> After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

Genesis 15:7

<sup>7</sup> And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”

Genesis 17:1-2

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, <sup>2</sup> that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”

Genesis 17:9-10, 14

<sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ...<sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

7. Underline common structural elements with different markings for each element. How would you describe the component parts of God’s covenant with Abraham?

· **ANSWER.** As with other covenants in the Ancient Near East, God’s covenant with Abraham seems to exhibit three, basic different parts: first, there is a declaration of who God is and what he has done in bringing Abraham out of Ur (covenant provision); second, there are the covenant stipulations of obedience and circumcision; third, there are covenant blessings and curses that are contingent upon the stipulations.

The understanding of covenant structure that this curriculum will adopt can be seen in the following diagram:

## **GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL ACTS OF PROVISION**

by which he establishes the covenant relationship  
(the blessings of the covenant, given as an act of grace in the *past*)

which leads to

## **THE COVENANT STIPULATIONS OR “CONDITIONS”**

upon which the covenant relationship is maintained  
(the commands of the covenant, to be kept in the *present*)

which leads to

## **THE COVENANT PROMISES OR CURSES**

based on keeping or not keeping the covenant  
(the consequences of the covenant, to be fulfilled in the *future*)<sup>26</sup>

In glancing over the previous outline, someone might immediately object: “Wait! The grace that God promises can’t be based on what we do! It wouldn’t be grace any more!” In response to this potential objection, read the following excerpt from John Piper:

*“Fulfilling conditions does not imply earning anything or meriting anything. Grace is still free, even when it is conditional. There is such a thing as unmerited, conditional grace. Do not equate meeting conditions of grace with earning or meriting grace.”<sup>27</sup>*

This covenant structure we will see again and again in the Bible. There are hints of it in the garden of Eden, and it is clearly the structure behind the covenant at

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<sup>26</sup> This outline is taken from Hafemann, *God of Promise*, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Excerpt from page 234 of *Future Grace, Revised Edition: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God* by John Piper, copyright© 1995, 2012 by Desiring God Foundation. Used by permission of WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

Sinai, which we will examine next week. <sup>28</sup>

Many people have been taught that the covenant God makes with Abraham is unconditional. Will the biblical evidence bear this out? Study the following passages.

Genesis 17:1-2

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, <sup>2</sup> that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”

Genesis 18:17-19

<sup>17</sup> The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, <sup>18</sup> seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? <sup>19</sup> For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

Genesis 22:15-18

<sup>15</sup> And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven <sup>16</sup> and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, <sup>18</sup> and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Genesis 26:2-5

<sup>2</sup> And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. <sup>3</sup> Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. <sup>4</sup> I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, <sup>5</sup> because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments,

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<sup>28</sup> The covenant God makes with Noah and creation is of a different kind because there are no conditions.

my statutes, and my laws.”

8. Was God’s covenant with Abraham conditional? Did Abraham keep the covenant? Underline phrases in the passages above that support your answer.

· **ANSWER.** *It would appear from these passages that God’s covenant with Abraham was conditional in the sense that Abraham’s obedience to God was necessary, and that God’s continuation of the covenant was according to Abraham’s response. Though God’s election of Abraham was totally free and unconditional (as we will see below), the blessings of the covenant were conditional.*

It is clear that God’s covenant is established with Abraham and his offspring. But does that mean Ishmael partakes of this covenant?

9. Search Genesis, chapters 15 to 21, for evidence that will help us answer this question. Record relevant passages below.

· **ANSWER.** *God promises Abram a son in Gen 15:4, but does not specify who would bear him that son. After Abram has Ishmael with Hagar, God tells him that his covenant will be established with Sarah’s son, Isaac (Gen 17:19, 21). Though God will bless Ishmael (Gen 17:20), the covenant will not be continued through him. God eventually grants Sarah her child, and Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away so that through Isaac Abraham’s offspring will be named (Gen 21:12).*

God’s choice of Isaac and not Ishmael is mirrored in the next generation. It will be through Jacob (Israel) and not Esau that God will continue his covenant. The Apostle Paul’s reflection on God’s choice should be brought in at this point.

Romans 9:6-13

<sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” <sup>8</sup> This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. <sup>9</sup> For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.” <sup>10</sup> And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children

by one man, our forefather Isaac, <sup>11</sup> though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—<sup>12</sup> she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” <sup>13</sup> As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

10. Why didn’t God form the twelve tribes directly from Abraham’s offspring? Why might God have caused Isaac and Jacob to be chosen first?

• **ANSWER.** *Though our answer must be somewhat speculative, it seems reasonable to conclude on the basis of Rom 9:6-13 that God chose Isaac instead of Ishmael and Jacob instead of Esau in order the his “purpose of election might continue” (Rom 9:11). God wanted to make it clear from the very beginning that his election is free and totally unconstrained. If God had formed twelve tribes directly from Abraham’s offspring, then the nature of grace might not have been set forth as clearly. The freeness of grace and election highlights the glory of God and the dependence of man.*

### Tracing God’s Ways

The structure of God’s covenant with Abraham was covenant provisions, on the basis of which the covenant stipulations were made, which would result in covenant benedictions if kept faithfully. Circumcision is given as the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham. Abraham faithfully kept the covenant stipulations and the covenant is transmitted to Abraham’s son, Isaac. Then Jacob gains the firstborn’s birthright and blessing. God’s covenant continues through him.

## Day 3

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### JOSEPH AND ABRAHAM IN CANONICAL PERSPECTIVE

The final 14 chapters of Genesis (approximately one third of the book) primarily deal with the story of Joseph and his brothers. Why might this story receive such emphasis in the book of Genesis? A key passage that occurs near the end of the story might provide a clue.

Genesis 50:19-21

<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. <sup>21</sup> So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.”

11. What, in your mind, is the theological significance of these verses?

- **ANSWER.** Joseph’s commentary (near the end of the book) reiterates three key themes that run throughout the Joseph narrative and throughout all of Genesis: first, the distinction between men and God and God’s rightful place as ruler and judge (cf. Gen 50:19); second, God’s goodness, in that he means to provide for the people whom he has created; third, God’s sovereignty in overcoming what appear to be obstacles to the advancement of his plans. God’s sovereignty even extends over the evil intentions and actions of men, which he uses to bring about his own purposes.

Psalm 105 is a theological reflection on the story of Joseph. Notice what this passage sees in Joseph’s story.

Psalm 105:16-24

<sup>16</sup> When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, <sup>17</sup> he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. <sup>18</sup> His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; <sup>19</sup> until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. <sup>20</sup> The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; <sup>21</sup> he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions, <sup>22</sup> to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom. <sup>23</sup> Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of

*Ham.* <sup>24</sup> And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes.

12. Skim the story of Joseph as narrated in Genesis 37-50. Note verses that give the author's theological interpretation of what is happening. Record these verses below. What is Joseph's story intended to teach us about God?

**ANSWER.** *The author's theological interpretation of Joseph's story can be seen in verses such as Gen 39:2-5, 21-23; 41:25, 38, 51-52, 55; 43:14, 23, 29; 45:5-11; 46:3, etc. Just as in Ps 105:16-24, the Joseph narrative in Genesis is meant to exalt the sovereignty and provision of God. It was God who sent Joseph to Egypt to rule and provide (see especially Gen 45:8). Reading this narrative from the perspective of a post-exodus Israelite—that is, reading Genesis as a part of the Pentateuch—would serve to strengthen faith in a God who is able to overcome obstacles and orchestrate circumstances for the good of his people.*

The story of God's election of Abraham is repeated often in the Old Testament. It forms one of the defining points in Israel's history and self-understanding. The God of creation is very often referred to as the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" or simply as the "God of our fathers."

Remember that the story of Abraham is one of faithfulness, but not perfection. Abraham does doubt God's provision by going down to Egypt and lying about his wife. But as God remains faithful and meets his needs, Abraham's faith is strengthened, and he believes God's promise and even is prepared to sacrifice his own son. In this case, however, the Lord provides the sacrifice.

Examine the following canonical reflections on the call of Abraham.

Joshua 24:2-4

<sup>2</sup> And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. <sup>3</sup> Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. <sup>4</sup> And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.'"



Nehemiah 9:7-8

<sup>7</sup> You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. <sup>8</sup> You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.

Psalm 105:5-11

<sup>5</sup> Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, <sup>6</sup> O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones! <sup>7</sup> He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. <sup>8</sup> He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, <sup>9</sup> the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, <sup>10</sup> which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, <sup>11</sup> saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance."

13. What is emphasized in these passages? Underline phrases that support your answer.

- **ANSWER.** When later biblical books are discussing God's dealings with Abraham, they usually emphasize the sovereignty and faithfulness of God. In Joshua 24:2, it is interesting to note that Abraham served other gods before the LORD called him. This would suggest that it was not anything in Abraham himself which motivated God to choose him. The Bible frequently speaks of God choosing Abraham; it never reverses that to claim that Abraham chose God.

The Apostle Paul reflected extensively on Abraham's example and the implications it had for those who believe in Jesus. Read two of his more important discussions of Abraham:

Galatians 3:7-9, 16, 26-29

<sup>7</sup> Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." <sup>9</sup> So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. . . . <sup>16</sup> Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And

to your offspring," who is Christ. . . .<sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

#### Romans 4:1-12

<sup>1</sup> What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."<sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup> And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, <sup>6</sup> just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup> "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; <sup>8</sup> blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."<sup>9</sup> Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. <sup>10</sup> How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. <sup>11</sup> He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, <sup>12</sup> and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

14. What emphasis does the Apostle Paul draw from Abraham's life and example?

- **ANSWER.** In both Gal 3 and Rom 4, Paul is emphasizing the importance of faith. In Gal 3, he makes the argument that those who believe in Jesus will be blessed with Abraham, because Abraham's offspring is named through Jesus. In Rom 4, Paul is contrasting faith and works, and makes the point that the blessing of righteousness is not only for those who have been physically circumcised.

*“The central theme that runs through the narrative is the covenant promise to Abram and the way that it is given. The promise is repeatedly made against a background of events that seem to threaten it and make its fulfillment impossible. By this means Abraham learns that he must live by faith in the promises of God even when it seems that the promises have been destroyed by circumstances.”*<sup>29</sup>

Here is one more New Testament reflection on Abraham:

James 2:14-26

*<sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup> So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! <sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? <sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup> For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

15. Can James’ teaching concerning Abraham be reconciled to Paul’s teaching? Explain.

- **ANSWER.** *We believe it can be reconciled. Here is an answer John Piper gave as to how: “When Paul teaches in Romans 4:5 that we are justified by faith alone, he means that the only thing that unites us to Christ for righteousness is dependence on Christ. When James says in James 2:24 that we are not justified by faith alone he means that the faith which justifies does not remain alone. These two positions are not contradictory. Faith*

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<sup>29</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 120-121.

*alone unites us to Christ for righteousness, and the faith that unites us to Christ for righteousness does not remain alone. It bears the fruit of love. It must do so or it is dead, demon, useless faith and does not justify.” (“Does James Contradict Paul?” an online sermon at the desiringGod website)*

### Tracing God's Ways

The stories of the patriarchs highlight God's sovereignty, provision, and faithfulness. In response, God expects that his people will have faith that God is able to do what he has promised (Romans 4:21).

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision was practiced by many peoples in the ancient Near East, but even if Israel adopted a practice that was common among her neighbors, the rite was significantly altered to suit a different function. The task of this day's study will be to explore what circumcision meant to Israel within the framework of biblical revelation.

*“Although the Israelites are not the only people in the ancient Near East to circumcise their sons, what is unique in their practice is that the ritual is used as a theological rite of passage into the covenantal community rather than a passage into adulthood or a new family group through marriage.”<sup>30</sup>*

Our study of circumcision begins with the establishment of the practice in Genesis 17.

Genesis 17:9-14

*<sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, <sup>13</sup> both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”*

In Genesis 17:11, circumcision is called a “sign of the covenant.” This terminology has a biblical precedent in Genesis 9:

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<sup>30</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 451.

Genesis 9:12-16

<sup>12</sup> And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup> I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

16. How might Genesis 9 help us understand what it means for circumcision to be the “sign” of the covenant God makes with Abraham?

- **ANSWER.** *In Genesis 9 the sign of the covenant most immediately applies to God as a reminder for him (vv. 14-15), but the sign may also legitimately be understood as given to Noah and his descendants as well. If the sign were only meant for God, why would the significance of the rainbow be transmitted through history and recorded in the Pentateuch? It seems probable that the rainbow was given to Noah’s descendants, and even the living creatures, as an enduring reminder of God’s faithfulness, mercy, and promise. In the same way it seems likely that circumcision, as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, is meant to have a similar function. It is meant to remind God of his promises to Abraham, but it serves as a reminder to Abraham’s descendants, through Isaac and Jacob, of their special covenantal relationship to Yahweh.*

As an aside, some may wonder why the covenant sign is only given to males. It is possible that males were given a special and unique role of guarding the transmission of the covenant, just as male priests and prophets functioned as the mediators and heralds of the covenant. This does not imply that men are more valuable than women, but simply that God has given men and women different roles to perform.

After Genesis, the theme of circumcision resurfaces again in Exodus 4:25-26. In a puzzling incident, the Lord seeks to put “him” to death, and is appeased by Moses’ wife Zipporah who cuts off her son’s foreskin and touches Moses’s feet with it. She says, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” (Exodus 4:26). The text is filled with ambiguities including the basic question of whom the Lord sought to kill—Moses or his son.

Although the precise meaning of this passage may elude us, many commentators have seen a connection between this episode and the Passover, since both narratives involve blood, death, and a first-born child. Exodus 4:24-26 may in fact foreshadow the bloody atonement of Passover in which God foregoes executing judgment on those whose doorposts have been touched with blood (as Moses is touched with blood). In Exodus 12:44-48, God extends the right of Passover to all those who are circumcised, regardless of whether they are native Israelites. Moreover, God extends participation in Passover (and circumcision) to those who willingly sojourn with Israel, even if they are bought. These sojourners are as “natives of the land.” However, Passover is not to be eaten by the uncircumcised.

At the same time as the theme of literal or physical circumcision is being developed, a metaphorical understanding of circumcision is introduced. Notice the following texts:

Leviticus 26:40-42

*<sup>40</sup> But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, <sup>41</sup> so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, <sup>42</sup> then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.*

Deuteronomy 10:12-16

*<sup>12</sup> And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? <sup>14</sup> Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. <sup>15</sup> Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. <sup>16</sup> Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.*

17. According to these passages, what does it mean to have a “circumcised heart”?

- **ANSWER.** *The passages imply that having a circumcised heart is having a heart that loves the LORD and responds in obedience to him. This is plain from what an uncircumcised heart is characterized by—iniquity—and what circumcising the heart is contrasted with—being stubborn. Note also the flow of Deut 10 from vv. 12-13 to v. 16.*

*“In the end, the Pentateuch makes it clear that something must be done about the human heart. The Sinai covenant was passing away. God’s will had to be written on the human heart, not merely on tablets of stone. At the conclusion of the Pentateuch, therefore, Moses calls for a new heart and a new covenant. When that time came, God would “circumcise” Israel’s heart so that they would “love the LORD with all [their] heart and soul” and thus would “live” (Deut. 30:6). This is the same message as Jeremiah 31:31-32 and Ezekiel 36:24-28.”<sup>31</sup>*

After the Israelites had crossed the river Jordan and before they began their conquest of Canaan, they were circumcised. In Joshua 5:2-8, Joshua is commanded to circumcise the sons of Israel “a second time.” We are informed that they had not been circumcised in the wilderness, even though their fathers were. The contrast is evident: the wilderness generation obeyed the voice of the Lord while uncircumcised, while their circumcised fathers disobeyed the Lord. We see again, even at this early point in biblical revelation, that ritual circumcision remains important because of its symbolic value, but circumcision of the heart is at the core of what God desires from his people.

The call for Israel to circumcise their heart is reiterated by the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 4:1-4

<sup>1</sup> “If you return, O Israel, declares the LORD, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, <sup>2</sup> and if you swear, ‘As the LORD lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.”<sup>3</sup> For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. <sup>4</sup> Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it,

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<sup>31</sup> John Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009) 48.



*because of the evil of your deeds.”*

It is clear throughout Israel’s history, however, that they did not heed this call and remained uncircumcised in heart.

**Deuteronomy 29:2-4**

*<sup>2</sup> . . . You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, <sup>3</sup> the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. <sup>4</sup> But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.*

**Jeremiah 6:10**

*<sup>10</sup> To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it.*

**Jeremiah 9:25-26**

*<sup>25</sup> Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh— <sup>26</sup> Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.*

Despite Israel’s stubbornness, God promised that a circumcision of the heart and moral purity would characterize his people when he restored them:

**Deuteronomy 30:4-6**

*<sup>4</sup> If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. <sup>5</sup> And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

**Isaiah 52:1-3**

*<sup>1</sup> Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. <sup>2</sup> Shake yourself from the dust and arise;*

*be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.* <sup>3</sup> *For thus says the LORD: “You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.”*

Several hundred years later, however, it became clear that the majority of Jewish leaders and Jews would reject the Messiah whom God had sent for the people’s redemption. Stephen offers a brutal assessment of their spiritual condition:

Acts 7:51-53

*<sup>51</sup> You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. <sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, <sup>53</sup> you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.*

Though only some of the Jews were saved through the preaching of the gospel, a number of Gentiles believed in the message and received the Holy Spirit. This presented a theological problem. Should these Gentile believers be compelled to be circumcised?

Acts 15:1-11

*<sup>1</sup> But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” <sup>2</sup> And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. <sup>3</sup> So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup> But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.” <sup>6</sup> The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup> And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup> And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, <sup>9</sup> and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> Now,*

therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>41</sup> But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

18. Write Peter’s response to the question of whether Gentile believers must be circumcised in order to be saved (see Acts 15:1) in your own words.

· **ANSWER.** *Peter first points to the indisputable fact that the Gentiles heard his preaching of the gospel, believed it, and were given the Holy Spirit. His theological inference from this is that God has cleansed their heart by faith. Knowing Israel’s history of disobedience, Peter asserts that Jew and Gentile must both be saved by the grace of Jesus.*

Peter’s response in the Jerusalem council points back to the earlier episode, recorded in Acts, in which Peter preaches to Cornelius and his household. Here is what happened:

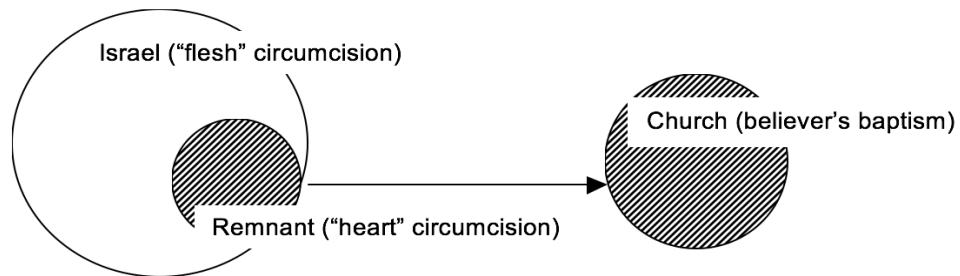
Acts 10:44-48

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

This episode raises the question of how a biblical theology of circumcision relates to the matter of baptism. It is the contention of this curriculum that while both circumcision and baptism function as signs of the covenant community, the new covenant people of God are not a continuation of Israel as a whole, but rather, a continuation of the faithful remnant. Therefore, we can agree with those who see a correspondence between circumcision and baptism. But baptism corresponds to what the Old Testament called the “circumcision of the heart.” God promised a future time in which all his people would be circumcised in heart, and the New Testament declares that that time is here. The connection is made explicit in Colossians 2:11-12, “In him also you were circumcised *with a circumcision made without hands*, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the

circumcision of Christ, *having been buried with him in baptism*, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

So the relationship between Israel and the new covenant people of God, and between circumcision and baptism, may be diagrammed as follows:



The priority that is given to the inward reality in the New Testament can be seen in a comparison of the following three Pauline texts:

1 Corinthians 7:19

<sup>19</sup> *For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.*

Galatians 5:6

<sup>6</sup> *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

Galatians 6:15

<sup>15</sup> *For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.*

19. What does a comparison of these three texts suggest?

- **ANSWER.** *Since all three verses were written by the same author and begin in almost identical ways, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the three different endings are mutually interpretive. If that is the case, then it is seen that keeping the commandments of God entails the “working out” of faith through love, which is evidence of a new creation. These texts suggest that the symbolic significance of circumcision has been superseded by the reality of the new creation that God has brought about in Christ.*

Perhaps the most stark development of the theme of circumcision is given by the Apostle Paul in the second chapter of Romans:

Romans 2:25-29

*<sup>25</sup> For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup> So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. <sup>28</sup> For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*

20. Is Paul's understanding of circumcision here unique in the history of redemption? Explain.

- **ANSWER.** *As our preceding analysis of the Old Testament has shown, Paul is not imposing an alien meaning on the Old Testament conception of circumcision and Jewish identity. Rather, he is drawing out what was always there—that physical circumcision was meant to be an outward symbol of the purity of heart. With Jewish identity then as well, Paul is claiming that a true Jew, a person who truly belongs to God, is one who has the right kind of heart. Paul is not being novel.*

## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Circumcision” (411-414)
- ▷ “Abraham” (367-372)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Genesis” (140-146)
- ▷ “Covenant” (419-429)

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of circumcision, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. God called Abraham in order to use him as a blessing to the nations. How might this understanding of Abraham's election shape how we understand our election?
2. Compare Acts 16:1-5 and Galatians 2:1-5. Is Paul acting in contradictory ways? Why or why not?
3. The issue of circumcision is not debated in Christian churches today. So is a biblical theology of circumcision still relevant for us? How?



## 🔗 YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

## 🔗 APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life:

Is your heart circumcised?

## 🔗 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “The Covenant of Abraham,” an online sermon at the [desiringGod](#) website
- ▷ Paul Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2007)



# Out of the House of Slavery

# 4

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## § INTRODUCTION

Jacob's descendants are sojourning in Egypt, but God has already promised to give them the land, after the sin of the Amorites has reached its full measure (Genesis 15:13-16). How will God fulfill his promise to Abraham and bring them out?

In this lesson, we will read about the exodus, one of the defining events in Israel's history and the creation of the nation. We will then examine the Mosaic covenant and the important book of Deuteronomy. The first five books of the Bible (often called the Pentateuch or Torah) are the foundation for all the other biblical books and for God's purposes in the world as he deals with Israel.

## § LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ explain God's purposes in the plagues and the exodus
- ▷ outline the contours of the Mosaic covenant
- ▷ describe how Israel broke the covenant almost immediately





Once again, the limitations posed by this course only allow for a basic survey of Exodus-Deuteronomy, and many important passages and ideas we will simply pass over. If you, as the instructor, or if your students want to discuss issues not raised by the material in this lesson, please feel free to do so.

As we note in the lesson, many of the complexities of the Sinai covenant are either ignored or abbreviated in our discussion. Such is the nature of an introductory course. Hopefully, later lessons will be able to draw out more of a theology of the law.

You will notice that this lesson does not touch on the sacrificial system. This is intentional. Much of the atonement material (in Leviticus especially) will be covered in Lesson 8 when the students do a biblical theology of the atonement. Hopefully, it won't cause too much confusion to skip it for now.



## Day 1

### GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE PLAGUES

God has already described to Abraham what would happen to his descendants: they were to be enslaved and oppressed in a land not their own. The beginning of Exodus describes this oppression:

Exodus 1:6-14

*<sup>6</sup> Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. <sup>7</sup> But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. <sup>8</sup> Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup> And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. <sup>10</sup> Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” <sup>11</sup> Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. <sup>12</sup> But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. <sup>13</sup> So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves <sup>14</sup> and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.*

The book of Exodus then narrates the birth of a savior—Moses. His leadership does not have a promising start, however, as he takes deliverance into his own hand and murders an Egyptian who is beating one of his fellow Hebrews. Later, an Israelite grumbles against him asking, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” (Exodus 2:14). It’s interesting to note how these two challenges to Moses’ leadership hauntingly recur throughout the Pentateuch.

The crisis of Israel’s oppression is brought to a head at the end of the second chapter.

#### Exodus 2:23-25

<sup>23</sup> During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. <sup>24</sup> And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup> God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

1. Why is Exodus 2:24 significant? What might be lost if this verse were excluded from these opening chapters?
  - **ANSWER.** *Exodus 2:24 ties the story of the people of Israel back to the covenant that God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, God's act of deliverance in the exodus can be seen as an expression of his faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant. Though there are contrasts to be made between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, they are both tied together by the faithfulness of God and his sovereign, unfolding plan.*

In response to his covenant with Abraham, God calls Moses to act as his agent of redemption. The call of Moses is described in Exodus 3:4-10.

#### Exodus 3:4-10

<sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Moses has a number of objections to this call, but God overcomes his objections and sends him. It is clear that God is now presenting himself in a new way to the people of Israel.

### Exodus 3:13-15

<sup>13</sup> Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

### Exodus 6:2-8

<sup>2</sup> God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup> I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. <sup>4</sup> I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. <sup>5</sup> Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. <sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup> I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.’”

2. Hasn't the divine name (LORD or Yahweh) been used repeatedly in the book of Genesis? Why then does Exodus 6:3 assert that God hadn't made himself known to them by that name? What might the significance be of God revealing his personal name to Moses and to Israel?

· **ANSWER.** This is a classic problem in relating Exodus to Genesis. We appreciate the following explanation offered by John Walton, Genesis, 460: “The epithet Yahweh was connected to the longer-term promises of God to the patriarchs, specifically the land, which even Abraham was told would be a long time coming. The patriarchs could truly be considered then not to have “known” God by his name Yahweh, for the promises with which Yahweh had been most closely associated had not yet come to pass. In Exodus, however, it was now Yahweh who was sending Moses to take



*the Israelites to the land that had been promised to them in the covenant. In other words, it is not that the patriarchs were ignorant of the name Yahweh, but the epithet Shaddai was appropriate for the aspects of the covenant that they experienced.”*

Before Moses even approaches Pharaoh, God tells him what to expect. God’s foreknowledge of the encounter indicates that he is in total control. Notice who is called “my firstborn son” in the second passage (Exodus 4:21-23). Who is the first one called “son of God” in the Bible (see Luke 3:38)?

Exodus 3:18-22

*<sup>18</sup> And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.” <sup>19</sup> But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. <sup>20</sup> So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. <sup>21</sup> And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, <sup>22</sup> but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.*

Exodus 4:21-23

*<sup>21</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. <sup>22</sup> Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, <sup>23</sup> and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”*

Exodus 5:1-4 records Moses and Aaron’s first encounter with Pharaoh. This passage sets the stage for the rest of what will transpire.

Exodus 5:1-4

*<sup>1</sup> Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” <sup>2</sup> But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let*

Israel go.”<sup>3</sup> Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”<sup>4</sup> But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.”

3. In reading this passage (above) do you observe anything of theological significance that might “set the stage for the rest of what will transpire”?

- **ANSWER.** *Pharaoh fatefully claims not to know the LORD (Ex 5:2). His ignorance of who the LORD is results in the lack of respect and obedience Pharaoh shows to the command of the LORD. As we will see, the LORD’s sending of the ten plagues upon Egypt is so that all of Egypt knows who he is.*

From a young age, Christian children are told the story of the ten plagues upon Egypt. What is the theological significance of this powerful story?

Quickly read through Exodus, chapters 7–11. Notice in particular, the following references:

- ▷ Chapter 7 Verses 1-5, 17
- ▷ Chapter 8 Verses 9-11, 18-19, 20-23
- ▷ Chapter 9 Verses 1-5, 11, 13-16, 20-21, 26-27, 29-30
- ▷ Chapter 10 Verses 1-2, 16
- ▷ Chapter 11 Verses 3, 7

4. After reading through this section, what would you say are God’s intentions behind the plagues? List them and discuss. How does your answer to this question relate to your answer to Question 3 of this lesson (the immediately preceding question)?

- **ANSWER.** *The plagues are sent so that Pharaoh and all of Egypt would know the LORD. Specifically, they are to know that there is no one like the LORD (8:10), that the LORD is in the midst of the earth (8:22), that there is none like the LORD in all the earth (9:14), that they have sinned and that the LORD is in the right (9:27; 10:16), that the earth is the LORD’s (9:29), that they should fear the LORD (9:30), and that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel (11:7). Furthermore,*

*the central passage of 9:14-16 makes it clear that the LORD was using this demonstration of his power to proclaim his name in all the earth, and 10:1-2 indicate that the LORD was bringing the plagues upon Egypt so that future generations of Israelites would know the LORD. Thus the plagues directly address the ignorance and defiance Pharaoh proclaimed in Ex 5:2.*

Consider one final verse, noting especially the second half of the verse:

Exodus 12:12

*<sup>12</sup> For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.*

And now read some important background information about Egyptian religion:

*“The Egyptians were also polytheists, as were all ancient peoples other than the Israelites... The Egyptian saw the universe as the habitation and expression of many gods and goddesses. Although from the point of view of a monotheist it might have been possible for a single, decisive plague to demonstrate Yahweh’s superiority to all other gods, from the point of view of a polytheist this might not have been quite so clear. A polytheist might easily conclude that a single plague was in fact a judgment against one god, but ten plagues of different sorts could hardly be understood that way. Since polytheism envisions many gods performing a great variety of functions, ten different sorts of plagues showing God’s control over a variety of functions within the natural realm serve to display the fact that the many gods in general do not have power against the one God in whose name Moses and Aaron spoke. . . .*

*...The worship of many gods had as its foremost goal to provide life. The gods were seen, above all, as the grantors of life and protectors of the living. To ignore the gods was to be in danger of ignoring the forces that provided life, the sustainers of existence. The gods, each in their particular ways, sustained the lives of those who worshipped them.”<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>32</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Exodus* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 279-280.

5. In what way is the LORD executing judgments on the gods (plural!) of Egypt? How might Exodus 12:12 explain the reason that the LORD sends ten plagues instead of one or two?

· **ANSWER.** *The LORD is executing judgments on the gods of Egypt by demonstrating his superiority and control over the one essential thing that the gods of Egypt were supposed to provide: life. By causing death among the Egyptians but not among the Israelites, the LORD is showing that he is more powerful and glorious than all the gods of Egypt. This also explains why there are ten plagues instead of one or two. In sending plagues that involve the Nile, animals, livestock, disease, the weather, and the sun, God is demonstrating his dominion over the Egyptian gods of the Nile, the animals, livestock, disease, weather, and the sun.*

### Tracing God's Ways

Under Egyptian oppression Israel cries out and God remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God raises up Moses to save his people. He reveals his personal name, Yahweh, and takes Israel to be his people in a unique way. Pharaoh does not yet know the LORD. Yahweh delivers his people from Pharaoh by demonstrating his power over Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods.

## Day 2

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### THE PASSOVER, EXODUS, AND COVENANT AT SINAI

The story of how God delivers his people from bondage is told again and again throughout Israel's history. This great act is commemorated in the Passover.

6. Read Exodus 12:1-28, 38, 43-51, then record all the observations you can make about the Passover.

#### How was the Passover celebrated?

- **ANSWER.** *A spotless lamb was killed at twilight on the tenth day of the first month. The blood was put to the lintel and doorposts and the flesh was roasted and eaten quickly.*

#### Why was the Passover celebrated?

- **ANSWER.** *The Passover was a memorial day commemorating the LORD's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and the mercy that he showed them. It was to be a time in which the next generation was taught about the LORD (Ex 26:27).*

#### Who could celebrate the Passover?

- **ANSWER.** *All the congregation of Israel could celebrate the Passover as well as slaves and strangers who were circumcised. It seems as if some of the Egyptians and Cushites went with the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 12:38) and may have celebrated the Passover.*

We have seen God's purpose in sending the plagues upon Israel. Now compare the following verses which describe what happens at the parting of the sea:

Exodus 14:4

<sup>4</sup> *“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.*

Exodus 14:13-14

<sup>13</sup> *And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”*

Exodus 14:17-18

<sup>17</sup> *And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. <sup>18</sup> And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

Exodus 14:24-25

<sup>24</sup> *And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, <sup>25</sup> clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.”*

Exodus 14:30-31

<sup>30</sup> *Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup> Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.*

7. What do these verses teach us about the exodus?

- **ANSWER.** *These verses teach us at least four things about the exodus: 1) that God’s intention in the exodus was to get glory over Pharaoh and his army (14:4, 17); 2) that God also intended for Egypt to know he was the LORD (14:4, 18); 3) that God fought for Israel and all Israel had to do*

was to wait and watch (14:13-14, 25, 30); and 4) that the result of God's demonstration of power was that Israel believed (at least temporarily) in the LORD and in Moses (14:31).

In the last lesson we learned about the typical covenant structure of provisions, stipulations (commands), and blessings and curses. Attempt to discern that same covenant structure in the following passages describing God's covenant with Israel.

Exodus 19:3-6

<sup>3</sup> . . . The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Exodus 20:2-3

<sup>2</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods before me.

Deuteronomy 4:5-7

<sup>5</sup> See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>6</sup> Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." <sup>7</sup> For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

Deuteronomy 28:1-3, 15-16

<sup>1</sup> And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. <sup>3</sup> Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. . . . <sup>15</sup> But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. <sup>16</sup> Cursed shall you be in the city,

and cursed shall you be in the field.

8. Underline each element of the covenant structure with a different marking. Then add your notes to the following table:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Covenant Provisions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>The two great covenant provisions of the Sinai (or Mosaic) covenant, as described in these passages, are the deliverance from Egypt and the presence of God to help when called upon.</i></li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Covenant Stipulations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>The basic covenant stipulation is obedience, which is described as obeying the voice of the LORD, keeping the covenant, and keeping and doing all the commandments that Moses gave. One of the most fundamental commands was the command not to have any gods before Yahweh (Ex 20:3).</i></li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Covenant Blessings and Curses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>The blessings for obedience are that Israel would be God's treasured possession, a wise nation, exalted above other nations and enjoying prosperity and military dominance. The curses for disobedience are described thoroughly in Deut 28, but could be summarized as economic devastation, military defeat, anguish, shame, death, and exile.</i></li></ul>



9. According to the passages above and your own understanding of the Sinai covenant, was it impossible for an Israelite to keep the Mosaic covenant?

· **ANSWER.** *This is a tricky question since the answer is both yes and no. The answer is “no, it was not impossible” since the covenant itself provided means for atonement. There were a number of Israelites who kept the covenant by trusting in God to forgive their sins and by keeping themselves from idolatry. The answer is also “yes, it was impossible” in the sense that it was impossible for an Israelite to come before God without sacrifices for sin. No one was able to obey God’s laws flawlessly. Furthermore, many Israelites did not trust in God to meet their needs since God did not provide the changed heart that was needed to obey (see below and Deut 29:4).*

John Piper offers his own reflections on this question:

*“Don’t make the mistake of thinking that the only righteousness the law required was perfection. It is true that any shortcoming of God’s law offends against his perfect holiness and makes us liable to judgment, since God cannot look with favor on any sin (Habakkuk 1:13; James 2:10-11). But the Old Testament law itself provided for forgiveness and reconciliation for sins. So the ‘requirement’ of the law was perfection in one sense, but not in the sense that without it a person was lost.”<sup>33</sup>*

10. How is God’s covenant with Israel related to God’s covenant with Abraham?

· **ANSWER.** *In many ways God’s covenant with Israel is a continuation of God’s covenant with Abraham, since it involves Abraham’s descendants, involves the land promised to Abraham, is global in its concern, requires faith and obedience, and is aimed at the glory of God. The threefold covenant structure is also the same between the Abrahamic covenant and the Sinai covenant.*

An understanding of the Mosaic Law and its place within redemptive history is an extremely complicated and debated subject, and we cannot begin to answer all of the issues here. One of the scholars who has written the most on a theology of the Pentateuch from an evangelical perspective is John Sailhamer. His recent

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33 Piper, *Future Grace*, 150-151.

book *The Meaning of the Pentateuch* warrants careful reading. Here are some of his thoughts on the structure of the Pentateuch and on how the Sinai covenant changed because of Israel's sin with the golden calf—an episode which we will study shortly:

*"A curious feature of the Sinai narratives is the way in which they envelop and thus serve to link the collections of laws in the Decalogue [Exodus 20:1-17], the Covenant Code [Exodus 20:22-23:33] and the Priestly Code [Exodus 25-Leviticus 16]. . . .*

*By means of the arrangement of the narrative, the Sinai covenant before the incident of the golden calf is characterized by the laws of the Decalogue, the Covenant Code and the instructions for building the tabernacle. However, the Sinai covenant after the incident of the golden calf is characterized by the fundamentally different and more extensive Priestly Code. In other words, after the incident of the golden calf, the bulk of the priestly laws [Exodus 35-Leviticus 16] takes the place of the Decalogue, the Covenant Code and the tabernacle. The incident of the golden calf has caused a fundamental change in the nature of Israel's covenant relationship. . . .*

*The author wanted to show that Israel's relationship with God, established at Sinai, underwent important changes due to Israel's repeated failure to obey God. What began as a covenant between God and Israel, fashioned after that of the patriarchs (the Covenant Code), had become a law code increasingly more complex (the Priestly Code) as Israel failed to obey God. Israel's propensity to follow "other gods," demonstrated in these narratives by the transgression of the golden calf, necessitated God's giving them the additional laws found in the Priestly Code."<sup>34</sup>*

Here are some of Sailhamer's conclusions with regard to the Law and faith:

*"Throughout this book I have attempted to feel a way along a path laid out by the author of the Pentateuch, and I have attempted to formulate a big idea that includes both the notion of obedience to the Mosaic law and the concept of living by faith. Ultimately, these two themes of law and faith have found their place alongside each other as a juxtaposition of law and gospel. The gospel—that is, the notion of justification by faith—is God's means for our fulfilling the law. This immediately strikes one as "Pauline," but not in the sense of reading Paul's theology back into the Pentateuch. The theology of the Pentateuch is "Pauline" in the sense*

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34 Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 51.

*that we must read the Pentateuch's theology into Paul. Paul's line of thought about the law and faith is drawn from the theology of the Pentateuch and the prophetic authors of Scripture who read the Scriptures "day and night," not the other way around."*<sup>35</sup>

We will consider these things more in depth in a later lesson (Lesson 11).

### Tracing God's Ways

Yahweh's act of deliverance is remembered in the celebration of the Passover. The exodus becomes a central and defining event in Israel's self-understanding. God's covenant with Israel, mediated through Moses, is of the same structure as God's covenant with Abraham: provisions, which enable stipulations, and blessings and curses which are contingent upon the stipulations. The purpose of the covenant was to reveal God's character and glory among the nations.

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35 Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 608.

## Day 3

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### A COVENANT BROKEN AND WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

Israel has entered a covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Exodus 24:7-8

*<sup>7</sup> Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."<sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."*

But Israel quickly breaks that covenant in the familiar episode with the golden calf. Here is the Lord's reaction to their sin and Moses' intercession.

Exodus 32:7-14

*<sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.<sup>8</sup> They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"<sup>9</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people.<sup>10</sup> Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."<sup>11</sup> But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?<sup>12</sup> Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?' Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people."<sup>13</sup> Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'"<sup>14</sup> And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.*

11. Underline phrases that describe the LORD's spiritual assessment of the people. Then double-underline or otherwise mark the phrases that indicate the *basis* for Moses' appeal. Why does the LORD relent of the disaster he had spoken of (Exodus 32:14)?

*ANSWER. The LORD does not relent of the disaster because his assessment of the people's condition had changed. It had not. The people were corrupt and stiff-necked. Moses does not argue with this. What Moses does is to remind God of the covenant and the promises he had made. He also asks what the Egyptians will say if Israel is consumed after such a great deliverance. Therefore, we might say that Moses' appeal is ultimately based on the glory of God, his reputation and his own faithfulness.*

Based on Moses' appeal, God relents and then renews the covenant he had made. This is a pattern that occurs repeatedly throughout Israel's history: Israel sins, God threatens punishment or punishes his people, but God remembers to honor his promise to the patriarchs. He is motivated by a concern for his own name.

For the purposes of this course, we need to skip large sections of narrative that describe Israel's wandering in the wilderness. We will only be able to consider a few episodes of significance.

First, we will look at the account of Nadab and Abihu, priests who offered unauthorized fire to the LORD:

Leviticus 10:1-3, 8-11

*<sup>1</sup> Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup> And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said, 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace. . . . <sup>8</sup> And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, <sup>9</sup> "Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. <sup>10</sup> You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, <sup>11</sup> and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses."*

What is said in Leviticus 10 about the role of priesthood is later confirmed by a passage in Malachi:

Malachi 2:1-9

<sup>1</sup> And now, O priests, this command is for you. <sup>2</sup> If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. <sup>3</sup> Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. <sup>4</sup> So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>5</sup> My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. <sup>6</sup> True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. <sup>7</sup> For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. <sup>8</sup> But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, <sup>9</sup> and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction.

12. According to these passages, what was the role of the priests? Why did the LORD put Nadab and Abihu to death?

- **ANSWER.** *The priests were charged with the responsibility of teaching the people the statutes of the LORD (Lev 10:11), guarding knowledge, and giving instruction as the LORD's messenger (Mal 2:7). It is clear from the passage in Malachi that the priests failed in this task. Nadab and Abihu had to die because they were not sanctifying the LORD or upholding his glory among the people. Like the wicked priests described in Malachi, they must suffer the consequences of their sin.*

We should note again the interesting perspective on the Pentateuch put forward by John Sailhamer. He suggests that while God's original intent was for Israel to be a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6), because of Israel's sin "a distinction is now made between the people and the priests—it is not a kingdom of priests but

a kingdom *with* priests.”<sup>36</sup> Whatever the failing of the priests was, they were not alone in their rebellion against God.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he intended for them to enter Canaan immediately. Upon hearing the report of the spies, however, the people rebelled and declare their interest in returning to Egypt (a reversal of the exodus). God’s anger again burns against Israel.

Numbers 14:11-23

<sup>11</sup> *And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? <sup>12</sup> I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.” <sup>13</sup> But Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, <sup>14</sup> and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup> Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, <sup>16</sup> ‘It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.’ <sup>17</sup> And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, <sup>18</sup> ‘The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, 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 generation.’ <sup>19</sup> Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.” <sup>20</sup> Then the LORD said, “I have pardoned, according to your word. <sup>21</sup> But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, <sup>22</sup> none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, <sup>23</sup> shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it.”*

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<sup>36</sup> John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 51. See also his more recent work, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*.

13. What similarities can you observe between this passage and Exodus 32:7-14 (studied above)?

- **ANSWER.** *In both passages the LORD threatens to annihilate the people because of their sin and Moses pleads with God for mercy. Notice that the basis for Moses' appeal in this passage is the same as the basis for the appeal he made in Ex 32: he brings up the reputation God has with the Egyptians and his own glory. The LORD agrees not to destroy the sinful people on the spot, but nevertheless promises that they will not be totally spared the consequences of their sin. [Instructors, notice the twofold foundation of the LORD's promise to let the generation coming out of Egypt die in the wilderness! The global glory of God is as certain as his own existence!]*

Only Caleb and Joshua will survive and enter the promised land from among their generation. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and on the eve of Israel's entrance into the promised land, Moses has these parting words for the people:

Deuteronomy 8:1-6

<sup>1</sup> *The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. <sup>2</sup> And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. <sup>6</sup> So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.*

Now read the rest of the chapter (Deuteronomy 8:7-20).

14. Interact with this statement: "The wilderness was designed as Israel's school for learning to have faith in God."

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*



The book of Deuteronomy does not only point backwards; it also points forwards. Before considering Moses' prophecy about Israel's future, first read this important statement:

Deuteronomy 29:2-4

<sup>2</sup> And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, <sup>3</sup> the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. <sup>4</sup> But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear."

Moses predicts what will happen in Israel's future in Deuteronomy 30.

Deuteronomy 30:1-6

<sup>1</sup> And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, <sup>2</sup> and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup> then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup> If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. <sup>5</sup> And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."

15. According to these two passages, what will happen to Israel and why? How will God respond after that?

- **ANSWER.** *These two passages, as well as all of Deut 29-33, indicate that Israel will not keep the covenant and will experience the curse of exile as a result. Israel will not keep the covenant because God has not given the necessary moral transformation for obedience (a circumcised heart; cf. Deut 29:4). However, the end of Deuteronomy also makes clear that God will restore his people from exile, bring them back into the land, cause them to obey, and bless them. The book of Deuteronomy is the story of Israel (and a biblical theology) in miniature.*

### Tracing God's Ways

Israel sins with the golden calf. When threatened with destruction, it is God's covenant promises to Abraham that keep them alive. God's presence will continue to dwell with Israel, but they need to be guarded from his holiness (see Exodus 33:5). Because Israel fails to obey God, an entire generation will die in the wilderness. God will bring the next generation into the land under a new leader .

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE SABBATH

Tracing a biblical theology of the Sabbath must start with the “divine Sabbath” since the human Sabbath is based upon the divine Sabbath as the fourth commandment states:

Exodus 20:8-11

*<sup>8</sup> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

*<sup>12</sup> Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. <sup>13</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>14</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. <sup>15</sup> You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.*

These two texts, above, refer back to the LORD’s rest at creation:

Genesis 2:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*

But what does it mean that the LORD “rested”? Here are two clarifying comments:

*“Why did God rest? Certainly God was not tired. God’s Sabbath was not a rest of exhaustion. Rather, God ceased from his labors because his work was “finished”; there was nothing more for him to do. God’s rest after his week of “hard work” thus indicated by his actions what he had declared earlier in his word, namely, that his creation was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). God’s job was done. His Sabbath was like the rest a metalsmith takes after the final polishing has been applied and the pendant is complete. God rested because the world was now perfectly suited to meet the needs of mankind and, in so doing, to display the glories of its Creator.”<sup>37</sup>*

*“God’s Sabbath is not a withdrawal from the world and its operations (e.g., “My work is done, it’s all yours now; good luck!”); instead, it represents his taking his place at the helm.”<sup>38</sup>*

And here is a passage about David’s “rest” that might shed light on what the divine rest entails:

2 Samuel 7:1-2, 8-11, 16 (compare 1 Kings 5:2-4)

*<sup>1</sup> Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, <sup>2</sup> the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” . . . <sup>8</sup> “Now, therefore, thus you [Nathan] shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup> And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. . . . <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’”*

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<sup>37</sup> Hafemann, *God of Promise*, 45.

<sup>38</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 153.

16. Was David's "rest" (2 Samuel 7:1, 11) a cessation of all activity? If not, what was it? What might David's rest have to do with the divine rest?

- **ANSWER.** *As the context of the passage makes clear, David's "rest" was accomplished when there were no more threats to his rule as king. Therefore, we might say that his "rest" was the kingly peace that he enjoyed when his reign was established. We would argue that God's "rest" is of this kind. After creating the world he begins to rule the world he has created with no rivals to his power. The divine Sabbath does not entail inactivity or disengagement from the world, but the enjoyment of sovereign rule.*

The Sabbath day was not first established in the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. Four chapters before the Ten Commandments, we find this passage about the Sabbath:

Exodus 16:14-30

<sup>14</sup> And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup> When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat." <sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.'" <sup>17</sup> And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup> But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. <sup>19</sup> And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." <sup>20</sup> But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. <sup>21</sup> Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. <sup>22</sup> On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, <sup>23</sup> he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'" <sup>24</sup> So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. <sup>25</sup> Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. <sup>26</sup> Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none." <sup>27</sup> On the

seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.<sup>28</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?<sup>29</sup> See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.”<sup>30</sup> So the people rested on the seventh day.

17. According to Exodus 16, how might the Israelites’ observance of the Sabbath day glorify God? How does breaking the Sabbath dishonor God?

- **ANSWER.** *By resting on the seventh day, the Israelites are demonstrating their contentment and confidence in the LORD’s provision. They are declaring with their actions, “You have provided all that we need. And we trust that you will continue to meet our needs in the future.” This glorifies God because, as Piper says, the giver gets the glory. The Sabbath exalts God as the sovereign, self-sufficient, supplier of all things. Conversely, to break the Sabbath displays a lack of trust in God’s provision. It declares, “We don’t trust that what you have given us is enough. We will work to provide for ourselves.” This disbelief in God’s word does not portray God’s character accurately in the world.*

The Sabbath becomes the sign of the Mosaic covenant just as circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. Notice the prominence that the Sabbath is given in the following passage:

Exodus 31:12-18

<sup>12</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, <sup>13</sup> “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. <sup>14</sup> You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. <sup>15</sup> Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. <sup>16</sup> Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. <sup>17</sup> It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.’” <sup>18</sup> And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

The Sabbath is given further prominence later in salvation history when its non-observance is mentioned as one of the chief reasons Israel was sent into exile (see Leviticus 26:32-35; Nehemiah 13:17-18). So it is all the more shocking when Jesus seems to be disregarding the Sabbath in his earthly ministry:

Matthew 12:1-8

<sup>1</sup> At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. <sup>2</sup> But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” <sup>3</sup> He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: <sup>4</sup> how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? <sup>5</sup> Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? <sup>6</sup> I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. <sup>7</sup> And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. <sup>8</sup> For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

18. How does Jesus justify his disciples’ breaking of the Sabbath? How might your answer relate the answer you gave to Question 16 of this lesson?

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus basically makes it an issue of authority. The implication of his answer is that he is greater than the temple and greater than David. The temple and David were pointers to his lordship and ministry. As the Son of Man, he is “Lord of the Sabbath.” His authority gives him the freedom of providing food for his disciples, regardless of the day. The centrality of authority in this passage corresponds nicely with the emphasis on authority that we noted in our answer to Question 16. The divine “rest” is actually the sovereign exercise of benevolent rule to provide for God’s people.*

Notice that the text never claims that Jesus himself eats—only his disciples. Jesus can be seen as providing food for them (remember Genesis 1:29!).

As something of an aside, also consider the following quotation that describes how the “showbread” or “Bread of the Presence” which David and his men ate in the temple was different from bread that was offered in pagan temples.

*In Mesopotamian religion it was common to offer bread to gods on food tables located in their temples. But these bread/food tables were located immediately in front of the idol of the god or goddess and were understood to be food the god needed (following the ancient pagan notion that the one thing the gods could not do for themselves was feed themselves). This represents a degeneration of the true practice, reflected here: God does not need food. It is offered to him symbolically, not to satisfy his hunger. Thus it is placed outside his personal room (the holy of holies) and separated from the ark (which represented him personally) by the curtain dividing the holy place from the holy of holies. The commentary to the Jewish Study Bible cogently expresses the difference: “This partition between God and the table makes it clear that the bread of display is not actually consumed by God but is only a token gift—this is also underlined by the fact that it was eaten by priests. That its purpose was display, not consumption, is also indicated by the fact that it is replaced weekly, not daily as elsewhere in the ancient Near East.”<sup>39</sup>*

The Bread of the Presence is one more testament to the great truth that the God of Israel is the sovereign, self-sufficient, supplier of all things!

Here is another episode in the Gospels that relates to a biblical theology of the Sabbath:

John 5:15-18

<sup>15</sup> *The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.*  
<sup>16</sup> *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.* <sup>17</sup> *But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”* <sup>18</sup> *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

Here are John Piper’s comments on this passage. Notice how these comments support what we’ve been asserting about the nature of the Sabbath:

*What does this mean? I think it means this: When Adam fell into sin, God got up from his Sabbath rest after creation, and started to work again—not this time on creation, but on redemption—toward a new creation. A new humanity. “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” You do not understand what I am doing. I and my Father are creating a new world, a new humanity, and when we are finished, we will celebrate with a new Sabbath.*

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<sup>39</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, page 575, footnote 347.



*And that work of redemption and new creation was finished decisively on the cross. And three days later Jesus rose from the dead to celebrate the victory he had won and the new creation he had decisively obtained and inaugurated. Now he could take his seat with his Father on the throne of the universe and enter his Sabbath rest.* <sup>40</sup>

After Jesus' death and resurrection, his disciples and the early church no longer observe the Sabbath on Saturdays, as such. Rather, there has been a fundamental change in their understanding of the Sabbath. John Piper explains:

*This is why the early church took the first day of the week as its day of worship and turned away from the seventh day. The seventh day marked the victory of the first creation. The first day marked the victory of the new creation with the resurrection of Christ. . . .*

*The Christian church made the change from the seventh to the first day for worship because it was the day that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead—the day he vindicated the completion of his Father's redeeming work. The new creation, the new humanity, were purchased and established—but not consummated.* <sup>41</sup>

Now look at the following passages:

Romans 14:4-6

*<sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. <sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. . . .*

Colossians 2:16-17

*<sup>16</sup> Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

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<sup>40</sup> John Piper, "Is There a 'Lord's Day?'" an online sermon at the [desiringGod](http://desiringGod.com) website.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

19. Do these two passages indicate that a Christian is not obligated to keep one day of the week as a holy day, consecrated to the Lord?

- **ANSWER.** *There is a difference of opinion on this question, and this course will not advocate for one answer or the other. Some claim that Rom 14 is not referring to the practice of the “Lord’s Day,” and that though the Lord’s Day may be a shadow (Col 2:17) hinting at a greater, future reality, it is still something that ought to be observed by Christians. Others claim that for the Christian, every day is a Sabbath day in that every day is an opportunity to display dependence upon God, which was the spiritual reality that the human observance of the Sabbath was always pointing to.*

We will consider only one more passage in our brief biblical theology of the Sabbath:

Hebrews 4:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. <sup>2</sup> For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup> For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” <sup>5</sup> And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my rest.” <sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

20. Is God’s Sabbath rest something we enjoy now or something which we will enjoy in the future? How does one enter God’s Sabbath rest?

- **ANSWER.** *Though the curriculum has not yet introduced the concept of “inaugurated eschatology,” this passage is a good example of it. There is a sense in which we have already entered God’s rest, and there is a sense in which we have not yet entered God’s rest in all its fullness (cf. vv. 9-10 and 11). Commenting on vv. 10-11, Piper says: “Redemption is accomplished. It*

*must now be applied and consummated. Our eternal Sabbath is begun but is not fully present.” And as Piper says regarding how we enter God’s rest, “We enter into it when we cease from our works and trust Christ and his finished work for us on the cross.”*

## Day 5.

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Sabbath” (745-750)
- ▷ “Rest” (727-732)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Deuteronomy” (159-165)
- ▷ “Law” (629-636)
- ▷ “Moses” (668-673)

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of the Sabbath, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. Is it unfair for God to harden Pharaoh's heart?
2. What was Israel's most basic problem? Why couldn't Israel keep the covenant?
3. Should we set aside one day a week to rest from our work? Is the Sabbath commandment still binding on us today?

## 📌 YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

## 📌 APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

Are you living in God's Sabbath rest?

## 📌 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992)
- ▷ John Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009)
- ▷ *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2000)
- ▷ T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002)





# The Throne of His Father David

# 5

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

The momentum for kingship has been building. Kingship relates to the commission of Adam in the garden; it is promised to Abraham that kings will come from his descendants; legislation for kings is laid down in the Mosaic law; and in Judges, the editorial comment critiquing Israel in those days was that there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

In this lesson, we will read about the rise of David. In order to set the backdrop, we will first discuss Joshua's leadership and Israel's inheritance of the land. The depravity of the following generations and the failure of Saul pave the way for the coming King. David is God's son, and yet, there is still one to come who is greater than David.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ discern the covenant structure in Joshua and a pattern of disobedience that emerges in Judges
- ▷ articulate the role of the king in the nation of Israel
- ▷ express the significance of the Davidic covenant and messianic expectation in the Old Testament





A helpful exercise for this lesson might be to project a copy of Joshua 23 onto a screen (or distribute a handout with the entire text) and then walk through the passage with your students verse-by-verse as you analyze, as a class, the covenant structure. The threefold structure of provisions, stipulations, and blessings and curses, is clearly seen in this passage, and identifying the covenantal components in this passage might give your students confidence and experience in doing this for themselves.

It is our conviction that kingship and the cluster of biblical themes around kingship (covenant, temple, Sabbath, creation, etc.) might be the center of biblical theology. God is represented by the metaphor of king more often than by any other metaphorical role. That is why this course invests so much time on kingship and the kingdom of God. And that is why we agree that, if pressed, we would chose King David as the most important human figure of the Old Testament.

Another theme that might be explored in this lesson is the perversion and demise of the Levitical priesthood. It is interesting to note that Moses was from the tribe of Levi, and the covenant associated with him brought Israel cursing and not blessing. The book of Hebrews explains the inadequacy of the Levitical priesthood and argues that Jesus does not need to be from the tribe of Levi in order to be our great high priest. The role of the priests in the Old Testament diminishes even as the role of kings gains more and more biblical attention.



## Day 1

### JOSHUA, THE JUDGES, AND THE SONS OF ELI

It would be understandable if Israel was hesitant. Moses was the only leader that they ever knew. They had seen him challenge Pharaoh, part the sea according to the word of the LORD, announce God's provision in the wilderness—and now he was dead. And they were right on the verge of entering the promised land. It was therefore important that God affirm Joshua's leadership, and it's significant that Joshua's success would be dependent upon the Lord's presence with him—as it was with Moses, and Joseph, and the fathers before him.

Joshua:1-2, 5

<sup>1</sup> After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, <sup>2</sup> "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. . . . <sup>5</sup> No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."

Joshua 6:27

<sup>27</sup> So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

Joshua 10:42

<sup>42</sup> And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.

The effect of God's fighting for Israel is that the nations of the land are afraid. This is clearly seen in Rahab's conversation with the spies.

Joshua 2:8-11

<sup>8</sup> Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof<sup>9</sup> and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before

you. <sup>10</sup> 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 devoted to destruction. <sup>11</sup> And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”

Joshua 5:1

<sup>1</sup> As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

And here is a description of Joshua and the people crossing over into the land:

Joshua 3:10-13, 17

<sup>10</sup> And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. <sup>11</sup> Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. <sup>12</sup> Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. <sup>13</sup> And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.” . . . <sup>17</sup> Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

1. In reading to the biblical texts above, what resonances do you hear between these texts and the story of the exodus from Egypt? What might be the significance of these echoes?

· **ANSWER.** *There are multiple resonances between these texts and the exodus. Israel “passing over on dry ground” (Josh 3:17) could as easily describe their crossing of the Red Sea as their crossing of the Jordan River. Moreover, the LORD’s presence with Joshua and Israel, and his fighting on behalf of Israel, remind the reader of Moses and the exodus. Finally, it*

*is clear from these passages that the LORD is concerned about his name and glory among the nations, just as he was in sending the plagues and drowning Pharaoh's army. These echoes suggest that the crossing of the Jordan is being portrayed as a new "exodus," a new beginning for Israel after the disobedience of a generation who died in the wilderness.*

The connection between crossing the Jordan and crossing the Red Sea is cemented by the following passage:

Joshua 4:19-24

*<sup>19</sup> The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. <sup>20</sup> And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. <sup>21</sup> And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?' <sup>22</sup> then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' <sup>23</sup> For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, <sup>24</sup> so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."*

The emphasis in the book of Joshua is on how the Lord has finally fulfilled the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has proved to be faithful to his covenant and trustworthy.

Joshua 11:23

*<sup>23</sup> So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.*

Joshua 21:43-45

*<sup>43</sup> Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. <sup>44</sup> And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. <sup>45</sup> Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.*

Perhaps the two most significant chapters in Joshua are the last two: chapters

23 and 24. These chapters describe how the covenant is renewed with a new generation in the land.

2. Read Joshua, chapters 23 and 24. As you read, record observations on the covenant structure in the table below.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Covenant Provisions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>Covenant provisions are described in Josh 23:1-4, 9-10, 14; and Josh 24:2-13, 17-18a. The main provisions are military victories, fulfilled promises, the entire history of Israel, a fertile land, and God's presence.</i></li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Covenant Stipulations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>Covenant stipulations are described in Josh 23:6-8, 11; and Josh 24:14-16, 18b, 21-24. Although "obedience to God" can be used to describe all the stipulations, they more specifically include obedience to the Law, renunciation of idolatry, "clinging" to the LORD, "loving" the LORD, "fearing" and "serving" the LORD, and inclining the heart to the LORD.</i></li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Covenant Blessings and Curses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>Covenant blessings and curses are described in Josh 23:5, 12-13, 15-16; and Josh 24:20. If Israel obeys, the LORD will drive out the foreign nations completely, and Israel will continue to enjoy prosperity in the land. If Israel disobeys, however, the LORD will not drive out the nations, but the foreign nations will harass and kill Israel.</i></li></ul>

The book of Judges begins with a sad commentary on the generation that followed Joshua's generation. Though Joshua and his generation had achieved some measure of faithfulness, this new generation did not know the LORD. Functionally, they are in the position of Pharaoh (see Exodus 5:2).

#### Judges 2:7-10

*<sup>7</sup> And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. <sup>8</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. <sup>9</sup> And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. <sup>10</sup> And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.*

This lack of knowledge of God and his glory becomes an endemic problem for Israel in the time of the judges. Since they do not know the Lord they follow false, pagan gods. God becomes angry and punishes them for the sin. When they do cry out to God, though, he raises up a judge to deliver the people.

Judges 2:11-23 functions as the hermeneutical key for the entire book. Read this passage carefully.

#### Judges 2:11-23

*<sup>11</sup> And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. <sup>12</sup> And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. <sup>13</sup> They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. <sup>14</sup> So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. <sup>15</sup> Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress. <sup>16</sup> Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. <sup>17</sup> Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. <sup>18</sup> Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. <sup>19</sup> But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not*



drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.<sup>20</sup> So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he said, “Because this people has transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice,<sup>21</sup> I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died,<sup>22</sup> in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not.”<sup>23</sup> So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

3. Now fit the following biblical references into the table below and take notes on these verses as needed.

Judges	3:7	4:1	6:34
	3:8	4:2	8:28
	3:9a	4:3a	10:6
	3:9b-11	4:23-24	10:7-9
	3:12a	5:31b	10:10
	3:12b-14	6:1a	10:11-16
	3:15a	6:1b-6a	11:29, 33
	3:15b, 30	6:6b-7	13:1

#### Israel's sin

- **ANSWER.** The following references describe Israel's sin: 3:7, 12a; 4:1; 6:1a; 10:6; 13:1. Notice how the sin of Israel is described as “evil in the sight of the LORD” (compare Judges 21:25) and as “serving” foreign gods instead of the God who has no needs.

#### God's judgment

- **ANSWER.** The following references describe God's judgment: 3:8, 12b-14; 4:2; 6:1b-6a; 10:7-9. God's judgment on Israel is described as being “sold into the hand” of their enemies to serve them. God's judgment is to lay waste to the land (a reversal of his provision in Gen 1:29).

### Israel's cry for help

- **ANSWER.** *The following references describe Israel's cry for help: 3:9a, 15a; 4:3; 6:6b-7; 10:10, 11-16. The cries for help are always to "the LORD" (God's covenant name). The last two passages describe Israel's confession of sin.*

### God's salvation

- **ANSWER.** *The following references describe God's salvation: 3:9b-11, 15b, 30; 4:23-24; 5:31b; 6:34; 8:28; 11:29, 33. The LORD's salvation takes the form of a deliverer and is achieved when the land has rest. In 6:34 and 11:29 the text speaks of the Spirit of the LORD being upon the deliverer (compare Isa 11:2).*

The book of Judges ends with these words: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25).

4. Use the cross-references in your Bible to find parallels to the last verse in the book of Judges. Is this a common refrain? What is the significance of this theological commentary (Judges 21:25)? Relate your answer to the pattern you have seen throughout the book of Judges.
- **ANSWER.** *The refrain of Judges 21:25, 17:6, 18:1, and 19:1 attributes Israel's sinfulness to a lack of kingship. Though the LORD should have been honored as king in Israel, Israel's idolatry (reminiscent of the golden calf; see Judges 17:3-5) makes it clear that Israel does not know him. Israel is using God for a cheap deliverance; they are not loving God with their whole heart. The downward spiral of repeated sin prepares the way for the corruption of the priesthood and the rise of Samuel and David.*

The end of the book of Judges incorporates a description of the perversion of the priesthood. It is with this theme that the book of 1 Samuel begins. God has harsh words for Eli, whose sons are "worthless men" who "did not know the Lord" (2:12). They were blaspheming God, but Eli did not restrain them (3:13).

1 Samuel 2:31-35

<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.

<sup>32</sup> Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. <sup>33</sup> The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. <sup>34</sup> And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. <sup>35</sup> And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

Samuel is that prophet/priest. He is born to the barren wife of Elkanah, Hannah. Examine the following descriptions of Samuel. Is this language familiar to you?

1 Samuel 2:21, 26

<sup>21</sup> Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the young man Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD.

. . . <sup>26</sup> Now the young man Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.

1 Samuel 3:19-21

<sup>19</sup> And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. <sup>20</sup> And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

One of the sub-themes in the book of 1 Samuel is the “exile” of the ark of the covenant. Its capture is closely related to the perversion of the priesthood. Read 1 Samuel 4:1-11 with an eye toward this connection.

1 Samuel 4:1-11

<sup>1</sup> And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. <sup>2</sup> The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. <sup>3</sup> And when the troops came to the camp,

*the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies."<sup>4</sup> So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.<sup>5</sup> As soon as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded.<sup>6</sup> And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp,<sup>7</sup> the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before."<sup>8</sup> Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.<sup>9</sup> Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight."<sup>10</sup> So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers.<sup>11</sup> And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.*

5. What was Israel's mistake in bringing the ark of the covenant to battle?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel's mistake in bringing the ark into battle is twofold: first, the LORD did not direct them to do so; second, it appears that Israel was putting their trust not in the LORD, but in an outward symbol of his presence. The ark had become like an amulet to them. This is not the last time in salvation history in which Israel will put their confidence in a holy object instead of the LORD. Compare Jer 7:4-11.*

God will not let his name be slandered among the nations. Therefore, while the ark is in captivity, his hand is hard against the Philistines and Dagon their god (see 1 Samuel 5:1-12).

### Tracing God's Ways

Joshua leads the people into the land and God fulfills his promises. The covenant is renewed. Israel's failure to drive out the inhabitants of the land, however, results in compromise and sin. God's deliverance through judges is not enough. There needs to be a king in Israel. The priesthood is corrupt, so God raises another priest and prophet, Samuel. The ark is taken into exile.

## Day 2

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### THE KING OF ISRAEL

Samuel redirects Israel's loyalty to the Lord, and therefore the Lord grants Samuel military success. When Samuel became old, the elders of Israel requested a king to rule over them. This is reminiscent of what Israel had already done in the time of Gideon.

Joshua 8:22-23

*<sup>22</sup> Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian." <sup>23</sup> Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you."*

1 Samuel 8:4-9, 19-20

*<sup>4</sup> Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah <sup>5</sup> and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." <sup>6</sup> But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. <sup>8</sup> According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. <sup>9</sup> Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." . . . <sup>19</sup> But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, <sup>20</sup> that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."*

6. Why is it evil for Israel to ask for a king? Hadn't God already promised Abraham that kings would come from his lineage (for example, in Genesis 17:6)? Hadn't Deuteronomy already prescribed regulations for a king (17:14-20)?

- **ANSWER.** *Although it may not have been evil in and of itself to ask for a king (see Deut 17:14-15), Israel's sin is in what is prompting them to ask for a king—a rejection of the LORD. They are choosing a king for themselves (1 Sam 8:18) instead of allowing the LORD to choose a king for them (Deut 17:15; cf. 1 Sam 16:1). Their sinfulness is revealed in their desire for a king to fight their battles for them (1 Sam 8:20), when it was the LORD who had always fought the battles for Israel. Notice that the people will have to meet the needs of the king instead of the king meeting the needs of the people (1 Sam 8:10-18).*

Samuel anoints Saul as king over Israel. But in doing so, Samuel has some words of caution to speak to Israel.

Read 1 Samuel 12:6-25.

7. What elements in this passage have you seen previously in our study of biblical theology? List them below:

- **ANSWER.** *There are a number of elements in this passage which we have already noted in earlier biblical passages, including the following:*

- A1. *A recitation of salvation history, emphasizing the LORD's righteous deeds*
- A2. *The charge that the LORD should have been king over Israel*
- A3. *The clear threefold covenant structure of the passage*
- A4. *The people fearing God and his appointed leader after a mighty work*
- A5. *The people pleading with their leader to pray on their behalf*
- A6. *The election of Israel for the glory of God*

As so often is the case in Israel's history, Israel falls into sin almost immediately after God's warning. Samuel had just spoken some words of warning in chapter 12. Now read what he has to say in chapters 13-15.

1 Samuel 13:10-14

<sup>10</sup> *As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. <sup>11</sup> Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, <sup>12</sup> I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced*

*myself, and offered the burnt offering.”<sup>13</sup> And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.<sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.”*

#### **1 Samuel 15:20-28**

*<sup>20</sup> And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction.<sup>21</sup> But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”<sup>22</sup> And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.<sup>23</sup> For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.”<sup>24</sup> Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.<sup>25</sup> Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the LORD.”<sup>26</sup> And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.”<sup>27</sup> As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore.<sup>28</sup> And Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.”*

#### **8. According to these verses, what is the Lord seeking in a king?**

- **ANSWER.** *Simply put, the LORD is seeking for a king who will keep his commandments and obey his voice (compare Deut 17:18-20 with 1 Sam 13:13-14; 15:22).*

It is now that we come to perhaps the most important figure in all of the Old Testament—King David.

*Again, it is as if all history has been waiting, in this case not for Abraham, but for David from the tribe of Judah. Or in the words of Walter Brueggemann, all history*



*is regarded as a footnote to David.* <sup>42</sup>

The contrast between David and Saul is immediately apparent. Compare the following biblical texts.

1 Samuel 10:23-24

<sup>23</sup> . . . *And when [Saul] stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.* <sup>24</sup> *And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!”*

1 Samuel 16:6-7, 13

<sup>6</sup> *When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him.”* <sup>7</sup> *But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” . . .* <sup>13</sup> *Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [David] in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.*

It could not be clearer that God is looking for a “man after his own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). The anointing of oil and the Holy Spirit is all the empowering that is needed for the king.

The story of David and Goliath is rightly esteemed as an important story within the life of David and the history of Israel. Oftentimes though, portrayals of the battle can miss the central point. Read the following excerpts from this well-known story again. Notice the similarities and differences between the texts that are placed side-by-side.

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<sup>42</sup> Stephen Dempster, “Geography and Genealogy, Dominion and Dynasty” in *Biblical Theology*, 73.

**1 Samuel 17:21-26, 37, 43-47, 49-51**

<sup>21</sup> And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. <sup>22</sup> And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. <sup>23</sup> As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. <sup>24</sup> All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid.

<sup>25</sup> And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."

<sup>26</sup> And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall 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 defy the armies of the living God?"

<sup>37</sup> And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

<sup>43</sup> And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup> The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field."

<sup>45</sup> Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with 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 defied. <sup>46</sup> This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, <sup>47</sup> and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."

<sup>49</sup> And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. <sup>50</sup> So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. <sup>51</sup> Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

**1 Samuel 4:2-4**

<sup>2</sup> Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. <sup>3</sup> And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. <sup>4</sup> But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him.

9. What is the story of David and Goliath really about? Defend your answer with support from the passages above.

• **ANSWER.** *The story of David and Goliath is about the LORD of hosts. The contrast between the men of Israel and David, and then the Philistine and David, makes it clear that David is concerned for the LORD's name and relies on the LORD's power for military success. David's victory will glorify God among all the nations and in Israel (1 Sam 17:46-47). The parallels between Goliath's death and the fall of Dagon also suggest that this battle is the LORD's victory over the pagan gods (cf. 1 Sam 17:43; Ex 12:12).*

Before ending this day's study we will cast a look back to Hannah's song, an important passage of theology within the book of 1 Samuel.

#### 1 Samuel 2:1-10

<sup>1</sup> And Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. <sup>2</sup> There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God. <sup>3</sup> Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. <sup>4</sup> The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. <sup>5</sup> Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. <sup>6</sup> The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. <sup>7</sup> The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. <sup>8</sup> He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. <sup>9</sup> He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. <sup>10</sup> The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed."

10. What features of this song are developed within the book of 1 Samuel and the rise of King David?

• **ANSWER.** *There are a number of features in this song that are developed in the succeeding narrative including the incomparability of the LORD,*

*the foolishness of arrogant speech, the dramatic reversals of human expectations, the victory of God, and the exaltation of the LORD's anointed. The song highlights the LORD's power and his kingship over the earth.*

David is granted military success over his enemies and brings the ark of the covenant back from exile to the new city of God, Jerusalem.

### Tracing God's Ways

The people ask for a king, rejecting the LORD as their king. Samuel anoints Saul as king. Saul fails to obey the LORD. The kingdom is then given over to David, who trusts in the LORD. David subdues the land and brings the ark into Jerusalem.

## Day 3

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### DAVID'S HOUSE

With the death of Saul, David is soon anointed king. Rather than taking kingship by force as so many of his successors do, David has waited for the Lord to exalt him. And as the LORD was with Joseph, Moses, and Joshua, the LORD is now with David.

2 Samuel 5:1-4, 9-12

*<sup>1</sup> Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. <sup>2</sup> In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'" <sup>3</sup> So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. <sup>4</sup> David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. . . . <sup>9</sup> And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward. <sup>10</sup> And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him. <sup>11</sup> And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also carpenters and masons who built David a house. <sup>12</sup> And David knew that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.*

Now study 2 Samuel 7:1-17 and 1 Kings 9:3-9.

2 Samuel 7:1-17

*<sup>1</sup> Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, <sup>2</sup> the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." <sup>3</sup> And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you." <sup>4</sup> But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, <sup>5</sup> "Go and tell my servant David, "Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? <sup>6</sup> I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. <sup>7</sup> In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word*

with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”<sup>8</sup> Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel.’<sup>9</sup> And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.<sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly,<sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.<sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.<sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.<sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,<sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.<sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”<sup>17</sup> In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

### 1 Kings 9:3-9

<sup>3</sup> And the LORD said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.<sup>4</sup> And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules,<sup>5</sup> then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’<sup>6</sup> But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them,<sup>7</sup> then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.<sup>8</sup> And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and

to this house?’<sup>9</sup> Then they will say, ‘Because they abandoned the LORD their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the LORD has brought all this disaster on them.’”

11. What are the covenant provisions, stipulations, and blessings/curses of this covenant?

#### Covenant Provisions

- **ANSWER.** *The LORD made David king. He has been with David, granting David military victories. The LORD promises to make him a house. The promise then extends to Solomon. The temple that Solomon has built has been consecrated by the LORD.*

#### Covenant Stipulations

- **ANSWER.** *The covenant stipulations that God has laid down for David are not clearly seen in 2 Sam 7, but the later narrative makes it clear that David’s obedience was integral to God’s establishment of his throne (see 1 Kgs 3:6; 11:33-34, 38; 14:8; 15:4-5). 1 Kings 9 demonstrates that Solomon must keep God’s commandments in order for his royal throne to be established forever (see also 1 Kgs 6:12; 8:25; Ps 132:11-12).*

#### Covenant Blessings and Curses

- **ANSWER.** *The blessings for obedience would be that God would establish the throne of the king and put his son on the throne. He would dwell with Israel, subdue her enemies, and grant peace and prosperity to the land. The curses for disobedience would be that God would destroy Israel and send her into exile. Thus the covenant blessings and curses are a reiteration of the Mosaic covenant’s blessings and curses (compare, for example, Deut 28:37 and 29:24-25 with 1 Kgs 9:7-9).*

After God's covenant with David and David's military victories over the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites, and Ammonites, it appears as if David is the ideal king. Like Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses before him, however, David also falls.

Read quickly through 2 Samuel 11-12.

12. Summarizing in your own words, how did David sin and what were the consequences?

- **ANSWER.** *The sins of David are widely known. He commits adultery with Bathsheba and then has her husband Uriah killed. In Nathan's rebuke, however, the LORD emphasizes the sin of David against God himself, who had shown him such kindness in blessing him and making him rich. The wealthy king should have provided for his people out of his own abundance rather than taking what little they had. Thus David's sin against Uriah can be seen in juxtaposition to his kindness and generosity to Mephibosheth. The consequences of David's sin are that evil will arise within David's house and David's son with Bathsheba will die.*

Interestingly, the narrative of David's fall is framed by accounts of Israel's battle with Rabbah. 2 Samuel 11:1 hints that David, as king, should have been leading his army. Joab's instructions to David in 2 Samuel 12:28 also suggest that David, as king, should be the military commander of Israel.

Thus we see that the king of Israel had two responsibilities: to represent the true and living God in war and to represent him through the keeping of the Law. Walton explains:

*The king's responsibility in this role [as covenant administrator] was to make sure that the Lord was being properly represented. This included (1) ensuring that the covenant was being kept by the people (so that God's holiness was appropriately represented), and (2) remaining a subordinate instrument for the Lord's military leadership and deliverances (so that God's kingship was appropriately represented). The king had the responsibility to model adherence to the law—to serve as a model for Israel's conduct as well as to portray the God of Israel to the nations.<sup>43</sup>*

Unfortunately, David failed in both responsibilities.

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43 Walton, *Covenant*, 68-69.



Much of the rest of David's story describes the trouble God brings to David's house and kingdom. Like mankind after the sin in the garden and mankind after the flood, Israel too begins to disintegrate after David's fall.

Despite his failings, David does genuinely repent and seek the LORD. Later biblical reflection upon David and his reign is surprisingly positive. Consider David's song of deliverance and his "last words" recorded in 2 Samuel 22:1–23:7.

13. What is the main point of these verses?

- **ANSWER.** *Much of this passage expresses David's trust in the LORD and the LORD's deliverance of David. The LORD is depicted as a mighty warrior. Interspersed in this material, however, are the striking claims of David that he has obeyed God and that the LORD has dealt with him according to his righteousness (22:21, 25)! How should we understand these claims, especially in view of David's sin with Bathsheba? The question is a difficult one, but perhaps we should understand that David's life was characterized by integrity, and when he did sin, he was quick to repent. The main point of these verses, then, might be a celebration of God's enduring covenant with David (see 23:3-5).*

The opening chapters of 1 Kings describe David's death, the establishment of Solomon's kingdom, and the building of the temple. The glory of the LORD fills the temple as it had filled the tabernacle. After the temple had been dedicated, the narrative ends with this "benediction" from Solomon:

1 Kings 8:56-61

<sup>56</sup> Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. <sup>57</sup> The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, <sup>58</sup> that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. <sup>59</sup> Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, <sup>60</sup> that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. <sup>61</sup> Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.

14. How does this passage relate to what we've learned thus far in our study of biblical theology?

- **ANSWER.** *This benediction is reminiscent of Joshua's words to Israel after God had established them in the land. Joshua too had spoken of God's fulfillment of the promises he made. Solomon exhorts the people of Israel to keep the Law and asks God for the power to obey what he has commanded. Like Moses, Solomon makes his plea on the basis of God's reputation and glory. This point in Israel's story represents a new beginning, as the renewal of the covenant had in Joshua's day.*

The last passage we will consider in this day's study is an important reflection from the Psalms on the Davidic covenant.

Psalm 89:20-21, 28-36

<sup>20</sup> I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, <sup>21</sup> so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. . . . <sup>28</sup> My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. <sup>29</sup> I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens. <sup>30</sup> If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, <sup>31</sup> if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, <sup>32</sup> then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, <sup>33</sup> but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. <sup>34</sup> I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. <sup>35</sup> Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. <sup>36</sup> His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.

15. Will the Davidic covenant endure, or will the sins of David's descendants nullify God's promises to David?

- **ANSWER.** *As this passage and other passages we've mentioned (see the references in the answer to Question 11) demonstrate, God's covenant with David will endure, just as God's covenant with Abraham will endure. We've argued that this is so not because these covenants are unconditional, but because Abraham and David were found faithful (yet not without sin). For their sake, God will keep his promises. Nevertheless, it is also clear that these two covenants are based squarely on the sovereign and free election of God. His mercy precedes any requirements that he makes. Therefore, although the sins of David's descendants will have consequences, yet God*

*will remain faithful to his promises and will establish David's throne (ultimately in the Messiah's reign).*

### Tracing God's Ways

God promises the kingdom to David and establishes his covenant with him. David, however, sin, and his house is divided. David's son Solomon succeeds his father, builds the temple, and ushers Israel into unprecedented wealth and power. It appears as if God is raising Israel above all the nations.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF KINGSHIP AND THE MESSIAH

The biblical theme of kingship extends much farther back into redemptive history than King David. In fact, the kingship of God and the kingship of the humans he created in his image is seen in the first chapter of the Bible.

Remind yourself of where the theme of kingship begins by reading Genesis 1:26-29 again:

Genesis 1:26-29

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.”*

After the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, however, we see even in the Pentateuch that the theme of kingship begins to center upon a single person. Some of the earliest “Messianic” texts in the Bible are found in Genesis 49 and Numbers 24, the prophecy of Jacob and the oracle of Balaam:

Genesis 49:8-10

*<sup>8</sup> Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you. <sup>9</sup> Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? <sup>10</sup> The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

Numbers 24:15-19

*<sup>15</sup> And he took up his discourse and said, “The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,*

*the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,<sup>16</sup> the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered:<sup>17</sup> I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.<sup>18</sup> Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly.<sup>19</sup> And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!”*

16. What do we learn about the theme of kingship from these passages?

- **ANSWER.** *We learn that the coming king will be of the tribe of Judah and that tribute and “the obedience of the peoples” (Gen 49:10) will come to him. We also learn that this Israelite king will have dominion over all the nations. It is important to keep in mind that militaristic images dominate the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. This will become important later on when we study the Jesus, the Gospels, and the kingdom of God.*

Once again, John Sailhamer offers some perceptive observations about the structure of the Pentateuch:

*Viewed as a whole, Genesis 1-11 follows a recognizable compositional strategy that links together an otherwise loose collection of independent narratives. The strategy consists of attaching poems to the end of each narrative. . . .*

*Is there a similar compositional pattern of narrative and poetry elsewhere in the Pentateuch? The answer is that there are four major collections of poems in the Pentateuch: Genesis 49, Exodus 15, Numbers 23-24, and Deuteronomy 32-33. Several features of these poems suggest that they are part of a compositional strategy similar to that in Genesis 1-11. . . .*

*The focal point of each of these major poems is the promise of a coming messianic king. . . .*

*The foregoing observations suggest that the author of the Pentateuch intentionally used the (larger and smaller) poetic texts in the Pentateuch to establish a context for reading the narratives. The author wants us to view the stories in the Pentateuch within the context of the prophetic hope in a coming messianic king. Thus, the poems focus attention on the central theme of the need for God’s grace*

*and redemption (the small poems of Genesis 1-11) and at the same time link those themes to the coming messianic king and his kingdom (the large poems forming the central structure of the Pentateuch). This suggests that one of the central issues in the message of the Pentateuch is the coming king and his eternal kingdom.*<sup>44</sup>

The Messianic expectations are developed and expanded throughout redemptive history and the Old Testament. Here are two of the more well-known passages that speak of the coming Messiah:

**Psalm 2:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?* <sup>2</sup> *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,* <sup>3</sup> *“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”* <sup>4</sup> *He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.* <sup>5</sup> *Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,* <sup>6</sup> *“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”* <sup>7</sup> *I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”* <sup>8</sup> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.* <sup>9</sup> *You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”* <sup>10</sup> *Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.* <sup>11</sup> *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* <sup>12</sup> *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

**Isaiah 9:2-7**

<sup>2</sup> *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.* <sup>3</sup> *You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.* <sup>4</sup> *For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.* <sup>5</sup> *For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.* <sup>6</sup> *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* <sup>7</sup> *Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time*

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44 John Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 35, 36, 37.

forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

17. In what way do these two passages extend the prophecies that are given in Genesis 49 and Numbers 24?

- **ANSWER.** *Both passages above develop the idea of the Messiah's dominion and rule over the nations of the earth. Psalm 2 makes it clear that God will install this King on Zion (Jerusalem). He is called God's son and God's people may find refuge in him. Isaiah 9 describes the justice and righteousness of the Messiah's rule. Of the names given to the child that will be born "Mighty God" and "Everlasting Father" are especially interesting. It is important to notice, again, however, that the king's authority and power are stressed in these passages.*

Psalm 2:2 speaks of the LORD's "Anointed." This word in the Hebrew was translated with the Greek word *Christos*, which, in turn, is translated by the English word "Christ" in the New Testament. The Hebrew word for "Anointed" or "the anointed one" is sometimes also translated by the English "Messiah." Therefore, "Christ" and "Messiah" are equivalent terms.

In the Old Testament, both Saul and David, and the Israelite kings in general, are called God's "anointed ones," which refers to the practice of anointing the king with oil to signify God's choice. Thus, the anointing oil might be called the sign of the Davidic covenant.

In the New Testament the most common title for Jesus is "Christ." The name and title could be translated with the phrase "Jesus Christ" or even "Jesus the Messiah." The phrase picks up this biblical theme of kingship and asserts that Jesus is the LORD's anointed one, the king.

Another passage that we've already considered pertaining to kingship are the Deuteronomic regulations for kings in the following passage:

Deuteronomy 17:18-20

*<sup>18</sup> And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. <sup>19</sup> And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, <sup>20</sup> that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.*

Read now another Messianic prophecy:

Ezekiel 37:21-28

<sup>21</sup> . . . Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. <sup>22</sup> And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. <sup>23</sup> They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. <sup>24</sup> My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. <sup>25</sup> They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. <sup>26</sup> I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. <sup>27</sup> My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>28</sup> Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.

18. In what ways might Ezekiel 37 be seen as a development of Deuteronomy 17?

- **ANSWER.** While Deut 17 specifies that the king shall obey God's Law, Ezek 37 makes it clear that the people will also obey God's Law under the reign of God's Messiah. Therefore, the moral cleansing of the people is intertwined with the rule of God's representative and the establishment of his presence. And again, the global purpose in redeeming a people for himself is that the nations would know something of who the LORD is.

*From Adam to David. From the creation of the world to the building of the temple, which will give new life to the world and from which the divine rule will extend to the ends of the earth. Genealogy and geography, dynasty and dominion. This represents the story of the Tanakh, a story that leaves Israel still in a type of exile, waiting for someone from David's house to come and build a house to bring about*



*the restoration of all things. This overall message, presented in a storyline with commentary, shows that the Tanakh is a book and not a ragbag. To be sure, it consists of many texts, but these find their part in a larger Text. The many stories together constitute a single Story. And this Story is about the reclamation of a lost human dominion over the world through a Davidic dynasty. In short, it is about the coming of the kingdom of God, and it is unfinished.* <sup>45</sup>

In later lessons, we will study the coming of Jesus, the proclamation of the kingdom of God, and God's salvation in much greater detail. For our purposes in this lesson, however, examine an interesting juxtaposition of texts that describe the comings of Jesus:

#### Matthew 21:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." <sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" <sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" <sup>10</sup> And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup> And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

#### Revelation 19:11-21

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. <sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him

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<sup>45</sup> Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 231.

on white horses. <sup>15</sup> From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>17</sup> Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, <sup>18</sup> to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." <sup>19</sup> And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. <sup>20</sup> And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. <sup>21</sup> And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

19. Of these two passages, which one resonates more with the Messianic passages of the Old Testament that we've looked at in this day's study? Explain your answer and reflect upon its significance.

· **ANSWER.** *The Revelation 19 passage more directly resonates with the passages we read above about what the Messiah would be like. The coming of a Messiah who would be humble, offer peace, and die an atoning death was not anticipated. But as we will see in later lessons, the role of the coming king as predicted in the Old Testament is fulfilled by Jesus in two comings, not one. Jesus rules as the crucified Savior.*

Jesus reigns as a son of David and a new Adam, succeeding where Adam had failed. God will give his anointed one all authority, so that God the Father might reign over all:

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and

power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

There is also, however, a significant strain of texts in the New Testament which tell us that those who believe in the Messiah will reign with him in the new earth. Here are some examples:

2 Timothy 2:11-12

<sup>11</sup> The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him . . .

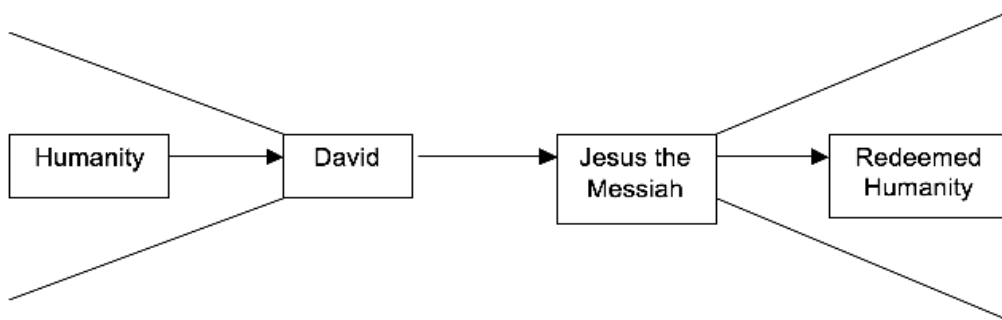
Revelation 3:21

<sup>21</sup> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Revelation 5:9-10

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Consider the following, simple diagram:



20. Does this diagram visually represent any of what we have learned in this day's study? Explain.

- **ANSWER.** *This diagram represents the flow of kingship through redemptive history. All of humanity in Adam was charged to be kings and queens of creation, being made in the image of God. After the fall, kingship in Israel was focused upon David, who was a type of Jesus, the king to come. Jesus establishes a new reign, and he invites those who would submit to him to join him in reigning over the new creation.*

## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “David” (435-443)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Genesis to Kings” (115-120)
- ▷ “Samuel” (178-183)
- ▷ “Kings” (183-188)



•••••  INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of kingship and the Messiah, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. If you had to choose one person, do you believe that David is the central human figure of the Old Testament? If not, who?
2. The names “Joshua” and “Jesus” are the same in Greek. What parallels do you see between these two leaders?
3. How might you lead a Bible study through the book of Judges now that you have considered an overview of its theology?

### YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions, and completing the required reading, and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

### APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

Is Jesus your king?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003)
- ▷ John Piper, “Son of God, Son of Man, King of Israel,” an online sermon at the [desiringGod](http://www.desiringGod.com) website
- ▷ Mark J. Boda, *After God’s Own Heart: The Gospel According to David* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2007)



# If You Will Not Obey the Voice of the LORD

# 6

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

“Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?” (2 Samuel 7:18). God had certainly shown steadfast love to the house of David and to Israel. He had given David rest from his enemies on all sides. Israel, a nation that began with seventy persons going down to Egypt, had multiplied into a mighty nation. They lived in the land that God had promised to their fathers, and now they enjoyed the unique blessing of God’s presence in the temple which Solomon had built. Everything was as it should be.

There were, however, cracks under the surface. And these cracks wouldn’t take long to split the nation of Israel in half. In this lesson, we will study the steady downward spiral that landed Israel in Assyria and Judah in Babylon. The God of Israel is holy. He will not give his glory to another. And so Israel’s idolatrous ways would find her out, sooner than later.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▶ describe the decline in Israel that resulted in the exile
- ▶ describe the role and basic message of Israel’s prophets
- ▶ identify key passages in the OT that articulate God’s restoration of Israel





There are two things which you will want to keep in mind as you teach this lesson. First, be sensitive to the way in which Israel's prophetic ministry not only critiques the nation's hard-heartedness but also to the way in which it points to the life of faith that God desires. Your teaching on this subject will be picked up again when we turn to the New Testament and see what kind of life God brings about in his people through Jesus and the Spirit. Second, you may want to invest significant time in examining the restoration passages of Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31. If pressed, we would identify these two passages as the most significant passages articulating God's plans for a new covenant and new covenant people. They are cited and alluded to repeatedly in the New Testament.



## Day 1

### FROM SOLOMON TO THE EXILES

Solomon's reign appears as if it is the high-water mark in Israel's history. There is an incredible influx of wealth, and there is peace throughout the land. The Queen of Sheba says, "Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness" (1 Kings 10:7-9). How can this description be immediately followed by an account of Solomon's downfall (1 Kings 11:1-10)? Is there any indication that Solomon's reign might not be as glorious as it appears? Compare the following two passages. Underline any similarities.

1 Samuel 8:9-17

<sup>9</sup> "Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."<sup>10</sup> So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. <sup>11</sup> He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. <sup>12</sup> And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. <sup>13</sup> He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. <sup>14</sup> He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. <sup>15</sup> He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. <sup>16</sup> He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. <sup>17</sup> He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves."

1 Kings 9:15, 18-22

<sup>15</sup> And this is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon drafted to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer . . .<sup>18</sup> and Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of Judah,<sup>19</sup> and all the store cities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.<sup>20</sup> All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel—<sup>21</sup> their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction—these Solomon drafted to be slaves, and so they are to this day.<sup>22</sup> But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves. They were the soldiers, they were his officials, his commanders, his captains, his chariot commanders and his horsemen.

Now compare these two passages. Underline any similarities.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

<sup>14</sup> When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, “I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,”<sup>15</sup> you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.<sup>16</sup> Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, “You shall never return that way again.”<sup>17</sup> And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.<sup>18</sup> And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests.<sup>19</sup> And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them,<sup>20</sup> that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

1 Kings 10:23–11:3

<sup>23</sup> Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.<sup>24</sup> And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his

wisdom, which God had put into his mind. <sup>25</sup> Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. <sup>26</sup> And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had one thousand four-hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. <sup>28</sup> And Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. <sup>29</sup> A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six-hundred shekels of silver and a horse for one hundred fifty, and so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria. <sup>11:1</sup> Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, <sup>2</sup> from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. <sup>3</sup> He had seven-hundred wives, princesses, and three-hundred concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.

1. In comparing these two pairings of Scripture, what assessment can be given of Solomon's reign?

- **ANSWER.** *Although Solomon did not make his fellow Israelites slaves, he did draft them for forced labor. Thus, he began to fulfill Samuel's warning of what a king would do. Furthermore, he directly disobeyed the three commands of Deut 17. Instead of being known for his obedience to the Law, Solomon's reign was known for its excessive wealth and human wisdom.*

The cracks appearing in Solomon's kingship suddenly rupture into a massive rift between him and Israel's God. The account of his sin is explicit: "Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done" (1 Kings 11:6). What will be the consequence of Solomon's fall?

1 Kings 11:9-13

<sup>9</sup> And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice <sup>10</sup> and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. <sup>11</sup> Therefore the

LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. <sup>12</sup> Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. <sup>13</sup> However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”

So we see that this account is both similar to and different from the Lord’s pronouncement over Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22-29. The king’s disobedience means that the kingdom cannot be established with him, but for the sake of David, the kingdom will not entirely be taken away. The Lord’s judgment upon Solomon is mingled with mercy.

The kings who succeed Solomon display a pattern of disobedience similar to what we have already seen in the book of Judges. Examine the following passages, especially with regard to David.

1 Kings 11:4-6

<sup>4</sup> For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. <sup>5</sup> For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. <sup>6</sup> So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done.

1 Kings 11:11-13

<sup>11</sup> Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. <sup>12</sup> Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. <sup>13</sup> However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”

Carefully read 1 Kings 11:29-39.

1 Kings 14:7-10

<sup>7</sup> Go, tell Jeroboam, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over my people Israel <sup>8</sup> and

tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my eyes,<sup>9</sup> but you have done evil above all who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods and metal images, provoking me to anger, and have cast me behind your back,<sup>10</sup> therefore behold, I will bring harm upon the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and will burn up the house of Jeroboam, as a man burns up dung until it is all gone.”

#### 1 Kings 15:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam began to reign over Judah. <sup>2</sup> He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. <sup>3</sup> And he walked in all the sins that his father did before him, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. <sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him, and establishing Jerusalem, <sup>5</sup> because David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

#### 1 Kings 15:11-12

<sup>11</sup> And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as David his father had done. <sup>12</sup> He put away the male cult prostitutes out of the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

David's shadow is also cast over the book of 2 Kings.

#### 2 Kings 8:16-22

<sup>16</sup> In the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, when Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, began to reign. <sup>17</sup> He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. <sup>18</sup> And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. <sup>19</sup> Yet the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David his servant, since he promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever. <sup>20</sup> In his days Edom revolted from the rule of Judah and set up a king of their own. <sup>21</sup> Then Joram passed over to Zair with all his chariots and rose by night, and he and his chariot commanders struck



the Edomites who had surrounded him, but his army fled home.<sup>22</sup> So Edom revolted from the rule of Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.

#### 2 Kings 14:3-6

<sup>3</sup> And [Amaziah] did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not like David his father. He did in all things as Joash his father had done. <sup>4</sup> But the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. <sup>5</sup> And as soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand, he struck down his servants who had struck down the king his father. <sup>6</sup> But he did not put to death the children of the murderers, according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, where the LORD commanded, "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. But each one shall die for his own sin."

#### 2 Kings 16:2-4

<sup>2</sup> Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done,<sup>3</sup> but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup> And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

2. According to the passages you have read from 1 and 2 Kings, what role(s) does David play in the succeeding narrative?

· **ANSWER.** David plays two basic roles in the succeeding narrative: 1) he becomes the standard for kingly obedience (except in the matter of Uriah; see 1 Kgs 15:5); 2) for his sake God is not willing to destroy Jerusalem. Thus it appears as if the Davidic covenant, founded upon David's (imperfect) righteousness, and more importantly upon God's promises, will endure (see 1 Kgs 15:4-5). Compare this to what Genesis says of Abraham (Gen 26:4-5).

The most important chapter in 1 and 2 Kings is probably 2 Kings, chapter 17. Read this chapter carefully. Then read 2 Kings 21:1-16 and 2 Kings 23:24-27.

3. Why did God send Israel and Judah into exile? List all of the reasons below:

- **ANSWER.** *Although student answers might vary depending on the specificity of their answers, here are the basic reasons why God sent Israel into exile:*

- A1.** *The people of Israel sinned against the LORD.*
- A2.** *They feared other gods.*
- A3.** *They walked in the customs of pagan nations.*
- A4.** *They practiced idolatry.*
- A5.** *They broke God's Law.*

*God sent Judah into exile because of its sin, culminating with the sin of Manasseh which included defiling the temple with idolatry and shedding innocent blood.*

After the account of Israel's exile (721 BC) and Judah's destruction and exile (586 BC), here is how the book of 2 Kings ends:

#### 2 Kings 25:27-30

*<sup>27</sup> And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. <sup>28</sup> And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. <sup>29</sup> So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table, <sup>30</sup> and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, as long as he lived.*

- 4. Is this a positive ending or negative ending? Defend your answer with what we've learned from our study of biblical theology.

- **ANSWER.** *We would judge the ending to be mixed, both positive and negative. The Davidic king is seated above the seats of other kings, and the Davidic line has been preserved despite the sin of Israel. But the king's needs are being met by a foreign, pagan king—not Yahweh. This is not the kind of dominion that was envisioned in the Davidic covenant. Rather than reigning as God's vice-regent in a dominion of dependence (see Gen 1:26-29), the Davidic king is the virtual pet of the Babylonian king, dependent on his daily provision.*

The canonical order of the Old Testament in our English Bibles is different from the order of these books in Hebrew collections of the first century AD. Whereas our English Bibles, following the Septuagint, place Malachi at the end of the Old Testament, Hebrew collections put 2 Chronicles at the end of the Old Testament. This becomes interesting when we look at how the book of 2 Chronicles ends and compare that to how the first book of the New Testament ends, the so-called Jewish Gospel of Matthew.

#### 2 Chronicles 36:22-23

<sup>22</sup> Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: <sup>23</sup> “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’”

#### Matthew 28:16-20

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

5. What similarities and differences do you observe between these two passages? Do you think Matthew’s ending is deliberately modeled on the ending of 2 Chronicles? If so, what might be the significance of that?

· **ANSWER.** *The similarities between these two passages are striking. Cyrus and Jesus both invoke the authority that God has given them to command people under their charge to do something. Both passages involve the movement of God’s people, and both mention God’s presence being with his people. If Matthew’s ending is deliberately modeled on 2 Chronicles (which we find plausible), then the differences between these passages are also evident. Cyrus commands people to go to Jerusalem to build God’s temple,*

*while Jesus commands his people to go to all nations to make disciples (who will be the new end-time temple in which God dwells).*

### **Tracing God's Ways**

Israel plummets from the peak of her prosperity in Solomon's reign to the depths of despair in the exile. The exile is God's judgment upon the sin of Israel—her sin which has persisted since the days of the exodus (2 Kings 17:14; 21:15). This downward spiral is due to Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant, and this unfaithfulness is most often led by Israel's kings.

## Day 2

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### GOD SENDS THE PROPHETS

The Old Testament prophets play a critical role in God's dealings with Israel. Their mission is first seen in the book of Judges.

#### Judges 6:6-10

*<sup>6</sup> And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, <sup>8</sup> the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage. <sup>9</sup> And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. <sup>10</sup> And I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.' But you have not obeyed my voice."*

Now examine the role of the prophets according to other passages from 2 Kings, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. Compare these to what you have read in Judges.

#### 2 Kings 17:13-14, 22-23

*<sup>13</sup> Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets." <sup>14</sup> But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. . . . <sup>22</sup> The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, <sup>23</sup> until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.*

#### Jeremiah 7:21-26

*<sup>21</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. <sup>22</sup> For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. <sup>23</sup> But this command I gave them: 'Obey my*

voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’<sup>24</sup> But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.<sup>25</sup> From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day.<sup>26</sup> Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.”

#### Jeremiah 35:15

<sup>15</sup> I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, “Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers.” But you did not incline your ear or listen to me.

#### Zechariah 1:3-6

<sup>3</sup> Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>4</sup> Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.” But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? <sup>6</sup> But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?”

#### 6. According to these passages, what is the role of the prophets?

- **ANSWER.** *The prophets were basically charged with representing God and his covenant with Israel. Their tasks included reminding the people of God’s provisions, calling for repentance and obedience, issuing warnings of judgments, and giving theological interpretation to historical events. As these passages demonstrate, the prophets were mostly ignored by the people of Israel.*

There are a number of messages that the prophets spoke to the people. One of the central ones can be discerned in the following verses.

**Hosea 6:4-7**

<sup>4</sup> *What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.* <sup>5</sup> *Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light.* <sup>6</sup> *For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* <sup>7</sup> *But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.*

**Isaiah 1:10-17**

<sup>10</sup> *Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!* <sup>11</sup> *“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.* <sup>12</sup> *When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?* <sup>13</sup> *Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.* <sup>14</sup> *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.* <sup>15</sup> *When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.* <sup>16</sup> *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil,* <sup>17</sup> *learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”*

**Jeremiah 22:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> *Thus says the LORD: “Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word,* <sup>2</sup> *and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O King of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates.’* <sup>3</sup> *Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.* <sup>4</sup> *For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people.* <sup>5</sup> *But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.”*

**Micah 6:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> *With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on*

high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?<sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

#### Zechariah 7:4-14

<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me: <sup>5</sup> “Say to all the people of the land and the priests, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? <sup>6</sup> And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? <sup>7</sup> Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, with her cities around her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?” <sup>8</sup> And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, <sup>9</sup> “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, <sup>10</sup> do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” <sup>11</sup> But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. <sup>12</sup> They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. <sup>13</sup> “As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the LORD of hosts, <sup>14</sup> “and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.”

#### 7. How would you summarize the message of these prophetic passages?

- **ANSWER.** A common prophetic refrain is that Israel is only keeping the Law on a superficial level (and not always even doing that) and that God demands a holistic response of obedience. God is not pleased with ritual sacrifices, if the heart is not pure. Israel misunderstands the Law, if she thinks that outward observance of religious practices fulfills God's demands. God wants mercy, justice, and faithfulness.

It is clear from what we have studied that Israel did not heed the voice of the Lord speaking through the prophets. Therefore, this is God's response:



#### Jeremiah 25:4-11

<sup>4</sup> You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the LORD persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets, <sup>5</sup> saying, “Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever. <sup>6</sup> Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, or provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.” <sup>7</sup> Yet you have not listened to me, declares the LORD, that you might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm. <sup>8</sup> “Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, <sup>9</sup> behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. <sup>10</sup> Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. <sup>11</sup> This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

#### Jeremiah 44:2-6

<sup>2</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You have seen all the disaster that I brought upon Jerusalem and upon all the cities of Judah. Behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, <sup>3</sup> because of the evil that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they knew not, neither they, nor you, nor your fathers. <sup>4</sup> Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, “Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!” <sup>5</sup> But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods. <sup>6</sup> Therefore my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste and a desolation, as at this day.

#### Lamentations 2:8-9

<sup>8</sup> The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he stretched out the measuring line; he did not restrain his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languished together. <sup>9</sup> Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; the law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the LORD.

Isaiah 29:9-14

<sup>9</sup> Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink! <sup>10</sup> For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers). <sup>11</sup> And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." <sup>12</sup> And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read." <sup>13</sup> And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, <sup>14</sup> therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden."

Micah 3:4-7

<sup>4</sup> Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths. <sup>6</sup> Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; <sup>7</sup> the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God.

Amos 8:11-12

<sup>11</sup> "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. <sup>12</sup> They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it."

8. How would you summarize God's response to Israel's hard-heartedness?

- **ANSWER.** God, because he is holy and can tolerate no rivals to his glory, must pour out wrath and judgment in response to Israel's God-belittling sin. God promises to send Israel into exile because of her sin. Furthermore, God will remove prophetic vision in the land because Israel has so

*thoroughly and consistently disregarded the warnings that he has given to her through the prophets.*

The prophets spoke not only of death and doom. While they did chastise Israel for her disobedience and warned her of God's judgment, they also spoke words of hope. Some of the richest verses in all of the Old Testament testify to the great work God would do in restoring his people and their land.

You have already read, in the previous lesson, some of the promises for a future king in the line of David. Now study the following passages that articulate additional promises from God to Israel despite her unfaithfulness and treachery. (This list could be expanded for many pages. We will study many other passages of Old Testament prophecy throughout the course.)

#### Amos 9:11-15

*<sup>11</sup> "In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, <sup>12</sup> that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," declares the LORD who does this. <sup>13</sup> "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. <sup>14</sup> I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. <sup>15</sup> I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God.*

#### Isaiah 35:1-10

*<sup>1</sup> The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; <sup>2</sup> it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. <sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup> Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." <sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; <sup>6</sup> then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; <sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. <sup>8</sup> And*

*a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. <sup>9</sup> No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. <sup>10</sup> And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

**Isaiah 56:6-8**

*<sup>6</sup> “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— <sup>7</sup> these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” <sup>8</sup> The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”*

**Joel 2:23-27**

*<sup>23</sup> Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. <sup>24</sup> The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. <sup>25</sup> I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. <sup>26</sup> You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. <sup>27</sup> You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.*

9. According to this brief list, what are some of God’s promises to Israel?

· **ANSWER.** *The following list includes summaries of some of the promises that God makes to Israel:*

**A6.** *Restoration of the Davidic house.*

**A7.** *That Israel would possess the nations.*

**A8.** *Material prosperity, agricultural fertility, and joy.*

**A9.** *Safety and security; no shame.*

A10. *Redemption and salvation from God.*

A11. *Physical healing.*

A12. *Moral purity.*

A13. *The ingathering of Israel and Gentile conversion.*

A14. *The presence of God.*

10. Why might God have sent the prophets instead of teaching the people through the priests? In other words, what would be missing in redemptive history without the ministry of the prophets?

- *ANSWER. Although a matter of speculation, it is possible that the prophetic ministry of repentance and judgment highlighted God's sovereignty and glory because prophetic warnings express the mercy and justice of God, and foretelling events ensures that military defeat isn't interpreted as weakness on God's part. Furthermore, the ministry of the prophets allows God to reveal more of who he is, what he expects of his people, and what he will do in history to bring glory to his name.*

### Tracing God's Ways

God sent prophets to Israel to remind them of the covenant. Their message was often to expose Israel's sin and call them to true obedience. Israel, however, would not listen, and so God brought the exile that he had prophesied and decreed a lack of prophetic words.

## Day 3

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### THE NEW COVENANT AND THE RETURN FROM EXILE

There are many, many texts in the Old Testament that reassure Israel of God's unending love and unfailing purpose to bring glory to himself. We will now concentrate on just two. These passages, perhaps more than any other, express the provisions of a new covenant that God will make with Israel.

Ezekiel 36:22-28

*<sup>22</sup> Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. <sup>23</sup> And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. <sup>24</sup> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

11. How does this passage deal with the core problem that Israel had throughout her history and that we have seen again and again thus far in this course?

· **ANSWER.** *The core problem of Israel's history is aptly summarized by Deut 29:4. God has not provided what Israel needs in order to render true obedience. Therefore, this passage describes the cleansing of sin and the new power for obedience that God will provide. God will "sprinkle clean water" (Ezek 36:25) on his people (which denotes ritual purification) and will put his Spirit in the people, so that they will obey. The result of these*

*two great covenantal provisions will be that the people will dwell in the land and be God's people, and he will be their God.*

The second great text that we will consider is explicitly about the new covenant:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

*<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

12. Inspect Jeremiah 31:31-34 and fill out the following table:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>With whom will this new covenant be made?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>This new covenant will be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. (Gentiles enter the covenant through Jesus by being grafted into the Jewish root. See Romans 11 and following lessons in this curriculum.)</i></li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What is the primary contrast between the old and new covenant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <b>ANSWER.</b> <i>The primary contrast between the old and new covenant is that Israel broke the old covenant, but will keep the new covenant.</i></li></ul>

**What is the primary contrast between the old and new covenant people?**

- **ANSWER.** *The old covenant people were a “mixed multitude”—that is, there were those who knew the LORD and those who didn’t. The new covenant people will all know the LORD, “from the least of them to the greatest” (v. 34).*

**What are the new provisions of the new covenant?**

- **ANSWER.** *Unlike the old covenant, the new covenant will provide definitive forgiveness of sins (v. 34) and the power to obey (v. 33). The latter is described as God writing his Law onto the heart of his people.*

**Hadn’t God already provided a means of forgiveness for Israel (compare verse 34)?**

- **ANSWER.** *Although God had already provided the sacrificial system for his people’s sins, we learn from other biblical passages that the new covenant will provide a definitive, once-for-all, totally effective cleansing from sin in the atoning death of Jesus, God’s Son.*

As we progress through the course, we will come back to these two foundational Old Testament texts.

After the years of the exile have been completed, some of the exiles do return to Israel in waves. The historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe their situation. Is it a glorious picture of restoration?

Read Ezra, chapter 9. Then read Nehemiah, chapter 9.

13. What picture do these two chapters give us of the post-exilic situation?

- **ANSWER.** *Ezra 9 is mostly Ezra’s prayer of confession after learning about impurity in the priesthood. His prayer makes clear that Israel is still caught*



*in her guilt, and that the people of Israel are slaves in their own land. Nevertheless, Ezra recognizes that Israel deserves even worse than they have experienced for their sins. Likewise, Neh 9 also states that the nation in his day has continued the pattern of disobedience that characterized former generations. Nehemiah interprets their present bondage and oppression as a result of their sin.*

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi also describe the post-exilic situation from a prophetic stance. Read the following descriptions.

Haggai 2:2-5 (compare Ezra 3:12-13)

*<sup>2</sup> Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, <sup>3</sup> “Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? <sup>4</sup> Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,” declares the LORD. “Work, for I am with you,” declares the LORD of hosts, <sup>5</sup> “according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.”*

Malachi 1:6-10

*<sup>6</sup> A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, “How have we despised your name?” <sup>7</sup> By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, “How have we polluted you?” By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. <sup>8</sup> When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup> And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. <sup>10</sup> Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.*

14. Has God fulfilled his promises in bringing the people back to the land of Israel? Why or why not?

- **ANSWER.** *Though God has brought some of his people back into the land promised to them, it is clear that the full restoration of Israel and the fulfillment of God's promises has not yet come about. The rebuilt temple is pathetic compared to the former temple, and the priesthood and sacrifices are still corrupt. As far as the heart condition of the people, it appears as if nothing yet has changed. Israel is still awaiting its consolation. (See especially Luke 2:25.)*

It is clear, however, from the post-exilic prophets that there is still hope. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are all chock full of divine reassurances and comforting promises for those who trust in the Lord. It appears as if the return from captivity has not brought about the full restoration that God has promised. And so, Israel waits.

The intertestamental time period (roughly 425 BC to 5 BC) is a time of waiting, groaning, and confusion. Has Israel's God forgotten his covenant and forsaken his people? At times, it appears this way. Israel is ruled by a succession of pagan kings and kingdoms. In 167 BC one pagan king even has the audacity to establish worship of himself in Israel's temple. The faithful rise up and break the yoke of this foreign oppressor, against all odds. This great event is memorialized in the Jewish calendar as the celebration of Hanukkah. But even this great victory over a hostile nation does not usher in a new golden era under a Davidic king, as the Old Testament has repeatedly foretold. So, Israel sinks back into patient expectation, waiting for her covenant God to act and establish the kingdom.

The book of Daniel addresses this intervening time period.

15. Read Daniel 2:31-45 and then complete the table below.

**Which historical empires correspond to the first, second, third, and fourth kingdoms?**

- **ANSWER.** *Though a matter of academic debate, it is likely that the four kingdoms correspond to the historical empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and ancient Rome.*

**Why might it be especially important to identify the fourth kingdom historically?**

- **ANSWER.** *It would be of interest to identify historically the fourth kingdom mentioned in this text because it is said that “in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed” (Dan 2:44).*

**Why might this prophecy have been given to a pagan king in a dream and then interpreted by Daniel?**

- **ANSWER.** *By giving this dream to a pagan king and then revealing that dream to Daniel, the God of Israel shows himself to be the “God of gods and Lord of kings,” (Dan 2:27) as Nebuchadnezzar himself confesses. Revealing his sovereign plan in this way highlights God’s power and greatness, even over the kingdoms of this earth.*

*“The idea of Israel’s god becoming King is to be seen within the context of the whole historical expectation of Israel, dependent on Old Testament expressions of hope for the universal divine rule. . . . One of the central biblical books which emphasized this theme was of course Daniel—which, significantly, was a favourite of revolutionary-minded Jews in the first century, since they reinterpreted it so that it spoke of a kingdom to be set up against the present Roman oppression.”<sup>46</sup>*

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46 N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1992), 303, 304.

### Tracing God's Ways

The Old Testament is a story waiting for an ending. Through the prophets, Israel's hope is beginning to take shape. Israel will wait for God to restore their nation, especially in his provision of the Spirit and a definitive forgiveness of sins.

God graciously brings some Israelites back into the land. Israel does not enjoy, though, the full restoration that is promised in the prophets. So Israel enters a period of waiting—waiting for their covenant God to establish his kingdom and fulfill all his promises.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF EXILE AND EXODUS

Contrary to what some might think, exile precedes exodus in the Bible. We begin our biblical theology, as we often do, in the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 3:22-24

<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” <sup>23</sup> therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

<sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

16. What features of this text suggest that the biblical theme of exile is being started here?

- **ANSWER.** *The themes of exile and exodus are intimately connected to the theme of land. Here, Adam and Eve are driven away from the land and from God’s presence (they are exiled) on account of their sin. They are not allowed to continue living in the land, lest they permanently pollute it with their sin. They are sent eastward. All of these observations could also be made about Israel: they are cast out of their land because of their sin, sent eastward, so as not to further pollute the land.*

We have already studied Israel’s exodus from Egypt in some detail in Lesson 4. After that exodus, God gives Israel the Law, in which he warns them of the punishment of exile if they break the covenant. Read the following passages which describe this threatened exile:

Leviticus 26:27-33

<sup>27</sup> But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me,

<sup>28</sup> then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. <sup>29</sup> You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall

*eat the flesh of your daughters.* <sup>30</sup> *And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you.* <sup>31</sup> *And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas.* <sup>32</sup> *And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it.* <sup>33</sup> *And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.*

#### Deuteronomy 28:58-68

<sup>58</sup> *If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God,* <sup>59</sup> *then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting.* <sup>60</sup> *And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you.* <sup>61</sup> *Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed.* <sup>62</sup> *Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God.* <sup>63</sup> *And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.* <sup>64</sup> *And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.* <sup>65</sup> *And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul.* <sup>66</sup> *Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life.* <sup>67</sup> *In the morning you shall say, "If only it were evening!" and at evening you shall say, "If only it were morning!" because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see.* <sup>68</sup> *And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.*

17. In what ways is the threatened exile a reverse of the exodus?

- **ANSWER.** *In the exodus, God rescued his people from the plagues and brought them out of slavery and into a land of milk and honey, a land in which they were to dwell securely, multiply in number, serve the true God, and follow his Law. This was so that the nations would marvel at God's wisdom and provision. If this people then breaks his Law, he will devastate their land, so that they eat the flesh of their own children instead of the abundance of the land (cf. Gen 1:29). God will inflict his people with diseases, sell them back into slavery; they will be reduced to few in number, dwell in fear, and serve idols. The nations will be appalled. The exile is explicitly said to be a return to Egypt (Deut 28:68).*

Even after predicting the horrors of the exile that would happen because of Israel's sin, God promises a "second exodus," a return to the land from exile.

#### Deuteronomy 30:1-10

<sup>1</sup> And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, <sup>2</sup> and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup> then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup> If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. <sup>5</sup> And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you. <sup>8</sup> And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today. <sup>9</sup> The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, <sup>10</sup> when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Solomon picks up on the promise of Deuteronomy and pleads for the people of Israel if they should go into exile:

1 Kings 8:46-53

*<sup>46</sup> If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, <sup>47</sup> yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, “We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,” <sup>48</sup> if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, <sup>49</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause <sup>50</sup> and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them <sup>51</sup> (for they are your people, and your heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace). <sup>52</sup> Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant and to the plea of your people Israel, giving ear to them whenever they call to you. <sup>53</sup> For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD.*

Israel’s prophetic hope for restoration is developed in the ministry of the prophets:

Isaiah 11:10-16

*<sup>10</sup> In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. <sup>11</sup> In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. <sup>12</sup> He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. <sup>13</sup> The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. <sup>14</sup> But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put out their*



hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them.<sup>15</sup> And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt, and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching breath, and strike it into seven channels, and he will lead people across in sandals.<sup>16</sup> And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

Jeremiah 16:14-15

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, "As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,"<sup>15</sup> but "As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them." For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers.

18. What imagery is used in these texts to describe the return from exile?

Why might this imagery have been employed in this way?

- **ANSWER.** *The return from exile is described as a second and greater exodus from Egypt. The Egyptian exodus imagery is probably used because that imagery is the most well-known and vivid imagery of salvation that could have been employed in Israelite thought and religion. The Egyptian exodus marked the beginning of a people, and this promised exodus will mark the beginning of a new people of God, when he claims his people from among every nation.*

One of the most tragic scenes in the Bible is the description of God's glory departing from the temple and Jerusalem. As God lifts his presence from Israel, he promises to bring foreign nations in to judge and destroy Israel. And yet, even at this tragic moment God promises a return from exile and a new, inward purification of Israel. Exile is judgment upon sin; the new exodus will be the removal of sin.

Ezekiel 11:13-23

<sup>13</sup> And it came to pass, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?"

<sup>14</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me:<sup>15</sup> "Son of man, your brothers, even your brothers, your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Go far from the LORD; to us this land is given for a possession.'<sup>16</sup> Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:

*Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.’<sup>17</sup> Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’<sup>18</sup> And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations.<sup>19</sup> And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,<sup>20</sup> that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.’<sup>21</sup> But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD.”<sup>22</sup> Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.<sup>23</sup> And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city.*

The biblical themes of exile and exodus receive development in the intertestamental period, as Israel realizes that the promised return from exile has not yet happened. Then, in the ministry of Jesus, surprising things begin to happen to indicate that the time of Israel’s waiting for renewal is over.

Read the following passages in which Jesus interacts with Israel’s expectations:

#### Matthew 8:5-13

*<sup>5</sup> When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, <sup>6</sup> “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.”<sup>7</sup> And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.”<sup>8</sup> But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup> For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”<sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. <sup>11</sup> I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, <sup>12</sup> while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”<sup>13</sup> And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.*

Matthew 10:1-7

<sup>1</sup> And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

<sup>2</sup> The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. <sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

19. How do these two passages relate to the biblical theme of the “second exodus”? How do these passages expand and modify Israel’s expectations?

· **ANSWER.** *The first passage describes many coming from east and west—language reminiscent of the return from exile. What is surprising, however, is that it is the Gentiles who have faith who will enter into the kingdom of heaven, while unbelieving Israelites will be thrown out (exiled). The second passage describes the re-formation of Israel, the twelve disciples representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Again, what is surprising is that the new people of God are being formed around the man Jesus.*

After surveying the Gospel of Mark’s prologue, literary structure, and nearly the entire text of this Gospel, Rikki Watts concludes,

*Mark presents Jesus in terms of the fulfillment of Israel’s hopes for a [new exodus], especially as described in the book of Isaiah. His Gospel is therefore to be seen in continuity with God’s historic dealings with his people, but now also including Gentiles qua Gentiles.* <sup>47</sup>

Finally, let’s see how the twin themes of exile and exodus are developed in the rest of the New Testament. Here are a few relevant passages:

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<sup>47</sup> Rikki Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2000), 381.

#### **Ephesians 2:11-22**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

#### **1 Peter 1:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.<sup>3</sup>

#### **1 Peter 1:13-19**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

1 Peter 2:11-12

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

20. As Christians, are we living in exile or have we been brought to God from exile? Interact with the texts above in your answer.

- **ANSWER.** *The answer to this question must demonstrate the same already/not yet tension that we've seen in many previous answers. As Eph 2 indicates, there is a sense in which Jesus death have brought Gentiles especially ("you who were far off"; Eph 2:17) from exile into the people of God. Believing Gentiles are no longer strangers and aliens (Eph 2:19). Peter, however, emphasizes the other side of this tension in claiming that believers are "elect exiles" (1 Pet 1:1) who still live in exile (1 Pet 1:17) and must not live as though this world was home (1 Pet 2:11).*

## Day 5

**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Exile” (475-478)
- ▷ “Exodus” (478-487)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Prophetic Books” (122-126)
- ▷ “Isaiah” (217-223)
- ▷ “Ezekiel” (229-232)

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of exile and exodus, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. What is your evaluation of King Solomon? Is he a good king? Why or why not?
2. Why did God send Israel into exile if it was always his intention to bring them back from exile someday?
3. Who fulfills the role of the prophets in the Christian church today?



## YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

## APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

Do you think of yourself as a sojourner and exile in this world? If so, what does this look like in your life? Have you experienced God's great second exodus and are you enjoying the blessings he promised to Israel long ago?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2000)
- ▷ David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002)



# After Me Comes He Who Is Mightier Than I

# 7

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

More than four hundred years have passed since the last of the great prophets. The glorious promises that God had made to Israel have not been realized. And Israel has waited. Under Greek domination first, then Egyptian, and then Syrian rule, Israel hasn't again achieved the status that it had under King David or King Solomon. It has languished, and its prayers and cries for help seem to go unanswered. Has God forgotten his covenant people?

In this lesson, we will study the expectations of first-century Jews, the message of John the Baptist, and the prophetic ministry of an uneducated, common manual laborer from Nazareth. How would preaching on the kingdom of God have been interpreted and received in the first-century context? What are we to make of this man who casts out demons, heals the sick, and even raises the dead? Could this be the son of David who was to come?

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ describe the first-century Jewish context for Jesus' ministry
- ▷ explain how John the Baptist's message was similar to and different from the thinking of most first-century Jews
- ▷ locate Jesus' message and ministry within a biblical theology of the kingdom





The study of the Old Testament in the New Testament is a vital one for biblical theology. You may want to invest more time in introducing this topic, although hopefully your students will see the value and importance of it throughout the rest of the course as they practice with more examples. In particular, you should stress that the New Testament authors cited from the Old Testament with an awareness of the Old Testament context. Though there are some puzzling citations in the New Testament, it is our conviction that upon further study, the New Testament authors are shown to be careful (if also creative) readers of the Old Testament. Of course, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus provided the New Testament authors with a new lens with which to view the Old Testament, but not a lens which distorted or contradicted the meaning of the Old Testament in its original context. The book edited by Beale, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* listed in the Additional Resources section is an exploration of some of the issues surrounding the study of the Old in the New.

When discussing the two charts employed for Question 19 (reproduced from Tom Steller's unpublished teaching notes on the kingdom of God and used by permission), you might want to use the well-known analogy of Old Testament prophetic perspective being like the view of two parallel mountain ranges from a distance. From a distance, two parallel mountain ranges could easily appear as if they were all part of one and the same mountain range. As the observer gets closer, however, he realizes that there is actually a great distance between the mountain ranges. Similarly, the prophets of the Old Testament were granted a view of God's future plans, but were at such a distance that those plans all appeared to be part of a single great event—"the Day of the LORD." As time passed, however, and in the teaching of Jesus, God's people slowly realized that what the Old Testament prophets saw was actually future reality that would be fulfilled in two major stages, at the first and second coming of Christ. As the instructor, it might be helpful to draw this analogy on a whiteboard or chalkboard and discuss it with your students.



## Day 1

### A KING LIKE DAVID OR JUDAS MACCABAEUS

We saw in the last lesson that Daniel had predicted that four kingdoms would rise against Israel before God would establish his kingdom. It is probable that most Jews recognized that the Romans represented the fourth and last evil kingdom. This belief would explain the flurry of Messianic rumors, whisperings, and pretensions that swirled about in the first-century Jewish world.

The Romans were not kind overlords. The Jews resented their reign and their disregard for Israel's God. Therefore, Jewish revolt was smoldering just under the surface, and a few false Messiahs had already tried to break the yoke of Roman rule. It is important to realize that Jesus was not the first (and he would not be the last) to claim that he was Israel's Messiah. The first-century Jewish world was a tinderbox waiting to burst into the flame of open revolution.

In order to understand how Israel's hopes had been shaped and solidified, we need some understanding of her history between the fall of Jerusalem (587 BC) and the birth of Jesus (6-4 BC).

1. Record everything you know about this period of history. Who ruled Israel during these centuries? What significant events shaped Israel's identity during this time, if any?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

Here is one summary of the history between the destruction of Jerusalem (587 BC) and the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes (175 BC):

*The story of second-temple Judaism is one of tension and tragedy. The Babylonians had destroyed the first Temple in 587 BC. Ever since then, those who looked to Jerusalem, and its Temple, as the centre of their homeland, and their very raison-d'être [reason for existence] as a people, had been faced with the mounting tension between the faith they professed and the facts they perceived. The exile had not only uprooted them from their land; it had placed a great question mark against*

*the pre-exilic faith in the ancestral god. When the great moment had come, and Babylon had been destroyed, Israel did not become free, mistress in her own land: the Persians, who had crushed Babylon, were generous overlords to the Jews, but overlords none the less. As we have already seen, Alexander the Great swept through the old Persian empire and beyond, painting the map a new colour and imposing a new culture. The two subsequent overlords, by Egypt in the third century and Syria in the second, make the story more complex but do not alter the basic fact that the world was now Greek.* <sup>48</sup>

Now read a significant passage from 1 Maccabees, a piece of Jewish intertestamental literature, describing the defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes, who had desecrated the temple in Jerusalem in 167 BC:

1 Maccabees 4:6-25, 36-55

<sup>6</sup> At daybreak Judas appeared in the plain with three thousand men, but they did not have armor and swords such as they desired. <sup>7</sup> And they saw the camp of the Gentiles, strong and fortified, with cavalry all around it; and these men were trained in war. <sup>8</sup> But Judas said to those who were with him, "Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. <sup>9</sup> Remember how our ancestors were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. <sup>10</sup> And now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this army before us today. <sup>11</sup> Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel." <sup>12</sup> When the foreigners looked up and saw them coming against them, <sup>13</sup> they went out from their camp to battle. Then the men with Judas blew their trumpets <sup>14</sup> and engaged in battle. The Gentiles were crushed, and fled into the plain, <sup>15</sup> and all those in the rear fell by the sword. They pursued them to Gazara, and to the plains of Idumea, and to Azotus and Jamnia; and three thousand of them fell. <sup>16</sup> Then Judas and his force turned back from pursuing them, <sup>17</sup> and he said to the people, "Do not be greedy for plunder, for there is a battle before us; <sup>18</sup> Gorgias and his force are near us in the hills. But stand now against our enemies and fight them, and afterward seize the plunder boldly." <sup>19</sup> Just as Judas was finishing this speech, a detachment appeared, coming out of the hills. <sup>20</sup> They saw that their army had been put to flight, and that the Jews were burning the camp, for the smoke that was seen showed what had happened. <sup>21</sup> When they perceived this, they were greatly frightened, and when they also saw the army of Judas drawn up in the plain for battle, <sup>22</sup> they all fled into the land

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<sup>48</sup> Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 157.

of the Philistines.<sup>23</sup> Then Judas returned to plunder the camp, and they seized a great amount of gold and silver, and cloth dyed blue and sea purple, and great riches.<sup>24</sup> On their return they sang hymns and praises to Heaven—“For he is good, for his mercy endures forever.”<sup>25</sup> Thus Israel had a great deliverance that day. . . .

<sup>36</sup> Then Judas and his brothers said, “See, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it.”<sup>37</sup> So all the army assembled and went up to Mount Zion.<sup>38</sup> There they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins.<sup>39</sup> Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes<sup>40</sup> and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven.<sup>41</sup> Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary.<sup>42</sup> He chose blameless priests devoted to the law,<sup>43</sup> and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place.<sup>44</sup> They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned.<sup>45</sup> And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar,<sup>46</sup> and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them.<sup>47</sup> Then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one.<sup>48</sup> They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple, and consecrated the courts.<sup>49</sup> They made new holy vessels, and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple.<sup>50</sup> Then they offered incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple.<sup>51</sup> They placed the bread on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken.<sup>52</sup> Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-eighth year,<sup>53</sup> they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built.<sup>54</sup> At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals.<sup>55</sup> All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them.<sup>49</sup>

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49 This citation from the Apocrypha is taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV).



2. How does this non-biblical account resonate with what we've studied thus far?

- **ANSWER.** *This account sounds almost like a narrative from the Old Testament because it describes the defeat of a pagan nation by Israel because God is fighting for her. Judas, Israel's leader, invokes the Egyptian exodus, the covenant, and the glory of God in motivating the people to fight. The people give thanks to God for the victory. Israel laments the desecration of the temple and then restores worship there. Interestingly, they recognize that there is no prophet in Israel who can tell them what to do (v. 46). There indeed has been a famine of words from the LORD (see Amos 8:11).*

The victory of Judas Maccabaeus and the cleansing of the temple (164 BC) formed Jewish Messianic expectations for the next two centuries. Under Roman domination, Israel was again looking for a military leader to throw off the yoke of Roman oppression and restore Israel's moral and ceremonial purity.

Here is one summary of the history between the cleansing of the temple (164 BC) and the rise of King Herod (37 BC):

*Three years to the day after the Temple's desecration (December 25, 164 BC) Judas cleansed and reconsecrated it. A new festival (Hanukkah) was added to the Jewish calendar. The Maccabean revolt became classic and formative in the same way as the exodus and the other great events of Israel's history. It powerfully reinforced the basic Jewish worldview: when the tyrants rage, the one who dwells in heaven will laugh them to scorn. YHWH [the LORD] had vindicated his name, his place, his land, his law—and his people.*

*The ambiguity of the subsequent years, in which the heirs of the successful revolutionaries ruled as priest-kings, did not dim the sense of the victory of their god, but created the same sort of puzzle that was left after the so-called "return from exile": a great vindication had occurred, but it now seemed as though there must be yet another one still to come. . . .*

*Pompey's arrival in 63 BC found Judaism in a certain amount of confusion, and created yet more. If the covenant god had defeated the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes when he presumed to desecrate the Temple, how could Pompey walk right in to the Holy of Holies and escape unscathed? From that moment there were bound to be Jews who would identify the Romans as the new great enemy, the Kittim, the power*

*of darkness ranged against the children of light. . . .*

*But no new Judas Maccabaeus arose to lead Israel's faithful heroes in another holy war. Instead, his heirs and successors compromised with the faithless, played the political game, rendered unto Caesar what Caesar thought was due to him, and gave to their god what was left. The Romans, meanwhile, oversaw Palestine from their base in the province of Syria, ruling the country through the Hasmonean, and then the Herodian, dynasties.<sup>50</sup>*

It is also necessary, however, to see if these expectations are actually reflected in the Bible. Read the following passages with an eye toward the expectations and concerns of those involved.

**Matthew 2:1-8, 16**

*<sup>1</sup> Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." <sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." . . . <sup>16</sup> Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.*

**Matthew 20:20-21**

*<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. <sup>21</sup> And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."*

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<sup>50</sup> Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 159, 160.

**Mark 11:7-10**

<sup>7</sup> And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. <sup>9</sup> And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! <sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

**Mark 15:31-32**

<sup>31</sup> So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup> Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

**Luke 19:8-11**

<sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” <sup>11</sup> As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

**Luke 24:18-21**

<sup>18</sup> Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.”

**John 6:11-15**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup> And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who

had eaten. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” <sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

John 7:40-43

<sup>40</sup> When they heard these words, some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.” <sup>41</sup> Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? <sup>42</sup> Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”

<sup>43</sup> So there was a division among the people over him.

3. According to these passages, what did people expect the Messiah (or Christ) to be like?

- **ANSWER.** The people of Israel expected the Messiah to be a mighty king, a descendant of David, and the one who would redeem Israel. Herod, who had considerable political power, apparently saw the birth of Jesus as a threat to his own rule. The people thought that the Messiah would bring in the kingdom of God immediately (Luke 19:11), which would take the form of defeating the Romans, and overthrowing any corrupt religious leadership within Israel.

Now read the following passages:

Matthew 16:20-23

<sup>20</sup> Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. <sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus 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 on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” <sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Luke 1:67-75

<sup>67</sup> And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, <sup>68</sup> “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people <sup>69</sup> and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his

servant David,<sup>70</sup> as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,<sup>71</sup> that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;<sup>72</sup> to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,<sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us<sup>74</sup> that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

Luke 22:47-50

<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him,<sup>48</sup> but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”<sup>49</sup> And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”<sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

4. What was the common expectation for how the Davidic kingdom would come?

- **ANSWER.** Again, the common expectation was that the Davidic king would deliver Israel from the hand of her enemies (Luke 1:74). That was why it was incomprehensible to Peter that Jesus should suffer and be killed. Peter was even prepared to defend Jesus with the sword when Jesus was to be arrested. The behavior of Peter was not atypical; it reflected the common Jewish belief that the Messiah would be a triumphant king who would establish the kingdom through military victories over human enemies.

With expectations running high for a Messiah to deliver Israel from oppression, you can imagine how John the Baptist’s preaching would have exploded onto the scene. It is written that “all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him” (Mark 1:5).

Compare the following New Testament passages about John the Baptist to these prophecies from the Old Testament.

Matthew 11:9-14

<sup>9</sup> What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.<sup>10</sup> This is he of whom it is written, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.”<sup>11</sup> Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.<sup>12</sup> From the

days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. <sup>13</sup> For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, <sup>14</sup> and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

#### Luke 1:13-17

<sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. <sup>14</sup> And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. <sup>16</sup> And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, <sup>17</sup> and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

#### Malachi 4:4-6

<sup>4</sup> Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. <sup>5</sup> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

#### Isaiah 40:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins. <sup>3</sup> A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” <sup>6</sup> A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. <sup>9</sup> Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” <sup>10</sup> Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. <sup>11</sup> He will tend his flock

like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

5. According to these passages, what would be the primary role of “Elijah”? Underline the evidence and record your reflections below.

- **ANSWER.** *The primary role of “Elijah” was to prepare the way of the LORD, who would return to Israel to judge and redeem them. Elijah would do this by calling for repentance, and preparing them for the LORD’s return. In this way, the Elijah figure was seen as the forerunner of God’s great salvation and the establishment of his kingdom. As we will see in the rest of this lesson, however, even John the Baptist (“Elijah”) didn’t fully understand how God’s kingdom would be established through Jesus.*

### Tracing God’s Ways

The Jews were expecting a Davidic king who would overthrow the Romans . Their Messiah would be a military ruler in the mold of David or Judas Maccabaeus. The kingdom of God would be established when pagan armies would be put under the feet of God’s anointed one in Israel. John the Baptist was to prepare the people of Israel for this.

## Day 2

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### JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS

Now read John the Baptist's message:

Matthew 3:4-12

<sup>4</sup> Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup> And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>11</sup> I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

6. How would you summarize John the Baptist's message? Are there any significant or surprising "omissions"? How does his message compare to the common Jewish expectation?

· **ANSWER.** *John the Baptist's message could be summarized as "The Messiah is coming to bring the judgment of God; therefore repent." What is missing in this message is any indication that the Messiah would first bring the judgment of God upon himself, dying a sacrificial death. John's message also does not indicate that the Messiah would bring a spiritual victory in his first coming and a military victory only in his second coming. Therefore, John was most likely operating within the common Jewish expectation for a king in the likeness of Judas Maccabaeus.*



Immediately after the passage above, we learn that Jesus himself comes to John for baptism. John's confusion and hesitation are understandable. What can explain this surprising development?

Matthew 3:13-17

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.

<sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

7. How should we understand the baptism of Jesus as depicted by Matthew?

- **ANSWER.** *This is a notorious problem in interpreting the Gospel of Matthew. In what way, for Jesus, is being baptized a fulfillment of all righteousness? One common answer to this question is that the baptism of Jesus fulfills biblical predictions about the Messiah—that it fulfills Scripture (cf. Matt 5:17, 20). Others suggest that Jesus' identification with John's baptism for the forgiveness of sins foreshadows his atoning death. Still others emphasize Jesus' humble solidarity with the people of God. Whatever the correct interpretation, Jesus' baptism is the inception of his public ministry and the declaration that he is the Davidic king who was to come (see Isaiah 11:1-2; 42:1; Ps 2:7).*

John the Baptist preaches against Herod, who was then ruling over Israel. Herod did not keep the Law of Moses or have any Davidic right to the throne. He was not a proper ruler of God's people. But nevertheless, he arrests John and throws him into prison. This is an account of what John does in prison.

Matthew 11:2-6 (compare Luke 7:18-23)

<sup>2</sup> Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

8. Was John confused about Jesus and his mission? How are we to understand this passage?

- **ANSWER.** *It is likely that John was confused about Jesus and his mission. His question to Jesus reveals that Jesus is not matching all of John's expectations of what the Messiah would be and do. He was probably anticipating that Jesus would free him from prison, challenge Herod's wrongful rule, and bring the judgment of God. Jesus' response indicates that his ministry of healing and proclaiming the gospel is the inaugurated fulfillment of the Messiah's role, but warns John not to take offense at those things Jesus was leaving undone in his first coming.*

Here are the texts that Jesus alludes to in his response to John's question:

Isaiah 29:17-21

*<sup>17</sup> Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? <sup>18</sup> In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. <sup>19</sup> The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. <sup>20</sup> For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, <sup>21</sup> who by a word make a man out to be an offender, and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and with an empty plea turn aside him who is in the right.*

Isaiah 35:3-7

*<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup> Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; <sup>6</sup> then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; <sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.*

Some commentators have claimed that John the Baptist knew that Jesus was going to die:

John 1:29-37

<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” <sup>30</sup> This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup> And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup> I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” <sup>35</sup> The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup> and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

9. Must we read John’s confession “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29) as a proclamation of Jesus’ forthcoming atoning death? Explain.

· **ANSWER.** *It is possible that the author of this Gospel intended to portray John the Baptist as understanding Jesus’ self-sacrificial ministry. (For this view, see John Piper, “Behold the Lamb of God,” an online sermon at the DG website.) If this is the case, however, it would be in tension with the account of John the Baptist’s message in the other Gospels. Therefore, it is also a possibility that John the Baptist’s confession could be paraphrased as such: “Behold, the Warrior Lamb of God, who clears away the sin of the world in judgment!” (cf. Rev 6:16-17). In this case, “taking away sin” doesn’t refer to atonement, but to judgment. This latter possibility doesn’t rule out that John the Baptist might be speaking more than he knew. This technique of dramatic irony is in fact one that the author uses elsewhere in this Gospel (see John 11:49-52; 19:15).*

In some ways, Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom of God, the coming reign of Israel’s king, was similar to John the Baptist’s. He stressed the importance of bearing fruit in keeping with repentance.

How would one enter into the kingdom? Examine the following passages. Look for the covenant structure: provisions, stipulations, blessings/curses.

Matthew 21:28-32

<sup>28</sup> “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said,

*'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.'*<sup>29</sup> *And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went.*<sup>30</sup> *And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go.*<sup>31</sup> *Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first."* *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.*<sup>32</sup> *For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him."*

[Read Matthew 21:33-45]

Mark 10:14-15

<sup>14</sup> *But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*<sup>15</sup> *Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*

Luke 13:23-30

<sup>23</sup> *And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them,*<sup>24</sup> *"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*<sup>25</sup> *When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.'*<sup>26</sup> *Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.'*<sup>27</sup> *But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!'*<sup>28</sup> *In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.*<sup>29</sup> *And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.*<sup>30</sup> *And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."*

John 3:1-8

<sup>1</sup> *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*  
<sup>2</sup> *This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."*<sup>3</sup> *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*<sup>4</sup> *Nicodemus said to him,*

“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.<sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Romans 14:17

<sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

<sup>9</sup> Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

10. How would you summarize Jesus’ teaching (and Paul’s) on the kingdom as expressed in these verses?

• ANSWER. Answers will vary.

### Tracing God’s Ways

John the Baptist called for Israel to repent before the coming of judgment. He was preparing the way for the Lord. It appears, however, that John did not understand the timing of God’s kingdom. John and Jesus (and Paul) agreed that repentance and faith were necessary for entering the kingdom.

## Day 3

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### THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND

Since this is the first lesson in which we are directly considering the New Testament, we must pause at this point to introduce an area of research that is indispensable to the study of biblical theology: the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

Although it may be a matter of common sense, it is important to remember that Jesus and his disciples knew the *Old Testament* as “Scripture.” The New Testament, at least in the form we have it today, was unknown to any of the earliest Christians. It was the Old Testament that was memorized, preached, and cherished in the mid-first century. Therefore, if we want to understand the New Testament, we must understand how Jesus and his disciples read and interpreted the Old Testament.

Read both the following New Testament passage and its Old Testament context:

#### Matthew 4:1-4

*<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*

#### Deuteronomy 8:1-10

*<sup>1</sup> The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. <sup>2</sup> And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your*

God disciplines you. <sup>6</sup> So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. <sup>7</sup> For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, <sup>8</sup> a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, <sup>9</sup> a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. <sup>10</sup> And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

11. How does the context of Deuteronomy 8:1-10 inform our interpretation of Matthew 4:1-4? What might Jesus be doing in citing this Scripture in his temptation?

· **ANSWER.** *The parallels between these texts (underlined above) are remarkable. They suggest that Jesus is doing more than merely “proof-texting” his obedience. Rather, he is identifying himself as the faithful Israelite, who does in the wilderness what Israel should have done. Jesus will not attempt to exercise his own power in order to meet his needs. He will humble himself and rely on God’s promises and perfect plan. And in so doing, he can redeem a people from the bondage of sin and lead them into the promised land. So Jesus quotes the Old Testament aware of the broader context.*

After Jesus’ temptation, and at the beginning of his public ministry, we find him preaching a message about the kingdom of God:

Matthew 4:17

<sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mark 1:14-15

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Luke 4:42-44

<sup>42</sup> And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving

them,<sup>43</sup> but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”<sup>44</sup> And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

12. Why do you think that “the kingdom of God is at hand” was Jesus’ first and most basic message?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

As an integral part of his preaching ministry, Jesus also healed the sick. The following verses demonstrate the connection between the kingdom of the God and Jesus’ ministry of healing:

Matthew 4:23-24

<sup>23</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.<sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.

Matthew 10:7-8

<sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”<sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Luke 10:9

<sup>9</sup> Heal the sick in it and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.”

13. How does healing fit with the kingdom of God?

· **ANSWER.** *Since the kingdom of God in all of its fullness will completely eradicate death and disease, Jesus’ ministry of healing the sick is giving a foretaste of the age to come. It is also a powerful demonstration of the truthfulness of Jesus’ message. Throughout the Old Testament, the God of Israel alone is the one who is portrayed as having the ability to heal diseases. It is a part of his sovereign control over all things.*

The healing of diseases in Jesus’ ministry is often related to, or found in



conjunction with, the casting out of demons. Study the following passages:

Matthew 12:24-29

<sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." <sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. <sup>29</sup> Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house."

Matthew 12:22-23

<sup>22</sup> Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. <sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?"

14. How do exorcisms fit with the kingdom of God?

- **ANSWER.** *Similar to Jesus' ministry of healing, Jesus' ministry of casting out demons is giving a foretaste of the age to come, in which there will be no demonic presence or opposition to God's perfected reign. It is also a powerful demonstration of the truthfulness of Jesus' message and his Messiahship.*

Here is one possible description of the "kingdom of God":

*The Kingdom of God is the dynamic reign of God in Christ which is breaking into this present evil age with salvation and with foretastes of the age to come. Through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit the kingdom of God is now in the process of delivering men and women from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation from their own sin and from Satan's oppression. It is here now in part, and one day will come in all its fullness and banish evil once and for all. <sup>51</sup>*

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<sup>51</sup> This definition is cited from Tom Steller's unpublished teaching notes on the kingdom of God.

15. Drawing from your own background knowledge or a quick survey of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels, while Jesus is proclaiming the kingdom of God, what title(s) is he applying to himself? What titles are others applying to him? What do these titles mean?

· **ANSWER.** *While others commonly call Jesus "Son of God," "Son of David," or the "Christ," Jesus rarely, if ever, applies these titles to himself. This is possibly because these titles had militaristic connotations in the Jewish culture of the first century and would therefore be misapplied to the purpose of Jesus' first coming. Rather, Jesus appears to favor the title "Son of Man," which is probably drawn from Daniel 7. Choosing this less-used title allows Jesus himself to fill the content of the title and define his own identity.*

### Tracing God's Ways

Jesus' basic message was "The kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus' mighty deeds of healing and casting out demons demonstrate the reality of what he is proclaiming.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Like almost every biblical-theological theme, the kingdom of God finds its roots in Genesis 1-3. Here again is the familiar passage in which God's "kingdom" is to be represented through human beings whom he has made in his image:

#### Genesis 1:26-28

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

The kingdom of God is also seen in subsequent events in salvation history:

#### Psalm 29:1-3, 10

<sup>1</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. <sup>2</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness. <sup>3</sup> The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters. . . . <sup>10</sup> The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

#### Exodus 15:1-18

<sup>1</sup> Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. <sup>2</sup> The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. <sup>3</sup> The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name. <sup>4</sup> Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. <sup>5</sup> The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. <sup>6</sup> Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. <sup>7</sup> In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow

*your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. <sup>8</sup> At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. <sup>9</sup> The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.' <sup>10</sup> You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. <sup>11</sup> Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? <sup>12</sup> You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them. <sup>13</sup> You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. <sup>14</sup> The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. <sup>15</sup> Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. <sup>16</sup> Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased. <sup>17</sup> You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. <sup>18</sup> The LORD will reign forever and ever."*

16. To which two events in salvation history are these passages (above) referring? How is the kingdom of God manifest in each event?

- **ANSWER.** *The passages are referring to the flood and to the exodus. At the flood, God revealed himself as King over creation. At the exodus, God revealed himself as a man of war who was victorious over foreign nations and all other "gods."*

The Old Testament looks forward to the day in which God's kingly rule will extend to all nations:

Psalm 22:27-28

*<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. <sup>28</sup> For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.*

Psalm 47:1-9

*<sup>1</sup> Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! <sup>2</sup> For the*

LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. <sup>3</sup> He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. <sup>4</sup> He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. Selah <sup>5</sup> God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. <sup>6</sup> Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! <sup>7</sup> For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! <sup>8</sup> God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. <sup>9</sup> The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!

This hope is particularly prominent in the book of Daniel—an important book for the New Testament:

Daniel 2:44-45

<sup>44</sup> And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, <sup>45</sup> just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.

Daniel 7:13-18

<sup>13</sup> I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. <sup>15</sup> As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. <sup>16</sup> I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. <sup>17</sup> These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. <sup>18</sup> But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.

17. Our discussion thus far has assumed that the “kingdom of God” refers primarily to his reign and not his realm—that is, to God’s power and authority and not to the people under that authority. Do these two passages from Daniel (above) support that assumption or not? Explain. Search the broader contexts, if necessary.

- **ANSWER.** *The two passages from Daniel do support the assumption. In Dan 2 the “kingdom of God” is contrasted with the rule of Nebuchadnezzar and the three “kingdoms” that will rule after him (see Dan 2:37-40). In Dan 7, the “dominion” is taken away from the beasts (7:12), and the “kingdom” of the Son of Man is put in parallel with “glory” and “dominion” (7:14). If the kingdom refers to a people, then why is the kingdom given to the Son of Man so that people should serve him (7:14)?*

As we’ve seen in this lesson, both John the Baptist and Jesus announce the kingdom. In some ways, however, Jesus’ teaching was very different from John’s. Notice the perspective offered in the following passages:

[Read Matthew 13:24-30]

**Matthew 13:36-43**

*<sup>36</sup> Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” <sup>37</sup> He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup> Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, <sup>42</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”*

**Mark 4:26-32**

*<sup>26</sup> And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. <sup>28</sup> The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. <sup>29</sup> But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” <sup>30</sup> And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, <sup>32</sup> yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”*

18. What might be the “mystery” of the kingdom that Jesus teaches, which was perhaps not fully understood by John the Baptist or initially by Jesus’ disciples?

· **ANSWER.** *The mystery of the kingdom is that it will not come all at once. Rather, Jesus inaugurates the kingdom in his first coming and only consummates it (after it has spread throughout the earth) at his second coming.*

A central question that needs to be answered concerning the kingdom is whether Jesus actually established it in his first coming. There are some theologians who argue that Jesus offered the kingdom to Israel, but Israel rejected it and therefore Jesus will not establish it with them until he returns.

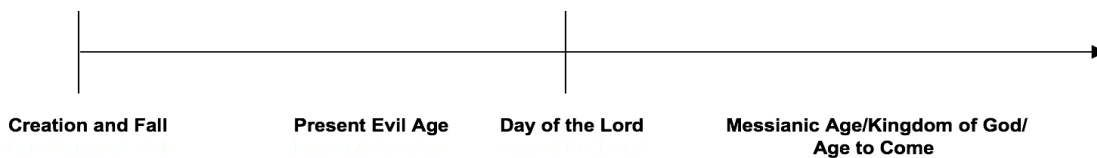
Luke 17:20-21

<sup>20</sup> Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed,  
<sup>21</sup> nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

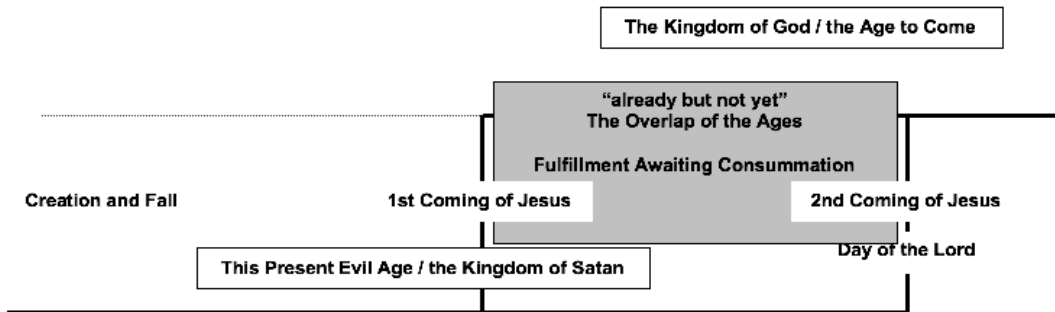
When thinking about the kingdom and eschatology, this curriculum will advocate for what is now a widespread understanding called “inaugurated eschatology.” In brief, inaugurated eschatology teaches that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has inaugurated (or brought about the beginning of) the kingdom of God, but did not yet consummate it. Therefore, there is an “already” and a “not yet” aspect to the fulfillment of the Old Testament’s hope in the ministry of Jesus.

This understanding can be helpfully represented by two charts. As you examine these charts, think about the common Jewish expectations and the teaching of Jesus.

### **Chart 1**



## Chart 2



19. What reflections do you have on the differences between Chart 1 and Chart 2?

• **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

“Inaugurated eschatology” was a difficult concept for Jesus’ disciples to grasp. The following passage demonstrates that even after Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples are still grappling with how God’s plans will unfold and fulfill his promises:

Acts 1:1-8

*<sup>1</sup> In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” <sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*



Though many more texts could be brought into this discussion, we will consider just one more from the book of Revelation:

Revelation 11:15-18

<sup>15</sup> Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”<sup>16</sup> And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,<sup>17</sup> saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.”<sup>18</sup> The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

20. What does it mean that the Lord God Almighty has “begun to reign” (Revelation 11:17)? Hasn’t God reigned all throughout salvation history?

- **ANSWER.** This passage points forward to the time when God’s heavenly rule will be completely and perfectly manifested on earth. Other biblical texts make it clear that in some sense Satan now rules over the earth and this age (see Eph 2:1-3; 1 John 5:19). So when God brings his kingdom fully upon the earth, the difference will be so great that it can be legitimately described as God beginning to reign on earth.

1 Corinthians 15:22-28

<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.<sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.<sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.<sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.<sup>27</sup> For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.<sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “John the Baptist” (602-604)
- ▷ “Kingdom of God” (615-620)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “New Testament Use of the Old Testament” (72-80)
- ▷ “Daniel” (232-236)
- ▷ “Synoptic Gospels” (126-129)

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of the kingdom of God, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. Do you think that John the Baptist and Jesus had different understandings of the kingdom of God? If so, is this a problem?
2. When you read the New Testament and come across an Old Testament citation, do you stop to read the broader context of the citation in the Old Testament? Why or why not?
3. What biblical evidence is there supporting the idea that the kingdom of God is a present reality? What biblical evidence is there that the kingdom of God is a future reality? How do you put all the biblical evidence together?

## YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

## APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

How should we apply Jesus' teaching of the kingdom? Should we look for healing and the casting out of demons in our day?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959)
- ▷ *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994)
- ▷ *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007)



# It Is Finished

# 8

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

Messianic speculation surrounding Jesus reached its highest crescendo as Jesus entered Jerusalem. He rides on a donkey, a symbol of Davidic kingship (compare 1 Kings 1:33, 38, 44; Zechariah 9:9). The crowds have cut branches to lay before him and are shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matthew 21:9). Jesus then cleanses the temple of impurity. The whole city is stirred up. The crowds were probably thinking, “This is he, the one who will redeem Israel and deliver us from our enemies!”

A few short days later, Jesus is hanging—as a bloody corpse—on a Roman cross, having been executed as a criminal. What happened?! This lesson attempts to account for Jesus’ death, offering explanations from the perspective of the religious leaders, from the perspective of Jesus’ own teaching, and from the perspective of later New Testament writers. Jesus’ death on a cross, as the center-point of all biblical theology, is at once confounding and awe-inspiring, ironic and beautiful.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ explain the human factors that resulted in Jesus’ death
- ▷ describe Jesus’ own interpretation of his death
- ▷ comment on the interpretation of Jesus’ death in other NT books







As the instructor, you've probably been drawing the timeline of salvation history in your discussion of each lesson. That timeline should have the cross of Jesus Christ at the center, since the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the pivotal moment in salvation history. Therefore, as you cover the material in this lesson, strive to show how the death of Jesus accomplishes God's purposes as they've been developed in the Old Testament and in salvation history up until this point.

Regarding Jesus' trial here are some helpful comments by J. Ed Komoszewski et al. in their book *Reinventing Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2006), 178-179:

*Up to this point, no one in Jewish literature was ever afforded the privilege of sitting at God's right side. Yet Jesus personally insisted on his right to do so. . . . He had claimed to exercise the authority of God, implying that he sat in judgment over the Jewish council—not the other way around. He had also committed blasphemy by threatening the uniqueness of God's presence. Jesus spoke brashly about going directly into the heavenly Holy of Holies and staying there, thus occupying a place far above even the angels, for "the place on the throne of God at the right hand of the Father is the highest place in heaven." Jesus' words staggered the Jewish council; their reaction strongly suggests that they understood him to be claiming divinity.*

On the meaning of the tearing of the veil, especially in Matthew's Gospel, see now the careful work of Daniel Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).



## Day 1

### JESUS' CONTROVERSIAL MINISTRY

Jesus was a controversial figure in first-century Palestine, as he is in our day and time. Though he commanded the respect of his disciples and held the crowds in wonder, the religious leaders almost universally condemned him. They plotted to kill him from early on in his ministry. What did Jesus do and say to get himself in so much trouble? Why would people seek to arrest and execute him?

There are a number of reasons why, from a human and historical perspective, Jesus was crucified. Certainly, his teaching and prophetic actions stirred up opposition. One of the areas of Jesus' teaching that provoked the most heated response was his teaching on the Sabbath.

Read the following account:

Mark 2:23–3:6

*<sup>23</sup> One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: <sup>26</sup> how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" <sup>27</sup> And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*

*<sup>3:1</sup> Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. <sup>2</sup> And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup> And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." <sup>4</sup> And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. <sup>5</sup> And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand*

was restored. <sup>6</sup> *The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.*

1. Why would the Pharisees and Herodians want to destroy Jesus (Mark 3:6)?

- **ANSWER.** *The Pharisees considered Jesus to be breaking the Sabbath, an offense that warranted capital punishment according to the Law of Moses (cf. Num 15:32-36). It is also probable, however, that they considered Jesus a threat to their own religious authority because of his popularity with the people and his mighty deeds. The Herodians were more threatened by Jesus' political significance. As supporters of Herod the tetrarch, they probably thought that Jesus represented a potentially subversive force, leading the people into rebellion against Herod and Rome.*

Notice in the passage above that Jesus is angered and grieved by the Pharisees' hardness of heart (Mark 3:5). They have not learned the message of the prophets that God desires mercy and not sacrifice (see Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13; 12:7).

Jesus' teaching on the Sabbath was not the only aspect of his ministry that was controversial, however. The Jewish religious leaders were also disgruntled about his association with "sinners." Look at the following passages:

Matthew 9:9-13

<sup>9</sup> *As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. <sup>10</sup> And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>12</sup> But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Luke 5:29-32 (compare Mark 2:13-17)

<sup>29</sup> *And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. <sup>30</sup> And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."*

Read Luke 7:36-50

Luke 15:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

Luke 18:9-14

<sup>9</sup> He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ <sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Matthew 21:28-32

<sup>28</sup> “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ <sup>29</sup> And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup> And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. <sup>31</sup> Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.”

This how Jesus represents the perception of his ministry:

Luke 7:31-35 (compare Matthew 11:16-19)

<sup>31</sup> To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? <sup>32</sup> They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.” <sup>33</sup> For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, “He has a demon.” <sup>34</sup> The Son of Man has come

eating and drinking, and you say, “Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!”<sup>35</sup> Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.

2. What is the significance of this emphasis within Jesus’ teaching and ministry?

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus’ embrace of tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners was not an endorsement of their sin. When Jesus forgave a sinner, he called them to forsake their life of sin. What his embrace of the marginalized in Jewish society did mean, however, was that God was ready to rejoice over the repentance of the most flagrant sinner. Forgiveness did not need to be earned by respectable conduct. The religious leaders were unable to see their own need of repentance, nor were they able to rejoice in the salvation of those whom they should have pitied.*

An even more controversial extension of this emphasis within Jesus’ teaching was what he said concerning Gentiles. Notice the following passage:

Luke 4:16-30

<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.  
<sup>17</sup> And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”  
<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.<sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”<sup>22</sup> And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”<sup>23</sup> And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.”<sup>24</sup> And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.<sup>25</sup> But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land,<sup>26</sup> and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.<sup>27</sup> And there

were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”<sup>28</sup> When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.<sup>29</sup> And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.<sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, he went away.

Though Jesus’ teaching on the Sabbath and Gentiles might alone have gotten him killed, he was also very forceful in his criticism of the religious leaders of the day. Functioning in the role of a prophet, Jesus did not mince words. He called things as he saw them. This made him dangerous to those whom he critiqued. Consider the following passages:

Mark 7:1-13

<sup>1</sup> Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders, <sup>4</sup> and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) <sup>5</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” <sup>6</sup> And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; <sup>7</sup> in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ <sup>8</sup> You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!” <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ <sup>11</sup> But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban” (that is, given to God)— <sup>12</sup> then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, <sup>13</sup> thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

Mark 12:38-40

<sup>38</sup> And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces <sup>39</sup> and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, <sup>40</sup> who devour widows’

houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

**Luke 16:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” <sup>14</sup> The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. <sup>16</sup> The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. <sup>17</sup> But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.”

**John 5:37-47**

<sup>37</sup> And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, <sup>38</sup> and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. <sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. <sup>41</sup> I do not receive glory from people. <sup>42</sup> But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. <sup>43</sup> I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. <sup>44</sup> How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? <sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup> For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. <sup>47</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

**John 8:39-47**

<sup>39</sup> They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, <sup>40</sup> but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. <sup>41</sup> You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. <sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. <sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do

*your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. <sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? <sup>47</sup> Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."*

Perhaps the main thrust of Jesus' spiritual assessment of the religious leaders, though, focused on the charge of hypocrisy:

Matthew 6:2, 5, 16

<sup>2</sup> *Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. . . . <sup>5</sup> And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. . . . <sup>16</sup> And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*

Matthew 22:18

<sup>18</sup> *But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?"*

Matthew 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29

<sup>13</sup> *But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. . . . <sup>15</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. . . . <sup>23</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. . . . <sup>25</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. . . . <sup>27</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. . . . <sup>28</sup> So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. . . . <sup>29</sup>*



Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous <sup>30</sup> saying, “If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.” <sup>31</sup> Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup> Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.

Mark 7:6-7

<sup>6</sup> And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; <sup>7</sup> in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.””

Mark 12:15

<sup>15</sup> But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.”

Luke 12:1, 56

<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. . . . <sup>56</sup> You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

Luke 13:15

<sup>15</sup> Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?”

The focus of Jesus’ charge against the scribes and Pharisees casts light by contrast onto what he expects from his own disciples:

Matthew 5:20

<sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

3. How would you summarize Jesus’ critique of the Jewish religious leaders?

· ANSWER. Answers will vary.

For our study of biblical theology, it is important to tie Jesus' ministry into the flow of redemptive history. How does what we've studied thus far relate to the rest of the biblical story?

Isaiah 5:1-7

<sup>1</sup> Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. <sup>2</sup> He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. <sup>3</sup> And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. <sup>4</sup> What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? <sup>5</sup> And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. <sup>6</sup> I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. <sup>7</sup> For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

Matthew 21:33-46

<sup>33</sup> "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. <sup>34</sup> When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. <sup>35</sup> And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. <sup>37</sup> Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>38</sup> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup> And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup> When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" <sup>41</sup> They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?' <sup>43</sup> Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. <sup>44</sup> And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." <sup>45</sup> When the

chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. <sup>46</sup> And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

4. How is Jesus' message similar to the message of the old covenant prophets? (Hint: Review your answers to Questions 6 and 7 in Lesson 6.)

· **ANSWER.** As we noted in the answers to Questions 6 and 7 in Lesson 6, the prophets were supposed to convict Israel of her sin (often the sin of hypocrisy) and then call for repentance. The prophets were supposed to communicate God's desire for a genuine obedience from the heart, so that Israel would become a light to the nations. Jesus, also, did these things in critiquing Israel's religious leaders and calling for repentance from everyone. Tragically, however, Jesus received the same treatment that most of Israel's prophets did—and worse.

We have seen that there were many aspects of Jesus' teaching and ministry which would have angered the religious leaders. We will now look at one more: perceived blasphemy.

Matthew 9:2-3

<sup>2</sup> And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."<sup>3</sup> And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming."

Mark 2:5-7

<sup>5</sup> And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."<sup>6</sup> Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,<sup>7</sup> "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

John 10:30-33

<sup>30</sup> "I and the Father are one."<sup>31</sup> The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.<sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"<sup>33</sup> The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

John 8:54-59

<sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' <sup>55</sup> But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." <sup>57</sup> So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" <sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." <sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

5. What did Jesus say that provoked the charge of blasphemy? Why would they have charged him with blasphemy and not, for example, pretension or arrogance?

- **ANSWER.** They charged Jesus with blasphemy because he made certain claims that were only proper to the God of Israel. In the passages above, these claims included the ability to forgive sins and the claim to be God.

The Jewish religious leaders could not deny the mighty deeds that Jesus performed. Therefore, their only conclusion was that Jesus was a false and demonic prophet:

Matthew 9:33-34

<sup>33</sup> And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." <sup>34</sup> But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

Matthew 12:23-24 (compare Mark 3:22)

<sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" <sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons."

Mark 3:22

<sup>22</sup> And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."

Luke 11:14-16

<sup>14</sup> Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone

out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. <sup>15</sup> But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,” <sup>16</sup> while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.

John 7:20

<sup>20</sup> The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?”

John 8:41, 48

<sup>41</sup> They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” . . . <sup>48</sup> The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

John 9:16, 24

<sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. . . . <sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.”

John 10:20

<sup>20</sup> Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?”

### Tracing God's Ways

From a human and historical perspective, it is clear that Jesus died because of his scandalous teaching and prophetic actions. The religious leaders found his teaching on the Sabbath, on “sinners” and Gentiles, on their hypocrisy, his mission, and his relationship to the God of Israel all highly objectionable. Their conclusion was that Jesus was a false prophet and false messiah.

## Day 2

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### THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE, AND THE ARREST AND TRIAL OF JESUS

Although we have already considered a few symbolic actions that got Jesus into trouble, perhaps his most scandalous action was to cleanse the Temple. Examine the following account:

Mark 11:15-18

*<sup>15</sup> And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. <sup>16</sup> And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. <sup>17</sup> And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” <sup>18</sup> And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.*

And now consider crucial Old Testament context for Jesus’ action (another example of the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament):

Jeremiah 7:1-15

*<sup>1</sup> The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> “Stand in the gate of the LORD’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. <sup>3</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. <sup>4</sup> Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’ <sup>5</sup> For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, <sup>6</sup> if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, <sup>7</sup> then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. <sup>8</sup> Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. <sup>9</sup> Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, <sup>10</sup> and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We*

are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? <sup>11</sup> Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD. <sup>12</sup> Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. <sup>13</sup> And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, <sup>14</sup> therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. <sup>15</sup> And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.”

Isaiah 56:6-7

<sup>6</sup> And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— <sup>7</sup> these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

6. Given the Old Testament context, what made Jesus’ cleansing of the temple so offensive to the chief priests and scribes?
  - **ANSWER.** First, Jesus’ action implies a moral critique of those within the temple: they are unrighteous and in need of repentance; they are putting a false hope in the outward symbol of the temple; they are oppressing the helpless. Second, Jesus points to the Old Testament intention that the temple would be a house of prayer for all peoples. But third, as the context of Jeremiah makes clear, Jesus’ action symbolizes the imminent destruction of the temple.

It is no wonder that the Pharisees would quickly become uncomfortable with this religious upstart, Jesus. They must have looked at his ministry and have seen a number of warning signs: he was gathering disciples around him (which they may have interpreted as the formation of his own guerrilla army); he was denouncing the temple; he was questioning the authority of the Pharisees; he was preaching about the kingdom of God. From these observations, the Pharisees made the natural conclusion: he is going to get Israel destroyed.

For all the reasons that we’ve surveyed, the religious authorities decided that Jesus needed to be arrested and crucified. By exposing Jesus to such a

humiliating death, it would certainly quell any kind of rebellion that was forming around him and keep their power intact.

They therefore hire Judas, one of Jesus' own apostles, to betray him. They decide to arrest Jesus at night so that there wouldn't be a controversy among the crowds. And they come with band of soldiers, armed with weapons.

What were the religious leaders expecting? They probably expected that Jesus' followers would fight to protect him (compare John 18:36). They probably expected all of the disciples to do what Peter did: resist with violence. This is the kind of kingdom paradigm from which they were operating.

Instead they find Jesus behaving in a puzzling way. As he later tells Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world" (John 18:36).

Look at the following accounts of Jesus' arrest:

Matthew 26:51-56

*<sup>51</sup> And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" <sup>55</sup> At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. <sup>56</sup> But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.*

Mark 14:46-50

*<sup>46</sup> And they laid hands on him and seized him. <sup>47</sup> But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>48</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? <sup>49</sup> Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." <sup>50</sup> And they all left him and fled.*

Luke 22:49-53

*<sup>49</sup> And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" <sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. <sup>51</sup> But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And*



he touched his ear and healed him.<sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?<sup>53</sup> When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

John 18:10-11

<sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)<sup>11</sup> So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

7. All four Gospels include the account of Jesus’ arrest. Why is this episode theologically significant?
  - **ANSWER.** *The arrest of Jesus demonstrates that the kingdom that Jesus is bringing will not come by the sword. His renunciation of violence indicates that his reign will not be established in the expected way of King David or Judas Maccabaeus. Rather, his kingdom will come through his own death (John 18:11) which is the fulfillment on Scripture and God’s plan.*

Among his own disciples this is the message that Jesus was preaching:

Matthew 5:38-47

<sup>38</sup> You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”  
<sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.<sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.<sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.<sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.<sup>43</sup> You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.<sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

**Mark 8:29-35**

<sup>29</sup> And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."<sup>30</sup> And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.<sup>31</sup> And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.<sup>32</sup> And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.<sup>33</sup> But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."<sup>34</sup> And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.<sup>35</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

**Mark 10:42-45**

<sup>42</sup> And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.<sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**John 12:23-33**

<sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.<sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.<sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.<sup>27</sup> Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.<sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."<sup>29</sup> The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."<sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.<sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.<sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."<sup>33</sup> He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

8. How would you summarize these verses? What made Jesus' teaching so provocative in the first-century Jewish context?

· **ANSWER.** *Again, Jesus' teaching should have prepared Jesus' disciples for his arrest. From his teaching they should have known that Jesus was prepared to go to the cross and lose his life. His purpose in dying was so that others might have life. This type of life is what he also expected from his disciples (Mark 8:34-35; John 12:25-26). This is the life that the Apostle Paul lived (cf. 2 Cor 4:7-12).*

Now we look at a paragraph in the Gospels which—perhaps more than any other—reveals the motivation of the religious leaders in killing Jesus:

John 11:45-53

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, <sup>46</sup> but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. <sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." <sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. <sup>50</sup> Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." <sup>51</sup> He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

Later in John's Gospel, the Jews are intent on convincing Pilate to crucify Jesus. What is their strategy?

John 19:12-16

<sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." <sup>13</sup> So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup> Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" <sup>15</sup> They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I

*crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”<sup>16</sup> So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.*

9. According to John 11:45-53 and 19:12-16, why did the religious leaders want to destroy Jesus? What were they afraid of?

- **ANSWER.** *According to these passages, the religious leaders wanted to destroy Jesus because they were afraid that he might get their temple and their nation destroyed by the Romans. Presumably, by getting people to follow him, the Jews were afraid that Jesus would start a Messianic revolt that would end unsuccessfully. Ironically and tragically, this is exactly what happened to Israel later in the history when the Romans destroyed the temple (70 AD) and the nation (135 AD) in Jewish revolts against imperial power.*

We should also not underestimate what Mark and Matthew indicate was a motive in the Jews handing Jesus over to be killed:

Mark 15:6-10 (compare Matthew 27:18)

*<sup>6</sup> Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. <sup>7</sup> And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. <sup>8</sup> And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. <sup>9</sup> And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”<sup>10</sup> For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.*

After Jesus’ arrest, the high priest and Pilate are questioning Jesus about his teaching, probably to ascertain whether he was planning a revolution and planning to set himself up as king. Jesus’ reply to the high priest is instructive. He says, in effect, “I haven’t been planning a seditious take-over in secret. If you want the full account of my teaching, you only need to ask someone who heard me teach in the temple.” Likewise, Jesus did not want Pilate to think that he was claiming to be king in the way that Pilate was thinking of that term.

Jesus, therefore, was not Barabbas. Most often, English translations describe Barabbas as a “robber” (John 18:40). But we shouldn’t think of him as a petty thief. Rather, the word being used here (Greek: *lāstās*) is better translated “insurrectionist.” Barabbas was a revolutionary militant trying to overthrow the Roman presence in Israel by the sword. Jesus is also crucified between two such men (Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27).

And what is the damning piece of evidence that the religious authorities use to condemn Jesus as worthy of death? Read these parallel accounts:

<p><b>Matthew 26:59-66</b></p> <p><sup>59</sup> Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, <sup>60</sup> but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward <sup>61</sup> and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" <sup>62</sup> And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" <sup>63</sup> But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." <sup>64</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." <sup>65</sup> Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. <sup>66</sup> What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death."</p>	<p><b>Mark 14:55-64</b></p> <p><sup>55</sup> Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. <sup>56</sup> For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. <sup>57</sup> And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, <sup>58</sup> "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" <sup>59</sup> Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. <sup>60</sup> And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" <sup>61</sup> But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" <sup>62</sup> And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." <sup>63</sup> And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? <sup>64</sup> You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death.</p>	<p><b>Luke 22:66-71</b></p> <p><sup>66</sup> When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, <sup>67</sup> "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, <sup>68</sup> and if I ask you, you will not answer. <sup>69</sup> But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." <sup>70</sup> So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." <sup>71</sup> Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."</p>
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10. What is blasphemous about Jesus' responses to their questions?

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah, was not in itself blasphemous. But when he claimed to be the Son of Man, and used language taken from Dan 7 about coming on the clouds (which language is used elsewhere only of God himself), this was too much for those questioning him. Furthermore, he claimed the right to sit at the right hand of God. As the Teaching Notes explain, this claim was a claim to divinity.*

*In terms of the Jewish authorities, then, the question "Why did Jesus die?" evokes a fivefold answer. He was sent to the Roman governor on a capital charge*

1. *because many (not least many Pharisees, but also, probably, the chief priests) saw him as "a false prophet, leading Israel astray";*
2. *because, as one aspect of this, they saw his Temple-action as a blow against the central symbol not only of national life but also of YHWH's presence with his people;*
3. *because, though he was clearly not leading a real or organized military revolt, he saw himself as, in some sense, Messiah, and could thus become a focus of serious revolutionary activity;*
4. *because, as the pragmatic focus of these three points, they saw him as a dangerous political nuisance, whose actions might well call down the wrath of Rome upon Temple and nation alike;*
5. *because, at the crucial moment in the hearing, he not only (as far as they were concerned) pleaded guilty to the above charges, but also did so in such a way as to place himself, blasphemously, alongside the God of Israel.*

*The leaders of the Jewish people were thus able to present Jesus to Pilate as a seditious trouble-maker; to their Jewish contemporaries (and later generations of rabbinic Judaism) as a false prophet and a blasphemer, leading Israel astray; and to themselves as a dangerous political nuisance. On all counts, he had to die.<sup>52</sup>*

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52 N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1996), 551-552.

### Tracing God's Ways

Jesus' cleansing of the temple symbolized God's judgment on the temple and those within it. This, among many other factors, accounts for why Jesus was arrested and put on trial. During his trial, the Jewish religious leaders found grounds (in their mind) to charge Jesus with blasphemy. Jesus did not resist arrest or this bogus trial, because he knew that his kingdom would be established by his own death and not by the sword.

## Day 3

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### JESUS' DEATH AND ITS MEANING

Most first-century Jews, including Jesus' own disciples, probably did not understand Jesus' public ministry. He was performing many mighty deeds and preaching the kingdom of God—this they could understand. But when he started to talk about his own death, about suffering and being humble—that made them scratch their heads. Jesus did not meet the Jewish messianic expectations of the day.

The night before Jesus died, though, he had said some things to his disciples. The Jewish festival that was being celebrated was the Passover, the time in which Jews would remember God's great act of deliverance, the exodus. It was a time when hopes would be renewed that God would again deliver his people from the bondage that held them down.

During the Passover, Matthew records these curious words:

Matthew 26:26-29

*<sup>26</sup> Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."<sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,<sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>29</sup> I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

Here is some of the biblical background to the celebration of Passover:

Exodus 12:21-27

*<sup>21</sup> Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb.<sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.<sup>23</sup> For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.<sup>24</sup> You shall observe this rite as*



a statute for you and for your sons forever. <sup>25</sup> And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. <sup>26</sup> And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ <sup>27</sup> you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

11. Matthew 26:26-29 (and the parallel passages) probably represent Jesus’ most explicit reflection on his coming death. How does he interpret his own death? What is significant about the timing of the Lord’s Supper?

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus interprets his own broken body as a provision for his disciples’ souls and his own shed blood as the inauguration of a new covenant in which the forgiveness of sins would be finally realized. Thus, Jesus is in effect claiming the fulfillment of Jer 31:31-34 in his own body. This understanding is reinforced by the timing of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper represents a reworking of the Passover festival in which Jesus himself is now the Passover lamb whose blood is shed to avert the wrath of God and deliver his people.*

Other clues about the significance of Jesus’ death can be found in the crucifixion accounts. These accounts are rich with Old Testament citations and allusions. Two of the most important texts that informed the way in which the Gospel authors depicted the crucifixion of Jesus were Psalms 22 and 69.

Read Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 in their entirety.

12. What do Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 have in common? Why might these psalms be significant in interpreting Jesus’ death?

- **ANSWER.** *Psalms 22 and 69 both portray the suffering of a faithful Israelite. Though there are a few indications that the psalmist in each case has sinned, it would be fair to say that he is suffering unjustly and for God’s sake. In each psalm, the psalmist cries out to God for help and expects to be vindicated. When applied to Jesus, these psalms help form the impression in the Gospels that Jesus is innocent, that he is suffering abuse from God’s enemies, and that his suffering is the fulfillment of what Scripture foretold. Though expressing the anguish of his suffering, these psalms probably also*

*imply that Jesus will ultimately be delivered by God from the trial. It may also be significant that Psalms 22 and 69 are both attributed to King David.*

Consider a portion of John's crucifixion account which has a striking Old Testament background:

John 19:33-37

*<sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. <sup>35</sup> He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” <sup>37</sup> And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”*

Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1

*<sup>10</sup> And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. <sup>11</sup> On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. . . . <sup>13:1</sup> On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.*

Let's also consider one more detail concerning Jesus' death in the Synoptic Gospels which relates to our study of biblical theology:

Matthew 27:50-54

*<sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”*

Mark 15:37-39

<sup>37</sup> And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Luke 23:44-47

<sup>44</sup> It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, <sup>45</sup> while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. <sup>47</sup> Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"

13. What is the significance of these texts?

- **ANSWER.** *The curtain in the temple mentioned in these texts is almost certainly the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. It represented the barrier between a holy and glorious God and a sinful people. Since the curtain was torn in two from top to bottom, many scholars interpret this as indicating that Jesus' death has now provided believers with access to God that was previously unavailable through the Old Testament sacrificial system (see Heb 9:11-14; 10:19-22). Matthew's additional material is probably drawing upon the restoration prophesied in Ezek 37, as reproduced below.*

Ezekiel 37:7-14

<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." <sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. <sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people.

*And I will bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”*

We will now briefly look at two important NT passages that explore the significance of Jesus’ death. As you study each passage, think about how each relates specifically to biblical theology.

#### Romans 3:21-26

*<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

One of the keys to understanding Romans 3:21-26 is to understand the word translated as “propitiation” in verse 25. The Greek word is *hilastarion*, which is also found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in the following passages. The word is translated by the ESV as “mercy seat.”

#### Exodus 25:17-22

*<sup>17</sup> You shall make a mercy seat [Greek: *hilastarion*] of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. <sup>18</sup> And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. <sup>19</sup> Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. <sup>20</sup> The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. <sup>21</sup> And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. <sup>22</sup> There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.*

Leviticus 16:14-16

<sup>14</sup> And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. <sup>15</sup> Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. <sup>16</sup> Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.

Numbers 7:89

<sup>89</sup> And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and it spoke to him.

14. What was the function of the “mercy seat” in the Old Testament? Why would Paul call Jesus the “mercy seat” (Romans 3:25)?

- **ANSWER.** The “mercy seat” was the lid to the ark of the covenant. God would speak from above the mercy seat to his people, and on the Day of Atonement, Aaron was instructed to sprinkle blood on it for purifying the Holy Place. For Paul to use this rare and very specific term is certainly significant. It is significant because Paul is representing Jesus himself as the new place of revelation and atonement.

We will look at one more passage commenting on the significance of Jesus’ death:

Titus 2:11-14

<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, <sup>12</sup> training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, <sup>13</sup> waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

15. How does this presentation of Jesus' death fit into a biblical theology?

- **ANSWER.** *Though Israel was intended to be a people for God's own possession (Ex 19:5), Old Testament history makes clear that they were a lawless people who were not zealous for good works. Therefore, Jesus' death redeems a new people—from both Jews and Greeks—a people who would be purified. This new people, by the grace of God, live godly lives in the present age while waiting for the appearance of Jesus. They thus fulfill God's intention for an obedience that would accurately represent him on this earth (cf. Gen 1:26-19).*

Jesus' death and resurrection is the eye of the needle through which all of the threads of biblical theology must pass.

### Tracing God's Ways

Jesus' death established a new covenant which provided the definitive forgiveness of sins, thus fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus is represented both as the new Passover Lamb and the new mercy seat. His death purified a people for the glory of God and vindicated God's righteousness in passing over former sins.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ATONEMENT

In order to build a well-informed view of the atonement, perhaps it is wisest to first lay the Old Testament foundations. By constructing our view from biblical texts, we will guard ourselves from letting contemporary culture and modern “sensibilities” dictate what we “can and cannot” believe.

The theme of atonement perhaps begins in the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve’s sin.

Genesis 3:7, 21

*<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. . . . <sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

Whereas Adam and Eve try in vain to cover their sin and shame with fig leaves, God provides a covering of skins for them. God’s provision of skins may imply that sacrifice was involved, though this idea is not developed from Genesis anywhere else in the Bible.

It is somewhat surprising that the theme of atonement is not at all prominent in the patriarchal narratives. Though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all build altars, only Noah is said to have offered sacrifices upon an altar (Genesis 8:20). Abraham’s near sacrifice of his own son, though not a sacrifice for sins, is significant since the Abraham names that place “The LORD will provide.” Some speculate that the very mount on which Abraham did not withhold his own son (see Rom 8:32) was later the site upon which Israel’s temple was built.

Sacrifice, priesthood, and atonement first come into focus in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Theologically, one of the most fundamental assertions we can make is that God is holy and can tolerate no sin in his presence. This is vividly seen in the execution of Nadab and Abihu.

Leviticus 10:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup> And fire came out from before the LORD and*

consumed them, and they died before the LORD.<sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said, ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’”

Now notice God’s attitude toward sin:

Deuteronomy 29:22, 24-28

<sup>22</sup> And the next generation, your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, will say, when they see the afflictions of that land and the sicknesses with which the LORD has made it sick— . . .

<sup>24</sup> all the nations will say, “Why has the LORD done thus to this land? What caused the heat of this great anger?”<sup>25</sup> Then people will say, “It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt,<sup>26</sup> and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them.<sup>27</sup> Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book,<sup>28</sup> and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day.”

Here are New Testament texts that witness to this same, shocking reality.

John 3:36

<sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Revelation 14:9-10

<sup>9</sup> And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,<sup>10</sup> he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

16. Underline all the descriptions of God’s emotional response toward sin (and sinners!) in Deuteronomy 29, John 3, and Revelation 14. Is it just for God to be angry at sin and punish it?

· **ANSWER.** *It is just for God to be angry at sin and punish it because sin is a slander on his glory and great worth. God would not be holy and righteous*



*and just if he did not detest sin and punish it. We would question someone's moral integrity if they did not respond with the appropriate emotions when confronted with an atrocity like the Holocaust. Would it not, then, be all the more appropriate and necessary for God to become angry at the outrage of human sin?*

Here are two New Testament texts that speak to the just penalty for sin:

2 Thessalonians 1:5-8

*<sup>5</sup> This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— <sup>6</sup> since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup> and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

Romans 6:23

*<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Unless we are prepared to explain away the very existence of hell, we must say that God is wrathful toward sin and justly punishes it.

When confronted with this truth, the critical question for salvation history then becomes, “How can a just and holy God forgive sin?” This is the inverse of the question many people ask: “How can a loving God send anyone to hell?” The question that more accurately reflects the tension the Bible (and the Old Testament in particular) expresses is, “How can a just and holy God send anyone to heaven?”

The consistent pattern of the Old Testament is of God forgiving sins through sacrifice, with particular reference to the blood of the sacrifice.

Leviticus 17:11

*<sup>11</sup> For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.*

We have already studied the Passover in some detail. We now turn to the sacrifices proscribed in the book of Leviticus. Although the inner logic of how

sacrifice removed or covered sin is not as explicit as we would like at times, substitution is clearly in view. The Day of Atonement is described to Israel in these terms: “on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins” (Leviticus 16:30).

On the Day of Atonement you will remember that two goats were set before the Lord. One goat was killed as the sin offering. Its blood was sprinkled inside the Holy of Holies on the “mercy seat” to make atonement for the people. The sins of the people are confessed over the second goat, and it is sent into the wilderness to bear the sins of the people. Taken together these two goats illustrate the forgiveness of sins well. There is a substitute which dies in our place and bearing our sins, and our sins are taken away from us.

But did this sacrifice guarantee that forgiveness would be accomplished? Examine the following two passages, which express an important theme that is developed out of Israel’s understanding of and practice of sacrifice:

Isaiah 1:10-17

*<sup>10</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! <sup>11</sup> “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. <sup>12</sup> When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? <sup>13</sup> Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. <sup>14</sup> Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. <sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. <sup>16</sup> Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, <sup>17</sup> learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”*

Psalm 51:16-17

*<sup>16</sup> For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

17. Do these passages teach that sacrifices were totally unnecessary for the forgiveness of sins?

- **ANSWER.** *No, they do not teach this. These passages are a radical denouncement of trusting in hypocritical sacrifices. God is not pleased with sacrificial offerings if they are not presented with genuine repentance. And sacrifices will not cover spiritual hardness, injustice, and a blatant disregard for God. But as the following verses make clear, sacrifice was still the mechanism by which God forgave his people. If forgiveness could come through repentance alone, then Jesus died for nothing.*

It is clear, however, that while sacrifices were not a sufficient cause for forgiveness, they were nevertheless necessary to it.

Psalm 51:7, 18-19

<sup>7</sup> *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . .*<sup>18</sup> *Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;*<sup>19</sup> *then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

Hebrews 9:22

<sup>22</sup> *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

One of the most important verses in all of Scripture in constructing a doctrine of the atonement has to be Hebrews 10:4, “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” Even the Old Testament prophets realized this and predicted a day in which the LORD would provide a definitive forgiveness of sins, securing something that could never be had through the sacrifice of animals in the temple. Remember two of the central passages dealing with the new covenant in which God’s forgiveness of his people is promised:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

<sup>31</sup> *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,*<sup>32</sup> *not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.*<sup>33</sup> *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*<sup>34</sup> *And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all*

*know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

**Ezekiel 36:24-29**

*<sup>24</sup> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup> And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses . . .*

Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 must be read together with Isaiah 53, which is an usual and highly important passage in the Old Testament's teaching on atonement:

**Isaiah 53:1-12**

*<sup>1</sup> Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup> For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. <sup>8</sup> 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, stricken for the transgression of my people? <sup>9</sup> And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong*

his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup> Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

18. Underline language in this passage which indicates that it contributes to a biblical theology of the atonement. What is surprising about how atonement is accomplished?

· **ANSWER.** *What is radical about this passage is that it envisions a human sacrifice for sin when it is clear that God forbids his people from making human sacrifices. Furthermore, since the human described here is portrayed as innocent, and will eventually be vindicated, he must be a person of extraordinary righteousness. Although this passage was difficult to understand at first, the earliest Christians believed that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by dying an atoning death on the cross for the sins of his people.*

*It is precisely by means of the revelation of the extraordinary nature of the purification of which Isaiah spoke that the prophecy makes its most distinctive contribution to redemptive history. While the Torah spoke of atonement as the only means by which the wrath of Yahweh against sin and uncleanness could be stayed, the Torah knew no atonement that produced the universal and permanent purification envisioned in Isaiah. Such extraordinary purification required an atonement of equally extraordinary and radical nature. Isaiah made clear that certain means would not secure this purification. It would not be by means of the traditional vehicle of atonement—e.g., Levitical sacrifice (Isaiah 1:11-15). Nor would it be by means of repentance (Isaiah 6:10) or Israel's suffering in the Babylonian exile. Rather, it would be accomplished by a new thing (Isaiah 48:7), something previously unknown and not derived from human experience or wisdom—the astounding suffering of one righteous Israelite (Isaiah 52:13–53:12), who bore the sins of others. <sup>53</sup>*

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53 J. Alan Groves, "Atonement in Isaiah 53," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Perspectives* (eds. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III;

1 Peter 2:22-24

<sup>22</sup> *He [Christ] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.* <sup>23</sup>

*When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* <sup>24</sup> *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

As we have seen, the most explicit interpretation of his own death that Jesus gives are the words he speaks to his disciples on the night before he is betrayed. It is crucial to recognize what the Passover meal symbolized, because the Passover provided the context in which Jesus' words and subsequent death must be understood. Paul offers the following insight:

1 Corinthians 5:7

<sup>7</sup> *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

Hebrews, more than any other New Testament book, reflects on the death of Christ and how it relates to the old covenant.

Hebrews 9:11-14

<sup>11</sup> *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

Hebrews 10:1-14

<sup>1</sup> *For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? <sup>3</sup> But in these*

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Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 88-89.

sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year. <sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. <sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” <sup>8</sup> When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup> then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. <sup>11</sup> And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

19. The Passover certainly provides crucial background for interpreting the death of Jesus. Is the same true of the Old Testament sacrificial system?

- **ANSWER.** Yes. These texts in Hebrews led us to understand that comparing Jesus’ death to the old covenant sacrificial system illuminates Jesus’ saving work. Jesus is compared in these passages both to the priest offering the sacrifice and to the sacrifice itself. Jesus atoning death was a bloody sacrifice—there is simply no way around that fact.

Jesus is the great high priest, his body is portrayed as both the temple and the sacrifice, and he is made the “mercy seat” too. In sum, nearly all the language of atonement in the Old Testament is applied to him.

If we’ve confirmed God’s wrathful disposition toward sin and the appeasement of that wrath as the forgiveness of sin (seen in the Passover and sacrificial system), then it should not come as a surprise to read New Testament descriptions of Jesus’ death as saving us from the wrath of God.

<sup>1</sup> Thessalonians 1:9-10

<sup>9</sup> For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

<sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

Romans 5:9-10

<sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

20. Is there a dimension to a biblical theology of the atonement that is still to be fulfilled in the future?

- **ANSWER.** *This is a difficult question. Jesus' death has clearly and finally accomplished the forgiveness of sins. There will be no more sacrifices (Heb 7:27; 10:10). But as the above texts indicate, there is still a sense in which we will be delivered from God's wrath in the future at the great judgment. Perhaps this can be explained as the future public and cosmic display of Jesus' atoning death and its efficacy for his people. When unbelievers are judged and condemned for their sins, it will be seen that Jesus' blood has ransomed people for God from all nations (cf. Rev 5:9-10).*

This examination of the atonement, from the perspective of Old and New Testaments, has supported what is called the “penal substitutionary” view of the atonement. This view of the atonement provides the best explanation of the inner logic of *how* a just God who is wrathful toward sin can forgive sinners. Here is a succinct description of this view:

In his death, Jesus bore our sins and suffered the penalty that we deserved. In so doing, God's wrath toward sin and the demands of his justice were satisfied, and at the same time the Father's sending of the Son and the Son's willingness to offer up his life are the greatest expressions of God's love and mercy. Therefore, understanding Jesus' death in our place as the accomplishment of the forgiveness of our sins is both fundamental and central to a biblical theology of the atonement.



## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Atonement” (388-393)
- ▷ “Priests” (696-701)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “John” (280-285)
- ▷ “Hebrews” (337-342)
- ▷ “Sacrifice” (754-762)



## INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of atonement, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. Is Jesus' message of non-violence an important part of his kingdom proclamation?
2. Does Jesus' death provide a model for us to follow?
3. How would Jesus' disciples have interpreted his death before his resurrection? Is it crucial to see Jesus as our substitute, bearing the wrath of God against our sin?

### YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

### APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

Has the blood of Jesus washed away your sin?

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### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Perspectives*. Edited by Charles E. Hill and Frank A James III. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- ▷ Steve Jeffrey, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach. *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2007.

# He Has Risen from the Dead

# 9

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” So said two of Jesus’ disciples in the aftermath of his crucifixion (Luke 24:21). The hopes and prayers of the disciples were dashed as Jesus was lifted up on the cross. We can imagine the despair, the confusion, the tears as the disciples try to make sense of what has happened. “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” It is hard to overestimate the impact of the glorious reversal that happens next.

“He is risen!” This lesson will explore Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead. Taken together, Jesus’ death and resurrection are the most shocking, dramatic, unexpected, and exhilarating events in biblical history. It was always the biblical expectation that God would deal with the sin in the world and set the world to rights. His purposes in creation would be accomplished. But how God works in the cross and resurrection of Jesus is truly a magnificent triumph for the wisdom, love, mercy, justice, and glory of God.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ articulate the three major reasons why Jesus was raised from the dead
- ▷ explain how Jesus’ resurrection is related to biblical theology and the hope of Israel
- ▷ understand the significance of Jesus’ ascension and exalted position at the right hand of God





This lesson focuses on three purposes in the resurrection. There may be more, but there are not less. It is our conviction that the resurrection is sometimes treated as a theological afterthought, and that it is often considered from only one angle. Do your best as the instructor of this course to present in balance the many reasons for Jesus' resurrection. And don't forget to stress the ascension and exaltation of Jesus as well. Since biblical theology aims to stick closely to the concerns of the biblical text itself, biblical theology can sometimes point to gaps in our own theology. We do not always focus on what the Bible itself appears interested in.

Some of your students may be uneasy about Question 17 and the first set of biblical texts presented in Day 4's study. This question, however, provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the concept of progressive revelation. You may choose to use the figure of Abraham and point out all of the things he did not know about when God called him or even during his lifetime. In God's wise and good plan, God chose not to reveal to Abraham his plans for a tabernacle/temple, the sacrificial system, the exile after Israel's exodus, or even the Messiah. Yet, what God did reveal to Abraham was enough for Abraham to follow God in faith and hope for things to come. In a similar way, God chose not to correct the foggy notions that some OT writers had about death, life after death, and the resurrection. This does not mean that God was misleading his people, but only that he was waiting in his own sovereign timing to show his people what they could expect after they died. In this course as we trace each of the biblical-theological themes that we do, you should show your students how later revelation develops and clarifies earlier revelation.

Finally, do not feel the need at this point in the course to talk extensively about the new heavens and earth. That topic will be further developed in the last lesson of this course.



## Day 1

### CERTIFIED AS DEAD, THEN CERTIFIED AS RIGHTEOUS

Before considering Jesus' resurrection we first need to mention his burial, because Jesus' burial seems to be something that is emphasized in the New Testament but not in our own theology. Notice how the Apostle Paul elevates Jesus' burial to the level of "first importance":

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

*<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

One of the reasons that early Christians emphasized Jesus' burial may be indirectly indicated by this post-resurrection account in Matthew:

Matthew 28:11-15

*<sup>11</sup> While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. <sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers <sup>13</sup> and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' <sup>14</sup> And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." <sup>15</sup> So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.*

The burial of Jesus is also given prominence by the fact that all four Gospels mention it. Read the following parallel accounts:



<p>Matthew 27:57-66</p> <p><sup>57</sup> When it was evening, there came <u>a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.</u> <sup>58</sup> <u>He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.</u> <u>Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.</u> <sup>59</sup> <u>And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud</u> <sup>60</sup> <u>and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.</u> <sup>61</sup> <u>Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.</u> <sup>62</sup> <u>The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate</u> <sup>63</sup> <u>and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.'</u> <sup>64</sup> <u>Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first."</u> <sup>65</sup> <u>Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can."</u> <sup>66</sup> <u>So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.</u></p>	<p>Mark 15:42-47</p> <p><sup>42</sup> <u>And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,</u> <sup>43</sup> <u>Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.</u> <sup>44</sup> <u>Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died.</u> <u>And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead.</u> <sup>45</sup> <u>And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.</u> <sup>46</sup> <u>And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.</u> <sup>47</sup> <u>Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.</u></p>	<p>Luke 24:1-9</p> <p><sup>50</sup> <u>Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man,</u> <sup>51</sup> <u>who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God.</u> <sup>52</sup> <u>This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.</u> <sup>53</sup> <u>Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid.</u> <sup>54</sup> <u>It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning.</u> <sup>55</sup> <u>The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid.</u> <sup>56</sup> <u>Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.</u></p>	<p>John 19:38-42</p> <p><sup>38</sup> <u>After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.</u> <sup>39</sup> <u>Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.</u> <sup>40</sup> <u>So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.</u> <sup>41</sup> <u>Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.</u> <sup>42</sup> <u>So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.</u></p>
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1. Underline material that is shared by at least two of the Gospel accounts and which you deem to be significant. What is the purpose of these burial accounts?

· **ANSWER.** *The purpose of these burial accounts seems to be primarily apologetic. Early Christians would have needed to establish two things in order to give credible testimony to Jesus' resurrection. First, they would needed to prove that Jesus was in fact dead. This seems to be why Joseph of Arimethea is mentioned (as an eyewitness), why Joseph asks Pilate for the body (which he would not have granted if Jesus were not dead), why they wrap Jesus in a shroud, and the two women named Mary see him laid in the tomb. Second, they would need to prove that they did not steal Jesus' dead body (see Matt 28:11-15), which is why the stone may be mentioned and why they mention soldiers set to guard it.*

After Jesus rises from the dead, the New Testament makes it very clear that his resurrection was seen by many different witnesses. Notice the following texts:

Luke 24:10-12

<sup>10</sup> Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup> but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

John 20:18

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

Acts 1:3

<sup>3</sup> He presented himself alive to [the apostles] after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Acts 10:39-41

<sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

2. How do these accounts work together with the burial accounts to give credible testimony to the bodily resurrection of Jesus from dead?

- **ANSWER.** *As mentioned above, the burial accounts demonstrate that Jesus was in fact dead and that the disciples (or women) could not have stolen his dead body and falsely claimed that he was raised from the dead. These accounts, combined with the multiple eyewitness accounts of Jesus' resurrection, indicate that Jesus was certifiably dead and certifiably raised from the dead. There is no other reasonable option left to explain the events narrated in the New Testament.*

The real, historical death of Jesus of Nazareth and his real, historical, bodily resurrection are two of the most important events within a Christian biblical theology, and so it is not surprising that the New Testament would labor to authenticate these events.

When it comes to the resurrection of Jesus itself, it is remarkable how almost nonchalant the Gospel accounts are. The narrative is almost matter-of-fact in its report of this historical account.

Read the following Synoptic Gospel accounts of the resurrection:

<p><b>Matthew 28:1-10</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup> Now <u>after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week</u>, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and <u>rolled back the stone and sat on it</u>.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.</p> <p><sup>6</sup> <u>He is not here, for he has risen, as he said</u>. Come, see the place where he lay.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, <u>he is going before you to Galilee</u>; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”</p> <p><sup>8</sup> So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.</p> <p><sup>9</sup> And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.</p> <p><sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”</p>	<p><b>Mark 16:1-8</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup> When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> And <u>very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen</u>, they went to the tomb.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”</p> <p><sup>4</sup> And looking up, they saw that <u>the stone had been rolled back—it was very large</u>.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.</p> <p><sup>6</sup> And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. <u>He has risen; he is not here</u>. See the place where they laid him.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that <u>he is going before you to Galilee</u>. There you will see him, <u>just as he told you</u>.”</p> <p><sup>8</sup> And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.</p>	<p><b>Luke 24:1-9</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup> But <u>on the first day of the week, at early dawn</u>, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> And they found <u>the stone rolled away from the tomb</u>,</p> <p><sup>3</sup> but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”</p> <p><sup>6</sup> <u>He is not here, but has risen</u>. Remember how <u>he told you, while he was still in Galilee</u>,</p> <p><sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”</p> <p><sup>8</sup> And they remembered his words,</p> <p><sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.</p>
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3. Underline material that is shared by at least two of the Gospel accounts and which you deem to be significant. What is the purpose of these resurrection accounts?

- **ANSWER.** *The resurrection accounts first and foremost are eyewitness testimonies to the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the mighty power of God in rolling away the stone and raising him from the dead. Secondly, the Synoptic Gospels all mention that Jesus was raised on the first day of the week at dawn, which, as we will see, signals that Jesus' resurrection is the start of a new creation. Thirdly, each of the Gospels indicates that Jesus' resurrection happens in accordance with what he had already foretold, further supporting Jesus' prophetic ministry. Finally, in Matthew and Mark, it is said that Jesus is going to Galilee which, as the citations below suggest, is significant.*

The resurrection accounts in both Matthew and Mark mention that Jesus will meet his disciples in Galilee, and we learn from Matthew 28:16 that he meets them on a "mountain." This holds some significance for biblical theology because God often met his people on a mountain.

*Jesus's meeting them on a mountain echoes the giving of the Torah from Mount Sinai as well as previous mountain experiences in Matthew.* <sup>54</sup>

*Jesus the Galilean has triumphed against all the odds, and back in his home territory (and that of his disciples) where the mission was originally launched, the good news of the kingdom of heaven is sent out in a proclamation which will continue until the "end of the age."* <sup>55</sup>

Now before Jesus is raised from the dead, it is important to think about how the Jews would have perceived Jesus' death. Listen first to their taunts of him:

Matthew 27:39-43

<sup>39</sup> *And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying,*

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<sup>54</sup> David L. Turner, *Matthew* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 688.

<sup>55</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2007), 1107.

*“You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”* <sup>41</sup> So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, <sup>42</sup> *“He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.* <sup>43</sup> *He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”*

**Luke 23:35-39**

<sup>35</sup> *And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!”*  
<sup>36</sup> *The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine* <sup>37</sup> *and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”* <sup>38</sup> *There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”* <sup>39</sup> *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”*

Now consider this verse from the Old Testament:

**Deuteronomy 21:22-23**

<sup>22</sup> *And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,* <sup>23</sup> *his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.*

Now also consider one other verse in Galatians:

**Galatians 3:13**

<sup>13</sup> *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” . . .*

4. Having examined these verses, complete the following chart:

### **How were the Jews interpreting Jesus' crucifixion as it was happening?**

- **ANSWER.** *Answer: The Jews thought that Jesus was being crucified as a false Messiah for his own sins and presumption. Their mockery indicates that if Jesus was truly sent from God, then God would somehow deliver him from death.*

### **How might they have interpreted it in light of Deuteronomy 21:22-23?**

- **ANSWER.** *It appears as if the Jews would have interpreted Jesus' death as signifying God's curse upon him, rightfully deserved for his blasphemy and deception. Ironically, they may even have believed that they were following the Law and doing God's will in executing Jesus as a false prophet and Messiah.*

### **How might Paul have answered the charge that Jesus died as one cursed by God?**

- **ANSWER.** *As Gal 3:13 suggests, Paul would have said that Jesus was cursed on the cross. Yet, he did not die for his own sins but for the sins of his people as he bore those sins in his atoning death. His death is the redemption and atonement of his people.*

### **What does all of this have to do with the resurrection?**

- **ANSWER.** *The resurrection is the reversal of the condemnation that Jesus bore on our behalf. It was God's answer to those who thought that Jesus died because of his own sins. By raising Jesus from the dead he was in effect declaring that Jesus was not guilty as charged and that God approved of Jesus' atoning sacrifice.*

Now examine the following three verses from the preaching and teaching of the apostle Paul:

Acts 17:31

<sup>31</sup> . . . *And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*

Romans 1:4

<sup>4</sup> *[Jesus] was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead . . .*

1 Corinthians 15:17

<sup>17</sup> *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*

5. According to these three verses, and what you have been reflecting on, what was one of the purposes of the resurrection?

· **ANSWER.** *The resurrection is God's vindication of Jesus' life, ministry, and atoning death. If God had not raised Jesus from the dead, we would need to conclude that Jesus' teaching was dangerously misleading, his claims were false, his miracles were all fraudulent, and the death he died was a result of his own sins. The resurrection overturns all these assessments and gives us great assurance that Jesus is who he said he was and his death did in fact achieve a definitive forgiveness of sins.*

### Tracing God's Ways

Jesus' burial and eyewitness testimony of his resurrection establishes that Jesus did die and that he was raised. Jesus' resurrection was the vindication of his atoning death. Rather than being crucified as a criminal, a false Messiah, and as one accursed by God, the resurrection signals God's approval of Jesus' teaching and saving work.



## Day 2

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### THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CREATION

The vindication of Jesus' words and work was not the only purpose of his resurrection. Jesus' resurrection plays other significant roles in biblical theology as well. Consider the following text:

Romans 8:19-23

*<sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

6. What is the hope of these verses? What do they promise? How does this connect to a broader biblical theology?

- **ANSWER.** *These verses depict the cosmic renewal that is promised at the end of the age. In it, not only will the saints receive their resurrected bodies, but the entire creation will be released from its bondage. The creation has been subjected to futility by God at the fall to show the heinousness of sin. Compare John Piper, "Subjected to Futility in Hope, Part 1," an online sermon at the [desiringGod](http://desiringGod.com) website: "The futility and corruption and groaning of the creation are judicial, not just natural. They are a divine, judicial decree, not just a natural consequence of material events. God decreed the futility and corruption and groaning of the world in response to sin. It is a judicial act, not just a natural consequence. . . . The meaning of all the misery in the world is that sin is horrific. All natural evil is a statement about the horror of moral evil. If you see a suffering in the world that is unspeakably horrible, let it make you shudder at how unspeakably horrible sin is against an infinitely holy God."*

Now read the following three passages from Paul's Corinthian correspondence:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

*<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

1 Corinthians 6:14

*<sup>14</sup> And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.*

2 Corinthians 4:13-14

*<sup>13</sup> Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, <sup>14</sup> knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.*

7. God has promised to renew the world and to restore our bodies (Romans 8:19-23). How does Jesus' resurrection relate to this promise?

- **ANSWER.** *As the term "firstfruits" suggests, Jesus' resurrected body is the guarantee or "down payment" of the future resurrection of the dead. His resurrected body is the beginning of the new creation. As we will see later in this lesson, this is an example of "inaugurated eschatology." The bodily resurrection of the dead and new creation has started with Jesus, but we must wait until his coming before the saints will be raised along with him and conformed to his likeness (see Phil 3:20-21 below).*

Revelation 3:14

*And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation."*

Notice also this sweet promise relating to the resurrection of Jesus and our future hope:

Philippians 3:20-21

*<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body,*

*by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

Let's look one more time at Gospel accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to his disciples. Keep in the mind the texts we've examined in this day's study:

**John 20:24-27**

*<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." <sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."*

**Luke 24:36-43**

*<sup>36</sup> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them.*

8. Why is it important for Jesus to prove to his disciples that his body is real? How might this relate to the previous two questions?

· **ANSWER.** *Without the real resurrected body of Jesus, Christians can have no hope of their own resurrection or the reality of the new creation. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead with a real, physical body, then this would imply either that the physical, material world God created was inherently evil or that God did not have the power to redeem it. In order to prove that he had a physical body, Jesus invites his disciples to touch him and he eats fish.*

*The significance of Jesus' resurrection, for Saul of Tarsus as he lay blinded and perhaps bruised on the road to Damascus, was this. The one true God had done for Jesus of Nazareth, in the middle of time, what Saul had thought he was going to do for Israel at the end of time.*<sup>56</sup>

From what we've studied thus far we might be tempted to think that while the new creation has begun with Jesus, we must wait until the end of the age to participate in this new creation. While this is partly true, notice the following provocative passages:

2 Corinthians 5:17

*<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

Galatians 6:14-15

*<sup>14</sup> But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.*

These verses imply that the new creation has also begun in us. But how is this so? Consider Romans 6:1-13, which describes a third purpose for Jesus' resurrection:

Romans 6:1-13

*<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives*

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<sup>56</sup> N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 36.

he lives to God.<sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.<sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

9. What is the purpose of the resurrection according to these verses?

- **ANSWER.** *According to this passage the resurrection functions in tandem with Jesus death to effect a death and resurrection in the life of those who are united with Christ. Our death with Christ is a death to the power of sin in our lives. Our resurrection with Christ applies not only to the future bodily resurrection which we will enjoy in the future (Rom 6:5), but also applies to the moral transformation we enjoy in the present, what Paul calls walking “in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). So we might say that Jesus’ resurrection is the cause of our spiritual resurrection resulting in a life lived not under the power of sin but under the power of grace. (Notice how the imperatives of vv. 12-13 flow from what precedes them.)*

This emphasis within Romans 6 is seen in other places in the New Testament as well:

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;<sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

1 Peter 2:24

<sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Romans 8:10-13

<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.<sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

#### Colossians 3:1-4

<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

10. How do these passages compare to Romans 6:1-13? Why would God want his people to walk in newness of life?

- **ANSWER.** *These passages, in different ways, also teach that Jesus was raised from the dead so that his people also might share in his new life by being transformed by his grace and his Spirit. (Notice the interplay between the indicatives and imperatives in the Colossians passage.) As a new creation in Christ, we give evidence of our spiritual birth by living a life of (real but not perfect) righteousness. God wants his people to be transformed for their own freedom and joy, but also for his glory, and for the advance of his image in the world. Seen in this way, Jesus' death and resurrection is the means by which God fulfills his original design in creating humankind while simultaneously addressing human moral corruption and the dishonor done to him in the fall.*

#### Tracing God's Ways

Jesus' resurrection is also the beginning of God's new creation. The renewal God has promised for the whole world, he has started in the body of his Son. His resurrection body is the firstfruits that guarantees the resurrection of those who believe in him. Furthermore, Jesus was raised so that his resurrection life might be in us, so that we too might walk in newness of life.

## Day 3

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### SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD AND REIGNING AS LORD

Theologians often give Jesus' resurrection some attention, but the significance of Jesus' ascension is little discussed. Read the following account in the book of Acts:

Acts 1:6-11

*<sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." <sup>9</sup> And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, <sup>11</sup> and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

11. After carefully studying this passage, complete the following chart:

#### What do the disciples mean by their question (v. 6)?

- **ANSWER.** *It appears as if the disciples are still thinking of the kingdom of God as a present earthly and political reality. It seems as if they are expecting Jesus to soon subdue the Romans and raise Israel above the nations.*

**Is what Jesus says an answer to their question?**

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus does answer the disciples' question, but indirectly. He does not correct their idea that the Lord will restore the kingdom to Israel, but he does indicate that it is not their prerogative to know the timing. Nevertheless, before the kingdom is fully restored, the disciples will receive power for a worldwide mission.*

**According to this passage, what is the significance of the ascension?**

- **ANSWER.** *The ascension signifies Jesus' enthronement in heaven, where he will reign with God, while the church carries out its mission. The ascension also is interpreted by the angels as a foreshadowing of Jesus' return to earth.*

There is actually much reflection on Jesus' ascension in the New Testament. Read the following collection of texts:

Acts 5:30-31

<sup>30</sup> *The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*

Romans 8:33-34

<sup>33</sup> *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

Ephesians 1:16-23

<sup>16</sup> *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is*



*the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

#### Hebrews 1:3-4

*<sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*

#### Hebrews 8:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup> a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.*

#### Hebrews 10:12-14

*<sup>12</sup> But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

#### 1 Peter 3:21-22

*<sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

12. Underline key phrases and words in these texts that express the significance of Christ's ascension and exaltation. Then summarize your findings below.

· **ANSWER.** *With Christ's ascension to the right hand of the Father, he receives authority and glory. This exalted status is the fitting reward for*

*his definitive work of salvation. It appears, however, that in some sense his exaltation allows him to forgive, intercede, and fill the church in a new way.*

As the risen and exalted Lord, Jesus is not merely the king of Israel, but the king of all the earth who reigns from heaven above. In the apostles' preaching about Jesus, it is clear that he is a threat to the powers of this world. Notice the following account:

Acts 17:1-8

*<sup>1</sup> Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." <sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. <sup>5</sup> But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. <sup>6</sup> And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, <sup>7</sup> and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." <sup>8</sup> And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.*

13. Were the people and city authorities in Thessalonica right to be disturbed when they heard about Jesus? Was Jesus really a threat to Caesar?

· **ANSWER.** *This is a tricky question. On one level, Jesus and his followers are not a threat to Caesar because Christians should labor for the peace, justice, and order of the societies in which they live. Christians were not to rise up in political or militaristic rebellion. Yet, at a much deeper level, Jesus was not only a threat but the undoing of Caesar because Jesus' claims to ultimate authority directly challenged Caesar's own claims to quasi-divinity and rule. Moreover, as the judge of the living and the dead, Jesus will hold Caesar and all other earthly rulers accountable and subdue them beneath his feet. So yes, Jesus' exalted status lays claim over every dominion and authority.*

Remember that, after the resurrection, God seated Jesus “at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:20-21). He is the world’s true Lord.

In a systematic theology course, one presumes that the deity and humanity of Jesus would be a central focus. Thus far in this biblical theology course, we have mostly considered Jesus as a human king in the line of David. Yet, we would argue that even biblical theology must be concerned with the fullness of Jesus’ identity, which of course includes his participation in the Godhead.

As you read the following pairings of texts, notice the material that is common between them. This is another exercise in the study of the Old Testament in the New.

<p>Philippians 2:5-11</p> <p><i><sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.</i></p>	<p>Isaiah 45:21-23</p> <p><i><sup>21</sup> Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. <sup>22</sup> Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. <sup>23</sup> By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: “To me <u>every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.</u>”</i></p>
<p>1 Corinthians 8:4-6</p> <p><i><sup>4</sup> Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” <sup>5</sup> For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— <sup>6</sup> yet for us there is <u>one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.</u></i></p>	<p>Deuteronomy 6:4</p> <p><i><sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our <u>God, the LORD is one.</u></i></p>

<p>Romans 10:8-13</p> <p><sup>8</sup> But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to <u>shame.</u>” <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; <u>the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.</u> <sup>13</sup> For <u>“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”</u></p>	<p>Joel 2:27, 32</p> <p><sup>27</sup> You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that <u>I am the LORD your God and there is none else.</u> And my people shall never again be put to <u>shame.</u> ... <sup>32</sup> And it shall come to pass that <u>everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.</u> For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.</p>
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14. Underline those words, phrases, or concepts that are shared between the New Testament texts and the Old Testament texts next to them. What implications do these sets of texts have for the identity of Jesus and of God? (Hint: Be careful to read the Old Testament citations in their context.)

· **ANSWER.** These texts clearly show that the roles that the LORD, and the LORD alone, was to fulfill according to the Old Testament (notice the strongly monotheistic context of each Old Testament passage), the New Testament attributes to Jesus, and calls Jesus “Lord.” Instead of bowing to the LORD (Yahweh), now all people will bow to Jesus. Instead of the LORD God being a “singular identity” (if we may put it that way), now Jesus shares in the divine identity. Instead of salvation being a result of calling on the LORD (for there is none else), now Jew and Gentile are saved by calling on the name of Jesus, who is Lord of all. The only reasonable conclusion we may draw from this stunning use of the Old Testament in the New is that the Apostle Paul believed that Jesus was acting for the LORD and indeed sharing in his identity. Jesus is the divine Savior and King.

15. From the perspective of biblical theology, then, why must Jesus be the divine king and not merely a sinless human king?

- **ANSWER.** *From the collection of passages above, and from what we have studied thus far in the course, it would appear as if only God himself could rescue his people from sin and death. The history of Israel's human kings demonstrates that even good, human kings cannot bring about the restoration that is promised by the prophets. Therefore, Jesus, as God the Son, must come down from heaven to save his people from their sins. Furthermore, in order to reign over his people from heaven and to receive a name that is above angels and every other authority and dominion, Jesus must be God. If Jesus was merely a creature, then the glory due him would be a threat and blasphemy against the glory of God.*

### Tracing God's Ways

After his resurrection, Jesus ascends into heaven and is exalted to the right hand of God, thereby confirming his finished work of atonement and his glorified position as the Lord of the world. Scripture attributes things to Jesus that are only properly attributable to God himself.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF RESURRECTION

In this lesson we have focused on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In this day's study we will see how Jesus' resurrection fits into a biblical theology of resurrection, from Genesis to Revelation.

We begin with a set of troubling Old Testament passages. Note carefully what these passages presume about "life after death."

Genesis 3:19

*<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

2 Samuel 14:14

*<sup>14</sup> We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. . . .*

Job 7:7-10

*<sup>7</sup> Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good. <sup>8</sup> The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more; while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone. <sup>9</sup> As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up; <sup>10</sup> he returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore.*

Job 14:7-12

*<sup>7</sup> For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. <sup>8</sup> Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the soil, <sup>9</sup> yet at the scent of water it will bud and put out branches like a young plant. <sup>10</sup> But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he? <sup>11</sup> As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, <sup>12</sup> so a man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep.*

Psalm 6:4-5

*<sup>4</sup> Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. <sup>5</sup> For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?*

Read Psalm 88

Psalm 115:17

<sup>17</sup> *The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence.*

Isaiah 14:3-4, 9-11

<sup>3</sup> *When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, <sup>4</sup> you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: “How the oppressor has ceased, the insolent fury ceased! . . . <sup>9</sup> Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations. <sup>10</sup> All of them will answer and say to you: ‘You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!’ <sup>11</sup> Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, the sound of your harps; maggots are laid as a bed beneath you, and worms are your covers.”*

Isaiah 38:9-11, 17-19

<sup>9</sup> *A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness: <sup>10</sup> I said, In the middle of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years. <sup>11</sup> I said, I shall not see the LORD, the LORD in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world. . . . <sup>17</sup> Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back. <sup>18</sup> For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness. <sup>19</sup> The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness.*

Notice that the first set of texts are drawn from different parts of the Bible—from the books of Genesis, 2 Samuel, Job, Psalms, and Isaiah. Look now at another set of texts, all from the Psalms. What do these passages presume about life after death?

Psalm 16:8-11

<sup>8</sup> *I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. <sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. <sup>10</sup> For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. <sup>11</sup> You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Psalm 49:12-15

<sup>12</sup> Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. <sup>13</sup> This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. Selah <sup>14</sup> Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. <sup>15</sup> But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.

Psalm 73:23-26

<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. <sup>24</sup> You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. <sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. <sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

16. Summarize the perspective offered on the “afterlife” in the first set of passages above (Genesis 3:19; 2 Samuel 14:14; etc.). Then summarize the perspective offered on the afterlife in the second set of passages (Psalm 16:8-11; 49:12-15; 73:23-26).

- **ANSWER.** *The first set of passages seem to envision an “afterlife” which is alternatively described as one of sleep, silence, or weakness. There does not seem to be the possibility of returning to earth from this realm, the realm of “Sheol.” Going to Sheol is not a positive prospect, so the saints plead with God to deliver them from it, for in Sheol there is no praise of God. It is almost as if the dead cease to exist. The second set of passages, by contrast, hold out the hope for a meaningful life after death. These texts speak of God rescuing his people from Sheol and receiving them to himself in glory and joy. Notice, however, that a bodily resurrection from the dead is nowhere part of the future hope that these passages describe. (It should be noted, however, that Peter does apply Psalm 16 to Jesus’ bodily resurrection in Acts 2:24-32.)*

We will now consider a third set of Old Testament texts which present a different perspective on Israel’s future existence after death:

Isaiah 25:6-9

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well



refined. <sup>7</sup> And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. <sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. <sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

#### Isaiah 26:19

<sup>19</sup> Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

#### Daniel 12:1-3

<sup>1</sup> At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

17. Summarize the perspective offered on the “afterlife” in this set of passages. Do the perspectives in these three sets of passages contradict each other?

- **ANSWER.** *The last set of passages speaks of a bodily resurrection and a future and everlasting life on earth. Although all people will be raised from the dead, only some will go to “life,” while others will go to “shame” and “contempt.” The LORD will feast with his people and they will rejoice in him. The perspective of this last set of passages, therefore, is very different from the two preceding sets of passages. How, then, should we reconcile these distinct perspectives? Although this is a difficult issue, it is our contention that each perspective offers some truth. The first set of texts rightly emphasizes the goodness of earthly life. The second set of texts rightly declares that God’s people will be with him after death, in joy and glory. The third set of texts rightly and clearly presents the doctrine of the bodily resurrection and the final judgment. These perspectives*

*do not contradict each other if we realize that God did not give a full understanding of the resurrection when he first revealed himself, but that he was gradually informing the hope of his people and correctly false notions they may have had of the afterlife. In other words, we believe that the concept of God's "progressive revelation" is the best way to reconcile all the texts reproduced above.*

*[The texts in this third set] are not speaking about a new construal of life after death, but about something that will happen after whatever "life after death" may involve. Resurrection is not just another way of talking about Sheol, or about what happens, as in Psalm 73, "afterwards," that is after the event of bodily death. It speaks of something that will happen, if it does, after that again. Resurrection means bodily life after "life after death," or, if you prefer, bodily life after the state of "death." That is why it is very misleading—and foreign to all the relevant texts—to speak, as does one recent writer, of "resurrection to heaven." Resurrection is what did not happen to Enoch or Elijah. According to the texts, it is what will happen to people who are at present dead, not what has already happened to them.<sup>57</sup>*

The doctrine of a bodily resurrection from the dead continued to develop during the intertestamental period. Though it became more and more widely accepted, not all Jews believed that the dead would be raised. The Sadducees as described in the New Testament, for example, did not believe in bodily resurrection (see Matthew 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27; Acts 23:8). We will now look at three resurrections described in the ministry of Jesus. Concentrate especially on the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, narrated in John 11.

Mark 5:35-43 (see also Matthew 9:23-26; Luke 8:49-56)

*<sup>35</sup> While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"<sup>36</sup> But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."<sup>37</sup> And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.<sup>38</sup> They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.<sup>39</sup> And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping."<sup>40</sup> And they*

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<sup>57</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2003), 108-109.

laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was.<sup>41</sup> Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."<sup>42</sup> And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.<sup>43</sup> And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

#### Luke 7:11-17

<sup>11</sup> Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. <sup>12</sup> As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. <sup>13</sup> And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." <sup>14</sup> Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."<sup>15</sup> And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. <sup>16</sup> Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"<sup>17</sup> And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

#### John 11:17-27, 38-44

<sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"<sup>27</sup> She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." . . . <sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"<sup>41</sup> So they

took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” <sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

18. What do we learn about the biblical theme of resurrection from these accounts of Jesus’ earthly ministry?

- **ANSWER.** *When Jesus raises the dead, people are understandably astonished. Raising the dead is a powerful demonstration of the kingdom of God [notice the statement, “God has visited his people!” (Luke 7:16)]. Yet, during his earthly ministry, Jesus did not raise the dead with new, heavenly bodies. Those whom he raised still died again. So while Jesus’ resurrection power is a foretaste of the coming resurrection, it is not displayed in its fullness in these accounts. Likewise, upon seeing the dead raised, the people hail Jesus as a great prophet, since the resurrection of the dead was not a totally new phenomenon (see 1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 13:21). But Jesus, in John 11 at least, claims that he is the resurrection and the life, and that belief in him results in everlasting life. Therefore, these resurrection episodes in the context of Jesus’ ministry demonstrate that he comes from the Father and represents him in a unique and special way. As we will see below in John 5, resurrection and life is beginning during Jesus’ earthly ministry when people put their trust in him.*

This curriculum has already introduced the concept of “inaugurated eschatology” (see Questions 18 and 19 in Lesson 7 for review) and argued that it is an important concept for having a proper biblical theology. We hope that you have already seen in multiple passages and in multiple aspects how God is initiating his end-time salvation in the first coming of Jesus but not yet completing it.

As we look at the biblical theme of resurrection in the following passage, think about how the concept of inaugurated eschatology helps us understand the passage:

John 5:24-29

<sup>24</sup> *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent*

me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. <sup>25</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

19. How does this passage relate to inaugurated eschatology? How does it relate to a broader biblical theology of resurrection?

- **ANSWER.** *John 5:24-29 presents us with a difficult question: If the hour is here (in Jesus' earthly ministry) when those who hear will live, why hasn't the "resurrection of life" and the "resurrection of judgment" happened yet? Inaugurated eschatology helps us answer this question by suggesting that those who hear Jesus experience a "spiritual" resurrection in passing from death to life. This is the beginning of the final and complete resurrection of the dead. The resurrection will not be here in its fullness, however, until all who are in the tombs come out. This passage, among others, makes it clear that the resurrection of the dead, like so many other realities tied to our salvation, is experience partially now but not fully until the end of the age.*

To complete our brief tracing of a biblical theology of resurrection, read one last passage near the end of the Bible and the end of this age:

Revelation 20:11-15

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

20. How does this passage complete our biblical theology of resurrection?

- **ANSWER.** *Revelation 20:11-15 speaks of the general resurrection of the dead which is promised in Dan 12:1-3 and referred to by Jesus. We should stress again that all will be raised, whether to live with God or to go into judgment. For believers, the resurrection of their bodies will complete the work of resurrection that God has started in this life. Revelation 20:11-15 does not complete a biblical theology of the resurrection in the sense that bodily resurrection is an end in itself, however. Our bodies are raised so that in them we might enjoy the goodness and presence of God for all ages and dwell in the new heavens and earth that he has made for his people.*

Consider also this passage which speaks of the bodily resurrection:

1 Corinthians 15:42-53

<sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. <sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

*It seems to me that the hope of resurrection does not have the same place of power and centrality for us today that it had for the early Christians. And I think one of the reasons for that is that we have a wrong view of the age to come. When we talk about the future and the eternal state, we tend to talk about heaven, and heaven tends to imply a place far away characterized by non-material, ethereal, disembodied spirits.*

*In other words, we tend to assume that the condition that the departed saints are*

*in NOW without their bodies is the way it will always be. And we have encouraged ourselves so much with how good it is for them now, we tend to forget that it is an imperfect state and not the way it will be, nor the way Paul wanted it to be for himself. Yes to die is gain, and yes, to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord, but NO this is not our ultimate hope. This is not the final state of our joy. This is not our final or main comfort when we have lost loved ones who believe. . . .*

*That is our hope—to be with the risen Christ with a body like his glorious body. To know him in a form like his. Our final destiny and our eternal state is not an ethereal, disembodied state in a distant heaven. It is to reign with Christ here on the renewed earth. This hope was so vibrant for the early Christians that they comforted each other not mainly with the joys of the disembodied state after death, but with the hope of resurrection bodies (cf. Philippians 3:21). . . .*

*God did not create the physical universe willy-nilly. He had a reason, namely, to add to the ways his glory is externalized and made manifest. "The skies are telling the glory of God." That's why he made them. Your body fits into that same category of physical things that God created for this reason. He is not going to back out on his plan to glorify himself through human beings and human bodies. So 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*

*Why does God go to all the trouble to dirty his hands to reestablish your body and clothe it with immortality? Because his Son paid the price of his life so that God could be glorified in your body forever and ever. "You were bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your bodies." God will not dishonor the work of his Son. That's why he will raise your body.*

*The sting of death is sin (15:56), but Christ bore the curse of sin. The power of sin is the law (15:56), but Christ satisfied the demands of the law. Therefore Paul cries out, "Thanks be to God who gives the victory through Jesus Christ." When Christ died, he forgave sin and fulfilled the law and defeated death and obtained not just our souls but also our bodies.*

*Therefore God will honor the work of his Son by raising your body from the dead, and you will use your body to glorify him forever and ever. That is why you have a body now. And that is why it will be raised imperishable.<sup>58</sup>*

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58 John Piper, "What Happens When You Die? The Dead Will Be Raised

## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Death and Resurrection” (443-447)
- ▷ “Life” (640-644)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Exaltation” (467-471)
- ▷ “Regeneration” (720-723)
- ▷ “1 Corinthians” (297-306)

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Imperishable,” an online sermon at the [desiringGod](http://www.desiringGod.com) website.



 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of resurrection, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. What would happen if one were to deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus?  
Can someone do this and still be saved?
2. Does Jesus still have a “physical” body?
3. Why might Jesus’ ascension be frequently neglected or overlooked in our theology?

## YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

## APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

Has your spirit been raised from the dead? Are you walking in newness of life?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “What Happens When You Die?” an online sermon series at the [desiringGod](http://desiringGod.com) website
- ▷ Richard Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (2nd edition; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987)
- ▷ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2003)



# You Will Be My Witnesses

# 10

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

As Jesus is lifted into heaven, his disciples watch him go. They must have been staring into the sky dumbfounded because angels stand beside them and ask, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?” This question should probably be read as an indirect and gentle rebuke: “You have work to do! Why are you still standing here?” The disciples hear this and then return to Jerusalem.

In this lesson, we will study what happened next. How did this movement that started among eleven men become a worldwide phenomenon? How is it that we know about Jesus today and what he said and did? This lesson will explore the birth of the Christian church and especially the provision of the Spirit at Pentecost.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ put the event at Pentecost and the inclusion of the Gentiles into the flow of redemptive history
- ▷ articulate the two great provisions of the new covenant
- ▷ describe the Holy Spirit’s activity in the Old Testament



## TEACHING NOTES

A biblical theology of the Old and New Testaments will necessarily be a Trinitarian theology. Though we haven't covered the doctrine of the Trinity as a separate and distinct issue (as would be done in a systematic theology course), hopefully you can point out to your students how a Trinitarian theology arises naturally and inevitably from the biblical texts and how its presentation within the discipline of biblical theology will be different than (but complementary to) how this same doctrine would be presented in systematic theology.

As the lesson indicates, the Apostle Paul's life and theology will be covered in more detail in the following lesson, so there is no need to discuss Paul in any depth in this lesson. Some discussion of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God, however, will begin to bleed into the next lesson. You might want to review what is covered in Lesson 11 before you discuss Lesson 10 so that you can know what questions or topics to postpone.

Joel 2 is an important chapter for this lesson. If time permits, you might want to show your students how the chapter juxtaposes physical, earthly renewal with the pouring out of the Spirit (compare especially verses 17-27 with what follows).

### Joel 2:17-28

*<sup>17</sup> Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" <sup>18</sup> Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. <sup>19</sup> The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. <sup>20</sup> I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear guard into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things. <sup>21</sup> Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! <sup>22</sup> Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. <sup>23</sup> Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. <sup>24</sup> The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the*

vats shall overflow with wine and oil. <sup>25</sup> I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. <sup>26</sup> You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. <sup>27</sup> You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame. <sup>28</sup> And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh . . . .”

Throughout this course you might want to emphasize the “so what?” of biblical theology, even though the practical application of biblical theology will be discussed in more detail in Lesson 12. As a good example of how what we are studying is powerful and useful for everyday Christian life, consider the following quotation from John Piper (“How Believers Experienced the Spirit Before Pentecost,” an online sermon at the [desiringGod](http://www.desiringGod.com) website), which includes a helpful analogy:

*When I pose myself a question like, "How did believers experience the Holy Spirit before Pentecost?" I can't think about it more than five minutes without saying, "So what?" Does anybody care? Would it make any difference for our lives today if we knew the answer? I think it will make a difference. . . .*

*We live in the latter days of the Spirit. We live in the days that Isaiah (44:3) and Ezekiel (11:19; 36:26f.; 39:29) and Joel (2:28) prophesied and longed to see. There are no more decisive turning points in redemptive history that must happen before Jesus returns to establish his kingdom. This is it. These are the days of Pentecost, the days of the fullness of the Spirit, the days of worldwide mission.*

*Now let me suggest an analogy to illustrate the experience of the Spirit before and after Pentecost. Picture a huge dam for hydroelectric power under construction, like the Aswan High Dam on the Nile, 375 feet high and 11,000 feet across. Egypt's President Nasser announced the plan for construction in 1953. The dam was completed in 1970 and in 1971 there was a grand dedication ceremony and the 12 turbines with their ten billion kilowatt-hour capacity were unleashed with enough power to light every city in Egypt. During the long period of construction the Nile River wasn't completely stopped. Even as the reservoir was filling, part of the river was allowed to flow past. The country folk downstream depended on it. They drank it, they washed in it, it watered their crops and turned their mill-wheels. They sailed on it in the moonlight and wrote songs about it. It was their life. But on the*

*day when the reservoir poured through the turbines a power was unleashed that spread far beyond the few folk down river and brought possibilities they had only dreamed of.*

*Well, Pentecost is like the dedicatory opening of the Aswan High Dam. Before Pentecost the river of God's Spirit blessed the people of Israel and was their very life. But after Pentecost the power of the Spirit spread out to light the whole world. None of the benefits enjoyed in the pre-Pentecostal days were taken away. But ten billion kilowatts were added to enable the church to take the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ to every tongue and tribe and nation.*

*So here's my answer to why the experience of the Old Testament saints is valuable for us today. If these saints experienced privileges and powers in the Holy Spirit before the dam was opened, how much more should we in these billion kilowatt days experience these things or more. A survey of Old Testament spiritual experience is needed to wake us up to our privileges in these last days that were inaugurated at Pentecost. The church today is so sleepy that some of us have even fallen behind the Old Testament saints in our appropriation of what the Spirit has to give.*

**Note:** In the next lesson (Lesson 11) there is an opportunity for you, as the instructor, to assign different “gospel sermons” from the book of Acts to your individual students. Please read Question 19 in the next lesson and the material that precedes it BEFORE class discussion of Lesson 10. If you decide to assign sermons, you will probably want to do this just before ending your discussion of Lesson 10 so that your students are clear about their assignment for Lesson 11. You may distribute the five sermon passages in any way you see fit, but it is our recommendation to divide your class into five roughly equal groups and then assign one sermon to each group.







## Day 1

### THE POURING OUT OF THE SPIRIT AND THE FEAST OF WEEKS

Before Jesus left his disciples, he made promises concerning the Holy Spirit, especially in relation to his departure. Read the following two passages. What other realities is the promise of the Holy Spirit connected to in these accounts?

Luke 24:48-53

*<sup>48</sup> “You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” <sup>50</sup> Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup> and were continually in the temple blessing God.*

Acts 1:7-8

*<sup>7</sup> He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

The Gospel of John presents a different angle on the giving of the Holy Spirit. Notice again what the promise of the Holy Spirit is connected with in these accounts.

John 14:15-17, 25-27

*<sup>15</sup> If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. . . . <sup>25</sup> These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things*

*and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

**John 15:26-27**

*<sup>26</sup> But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*

*<sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*

**John 16:7-15**

*<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. <sup>12</sup> I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

**John 20:19-23**

*<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."<sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."<sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."*

1. List your answers to the following question: "With what is the promise of the Holy Spirit connected in these accounts from Luke, Acts, and John?"

- **ANSWER.** *In Luke and Acts the giving of the Spirit is connected with power—especially a power that enables Christian witness. In John, the promise of the Holy Spirit is connected with teaching and remembering what Jesus said, peace, witness to Christ, conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment, guidance, glorifying Jesus, and empowerment for proclaiming the forgiveness of sins. To oversimplify, the promise of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is mostly concerned with empowering the disciples to witness to the world while in John the promise is mostly concerned with the Spirit's witness to the disciples about Jesus and the truth. Both, of course, are essential.*

Before the event of Pentecost is recounted in the book of Acts, Luke provides an intervening story about the choosing of Matthias. Read this story and think about why it is significant.

Acts 1:12-26

<sup>12</sup> Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup> And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. <sup>14</sup> All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. <sup>15</sup> In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about <sup>120</sup>) and said, <sup>16</sup> "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup> For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."<sup>18</sup> (Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. <sup>19</sup> And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) <sup>20</sup> "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, "May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it"; and 'Let another take his office.'<sup>21</sup> So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us--one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."<sup>23</sup> And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two

you have chosen <sup>25</sup> to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” <sup>26</sup> And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

2. Why was it necessary for there to be twelve apostles? Why couldn't the number remain at eleven? (Hint: Review your answer to Question 19 of Lesson 6 and any class discussion notes you may have taken related to this question.)
  - **ANSWER.** *As we suggested earlier, Jesus originally called twelve disciples to represent symbolically the re-formation of the twelve tribes of Israel around his own person and work. When one of those twelve proves to be an apostate, the disciples determine that his office needs to be filled in order for the symbolism to be re-established. It is important for the twelfth apostle to be an original follower of Jesus and witness to his resurrection. They pray to the Lord to help them choose a man who is pure of heart because all twelve apostles, representing the pure and transformed people of the new covenant, must be genuine believers. The new covenant community is not a mixed community consisting of believers and unbelievers.*

Once the twelfth apostle is chosen, the story immediately moves on. It's almost as if God was waiting for there to be twelve apostles again before pouring out his Spirit. According to Acts 2:1 the pouring out of the Holy Spirit occurred on “the day of Pentecost.” Do you know what day this is on the Jewish holy calendar?

3. Skim through Exodus 23, Leviticus 23, and Deuteronomy 16, making use also of any cross-references that your Bible may have. Fitting this information from what you know about Jesus' death (on which holy day did this occur?), his resurrection, and his forty days with the disciples, which Jewish festival should be identified as corresponding to Pentecost?
  - **ANSWER.** *According to Exodus 23, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) is followed by the Feast of Harvest (23:16) in which the firstfruits of the (wheat) harvest are presented to the Lord (23:19). This feast is also called the Feast of Weeks in Ex 34:22. In Lev 23 we learn that this festival occurred fifty days after the sheaf of the wave offering (and it is from the Greek word for fiftieth that the festival was named “Pentecost”). This numbering is also confirmed by Deut 16:9.*

Now read the following account in the book of Jubilees, a Jewish document written about a hundred years before the time of Christ.

Jubilees 6:15-19

<sup>15</sup> And He gave to Noah and his sons a sign that there should not again be a flood on the earth. <sup>16</sup> He set His bow in the cloud for a sign of the eternal covenant that there should not again be a flood on the earth to destroy it all the days of the earth. <sup>17</sup> For this reason it is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets, that they should celebrate the feast of weeks in this month once a year, to renew the covenant every year. <sup>18</sup> And this whole festival was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation till the days of Noah—twenty-six jubilees and five weeks of years: and Noah and his sons observed it for seven jubilees and one week of years, till the day of Noah's death, and from the day of Noah's death his sons did away with (it) until the days of Abraham, and they eat blood. <sup>19</sup> But Abraham observed it, and Isaac and Jacob and his children observed it up to thy days, and in thy days the children of Israel forgot it until ye celebrated it anew on this mountain. <sup>59</sup>

*The Jubilees-Qumran tradition shows that by the second century B.C.E. the festival of weeks was closely tied to the events at Mt. Sinai, especially the covenant between God and Israel. The festival of weeks was the date for making and remembering the biblical covenants and for renewing the Sinaitic covenant.”*<sup>60</sup>

4. Working from all these sources, why might God have chosen to pour out his Spirit on the Feast of Weeks?

- **ANSWER.** *The timing of the pouring out of the Spirit was no less intentional than the timing of Jesus' death (Passover). It could be that God chose to pour out his Spirit on the Feast of Weeks as a kind of gracious reversal of the original festival. Instead of Jews presenting their firstfruits to God, God now pours out the Spirit as a down payment of the later spiritual harvest-fullness to come. It is probable, though, that the tradition mentioned above is primarily in view. Whereas at Mt. Sinai God gives*

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59 This excerpt was taken from the English translation of the Pseudepigrapha edited by R. H. Charles (1913).

60 James C. VanderKam, "Covenant and Pentecost," *Calvin Theological Journal* 37.2 (2002), 253.

*from above his law written on stone tablets to initiate the covenant, at Pentecost God pours out his Spirit from above to initiate a new covenant in which the law is written on the tablets of human hearts. The new covenant is a renewal of the Sinaitic covenant only in the sense that it fulfills what the Sinai covenant was designed to do all along but could not because of the weakness of sinful flesh (see Rom 8:3-4).*

We now turn our attention to the account of Pentecost itself.

#### Acts 2:1-13

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. <sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” <sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

5. In carefully observing and reading of this text, complete the following table:

**Where were the disciples when this happened (compare Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46)?**

- **ANSWER.** *The disciples were certainly in Jerusalem and probably in the temple when the Spirit was poured out. This is significant because it could signal that God is building a new temple in which his Spirit can dwell—a temple consisting of those who believe in Jesus, the Messiah.*

**Why might God have given the disciples the ability to speak in other languages?  
And what were they speaking about?**

- **ANSWER.** *As we will argue in answering the next question, it seems as if the pouring out of the Spirit is a reversal of the Tower of Babel. Rather than language being used as a means to undermine the glory of God, and being confused as a result, in this event the language barriers are overcome so that all can hear and understand the disciples speaking of God's deeds of power.*

**Why are verses 5 and 9-11 significant?**

- **ANSWER.** *These verses are significant because they indicate that God is ending the exile and dispersion of the twelve tribes of Israel not by bringing all the Jews back into their own homeland, but by creating a new people by his Spirit so that they might be witnesses all throughout the world. (Notice, however, that at this point the text only mentions Jews and those who have been circumcised as Jewish proselytes.)*

**Tracing God's Ways**

The promise of the Spirit is connected to the empowering of the disciples so that they can faithfully witness to the person and work of Jesus. The pouring out of the Spirit is delayed until the apostles can symbolically reconstitute the "twelve" of a new Israel and until the festival of covenant renewal begins. God has begun the restoration of his people Israel, drawing Jews from all nations.



## Day 2

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### FULFILLMENT, EXPANSION, OPPOSITION, AND INCLUSION

When the Spirit is poured out and the disciples begin to speak in other languages, the crowds are perplexed, and some begin to sneer. Peter then responds to the confusion and charge of drunkenness:

Acts 2:14-21, 32-36

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup> Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. <sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. <sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’... <sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, <sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies your footstool.”’ <sup>36</sup> Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

6. What is Peter’s interpretation of what has happened, why has it happened, and for what purpose?

· **ANSWER.** Peter interprets the speaking in tongues not as a sign of drunkenness but as a sign of the end-time restoration of Israel in which the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. The Spirit has been poured out because Jesus, who is the true Messiah even though he was crucified, has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received the Spirit so that he

*may pour the Spirit out upon his people. This indicates that the salvation of the day of the Lord has already come, and that people may be saved by calling upon the name of Jesus. The Spirit empowers all the people of the new covenant for prophetic ministry.*

From the day of Pentecost, this dynamic movement began to multiply rapidly. Read the following descriptions of the early Christian community:

Acts 2:41-47

*<sup>41</sup> So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. <sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

Acts 4:32-35

*<sup>32</sup> Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. <sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. <sup>35</sup> They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.*

Acts 5:12-16

*<sup>12</sup> Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. <sup>13</sup> None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. <sup>14</sup> Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, <sup>15</sup> so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. <sup>16</sup> A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.*

7. These episodes seem primarily to stress two things about the early church. What are these two things? Underline and double-underline verses to support your assertion. Why might they be fitting descriptions of the new covenant people?

- **ANSWER.** *The first repeated thing we observe in these texts is the kingdom power that is attending the ministry of the apostles (single-underlined above). The signs and wonders they are performing are reminiscent of Jesus' own earthly ministry and suggest that God's mighty presence is among them and working through them. It also suggests that God's end-time salvation is breaking into the present. The second repeated thing is the generosity of the people, and the material provision that is made for all those within the community of faith. This indicates first the moral transformation that has been brought about by God's Spirit. It also reflects God's design for Israel to be a people among whom the poor were cared for, which was sadly never realized. These texts (double-underlined above) may also be a biblical-theological twist on Gen 1:29. God is now providing for the needs of his people through the kindness of a redeemed and transformed community.*

Though the texts above indicate that the power and generosity of God's new people generated awe, goodwill, and high esteem, this movement did not go unopposed. We read already in Acts 4 that the apostles are being arrested and threatened. Then in Acts 5 they are brought before the council again. Upon hearing the apostles' bold words of resistance, the council is enraged and wants to kill them.

Then Gamaliel speaks up:

Acts 5:35-40

<sup>35</sup> And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. <sup>36</sup> For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup> So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; <sup>39</sup> but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, <sup>40</sup> and when they had called in the apostles, they beat

*them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.*

This is an interesting passage because it confirms that there had been false Messiahs before Jesus and that some of the Jewish leaders were viewing Jesus as a false Messiah. The entire book of Acts proves that the Christian “undertaking” was of God, and it could not be stopped.

Now read the story of the stoning of Stephen, from Acts 6:8 to 7:60.

8. Analyze Stephen’s speech (Acts 7:2-53). Is Stephen doing biblical theology as he responds to the high priest and the Jewish council? Explain your answer. What is Stephen’s main point in rehearsing the history of Israel?

· **ANSWER.** *In the first lesson of this course we defined biblical theology as “a theological discipline which attempts to discern the inner unity of the biblical texts, considered as a whole, and then to present this unity in a manner which is sensitive to the historical and progressive nature of God’s revelation and which reflects the concerns and categories of the text itself.” According to this definition Stephen was doing biblical theology because his rehearsal of Israel’s story attempts to portray the consistent hardheartedness of the people and their resistance of God’s appointed leaders. Stephen’s presentation is chronological, historical, and he directly cites the Old Testament. His speech not only suggests the error of the Jewish leadership in opposing Jesus, but he also relativizes the importance of the temple by pointing out that God does not dwell in houses made by human hands.*

It has been frequently observed that the book of Acts is structured according to Acts 1:8, “you will be my witnesses in [1] Jerusalem, [2] in all Judea and Samaria, and [3] to the end of the earth.” The early chapters of Acts describe the expansion of the gospel in Jerusalem.

Now examine the following string of texts in the book of Acts:

**8:1**                      **8:4-5**                      **8:14-17**                      **8:25**                      **8:40**

9. How far has the gospel extended by Acts 8:40? Is there any evidence in Acts 1–8 that Gentiles have been accepted into the new covenant people of God?

· **ANSWER.** *By Acts 8:40 it is clear that the gospel has been preached in Judea, Samaria, and all along the Mediterranean coast of Israel. In other*

*words, it appears as if the ministry of Jesus' disciples has progressed to the second of the three stages of expansion that Jesus promises in Acts 1:8. Despite this fact, there is no evidence yet that Gentiles as Gentiles (that is, as uncircumcised believers) have been accepted as part of the new covenant people of God. The only references to Gentiles in Acts 1–8 are to Gentile proselytes (that is, Gentiles who have been circumcised and who practice the Law). This explains why Peter and those with him are so surprised that the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the uncircumcised. It also confirms that what Acts 11:19 describes has been the standard practice: the gospel has only been preached to the Jews (and Jewish proselytes) up to this point in the narrative (cf. Acts 15:7).*

The story of Cornelius is not one of the better-known stories in the New Testament. From the perspective of biblical theology, however, it is a radical, paradigm-shifting event.

Quickly read Acts 10:1-33. Then continue the story in the following quotations:

Acts 10:34-48

*<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), <sup>37</sup> you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." <sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone*

*withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”<sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.*

**Acts 11:15-18**

*<sup>15</sup> “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>17</sup> If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?”<sup>18</sup> When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”*

**10.** What was so shocking (and unexpected!) to the Jews about the gift of the Spirit being given to the Gentiles?

***ANSWER.** The early Jewish Christians, including the apostles, seemed to believe that the gift of the Spirit and the forgiveness of sins was only intended for the Jews and those who submitted to the Mosaic Law. They seemed to think that one could not be part of the new covenant people without being circumcised and keeping the Law. What is so radical about Cornelius’ story is that God seems to show disregard for his own Law by pouring out the Spirit upon those who have not been circumcised. This proved, contrary to their expectations based on the Old Testament, that faith in Jesus Christ alone was sufficient for salvation and membership in the people of God. Observing the Law was no longer necessary, and in fact, as we will see, Peter describes the Law later as a yoke “that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear” (Acts 15:10). The Jews may have thought that one could not be righteous if one did live according to the Law. The story in Acts 10-11 proves otherwise.*

Though surprising to Peter and the other Jewish Christians, the core of this radical new idea was already present in Peter’s first sermon at Pentecost.

Compare the following two texts:

Acts 2:38

*<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 10:42-44

*<sup>42</sup> “And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” <sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.*

In order to understand how revolutionary it was that uncircumcised Gentiles would receive the gift of the Spirit from Israel’s God, we need to remember that thousands of Jews died for the right to circumcise. In the decades leading up to this fateful day with Cornelius, Jews around the Mediterranean had labored to preserve the identity markers for the Jewish people. It would have been a category mistake in the minds of many early Jews to talk about an uncircumcised person who belonged to the people of God.

Since we are so far removed from this reality and often take it for granted that we Gentiles can enjoy Jewish promises, this is sometimes hard for us to understand. But this was THE major issue in the early church. The question was “what must I do to be saved?” And the answer was simply, “Repent and believe in the gospel.”

### Tracing God’s Ways

The new covenant community experiences a unity that Israel never knew, and demonstrates that the presence of the Spirit is in their midst. As the gospel message spreads throughout Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and then even farther, it encounters the Gentiles. Shockingly, the Spirit is poured out on Gentile believers in Jesus without them first being circumcised !

## Day 3

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### NOT CIRCUMCISION BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

(For now we will skip over the accounts of Paul's conversion and his first missionary journey. We will look at the Apostle Paul's life and teaching in the next lesson.)

The biblical-theological truth revealed in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and those with him (a second Pentecost if you will), was tested and later confirmed by the early church in Jerusalem. The truth was hard-won, though, and only become solidified through deliberation and study of the Scripture. The Jerusalem council was another significant turning point in biblical theology because it was officially recognized there that Gentiles were not under obligation to keep the Law of Moses in order to be full members of God's new covenant people.

Read about the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:1-35.

11. Summarize Acts 15:1-35 in your own words, including the issue that prompted the council, the arguments voiced at the council, the decision of the council, and the results of that decision.

· **ANSWER.** *Student answers to this question will vary, but one summary of these verses could be as follows:*

- A1. *The Jerusalem council was prompted by certain men from Judea who were telling Gentile converts that they could not be saved unless they were circumcised and then by some believing Pharisees who thought that Gentile converts should be instructed to keep the Law. In response Paul, Peter, and then James affirm that faith in the grace of Jesus alone is needed for a cleansed heart and right living. They also urge the converts to stay away from idolatry and immorality. The letter giving this decision is then received in joy and with encouragement by the Gentiles.*

One of the closing arguments made at the Jerusalem Council involves the quotation of Scripture. Compare James' appeal to Amos with these verses as



reproduced from the Hebrew Bible:

<p>Amos 9:11-12</p> <p><sup>11</sup> <u>“In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, <sup>12</sup> that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the LORD who does this.</u></p>	<p>Acts 15:14-18</p> <p><sup>14</sup> Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup> And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, <sup>16</sup> <u>“After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, <sup>17</sup> that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things <sup>18</sup> known from of old.”</u></p>
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12. Underline differences between Amos 9:11-12 and Acts 15:16-18. What accounts for these differences? Is James quoting from the Old Testament in a legitimate way?

· **ANSWER.** *Note: This is an extremely difficult textual issue and there is no way that we can enter into its complexity here. There is academic debate as to whether Acts 15:16-18 is following the LXX (Septuagint) rather than the MT (Masoretic text) and as to the significance of the conflation of different texts that James quotes—he alludes to more than just Amos 9:11-12. We wrote this question only to alert the students to the fascinating difficulties that attend a study of the New Testament’s use of the Old. For a more detailed discussion of this text, see the Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 589-593. In brief, all we can say is that James reads Amos as a witness to the truth that Gentiles also may enjoy the restoration of David’s royal house and access to the Lord.*

Review your answers to Questions 11 and 12 in Lesson 6. This course has argued that the two great provisions of the new covenant are the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. By way of review, skim Hebrews 8:1–10:18.

13. Briefly answer the following question: “What does this extended passage (Hebrews 8:1–10:18) teach us about Jesus’ death and the forgiveness of sins?”

- **ANSWER.** *To put it very concisely, this extended passages in Hebrews argues that Jesus’ death was a definitive act of atonement which achieves a final forgiveness of sins. By virtue of his atoning death, Jesus becomes the mediator of a new and better covenant. The old covenant, with its blood sacrifices, are therefore made obsolete.*

The second great provision of the new covenant, then, is the gift of the Spirit. Remember God’s promise in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 36:22-28

*<sup>22</sup> Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. <sup>23</sup> And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. <sup>24</sup> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

Now examine the following New Testament texts concerning the Spirit:

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

*<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

2 Corinthians 3:3-6

<sup>3</sup> And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. <sup>4</sup> Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup> who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-7

<sup>4</sup> For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup> because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup> And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup> so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

1 John 3:23-24

<sup>23</sup> And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. <sup>24</sup> Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

14. According to these passages (and many more could have been listed), for what purposes was the Holy Spirit given? Underline words and phrases that support your answer.

- **ANSWER.** *The Spirit was given, in fulfillment of Ezek 36:22-28, so that God's people might glorify him among the nations by being an obedient people. The Spirit makes this possible by granting the conviction, belief, and joy that attend conversion, by providing life and sufficiency for the Christian life, and by empowering believers for a ministry of love within the community of faith. In other words, the Spirit transforms and empowers God's people to fulfill the original commission that God gave to man in Gen 1:26-28. Through the Christian community God will finally fill the earth with his glory and make his name great among the nations.*

Now we return to the book of Acts to examine the following passages about the Spirit.

Acts 1:8

<sup>8</sup> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

Acts 4:29-31

<sup>29</sup> *“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup> while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” <sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*

Acts 6:9-10

<sup>9</sup> *Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. <sup>10</sup> But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.*

15. According to these passages, for what purpose was the Holy Spirit given?

- **ANSWER.** *These passages in Acts stress that the Spirit of God is given for the mission of God through the church. More specifically, the Spirit grants the power, boldness, and wisdom necessary for effective witness to Christ. Whereas the passages from Paul and John reproduced above emphasize the inner, moral transformation, these passages in Acts emphasize the outer, missional equipping that the Spirit provides to Christian witnesses proclaiming the gospel. Both, of course, are necessary to God’s purpose to fill the earth with his glory and make his name great among the nations.*

### Tracing God’s Ways

The work of God is affirmed in the Jerusalem council: God is incorporating Gentiles in the new covenant without them becoming Jews. Only faith in Jesus is required. The forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus cleanses us, puts us into a right relationship with God, and allows the Spirit to dwell in our hearts by faith. The Spirit empowers us in many ways for ministry and witness, giving us the ability to do the commands of Jesus and the boldness to speak his truth.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE SPIRIT

In an enigmatic reference in the second verse of the Bible, the Spirit is mentioned as involved in creation.

#### Genesis 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* <sup>2</sup> *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

Much later in biblical prophecy the Spirit is again mentioned as being involved in a new creation. Notice how physical renewal and moral restoration flow into each other in the following passages:

#### Isaiah 32:14-18

<sup>14</sup> *For the palace is forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks;* <sup>15</sup> *until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.* <sup>16</sup> *Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.* <sup>17</sup> *And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.* <sup>18</sup> *My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.*

#### Isaiah 44:1-5

<sup>1</sup> *But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!* <sup>2</sup> *Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.* <sup>3</sup> *For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.* <sup>4</sup> *They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.* <sup>5</sup> *This one will say, "I am the LORD's," another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, "The LORD's," and name himself by the name of Israel.*

In this day's study we will consider the three primary roles that the Spirit fulfills in the Old Testament. The first of these roles is as the agent of creation and renewal, as we have seen in the texts above. The second role is described in the texts below:

Exodus 31:1-5

<sup>1</sup> *The LORD said to Moses,* <sup>2</sup> *“See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah,* <sup>3</sup> *and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship,* <sup>4</sup> *to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze,* <sup>5</sup> *in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.”*

Numbers 24:2-4

<sup>2</sup> *And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him,* <sup>3</sup> *and he took up his discourse and said, “The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,* <sup>4</sup> *the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty . . . .”*

Judges 3:9-10 (compare 6:34; 14:6, 19)

<sup>9</sup> *But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.* <sup>10</sup> *The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.*

Isaiah 59:21

<sup>21</sup> *“And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit that is upon you [Isaiah], and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,” says the LORD, “from this time forth and forevermore.”*

This role of the Holy Spirit is also found in the following important text about the anointing of David as king of Israel:

1 Samuel 16:6-13

<sup>6</sup> *When they came, he [Samuel] looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the*

LORD's anointed is before him.”<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.”<sup>9</sup> Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.”<sup>10</sup> And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen these.”<sup>11</sup> Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.”<sup>12</sup> And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he.”<sup>13</sup> Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

16. What does the Spirit do according to these Old Testament passages?

- **ANSWER.** *According to these passages, the Spirit empowers people for various ministries/tasks within Israel. These Spirit-sustained abilities/gifts are as diverse as artistic gifts for the construction of the temple, prophecy (speaking the words of the LORD), strength and success in war, and wisdom and authority to govern Israel as king. This second role of the Spirit finds a parallel in the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the body of Christ for ministry and service (see especially 1 Cor 12-14).*

The second role of the Spirit that is described in the Old Testament is not a role that the Spirit had within all of Israel. Not all Israelites were given a spiritual gift to serve or lead. Likewise, the third role of the Spirit in the Old Testament—which we will examine now—was also not universally enjoyed in all of Israel.

Consider the following texts, especially noting the excerpt from Ezekiel 36, a text which we read at greater length in Lessons 6 and 8.

Numbers 14:22-24

<sup>22</sup> None of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, <sup>23</sup> shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. <sup>24</sup> But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit [Spirit?] and has followed me fully, I will bring

*into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.*

Ezekiel 11:17-20

*<sup>17</sup> Therefore say, “Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.” <sup>18</sup> And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. <sup>19</sup> And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, <sup>20</sup> that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

Ezekiel 36:24-28

*<sup>24</sup> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

17. With what is the Spirit associated according to these Old Testament passages?

- **ANSWER.** *Commentary in the Old Testament indicating the deepest reason for why certain Israelites were faithful when the majority were not is surprisingly sparse. The first of the three passages, however, is suggestive in that Caleb’s obedience amidst widespread unbelief is attributed to his different “spirit.” Later in the Old Testament, it is clear that the remedy to Israel’s unfaithfulness will be the gifts of cleansing and the Spirit—a Spirit which will cause the people to obey. Therefore, it seems as if the Spirit is associated with moral transformation, though again this is not a role that the Spirit has among the majority of Israelites under the old covenant.*

There are probably many ways to describe the problem Israel had under the old covenant and the reason why the nation, as a whole, did not fulfill God’s commission to spread his glory throughout the whole world and be a blessing to the nations. One way to describe this problem would be to say that Israel (again,



as a whole) lacked the Spirit of God. It becomes increasingly clear that Israel's kings also, in general, lack the Spirit and therefore lead the people into idolatry and eventually into exile.

What is the LORD's response to this problem? Notice the following texts below and how the Spirit is involved in the restoration of Israel.

#### Numbers 27:15-19

<sup>15</sup> Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, <sup>16</sup> "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation <sup>17</sup> who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd." <sup>18</sup> So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. <sup>19</sup> Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight."

#### 1 Samuel 16:1, 12-13

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." . . . <sup>12</sup> And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." <sup>13</sup> Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

#### Isaiah 11:1-5

<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. <sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. <sup>3</sup> And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, <sup>4</sup> but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. <sup>5</sup> Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Here are two New Testament passages which address the Old Testament expectation:

John 1:29-34

<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup> And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup> I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

John 3:31-35

<sup>31</sup> He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup> He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. <sup>33</sup> Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup> For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup> The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

18. According to these Old and New Testament passages, what is the first way in which the Spirit is involved in the redemption of God’s people?

- **ANSWER.** *These texts bear witness to the prophetic expectation for an anointed Messiah—an expectation that is fulfilled with the coming of Jesus and his baptism. The anointing of the Holy Spirit allows Jesus to fulfill his kingly task, rule with righteousness and faithfulness, and speak the words of God directly in an unprecedented way. In other words, the Spirit empowers Jesus to act as one who reveals God and rule over his people.*

The Spirit, however, will not just come upon the Messiah of God’s new covenant people. The following passages bear witness to another prophetic hope for God’s people that involves the Spirit:

Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29

<sup>16</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. <sup>17</sup> And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of

the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone. . . .<sup>24</sup> So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent.<sup>25</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.<sup>26</sup> Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp.<sup>27</sup> And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”<sup>28</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.”<sup>29</sup> But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”

Joel 2:28-29

<sup>28</sup> And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

Acts 2:14-18

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup> For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; <sup>18</sup> even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.’”

19. According to these passages, what is one significant difference between the old and new covenants with regard to the Spirit?

- **ANSWER.** *These passages suggest that there is a difference in who receives the Spirit under the old and new covenants—that is, a difference in scope. Under the old covenant it appears as if only a few of Israel’s leaders were*

*receiving the Spirit. This prompts Moses to wish that the LORD would put his Spirit on all the people so that they were “prophets.” This very thing is what Joel promises as part of the restoration God will accomplish, and Peter cites the Joel text on the day of Pentecost to interpret what’s happening. Now, under the new covenant, all God’s covenant people receive the Spirit regardless of gender, age, or socio-economic status. Some scholars call this a “democratization” of the Spirit in the new covenant.*

One of the classic problems in biblical theology is how to relate the work of the Spirit in the lives of believers under the old covenant with the work of the Spirit in the lives of believers under the new covenant. Since a remnant of old covenant saints did believe in God and obey him, many scholars presume that the Spirit must have indwelt old covenant saints. The following passages from the Gospel of John, however, cause problems for this theory:

John 7:39

*<sup>39</sup> Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

John 14:16-17

*<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

John 20:21-22

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

To deny that the Spirit regenerated old covenants saints, however, also causes massive theological problems. So how can this tension be explained? One recent attempt is summarized as follows:

*In seeking to explain how old covenant believers were empowered to live by faith, I will argue that indwelling is not to be equated with regeneration. This distinction opens the possibility that old covenant believers experienced regeneration by the Spirit, even though the Spirit did not then take up residence within them. Some*

*scholars hesitate to use the term “regenerate” in reference to old covenant believers because the Old Testament does not use the “new-birth” and “made-alive” language found in the New Testament. As noted above, the Old Testament metaphor for this is “circumcision of the heart.” Since both regeneration and heart circumcision refer to God enabling people who are dead in sin to believe and obey, I will regard the two expressions as functionally equivalent. Thus old covenant believers may be described as regenerate though not indwelt. They became believers when the Spirit of God enabled them to believe, and they were maintained in faith by God’s covenant presence with the nation as He dwelt in the temple. . . .*

*It will be argued here that prior to Jesus’ glorification God sanctified believers by His presence with them rather than in them. Often the Old Testament describes God as with select persons. God declared to His old covenant people, “I am Yahweh, who sanctifies you.” God made His people holy as He indwelt the tabernacle and later the temple, and thereby He remained near His people on an individual and corporate level. After Jesus’ glorification, in keeping with the coming of “that day” (John 14:20), God brought about new birth and obedience by regenerating individuals and indwelling them by His Spirit. So regeneration and indwelling remain distinct works of the Spirit, but they are simultaneously received by all who believe.*

*With Jesus’ completion of the work the Father sent Him to do, a major salvation-historical shift took place. The Spirit takes up residence in a new temple. He dwells in those who believe, and He will do so until the end of the age. This is best seen when compared with the Spirit’s work in the old covenant. Prior to the completion of Jesus’ work, God dwelt in the temple. In the Old Testament, God is described as with and near His chosen nation and only in certain persons for extraordinary tasks. Jesus’ proclamation of the new covenant ministry of the Spirit, and the disciples’ reception of the Spirit, anticipate subsequent references to believers and the church as a temple built of living stones. The indwelling of the Spirit is connected to the reality that Jesus has replaced the temple, with the result that worship is no longer centered at specific locations. A temple is no longer necessary because those who believe are “in” Jesus. Through His death on the cross, Jesus puts an end to sacrifice. The triune God no longer dwells in the temple in Jerusalem, but in believers who live all over the world.<sup>61</sup>*

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61 James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2006), 4-5. Most of the Bible verse references have been removed from this excerpt. See Hamilton’s book for his

What is especially intriguing is how this explanation ties into a biblical theology of the temple. Review the work you did in Lesson 2 as a reminder for how God's unfolding plan of redemption involves the temple.

One of the most important passages in the entire Bible about the Holy Spirit is Romans 8. This text pulls together much of what we have studied not only in this lesson, but in the entire course.

Romans 8:1-17

*<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. <sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

Remember also that Romans 8:1-17 is only the first half of the chapter. The second half gives eloquent expression to the hope Christians have for their

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defense of this thesis.

participation in the renewed cosmos, a hope that is grounded upon the unshakeable love of God.

So now that the Spirit indwells those who believe in Jesus, is there no hope or expectation that remains to be fulfilled? No, a biblical theology of the Spirit is not completed until the Spirit's role in the new heavens and new earth is considered:

*Typically the work of the Spirit has been viewed individualistically as a matter of what God is doing in "my" life, in the inner life of the believer, without any particular reference or connection to God's eschatological purposes.*

*We only have to ask: How many believers today recognize that the present work of the Spirit within the Church and in their lives is of one piece with God's great work of restoring the entire creation, begun in sending his Son "in the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4) and to be consummated at his return? How many Christians grasp that in union with Christ, the life-giving Spirit, the Christian life in its entirety is essentially and necessarily resurrection life?<sup>62</sup>*

In the new heavens and new earth we await the fullness of life and joy. We also await the fullness of something else. Consider the following passage about the Spirit:

Ephesians 1:13-14

<sup>13</sup> *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,*  
<sup>14</sup> *who is the guarantee [Greek: arrabōn] of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

The Greek word *arrabōn*, translated here as "guarantee" (ESV), is translated in other versions as "pledge" or even "first installment." Since this is an important word to understand, read the following two excerpts from commentaries on the book of Ephesians, which provide more information about this specific word:

*The Holy Spirit by whom the Gentiles were sealed when they believed the gospel is now called the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. Behind this translation lies the word that signifies a "down payment" or "pledge," and which in the New*

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62 Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "'Life-Giving Spirit': Probing the Center of Paul's Pneumatology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41.4 (1998): 585.

*Testament is used only in the Pauline writings and always with reference to the Spirit of God. Originally of Semitic origin, this word in Hellenistic Greek became the ordinary commercial term for a down payment or first installment. According to 2 Corinthians 1:22 the Corinthians received the “down payment” of the Spirit to guarantee the consummation of their future salvation. Their longing for the heavenly dwelling results from the certainty that they have been provided with an advance installment of the Spirit. Here in v. 14 the Spirit received is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance: in giving him to us God is not simply promising us our final inheritance but actually providing us with a foretaste of it, even if it “is only a small fraction of the future endowment.”*<sup>63</sup>

*[The word arrabōn] is sometimes translated “pledge” but this is really inaccurate because the pledge is returned when the full payment is made, whereas [arrabōn] is a portion of the whole payment. Chrysostom states that it is “a part of the whole.” Bauer states that it “is a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments.” It is better to translate it “earnest,” “deposit guaranteeing,” or “initial installment.” All of these indicate that much more is sure to come. In Eph 1:14 the promised Holy Spirit is the present deposit or initial installment of the believers’ future inheritance.*<sup>64</sup>

20. What significance for biblical theology might this Greek word *arrabōn* hold? Record your own reflections below:

- **ANSWER.** *Understanding the precise meaning of this word informs us that our experience of the Spirit in this age is not a “pledge” of our future salvation which will be removed when we come into the age to come. Rather, our experience of the Spirit now is a foretaste of the fullness of the Spirit which will be given to us in the new age. Therefore, the gift of the Spirit is like every other aspect of our salvation: we have a definite and inaugurated experience of it now, but the consummated fullness is waiting until the return of Jesus, the resurrection of our bodies, and life in the new earth. At that time we will experience the fullness of the Spirit.*

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63 Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), 120-121.

64 Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 242.



## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Holy Spirit” (551-558)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Nations” (676-678)
- ▷ “Testimony/Witness” (811-814)
- ▷ “Acts” (285-291)



.....  INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of the Holy Spirit, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.

 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. Did Peter's observation of what was happening on Pentecost force him to reconsider what the book of Joel was prophesying? In other words, did his interpretation of Scripture change when he saw what was happening?
2. What is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the plan of God (see Romans 11)?
3. Are all the spiritual gifts described in the New Testament "active" and "valid" for today?

### YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

### APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

What evidence do you see of the Spirit at work in your life?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007)
- ▷ James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2006)
- ▷ John Piper, "How Believers Experienced the Spirit Before Pentecost," an online sermon at the [desiringGod](http://www.desiringGod.com) website

# Your God Reigns!

# 11

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## § INTRODUCTION

“Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18). By including the Gentiles in the new covenant people, purified simply by faith in Jesus, God has done an unexpected and wonderful thing. Biblical theology, by studying God’s unfolding plan, highlights this turning point in redemptive history. Although we might take it for granted, this surprising development took the early church time to digest. And one of the primary champions for the integration of the Gentiles into the people of God (and for outreach to Gentiles) was the Apostle Paul.

This lesson will concentrate on the Apostle Paul and his unique role in redemptive history for calling the Gentiles to obedience to the Jewish Messiah. We will examine his life and ministry and will also look at controversies in the early church. Moreover, when the apostles wanted to proclaim the gospel, what did they say? How was biblical theology reflected in their proclamation?

## § LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ describe Paul’s ministry in biblical-theological context
- ▷ list some of the fundamental controversies that the early church endured and explain how the apostles dealt with these controversies
- ▷ articulate a biblical statement of the gospel





This lesson, perhaps more than any other, will afford a surplus of material for class discussion. It might be difficult, then, to cover everything that the students do in preparation. Although you can certainly try to give adequate coverage to Paul, controversies in the early church, and a biblical theology of the gospel, you may want to focus on just one of these:

- If you focus on Paul and his theology, you might choose to demonstrate how his life and ministry relate to biblical theology. Or you could take a specific passage in the Pauline Epistles and explore it in more depth.
- If you focus on controversies in the early church, you may want to show how these false teachings in the New Testament are related to false teachings in the global church today. You should also stress how each of these controversies relates to biblical theology.
- If you focus on a biblical theology of the gospel, you could invest much of your class time to individual or group presentations on the gospel sermons in Acts (Question 19). Be sure to point out how these sermons are related to the discipline of biblical theology and how they summarize many of the things we've studied thus far in the course.

Regarding the gospel sermons in Acts, it is obvious that apostolic preaching to Jews, who know the story of Israel's God, will be different than preaching to Gentiles who are ignorant of that story. From what we can infer from Paul's letters, however, Christian discipleship of Gentiles included teaching from the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, we should not understand these initial, evangelistic sermons in Acts 14 and Acts 17 as full-blown expositions of the gospel. Training in the gospel would immediately follow a profession of faith in the true God and repentance of idols.



## Day 1

### THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Saul's (Paul's) conversion is narrated three times in the book of Acts and is a well-known and important moment in salvation history. We will begin our study of Paul's life by examining those texts in Acts and in Paul's letters which describe what Paul was like before his conversion:

Acts 9:1-3, 13-14

*<sup>1</sup> But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. . . . <sup>13</sup> But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."*

Acts 22:3-6

*<sup>3</sup> I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, <sup>5</sup> as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. <sup>6</sup> As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me.*

Acts 26:4-5, 9-12

*<sup>4</sup> My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. <sup>5</sup> They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of*



our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. . . .<sup>9</sup> I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>10</sup> And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them.<sup>11</sup> And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.<sup>12</sup> In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

1. According to these passages, what do we know about Paul before his conversion?

· **ANSWER.** *Paul was a Jew who was born in Tarsus. He was educated as a Pharisee at the feet of Gamaliel. He was a strict and zealous Pharisee and his zeal for Israel and Israel's God led him to oppose Jesus and persecute his followers. At the time of his conversion Paul was headed for Damascus with authority to arrest Christians there and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.*

In his letters, Paul occasionally reflects on his former life and his conversion. Read the following three passages which give us Paul's own perspective on his conversion to Christ:

#### Galatians 1:11-17

<sup>11</sup> For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. <sup>15</sup> But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, <sup>16</sup> was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; <sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

#### Philippians 3:3-11

<sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have

reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

#### 1 Timothy 1:12-17

<sup>12</sup> I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, <sup>13</sup> though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup> and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. <sup>16</sup> But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. <sup>17</sup> To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

#### 2. What do we learn from these passages as Paul reflects on his conversion?

- **ANSWER.** Paul considered himself to be a “blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent” (1 Tim 1:13) before his conversion. His zeal was not only causing him to advance in Judaism but to destroy the church. Paul was a Pharisee and his “righteousness under the law” was “blameless” (Phil 3:6). Nevertheless, God’s grace overflowed to him in God’s call of him so that Paul was able to count Christ as more valuable than all the earthly and ethnic distinctives he had previously possessed. Paul wanted the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ and depends on faith. His mission was now to preach Jesus to the Gentiles.

The conversion of Paul is first narrated in Acts 9. The narrative in the book of Acts then shifts back to Peter for most of Acts 10-12. But then in Acts 13:1-3 the book describes the calling of Paul and Barnabas for the so-called first missionary journey.

Nevertheless, it appears as if Paul and Barnabas are concentrating their message on the Jews and proclaiming Jesus primarily in the synagogue (see Acts 13:5, 16). We pick up the narrative after Paul has preached his sermon to the Jews and “God-fearers” in Antioch in Pisidia.

Acts 13:42-52

*<sup>42</sup> As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. <sup>43</sup> And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. <sup>44</sup> The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. <sup>45</sup> But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. <sup>46</sup> And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” <sup>48</sup> And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup> And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. <sup>50</sup> But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. <sup>51</sup> But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Now compare this passage (above), especially Acts 13:47, with Isaiah 49:5-6, Luke 2:32, and Acts 26:23.

Isaiah 49:5-6

*<sup>5</sup> And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— <sup>6</sup> he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for*

*the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

Luke 2:27-32

<sup>27</sup> And [Simeon] came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup> he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

Acts 26:22-23

<sup>22</sup> To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: <sup>23</sup> that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.

3. What is the significance of Paul identifying his ministry by citing Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47?

· **ANSWER.** What is significant (and stunning) is that Isa 49:6 is first applied to Jesus in Luke 2:32 and again alluded to in reference to Jesus in Acts 26:23. Being a light to the Gentiles was Jesus’ commission. Therefore, in applying this same prophesy to Paul and Barnabas, it is clear that Paul and Barnabas are extending the ministry and mission of Jesus through their own proclamation of him. In other words, Jesus is being a light to the Gentiles through the apostolic witness. As we will see in studying Col 1:24-26 in the next day’s study, there is a real sense in which Paul is not only “completing” Christ’s afflictions by extending them to the nations but also “completing” Christ’s role of being a light to the Gentiles by preaching the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

In the last lesson we mentioned that Acts 1:8 establishes a framework for the book of Acts. Compare the following list of passages, trying to discern how these passages might reveal an intentional structure within the book and within God’s unfolding plan of redemption.

Acts 1:8

<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you

will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 8:14-17

<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:1-10

<sup>1</sup> And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. <sup>2</sup> And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” <sup>3</sup> And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” <sup>4</sup> And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” <sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. <sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all. <sup>8</sup> And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

4. Comment on the significance of each underlined portion of the text above:
  - **ANSWER.** The first underlined portion of text is reminiscent of Acts 8:14-17 in which Peter and John lay hands on the Samaritans. In that context, the reception of the Holy Spirit was an important public demonstration of the extension of the gospel to its “second stage” (according to the stages outlined in Acts 1:8). Likewise, in Acts 19:6-7 it is possible that another public demonstration of the extension of the gospel is needed because the gospel is now reaching out to the ends of the earth (a general concept for regions beyond Judea and Samaria). The fact that there are about twelve disciples may suggest the formation of a new people of God among the

*Gentiles through the missionary efforts of Paul and others. The fact that Paul is in the “hall of Tyrannus” rather than the synagogue, and that Paul is preaching to both Jews and Greeks, probably signals that the church of Jesus Christ has now fully enveloped all the nations. Jesus promise in Acts 1:8 is being fulfilled.*

The last text to consider in this very abbreviated survey of the ministry of Paul and the book of Acts is the last passage in the book of Acts. This is how the book of Acts ends:

Acts 28:23-31

*<sup>23</sup> When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. <sup>24</sup> And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. <sup>25</sup> And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: <sup>26</sup> ‘Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. <sup>27</sup> For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ <sup>28</sup> Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.” <sup>29</sup> <sup>30</sup> He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.*

5. Where is Paul at the end of the book of Acts? Why might the book end in this (abrupt) way? Why wouldn't the book end with the death of Paul, for example?

· **ANSWER.** *By the end of the book, Paul is in the capital city of Rome, the symbol of worldly power and opposition to the kingship of Jesus. Nevertheless, he is there preaching the gospel with boldness and without hindrance. Darrell L. Bock comments on the ending of the book: “Luke’s story is that the gospel reaches Rome and is carried on the start of its journey to ‘the end of the earth.’ God sovereignly and powerfully brings the word to the capital of the world on a long and arduous journey from*

*Jerusalem. This journey has been coupled with unjust suffering and bold witness. As ironic as this combination may sound, it means triumph for the message of the kingdom and the Lord Jesus. . . . Luke’s message is this: be reassured; the unhindered progress of God’s word about salvation to all people is occurring by God’s direction, fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the long-revealed promise of Scripture to Israel—and despite opposition. . . . God is the hero of Acts, and the plot line is how he reveals his word through Jesus and a faithful church. God will make sure it happens, and so will a faithful church” (Acts (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 750, 759-760). The open ending of the book of Acts thus invites those who follow Jesus to continue to preach the gospel to all.*

### Tracing God’s Ways

Paul was saved by God’s grace for God’s mission to the Gentiles. The book of Acts describes the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman empire. Along the way, the gospel crosses ethnic lines, making it clear that God is creating a new people composed of Jews and Gentiles. The story of Acts ends with the triumph of the gospel in the heart of the pagan capital. God is establishing his kingdom over all earthly rulers and authorities and filling the earth with his glory through the gospel.

## Day 2

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### THE MISSION AND SUFFERING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Thus far in this lesson we have quickly surveyed Paul's conversion and his ministry according to the book of Acts. In this day's study we turn to consider his mission and his apostolic suffering by looking mostly at his own writings. We will first look at what Paul says about his ministry in the book of Romans, which many theologians regard as his most important letter.

#### Romans 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations . . .

#### Romans 15:15-21

<sup>15</sup> But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God <sup>16</sup> to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. <sup>17</sup> In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. <sup>18</sup> For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, <sup>19</sup> by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; <sup>20</sup> and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, <sup>21</sup> but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

#### Romans 16:25-27

<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that



was kept secret for long ages<sup>26</sup> but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—<sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

6. According to these passages, what is the purpose of Paul's ministry? Underline words and phrases that support your answer. How does the purpose of his ministry fit into a broader biblical theology?

- **ANSWER.** *According to these passages, the purpose of Paul's ministry is to preach the gospel about Jesus and to bring about the "obedience of faith." This aim fits into a broader biblical theology because it has always been God's intention to create a people who would fill the earth with his glory by reflecting his likeness. Whereas the nation of Israel was generally disobedient, however, and caused God's name to be slandered among the nations, as a minister of Jesus Christ God is working through Paul and the message of the cross to bring about a redeemed people who will obey—specifically, a people comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. God's global intentions are being realized at last.*

Here is another important passage testifying to God's cosmic plans for the gospel in salvation history:

Ephesians 3:7-12

<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

A final passage which describes Paul's ministry in salvation-historical terms is 2 Corinthians 3. We will study the entire chapter:

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

<sup>1</sup> Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? <sup>2</sup> You yourselves are our letter

of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. <sup>3</sup> And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. <sup>4</sup> Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup> who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. <sup>7</sup> Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, <sup>8</sup> will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? <sup>9</sup> For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. <sup>10</sup> Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. <sup>11</sup> For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. <sup>12</sup> Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, <sup>13</sup> not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. <sup>14</sup> But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. <sup>16</sup> But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

7. How is Paul's ministry different than Moses' ministry?

- **ANSWER.** *Moses' ministry brought death and condemnation because it met with hardened minds and veiled faces. It could not transform but only kill. Paul's ministry, on the other hand, brings life through the Spirit. It is a "ministry of righteousness" (2 Cor 3:9). When Christ removes the veil from the human heart, a person can see the glory of God and be transformed. In the words of Jeremiah, Paul's ministry under the new covenant is different because now God is writing the Law on human hearts.*

The proclamation of the gospel and the ministry of the Spirit were, for Paul, always joined with suffering. In the first account of Paul's conversion and commissioning, we hear these fateful words from the Lord Jesus:

Acts 9:15-16

<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

Throughout the book of Acts, these words are confirmed as Paul suffers in the spread of the gospel. Read the following descriptions of Paul’s ministry from his own letters:

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. <sup>8</sup> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death is at work in us, but life in you.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

<sup>3</sup> We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; <sup>7</sup> by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Particularly instructive is Paul’s description of his suffering and ministry in Colossians 1.

Colossians 1:24-26

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, <sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup> the mystery

*hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.*

The unusual phrase underlined above finds its only close parallel in the language of Philippians 2:30:

Philippians 2:29-30 (see also Philippians 4:18)

<sup>29</sup> *So receive [Epaphroditus] in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men,* <sup>30</sup> *for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.*

8. How is it that Paul fills up “what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Colossians 1:24)? How does his suffering relate to his mission?

· **ANSWER.** *In both Col 1 and Phil 2 what is lacking is the personal delivery of the gift, not anything in the gift itself. John Piper answers this question well in *Desiring God*, page 268: “Paul’s sufferings complete Christ’s afflictions not by adding anything to their worth, but by extending them to the people they were meant to save. What is lacking in the afflictions of Christ is not that they are deficient in worth, as though they could not sufficiently cover the sins of all who believe. What is lacking is that the infinite value of Christ’s afflictions is not known and trusted in the world. These afflictions and what they mean are still hidden to most peoples. And God’s intention is that the mystery be revealed to all the nations.” (For a defense of this interpretation see pages 267-269 of *Desiring God*.) So Paul’s sufferings necessarily accompany his proclamation of Christ’s sufferings so as to testify to the surpassing greatness of the gospel and to demonstrate that all the power comes from God.*

Yet we must also consider what Jesus’ and Paul’s example might mean for us. Consider the following texts and the underlined phrases:

John 15:18-20

<sup>18</sup> *If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* <sup>19</sup> *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* <sup>20</sup> *Remember the word that I said to you: “A servant is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*

Acts 14:21-22

<sup>21</sup> When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

2 Timothy 3:10-13

<sup>10</sup> You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. <sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

1 Peter 4:12-14

<sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

9. Considering each text that we have examined, summarize the role of Christ-like suffering in the spread of the gospel for Paul and for us.
  - **ANSWER.** Jesus, Paul, and Peter (among others) make it clear that Christian disciples will experience suffering as they live godly lives in this evil age. Suffering was not reserved for Jesus or for the apostles alone, but all who share in Christ's life must share in his sufferings too. This suffering is meant to refine our faith and to demonstrate the surpassing value of following Jesus as his disciple. Enduring suffering with faithfulness and joy brings God much glory in this world and attracts those who do not yet know him.

Think back now over redemptive history and major events in the history of Israel: the exodus, the conquest of the promised land, the period of judges, the rise of David, the establishment of Solomon's throne and the building of the temple, the defeat of the Assyrians during Hezekiah's reign, the prophet Elijah

on Mount Carmel, and the celebration of Hanukkah after the temple is cleansed, for example.

10. How does the expansion of God's kingdom under the new covenant compare to the expansion of his kingdom under the old covenant? Did Israel expand the kingdom of God through suffering with joy?

· **ANSWER.** *As the events mentioned above demonstrate, the kingdom of God was most often displayed and extended through the defeat of foreign nations and their gods. It was the military success, economic wealth, and wisdom of Israel which would testify to the greatness of their God. That is why Israel was expecting a Messiah to come in the likeness of King David or Judas Maccabaeus. Yet the kingdom of God and the gospel are spread under the new covenant most often through the patient, faithful, and joyful suffering of God's people. The world sees the superiority of our God when they see that all of our hope is founded upon what God promises to do for us when Jesus returns, despite what happens to us as we walk upon the path of obedience now. Therefore, following the lead of our Messiah and Savior, Jesus, the church extends the kingdom by a radically different means than the means that Israel employed and expected.*

### Tracing God's Ways

The purpose of Paul's ministry—and the purpose of our ministry of the gospel today—is to bring about the obedience of faith to the glory of God. This is often done through suffering. Part of God's plan is that the suffering of Christ might be made known and demonstrated through the suffering of his people.

## Day 3

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### CONTROVERSIES IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The epistles of the New Testament provide ample evidence of the problems and controversies that confronted the early church. Most, if not all, of these problems flowed from a faulty understanding of biblical theology or eschatology. We will examine five such problems below. The majority of the corrective teaching and encouragement of the New Testament epistles can be categorized under the broad reach of one of these five problems.

**PROBLEM #1:** *A faulty understanding of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles—specifically, concerning justification and the place of the Law in the new covenant.*

Galatians 2:15-21

<sup>15</sup> We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; <sup>16</sup> yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. <sup>17</sup> But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! <sup>18</sup> For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. <sup>19</sup> For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

11. How is Problem #1 manifested in this text? What is Paul's basic response?

- **ANSWER.** *It appears from this text (and the letter of Galatians as a whole) that certain Jewish "Christians" were teaching that Gentiles must be circumcised and obey the Law in order to be justified—a teaching which has connections to what we call "legalism" today. Paul calls this a false*

*gospel. According to Paul, no one can be justified through works of the Law. Only faith in Jesus and his atoning death can justify. Observance of the Mosaic Law then becomes an optional practice that cannot be compelled. Paul can circumcise Timothy for missionary reasons, but he can also stand with Titus who refused to be circumcised. Christians keep the Law through love (see Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8).*

**PROBLEM #2:** *A faulty understanding of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles—specifically, concerning God’s faithfulness to Israel.*

Romans 9:4-8

*<sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup> To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. <sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” <sup>8</sup> This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.*

Romans 11:1-2, 5-6, 11-12, 25-28

*<sup>1</sup> I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup> God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. . . . <sup>5</sup> So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. . . . <sup>11</sup> So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. <sup>12</sup> Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! . . . <sup>25</sup> Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; <sup>27</sup> “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” <sup>28</sup> As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.*



12. How is Problem #2 manifested in these texts? What is Paul's basic response?

- **ANSWER.** *It appears from Rom 9-11 that certain Gentiles were boasting over Jews because they had found mercy with God whereas Jews were stumbling over the gospel. Paul's basic response is that God remains faithful to his promises to Israel because God never promised the salvation of all ethnic Israelites, or Israel according to the flesh. Paul makes it clear, however, that Gentiles have not replaced Jews in the plan of God. While there is a difference among commentators on the nature of Israel's salvation described in Rom 11:26, it is undisputed that God has a special relationship to Israel (Rom 11:28), and that he will continue to work with Israelites to bring them to saving faith in Jesus. Jews and Gentiles are both saved through faith in Jesus. This theology addresses any form of teaching which is anti-Semitic or claims that there are multiple paths to salvation.*

**PROBLEM #3:** *A faulty understanding (or practice) of the new life of love that flows from the grace of God given in his Son, Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

<sup>9</sup> *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

James 2:14-17

<sup>14</sup> *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup> So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

1 John 2:3-6

<sup>3</sup> *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup> Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his*

word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

13. How is Problem #3 manifested in these texts? What is the basic response?

- **ANSWER.** *From this diverse collection of texts, it seems as if a major problem within the early Christian church was that certain people believed that the grace of God excused a lifestyle of sin—a similar theology to what is sometimes called “easy believism” today. The NT authors would have none of this and insisted that the grace and salvation of God also brought about moral transformation. Those whom God redeemed would be sanctified, and a lack of spiritual fruit in a person’s life suggested that they did not really know God.*

**PROBLEM #4:** *A faulty understanding of the nature of Christ’s return and the resurrection of the dead.*

1 Corinthians 15:12-14, 35-36, 42-44

<sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. . . . <sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” <sup>36</sup> You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. . . . <sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. <sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel,

*and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.<sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

#### 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,<sup>2</sup> not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

#### 2 Timothy 2:16-18

*<sup>16</sup> But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,<sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,<sup>18</sup> who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.*

14. How is Problem #4 manifested in these texts? What is Paul's basic response?

- **ANSWER.** *There seems to have been a host of false teachings concerning the Christian's future hope. Some simply denied the resurrection; others seemed to over-spiritualize it—not unlike the teaching of Christian “preterists” today. In response to these false teachings Paul clearly affirms the resurrection of Christ, asserts and describes our bodily resurrection as believers, and dismisses the false teaching of those who claim that the resurrection has already happened.*

**PROBLEM #5:** *A faulty understanding of the pattern of life before the return of Christ—that is, that glory is preceded by suffering.*

#### 1 Corinthians 4:8-16

*<sup>8</sup> Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!<sup>9</sup> For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.<sup>10</sup> We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in*

disrepute. <sup>11</sup> To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, <sup>12</sup> and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup> when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. <sup>14</sup> I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. <sup>15</sup> For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

#### Hebrews 10:32-39

<sup>32</sup> But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, <sup>33</sup> sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. <sup>34</sup> For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. <sup>35</sup> Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. <sup>37</sup> For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; <sup>38</sup> but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” <sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

#### 1 Peter 2:19-21

<sup>19</sup> For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

#### Revelation 13:5-10

<sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, <sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the

world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.<sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear:<sup>10</sup> If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

15. How is Problem #5 manifested in these texts? What is the basic response?

- **ANSWER.** *These texts imply that there were some among the early Christians who thought that a life of faith led to a life without suffering—not unlike the “prosperity gospel” of our own times. These texts were written, then, to assure Christians that faithfulness to God would often lead to persecution, suffering, and weakness. Yet, if early Christians followed the example of Jesus, Paul, and others, then they could overcome the hardships of this world and be rewarded for their steadfastness.*

### Tracing God’s Ways

A deficient understanding of biblical theology caused many problems in the early church, five primary ones being a legalistic demand for Law observance; Gentile boasting over Jews; a licentiousness supposedly legitimized by grace; a misunderstanding of eschatology; and an unwillingness to suffer and endure. These five problems correspond to five great realities of the new covenant: the total sufficiency of Christ’s work; the offer of salvation to Jew and Gentile; newness of life in the Holy Spirit; a hope for bodily resurrection; and a future reward for God-exalting endurance.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL

The word for “gospel” in Greek (*euangelion*) is closely related to the verbal form *euangelizō*, which is often translated as “bring/preach the good news.” To understand how the New Testament authors used and understood these key terms, we must first understand how these words were used in the Old Testament. Where would you guess is the first place the noun form *euangelion* or the verbal form *euangelizō* occurs in the entire Old Testament in its Greek translation (the Septuagint)?

The surprising answer is 1 Samuel 31. This chapter along with another chapter in the book of 2 Samuel begin to inform our understanding of what the term “gospel” meant.

#### 1 Samuel 31:6-10

<sup>6</sup> Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together. <sup>7</sup> And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them. <sup>8</sup> The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. <sup>9</sup> So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news [Greek: *euangelizō*] to the house of their idols and to the people. <sup>10</sup> They put his armor in the temple of Ashtaroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

#### 2 Samuel 18:19-33

<sup>19</sup> Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, “Let me run and carry news [Greek: *euangelizō*] to the king that the LORD has delivered him from the hand of his enemies.” <sup>20</sup> And Joab said to him, “You are not to carry news [Greek: *euangelia*] today. You may carry news [Greek: *euangelizō*] another day, but today you shall carry no news [Greek: *euangelizō*], because the king’s son is dead.” <sup>21</sup> Then Joab said to the Cushite, “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran. <sup>22</sup> Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, “Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite.” And

Joab said, “Why will you run, my son, seeing that you will have no reward for the news [Greek: euangelia]?”<sup>23</sup> “Come what may,” he said, “I will run.” So he said to him, “Run.” Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.<sup>24</sup> Now David was sitting between the two gates, and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he lifted up his eyes and looked, he saw a man running alone.<sup>25</sup> The watchman called out and told the king. And the king said, “If he is alone, there is news [Greek: euangelia] in his mouth.” And he drew nearer and nearer.<sup>26</sup> The watchman saw another man running. And the watchman called to the gate and said, “See, another man running alone!” The king said, “He also brings news [Greek: euangelizō].”<sup>27</sup> The watchman said, “I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok.” And the king said, “He is a good man and comes with good news [Greek: euangelia].”<sup>28</sup> Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, “All is well.” And he bowed before the king with his face to the earth and said, “Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.”<sup>29</sup> And the king said, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” Ahimaaz answered, “When Joab sent the king’s servant, your servant, I saw a great commotion, but I do not know what it was.”<sup>30</sup> And the king said, “Turn aside and stand here.” So he turned aside and stood still.<sup>31</sup> And behold, the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, “Good news [Greek: euangelizō] for my lord the king! For the LORD has delivered you this day from the hand of all who rose up against you.”<sup>32</sup> The king said to the Cushite, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” And the Cushite answered, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you for evil be like that young man.”<sup>33</sup> And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

16. If you only were working from 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 18, how would you define the term “gospel” (*euangelion*) or “preach the gospel” (*euangelizō*)? What connotations do these words have?

· **ANSWER.** *These two terms, as they are used in the Septuagint, are used consistently to describe a report of victory from the battlefield or the heralding of that good report. In both passages, the battle takes place away from the land of the Philistines and their temple or away from the city of Jerusalem. Messengers, therefore, must bring news of the battlefield result by foot back to those who are awaiting the outcome. After running from the*

*battlefield, they come to proclaim what has happened there. A declaration of victory is the “gospel.”*

Although the terms “gospel” and “preach the gospel” are used in 1 Samuel 31, 2 Samuel 18, and other Old Testament texts, the New Testament authors were probably most influenced by the way in which this term was used in the book of Isaiah. Carefully examine the following passages from the book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 40:9-11

<sup>9</sup> *Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news [Greek: euangelizō]; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news [Greek: euangelizō]; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”* <sup>10</sup> *Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.* <sup>11</sup> *He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.*

Isaiah 52:7-10

<sup>7</sup> *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news [Greek: euangelizō], who publishes peace, who brings good news [Greek: euangelizō] of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”* <sup>8</sup> *The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion.* <sup>9</sup> *Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.* <sup>10</sup> *The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

Isaiah 61:1-4

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news [Greek: euangelizō] to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup> to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.* <sup>4</sup> *They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.*



17. How are these three passages from Isaiah related to 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 18? With what is the “gospel” associated in Isaiah 40, 52, and 61?

• **ANSWER.** *Like 1 Sam 31 and 2 Sam 18, these three passages employ the same battlefield imagery that is communicated by one who is running upon the mountains and who is seen from the city of Jerusalem by watchmen. This messenger’s basic message is “Israel, behold your God—the God who reigns and has accomplished his victory!” The gospel is therefore associated with the renewal God promises Israel after the exile and the Lord’s return to Zion. The gospel is the message that is preached after God has executed his judgment and achieved the redemption and prosperity of his people.*

Turning now to the Gospels themselves, we find that the gospel is being preached even at the beginning of these books. Notice the following two passages:

Mark 1:1-4, 14-15

<sup>1</sup> *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* <sup>2</sup> *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, <sup>3</sup> the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”* <sup>4</sup> *John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. . . .* <sup>14</sup> *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,* <sup>15</sup> *and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*

Luke 2:8-12

<sup>8</sup> *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.* <sup>9</sup> *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.* <sup>10</sup> *And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news [Greek: euangelizō] of great joy that will be for all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* <sup>12</sup> *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”*

18. How could Jesus preach the gospel (Mark 1:15) before his death and resurrection? How could the angels preach the gospel even before Jesus began his public ministry?

- **ANSWER.** *As we saw from the book of Isaiah, the gospel is associated with the renewal and restoration that God promises Israel after the exile. Therefore, in preaching the gospel before his death and resurrection, Jesus is announcing that those promises are now being fulfilled through him. Likewise, in preaching the gospel at Jesus' birth, the angels are testifying that the birth of Jesus is going to be the means by which God accomplishes victory, peace, and redemption for his people. Mark 1 and Luke 2, therefore, do not imply that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are not essential parts of the gospel message, but only that the time of God's eschatological deliverance has come—a deliverance which he accomplishes through the person and work of his Son.*

There is a challenge in defining the gospel and in tracing a biblical theology of the gospel. John Piper articulates this problem:

*The challenge in defining such a common and broad word or phrase like “good news” or “declare good news” is to avoid two extremes. One extreme would be to define the Christian gospel so broadly that everything good in the Christian message is called gospel, and the other would be to define the Christian gospel so narrowly that the definition cannot do justice to all the uses in the New Testament.<sup>65</sup>*

Unfortunately, we do not have the space to investigate the many facets of the gospel in this day's study. The gospel message includes many glorious realities. For an exposition of these realities we highly recommend the second chapter of John Piper's book, *God Is the Gospel* (listed in the Additional Resources for this lesson). In that chapter, Piper looks at many New Testament texts to see what they say about the biblical scope of the gospel.

For the purposes of this course, however, we will look at the sermons preached by the apostles in the book of Acts, which we have mostly passed over thus far in the course.

**Note:** In the last class period, your instructor may have assigned you a particular sermon in the book of Acts to study and present to the class. If you have been assigned a sermon, please read all of the sermons listed below but especially study your assigned sermon now and answer Question 19. If your instructor did

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65 John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005), 26.

not assign you a particular sermon in the book of Acts, read all of the sermons listed below, choose one of these sermons, and then answer the lesson question. You will probably be presenting on the sermon you chose during the class discussion.

**Gospel Sermons in the Book of Acts:**

**2:14-40**

**3:12-26**

**10:34-43**

**13:16-41**

**17:22-31**

19. To whom is your particular sermon directed (that is, who is the audience)? What does this sermon teach us about the gospel? How is the sermon related to biblical theology? What are the similarities and differences between this sermon and the other gospel sermons in the book of Acts?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

We will now read two final passages concerning the gospel from the Corinthian correspondence. These two passages provide foundational descriptions about what the gospel is:

**1 Corinthians 15:1-5**

*<sup>1</sup> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

**2 Corinthians 4:1-6**

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup> But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to*

keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.<sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.<sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

20. What is the gospel according to 1 Corinthians 15? What is the gospel according to 2 Corinthians 4? How do these two passages relate?

- **ANSWER.** In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul describes the gospel by listing the major gospel events of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances. These events are for the salvation of those who believe. Notice also that these events happen "in accordance with the Scriptures"—an important and sometimes neglected phrase in this passage. In 2 Cor 4 Paul describes the essence of the gospel as the light of the glory of Christ, who is God. Therefore, as Piper explains in the fourth chapter of *God Is the Gospel*, 1 Cor 15 describes the "historical core" (61) and "indispensable deeds" (67) of the gospel which are "designed by God to reveal the glory of Christ" (61) and are mediated through the proclamation of the first generation of disciples who saw these things with their own eyes (66).

In all of our study of what the gospel is, we must never forget the highest good of the gospel—what ultimately makes the gospel good news. Let's conclude our study of a biblical theology of the gospel by reading another important quotation from *God Is the Gospel*:

*In the last chapter we unfolded the broader biblical meaning of the Christian gospel. It included the existence of the living God and his coming into history with imperial authority over all things as the long-awaited King of Israel and Lord of the universe. This King was Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. He fulfilled the Old Testament expectations of the Son of David, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again triumphant over Satan, death, and hell. He promised his own Spirit to be with us and help us. On the basis of his death and resurrection, the gospel promises a great salvation—eventual healing from disease and liberation from oppression, peace with God and others who believe, justification by faith apart from works of the law, forgiveness of sins, transformation into the image of Christ, eternal life, and the global inclusion of all people from all nations in this salvation.*

*But the point was made that the final and greatest good of the gospel is not*

*included in that array of gospel gifts. My burden in this book is to make as clear as I can that preachers can preach on these great aspects of the gospel and yet never take people to the goal of the gospel. . . .*

*What makes all the events of Good Friday and Easter and all the promises they secure good news is that they lead us to God. “Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). And when we get there, it is God himself who will satisfy our souls forever. Everything else in the gospel is meant to display God’s glory and remove every obstacle in him (such as his wrath) and in us (such as our rebellion) so that we can enjoy him forever. God is the gospel. That is, he is what makes the good news good. Nothing less can make the gospel good news. God is the final and highest gift that makes the good news good.<sup>66</sup>*

God will grant his people this final and highest gift when he returns to take us to be with him forever.

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66 John Piper, *God Is the Gospel*, 41, 42.

## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Gospel” (521-524)
- ▷ “Righteousness, Justice, and Justification” (740-745)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Paul” (136-140)
- ▷ “Romans” (291-297)

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of the gospel, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. How do contemporary proclamations of the “gospel” measure up to what you’ve observed in this lesson?
2. Of the five problems in the early church outlined in this lesson, which problem is most evident in your church or context?
3. Can the gospel be preached apart from biblical theology?



## 🔗 YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

## 🔗 APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

Have you repented and believed the gospel (and are you awaiting its final and highest gift)?

## 🔗 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006)
- ▷ Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2009)
- ▷ Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004)
- ▷ Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010)
- ▷ John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005)



# Yes, I Am Coming Quickly

# 12

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

Throughout this course we have been plotting our way through the storyline of the Bible. The story that the Bible tells can seem at times a very distant story; it's a story that is removed from us not only by geographical distance, but also by generations of history, and by culture and language. Is this biblical story relevant for us today? Is there still a story to tell?

In this lesson we will begin by reviewing the biblical story, tracing its beginning through to its present-day expression in the life of the church. Then we will consider what still remains in the story and how the story will end. We will conclude by considering, in broad strokes, how to apply biblical theology to our lives and we will trace a biblical theology of new creation.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ recount the major movements in the biblical story and its overall message
- ▷ articulate the ending of the biblical story and what will happen before its conclusion
- ▷ explain how biblical theology has practical value for living by faith





Since this is the last lesson of the course, you will probably want to invest a lot of time in reviewing the broad sweep of redemptive history. You might find it helpful to once again reproduce the basic timeline of salvation history that was introduced in Lesson 2 (and which you have hopefully been using in each class discussion to give your students a sense of the continuity in God's plan).

If you had your students take the "biblical theology pre-test" outlined in the Instructor's Introduction as an optional exercise, redistribute these pre-tests to your students. By reading the summaries of the story-line of the Bible that they composed before studying biblical theology, they may fruitfully compare their former understanding with what they have learned through the course. Even if they didn't take the pre-test, you still might choose to invest some of the class discussion in assessing how the students' understanding of biblical theology has grown through the course.

It might also be appropriate to spend about 15 minutes at the end of class either discussing any remaining questions or discussing ways in which the students' view of God has changed over the semester. Don't forget to focus on "application" or how this course has encouraged your students in the daily walk of faith.



## Day 1

### CREATION, SIN, AND ISRAEL

As we have seen throughout this course, almost all of the biblical-theological themes find their roots in Genesis 1-3. Of those chapters, the following passage might be the most important:

#### Genesis 1:26-29

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."<sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."

1. Review Lesson 2 and your answers to Questions 1-5. What was God's purpose in creating human beings?

· **ANSWER.** *Since we have provided suggested answers for each of these five questions, we will only briefly summarize our response to this question. Human beings were created with the capacity and commission to reflect God's glory through a "dominion of dependence." By multiplying on the earth, God intended for his glory to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.*

Almost as soon as God had commissioned Adam and Eve, the serpent intervenes and attempts to thwart God's design. Consider again the serpent's interaction with Eve.

### Genesis 3:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. <sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

The immediate effect of Adam and Eve’s sin is a break in their fellowship with God and a pollution of the world in which they lived.

2. Review Lesson 2 and your answers to Questions 7-10. What is sin? Why must God punish sin? What were the effects of Adam and Eve’s sin?

• **ANSWER.** *Sin is, briefly, the act of a moral agent in which God’s word and provisions are doubted so that that agent disobeys what God has said and thereby misrepresents the glory and goodness of God. Since God is committed to the preservation and display of his own glory above all things, he cannot tolerate such a misrepresentation of his glory. Therefore, not only did Adam and Eve suffer separation from the holy presence of God and death for their transgression, but God also subjected this present world to futility to serve as a reminder of the heinous result of men and women trying to provide for themselves.*

In his mercy, God does not immediately destroy what he has made. Even in the flood, he preserves man and the rest of creation. He initiates a new plan by which his purposes will be accomplished in the world.

#### Genesis 9:1-11

<sup>1</sup> And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup> The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. <sup>3</sup> Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. <sup>4</sup> But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. <sup>5</sup> And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. <sup>6</sup> Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. <sup>7</sup> And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it.” <sup>8</sup> Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup> “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. <sup>11</sup> I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

#### Genesis 12:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

3. Review your answers to Lesson 2, Questions 11-12, and Lesson 3, Questions 4-5. What is God’s response to the problem of sin? Will his global intentions still be accomplished?
  - **ANSWER.** God responds to the sin of the world by sending a flood in judgment. The flood demonstrates the greatness of the glory of God, the seriousness of sin against that glory, and God’s wrath toward sin. Despite this judgment, God perseveres a faithful remnant of Noah and his family and later Abram and his family. By establishing a covenant with Abraham in which he will be glorified and then by promising that all the families of the earth will be blessed through Abraham, God has clearly not surrendered his global intention of filling the earth with his glory.



From Abraham's descendants, God called out a people for himself from Egypt. This nation was given the commission that Adam, Noah, and Abraham were given. Their mandate is expressed perhaps most clearly in Exodus 19:1-6 and the following four passages in Deuteronomy which develop that text:

#### Exodus 19:1-6

<sup>1</sup> On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. <sup>2</sup> They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, <sup>3</sup> while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: <sup>4</sup> You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

#### Deuteronomy 4:1-8

<sup>1</sup> And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. <sup>2</sup> You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. <sup>3</sup> Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor. <sup>4</sup> But you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today. <sup>5</sup> See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>6</sup> Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."<sup>7</sup> For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?<sup>8</sup> And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

#### Deuteronomy 26:17-19

<sup>17</sup> You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and

will obey his voice.<sup>18</sup> And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments,<sup>19</sup> and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.

#### Deuteronomy 28:9-10

<sup>9</sup> The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.<sup>10</sup> And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.

#### Deuteronomy 33:29

<sup>29</sup> Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.

#### 4. What were God's intentions for the people of Israel?

- **ANSWER.** God intended for the nation of Israel to be a “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation.” Through their obedience to the wise Law of God, God would bless them and exalt them above all the other nations of the earth. Thus, all people who see the greatness of Israel's God, and they would be in fear of them.

After bringing Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land, we have studied in this course how Israel was eventually judged by God and removed from their land, just as Cain was driven away from God's provisions. It is clear that in sending Israel into exile, God is still thinking of his worldwide reputation:

#### Deuteronomy 29:22-28

<sup>22</sup> And the next generation, your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, will say, when they see the afflictions of that land and the sicknesses with which the LORD has made it sick—<sup>23</sup> the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath—<sup>24</sup> all the nations will say, “Why has the LORD done thus to this land? What caused the heat of this great anger?”<sup>25</sup> Then people will say, “It is because

they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, <sup>26</sup> and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them. <sup>27</sup> Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book, <sup>28</sup> and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day.”

5. Did God accomplish what he wanted to accomplish through the nation of Israel?

- **ANSWER.** *This question raises an important concept which we will address again in Question 14. In one sense, God did not accomplish what he wanted to through the nation of Israel, because Israel failed to keep the covenant and brought mostly slander to God’s name among the nations rather than praise. On a deeper level, however, God accomplished exactly what he wanted to accomplish through Israel because even in Israel’s failure as a nation, God glorified himself in their judgment and prepared the way for his plan of redemption, including the sending of his own Son. See also the important quotation of John Piper before Question 9 in Lesson 1.*

### Tracing God’s Ways

God created the heavens and earth in order to display his glory. Humans, as the pinnacle of God’s creation, were given the capacity to consciously enjoy and reflect God’s glory. God intended to spread his glory through them to fill the whole earth. These humans, though, doubted God’s provision and word, disrupted God’s design by sinning, and threatened to obscure the glory of God instead of reflecting it. God, however, re-engaged the world by entering into covenants.

## Day 2

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### THE FULLNESS OF TIME AND THE FUTURE

Israel broke their covenant with God. And yet, God still promises restoration. His plans will go forward. After hundreds of years of exile and then bondage, and in the fullness of time, God sends his Son to fulfill his promises to Israel. Look at the following passages which discuss the sending of Jesus.

#### Matthew 1:20-21

*<sup>20</sup> But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

#### Luke 2:25-32

*<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup> he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*

#### Galatians 4:4-5

*<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

#### Ephesians 1:7-10

*<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according*

to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

6. According to these passages, what part does Jesus play in the sweeping story of God's redemption of the world?

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus will save his people from their sins so that they might truly be sons of God and reflect God's likeness in the world. Jesus will be God's agent among the nations and will one day unite all things and accomplish God's plan for the glory of God.*

The new people of God consists of those who are in Christ. By believing upon him, we are united to him in his death and resurrection. But how marvelous it is that now we are used as instruments of righteousness to advance God's plan! God has not left us without a purpose in this world.

Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

7. How are the followers of Jesus different from the people of Israel under the old covenant? What do we have that they didn't have?

- **ANSWER.** *As followers of Jesus we have a definitive purification of sin that allows God himself to dwell with us and in us (by his Spirit), and we have the authority and power to make disciples of all nations so that God's global plans for his own glory are finally realized (though not perfectly until Jesus returns again).*

Having traced the major contours of salvation history, we are now in position to ask a crucial question: "So where are we now in the biblical story?" The story that the Bible tells is big enough to envelop all of human history. It is properly called a "meta-narrative," because it is a story that explains all of human life, existence, and history. The biblical story embraces the present day and all of the time remaining before the second coming of Jesus.

We are now in the period of salvation history that is described in 2 Peter 3.

## 2 Peter 3:1-14

<sup>1</sup> This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, <sup>2</sup> that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, <sup>3</sup> knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” <sup>5</sup> For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, <sup>6</sup> and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. <sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. <sup>11</sup> Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! <sup>13</sup> But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

In addition to this passage, theologians have typically pointed to two more passages to explain why the Lord has delayed his return.

## Matthew 24:14

<sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

## Revelation 5:9-10

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup> and you have

*made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*

8. In your own words, explain what is happening during our present chapter in the biblical story. Why has Jesus not returned yet?

- **ANSWER.** *We are now in a period of redemptive history in which God is gradually but inevitably filling the earth with his glory by creating disciples among all peoples. God is gathering his people from every tribe, language, people, and nation. Once this work is done, he will return to the earth to judge the living and the dead.*

This course is not a course about the events immediately preceding the return of Christ. There is a wide diversity of opinion about what will happen in history before that great event. This course is concerned with eschatology, however, when that term is defined in its broadest sense.

*In contrast with cyclical views of history, which hold that the universe is locked into a cycle of endless repetitions, special divine revelation led the Hebrews to see history as moving towards a future goal.* <sup>67</sup>

*Biblical eschatology may be defined as “the direction and goal of God’s active covenant faithfulness in and for his created order” . . . . It is Trinitarian in shape, Christocentric in focus, creation-affirming and future-orientated, describing the way God’s good purposes in history correspond to God’s ultimate reality.* <sup>68</sup>

Despite differences in the details, there is general agreement about several foundational matters concerning the “last things.” To mention a few:

- the day of the Lord will be unexpected and sudden
- the coming of the Lord will be preceded by tribulation
- the coming of the Lord will be preceded by the appearance of an opponent, most commonly referred to as the antichrist

Here is one doctrinal statement about the return of Christ:

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<sup>67</sup> *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 228.

<sup>68</sup> *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 459.

*We believe in the blessed hope that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally, visibly, physically, and suddenly in power and great glory; and that He will gather His elect, raise the dead, judge the nations, and establish His kingdom. We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master, and those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness will be consigned to everlasting conscious misery.*<sup>69</sup>

One significant difference between theologians is how to interpret the millennium of Revelation 20:

#### Revelation 20:1-10

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup> and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. <sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. <sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup> and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, <sup>10</sup> and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

#### 9. What different interpretations of this passage have you heard?

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<sup>69</sup> This excerpt is from the Bethlehem Elder Affirmation of Faith, 14.2. It is available online at the [desiringGod](http://desiringGod.com) website).



- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

Regardless of how one understands the millennium (which will not be explored extensively in this course), everyone is agreed that Jesus will judge the world.

Matthew 13:41-43

*<sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, <sup>42</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

The ultimate Christian hope, however, is not simply a “heaven” apart from earth. Our hope is not for disembodied bliss. Rather, we are waiting for the day when creation itself will be freed from its bondage to decay (Romans 8:21). We are waiting for heaven to descend to earth and for the earth to be remade. We will not spend eternity floating in the clouds. We will have new, resurrected bodies; we will feast with the Lord; we will dwell in a new city; we will enjoy all the pleasures of an earth that is devoid of sin and full of righteousness. Our greatest pleasure will be to see the unobstructed glory of Jesus. That is the great Christian hope. Amen! Come Lord Jesus!

10. Read Revelation 20:11–22:21. After reviewing the notes you have already taken on this passage in various assignments throughout this course, how does the vision of the new earth fulfill God’s original purpose for humans and all creation?

- **ANSWER.** *Briefly put, the glory of God will fill the new heavens and earth as the redeemed are perfected and are “a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rev 5:10). Furthermore, as we saw in Lesson 2, all the saints will dwell in the immediate and unmediated presence of God. The important note that “they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Rev 21:3) can be fruitfully traced through the OT (cf. Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:27).*

### Tracing God's Ways

God sent his Son Jesus Christ, a king in the line of David, to be king over a new covenant people. By sharing in his atoning death and triumphant resurrection, the church is empowered to spread the knowledge of the glory of God throughout the world by making disciples and living in a new, Spirit-filled community.

We are now witnessing the spread of the gospel among all nations. God is filling the earth with his glory as he is redeeming people from every tongue and tribe. One day soon, Jesus will return to judge the world and claim his own. God will then remake the world. His people will dwell in the new earth with him forever.

## Day 3

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### INHABITING THE BIBLICAL STORY

Throughout this course, direct and immediate application has been sparse. This is intentional. It may not always be easy to see how biblical theology is practical, relevant, or helpful in the life of faith. We are of the conviction, however, that a solid grounding in the biblical story and a persuasion of its truthfulness is a powerful mooring for the soul. When biblical theology is understood, when the biblical story envelopes your life, when the ambition of your life aligns with God's purposes in history—transformation happens.

*To accept the authority of this [biblical] story is to enter it and to inhabit it. It is to live in the world as the world is portrayed in this story. It is to let this story define our identity and our relationship to God and to others. . . . The Bible's narrative does not simply require assent. Like all stories, it draws us into its world, engages us imaginatively, allows us at our own pace to grow accustomed to it. . . . But to accept the Bible's metanarrative as authoritative is to privilege it above all other stories. It is to find our own identity as characters in that story, characters whose lives are an as yet untold part of the story<sup>70</sup>.*

11. How are we to “apply” the Bible’s story to our lives (and is “apply” the best word)? Put Bauckham’s quotation (above) into your own words.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

In the following passage, notice the effect that the biblical story had upon Paul’s life and witness:

Acts 26:19-29

<sup>19</sup> “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. <sup>21</sup> For this reason

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<sup>70</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 64, 65.

*the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup> To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: <sup>23</sup> that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” <sup>24</sup> And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” <sup>25</sup> But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. <sup>26</sup> For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” <sup>28</sup> And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” <sup>29</sup> And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”*

12. Describe the relationship between Paul’s “biblical theology” and his life. Is biblical theology spiritually edifying or merely an academic exercise?

• **ANSWER.** *That Paul believed in an single, unifying plan of God grounded in the Scriptures and focused on Jesus Christ is evident from his insistence that he is saying nothing “but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass” (Acts 26:22). Likewise, his question to King Agrippa “Do you believe the prophets?” also reveals that Paul’s biblical theology (at this point in his life at least) included the belief that the prophets of Israel’s Scripture and the storyline of Scripture clearly pointed to the death and resurrection of Christ and the Gentile mission (Acts 26:23). These beliefs gave Paul the courage and conviction to be persecuted and imprisoned for his faith. Paul would not have lived the radical life of obedient suffering that he did unless he was convinced that the God of Israel was fulfilling his promises and purposes through the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, we might say that Paul’s biblical theology was spiritually-edifying, conviction-shaping, and obedience-empowering.*

Similarly to Richard Bauckham’s quote above, P. E. Satterthwaite argues that we can find meaning in life if we locate ourselves in the continuing story that the Bible tells.

*The biblical account gives us a narrative framework, a continuing story, in which*

*we can, if we will, locate ourselves, and thereby find meaning in life. Like the speakers in Nehemiah 9, we may feel dissatisfaction that the end of the narrative still seems far off, but in the light of Jesus' resurrection we have better grounds than they for confidence that the narrative will in due course end triumphantly.*<sup>71</sup>

13. Describe how this course has impacted your life. Would you encourage others to study biblical theology? Why or why not?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

We must pause at this point to mention a *very* important qualification. Several times during this course God's actions in history have been described using language such as "this is what happened and God responded in this way" or "God's purposes will *finally* be *realized* in the church." This does *not* imply that God is constantly being frustrated in his purposes and then making new attempts to fulfill his plan. The cross of Jesus Christ is not God's second plan or "plan B." It is not even a plan that God designed *after* the fall of Adam and Eve. We who believe were chosen *before* the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). 1 Peter 1:20 makes it clear that Christ as the lamb of God was foreknown *before* the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for our sake. Names were written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain *before* the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8, 17:8). Before God created anything, it was his intention to glorify his mercy in the death of his Son Jesus and the redemption of a people. The death of his Son was predestined to take place (cf. Acts 2:23, 4:28). This should inspire great confidence in God and his purposes. The story of human existence and history has already been written in the wisdom, power, and love of God. It is this rock-solid confidence that assures us that our gospel-labor is not in vain. One day soon the Lord Jesus will return to claim his own.

14. Why is this an important qualification to make? What would be lost if God was not completely sovereign in biblical theology?

· **ANSWER.** *This is an absolutely crucial qualification to make because our confidence in God's ability to conclude redemptive history in the way he has promised is built upon our knowledge that the biblical story has gone exactly as God has ultimately desired it to go up to this point. If God's*

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71 P. E. Satterthwaite, "Biblical History," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 51.

*ultimate plan has been frustrated in any way up until this point, how can we know that our glorious future is completely secure? This is why it is our belief that the teaching of “Open Theism” is so destructive to a biblical theology that honors God, accurately understands the Bible, and produces joy and hope in God’s people. Every twist and turn in the biblical story, though it may not be pleasing to God in and of itself, has been predetermined by him for his greater glory and our good.*

We will look at just one more text. All of redemptive history from Adam and Eve until the final judgment is only an infinitesimally small period of time when compared to the endless ages we will enjoy in the presence of God. We will be with the Lord forever—not in “timelessness” but in endless time. Therefore, when we think about how God is going to glorify himself we must consider how he will glorify himself in the infinitely large period of time from the final judgment to the new heavens and new earth and on and on and on and on . . .

Ephesians 2:4-7

*<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

15. How will God be glorified in the coming ages?

- **ANSWER.** *The kindness that God has shown toward us in Christ Jesus is spelled out by Eph 2:1-6—specifically God’s grace in forgiving our trespasses and making us alive together with Christ. Therefore, in the coming ages we will see more and more of just how rich and merciful and gracious and kind this salvation is. As O’Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians, says, “What God has done for those in Christ is a reality, but only in the coming ages will it be fully seen for what it is. In the light of God’s gracious saving work, believers point men and women [both now and in the coming ages] from themselves to the one to whom they owe their salvation” (173).*

*Notice how Paul piles up words to make a deep and lasting impression on our*

hearts. God's settled purpose is to be gracious to those who are in Christ Jesus. And lest we miss the sweetness and gentleness and gladness of the word "grace," he adds the words, "in kindness toward us." Now ask yourself this question: If there were one person in all the universe the benefits of whose kindness you could choose, who would it be? Would it not be God? You might be able to think of a thousand things that would be kindness to you. But then your imagination would run out. But God's imagination will never run out. . . . And to make this clear Paul uses the word "riches." God's purpose is to spend the "riches of his grace in kindness on us." And then to assist our faltering imagination he adds the word "immeasurable" or "surpassing" or "incomparable."<sup>72</sup>

### Tracing God's Ways

The biblical story that has been preserved for us in the Bible is meant to be studied, appreciated, and "inhabited" for the glory of God and the joy of his people.

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72 John Piper, "But God . . .," an online sermon at the desiringGod website.

## Day 4

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### TRACING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF NEW CREATION

The Creator-creature distinction is fundamental to any Christian theology. This is no different for biblical theology. The entire storyline of the Bible presumes and is built on the truth that God is the uncreated Creator, and that as Creator of the World he is also Ruler of the world and of history. It is therefore appropriate that in this last lesson we return once again to the beginning and trace a theology of creation and new creation through the Bible and all the way to the end of the Bible and the climax of God's plan.

Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 17-18, 21, 25, 31

*<sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. . . . <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. . . . <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. . . . <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. . . . <sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. . . . <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. . . . <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

16. Why did God see creation as “very good” only after the sixth day (Genesis 1:31)? (Hint: The answer to this question has to do with the purpose for which creation was made.)

· **ANSWER.** We agree with Hafemann when he writes that Gen 1:28-29 “makes clear that the function of creation is to provide a home and food for mankind as a manifestation of the perfection of our Provider. . . . Creation



*was ‘very good’ not only because it fulfilled the immediate function for which it was designed (to provide for humanity) but also because it so clearly accomplished its ultimate purpose (to reveal God’s character). Since all of creation owes its existence solely to God’s decision to make it, the creation is a revelation of God’s sovereignty (God is the powerful Creator) and grace (God creates freely as an expression of his own sufficiency)” (The God of Promise and the Life of Faith, 29-30). Creation was not seen to be “very good,” therefore, until after the sixth day because creation could not fulfill its immediate or ultimate purpose until the end of the sixth day.*

Although this course has focused on man—and rightly so—we must remind ourselves that man is only a part of God’s creation. All of God’s creation is designed for the glory of God:

Psalm 19:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup> Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.*

Whereas the rest of creation, however, cannot reflect the moral beauty of God or consciously rebel against him, men and women (and angels) do have that capacity. Soon after God’s good creation, the man and woman whom he created tried to thwart God’s design. Humans began to fill the earth with their own wickedness instead of the glory of God.

Read the following verses that pertain to the flood, and notice that God’s punishment does not include only men and women but also “all flesh in which is the breath of life.”

Genesis 6:5-7, 11-13, 17

*<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. <sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” . . . <sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup> And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. <sup>13</sup> And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all*

*flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. . . .<sup>17</sup> For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.”*

Here are some thoughts about creation and God’s judgment:

*This link between God’s presence and his provision explains why, when mankind’s rebellion reaches such drastic proportions that God decides to destroy them, he does so by destroying with a flood the very habitat he has provided. Humanity’s ever-increasing failure to honor their Creator is thus judged by a progressive reversal of the purpose of creation itself, which was to manifest God’s glory through the dependent dominion of his people made possible by his provision. An increasing alienation from God brings with it an increasing alienation from God’s other provisions. Mankind’s evil finally reaches such a pitch that God causes the world over which humanity was to exercise dominion as his image to rise up in an act of ultimate rebellion against them. As a result, the mist that watered the garden from below is replaced by a flood of waters that drown the earth from above. In a world perverted by sin, the means of life now become the instrument of death.<sup>73</sup>*

17. Using these reflections from Hafemann, think for yourself about how creation theology is related to God’s judgment of sin. Record your thoughts below.

· **ANSWER.** *As we noted in our previous answer, the immediate purpose creation was to fulfill was to provide for humanity. In judging sin, God reverses this purpose so that now creation threatens and destroys humanity instead. Nevertheless, creation still serves its ultimate purpose of revealing God’s character. Yet again, instead of revealing God as the sovereign, self-sufficient, and benevolent supplier of all things, the flood reveals a sovereign, holy, and wrathful destroyer of all things who is angered at man’s attempted self-sufficiency. Creation always serves its Master.*

A biblical theology of creation and new creation, however, is not limited to the first few chapters of Genesis and the last few chapters of Revelation. Rather, it is a theme that runs all throughout Scripture.

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<sup>73</sup> Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*, 65-66.

*The biblical story, from beginning to end, can rightly be described as an epic of new creation. As its prologue opens with Elohim's creation of heaven and earth, so its epilogue closes with the dramatic appearance of the new heaven and earth—a place where sorrow and death are no more, and where the dwelling place of God is with his people. Creatio originalis gives way to creation nova as the one seated upon the throne announces, “Behold, I make all things new!” (Rev 21:5). . . .*

*The motif of “new creation,” however, is not confined to the opening and closing chapters of the Christian Scriptures. The prophets, the psalmists, the evangelists [that is, the Gospel writers], and so on, all exhibit a robust faith in the creative activity of God, and this faith was not focused solely on the remote past or the distant future. The prayer of the penitent sinner that God would “create a pure heart, and grant a new spirit” (Ps 51:10), as well as the bold declaration of the prophet that Yahweh was, even now, “making something new” (Isa 43:18), reflect a deep-seated belief in the continuing new-creative work of God, and form part of the vibrant, if variegated, biblical witness to new creation.<sup>74</sup>*

The theme of new creation is too extensive to cover comprehensively in this lesson, so we will focus on a few key aspects of it, starting with the following passages about creation and Israel:

Deuteronomy 32:6-7, 15-18

*<sup>6</sup> Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?<sup>7</sup> Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. . . .<sup>15</sup> But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.<sup>16</sup> They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger.<sup>17</sup> They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.<sup>18</sup> You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.*

Isaiah 43:1, 5-7, 15, 18-21

*<sup>1</sup> But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name,*

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<sup>74</sup> Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

*you are mine. . . .<sup>5</sup> Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. <sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, <sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. . . .<sup>15</sup> I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. . . .<sup>18</sup> Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. <sup>19</sup> Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. <sup>20</sup> The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, <sup>21</sup> the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.”*

18. How is creation theology related to the nation of Israel?

- **ANSWER.** *These two passages describe the nation of Israel as the LORD's direct creation. Being the “Creator of Israel” means that the LORD rightly demands Israel's obedience and allegiance. In fact, the LORD created Israel for his glory (Isa 43:7) and formed them for his praise (Isa 43:21). In this way, there are many similarities between Israel and Adam. Both were directly and personally formed by God with the express purpose of glorifying him. Both Adam and Israel, however, failed in their commission and were exiled from the very land which God had given to them to supply their needs.*

God made promises for a new creation after Israel's exile. The language used in the following passages is picked up in the final vision of the new creation in Revelation 21-22.

In this first passage notice that not only are humans prospering, but all of creation is in harmony:

Isaiah 65:17-25

<sup>17</sup> *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. <sup>18</sup> But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. <sup>19</sup> I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. <sup>20</sup> No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the*

sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. <sup>21</sup> They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>22</sup> They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. <sup>23</sup> They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them. <sup>24</sup> Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. <sup>25</sup> The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Another passage describes live-giving water flowing from God's presence:

Ezekiel 47:1, 6-9, 12

<sup>1</sup> Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. . . . <sup>6</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river. <sup>7</sup> As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. <sup>8</sup> And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. <sup>9</sup> And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. . . . <sup>12</sup> And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."

This final passage describes the abundant life and joy God's people will enjoy in his presence as they are his people and he is their God "in faithfulness and in righteousness":

Zechariah 8:1-8

<sup>1</sup> And the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. <sup>3</sup> Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in

*the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. <sup>4</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. <sup>5</sup> And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. <sup>6</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares the LORD of hosts? <sup>7</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts: behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, <sup>8</sup> and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.”*

As we mentioned above, we can only focus on a few key aspects of a biblical theology of creation. A fuller biblical theology of creation would undoubtedly detail how the Old Testament’s expectation for a new creation is completely met in various ways in the New Testament. And central to that fulfillment would be the person of Jesus, the Son of God.

*God’s glory in creation finds its supreme manifestation in Jesus Christ. But the eternal Son of God is also the divine Creator, so how can God’s glory in creation be manifested in the Creator? The answer lies in the Incarnation: the Creator became the creature. In Christ, deity took on the form of humanity. In Jesus Christ, the Creator and the creature meet, and the glory of God is manifested in the creation. <sup>75</sup>*

Any biblical theology of the new creation would have to consider the following Christological texts as building blocks for constructing an understanding of the Son of God’s involvement in the creation:

John 1:1-3, 14

*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . . <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

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<sup>75</sup> Mark D. Futato, *Creation: A Witness to the Wonder of God* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2000), 12.

Colossians 1:15-18

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Revelation 3:14

<sup>14</sup> And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: “The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.”

By virtue of our union with Christ, we too participate in the new creation:

2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Galatians 6:14-15

<sup>14</sup> But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Now look at two more passages which speak of the new creation by using temple and body metaphors:

Ephesians 2:8-10, 19-22

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. . . . <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:15-16

<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him

who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

19. How is creation theology related to Jesus and the church?

- **ANSWER.** *Much of what can be said of God's creation of Israel could also apply to his creation of the church through Jesus Christ. Jesus' incarnation is one of the most important moments in salvation history as it represents God's return to Israel and the revelation of his glory. The new creation begins, though, with Jesus' resurrected and glorified body. We participate in the new creation as the Spirit revivifies our spirit and is given to us as an initial payment of the renewal and filling that will be ours when all of creation is restored.*

Though the new creation has been inaugurated, it certainly has not been consummated. We are awaiting the day when not only our bodies but all of creation will be set from bondage. The new creation is an integral part of the Christian's hope for the future.

Romans 8:18-25

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

We now live in the tension between the old creation and the new creation—the overlap of the ages. And we cannot rightly understand our place within creation unless we understand this tension:

*You can never understand the beginning or middle of a story without the ending.*



*The story of God's work as creator and sustainer of the Universe needs to be held together with his future work of new creation.*

*. . . Creation and new creation existed together in the mind of God from the beginning. Furthermore, the very suffering, frustration and decay that results from the sin of human beings can become pointers to God's future purposes. . . . If such pointers are seen from the perspective of Jesus, and in particular his resurrection, they point forward to a new creation. . . . The cross and resurrection help us to see a suffering, expectant, frustrated and groaning creation in the context of hope.<sup>76</sup>*

Let's look at one more pair of texts which reflect some of the differences between the old creation and the new creation:

#### Genesis 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* <sup>2</sup> *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

#### Revelation 21:1-5

<sup>1</sup> *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.* <sup>2</sup> *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* <sup>3</sup> *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."* <sup>4</sup> *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* <sup>5</sup> *And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

20. Why will there be no more sea in the new creation (Revelation 21:1)? (Hint: Doing a concordance search or a word study on "sea" in the book of Revelation will help you answer this question.) What does this detail teach us about the new creation?

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<sup>76</sup> David Wilkinson, *The Message of Creation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 217, 242-243.

- **ANSWER.** *By commenting that there will be no more sea, John probably does not mean that there will be literally no large bodies of water in the new earth. Rather, the “sea” is probably functioning as a symbol for something else. As Jonathan Moo points out, the sea “can be used in Revelation to denote the realm of cosmic evil, sometimes linked with the abyss and death, and it is regularly associated with God’s judgments” (“The Sea That Is No More,” Novum Testamentum 51.2 (2009), 161). Therefore, as Moo concludes, “By describing the new creation in terms that echo the first, John highlights what is different about the new creation. He suggests that the cosmic sea, the waters of which could be set loose during this age to bring destruction and from which beasts and evil powers might arise, will no longer pose any threat in the renewed cosmos. Never again will creation be called upon to destroy the destroyers of the earth for all judgment will be past and salvation finally and definitely accomplished” (167). The sea, then, probably symbolizes the “former things” which have passed away (Rev 21:4). The new creation will never be spoiled by sin, evil, or death.*

## Day 5

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**Required Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Creation” (429-435)
- ▷ “Eschatology” (459-464)

**Further Reading:** *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- ▷ “Preaching and Biblical Theology” (104-112)
- ▷ “Heaven” (540-542)
- ▷ “Revelation (book)” (356-363)



## INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

In two or three paragraphs, compose your own biblical theology of new creation, drawing upon what you've learned from your study of Scripture and from the required reading.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Review the following three questions in preparation for class discussion. You might want to jot down some notes that will remind you of ideas to share with the group.

1. Can you think of any creative ways to summarize the biblical story?
2. What periods of salvation history would you like to study more?
3. Why didn't God begin with the new heavens and earth? Why should there be hundreds of generations of human pain and misery before then?

### YOUR OWN QUESTION

After answering the lesson questions and completing the required reading and integrative assignment, record one lingering question that you have and would like to ask in discussion.

### APPLICATION QUESTION

Consider the following application question as you think about how the biblical material introduced in this lesson might shape your own life.

Have you “inhabited” the biblical story? If so, how? If not, why not?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▶ John Piper, “The Triumph of the Gospel in the New Heavens and the New Earth,” an online conference message at the [desiringGod](#) website.
- ▶ John Piper, *God is the Gospel* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005).
- ▶ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004).
- ▶ Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994).

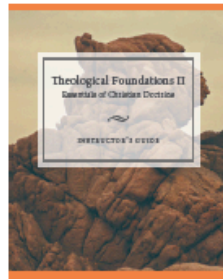


# Tracing God's Ways

## An Introduction to Biblical Theology

The course *Tracing God's Ways* will attempt to provide students with a comprehensive, chronological, and biblical overview of God's purposes as they are providentially unfolding in redemptive history. The course begins with creation and the garden of Eden and then progresses through biblical history by focusing on the defining events and persons in God's plan. From conception to culmination, Genesis to Revelation, the perspective this course offers on God's work is broad and integrated. The bulk of the student's labor in this course will be focused on inductive Bible study of key biblical passages and themes.

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