

A Royal Residence for the Prince of Peace

A Blueprint of the Structure of the Old Testament



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Introduction

A way to picture the Old Testament

For many years I've looked for a concrete way to picture the structure of the OT. As a facilitator for Langham Preaching International in French-speaking Africa, I've had the privilege of introducing hundreds of pastors and church leaders to the preaching of the grace of God from OT texts. (This booklet is not an L.P.I. textbook but simply draws on my experience as a teacher.) It's been a real challenge. Why? Certainly not because of the capacity of the students. They are both capable and passionate for Scripture. No, the challenge lies elsewhere.

Surveying the OT, we are impressed by its vast grandeur. It starts with the beginning of all things. The OT introduces a majestic Creator God and covers centuries of history. It also presents us with thousands of people with difficult names. It tells us of a complex religion lived out by people long ago.

Yet, in spite of all these challenges, God the Father still tells His servants to preach the word.

2 Timothy 4 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

To preach the word means to preach the Old Testament alongside the New Testament.

Our assignment is clear: first, understand and then, teach this part of the Bible which tells the story of the work of God before the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ. I offer you in this booklet a way to understand the main framework of the OT. This is not a commentary on all the books. Those brilliant commentaries already exist. Rather, this booklet introduces the two great themes of the Bible: the kingdom of God and the covenants of God. We will see how these themes complement each other. From the perspective of the unity of these themes we will picture the OT as the construction of a royal residence for Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

For the moment, think of yourself as an architect while reading the Bible. An architect starts the project by looking at the big picture. All of the details will come along later. We, too, look at the



OT as a vast building project of God. In the OT God gives us His plans for a royal palace, a home for the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:5). Let's look at the overall design of this magnificent work to discover first the foundation, then the walls, and then the roof. Each chapter will reveal another part of the residence.

When the whole palace is complete by the end of the OT, we'll then be able to see how Jesus comes in the NT to claim His rightful place on his throne as Lord. Jesus is the accomplishment of the entire plan of God for our salvation. So now, dear readers, get your hard hats on and let's get to work!

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

Note: The verses quoted in this booklet are from the New American Standard Bible

Thanks: I would like to thank Mrs. France Spackman and Mr. and Mrs. Jean Bouda for their corrections and suggestions for the original French version. All the errors are solely mine. I would also like to thank my daughter, Blake Dennis, for her arduous work of editing and lay out of the MS.

Chapter one

The foundation for a palace is laid down

How can one approach the sheer magnitude of this book made up of 39 books which we call the Old Testament? Actually, it was my reading in the NT that first gave me the idea of approaching the OT by seeing it as the construction of a great royal residence. I was struck by the picture of God as a builder found in Hebrews.

Hebrews 3 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; ² He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. ³ For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; ⁶ but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Hebrews 11 ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

The author presents the redeemed people as a house built by God over which Jesus is sovereign. God gathers these saved people into the church. In the NT this house is also called the body of Christ. The body is seen as the dwelling place of God on earth by His Spirit. The church is part of an even greater dominion of God, namely, the kingdom of God. The author of Hebrews describes this kingdom as *the heavenly calling* (3:1). God the Father is the builder of the kingdom and Christ's church is the earthly visible expression of the kingdom. Jesus now rules over the kingdom for the glory of God.

Luke gives us the apostle Paul's point of view on this kingdom right at the end of his life:

Acts 28 ²³ When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly *testifying about the kingdom of God* and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening

...

³⁰ And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹ *preaching the kingdom of God* and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

You notice that Paul uses the OT, especially Moses and the prophets, to persuade people that the kingdom of God has arrived on earth through Jesus' work. Jesus

is Lord of the kingdom because He is the Messiah (Christ in Greek). Paul says in Acts 20:24-27 that the establishing of the kingdom is none other than *the whole plan of God, the good news of the grace of God, and the ministry* that he himself received from the Lord Jesus. Here is the big plan of God for the universe! The Divine Architect lays out the foundation of a kingdom where Jesus will be the Prince of Peace. This domain is filled with joyful folks who love and serve their creator through the power of the Holy Spirit put into their hearts.

All of these verses about the kingdom stimulated my imagination. At the heart of every kingdom is a royal residence or a headquarters, if you will. In my reflections I started to conceive of this purpose of God as a blueprint for the construction of a residence for the royal Son of God where He would maintain a close bond with His people. With this image in mind of the kingdom of God concentrated into a palace built for the prince and his citizens I started to flesh out a picture of the structure of the OT.

Immediately I was confronted with a mystery. I could see from Genesis to Malachi how God established his kingdom among his faithful ones. After all, God is sovereign in all things. But how do we explain the presence of so many covenants in the OT? There are two big themes in the OT not just one, namely, the kingdom of God and the covenants of God. Here was my question: *what is the relationship between this kingdom that the Father is establishing for His Son and all these covenants found right through the Law of Moses and the prophets* (Acts 28:23)? Paul was able to answer this question over a two-year period when he was in Rome. Unfortunately, we don't have a recording of that teaching! It's up to us to search our Bibles and to find the possible links between the kingdom and the covenants.

We need to pause a moment here and take some time to look at the kingdom and the covenants separately in order to see a possible tie in. If we can see the real relationship between them then we can continue with our illustration of the OT as a blueprint for the building of a royal residence which will welcome the Lord Jesus when all is complete.

The Character of the kingdom of God

The kingdom of God has two dimensions. It is 1) the immediate spiritual power of the rule of God in the lives of His redeemed people and 2) the actual domain where this spiritual rule takes place each day. Some theologians speak of a *dynamic* (ruling) side and a *static* (domain) side of the kingdom. There is a spiritual divine presence for the people of God in the kingdom. It is dynamic. But this spiritual force is actually exercised in a place called the kingdom. It is static. To experience the fullness of the kingdom both elements, or dimensions, will be present. This fullness of God's presence and place is the goal of eternal life.

Let's take some secular examples to better understand the two dimensions of a kingdom. The king of the Belgians certainly has a physical domain with boundaries over which he rules in a symbolic sense. But in this territory called his kingdom, does he actually rule with true *dynamic* power? No. His rule is in name only. On the other hand, when the king of the Romanians had to leave his *physical domain* during a revolution, many of his followers went with him into exile. They still called him king. He had real power in their hearts even though he no longer ruled over a geographic area. Neither the Belgian nor the Romanian king has the fullness of a kingdom, that is, real power expressed in a real domain. In fact, there are very few examples in the modern world of a king who rules powerfully over a literal kingdom.

In the OT there is always a dynamic (spiritual) dimension to God's kingdom. God ruled in the personal lives of the people of faith. The static (territorial) dimension is never seen as often. There were highs and lows for the land of Israel. For long periods of time God's true people were just nomads, never possessing their own land over which God ruled. After the conquest of the promised land under Joshua until the exile of the tribe of Judah, we can say that God had an earthly kingdom, the land of Israel.

1 Samuel 11 ¹² Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is he that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." ¹³ But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has accomplished deliverance in Israel." ¹⁴ Then Samuel said to the people, "Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there." ¹⁵ So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

God's faithful people in Israel rejoiced to have a provisional expression at least of both dimensions of the kingdom. God reigned over their daily lives within a royal territory with real borders and an earthly king. Israel lacked, of course, the permanent presence of their Messiah King. The faithful Jews and converts had to be content with God's promises of a Savior, the daily sacrifices, and the prophecies of a glorious future. Abraham was their model to imitate...

Hebrews 11 ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

The coming of Jesus marks the accomplishment of all the promises for God's kingdom. Jesus declares at the beginning of His public ministry: *The kingdom of God has come.* (Mark 1:14) Jesus the King comes to rule spiritually in the lives of His people. The Father saves His people by the cross of Jesus. That is to say, the sacrificial death of the Messiah Jesus makes it possible for God to freely welcome

the Jews and the Gentiles equally as His own. Thus we are all kingdom citizens by faith in His grace.

Philippians 3 ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To set us a part from the world the Holy Spirit is given to every kingdom citizen. The Spirit of God is the *dynamic* power of the kingdom.

Romans 14 ¹⁷ the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The dynamic dimension of the kingdom is pretty clear: Jesus rules our spirits by His Spirit. But what about the static or “territorial” dimension of God’s kingdom under the Lord Jesus? Is there now a place where we can see the kingdom at work? I would say “Yes”. How? In the life of the church of Jesus Christ. The church is not the very same thing as the fullness of God’s kingdom, of course. The kingdom is a bigger place than the church. The church is found on earth. The kingdom is seen on earth and in heaven. The members of the church live and serve on the earth. The members of the kingdom live in the church but continue to live in the kingdom after death (absent from the body and present with the Lord.) The angels are not members of the earthly church, but they are members of the eternal kingdom. The author of Hebrews describes what is happening in heaven while the church is worshiping on earth.



Hebrews 12 ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

We worship the Lord here below. The angels and the believers who have died worship up there.

The church is the principal earthly expression of the kingdom of God. The character of the kingdom is to be seen in the life of the church. If you want to see a community of mutual love, patience, respect, and brotherly welcome then you ought to be able to see it in the body of Christ.

1 Peter 2 ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For this is contained in Scripture: “Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” ⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,” ⁸ and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Even with all her faults and frailties, the church of Jesus Christ remains the place on earth where the kingdom of God is visibly manifest. (There are two subjects which go beyond the scope of this booklet, namely, 1) what are all the lines of relationship between the kingdom and the church, and 2) to what extent do we see the presence of God’s kingdom already present on earth. See appendices for more details about these questions.)

The character of a covenant and the relationship between the kingdom and the divine covenants

We’ve just seen in the verses above that the great plan of God, His eternal will for His creation, is to establish it as a spiritual kingdom with Jesus as its Lord. The Old Testament, however, speaks continuously about the covenants of God. What might be the relationship between kingdom and covenant?

For the sake of simplicity, let me say that the original covenant of God is the governing constitution of the kingdom. A covenant bond is the chosen means of God to rule and guide His kingdom throughout human history. The kingdom is not a tyranny. It is not a domain ruled by angelic mediators who report back to a remote and impersonal God. The kingdom is ruled both directly and personally by God himself. There have always been kings and dictators who rule as tyrants. They do not love their citizens. They don’t speak directly to their subjects. These leaders use lackeys to hold the people down. Our God is far from that!

God is a king who loves a personal relationship with His creation. His love is best seen in the original creation in the fact that He made humanity, male and female, in His own image. We are created for a personal walk with God. Humanity ought to reflect the splendor of God through our own creativity, our own honest communication, and by our devotion to divine wisdom. As the image bearers of God we are invited to worship our creator. We talk to Him. Our work is for His glory. We rejoice in all the good things He has created. There is no other king who can be compared to our God.

Let's look at the concept of a covenant to see why it is such an appropriate way to govern the kingdom of God. A covenant is a formal bond between two or more parties with serious commitments to obey in compliance with the agreement. Normally these obligations are put in writing or are at least recognized publically. There are great benefits for the parties when they are faithful to the terms of the covenant. There are, at the same time, grave consequences for the party who breaks the terms of the covenant. A covenant between two people or entities is both serious and very close. There are all kinds of covenants. Marriage between a man and a woman is a covenant. (In French, the very word for a wedding ring is *alliance*, ie. covenant.) Mutual fidelity to the marriage vows allows the couple made in God's image to enjoy deep intimacy and encouragement. This matrimonial covenant is gravely threatened if either partner is unfaithful to the wedding vows made before God, state, and family. Such a couple runs the risk of divorce, the death of a marriage bond.



Business contracts and political treaties are also covenants. Take, for example, the African Union. Here we have 54 countries that are united in a covenant of peace and mutual good will. All the signatory nations promise to respect the by-laws of the covenant. Each nation benefits from their faithfulness. There are, however, warnings within the signed documents that spell out the grave consequences for any country which threatens its neighbors. Such a country would risk a war if they didn't respect the terms of the covenant of peace. SADC in southern Africa and CARICOM in the Caribbean region are two other similar covenant groups. They have the same goals and the same requirements. Regional stability throughout the world is often maintained by covenant, that is, by treaty.

God, Himself, loves the idea of covenant ties. God speaks poetically in the OT in order to encourage the Jews to believe Him using these covenantal terms about His creation.

Jeremiah 33 ¹⁹ The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁰ "Thus says the Lord, 'If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, ²¹ then My covenant may also be broken with David My

servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers.

Since God cannot be unfaithful to His creation, the people of God can confidently trust in Him; God will accomplish His plan for His own glory and for the wellbeing of His children.

God the creator wants to rule his image-bearers personally. For Him, the best way to do that is to enter into a covenant with humanity: a covenant with serious consequences for disobedience but with glorious blessings for obedience. God uses the means of a covenant bond to be both sovereign over His kingdom and remain very close to His earthly children.

Putting the two great themes of the Bible together into one picture

We are ready now to introduce the illustration used in this booklet. In our illustration we will bring kingdom and covenant together. Picture the plan of God for His kingdom as the blueprint for the construction of a magnificent palace. There will need to be a very solid foundation. The walls must be thick and strong. The roof must be watertight. The covenants of God found throughout the OT will serve well in our illustration as the foundation, the walls, and the roof of the royal residence. Each part of the building will be added at just the right moment as we read the history in the OT of the preparations made for our redemption.

At the beginning of the Bible God laid down the foundation of the royal domicile in the Garden of Eden. This means that we see in this holy place both the physical and spiritual blessings of God's rule. God places in the Garden the man and woman He made in His image. God immediately speaks to them in covenantal terms even though the Bible doesn't use the very word "covenant" yet. God uses this covenant as a means of sovereignly guiding the communion between Creator and creatures. We read of the wonderful blessings the couple will enjoy as they faithfully obey God's voice. We also read of the threat of death for the couple if they disobey their king.

Genesis 2 ⁷ Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being

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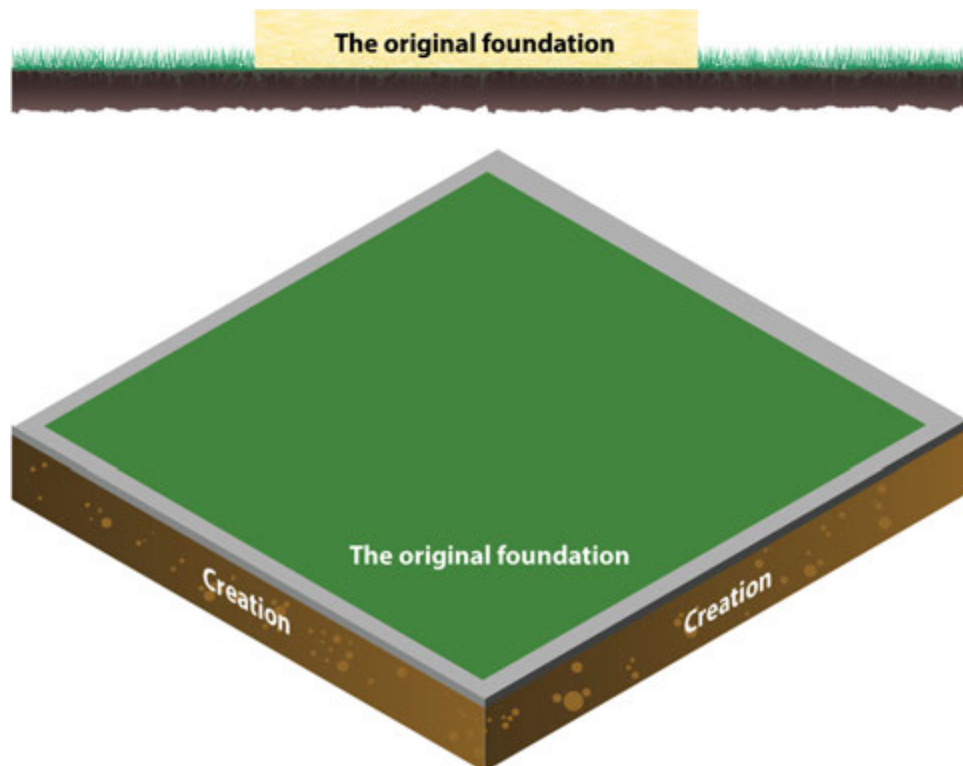
¹⁵ Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ¹⁶ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Thus God lays the foundation for a heavenly dwelling on earth. When God created this very intimate bond between Himself and the first couple He was

making a unique place for humanity to be close to Him. Neither the angels nor the animals occupy this unique place in creation. God wanted to eventually make of the entire earth a sanctuary of praise for His Son starting with the couple in the Garden. The first covenant with Adam and Eve was the foundation for the sanctuary of worship. Their continued obedience have, by God's blessing, made the whole world a Garden of Eden.

Genesis 1 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

If Adam and Eve had maintained their original innocence in the Garden by their on-going obedience, then one day they would have certainly been invited to eat from the tree of life. The original earth would have been a royal residence for the Son of God, a place of permanent intimacy between God and His people through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord strolled through the Garden in order to bless the couple according to the promise of the covenant. God had laid down a good foundation. God came to confirm the solid condition of the foundation. What did he find? Let's see.



The original foundation for the royal residence: the covenant with the innocent first couple premised on their continued perfect obedience

Chapter two

The foundation of the residence broken and remade

The outcome of the first foundation

When God went to the Garden in order to talk with the first couple did Adam and Eve go out to meet him? Were they really happy to hear His voice? Not at all. They were afraid of their Creator and spiritual companion. What a sudden about-face! A totally surprising reversal. What happened? Let's read the story for ourselves.

Genesis 3 ⁶ 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. ⁸ 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. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." ¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

Neither Adam nor Eve would take responsibility for their disobedience. They tried to avert the consequences of their actions by shifting the blame to others, including God himself. It is impossible to maintain the purity of their friendship with God after this refusal to respect His love. The divine covenant is broken. The guilty couple must receive the death penalty according to the covenant warning of God. Later in Israel's history, God refers to this tragic moment in order to give the unfaithful Jews a sense of the gravity of their own faults.

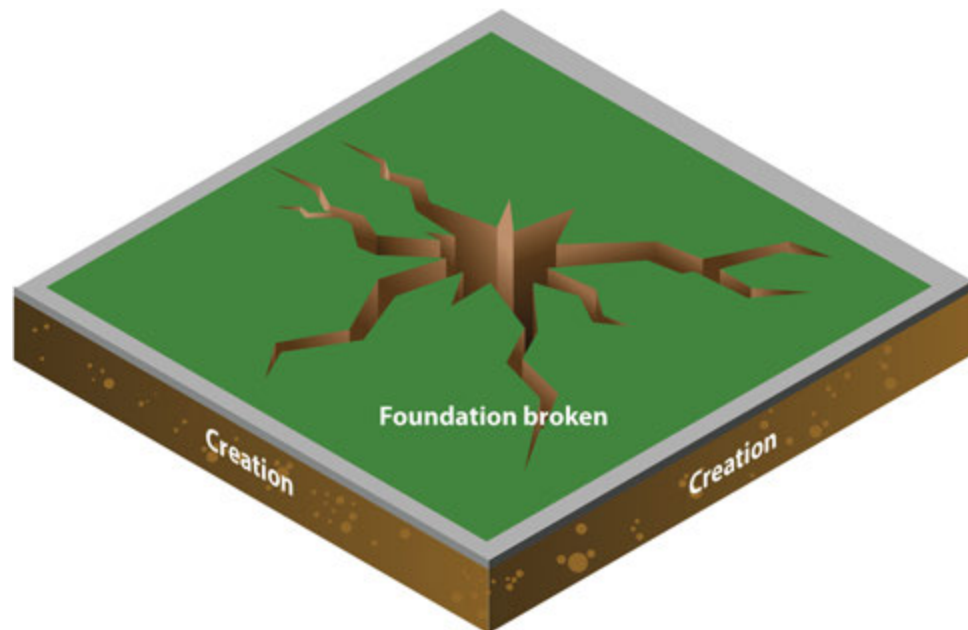
Hosea 6 ⁶ For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. ⁷ But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me.

The covenant of God is both serious and personal. Adam had violated the terms sovereignly imposed by God His creator. Punishment must follow. .



In keeping with the illustration that I proposed at the beginning, we must now admit that the foundation for a royal residence on earth for the Son of

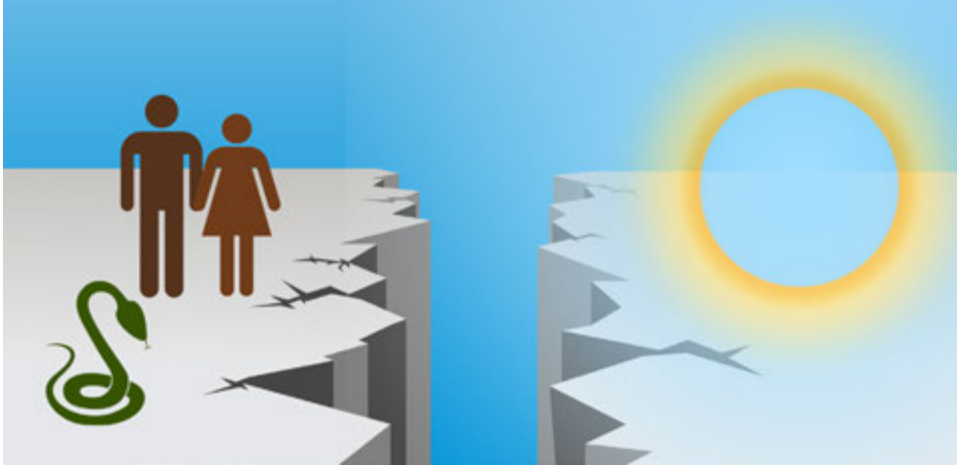
God is totally broken. The foundation is too weak to support the palace which represents the kingdom of God. Human beings are incapable of repairing the damage. The fallen couple remain under the sentence of death. They must simply wait to hear the condemning words from the mouth of the judge. This is a terribly important moment for God's creation. Only God can do something about it. But what can He do? One option is the judicial destruction of all things. Another would be to condemn just the image bearers, Adam and Eve. God could abandon forever His plan to make of His creation a sanctuary of praise for His royal Son. God choses not to do any of these righteous things. God choses mercy instead of immediate death for the sinners. God will lay a new foundation on top of the broken foundation. God commits himself to building His kingdom "*on earth as it is in heaven.*" (Matthew. 6:10)



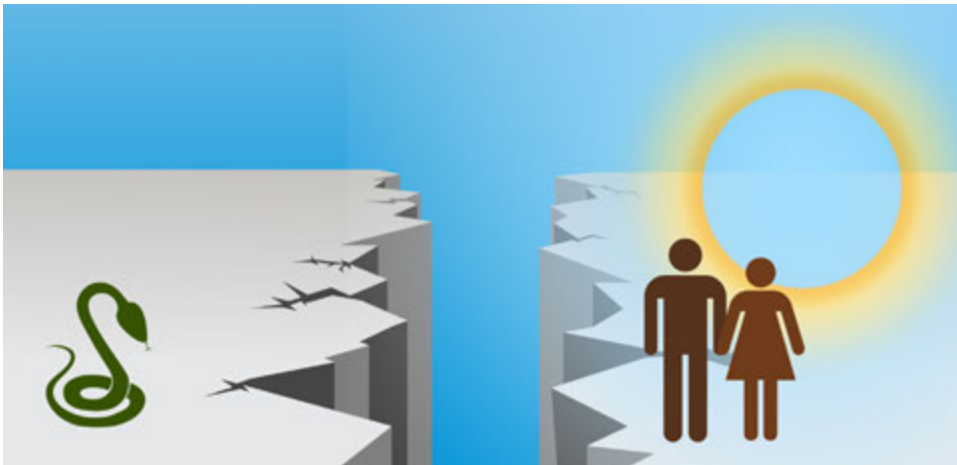
Listen to the gracious words that God uses to prepare for the laying down of a new foundation for the royal residence.

Genesis 3 ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.

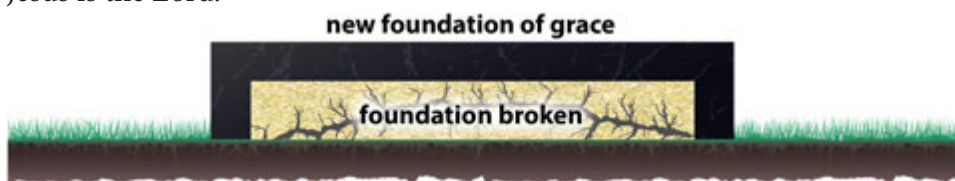
When listening to the voice of the devil (Satan, the accuser) our first parents put themselves on his side over against the perfect will of God. All three, Adam, Eve, and Satan are together under the judgment of God. There is a gulf between God and them which can't be passed from their side.



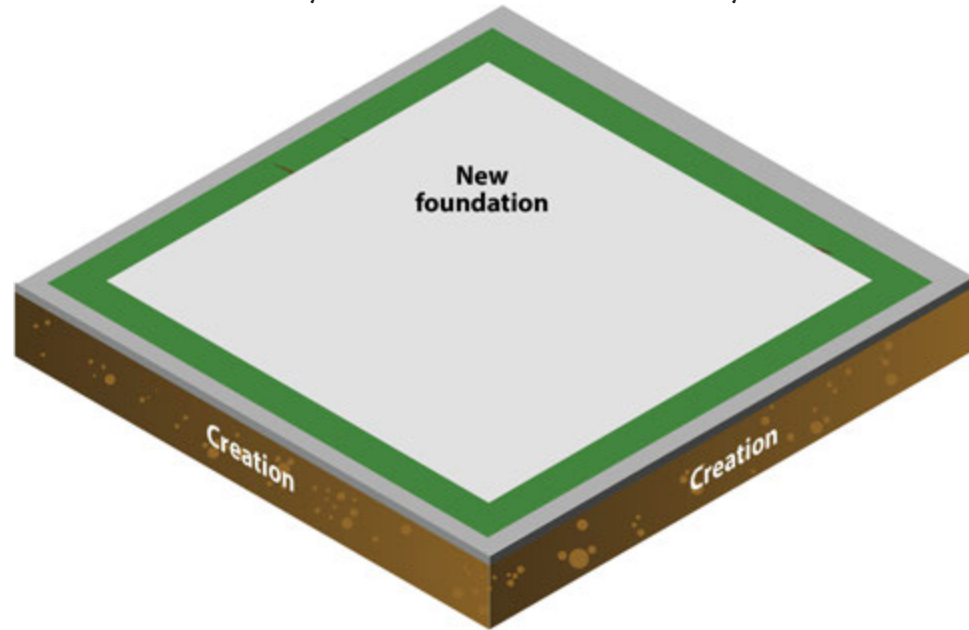
By grace, pure and simple, God announces that He will retake possession of the shameful couple. It is God the Father who puts enmity between the devil and the woman. God takes all the initiative. He declares spiritual war against Satan and all his forces. God promises to come to the aid of all of Eve's believing children.



At the right moment a special child, a son in Eve's family, will come to destroy the devil by crushing his head. This savior will himself suffer for the believing children of Adam during His mission of redemption. Theologians speak of this promise to Eve as the first announcement of the gospel in the Bible. A new covenant has been introduced. A new foundation for the palace of grace has been laid down. God is still the great builder. God wants to have a house where Jesus is the Lord.



The new foundation doesn't depend on the obedience of man. Humanity is already lost, born in sin (Psalm 51). The old foundation has fallen into ruins. The new foundation laid down over the broken one is a foundation of divine grace. This foundation is so solid that God can build all of our redemption on top of it. The kingdom of God is a domain of grace. The charter of the kingdom is this covenant of grace announced in the Garden of Eden. God formally commits Himself to being our king in the terms of this covenant. "I will save you through the faithful mission of My Son. Therefore, walk with Me by faith."



The entire structure of the OT is based on this design of God. The logical relationship between the kingdom and covenant of grace continues forever. The plan of God is unchangeable. God will establish a place for His Son among human beings. Jesus the Prince of Peace will come to fulfill the plan of His Father. This savior must pay for the sin which has broken the first covenant. This broken first covenant is always there. It hasn't disappeared from God's view. He sees it in ruins. Therefore, we are all dead in the first sin of Adam. We all have need of the death of Christ in order to live in the kingdom of God. The new foundation which promises the death of Christ for us covers over the former foundation which has fallen under the judgment of its Creator.

In the following chapters, we'll see how God prepared the world well for the coming of His Son. The divine builder has set up on His foundation of grace the walls and a roof. Each wall is represented by a covenant. Each covenant adds strength to the overall structure. Little by little, the whole structure will be revealed. When everything is in place by the end of the OT, we will see how Jesus Christ has come to take possession of His royal residence.

Chapter three

The first wall: a promise for the preservation of humanity

The covenant with Noah and his descendants

Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of God. That was a part of their punishment. They had broken their side of the original covenant bond. Nevertheless, God was faithful to His own nature.

Exodus 34 ⁶ Then the LORD passed by in front of Moses and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin...

God began a new covenant with the man and his wife. This time God must maintain the terms of the covenant for both parties, that is, for God and humanity. Why? Because humanity on its own cannot remain faithful to its commitment to God.

We’ve just seen in chapter two that this new covenant of grace forms the base for the royal residence that the Father wants to build for His own Son. The new foundation is placed over the broken original one. By God’s grace the Lord’s plan of redemption can continue in the OT. God will save a people for His Son.

John 17 ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Time passes. The family of man grows greatly over the course of the centuries. Two distinct lines of descendants of Adam and Eve develop. Their first born, Cain, becomes the father of a line of boastful sons. The pride of Lamech of the 4th generation is the inevitable fruit of this family that boasts of its independence from God. After the murder of Abel by Cain, another son, Seth, becomes the father of a line of faithful sons from which the Savior, Himself, will eventually be born.

Unfortunately, the bad influence of the children of Cain became more powerful than the faith of the believing line. Gradually the faithful family began to intermarry with the unbelievers. The situation of humanity became desperately bad.

Genesis 6 ⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The plan of God for His kingdom is confronted with a painful conflict. How can God build a kingdom of believers on the new foundation of grace and at the

same time pass a righteous judgment on the sinful behavior of mankind? God resolves this dilemma by His treatment of the mockers on the one hand and His treatment of Noah on the other hand.

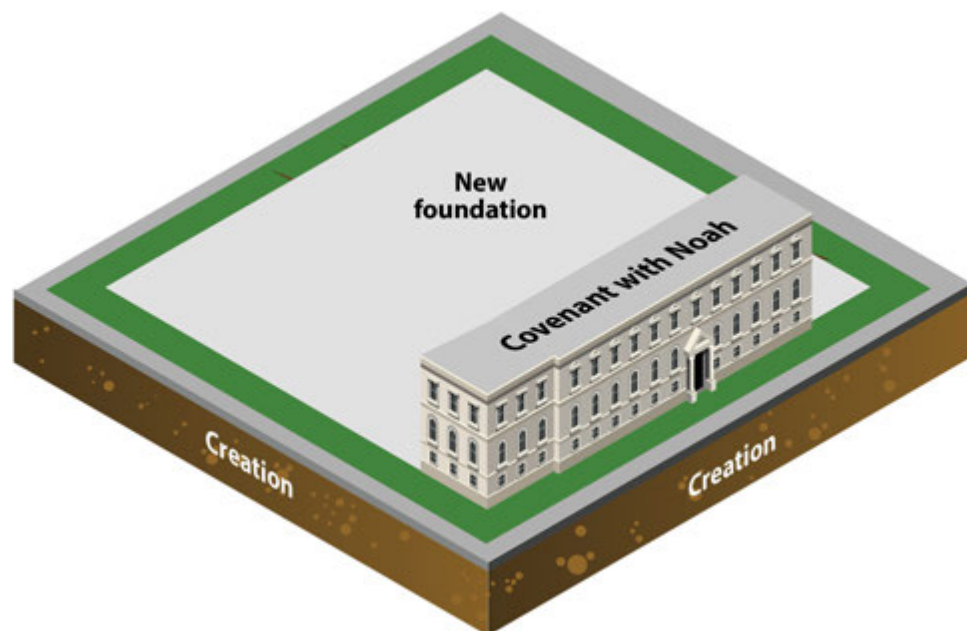
Genesis 6 ⁷The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.” ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

A well-deserved judgment awaits the unbelievers. But, as in the Garden of Eden, God shows His mercy to His children, adopting them in love. Once again God puts enmity between Satan and the one He has chosen, namely, Noah. As a sinner, Noah, like Adam, should be judged. And like Adam, he receives pardon.

Let’s go back to our illustration of God the builder. He puts up the first wall of the royal residence by His covenant with Noah. I won’t repeat the whole well-known story of Noah and the flood. Instead I pass to the the end of the episode where God sovereignly establishes a covenant with Noah. We remember that in a covenant there are always obligations to maintain. What is the principal commitment that God makes in the covenant with Noah?

Genesis 9 ¹¹I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.

Here is a great promise for all humanity born after the days of Noah. There will not be a total destruction of mankind before a savior has a chance to come to earth. This covenant is for the preservation of humanity until the plan of God can be accomplished by Christ. What a solid wall for the house of King Jesus! What assurance for the tribes of the world! The continued existence of humanity is guaranteed until the end of earthly time.



It is necessary that this first wall be built on the new foundation. That means that there must be a direct line between the covenant with Noah back to the covenant with Adam established after his fall into sin. There is oneness in the will of God. When God had created man and woman according to His image, He said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” In the covenant of grace after the fall, God maintained this blessing for humanity. God spoke of the “descendants” of the woman in Genesis 3:15. Later we read:

Genesis 3 ²⁰ Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

Here we have a new reference to the fruitfulness of mankind. If there is a direct relationship between the covenants, there must be a repetition of this promise of fruitfulness of the human race. What do we read precisely at the establishment of the covenant with Noah?

Genesis 9 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”

You see that it is the very same command! But one might object: Adam and Eve received this command because they were created in the image of God before the fall. But what about Noah and his descendants? Are we, too, created in God’s image?

Genesis 9 ⁶ “Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.
⁷ “As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

Yes, we are so created. Verse six shows that the human being is still created in God’s image. Following this declaration God repeats in verse seven His original command: multiply on the earth. The line between the two covenants is both direct and clear.

Often God gives signs or ceremonies to highlight His covenant with someone. These signs serve as reference points both for God and for the person with whom He is creating a bond. What is the sign of Noah’s covenant?

Genesis 9 ¹² God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; ¹³ I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”



Without knowing it, the people of the whole world live under the sign of God’s covenant with Noah. We ought to be very thankful. God sees a rainbow somewhere on earth every day. He always remembers His promise: I will not judge the whole world before all My plans for redemption are completed. God remembered this covenant during the days of Israel’s unfaithfulness.

Isaiah 54 ⁸ “In an outburst of anger
I hid My face from you for a moment,
But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,”
Says the LORD your Redeemer.

⁹ “For this is like the days of Noah to Me,
When I swore that the waters of Noah
Would not flood the earth again;
So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you
Nor will I rebuke you.

¹⁰ “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,

But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,”
Says the LORD who has compassion on you.

God is explicit. The relationship is very close between the covenant of grace made with Adam and the covenant of human preservation made with Noah. If Noah could have confidence in God we, also, can be sure that believing children of Eve can have confidence in Him.

Where are we now in our story of the building of a royal residence? Up to this point we’ve witnessed the placement of the original foundation at the creation of Adam and Eve. Theologians speak of this as the creation covenant or the covenant of works. Then we saw the rupture of the relationship between the man and his wife and their divine Creator. Consequently, the first covenant of mutual love is broken. There is no further possibility of life based on this covenant. While still in the Garden of Eden God inaugurates another covenant. He lays a new foundation on top of the old broken one. We talk no further of a covenant of works but of a covenant of grace. In this covenant God commits Himself to saving a people for Himself by the work of a son of Eve.

The OT is the story of the preparation of the world by God for the coming of this son, Jesus. For centuries the world waited for this son of Eve who is also the Son of God. The covenant with Noah (our first palace wall) is necessary because, without this promise of preservation, God could judge the world with justice before the coming of Christ because of the sinfulness of humanity.

The world lived for a long time under the divine authority of these two covenants, a promise to Eve and a promise to Noah. This is a great beginning, but far from a full royal dwelling for God among hHis people. After centuries of silence God pushes His redemption plan far ahead when the Bible introduces us to the friend of God. His name: Abraham.

Chapter four

The second wall: the calling of the father of believers

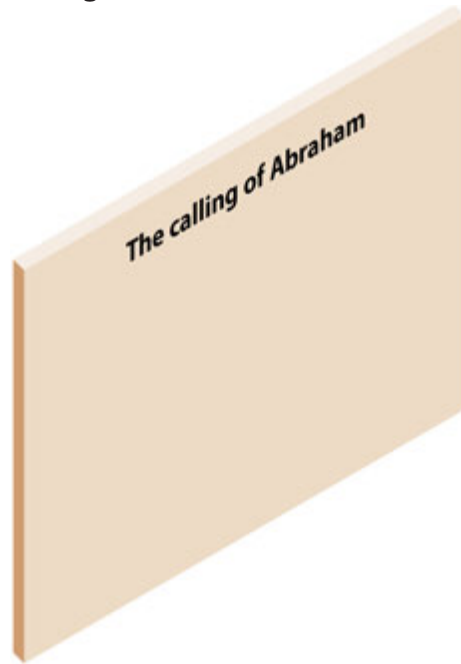
The covenant with Abraham and the creation of the Jewish family

The Bible is special in its treatment of time. There are passages where time moves along very quickly. Then there are moments where everything slows down to a snail's pace. Chapters 1-11 of Genesis are devoted to a vast period of time. They treat the creation of the world. Only the essential aspects of the covenant with Adam and Eve and their subsequent fall into sin are dealt with. The new covenant of grace is briefly introduced. The history of the punitive flood and the saving of Noah are carefully examined in four chapters. Overall we have thousands of years of history condensed into relatively few verses.

Starting at Genesis 12 God puts on the brakes. We enter a time of detailed history. Why does God suddenly slow the pace without warning? It's because God is now introducing us to the key person of all of the rest of the OT. His name is Abraham. (At the beginning of the story he is called Abram which means "highly placed father;" but it is easier for us to use the name God gave him later, Abraham, which means "father of a multitude.» (Gen. 17:5))

With the calling of Abraham, God shows that He is ready to add a wall to the royal residence of the redeemer. The story of salvation is moving towards the coming of Jesus Christ. We will soon learn much more about the nature of the kingdom of God. According to our illustration the house of God is constructed by a series of covenants. The second covenant with Adam which covers over the broken original covenant is the foundation of the residence. The first wall is the covenant of human preservation made with Noah. God puts up a second wall when He enters into a very close covenant with Abraham. The Lord takes a long time to set up this wall. We will see that it took 40 years in order to complete the four phases of inauguration of this one covenant. The following illustrations show the four phases God went through with Abraham. The entire plan of God for His Son and for us depends on this covenant. Please notice that we are talking about one covenant enacted in four phases and not four distinct covenants.

The first phase: the calling of Abraham



Genesis 12 Now the Lord said to Abram,

“Go forth from your country,

And from your relatives

And from your father’s house,

To the land which I will show you;

² And I will make you a great nation,

And I will bless you,

And make your name great;

And so you shall be a blessing;

³ And I will bless those who bless you,

And the one who curses you I will curse.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

...

⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

When we meet Abraham for the first time he is far from the country where most of Bible history takes place. He lived in a region that today is called Iraq.

Genesis. 11 ³¹ Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.

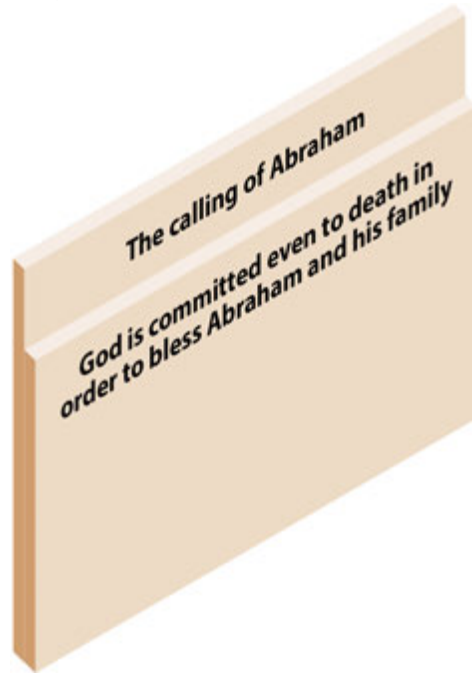
Nehemiah 9 ⁷ You are the LORD God, Who chose Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, And gave him the name Abraham. ⁸ You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him...

The ancestors of Abraham accepted many gods. This fact shows us that God did not choose Abraham because his fathers were already monotheists and faithful as Noah was. God called him by grace (unmerited favor.)

Joshua 24 ² Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. ³ Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

What is the heart of this calling? There are two key elements that complement each other: 1) Abraham will first, be the father of a nation which will bless all nations and 2) this nation will possess their own land. It is here, right at the beginning of the covenant with Abraham that God introduces the predominant theme of the rest of the OT. *The family of Abraham will bless the whole world.* At the start this promise was just a small seed. Pertinent questions arise, of course. How could one family bless the whole world? Will this family have only one land? We have to wait patiently for the Lord to answer these and other questions. In the course of Abraham’s life, God will add little by little some extraordinary elements to His covenant with the father of the Jews.

The second phase: God is committed, even to death, in order to bless Abraham and his family



Genesis 15 ⁴Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” ⁵And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ⁶Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. ⁷And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.” ⁸He said, “O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?” ⁹So He said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. ¹¹The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

¹²Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. ¹⁵As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

¹⁷It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,

“To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

It was necessary to read this long passage in order to understand the intensity of friendship between God and Abraham. Even if the symbolism of this chapter seems a bit strange to us, we will be well rewarded if we study it closely. The chapter is still dealing with the two halves of the divine promise: a great family for Abraham and a national territory for his family.

In verses 1-6 God answers Abraham's worry about the promise of having a large family. The God who created all the stars invites Abraham to raise his eyes and look. God gives him an example of divine power. If the Creator is capable of all that splendor then He is certainly able to give Abraham a large family. It is just as easy for God to create a nation as it is for Him to create a star.

What is Abraham's reaction to such a vision of grandeur? Total confidence. *Abraham believed God*, says verse 6.

By faith Abraham accepts yet again the original promise. God's covenant can be accomplished in Abraham's life because he is a man of faith. This is confirmed in Hebrews.

Hebrews 11 ¹²Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants *as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

How great was the gift of faith in the life of the father of believers!

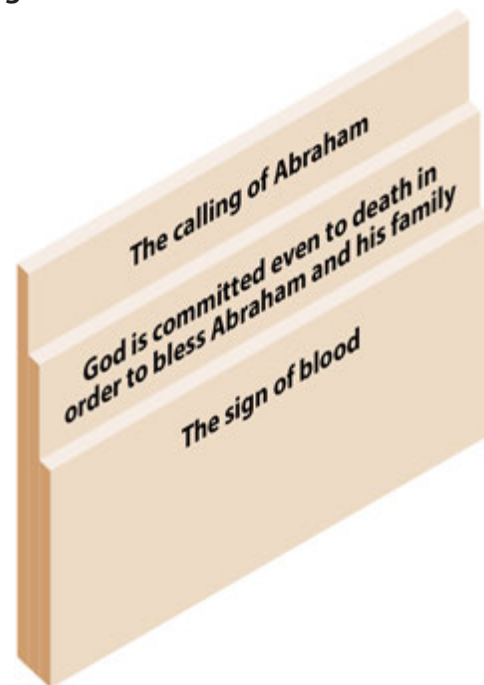
In verses 7 and 8 God responds to Abraham's other great concern. He wondered, "Where will my large family live in peace and quiet since I live a nomadic life?" God's answer is shocking. We've just read that God used the stars to encourage Abraham's faith. That covenant sign didn't require anything new from God since the galaxies already existed. The celestial sign is already there when Abraham leaves his tent. But the covenant sign which guarantees that his children will possess their own land comes at a great price to God. Let us continue to be astounded at God's total commitment to save His people and give them a place in His kingdom.

What does the mysterious covenant sign mean? The death of the animals shows us that this covenant is the most serious relationship possible between God and His people. When Abraham puts the two parts of the animals across from each other what does he actually create? The pieces form a sort of small pathway, right? One could call this design a path of death. This type of ritual was well known in the ancient Near East. After creating the pathway with the animal parts, the two parties of a covenant could walk through the length of the path together. By entering the path each party was promising to be killed, just like the animals, if he didn't fulfill all the covenant obligations. In Genesis 15, who are the two parties? God is one party, certainly. His presence is symbolized by the smoking furnace and the flame. (V.17) (This same sign is used again later

in the Exodus when God walks with Israel in the desert in a column of flame.) We are tempted to assume that Abraham is the second person ready to enter the pathway of death. But watch out! Where is Abraham? *Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram...* (V12)

Abraham wasn't capable of entering the path of death. Does that mean that no covenant is possible? Not at all. In an unexpected act, God enters the path alone. The text tells us that at that very moment, God made a covenant with Abraham. This covenant is not an absolutely new one with no relationship to the one of chapter 12. It is rather a new phase of the covenant of Abraham's calling. God is adding blocks to the wall of the royal residence that He has already begun building. The sign of the stars helped Abraham believe the promise of a large family. The sign of God entering the path of death taking all the obligations of faithfulness on Himself helped Abraham believe the promise of a great territory for his large family. At this point Abraham wasn't sure just how God would accomplish the sign of the animal ritual. In a few years he would see very vividly how God would save His worldwide family of faith.

Phase three: the sign of blood



Genesis 17 Now 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.

² "I will establish My covenant between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly."

³ Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

⁴ "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,
And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.

⁵ "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.

⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. ⁷ I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. ⁸ I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

⁹ God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

We tend to read our Bibles very quickly. This gives us the impression that historical reality happened just as quickly as our reading. Our text says that Abraham was 99 years old. He was 75 when God called him to leave his native land. That means that it took 24 years for the first two phases to be inaugurated. We learn a good lesson in patience from this story. Neither God nor Abraham had forgotten the great promise. God is now on the verge of accomplishing the first part of His promise: a miraculous family for His friend. In one year Abraham's wife, Sarah, will bring a son into the world! You've already noticed in verse 4 that God repeats the main idea of the covenant: you will become *the father of many nations*. I stress this point so that we see that the sign of circumcision is not a new covenant but is the third phase of the same covenant of grace.

It can be a little hard for us to grasp this idea. After all, verse 10 says: this is my covenant. One could get the impression that it is a new covenant. The context of the passage shows us that God isn't establishing a new covenant. He is adding a sign to further define the one covenant already in force. God is continuing to build the second wall of the royal residence. The meaning of the rite of circumcision will help us understand how God will satisfy the terms of the covenant of grace.

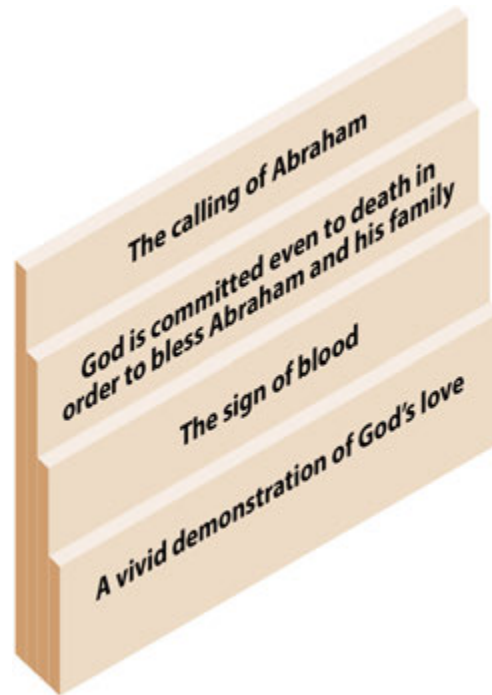
In this rite there is the shedding of blood. A little while ago we read of the shedding of animal blood when God wanted to create the pathway of death through which He would pass alone. Now we read again of the shedding of blood. But this time it isn't animal blood. Rather it is human blood, that of a male. Circumcision represents death, the death of the covenant member who doesn't fulfill all the obligations of the agreement. God is very explicit with Abraham. The sign is not optional.

Genesis 17 ¹³ A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

¹⁴ But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.

In circumcision a small portion of flesh is removed. This small bloody portion symbolizes the whole person separated from God by his sin. Abraham must humbly accept that he and his family should be cut off from the holy God. God has concluded a covenant with Abraham by grace. Abraham accepts this offer of life by faith. The two parties to the bond know that Abraham isn't capable of perfectly maintaining his side of the relationship. In reality the required circumcision has the same intention symbolically as God's passing through the animal pieces. He is highlighting the fact that it is in His own person that God will suffer in order to accomplish the aim of the covenant: eternal fellowship with sinners through the Lordship of Jesus Christ. How far is God willing to suffer? We'll answer that in the fourth phase of the covenant inauguration.

The fourth phase: a vivid demonstration of God's love



Genesis 22 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ² He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”

...

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

We would like to believe that Abraham had already passed his test by the third phase. It had been twenty-five years of waiting since his call to leave his land. This aged man and his sterile wife were able to have a son. He circumcised his little son, Isaac, according to the terms of the covenant. Everything is in order. There's nothing further to do, right?

God, however, isn't finished with the building of the second wall of the earthly residence illustrating his kingdom among us. There is still a fourth phase in the complete inauguration of the covenant. And the fourth phase is the most difficult. The sacred history recounts for us how God asks Abraham to give back to the Creator the life of his son. This commandment seems totally contradictory to the whole plan of God. How can God build a residence for the Lord of His

kingdom if He destroys the son of Abraham who is the cornerstone of the very promise on which everything rests? For the nonbeliever this is the supreme example of the weakness of God.

1 Corinthians 1 ²⁵ The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The Genesis text adds to the price Abraham must pay in order to obey his God. Take your only son, the one you love, Isaac. Three times God insists on the identity of the sacrificial victim as if Abraham wasn't sure. But Abraham knows very well. This is the son of the promise. Isaac will be the father of a great nation. This is the family who will take possession of the land. Abraham has to face a crushing challenge. How is he supposed to resolve this dilemma? His courage has to feed off of his faith. Like a good musician, he repeats in his spirit the composition of all the notes of God's promises. I can imagine a conversation within Abraham's heart. "I received the call of God to leave my home in Ur. He promised me a large family that would bless the whole world. He promised me a land for my family. The holy God has given me extraordinary signs of His commitment unto death to make these promises come true. If the only Lord of the universe is worthy of trust then Isaac will live even if he dies. Therefore, I will offer up my son because God will give him life again." The writer of Hebrews also sees things this way.

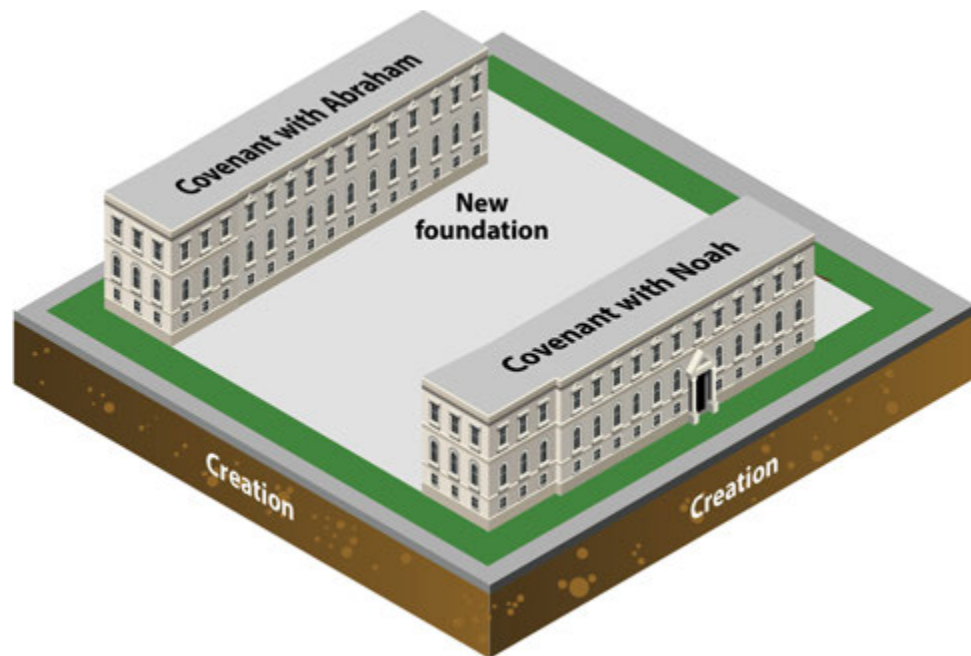
Genesis 11 ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; ¹⁸ it was he to whom it was said, "*In Isaac your descendants shall be called.*" ¹⁹ He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

Isaac was figuratively resurrected from the dead. For the moment, God accepts the ram's life in place of Isaac's. But not forever. God planted a crucial idea in Abraham's spirit. He realizes that God is ready even to ask for the life of an only son in order to meet the demands of the covenant. Yet no one is able to meet these demands apart from God, Himself. Abraham is coming to realize that God will make the final and sufficient sacrifice, not man.

At last, the construction of the second wall is completed. It has taken four phases of construction to finish the job. The entire history of the redemption of God's people flows from this covenant between God and Abraham. You've undoubtedly seen that each of the four phases repeats the two parts of the divine promise: Abraham will have a great family which will bless the world and this family will have an earthly territory as the site of God's kingdom. The final head of this family is the son promised to Adam and Eve, the son who will have victory over the evil one. God had said to the devil: *you will bruise his heel*. We

see in the covenant with Abraham that this bruising is mortal for the Son of God. Nevertheless God gives us hope for the resurrection of Eve's son by His prophetic actions with Isaac. God "resurrects" him as a symbol of the true resurrection of the Savior.

God has made progress in the construction of a royal residence for the son of Adam and Eve, the son who resembles the miraculous son of Sarah and Abraham. We now have a massive foundation. There are two solid walls which are the covenants with Noah and Abraham. On the other hand there are very few members of the promised family. Thankfully, the divine builder continues his work. He puts up a third wall for the palace. After centuries of silence God comes to Moses.



Chapter five

The third wall: redemption of the house of Israel

The covenant with Moses and the Jews and the gift of the Law

In the last chapter we left Abraham and his little family living peacefully as nomads. Patriarchal history unfolds slowly.

Matthew 1 ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

The hope for a large family is actually taking place. But this road isn't exactly a straight one. It has many detours. There are four centuries between the end of the history of Judah and his brothers and the beginning of the story of Moses and the Exodus. God had already warned Abraham of the slow pace of development of the covenant.

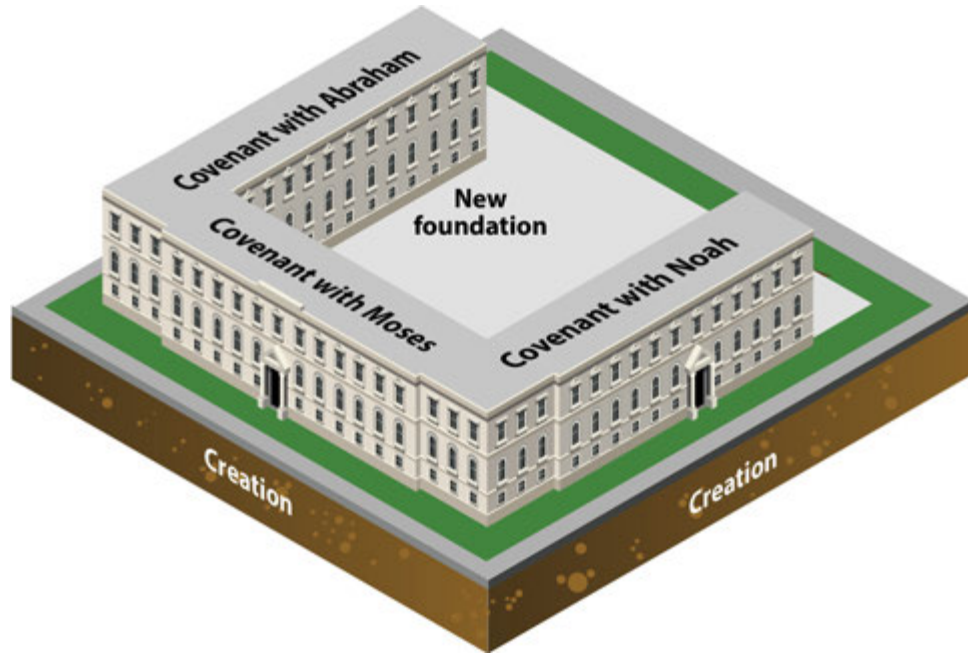
Genesis 15 ¹³ God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.

God sets the pace for the construction of the royal residence for the Prince of Peace. (Remember we are talking about an illustration not a literal palace.) God doesn't rush things. He wanted to give the Canaanites plenty of time to repent of their sins before He would give their land to the children of Abraham. God displays His patient mercy.

The 400 years come to an end for Abraham's family, the Jews. God restarts his building of the palace for King Jesus. The building now receives its third wall. This is the covenant with Israel of which Moses is the mediator. One could have the impression that the covenant with Israel is completely distinct from the covenants with Adam and Abraham. It would be understandable. After all, there had been four centuries of silence. How should we see this covenant? Let's read a passage which speaks of this time in the redemption story.

Exodus 6 ² God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord; ³ and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. ⁴ I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. ⁵ Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. ⁶ Say, therefore, to the sons 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 their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷ Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your

God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.”



Why is God interested in a family of slaves? Out of all the people on earth, did God just suddenly show an interest in Israel? Not at all! God insists: *I have remembered my covenant*. Which one? The one with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of course. The entire history of Israel is intimately bound up with the peace treaty God had sovereignly established with Adam, first, and then with Abraham. There will certainly be new features added to this phase of the covenant. But the important thing to remember is that we are talking about the same divine covenant founded on the same promises of grace.

There is one thing that immediately hits us about the history of Israel: all of life is regulated right down to the daily details. In the time of the patriarchs, life was not so carefully controlled by law. From the moment Israel passes the border of Egypt, God gives Israel many laws for living under the covenant. What is the explanation for this microscopic eye to detail? God has something to say about everything in Jewish life including their worship, their marriages and homes, their politics, their agriculture, their army, their relations with neighbors, their construction, their business, their public behavior, and their inner hearts. The Law of God is a marvel of unity and integrity. The addition of the Law to the covenant is a function of their new circumstances. Consider the new situation of Israel. When they arrived in Egypt there were only 70 people.

Exodus 1 ⁵ All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt.

They were still nomadic in those days.

Psalm 105 ⁸ He has remembered His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,
⁹ The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac.
¹⁰ Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
¹¹ Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the portion of your inheritance,"
¹² When they were only a few men in number,
Very few, and strangers in it.
¹³ And they wandered about from nation to nation,
From one kingdom to another people.

After four centuries this family of 70 has become a nation of several hundred thousand.

Psalm 105 ²³ Israel also came into Egypt;
Thus Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
²⁴ And He caused His people to be very fruitful,
And made them stronger than their adversaries.

When you are dealing with just your own children within your family you don't need a lengthy written law. One word from father or mother should be enough to restore order. By the blessing of God the patriarchal family has become a nation ready to take its place among the nations of the world. Instructions based on word of mouth won't be sufficient to maintain order. Israel has a need for a written code. Here's Paul's view concerning Israel and the Law:

Galatians 4 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

The Israel that leaves Egypt is a populous nation. But in the view of their Heavenly Father, Israel is still a nation in its infancy. Israel still needs tutors. The Law served as a tutor for the people. God wanted to protect their life as a nation at all costs. The Savior of the world will be born from this family. Therefore, God used the Law to guide and correct the descendants of Abraham.

Let's not forget that there are two dimensions of the kingdom of God, namely, the dynamic dimension (the rule of God in the hearts of his people by his Spirit)

and the territorial (static) dimension (the place where God's power is on display.) In the daily life of the patriarchs God underlines the dynamic presence of his power in their hearts. After Israel takes possession of Canaan, God adds to this dynamic side of His kingdom the territorial side of His reign. You can see where He rules.

Exodus 19 ⁶ you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God speaks to the nations surrounding Israel:

Psalms 105 ¹⁵ Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm.

God wanted to display His brilliant and omnipresent holiness before the eyes of His children and before the nations, as well. Their king is holy in all His ways. All of their activities must be holy, too.

Leviticus 19 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

² "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

A great many laws have to do with symbolic rituals in Israel. God stressed that justice requires the death of the sinner. His kingdom cannot tolerate guilty citizens. By his lovingkindness (the love of God which faithfully maintains the covenant) God offers His people a way of salvation. God provisionally accepts the death of an animal or a bird as a substitute for the person. Believers knew full well that an animal couldn't ultimately take a person's place. They offered their sacrifices always hoping for the day when God would send a perfect human substitute. They waited for a savior. God promised Eve a son who would defend her. God promised Abraham a son who would benefit the world. God now shows Israel another aspect of the son.

The ritual sacrifices paint a picture of the sacrificial death of the son of Abraham. God's request of the offering of Isaac was a prophetic picture of the death of Jesus, God's only begotten son. The Law of Moses highlights this fact at many points. The sacrificial blood was shed every day in the Temple.

God gave Israel an additional sign of the covenant to go along with circumcision which was in force from the time of the patriarchs. What is this other sign? The Passover. There is only enough space here to give the heart of the story.

Exodus 12 ⁵ Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. ⁷ Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or

boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. ¹⁰ And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. ¹¹ Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord's Passover.

...

²⁴ And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever.

²⁵ When you enter the land which the Lord will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. ²⁶ And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?'

²⁷ you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped.

God accepted the death of the lamb in the place of the first-born of the Jews. The Egyptians didn't have this protection. Their first-born sons were exposed to the judgment of God on sin. Hence, the Passover remained as a sign of God's loving mercy to the Jewish nation. Please notice the direct relationship between the two signs, circumcision and Passover. God saves Israel and gives His people the promised land according to the covenant with Abraham. The sign of Abraham's promise is circumcision. In due time Israel did enter the land. What must they do? "*You will observe this rite.*" (Passover) The people of God are distinguished from the world by these two signs, circumcision and Passover.

By way of review I call your attention to these verses.

Psalm 105 ⁸ He has remembered His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,
⁹ The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac.

¹⁰ Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
¹¹ Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the portion of your inheritance,"

...

³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering,
And fire to illumine by night.
⁴⁰ They asked, and He brought quail,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
⁴¹ He opened the rock and water flowed out;
It ran in the dry places like a river.
⁴² For He remembered His holy word
With Abraham His servant;
⁴³ And He brought forth His people with joy,
His chosen ones with a joyful shout.

⁴⁴ He gave them also the lands of the nations,
That they might take possession of the fruit of the peoples' labor,
⁴⁵ So that they might keep His statutes
And observe His laws,
Praise the LORD!

This Psalm is a poetic summary of the Exodus. It helps us as an illustration of the on-going construction of the royal palace. The covenant with Moses is our third wall. That means that the wall is definitely tied in to the other walls and with the new foundation. We read in the Psalm that God always remembers His covenant, the covenant with Abraham. But this also means he remembers His covenant with Israel forever, as well. Notice all the symbols of God's presence with Israel: the cloud, the fire, the bread, and the water. The apostle Paul teaches in the NT in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 that these physical manifestations showed that Christ was with them by His Spirit. The Son of God for whom the Father is building a kingdom among His spiritually adopted children was with the Father in redeeming Israel from Egypt. He was with them in the desert and during the conquest of the land.

Where do Abraham and his children come from? They are the descendants of Noah. They exist because God is faithful to His covenant with Noah. The three covenants we have seen so far all rest on the new foundation of grace laid down by God in the Garden of Eden. God will send a son of Eve to save all those who trust in Him.

The outline of a royal residence for the Son of God to occupy among His people is becoming clearer as the OT story moves ahead. The palace needs a fourth wall. Is there yet a fourth covenant in the OT that would meet the requirements of such a wall? Let's see in the next chapter.

Chapter six

The fourth wall: the prophecy of an everlasting king for God's people

The covenant with David and his descendants

Most readers of the OT realize that God entered an intimate bond of commitment with Abraham and later with Moses and Israel through a covenant. There is another divine covenant in the OT which is less known. Here is a little background to this special relationship. Jacob, Abraham's grandson, had 12 sons. From among all of these sons God chose the family of Judah as the direct forebears of Christ, the one who saves believers. Gradually Judah's tribe became quite large. It was necessary for God to narrow down His choice among the clans of Judah. The one chosen was father Jesse. Yet he had 8 sons so the choice was narrowed even further to the youngest son, David. God, therefore, entered into a covenant with David. This is the one who would be the father of the line of Jesus the Messiah.

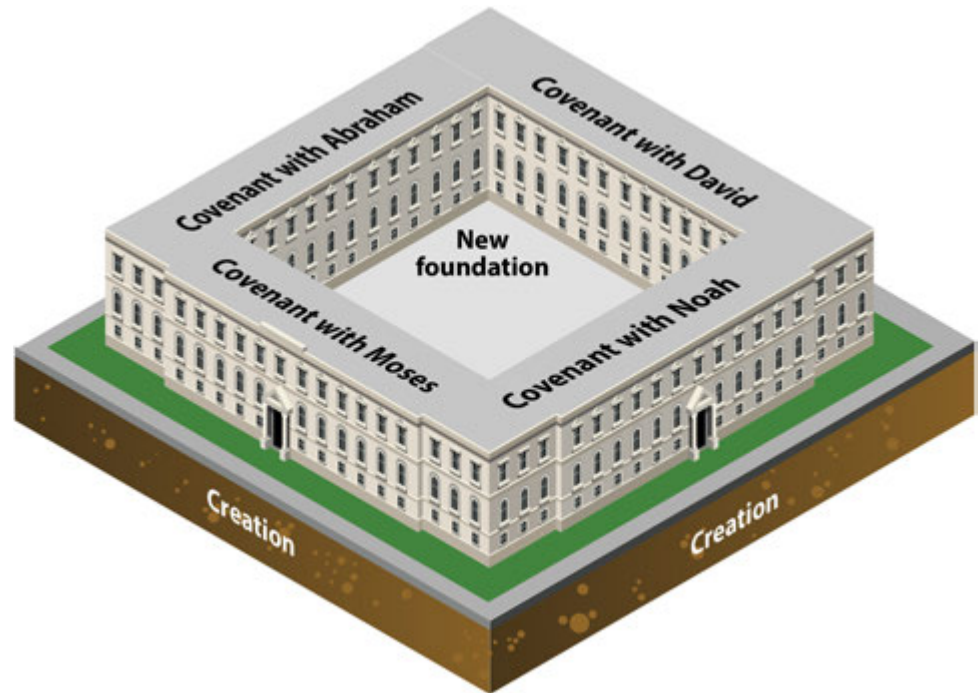
2 Samuel 7 Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, ² that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains." ³ Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your mind, for the LORD is with you."

⁴ But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, ⁵ "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?' ⁶ For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle. ⁷ Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"

⁸ "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, to be ruler over My people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. ¹⁰ I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, ¹¹ even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. ¹² When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will

be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, ¹⁵but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.””

¹⁷ In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.



David receives a double blessing. His earthly son, Solomon, will literally build a temple for Jehovah, the God of Israel. At the same time, Solomon becomes a symbol of the eternal king who reigns over an eternal kingdom. God makes only one principal promise in this covenant: a son of David will rule forever. We know that Solomon wasn't the fulfillment of this promise. He is a sinner like everyone else. He died one day. His reign ended after 40 years. Thankfully God repeated the same covenant promise to Solomon.

2 Chronicles 7 ¹⁷ As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, even to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, ¹⁸ then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to be ruler in Israel.'

Perhaps you've already noticed that the royal son must observe the Law of Moses. The covenant with David in no way invalidates the covenant with Moses and Israel. The bond between Moses and David remains strong. The fourth wall of the divine residence is solidly built on the same foundation as the other three. David's covenant is far from being an isolated promise without reference to the history of redemption. This covenant, too, has a sure place with the others in the

plan of God. Jewish historians, poets, and kings all treat the Davidic covenant as essential for Israel.

2 Chronicles 21 ⁷ Yet the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David because of the covenant which He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and his sons forever.

Psalms 89 ³ “I have made a covenant with My chosen;

I have sworn to David My servant,

⁴ I will establish your seed forever

And build up your throne to all generations.”

...

²⁰ “I have found David My servant;

With My holy oil I have anointed him,

²¹ With whom My hand will be established;

My arm also will strengthen him.

²² “The enemy will not deceive him,

Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

²³ “But I shall crush his adversaries before him,

And strike those who hate him.

²⁴ “My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him,

And in My name his horn will be exalted.

²⁵ “I shall also set his hand on the sea

And his right hand on the rivers.

²⁶ “He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father,

My God, and the rock of my salvation.’

²⁷ “I also shall make him My firstborn,

The highest of the kings of the earth.

²⁸ “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever,

And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.

²⁹ “So I will establish his descendants forever

And his throne as the days of heaven.

³⁰ “If his sons forsake My law

And do not walk in My judgments,

³¹ If they violate My statutes

And do not keep My commandments,

³² Then I will punish their transgression with the rod

And their iniquity with stripes.

³³ “But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him,

Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.

³⁴ “My covenant I will not violate,

Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.

³⁵ “Once I have sworn by My holiness;

I will not lie to David.

³⁶ “His descendants shall endure forever
And his throne as the sun before Me.
³⁷ “It shall be established forever like the moon,
And the witness in the sky is faithful.”

Psalm 132 ¹⁰ For the sake of David Your servant,
Do not turn away the face of Your anointed.
¹¹ The LORD has sworn to David
A truth from which He will not turn back:
“Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.
¹² “If your sons will keep My covenant
And My testimony which I will teach them,
Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever.”
...
¹⁷ “There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth;
I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed.
¹⁸ “His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon himself his crown shall shine.”

2 Chronicles 13 ⁴ Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, “Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel: ⁵ Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?
...
¹⁰ But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their work. ¹¹ Every morning and evening they burn to the LORD burnt offerings and fragrant incense, and the showbread is set on the clean table, and the golden lampstand with its lamps is ready to light every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him. ¹² Now behold, God is with us at our head and His priests with the signal trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed.”

For King Abijah the covenant with David is but a further precision of the covenant with Moses. The divine Law is sovereign for both king and people.

Let's look at our building site for a review. The four walls have been erected. They are each well-anchored in the new foundation. God has been taking His time in the building of the palace for a Messiah. There have been almost 1000 years between Abraham and David. Now we see distinctly the four covenants: 1) with Noah for the preservation of humanity, 2) with Abraham for a world-wide family of believers, 3) with Moses for a holy and joyful people, and 4) with David for a royal and eternal son. Is the palace ready for habitation? Not really. It is still lacking a vital part. A roof. Let's see if we can find one last OT covenant which can serve as a roof for the royal residence.

Chapter seven

A roof for the royal residence

The New Covenant

As a missionary I have occasionally helped on house building teams. You always make sure the foundation is solid before putting up the walls. You use iron re-bar to reenforce the strength of the walls. Then you put on the roof. It has to be well-tied to the walls. It's the combination of foundation and roof which assures the integrity of the walls. Thus the house can be lived in with confidence.

It is now time to put on the roof according to our palace-building illustration. We need to discover a distinctive covenant in the OT. We've already used the covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David as foundation and walls. We find our final covenant in the prophecies of Jeremiah. He foretells a time when there will be a "new covenant."

Jeremiah 31 ³¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jeremiah 32 ³⁷ Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. ³⁸ They shall be My people, and I will be their God; ³⁹ and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul. ⁴² For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.

Jeremiah 33 ⁶ Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth. ⁷ I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first. ⁸ I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. ⁹ It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.'

Jeremiah 33 ¹⁴ ‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.’ ¹⁷ For thus says the LORD, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸ and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually.’”

The book of Hebrews will help us understand these rich but difficult texts.

Hebrews 8 ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. ⁸ For finding fault with them, He says,
“Behold, days are coming, says the LORD,
When I will effect a new covenant
With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...

When the writer speaks of the first covenant he is referring to the Mosaic one since it had been dominating Jewish daily life for nine centuries. The history of Israel makes it very clear that the Law is not capable of changing the heart. Even if the Law is a clear expression of God’s will, it always remains outside the human heart.

1 Kings 8 ⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

The faithful Jews always tried to practice the Law. But they lacked the fullness of the Holy Spirit to do so thoroughly. They waited for a Savior who would give them this Spirit blessing as a key element of His work of redemption.

The “second” covenant of Hebrews 8:7 is the new covenant announced in Jeremiah’s prophecies. The relationship between God and His people is much closer in the new covenant. Why? Because the Spirit of the LORD is poured into the lives of His children. The Spirit is the fruit of the Messiah’s difficult offering of Himself in sacrificial death.

Acts 2 ³³ Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

The apostle Paul says to the Corinthian believers living under the terms of the new covenant that

2 Corinthians 3 ³ ...you are a letter of Christ, cared for 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.

The age of the Holy Spirit in the church is the sign that the terms of the new covenant are in force.

The new covenant completes the royal residence of the Son of God. The kingdom of God has a worthy dwelling for the Christ. Paul put it this way to Timothy in his first letter

1 Timothy 3 ¹⁵ in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

The church is the house of God because it is the visible expression of God's kingdom on earth. Jesus rules there. The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is Himself the sign that the new covenant is in force. Paul is right to insist on holy behavior among God's children during the age of the new covenant. The Spirit of Christ writes the law on our hearts. You can't find a better summary of the Gospel than these words of Paul to Titus.

Titus 2 ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

If our illustration is correct, then the new covenant must be securely attached to all four covenant "walls" and to the foundation of grace. The picture of a palace requires a great unity in the plan of God to set up His kingdom on earth among His chosen citizens. Look at this text as a first response to the issue of unity.

Jeremiah 33 ¹⁹ The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁰ "Thus says the LORD, 'If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, ²¹ then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. ²² As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.'"

It is fascinating to see how God unites His covenants with creation, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, along with the new covenant. Believers should be full of confidence in God. He has created an immense but stable universe. He has placed our solar system and our planet in the creation. On our planet He has made a garden and put a man and a woman in that garden. God has established a unique friendship with our first parents. Everything else flows from that first covenant bond. Even after the rupturing of that friendship because of sin, God

has maintained the laws of nature for His own purposes. Who is this God so great and merciful?

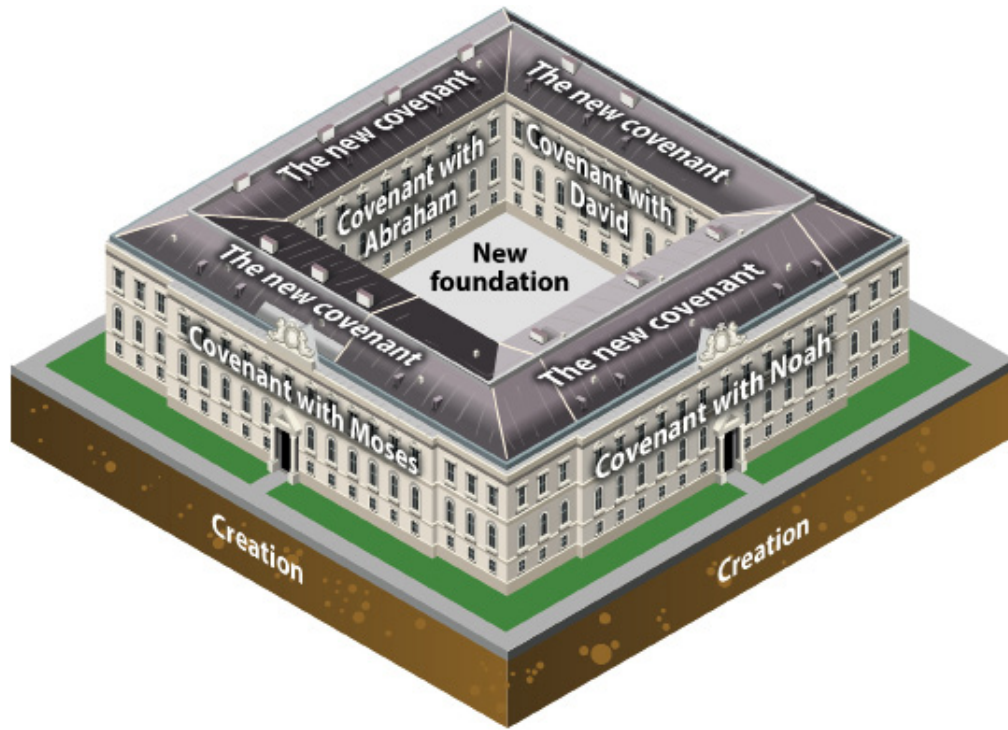
The God who maintains the laws of nature through faithfulness to His promise to Noah after the flood is the same God who will give us a son as king through David's line. Adam had broken the first covenant and the whole world has suffered ever since. God hasn't abandoned His creation. He upholds it. He will rejuvenate it.

Romans 8 ²¹ the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The God who promised an international family to Abraham will multiply the descendants of David who come from Abraham's lineage. This God, who gave the covenant of the Law to the Levites in order that they would teach Israel, will create a whole nation of Levites, namely, his church in order that the church might teach the LORD's good news to the nations.

Jeremiah 33 ²³ the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁴ "Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, 'The two families which the LORD chose, He has rejected them'? Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight. ²⁵ Thus says the LORD, 'If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, ²⁶ then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.'"

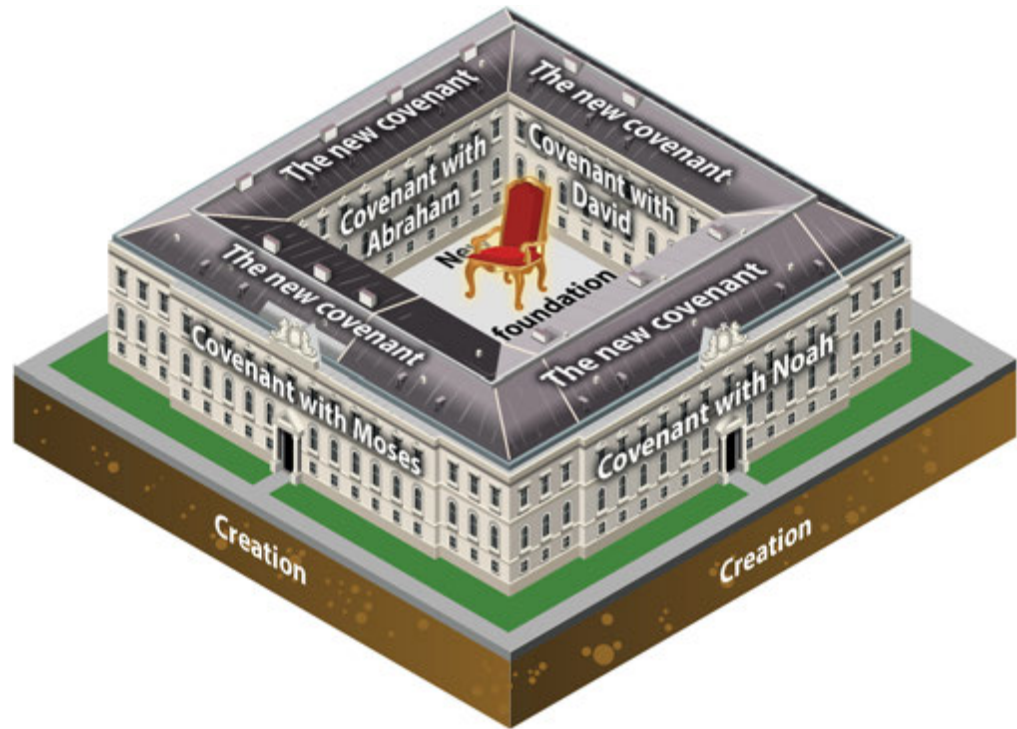
Once again God uses all the preceding covenants to heighten the glory of the new covenant during the reign of the Messiah. God speaks of His faithfulness to creation when He speaks of the day and the night or of the earth and the heavens. He mentions Jacob, David, and their descendants. He speaks of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If there were not unity of purpose in all these covenants it would be useless to believe in the good news. The unity of the plan of redemption is a sign of the unique character of God Himself. We don't have faith in a God with several plans of salvation who can suddenly change opinions. No. God is one. There is also only one plan of restoration for the creation. This plan is worked out in many stages. All the covenants work in harmony. The new covenant unites everything. The roof of our symbolic palace is securely in place. Everything is ready for the arrival of the one who is called the Prince of Peace, the Messiah, the son of Eve, the son of Abraham, the son of David.



Chapter eight

Everything is ready: the long wait for the royal son

God repeats all the promises for the son and his residence



What a marvelous royal residence God has been building. He has found a way to recreate the intimate bond with humanity after the break up of the original alliance when man was still innocent. The will of God to live among His people will come true after all. The broken foundation is covered over by grace. The walls are fixed on the new foundation as each covenant adds a new dimension. The ultimate covenant is new because it ties all the other elements together in one admirable structure. There's only one thing we lack. The rightful owner, of course! You notice in the picture that the throne is empty. The king hasn't arrived yet. How can the OT believers keep hanging on as they wait?

The prophets gave God's faithful ones many promises so that their belief wouldn't fade away during the long wait. Let's take the texts in chronological order. (Reading hint: God often speaks directly to the Messiah in these passages as He perfectly represents the whole nation of Israel.)

Before the exile of Israel to Assyria (~750 BC)

Isaiah 42 ⁶ “I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations...

Isaiah 49 ⁸ Thus says the LORD,
“In a favorable time I have answered You,
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;
And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,
To restore the land, to make *them* inherit the desolate heritages;
⁹ Saying to those who are bound, ‘Go forth,’
To those who are in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’
Along the roads they will feed,
And their pasture *will be* on all bare heights.
¹⁰ “They will not hunger or thirst,
Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;
For He who has compassion on them will lead them
And will guide them to springs of water.

Isaiah 55 ³ “Incline your ear and come to Me.
Listen, that you may live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
According to the faithful mercies shown to David.
⁴ “Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
A leader and commander for the peoples.

Isaiah 61 ⁸ For I, the LORD, love justice,
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;
And I will faithfully give them their recompense
And make an everlasting covenant with them.
⁹ Then their offspring will be known among the nations,
And their descendants in the midst of the peoples.
All who see them will recognize them
Because they are the offspring *whom* the LORD has blessed.

During the exile of Judah for the remnant in Jerusalem (~550 BC)

Jeremiah 50 ⁴ “In those days and at that time,” declares the LORD, “the sons of Israel will come, *both* they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be the LORD their God they will seek. ⁵ They will ask for the way to Zion, *turning* their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the LORD *in* an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.

During the exile of Judah for the Jews in Babylon (same time)

Ezekiel 34 ²³ “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.; ³⁰ Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares the Lord GOD. ³¹ “As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God,” declares the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 37 ²⁴ “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. ²⁵ They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. ²⁶ I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. ²⁷ My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ²⁸ And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””

After the exile for those who returned to Judah (~480 BC)

Haggai 2 ⁴ But now take courage, Zerubbabel,’ declares the LORD, ‘take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,’ declares the LORD, ‘and work; for I am with you,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ⁵ ‘As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!’

Zechariah 9 ⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak peace to the nations;
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you,
I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

The last prophecy received by the Jews (~450 BC)

Malachi 3 “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.

We know now that believers still needed to wait four centuries more before the Messiah would come. The structure of the OT is complete. God closes the curtains as far as new revelations are concerned. He still cared for His people during the silent years, of course. It’s just that He doesn’t add any new elements to His plan for the coming king to redeem the people for His kingdom. They now wait 400 years!

Chapter nine

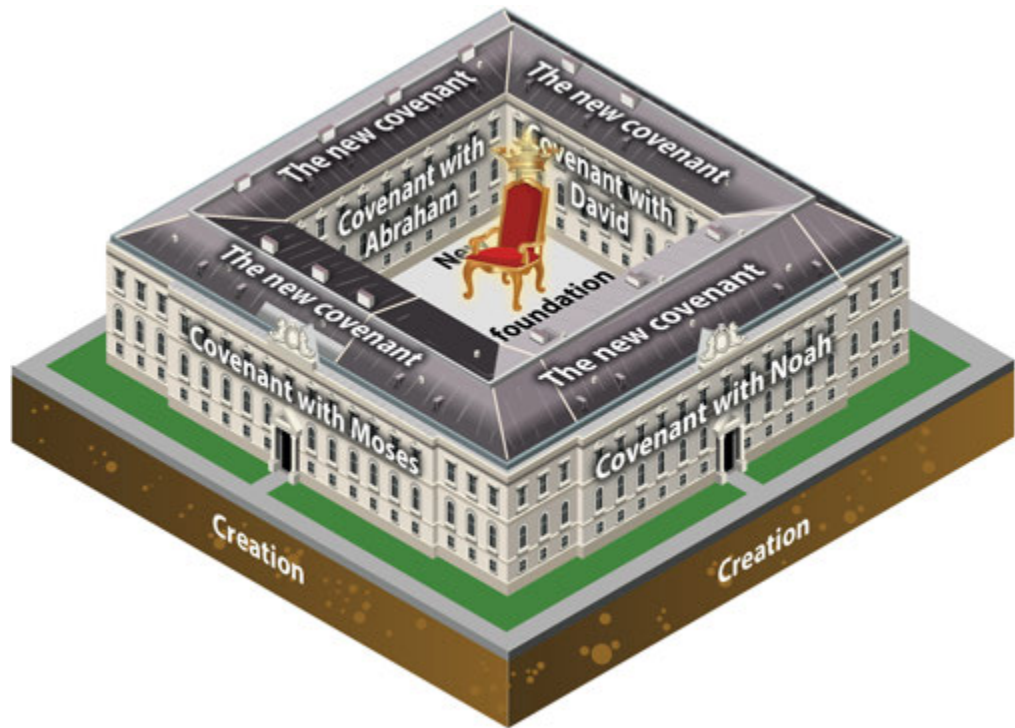
Jesus Christ, the royal son, arrives!

Malachi had nailed the final prophetic roof beam in place. The residence was ready for habitation. The faithful people waited for their savior.

Psalm 6 ⁴ Return, O Lord, rescue my soul; Save me because of Your lovingkindness.

Israel waited 400 years before the birth of the Christ.

2 Peter 3 ⁸ But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.



God now reopens the curtains of revelation so that the nation can receive its king.

Luke 19 ³⁷ As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, ³⁸ shouting: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Every king is master of his entire palace. That means he is at ease walking in any wing or corridor. What about Jesus the king? Yes, He, too, can walk in any

part of the structure God has built to receive Him. He confidently fulfills every term of every covenant God has established in the OT. The Son of God incarnate says to His Father in heaven:

Hebrews 10 ⁷ ‘Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God.’

Let’s do a quick overview of the NT to be totally sure that Jesus is the true proprietor of the royal residence, the savior looked for since the Garden of Eden.

The covenant with Adam and Eve after the fall

Romans 5 ¹⁷ For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

1 Corinthians 15 ⁴⁵ So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

Colossians 2 ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Romans 16 ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Remember that there are two essential elements of this covenant. First, a new friendship bond must be created and second, the evil one must be destroyed. The apostle Paul loved to talk about this restoration. He underscores that Adam plunged us into a state of sin. On the other hand, the obedience to death of Jesus has crossed the abyss between God and us. Jesus, the son of Eve, has created a permanent enmity between the believer and the devil. We are forever on God’s side.

Paul insists that Jesus’ death brings condemnation to Satan and the demons. Our King triumphs by the cross. The church of Christ is united to Him. Just as the Christ crushed the serpent’s head by his sacrificial death, we, too, by faith in Christ, crush Satan’s head. Paul is sure that Jesus is the warrior son of Adam and Eve.

The covenant with Noah for the preservation of humanity until the end of earthly time

1 Peter 3 ¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; ¹⁹ in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, ²⁰ who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. ²¹ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

God was faithful to his promise to Noah by not destroying the world in judgment before a king could come to establish His kingdom among His people. Peter uses the history of the flood in a rather difficult passage as a picture of our salvation. He speaks of a boat which saved Noah's family. This ark is a picture of Jesus who protects us from the flood of God's judgment against our sin and gathers us in a worldwide church. But Jesus Himself is drowned in these very floodwaters of divine judgment when He dies on a cross. Our Christian baptism is a sign that we are purified from sin by the waters which swallowed up our Lord and that we are placed within the church community. The fact that He was raised by the Father is our assurance that the death of Jesus was accepted as a substitute for our own penal death. The sign of baptism in itself has no saving power, of course. The sign must be vitally united to the object symbolized. In the NT however, the writers can sometimes speak of the *sign* of a reality as the *reality* itself. In Peter's explanation of baptism we insist that there is no separation between the *sign* pointing to Jesus and faith in Jesus who is our *reality*. It is in this sense of *union with Christ* symbolized by baptism that Peter can write: *baptism now saves you*.

The covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs

Galatians 3 ⁸ The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Romans 4 ²³ Now not for Abraham's sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴ but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Acts 3 ²⁴ And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. ²⁵ It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ ²⁶ For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

There is a very intimate bond between Jesus and Abraham. Jesus was proud to say to the Jews that *“your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”* (John 8:56) The New Testament begins with these words of Matthew: *The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* The entire ministry of Jesus aims to accomplish the promises and signs given to Abraham.

God promised a great international family to Abraham. Jesus announced the beginning of the fulfillment of this hope in His gospel.

Matthew 8 ¹¹ I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord adds a warning to those who don’t accept this gospel.

Luke 13 ²⁸ 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 yourselves being thrown out. ²⁹ And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.

God commanded circumcision as a sign of the covenant. Paul explains that the death of Christ is the reality of which circumcision was the sign for Abraham. Jesus was cut off from life with God in order to take on Himself the covenant curses.

Colossians 2 ¹¹ in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

The story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah is unforgettable. God asks for sacrifice of the beloved son. But this story pales in comparison with the story of Mount Golgotha.

John 3 ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

God does not substitute a ram in place of His only begotten Son.

Zechariah 13 ⁷ “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,” Declares the *LORD* of hosts. Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered.

During the inaugural Lord’s Supper Jesus declares that this prophecy is fulfilled by His death.

The covenant with Moses and the nation of Israel

Matthew 5 ¹⁷ Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Galatians 3 ¹² However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “He who practices them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— ¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 4 ⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Romans 10 ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

From an OT point of view the covenant with Moses and the role of the Law are dominating. There are so many signs and symbols that are made reality in Jesus’ ministry. The verses cited above are sufficient to show that Jesus obeyed everything perfectly. Jesus’ integrity is necessary because we need a right standing with a holy God. No one could find any sin in Jesus. We are united to Jesus’ perfect standing with God as we come to Him in faith and repentance.

His propitiatory death is needed in conjunction with His perfect life. His life on earth alone does not atone for guilt and shame. God said to Adam, *in the day that you eat you shall surely die*. The Law of Moses repeats the same principle. Our rebellion against our creator deserves condemnation.

Hebrews 9 ²⁷ inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

The covenant with David

Matthew 1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Luke 1 ²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.

Luke 20 ⁴¹ Then He said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is David's son? ⁴² For David himself says in the book of Psalms,
'The LORD said to my Lord,
'Sit at My right hand,
⁴³ Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"

⁴⁴ Therefore David calls Him 'Lord,' and how is He his son?"

A little while ago we said that Jesus had a special relationship with Abraham. We could say the same thing about Jesus and David. He is the first OT man mentioned in the NT. The throne of David is promised to Jesus even before His birth. During His ministry He poses a riddle to the religious leaders. By this means Jesus suggested that He is both the son of David and David's Lord at the same time.

The vision of Christ in the book of Revelation leaves no doubt. The king of the house of David reigns!

Revelation 1 ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— ⁶ and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

(Note that the king is also the sacrificial victim showing how the covenants of Moses and David complete each other.)

Revelation 17 ¹⁴ These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.

Revelation 19 ¹¹ And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. ¹³ He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

The New Covenant

Matthew 26 ²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” ²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2 ³² This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. ³⁴ For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, ³⁵ Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”” ³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

2 Corinthians 1 ²⁰ For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. ²¹ Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²² who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

After the birth of a baby the parents will look closely to see if there is a birthmark on the skin. After our spiritual new birth, we each receive a birthmark. Not on the skin but in the heart. It is the Holy Spirit, the down payment of our eternal life. The verses above show us that we receive the New Covenant Spirit thanks to the gracious work of Jesus on our behalf.

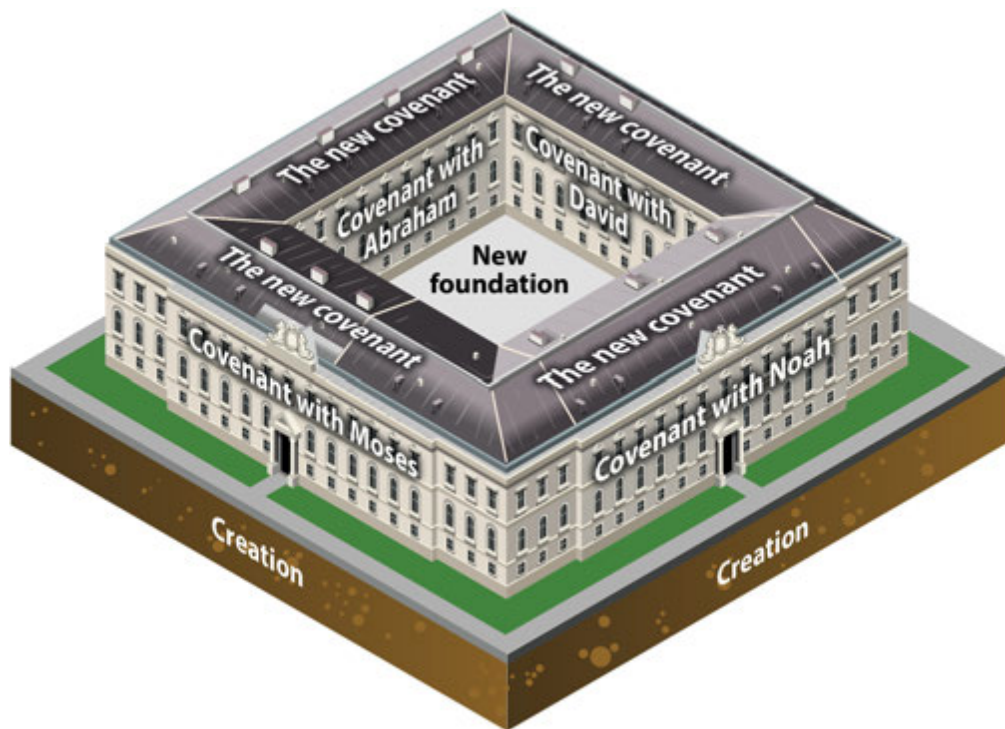
Jesus never does things haphazardly. He always has a goal. He is always conscious of doing His Father’s will. We can imagine our Savior saying something like this, “I have come to occupy the residence of the Prince of Peace. I know that there are several harmonious covenants that must be fulfilled. My Father has prepared everything for my coming. His plan is now accomplished. I see the royal palace of the kingdom before me. The throne is mine. I have done all things well in order to live in my kingdom with my people, the people my Father has given me.”

Chapter ten

How to read the OT in light of our illustration

A palace can be grand and imposing. It can have high ceilings and shining floors. Do you want brilliant windows and chandeliers? There can be hundreds of them. Nevertheless, is a palace all by itself very inviting as a place to live? An empty palace is not very welcoming.

If the great royal residence carefully constructed by God from creation to the last prophet Malachi remains void of stories it won't be very interesting to think about. The foundation of grace is solid. The walls, that is to say, the four covenants, are in agreement with God's plan of redemption. The palace roof, the New Covenant, is watertight and well-attached to the walls. Without this balanced framework no residence is possible. But something is missing in this total picture from the OT.



Our palace needs many rooms filled with furniture and decorations. In this last chapter I invite you to imagine God as an interior decorator as well as a builder. From the beginning our creator loves to make things in both abundance and in variety. Nature in all its splendor shines with the colors of God's palette. His plan of redemption reflects the same creativity.

Psalm 147 ⁴He counts the number of the stars;
He gives names to all of them.
⁵Great is our Lord and abundant in strength;
His understanding is infinite.
⁶The LORD supports the afflicted;
He brings down the wicked to the ground.

God loves close, personal relationships. Let's never forget that God reigns directly in our lives. He isn't content to pass through many angelic mediators in order to communicate with us, His image bearers. God calls Himself Emmanuel, God with us. Throughout the length and breadth of the history of redemption God works with the same creativity of spirit as we see reflected in creation.

Hebrews 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ²in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

The Father builds a royal residence for Jesus to live in among His people because the Son is the inheritor of all things.

We now apply this understanding of God the decorator to our illustration of a royal domicile. God sets up the main structure slowly over many centuries: 500 years more or less between Abraham and Moses; another 500 to David; another 500 to the New Covenant; 500 still more to the coming of Jesus. What does the Divine Builder do during the centuries between the covenants? It's obvious that there is a lot more to the OT than just the establishing of covenants.

God walks with His adopted children every day. He blesses them. He saturates their lives with His presence. He gives them examples of His faithfulness. He paints prophetic pictures of the coming Christ through their religious rituals and by societal authorities leading Israel such as the priests, kings, and prophets. (See appendix 1 for several examples.) The Eternal One writes a Law which publically displays the holiness of His own character and His kingdom. His voice vehemently thunders from heaven through the prophets warning against idolatry. He counsels wisdom in the Proverbs in order for His people to be successful in life while waiting for the Messiah. He inspires poetic Psalms to comfort and challenge them at home and in worship.

In other words, God fills the main structure with valuable stories for us all. The palace doesn't remain empty. Every chapter and verse of the OT has its place in the big picture. What does that mean for understanding the OT? It means we must study the *context* of the books, chapters, and verses in order to rightly understand their content. Let's take the 39 OT books as representing the *rooms* of the royal palace we've been describing. While holding that picture in our minds, let's take the chapters and verses of those 39 books as the *furniture*

and other decorations in each room. How can we understand the proper usage of each piece of furniture in a room, that is, what is the meaning of a given passage in the chapter and in the whole book? This is the same thing as asking: *what is the main idea of the passage?* We must understand the context of the passage to answer the question of meaning. Taken out of its context any passage can become the victim of all kinds of trickery. This is what cult groups do. They build whole religions on texts taken out of their historical and theological contexts.

In line with our illustration in the booklet, we can say that the largest context of each individual book and verse in the OT is the total structure of the royal residence of the King, the one who comes as the Son of God. All of the covenants solidly built on the foundation of grace form the grand design of the Divine Architect of the OT. That means that each passage of Scripture is put in the context of one or more of these covenants. We know that God is one. His will for the world harmonizes perfectly with His nature. Therefore, our understanding of a biblical text must harmonize with God's nature and God's one plan of redemption.

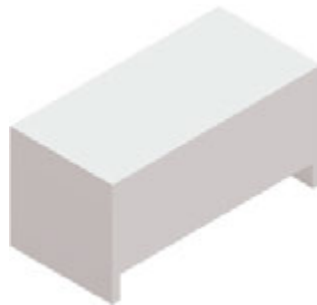
According to our illustration, each passage (that is, each piece of furniture and decoration) is found in a palace room. Each room is found in a wing associated with a certain wall, i.e., with a certain covenant. The textual unit of Genesis 1-5 is tied to the covenant with Adam made after the great rebellion in Eden. The unit Genesis 6-9 is tied into Noah's covenant but also with Adam's, as well. The next unit in Genesis, 10-50 is linked to Abraham primarily but also has echos of Adam's and Noah's covenants. From Exodus to the end of the OT, most of the "rooms" (Bible books) are closely tied to the covenant with Moses and Israel and the covenant with David. Remember, however, that all of the rooms are bound together by a foundation of grace and a roof which is the New Covenant. The overall pattern of OT development is clear: the more walls (covenants) there are that come before any given passage that you are studying, the more context there is to account for. The farther you read into the OT story of redemption, the more history and symbolism you have to remember which are associated with an individual text.

Each time that God adds a covenant to His plan of salvation there are always many new details to study. Why? Because the context becomes more complex. For example, Adam and Abraham had very little of the royal palace built in their days. There is less context to account for in the studying of these stories. One might say that there's little furniture in the few rooms that have been built. On the other hand, if we read a passage from a prophet after the exile of Judah, there is so much more context to think about. Why? Because the exile comes towards the end of the OT saga. Even the New Covenant was foretold just before the exile. The palace was ready to receive its king by the days of the exile. A passage from

the prophets is like a palace room filled tightly with furniture and pictures. The late OT texts make use of all the revelations God had given to the patriarchs and Israel. That makes the text of Zechariah, on the whole, more difficult to grasp fully than a text from Genesis. The goal of Bible study, however, remains the same for all texts: what is the meaning of the passage in the full context of God's plan?

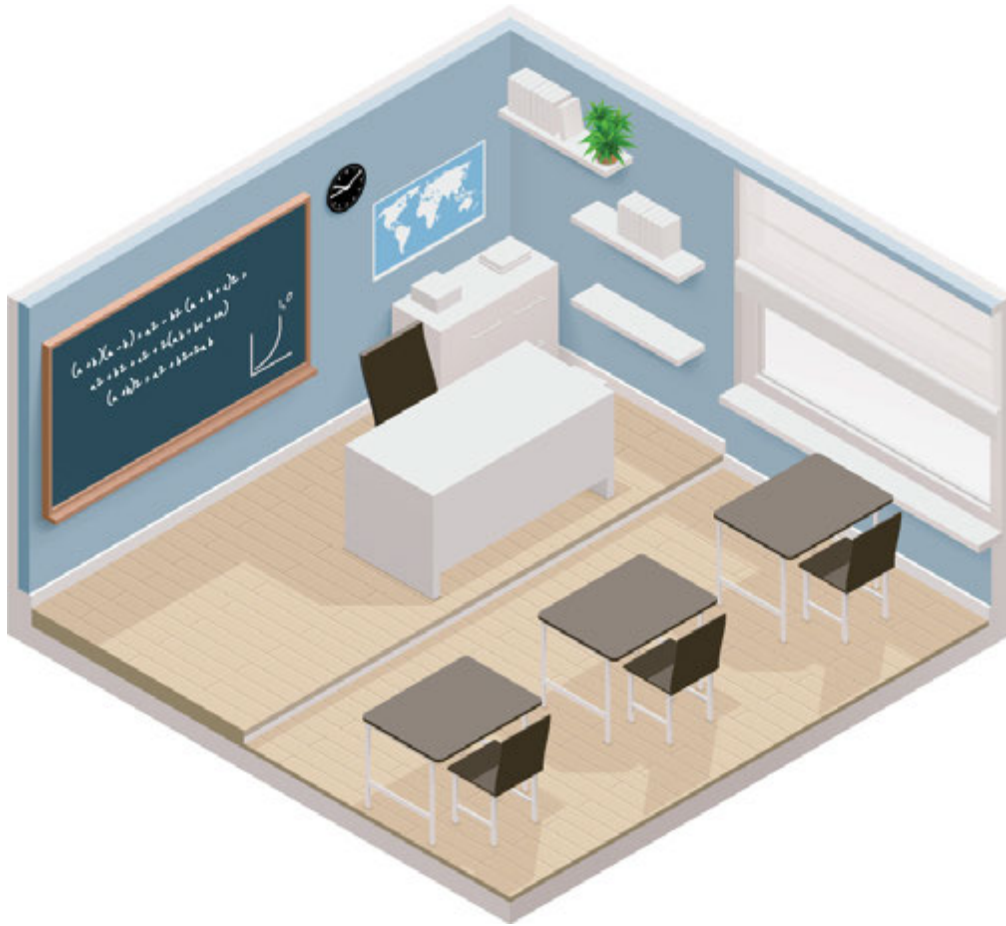
In studying the Bible we always try not to get lost in the details of a text prematurely. We try to discern a hierarchy of importance among the facts found in a passage. In a room, for example, the bed and a chair will be more important than a small rug in the corner even though the rug is part of the overall decoration. We will look at the rug in proper time but not at the expense of looking past the chair and bed.

Let's look at the following illustration to appreciate the importance of context in understanding a text.



The table without context

Here is a table made of wood. It is in a room but we know nothing about the room. We walk into the room and see the table. We immediately start to study the table closely. We don't bother to ask any questions about the room in which the table is found. We're only interested in the table (like one verse in a chapter.) Can we say any true things about the table? In a sense, yes. We can talk about the kind of wood the carpenter used. We see that it has four legs. We could measure the dimensions. Is it painted? Fine, now we know the color of the table. Can we now say we really know the meaning of this table? Far from it. The meaning of the table is closely tied to the context, ie. the meaning of the room where it is found. And that individual room gets its fuller meaning from the whole building in which it is located.

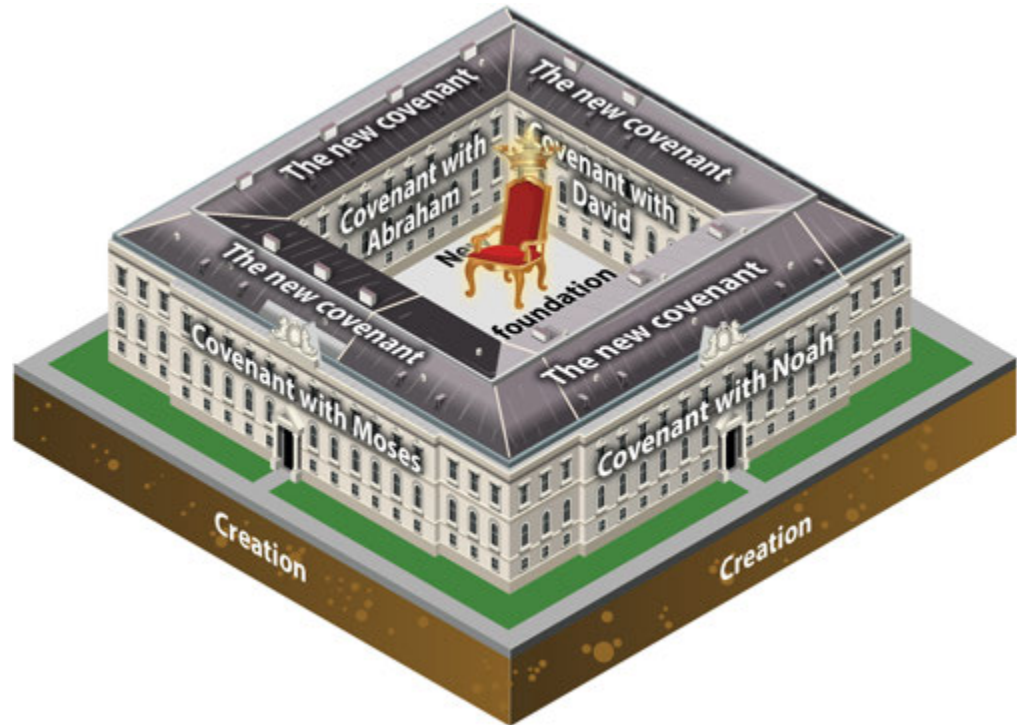


The table in context

Let's look at the table again but this time let's ask some key questions about the room and the whole building. We see now that the locale is a school classroom. What kind of school? We go to the principal and find out that it is a Bible college. Suddenly we have discovered something significant about our simple table. It is a vital tool in the overall training of a student who is preparing for service in the church. No longer do we see a bare piece of furniture with certain dimensions and colors. The table takes its place in the totality of the room and the room in the school and the school in the big picture of God preparing people for kingdom ministry.

Do we students and teachers of the OT take seriously the grand structure of God's word? Do we try to read the individual passages in the context of the covenants of God? Have we tried to properly place the chapters and verses within the meaning of the whole book? How often I've heard preachers speak about a word or a verse without any reference to the context. They do say some true things. That may be okay and God can bless His word. But these preachers usually miss "*the infinite riches of Christ*." (Ephesians 3:18) These riches are found in the treasure chest of the total structure of the OT which finds its fulfillment in the NT.

You can't preach the fullness of a passage without being aware of the grand design of God's redemptive word. That structure has been illustrated in the booklet as a royal residence of the kingdom built by God the Father for His Son in order that He might live among His people, the kingdom citizens of faith.



Conclusion

I've offered this booklet as a visual aid for studying the OT. The intention has been to give you a tool with which to picture the overall framework of God's plan. All of the joy of studying God's word is for you now. I hope that having read this booklet you'll better appreciate the unity and the grandeur of the history of our salvation.

Ephesians 4 ³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Like the faithful Jews who waited for their king to come after the exile, we, too, have entered a long period of waiting. We long for the Prince of Peace. We know that the celestial throne is occupied by Jesus. The heavenly palace houses

our king. One day the Lord will come again to renew His universe. Heaven and earth shall be one. We will be forever with our Savior.

Revelation 21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." ⁶ Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost."

Appendix 1

Some images, symbols, and major types of Christ in the Old Testament

In this booklet, we've made a distinction between the total structure of the OT seen in a series of divine covenants, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the individual books and verses found within the history of these covenants. The verses found below are a part of the "furniture" of the royal residence. That means we should understand these symbols and images, etc. in the general context of these covenants. These verses reveal the vitality of Jewish daily life under the terms of each successive covenant. All of these verses present different facets of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

1. The promised seed

Genesis 3 ¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

2. The covenant sign and the sacrificial victim

The true circumcision

Genesis 17 ⁹ God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

Isaiah 53 ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

The only Son offered

Genesis 22 ¹ Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

Mark 15 ³⁴ At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

3. The burning bush

Exodus 3 ¹ Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. ³ So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

4. The Passover lamb

Exodus 12 ⁵ Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. ⁷ Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

1 Corinthians 5 ⁷ Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

John 1 ²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

5. The column of cloud and fire at the Exodus

Exodus 14 ¹⁹ The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. ²⁰ So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

6. Manna

Exodus 16 ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.

John 6 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’” 32 Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

7. Living water

Exodus 17 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

John 7 37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

8. The bronze serpent

Numbers 21 4 Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. 5 The people spoke against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.”

6 The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 So the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.” And Moses interceded for the people. 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.” 9 And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

John 3 14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

9. The tabernacle (meeting tent)

Exodus 33 7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. 8 And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each

at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. ⁹ Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. ¹⁰ When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. ¹¹ Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

1 Kings 8 ³ Then all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. ⁴ They brought up the ark of the LORD and the tent of meeting and all the holy utensils, which were in the tent, and the priests and the Levites brought them up. ⁵ And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who were assembled to him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen they could not be counted or numbered. ⁶ Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim made a covering over the ark and its poles from above. ⁸ But the poles were so long that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside; they are there to this day. ⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁰ It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹ 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. ¹² Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. ¹³ "I have surely built You a lofty house, A place for Your dwelling forever."

10. The Ark of the Covenant

Exodus 25 ¹⁶ You shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you. ¹⁷ "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. ¹⁸ You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. ²⁰ The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. ²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²² There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

11. Day of Atonement and the scapegoat

Leviticus 16 ¹ Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died. ² The LORD said to Moses:

“Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. ³ Aaron shall enter the holy place with this: with a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be girded with the linen sash and attired with the linen turban (these are holy garments). Then he shall bathe his body in water and put them on. ⁵ He shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. ⁶ Then Aaron shall offer the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household. ⁷ He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ⁸ Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. ⁹ Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the LORD fell, and make it a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat... ²⁰ “When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. ²¹ Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. ²² The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

12. Jubilee

Leviticus 25 ⁸ ‘You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years. ⁹ You shall then sound a ram’s horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. ¹⁰ You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. ¹¹ You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field.

13. The three offices of the Messiah:

Prophet

Deuteronomy 18 ¹⁸ I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

John 4 ⁴³ After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. ⁴⁴ For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

Acts 3 ⁹ Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. ²² Moses said, ‘The LORD God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. ²³ And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’

Priest

Hebrews 4 ¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

King (or judge)

John 12 ¹² On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” ¹⁴ Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, ¹⁵ “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.” ¹⁶ These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.

Revelation 19 ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

14. The Angel of the Lord who appears to Joshua, Balaam’s donkey, Gideon, Samson’s parents, and the Jews

Joshua 5 ¹³ Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?” ¹⁴ He said, “No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?” ¹⁵ The captain of the LORD’s host said to Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Numbers 22 ²² But God was angry because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him. ²³ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned off from the way and went into the field; but Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way. ²⁴ Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. ²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself to the wall and

pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again. ²⁶ The angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left. ²⁷ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick. ²⁸ And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" ²⁹ Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now." ³⁰ The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."

³¹ Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

³² The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me. ³³ But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live." ³⁴ Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back." ³⁵ But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I tell you." So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.

Judges 2 Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, ² and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done? ³ Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.'" ⁴ When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. ⁵ So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

Judges 6 ¹¹ Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. ¹² The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior." ¹³ Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." ¹⁴ The LORD looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?" ¹⁵ He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house." ¹⁶ But the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man." ¹⁷ So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it

is You who speak with me. ¹⁸ Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You.” And He said, “I will remain until you return.”

¹⁹ Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so.

²¹ Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

²² When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.” ²³ The LORD said to him, “Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.” ²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Judges 13 Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. ² There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children. ³ Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. ⁴ Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. ⁵ For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” ⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, “A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name.

...

¹¹ Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” And he said, “I am.”

...

¹⁵ Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.” ¹⁶ The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD.” For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD. ¹⁷ Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that when your words come to pass, we may honor you?” ¹⁸ But the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” ¹⁹ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on.

²⁰ For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.

²¹ Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. ²² So Manoah said to his wife, “We will surely die, for we have seen God.” ²³ But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear things like this at this time.”

15. The Nazarite vow

Numbers 6 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD, ³ he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes. ⁴ All the days of his separation he shall not eat anything that is produced by the grape vine, from the seeds even to the skin. ⁵ ‘All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for *which he separated himself to the Lord*; he shall let the locks of hair on his head grow long. ⁶ ‘All the days of his separation to the LORD he shall not go near to a dead person. ⁷ He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. ⁸ All the days of his separation he is holy to the LORD.

Judges 13 ² There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children. ³ Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. ⁴ Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. ⁵ For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, *for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb*; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

Luke 1 ²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹ But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. ³⁰ The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be *called the Son of the Most High*; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Matthew 1 ¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. ²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel

of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; *for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*

²¹ She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

16. The virgin birth

Isaiah 7 ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Matthew 1 ²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”

17. The kinsman redeemer

Ruth 2 ¹⁹ Her mother-in-law then said to her, “Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.” ²⁰ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.” Again Naomi said to her, “The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.”

4 ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.

18. The suffering servant of the Lord

Isaiah 53 ⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Zechariah 13 ⁷ “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,” Declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

Matthew 26 ³¹ Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’

19. The Son of Man

Daniel 7 ¹³ “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Matthew 26 ⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴ Jesus *said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

20. The wisdom of God

Proverbs 1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:
² To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding,
³ To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;
⁴ To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion,
⁵ A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,
⁶ To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles.
⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Matthew 13 ³⁴ All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.”

1 Corinthians 1 ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

21. Several OT types of Christ:

- Joseph, suffering savior of his family
- David, shepherd and king of God’s people
- Moses, mediator between God and people
- Samson, judge and savior of the people
- Nehemiah, leader who rebuilds God’s city

22. Historic events with a symbolic meaning for Christ's ministry:

- Samson and the Philistines (Judges 15) one believing warrior against many enemies
- David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) someone who takes responsibility to save a weak people
- Daniel and the Babylonians (Daniel 6) a leader who suffers for his faithfulness to God

23. The miracles of Elijah and Elisha as signs of God's grace:

The dead revived; multiplication of bread; healing of the sick; goods restored

Appendix 2

An exercise in the study of the Kingdom of God

Study the texts below. Does the text talk about the completeness (fullness) of the Kingdom in its future dimension after the return of Christ or does it speak of the partial presence of the Kingdom in its earthly dimension (the time from the ascension to the return of Christ)? Or perhaps the text speaks of the present and the future at the same time! Carefully note the context of each passage before responding. Put each passage in one of these columns:

The current presence of the Kingdom

The Kingdom in fullness

Aspects of present and future

Matthew 2 ⁴Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

⁶'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,

Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah;

For out of you shall come forth a Ruler

Who will shepherd My people Israel."

⁷Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." ⁹ After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.

John 3 ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁴Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Acts 14 ²¹ After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 4 ²⁰ For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

1 Corinthians 15 ²⁴ then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

1 Corinthians 6 ⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5 ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5 ⁵ For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Colossians 1 ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

2 Thessalonians 1 ⁴ therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. ⁵ This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

1 Timothy 6 ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

2 Timothy 2 If we endure, we will also reign with Him;
If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

2 Timothy 4 ¹ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Timothy 4 ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 1 ⁸ But of the Son He says,
“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.

Hebrews 12 ²⁸ Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

James 2 ⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

1 Peter 2 ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

2 Peter 1 ¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Revelation 1 ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— ⁶ and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 11 ¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded; 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 will reign forever and ever.”

Revelation 15: ³ And they *sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,
“Great and marvelous are Your works,
O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Your ways,
King of the nations!

Revelation 17 ¹⁴ These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

Revelation 19 ⁶ Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,
“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

Appendix 3

Some suggested lines of relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church

I offer here some reflections on the relationship between these two predominant realms of activity for the believer. In the booklet we said that the Kingdom was larger than the Church. What is the significance of such a statement? Consider these facts:

1. *The Church exists on the earth*; the church is organized according to denominations or local assemblies. It exists visibly even if there are only two or three believers united in Jesus' name. The universal church which is invisible for us exists in its perfection only in God's eyes.
2. *The church's authority extends only to the spiritual and moral life of the believers within its assemblies*. The church doesn't have authority concerning the members' private lives in areas such as the choice of a career or of a Christian spouse or of the number of children to have in the family. The church can give advice, of course, in all of these areas. Nevertheless the leaders can't refuse to give the Lord's Supper to a member because, for example, they don't agree on the same political candidate.
3. *The church is temporal*. It is the family of God made up of living human beings. There are always new spiritual family members who join the church. But the church must always sadly say good bye to members who have died and gone to be with the Lord. We remove their names from the list of active members.

These are three aspects of the church among many others. Let's consider some elements of the Kingdom of God:

1. *The Kingdom includes all the believing members of the Church of Jesus Christ on earth, of course. But the Kingdom also includes all believers who have died and are with the Lord now in glory*. The angels in heaven are also part of the Kingdom of God but aren't members of the church. This means that the Kingdom citizens above are totally committed to God's will just as we try to be here on earth.

2. *The authority of King Jesus is continually dominant in all areas of the believer's life.* This means that the Spirit's authority is omnipresent while the church's authority is more specific. Let's take an example. Let's say I am a teacher. The leaders of my church have the authority to insist that my behavior as a teacher is always honorable in my classroom. If I lie to the students or headmaster one day, the pastor has the authority to insist that I repent before taking the Lord's Supper. But the pastor doesn't have the authority to write out my school curriculum for me and insist that I teach only what he wants me to teach. That is part of my personal work. I teach under the authority of the headmaster or board. Nevertheless, my personal work is under the authority of Jesus for the honor of His Kingdom. He is with me by His Spirit as I work with the students. I live for Him in my daily life.
3. We have said that the church is temporal. *The Kingdom (or reign) of God is eternal.* The church serves the Lord on the earth. The Kingdom reveals God's power on earth and in heaven. The glorious goal of the will of God for His people is not finally the church as much as it is the Kingdom. The union of the new heavens and the new earth under the direct loving rule of God is the eternal goal of the Holy Trinity.

Appendix 4

Some reflections on preaching

I would like to share with you some observations I've made during 40 years of preaching.

1. It is subtly easier to preach the Law of God rather than the Gospel. It is our nature to want to make ourselves better by our own efforts. We underestimate the depth of the selfishness which remains in our hearts, on the one hand, and the depth of the love of God for us, on the other. To preach the love of Jesus might seem indulgent as if God's love tolerates sin. To preach the Law seems stricter and more easily understood. We impose the Law as if we were capable of keeping the Law without the power of the Spirit of grace. In reality, the child of God is sanctified by realizing every day that even as great sinners we are loved and sanctified by a God who is greater than our sin.

Jeremiah 32 ⁴¹ I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.

The goodness of the Lord leads to holiness.

2. During sermon preparation the preacher should ask himself this question: *does this passage having something to say about the idols (heart desires that are too strong) which are hidden in the hearts of my listeners?* In Ezekiel 14 God speaks often of the idols of the heart. Some theologians speak of two categories of idols, large and small. The *large idols* (or desires) are those two or three dominant motivations in my life. For example, constantly seeking approval from others, always needing to have the final word, dedicating myself to financial or physical safety could all be life-dominating idols. Even if you aren't aware of the controlling role these idols play in your life they can lead you to do things contrary to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The *smaller idols* are the daily habits we form to manage our lives in the service of the larger idols which are often hidden from view. For example, if my desire is for constant approval from others I will do or not do things only according to their standards. Little by little, habits of action and speech develop in my life. Perhaps I won't tell the whole truth or I might flatter people even if the person doesn't deserve any praise. Or I might give school fee money to a powerful man in the neighborhood to gain favor even if my child suffers in the process. As you prepare the

sermon pray that your study of the Bible text will help people discover their big and small idols so that they can throw them away in repentance. This is where the applications in your sermon can be most effective.

3. Please notice, my dear colleagues, the equilibrium in Scripture between, in the first place, those *spiritual realities* which God has established by His grace in our lives, followed, in the second place, by the *commandments* of God which flow naturally out of our new life in Christ. There is a logical order of the Spirit which we must underline for the church. God always declares Good News first to His children. He changes our helpless condition. He adopts us. He calls us His well-beloved. It is always God who is taking the initiative. Then from our side there is always a response which is tied to our new identity in Christ as the children of God. The order is clear in the Bible: first, the believer's new status is announced, then come the commandments which are related to the new status. Let's take the example of

Colossians 3 ¹² So, as those who have been *chosen of God, holy and beloved*, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as *the Lord forgave you*, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ *Let the peace of Christ* rule in your hearts, to which indeed *you were called* in one body; and *be thankful*.

The passage is full of exhortations, isn't it? But did you notice that these exhortations are always based on the new reality which rules the believer's life (the italicized words.) We are already chosen, set apart for God, loved by God. The daily expression of this acceptance comes out in our compassion, goodness, humility, etc. Paul exhorts the believers to forgive one another. But according to what standard? According to the fact that we are already forgiven by Christ. Yes, let the peace of Christ rule in the church (a commandment). But we remember that we have already received peace with God as part of our calling to follow Christ. We don't create peace ourselves. We live out through obedience the peace won for us by Jesus in His death and resurrection.

4. A wise preacher tries to adapt his presentation to the mental abilities and preferred learning style of the hearers. That doesn't mean we play with the meaning of the text and change it as we wish. We remain ever vigilant in preaching the truth of God. But there are various doors by which God's word can enter into the hearts of His people. A long time ago someone

taught me that there are at least four doors of access to the person's heart and mind. They are the emotions, logical argument, the imagination, and the conscience.

Read the four passages as examples of each door:

Luke 15 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.

² Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

³ So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴ "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, *rejoicing*. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way, there will be more *joy* in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸ "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is *joy* in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Here are two parables overflowing with strong *emotions*. It is necessary to preach with lots of emotion in the voice and gestures to reflect the feeling of the passage. It is completely justified to use human emotion to preach such good news.

Romans 3 ²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

This passage is Paul at his *logical* best. Is it a passage filled with emotions? Not at all. There is some emotion but not a lot. Instead we have a detailed presentation of some very dense aspects of our justification. You really have to follow carefully to get the argument. Unfortunately, few pastors preach such passages with the necessary attention to detail. I notice that more pastors

prefer to rely on the emotions. In order to preach Romans you have to choose your words with care and modulate the rhythm of your message. You can't follow the logic of the passage if the sermon is too filled with emotional language and gestures.

Revelation 1 ¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ¹³and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

What a marvelous picture of Jesus Christ which touches our *imagination*s. The truth of who Jesus is now is painted in vivid colors. It is not a question of emotions or logical argument. John is trying to describe a heavenly vision. There will be people in your church who love such passages. They have fertile imaginations as the saying goes. They will respond to Jesus as He is presented imaginatively. A fellow in the same row who really loves logic won't be as touched as his neighbor.

2 Samuel 12 Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said,
"There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor.
²"The rich man had a great many flocks and herds.
³"But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb
Which he bought and nourished;
And it grew up together with him and his children.
It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom,
And was like a daughter to him.
⁴"Now a traveler came to the rich man,
And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd,
To prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him;
Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."
⁵Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. ⁶He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion." ⁷Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!"

Nathan had a terribly hard assignment: confront the king. How should he do it? With an appeal to emotions? David wouldn't have allowed it. How about with a logical argument carefully laid out? David would have had his own

arguments to defend himself. What is Nathan to do? He was wise. He told a touching story with lots of imaginative details. His story went to the King's *conscience*. God melted David's resistant heart as he saw his own hypocrisy.

What is the take-away thought in looking at these four passages? The atmosphere of the text should dictate the primary teaching approach including the gestures, the tone of voice, the outline of the sermon, the illustrations, and the applications. Try to vary the tone in every sermon even if the text requires one predominant style to get the truth across. The Lord will often reveal His truth in a single passage by touching our emotions and our logical minds at the same time.