

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	The Word of God . . . . .	1
1.2	Redemptive History . . . . .	7
1.3	Ancient Near East . . . . .	8
1.4	Imperial Rome . . . . .	17
1.5	Covenantal Bible . . . . .	19
<b>2</b>	<b>OT Law</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1	Genesis . . . . .	24
2.2	Last Four Books of Moses . . . . .	31
<b>3</b>	<b>OT History</b>	<b>45</b>
3.1	Deuteronomistic History . . . . .	46
3.2	Chronistic History . . . . .	52
3.3	Other Books . . . . .	55
<b>4</b>	<b>OT Poetry</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1	Psalms . . . . .	60
4.2	Wisdom Literature . . . . .	64
<b>5</b>	<b>OT Prophecy</b>	<b>73</b>
5.1	Major Prophets . . . . .	74
5.2	Minor Prophets . . . . .	82
<b>6</b>	<b>NT History</b>	<b>91</b>
6.1	Synoptic Gospels . . . . .	98
6.2	Gospel of John . . . . .	103
6.3	Acts . . . . .	104
<b>7</b>	<b>NT Letters</b>	<b>107</b>
7.1	Pauline Letters . . . . .	109
7.2	Other Letters . . . . .	118
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>127</b>



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*The New Testament is in the Old concealed;  
The Old Testament is in the New revealed.*  
– St. Augustine

### 1.1 The Word of God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [John 1:1]<sup>1</sup>

“You search the **Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me . . .” [John 5:39]

“... These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the **Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the **Scriptures**, and said to them, “Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” [Luke 24:46-48]

**All Scripture** is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. [2 Tim 4:14-17]

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the **other Scriptures**. [2 Peter 3:15,16]

In this course we will survey the Bible from a Christ-centered, covenantal, and redemptive-historical perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

## CPC Membership Vow #1

I believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation.

## Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-1647)

### Chapter 1

1. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments . . . All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things

as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

10. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

### **Westminster Shorter Catechism**

Q3: What do the Scriptures principally teach?

A: The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.<sup>3</sup>

### **Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)**

#### **Summary Statement**

1. God, who is Himself truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Atlanta, GA: Presbyterian Church in America, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses being serious loss to both the individual and the church.<sup>4</sup>

## Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

### Article X: The Autographs

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.<sup>5</sup>

### Tanakh: The Hebrew Old Testament<sup>6</sup>

Torah	Nevi'im (Prophets)		Ketuvim (Writings)
	Former	Latter	
Genesis	Joshua	Isaiah	Psalms
Exodus	Judges	Jeremiah	Proverbs
Leviticus	1-2 Samuel	Ezekiel	Job
Numbers	1-2 Kings	<i>The Twelve</i>	<i>5 Scrolls</i>
Deuteronomy		Hosea	Song of Songs
		Joel	Ruth
		Amos	Lamentations
		Obadiah	Ecclesiastes
		Jonah	Esther
		Micah	Daniel
		Nahum	Ezra-Nehemiah
		Habakkuk	1-2 Chronicles
		Zephaniah	
		Haggai	
		Zechariah	
	Malachi		

<sup>4</sup>R.C. Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy* (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 1980), pp. 60-61.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>6</sup>Willem VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), p. 17.

## Old Testament Manuscripts

### Septuagint (LXX)

“The history of the Septuagint is not only shrouded in antiquity but also clouded by Jewish and Christian legends which stress its miraculous origin. According to these legends the translators worked in isolation from each other and yet produced translations which agreed verbatim. Named after the traditional number of translators (Latin *septuaginta* ‘seventy,’ thus LXX), it seems to have originated among the Jewish community in Alexandria [Egypt] between 250 and 100 BC. . . . The LXX . . . is of crucial significance in textual studies, since it represents a form of the Hebrew text prior to the standardizing which took place in the early Christian centuries.”<sup>7</sup>

“The Septuagint was the standard Old Testament text used by the early Christian church. The expanding Gentile church needed a translation in the common language of the time – Greek. By the time of Christ, even among the Jews, a majority of the people spoke Aramaic and Greek, not Hebrew. The New Testament writers evidence their inclination to the Septuagint by using it when quoting the Old Testament.”<sup>8</sup>

### Masoretic Text (MT)

“After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Judaism was threatened by decentralization associated with the loss of the temple and by Christian evangelism throughout the Mediterranean world. Rabbis and scribes took definite steps to standardize the text for study and worship. Christians began to use the LXX . . . cherished for years by Jews in the Diaspora. This sparked Jewish opposition to the LXX and increased Jewish loyalty to every word of the Hebrew text. . . . The letters, words, and verses of each book were counted carefully, and a note was added at the close of each book to summarize the totals for the book. This final masora (lit. ‘tradition’) contained mnemonic devices by which each new copy of the scroll could be checked for accuracy.”<sup>9</sup>

“The textual history of the Masoretic Text is a significant story in its own right. This text of the Hebrew Bible is the most complete in existence. It forms the basis for our modern Hebrew Bibles and is the prototype against which all comparisons are made in Old Testament textual studies. It is called Masoretic because in its present form it is based on the *Masora*, the textual tradition of the Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes of Tiberias. (Tiberias was the location of their community on the Sea of Galilee.) The Masoretes, whose scholarly school flourished between AD 500 and 1000, standardized the traditional consonantal text by adding vowel pointing and marginal notes. (The ancient Hebrew alphabet had no vowels.) . . . The Masoretic Manuscripts, as old as they are, were written between one and two thousand years after the original autographs. Earlier witnesses to the ancient Hebrew text still needed

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<sup>7</sup>William S. Lasor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederic W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 616.

<sup>8</sup>Mark R. Norton, “Texts and Manuscripts of the Old Testament,” in Philip Wesley Comfort, ed., *The Origin of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992), p. 165.

<sup>9</sup>Lasor, pp. 612-3.

to be brought forward to testify to the accuracy of the Masoretic Text.”<sup>10</sup>

### Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)

“Over fifty years have elapsed since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, the most celebrated, if not fortuitous, archaeological discovery of this [20th] century. In the spring of that year, three Bedouin shepherds were in the area called Qumran, which is on the northwest side of the Dead Sea, apparently tending their flock. The shepherds were cousins and members of the Ta’amireh tribe, one of whom, Jum’a Muhammad Khalil, amused himself by throwing rocks at a cave opening in the cliffs to the west of the plateau at Qumran. One of the stones went into the cave and made a shattering noise. The Beduins did not enter the cave that day, but two days later one of them, Muhammad ed-Dhib, went back to it and, venturing in, found ten jars. One of those jars held three ancient manuscripts. . . . The discovery of these ancient documents and the hundreds more that nearby caves would later yield is regarded by many as the most significant archaeological finding of the twentieth century and as nothing short of providential.”<sup>11</sup>

“Before the Qumran discoveries, the oldest existing Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament dated from about AD 900. The greatest importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, therefore, lies in the discovery of biblical manuscripts dating back to only about 300 years after the close of the Old Testament canon. That makes them one thousand years earlier than the oldest manuscripts previously known to biblical scholars. The texts found at Wadi Qumran were all completed before the Roman conquest of Palestine in AD 70, and many predate this event by quite some time. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Isaiah scroll has received the most publicity, although the collection contains fragments of all the books in the Hebrew Bible with the exception of Esther.”<sup>12</sup>

“The oldest text is a fragment of Exodus dating from about 250 BC. The Isaiah scroll dates from about 100 BC. These ancient witnesses confirm the accuracy of the Masoretic Text and the care with which the Jewish scribes handled the Scriptures. Except for a few instances where spelling and grammar differ between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic Text, the two are amazingly similar. The differences do not warrant any major changes in the substance of the Old Testament.”<sup>13</sup>

### New Testament Manuscripts

There are approximately 5000 Greek manuscripts which contain all or part of the New Testament.<sup>14</sup>

“The earliest known New Testament manuscript is  $\phi$ 52, a fragment of John’s Gospel. This papyrus fragment was dated by various paleographers to the first half of the second century [AD] – even to the first quarter. . . . there is nothing

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 153-5.

<sup>11</sup>C. Marvin Tate, *Communities of the Last Days: The Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament, and the Story of Israel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup>Norton, p. 156.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>14</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 36.

unreasonable about assigning a date of AD 100-125 for  $\phi 52$ . If the Fourth Gospel was written in the 70s or 80s, then we have a manuscript fragment twenty years removed from the autograph.”<sup>15</sup>

“ $\phi 52$ . Measuring only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches and containing but a few verses from the Fourth Gospel (18:31-33,37-38), this papyrus fragment is the oldest copy of any portion of the New Testament known to be in existence today. . . . Although the extent of the verses preserved is so slight, in one respect this tiny scrap of papyrus possesses quite as much evidential value as would the complete codex. Just as Robinson Crusoe, seeing but a single footprint in the sand, concluded that another human being, with two feet, was present on the island with him, so  $\phi 52$  proves the existence and use of the Fourth Gospel during the first half of the second century in a provincial town along the Nile, far removed from its traditional place of composition (Ephesus in Asia Minor).”<sup>16</sup>

“A few scholars, however, believe that there is an even earlier manuscript, designated P46. This manuscript, known as the Chester Beatty Papyrus II, containing all of Paul’s epistles except the Pastorals, has recently been dated in the late first century. If this dating is accurate, then we have an entire collection of Paul’s epistles that must have been made only twenty to thirty years after Paul wrote most of the Epistles.”<sup>17</sup>

## 1.2 Redemptive History

The *redemptive-historical* approach to interpreting the Bible “shows an appreciation of God’s Word as it has come down to us in space and time, by paying attention to the historical and grammatical analysis as well as to the literary and canonical functions. This method of interpreting the Bible begins with the presupposition that the Bible is both the Word of God and the word of man. As the Word of God the Bible reveals the triune God and his plan of salvation and life for human beings in relation to his grand design for the renewal of heaven and earth. As the word of man the Bible is the collection of the literary works written by men of God and inspired by the Spirit of God.”<sup>18</sup>

“Revelation possesses a genetic linkage as it progresses through history. . . . The first revelation of the new order of salvation for fallen man is contained in Genesis 3:15 (the so-called *protoevangelium* or ‘first gospel’). Adam and Eve are told that a human being will bring about a reversal of Satan’s apparent victory over fallen man. As the Scriptures unfold from Genesis to the Gospels, we learn that this man-child will be a Hebrew (from the seed of Abraham), a Judahite (of the tribe of Judah), and a Davidite (son of David). Thus the unfolding picture of the coming deliverer becomes more specific as we approach the incarnation. Or consider the self-disclosure of God in the tabernacle-temple. God condescends or humbles himself; he dwells or abides with his people; he identifies with their condition (a tent in the desert; a building in the promised land). When Jesus

<sup>15</sup>Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barret, eds., *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscript* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>16</sup>Metzger, pp. 38-9.

<sup>17</sup>Philip W. Comfort, “Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament,” in Comfort, p. 179.

<sup>18</sup>Willam VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), p. 17.

affirms that he is the temple (John 2:19), the historic progress displayed from tabernacle to temple finds its accomplishment in him. Jesus is the condescension of God; he is God dwelling in our midst; he identifies with our human nature.”<sup>19</sup>

“Whereas Systematic Theology takes the Bible as a completed whole and endeavours to exhibit its total teaching in an orderly, systematic form, Biblical Theology deals with the material from the historical standpoint, seeking to exhibit the organic growth of development of the truths of Special Revelation from the primitive pre-redemptive Special Revelation given in Eden to the close of the New Testament canon.”<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3 Ancient Near East

“The most important area for the study of human antiquity is the Near East. There we find a cluster of ancient civilizations that are not only the oldest and among the greatest but are also well recorded. The Near East included notably Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel . . .”<sup>21</sup>

#### Ancient Egypt<sup>22</sup>

“Like a giant lifeline in the midst of desperation, the Nile River, longest river in the world, cuts a swath of green and life through the barrenness of the giant Sahara desert in North Africa. Fed by three major sources – the White Nile which begins at Lake Victoria, the Atbara, and the Blue Nile, which joins the Nile near Khartoum in the Sudan – the river rushes down into the Nile Valley and beyond that into the rich alluvial plain of the Nile delta. Swollen by rains, the river yearly floods the Nile Valley, so that the valley literally turns into isolated islands separated by the high waters. In an area without any rainfall, the Nile brings water and life, and in its periodic flooding, it also brings nutrient-rich silt which it deposits on the agricultural land in the Nile Valley.

“Along this narrow strip of life, one of the greatest and most enduring human civilizations established itself. It was an African civilization which fed off human cultures to the south, the west, the east, and eventually, the north. At times it was the greatest power in the world; at other times, the Egyptians groaned under the domination of foreign powers. By 300 AD, its greatness had faltered permanently, and this great culture faded from memory. People forgot its religion and its writing; only the stones of their monuments stood as a mute testimony of three thousand years of human experience.”

#### The Second Intermediate Period (1640-1550 BC)

“The large-scale immigration of foreigners into the Nile Valley during the Middle Kingdom eventually spelled the end of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt. These foreigners remained non-naturalized “Asiatics” in the land of the pharaohs; they established their own communities and lived by their own laws. Eventually, as

<sup>19</sup>James T. Dennison, Jr., “What is Biblical Theology?”, *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator* (Jackson, MS: Reformed Academic Press, 2000), p. 188.

<sup>20</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 1948), pp. v-vi.

<sup>21</sup>Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 4th edition (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 17.

<sup>22</sup><http://www.wsu.edu:8080/dee/EGYPT/EGYPT.HTM>

their numbers increased, they threatened the power of the Egyptian monarchy itself and Egypt fell into disarray.

“This period, the Second Intermediate Period, saw Egypt ruled by foreign kings for almost a hundred years. . . . The Egyptians, ashamed and angered at the loss of their state, called these kings Heka-Khaswt, or “Rulers of the Foreign Lands.” The Greeks later perverted this word to Hyksos.

“A ferocious Egyptian family from Luxor waged a brilliant and fierce set of wars with the Hyksos kings and finally drove them out of Egypt by 1550 BC. Amosis, the great general who finally drove out the Hyksos, then founded a new dynasty, the Eighteenth Dynasty, and ushered in the era of the New Kingdom.”

### **The New Kingdom (1550-1070 BC)**

“After Amosis drove out the Hyksos and established the Eighteenth Dynasty, the Egyptian kings dedicated themselves to preventing the Hyksos disaster from ever happening again. The period of Hyksos domination was a chaotic and shameful time for the Egyptians, and they were determined never to see a foreign king lording it over Egypt ever again. These were warrior-kings, great generals who did not stand apart from their people in divine aloofness. They were active administrators who built up fortifications all along the Egyptian border and actively seized territories outside of Egypt, such as Palestine and Syria. These kings subjugated foreign lands and exacted high taxes, making Egypt wealthy and powerful again. They didn’t tolerate foreigners, who were treated relatively badly. Among those foreigners or sojourners were the Hebrews (Egyptian “apiru”=“foreigner”), whose national identity was formed in their epic migration from Egypt in the thirteenth century BC.”

### Egyptian Chronology

Note: Liberals tend to date the Exodus around 1290 BC, during the reign of Ramses II, while conservative scholars date the Exodus around 1446 BC, during the reign of Amenhotep II.

When	Event(s)
5000 BC	Earliest evidence of settled human habitation in the Nile delta
3100 BC	Earliest evidence of hieroglyphic writing in Egypt
2700-1640 BC	Pyramid-building period; largest pyramids built for Cheops, Chephren, and Mycerinus
2550-2490 BC	Building of the pyramid tombs for Khufu (Cheops) and Khephren (Chephren), the largest of the Egyptian pyramids
2040-1640 BC	Middle Kingdom
1640-1550 BC	Collapse of the Middle Kingdom (1640 BC; beginning of the Second Intermediate Period)
1550-1070 BC	New Kingdom; temple-building period in Egypt; the Temple of Karnak built and added to all through the New Kingdom period
1500 BC	Earliest examples of the Book of the Dead
1380 BC	Building of the Temple of Luxor by Amenhotep III
1367-1350 BC	Reign of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton), who abandoned Egyptian polytheism for a monotheistic religion
1347-1339 BC	Reign of Tutankhamon
1182-1151 BC	Reign of Ramses III
1070-712 BC	Collapse of New Kingdom (1070 BC; Third Intermediate Period)
750 BC	Conquest of Egypt by Kush under Kashta and then Piankhy
332 BC	Invasion of Egypt by Alexander the Great
332 BC-395 AD	Hellenistic-Roman Period
332-31 BC	Ptolemaic Egypt
285-246 BC	Reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who commissioned the Greek translation of the Hebrew Torah, the Septuagint
170 BC	Aristobolus, the first Jewish Greek philosopher, presents an explanation of Mosaic scripture to Ptolemy VI Philometor
51-30 BC	Reign of Cleopatra VII, last of the Ptolemaic monarchs of Egypt
31 BC	Battle of Actium; Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony defeated by Augustus Caesar
30 BC-395 AD	Conquest of Egypt by Augustus Caesar; Roman period

## Ancient Mesopotamia<sup>23</sup>

### Sumerians (2900-1800 BC)

“Among the earliest civilizations were the diverse peoples living in the fertile valleys lying between the Tigris and Euphrates valley, or Mesopotamia, which in Greek means, “between the rivers.” In the south of this region, in an area now in Kuwait and northern Saudi Arabia, a mysterious group of people, speaking a language unrelated to any other human language we know of, began to live in cities, which were ruled by some sort of monarch, and began to write. These were the Sumerians, and around 3000 BC they began to form large city-states in southern Mesopotamia that controlled areas of several hundred square miles. The names of these cities speak from a distant and foggy past: Ur, Lagash, Eridu. These Sumerians were constantly at war with one another and other peoples, for water was a scarce and valuable resource. The result over time of these wars was the growth of larger city-states as the more powerful swallowed up the smaller city-states. Eventually, the Sumerians would have to battle another peoples, the Akkadians, who migrated up from the Arabian Peninsula. The Akkadians were a Semitic people, that is, they spoke a Semitic language related to languages such as Hebrew and Arabic. When the two peoples clashed, the Sumerians gradually lost control over the city-states they had so brilliantly created and fell under the hegemony of the Akkadian kingdom which was based in Akkad, the city that was later to become Babylon.”

### Akkadians (2340-2125 BC)

“The Akkadians were a Semitic people living on the Arabic peninsula during the great flourishing period of the Sumerian city-states. Although we don’t know much about early Akkadian history and culture, we do know that as the Akkadians migrated north, they came in increasing conflict with the Sumerian city-states, and in 2340 BC, the great Akkadian military leader, Sargon, conquered Sumer and built an Akkadian empire stretching over most of the Sumerian city-states and extending as far away as Lebanon. Sargon based his empire in the city of Akkad, which became the basis of the name of his people. This great capital of the largest empire humans had ever seen up until that point later became the city of Babylon, which was the commercial and cultural center of the middle east for almost two thousand years.

“But Sargon’s ambitious empire lasted for only a blink of an eye in the long time spans with which we measure Mesopotamian history. In 2125, the Sumerian city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia rose up in revolt, and the Akkadian empire fell before a renewal of Sumerian city-states.

“The Akkadians were Semites, that is, they spoke a language drawn from a family of languages called Semitic languages (the term “Semite” is a modern designation taken from the Hebrew Scriptures; Shem was a son of Noah and the nations descended from Shem are the Semites). These languages include Hebrew, Arabic, Assyrian, and Babylonian. After the final end of Sumerian power and civilization around 2000 BC, the area came under the exclusive control of Semitic peoples for centuries.”

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<sup>23</sup><http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/MESO/MESO.HTM>

**Amorites (1800-1530 BC)**

“After the last Sumerian dynasty fell around 2000 BC, Mesopotamia drifted into conflict and chaos for almost a century. Around 1900 BC, a group of Semites called the Amorites had managed to gain control of most of the Mesopotamian region. Like the Akkadians, the Amorites centralized the government over the individual city-states and based their capital in the city of Babylon, which was originally called Akkad and served as the center of the Amorite empire. For this reason, the Amorites are called the Old Babylonians and the period of their ascendancy over the region, which lasted from 1900-1600 BC, is called the Old Babylonian period.

“Perhaps the most important legal text in history is an Old Babylonian code of laws written by Hammurabi (around 1792-1750 BC), the most famous of the Old Babylonian monarchs. This code, called the Code of Hammurabi is generally regarded as Sumerian in spirit, but with all the harshness of the Old Babylonian penalties.”

**Hittites (1600-717 BC)**

“Roaring into history from mysterious origins, the Hittites would rule a great empire that stretched from Mesopotamia to Syria and Palestine. The Hittites are shrouded in fog and mystery; we don’t where they came from, and for a long time the language they spoke was undecipherable. In the end, it turns out they were Indo-European, that is, they spoke a language from the Indo-European language family, which includes English, German, Greek, Latin, Persian, and the languages of India. Their invasion spelled the end of the Old Babylonian empire in Mesopotamia (1900-1600 BC), and like so many others before them, the invaders adopted the ways of the conquered; after the conquest of Mesopotamia, the Hittites adopted the laws, religion, and the literature of the Old Babylonians thus continuing the long heritage of Sumerian culture.

“Their empire was at its greatest from 1600-1200 BC, and even after the Assyrians gained control of Mesopotamia after 1300 BC, the Hittite cities and territories thrived independently until 717 BC, when the territories were finally conquered by Assyrians and others.

“The Hittites are perhaps one of the most significant peoples in Mesopotamian history. Because their empire was so large and because their primary activity was commerce, trading with all the civilizations and peoples of the Mediterranean, the Hittites were the people primarily responsible for transmitting Mesopotamian thought, law, political structure, economic structure, and ideas around the Mediterranean, from Egypt to Greece. So the Hittites are the great traders in the culture built by the Sumerians and adopted and modified by later peoples. Because of the Hittites, when the Hebrews migrated to Canaan under Moses they found a people, the Canaanites, who were, culturally speaking, Mesopotamian.”

**Assyrians (1170-612 BC)**

“Beginning with the monarch, Tukulti-Ninurta (1235-1198 BC), Assyria began its first conquests, in this case the conquest of Babylon. The Assyrian dream of empire began with the monarch, Tiglat-Pileser (1116-1090), who extended Assyrian dominance to Syria and Armenia. But the greatest period of conquest occurred between 883 and 824, under the monarchies of Ashurnazirpal II

(883-859 BC) and Shalmeneser III (858-824 BC), who conquered all of Syria and Palestine, all of Armenia, and, the prize of prizes, Babylon and southern Mesopotamia. The Assyrian conquerors invented a new policy towards the conquered: in order to prevent nationalist revolts by the conquered people, the Assyrians would force the people they conquered to migrate in large numbers to other areas of the empire. Besides guaranteeing the security of an empire built off of conquered people of different cultures and languages, these mass deportations of the populations in the Middle East, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, turned the region into a melting pot of diverse cultures, religions, and languages. Whereas there would be little cultural contact between the conquered and the conquerors in early Mesopotamian history, under the Assyrians the entire area became a vast experiment in cultural mixing. It was the Assyrian monarch, Sargon II (721-705 BC), who first forcefully relocated Hebrews after the conquest of Israel, the northern kingdom of the Hebrews. Although this was a comparatively mild deportation and perfectly in line with Assyrian practice, it marks the historical beginning of the Jewish diaspora. This chapter in the Jewish diaspora, however, never has been really written, for the Hebrews deported from Israel seem to have blended in with Assyrian society and, by the time Nebuchadnezzar II conquers Judah (587 BC), the southern kingdom of the Hebrews, the Israelites deported by Sargon II have disappeared nameless and faceless into the sands of northern Mesopotamia.

“The monarchs of Assyria, who hated Babylon with a passion since it constantly contemplated independence and sedition, destroyed that city and set up their capital in Nineveh. Later, however, feeling that the Babylonian god, Marduk, was angry at them, they rebuilt the city and returned the idol of Marduk to a temple in Babylon. The last great monarch of Assyria was Ashurbanipal (668-626 BC), who not only extended the empire, but also began a project of assembling a library of tablets of all the literature of Mesopotamia. Thirty thousand tablets still remain of Ashurbanipal’s great library in the city of Nineveh; these tablets are our single greatest source of knowledge of Mesopotamian culture, myth, and literature.

“After Ashurbanipal, the great Assyrian empire began to crumble; the greatest pressure on the empire came from their old and bitter enemies, the Babylonians. Aided by another Semitic people, the Medes, the Babylonians led by Nabopolassar eventually conquered the Assyrian capital of Nineveh and burned it to the ground, ending forever Assyrian dominance in the region.”

### **Chaldeans (612-539 BC)**

“After the fall of Assyrian power in Mesopotamia, the last great group of Semitic peoples dominated the area. Suffering mightily under the Assyrians, the city of Babylon finally rose up against its hated enemy, the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, and burned it to the ground. The chief of the Babylonians was Nabopolassar; the Semites living in the northern part of Mesopotamia would never gain their independence again.

“Nabopolassar was succeeded by his son, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC). Nebuchadnezzar was the equal of all the great Mesopotamian conquerors, from Sargon onwards; he not only prevented major powers such as Egypt and Syria from making inroads on his territory, he also conquered the Phoenicians and the state of Judah (586 BC), the southern Jewish kingdom that remained after the subjugation of Israel, the northern kingdom, by the Assyrians. In order to secure the territory of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar brought Jehoiachin and Zedekiah,

the two kings of Judah (in succession) and held them in Babylon. In keeping with Assyrian practice, the “New Babylonians,” or Chaldeans forced a large part of the Jewish population to relocate. Numbering possibly up to 10,000, these Jewish deportees were largely upper class people and craftspeople; this deportation marks the beginning of the Exile in Jewish history.

“Under Nebuchadnezzar, the city of Babylon was rebuilt with great splendor; it would eventually become one of the most magnificent human cities in the area of the Middle East and Mediterranean. But all was not perfect beneath the shining surface; there still existed a number of cities that were loyal to the Assyrians. The entire period dominated by the Babylonians, in fact, is a period of great unrest as Babylonian hegemony was continually tested by philo-Assyrians. This conflict slammed the door on the Babylonian empire after a dynasty of only five kings. Babylon in 555 BC came under the control of a king loyal to the Assyrians, Nabonidus (555-539 BC), who attacked Babylonian culture at its heart: he placed the Assyrian moon-god, Sin, above the Babylonian’s principal god, Marduk, who symbolized not only the faith of Babylon but the very city and people itself. Angered and bitter, the priests and those faithful to Babylon would welcome Cyrus the Conqueror of Persia into their city and end forever Semitic domination of Mesopotamia. The center of the Middle Eastern world shifted to Cyrus’s capital, Susa, and it would shift again after the Greeks and then the Romans. For almost two and a half centuries, Mesopotamia and Babylon at its center, dominated the landscape of early civilization in the Middle East to be finally eclipsed by the rising sun of the Indo-European cultures to the north and to the west.”

### **Persians (539-330 BC)**

“Until the sixth century BC, they were a people shrouded in mystery. Living in the area east of the Mesopotamian region, the Persians were a disparate group of Indo-European tribes, some nomadic, some settled, that were developing their own culture and religion unique from that of the great cities to their west. . . . By 486 BC, the Persians would control all of Mesopotamia and, in fact, all of the world from Macedon northeast of Greece to Egypt, from Palestine and the Arabian peninsula across Mesopotamia and all the way to India.

“Cyrus was a first in human history, for he was the first to conceive of an idea that would forever fire the political and social imaginations of the people touched by the Persians. That idea? Conquer the world.

“By 554 BC, Cyrus had conquered all of Persia and defeated the Medes for control of the region. He soon conquered Lydia in Asia Minor, Babylon in 539 BC and, by the time he died in 529 BC, he had conquered a vast territory – in fact, he probably was the greatest conqueror in human history.

“. . . the conquest of Babylon led to the immediate freeing of the Hebrews who had been exiled in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. . . .

“Although the internal structure of the Persian imperial government was somewhat shaky, the conquests and fire for conquest continued after Cyrus’s death. His son, Cambyses, conquered Egypt in 525 BC, but the Chaldeans revolted in Mesopotamia and the Medes revolted east of the Tigris. Cambyses’s son, Darius I (reigned 522-486 BC . . .), or Darius the Great, quelled the Chaldeans and Medes and worked on firming up the state. His great innovation was to divide the huge empire into more or less independent provinces called satrapies.

“Darius extended the Persian empire to its farthest reaches, extending through his conquests all the way into Macedon just northeast of Greece. . . . Eager to prevent any future threats to the empire by Athens or any other Greek city, Darius set out to conquer the whole of Greece. And he almost made it.

“So in 490 BC, the Persians launched an expedition against Athens. They were met, however, by Miltiades, who had been an outstanding soldier in the Persian army but ran for his life when he angered Darius. Unlike other Athenians, he knew the Persian army and he knew its tactics. The two armies, with the Athenians led by Miltiades, met at Marathon in Attica and the Athenians roundly defeated the invading army. This battle, the battle of Marathon (490 BC), is perhaps the single most important battle in Greek history. Had the Athenians lost, the Persians would have installed Persian government and culture as the norm in Greece long before the classical period in Greek history. All subsequent culture influenced by the Greeks would have been Persian culture.

“Only a decade later, Xerxes I, the successor to Darius I, was driven out of Europe completely by the Greeks. Over the next few years, all of the Greek cities in Asia Minor would become independent and Athens, which had led the fight against the Persians, would become the dominant political force in the Greek world. The Persian empire, however, hung on for another century and a half, surviving numerous revolts and succession problems. In 340 BC, Alexander the Great set out to conquer the Persians in his own punitive expedition. Even though the ruler of Persia, ironically named Darius II, had a much superior force, Alexander manage to win battle after battle against the Persians until, in 331 BC, he crossed the Euphrates into Mesopotamia. In 330 BC he entered Babylon after Darius II had fled (eventually to be assassinated) and the infinitely long history of Mesopotamia folded into a new history, that of the Hellenistic period and the Greek and later Roman domination of the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates.”

## Mesopotamian Chronology

When	Event(s)
5000 BC	Earliest evidence of human culture in Mesopotamia
2900 BC	Pre-dynastic Sumerians
2750 BC	First Sumerian dynasty of Ur
2340-2125 BC	Sargon I begins the Akkadian rule in Mesopotamia
2100-1800 BC	Third Sumerian dynasty of Ur
1800-1170 BC	Old Babylonian period
1728-1685 BC	Hammurabi, author of the first known Code of Laws
1600-1100 BC	Staggered periods of Hittite hegemony over Mesopotamia
1200-612 BC	Assyrian period
714-681 BC	Reign of Sennacherib, whose conquest of Judah resulted in the first deportations of the Hebrews
668-626 BC	Reign of Ashurbanipal, the most energetic of the Assyrian conquerors
612 BC	Fall of Nineveh
612-539 BC	Neo-Babylonian Period
605-565 BC	Reign of Nebuchadnezzar; his conquest of Judah and subsequent deportation of some Hebrew peoples mark the beginning of the Hebrew Exile
539 BC	Fall of Babylon and the beginning of Persian dominance in Mesopotamia
546 BC	Conquest of Lydia and the Greek cities of Asia Minor by Cyrus
521-486 BC	Reign of Darius I; the Persian empire at its fullest extent, from Macedon to Egypt, Palestine to India
499-494 BC	Rebellion of Greek cities against Persian rule
490-489 BC	Darius I invades Greece on a punitive expedition against Athens; known in Greek history as Persian Wars
480-479 BC	Invasion of Greece by Xerxes
479 BC	Defeat of Persian armies by the Greeks
334-330 BC	Conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great
330 BC	Alexander enters Babylon; final fall of the Persians and Mesopotamian dominance over the region; beginning of Hellenistic period

## 1.4 Imperial Rome

“After the death of Augustus in 14 AD, Rome underwent a series of profound changes. The Empire itself grew dramatically; from Augustus to the time of Trajan (98-117 AD), Rome acquired more of northern Africa, most of Great Britain, parts of Germany, eastern Europe around the Black Sea, as well as Mesopotamia and the northern part of the Arabian peninsula.

“The first emperors of Rome were all from the Julian line. Augustus was immediately succeeded by Tiberius (emperor 14-37 AD), who was followed by Gaius, nicknamed Caligula (“little boot”) (37-41), Claudius (“cripple, lame”) (41-54 AD), and Nero (54-68 AD). Tiberius and then Caligula demonstrated how arbitrarily power could be wielded by the emperor; Caligula, in particular, probably had a nervous breakdown on the death of his sister and was famous throughout Roman history for his cruelty and delusive behavior. The imperiate of Caligula, however, demonstrated how the emperor’s rule was based on sheer military power; after the assassination of Caligula in 41 AD, the Praetorian Guard found Claudius cowering in the palace and declared him emperor. . . .

“The final Julian emperor to sit on the throne was Nero, who had begun as a brilliantly talented and highly moral youth. It was in the time of Nero that the Romans began to actively persecute, and execute, Roman members of a new . . . religion: Christianity. Among those executed was . . . Paul of Tarsus. He soon, however, proved himself unconcerned and incompetent, and the frontier armies began to grow restless. In 68 AD, the armies revolted in Gaul and Nero was overthrown. The next year, 69 AD, no fewer than four emperors mounted the throne, each backed by a powerful army.

“Rome was spinning into chaos, but a Roman general, Vespasian (69-79 AD), managed to hold onto the imperiate long enough to found his own dynasty: the Flavian dynasty. . . . He was a hard-headed and practical soldier and administrator who ridiculed most of the trappings of the office he held. This hard-headed practicality translated into a highly effective imperiate. He was succeeded by his son, Titus (79-81 AD) and then Domitian (81-96 AD), who began the second wave of persecutions of Christians.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup><http://www.wsu.edu:8080/dee/ROME/IMPROME.HTM>

Roman and New Testament Chronology<sup>25</sup>

Event(s)	When
Jesus born	5-4 B.C.
Tiberius rules	A.D. 14-37
Jesus' Death, Resurrection	30-32
Jesus' Ascension [Acts 1:9]	30-32
Coming of the Holy Spirit [Acts 2:1-4]	30-32
Stephen stoned [Acts 7:54-60]	35?
the Church prospers [Acts 9:31]	37?
Caligula rules	37-41
Claudius rules	41-54
Herod kills James [Acts 12:2]	44
Herod dies [Acts 12:23]	44
Book of James written	46
Paul's first missionary journey [Acts 13:3-14:27]	47-49
Galatians written	48
Matthew written	50
Paul's second missionary journey [Acts 15:40-18:22]	50-53
1 and 2 Thessalonians written	50-51
Paul's third missionary journey [Acts 18:23-21:17]	53-57
Nero rules	54-68
1 Corinthians written	56
2 Corinthians written	56
Romans written	57
Paul in Rome [Acts 28:16]	60-62
Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon written	60-62
Jude written	60-64
Luke-Acts written	62-64
1 Peter written	62-64
Titus written	62-64
1 Timothy written	62
Hebrews written	before 64
Mark written	64-67
2 Timothy written	64-67
2 Peter written	64-67
Peter and Paul killed	67
Revelation written	67?
Epistles of John written	90?
John written	90?

<sup>25</sup>Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn, *Ancient History from Primary Sources*, (visit [www.triviumpursuit.com/](http://www.triviumpursuit.com/)).

## 1.5 Covenantal Bible

“... the goal of the study of biblical covenants in the light of ancient Near Eastern treaties ... is to recover the ancient background of biblical passages in order to recover more fully a sense of how the original readers would have naturally read them. In brief, with the discovery of the covenant-treaty analogy, we are not really reading anything foreign into the Scriptures, we have rather rediscovered a bit of background which has been lost to readers of the Bible through the centuries, but which was current in the ancient world.”<sup>26</sup>

“[B]iblical history is not objective history – that is, uninterpreted – history, but rather history narrated with a divine purpose. For this reason, commentators have referred to biblical history as ‘theological history,’ ‘prophetic history,’ and ‘covenantal history.’ The last is especially appealing, because covenant is the primary divine-human relationship metaphor used in the Bible, and the Bible charts this relationship from the time of Adam and Eve (Genesis) through the time of consummation (Revelation).”<sup>27</sup>

### What is a Covenant?

“A covenant is a *bond in blood sovereignly administered*. When God enters into a covenantal relationship with men, he sovereignly institutes a life-and-death bond.”<sup>28</sup>

“Of the biblical words usually rendered ‘covenant’ the primary one in the Old Testament is the Hebrew *berith*, for which the Greek *diatheke* was the translation choice of the New Testament writers. ...

“Repeatedly we read of a *berith* being ‘made.’ The *berith*-making is accomplished through a solemn process of ratification. Characteristically the transaction centers in the swearing of an oath, with its sanctioning curse. Clearly a *berith* is a legal kind of arrangement, a formal disposition of binding nature. At the heart of a *berith* is an act of commitment and the customary oath-form of this commitment reveals the religious nature of the transaction. The *berith* arrangement is no mere secular contract but rather belongs to the sacred sphere of divine witness and enforcement.

“The kind of legal disposition called *berith* consists then in a divinely sanctioned commitment. In the case of divine-human covenants the divine sanctioning is entailed in God’s participation either as the one who himself makes the commitment or as the divine witness of the human commitment made in his name and presence. ...

“So much was oath-commitment definitive of the *berith* that the act of making a *berith* was denoted by the imagery of the oath ritual performed when ratifying a *berith*. Thus, since the characteristic ratification rite was one of slaying and cutting up animals to symbolize the curse that would befall the breaker of the oath, ‘cut a *berith*’ became the idiom for this transaction. ...

<sup>26</sup>Tremper Longman III, “Evangelicals and the Comparative Method,” *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator* (Jackson, MS: Reformed Academic Press, 2000), p. 40.

<sup>27</sup>Raymond B Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup>O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), p.4.

“... the meaning of *berith* is confirmed by the extra-biblical evidence of analogous phenomena in the ancient world, particularly certain political arrangements whose formal equivalence to the divine covenants in the Bible is established by striking and extensive parallels in the ratificatory rituals and documents and in their administrative procedures. For these similar covenantal arrangements are regularly called ‘bonds (i.e., obligations) and oaths.’ ”<sup>29</sup>

## Covenantal Old Testament

“Four covenants in particular take on a special importance for the OT and Jewish tradition: God’s unconditional covenant with the world through Noah [Gen 6:18,9:8-16]; the promise of land and posterity to Abraham [Gen 12:1-3,15:18-19,17:1-4], which was repeated to the ancestors Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph [Gen 26:1-5,28:13-15,48-50 passim]; the royal and eventually messianic covenant with David and his descendants [2 Sam 7:1-17; Ps 89; Is 9:2-7]; and the conditional covenant formed between God and Israel at Sinai [Ex 19-24,34; Deut 5-28]. . . .

“The covenant is also a common thread running through the OT. Much of the Pentateuch seeks to elaborate and detail the covenant established through Moses. The historical books explain Israel’s persistent difficulties as disobedience to the covenant. The prophets too see Israel’s covenantal indiscretions as the chief reason for the punishment of exile. The prophets also describe the future in covenantal terms. God is going to reestablish the Mosaic covenant, variously depicted as covenant of love [Hos 2:16-20] or peace [Ezek 34:25,37:26] or as ‘everlasting’ [Is 61:8; Jer 32:40,50:5]. The prophet Jeremiah even speaks of a ‘new covenant’ that entails unprecedented forgiveness, reconciliation and re-creation [Jer 31:31-33]. The prophets also universalize the particular covenant given to Israel: the future covenant includes the whole world [Is 42:6,49:6-8]. This eschatological and universal covenantal vision – a vision that authentically reflects the covenants God forged with David, Israel, Abraham and Noah – provides the conceptual framework for understanding new covenant language in the NT.<sup>30</sup>

## Covenantal New Testament

“As treaty documents of the New Covenant, the Gospels and Acts provide the ‘historical prologue’ of the New Covenant, with the former bearing witness to the ratification of God’s covenant with His people in the sacrificial death of Christ, and Acts focusing on the founding of the New Covenant community through apostolic proclamation and providing at the same time the historical framework for the epistles. The New Testament epistles in turn provide the stipulations and sanctions of the New Covenant, that is, they serve as the means of forming and instructing God’s covenant community and prosecuting God’s covenant lawsuit against His church when the need arises. As such, the New Testament books, along with the Old, functioned *from the beginning* in their character as ‘treaty documents’ to form and structure the New Covenant community and to order its faith and life.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), pp. 1-3.

<sup>30</sup>Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997) pp. 246-7.

<sup>31</sup>Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 69.

## Testament vs. Covenant

“The terms ‘Old Testament’ and ‘New Testament’ for the two collections of books came into general Christian use in the later part of the second century; Tertullian rendered *diatheke* into Latin by *instrumentum* (a legal document) and also by *testamentum*; it was the latter word survived, unfortunately, since the two parts of the Bible are not ‘testaments’ in the ordinary sense of the term.”<sup>32</sup>

## Major Covenants<sup>33</sup>

### Covenant of Works [Gen 1:28-30; 2:15-17]

- Made with Adam as head of humanity.
- Adam was created in God’s image and given the role of expanding human vice-regency from Eden to the entire earth by means of multiplication and dominion.
- Adam was required to pass the test of the forbidden fruit or he would bring the judgment of death to the entire human race.

### Covenant of Grace [Gen 3:15; Isa 42:6]

- Made with Christ as head of redeemed humanity.
- Christ received the promise of an elect people whom he redeemed from the Fall through the history of salvation culminating in his humiliation, exaltation, and glorious return.
- Christ fulfilled the obligations of human loyalty that Adam failed to keep and gives eternal life to the elect.

### Noahic Covenant [Gen 6:18-22; 9:8-17]

- Made with Noah as father of humanity.
- Noah was redeemed from the flood and granted a stable creation within which human vice-regency could extend through multiplication and dominion over the entire earth.
- Noah and his descendants were required to observe God’s moral requirements or suffer the judgment of death.

### Abrahamic Covenant [Gen 15:9-21; 17:1-27]

- Made with Abraham as father of Israel.
- Abraham was chosen to further the vice-regency of humanity first through the multiplication and dominion of his redeemed descendants in the land of Canaan and then through extending the blessing of redemption throughout the entire earth.
- Abraham and Israel were required to live righteously and observe circumcision, which symbolized judgment against those who violated God’s moral requirements.

<sup>32</sup>F.F. Bruce, “The Bible,” in Comfort, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup>*The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), p. 25.

**Mosaic Covenant** [Ex 19-24]

- Made with Israel through Moses' mediation.
- Israel was redeemed from slavery in Egypt and granted holy laws to guide their vice-regency as redeemed humanity's first through multiplication and dominion in the land of Canaan and then in the entire earth.
- Israel was required to observe the law of Moses or suffer the judgment of God which would culminate in defeat and exile from the land.

**Davidic Covenant** [2 Sam 7:5-16; Ps 89, 132]

- Made with David as head of Israel's permanent royal dynasty.
- David was promised a permanent dynasty to further the vice-regency of Israel as redeemed humanity first through multiplication and dominion in the land of Canaan and then in the entire earth.
- The descendants of David were required to observe the law of Moses or suffer judgment from God culminating in temporary defeat and the exile from the throne of Israel.

**New Covenant** [Isa 54:10; Jer 31:31-34; Eze 34:25,37:26]

- Made with Israel and Judah for the time of Christ after the exile.
- Israel was promised complete redemption from sin and unprecedented blessings in vice-regency through multiplication and dominion over the entire new creation.
- All of God's people throughout the world will be fully redeemed from sin in Christ and will observe the law of God perfectly through the power of the Spirit of Christ.

## Chapter 2

# OT Law

The first five books of the Bible are collectively known as the *Torah* (Hebrew for “instruction”), the Pentateuch (Greek *pentateuchos*, “five volume [book]”), the Law, the Law of Moses, or simply “Moses” [Luke 16:31].

“The Pentateuch is both a composite of individual books and a seamless narrative that renders a complete story from creation to the death of Moses. . . .

“The Pentateuch is primarily a blending of history and law. . . . the Pentateuch’s big story relates to God’s covenants with the patriarchs; his later deliverance of the descendants, now a nation, from Egypt; and their obligation to keep God’s laws as delineated in the covenant to which they agreed at Sinai and that Moses expounded in Deuteronomy [Dt 6:20-25]. . . .

“Genesis focuses on God’s covenants with [Israel’s] fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which promise that God will make of their family a great nation. The narrative in Exodus through Deuteronomy deals with the nation’s founder, Moses, and God’s covenant mediated through him to make Israel a holy nation. That story and these covenants find their fulfillment in Christ and the new Israel as the sovereign God directs history toward its ultimate destiny.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *SotRSB*, pp.4-5.

## 2.1 Genesis

“Genesis is well named. It is a transliteration from the Greek of the LXX: it means ‘source, origin.’ The Hebrew name comes from the book’s first word, *beresheet* – ‘in the beginning.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

### General Division<sup>3</sup>

#### A. Genesis 1-11: *The Primeval History*

Creation	[1:1-2:25]	(Adamic Covt: Covt of Works)
Fall	[3:1-5:22]	(Gen 3:15: Covt of Grace)
Flood	[6:1-9:29]	(Noahic Covt: Covt of [Common] Grace)
Nations	[10:1-11:9]	

#### B. Genesis 12-50: *The Patriarchal History*

Abraham	[11:10-25:10]	(Abrahamic Covt: Covt. of Grace)
Isaac	[25:11-26:33]	
Jacob	[27:1-36:43]	
Joseph	[37:1-50:26]	

### Creation

The three major evangelical interpretations of Genesis 1-2 all affirm the creative activity of God. Where they differ is on the nature of the six days.

**24-Hour** Each of the six days is a literal earth day.

**Day-Age** Each of the six days represents an unspecified length of time.

**Literary Framework** The six days are figurative:

Creation Kingdom	Creature Kings
Day 1 Light	Day 4 Luminaries
Day 2 Sky, Seas	Day 5 Sea creatures, Winged creatures
Day 3 Dry land, Vegetation	Day 6 Land animals, Man

On the Sabbath, the seventh day, God the Creator King is enthroned.<sup>4</sup>

[Col 1:15,16a]

*Enuma Elish* (“When on high”): 11th century BC Akkadian creation story

### Expanded Outline<sup>5</sup>

The Hebrew word *toledot*, or “generations,” divides the rest of Genesis into ten parts. These ten occurrences create a literary bridge between Adam and Abraham (divisions one through five) and Abraham and Israel in Egypt (divisions six through ten).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Lasor, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>John Yeo, unpublished lecture notes, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2004.

<sup>4</sup>Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, “The Framework View,” David G. Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001), p. 224.

<sup>5</sup>Meredith G. Kline, unpublished lecture notes, Westminster Theological Seminary, n.d.

<sup>6</sup>*Progress of Redemption*, p. 71.

**Prologue: Covenant of Creation** [1:1-2:3]

- A. Beginning of heaven and earth [1:1]
- B. Earthly kingdoms [1:2-13]
- B1. Earthly kings [1:14-31]
- A1. King of heaven and earth [2:1-3]

**Division One: City of Man in the Old World** [2:4-4:26]

- A. Probation in paradise [2:4-25]
- B. Fall and exile curse [3:1-24]
- C. Escalation of evil in the city of man [4:1-24]
- D. (Transition) Godly remnant [4:25, 26]

**Division Two: Community of Faith in the Old World** [5:1-6:8]

- A. Covenant line of Seth [5:1-32]
- B. (Transition) Cult of man [6:1-8]

**Division Three: Redemptive Judgment and Re-creation** [6:9-9:29]

- A. Covenant of salvation with Noah [6:9-8:22]
- B. Common grace covenant [8:20-9:17]
- C. Kingdom oracle [9:18-29]

**Division Four: City of Man in the New World** [10:1-11:9]

- A. Diaspora of mankind [10:1-32]
- B. Escalation of evil of Babel [11:10-26]

**Division Five: Community of Faith in the New World** [11:10-26]

- A. Covenant line of Shem [11:10-26]

**Division Six: Covenant with Abraham** [11:27-25:11]

- A. (Introduction) Genealogical sources [11:27-32]
- B. Promised Inheritance [12:1-15:20]
  - a. Covenant promise and demand [12:1-5]
  - b. Difficulties and deliverance [12:6-13:17]
  - c. Success and dedication [13:18-14:24]
  - d. God's oath of ratification [15:1-20]
- A1. (Linkage) Genealogical resources [16:1-16]
- B1. Promised heir [17:1-22:19]
  - a. Covenant promise and demand [17:1-37]
  - b. Difficulties and deliverance [18:1-19:38]
  - c. Success and dedication [20:1-21:34]
  - d. God's oath of confirmation [22:1-19]
- A11. (Conclusion) Genealogical succession [22:20-25:11]

**Division Seven: Dismissal from the Covenant** [25:12-18]

- A. Rejected line of Ishmael [25:12-18]

**Division Eight: Isaac, Covenant Patriarch** [25:19-35:29]

- A. Jacob's election as successor [25:19-27:40]
  - a. Jacob's struggle for the birthright [25:19-34]
  - b. Blessings for Isaac in Canaan [26:1-33]
  - c. Jacob's reception of Isaac's blessing [26:34-27:40]
- B. Exile origin of the tribal fathers [27:41-33:17]
  - a. Jacob's flight from the land [27:41-28:9]
  - b. Encounter with God's angel at Bethel [28:1-32]
  - c. Conflict with Laban [29:1-30]
  - d. Birth of Jacob's sons [29:31-30:24]
  - c1. Pact with Laban [30:25-31:55]
  - b1. Encounter with God's angel at Penuel [32:1-32]
  - a1. Jacob's return to the land [33:1-17]
- C. Israel in Canaan under Isaac [33:18-35:29]

**Division Nine: Dismissal from the Covenant** [36:1-37:1]

- A. Rejected line of Esau [36:1-37:1]

**Division Ten: Jacob, Covenant Patriarch** [37:2-50:26]

- A. Family disunion in Canaan [37:2-38:30]
- B. Joseph in Egypt [39:1-41:57]
- C. Refining of the covenant family [42:1-45:28]
- B1. Jacob's family in Egypt [46:1-47:27]
- A1. Reunion and restoration to Canaan [47:28-50:26]

Flood Narrative [6:10-9:19]<sup>7</sup>

- A. Noah [6:10a]
- B. Shem, Ham, and Japheth [10b]
- C. Ark to be built [14-16]
- D. Flood announced [17]
- E. Covenant with Noah [18-20]
- F. Food in the ark [21]
- G. Command to enter the ark [7:1-3]
- H. 7 days waiting for flood [4-5]
- I. 7 days waiting for flood [7-10]
- J. Entry into ark [11-15]
- K. Yahweh shuts Noah in [16]
- L. 40 days flood [17a]
- M. Waters increase [17b-18]
- N. Mountains are covered [19-20]
- O. 150 days water prevail [(21)-24]
- P. **God remembers Noah** [8:1]
- O1. 150 days waters abate [3]
- N1. Mountain tops visible [4-5]
- M1. Waters abate [5]
- L1. 40 days (end of) [6a]
- K1. Noah opens window of ark [6b]
- J1. Raven and dove leave ark [7-9]
- I1. 7 days waiting for waters to subside [10-11]
- H1. 7 days waiting for waters to subside [12-13]
- G1. Command to leave ark [15-17 (22)]
- F1. Food outside ark [9:1-4]
- E1. Covenant with all flesh [8-10]
- D1. No flood in the future [11-17]
- C1. Ark [18a]
- B1. Shem, Ham, and Japheth [18b]
- A1. Noah [19]

“An intimation of the true dimensions of the times so briefly surveyed in Genesis 4 through 6 is given in 2 Peter 3:5-7. There, all of man’s history on earth is divided in two at the Flood, and the prediluvian times are viewed not merely as an early stage in the present course of events but virtually as a separate world history by themselves, the history of another world that preceded the present world. The apostle speaks of “the world that then was,” the original heavens and earth created by the word of God, a world that perished in the judgment of the Flood, and he sets that prediluvian world over against the present heaven and earth, the world produced at the Flood, which is also moving towards a destiny of divine judgment.”<sup>8</sup>

[1 Peter 3:18-22]

*Epic of Gilgamesh*: 2nd millennium BC Babylonian flood story

<sup>7</sup>G.J. Wenham, “The Coherence of the Flood Narrative,” *Vetus Testamentum* 28 (1978), p. 338.

<sup>8</sup>*Kingdom Prologue*, p. 11.

## Abrahamic Covenant<sup>9</sup>

**Covenant of Grace** A unilateral covenant based upon the binding, unconditional promises of God (imposed Suzerain-Vassal treaty)

**Genesis 12:1-3** Notice the parallel structure of [12:1a] and [12:1b-3]:<sup>10</sup>

country/land	land (of Israel)
people/clan/family	descendants/great nation (Israel)
father's house	blessing (father of many nations [17:4])

**Genesis 15** God's self-maledictory oath as He "cuts" or ratifies the covenant with Abram in a vision

**Genesis 17** The sign of the covenant: circumcision

**Genesis 22:1-19** Confirmation of the covenant

**Foundational** to the other covenants in Scripture:

- The promise of land in the Mosaic covenant [Deut 30:1-10]
- The promise of kingly descendants in the Davidic covenant [2 Sam 7:12-16]
- The promise of blessing in the Old and New covenants [Ex 19:3-6; Jer 31:31-40]

**NT Antitypes** For the apostle Paul, the "mystery" of the gospel was that Gentiles are included in the Abrahamic promise!

land (Canaan)	New Jerusalem [Heb 11:9,10; Rev 21]
descendants (Israel)	church (the Israel of God) [Gal 6:16]
blessing to the nations through a "seed" [Gen 22:18]	Jesus Christ [Gal 3:19]

## Isaac and Ishmael: Rivalry and Deliverance<sup>11</sup>

"Isaac's name means 'laughter' because both Abraham and Sarah 'laugh' at the promise God makes to them concerning Isaac's birth. Abraham would be 100 and Sarah would be 90 years of age when they give birth to Isaac. Isaac is the 'elect' second child of Abraham representing the lineage of faith, the seed of the woman, who continues in the covenant promises of Abraham. Isaac's wife is sovereignly provided from among Abraham's descendants in Mesopotamia (from his brother Nahor, in the city of Nahor), not from the Canaanites [Gen 24:10ff].

"Ishmael's name means 'God hears' and ironically God hears the child's cries after Sarah casts out Hagar, the Egyptian concubine, and her son from Abraham's presence [Gen 21:9-21]. Why did Sarah cast her out? Because Ishmael was literally 'laughing' (i.e., scoffing) at Isaac and persecuting him (a foreshadowing of the persecution of Egypt against Israel). Although God

<sup>9</sup>John Yeo, lecture notes.

<sup>10</sup>Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), p. 73.

<sup>11</sup>John Yeo, lecture notes.

promises that Ishmael too will become a great nation because of his descent from Abraham (he is the father of the Arab nations), he is, nonetheless, rejected from the Abrahamic covenant promises, and is, therefore, a seed of the serpent. Ishmael, incidentally, marries and Egyptian [Gen 21:21].”

### **Jacob and Esau: Deceit and Change<sup>12</sup>**

“Jacob’s name means ‘supplanter’ or ‘deceitful,’ literally ‘one who catches the heel.’ Even before their birth, Jacob and Esau are depicted as struggling in the womb for firstborn status [Gen 25:23]. At birth, Jacob is even seen grasping Esau’s heel. The theme of God sovereignly choosing the younger over the elder or oldest brother is clearly repeated in Genesis: Abel over Cain, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Judah over Reuben (also another theme is the barren wife: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist; see also the passing of the wife as sister: Abraham twice [Egypt and Gerar], Isaac once [Gerar]). Jacob cleverly steals Esau’s birthright for a pot of ‘red stew(ed)’ lentils and bread [Gen 25:29ff]. Jacob also steals the ‘solemn family blessing’ from Esau by pretending that he was Esau by wearing a skin of goats over his hands and neck and by feeding Isaac savory food and bread [Gen 27]. Notice that the mothers of both Isaac and Jacob play a pivotal role in the outworking election of God in their individual lives. Jacob flees from Esau and returns to his ancestry, to his uncle Laban, Rebekah’s father. He, like Isaac, marries a woman from Mesopotamia and not someone from among the Canaanites, like Esau. Jacob works for Laban seven years but is ‘deceived’ into marrying Leah. He eventually marries Rachel seven days later, but must work an additional seven years for Rachel [Gen 29:15-30]. Jacob’s life up to the time that he wrestles with God has been characterized by deceiving and being deceived. He was a constant schemer. An example of this type of scheming was in his agreement with Laban that every newborn spotted livestock would be his. Jacob actually believed that placing alternating colors in front of mating animals would result in unusually colored offspring and, therefore, would belong to him. But God chose to bless Jacob because of the Abrahamic blessing on his life through his father Isaac. During his wrestling with God, God touches Jacob’s hip socket and makes him lame or weak in one leg. Jacob, who always depended on his strength, was now physically and spiritually dependant on God’s grace for his every move. Jacob’s name is changed from ‘supplanter’ to ‘prince with God’ which indicates that Jacob had now been spiritually changed.

“Joseph’s name means ‘One who adds.’ The word ‘recognize’ plays a vital role in the Joseph story. The Joseph narrative seeks to preserve both the lives and purity of the nation of Israel from marrying among the Canaanites.”

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

## Christ in Genesis<sup>13</sup>

**Messianic Prophecies** are prophetic statements of fact about Christ.

Gen 3:15	redeemer [Gen 22:14] and [John 8:56]
Gen 22:18	seed/offspring [Gal 3:16-19]
Gen 49:8-12	king [Rev 5:5]

**Types** are people, places and things that point to of the work of Christ.

Gen 3:21	animal skins	substitutionary atonement [Rom 5:8-11]
Gen 6-9	ark	baptism as judgment [1 Pet 3:18-22]
Gen 14:17ff	Melchizedek	perfect priesthood [Heb 5,7,8]
Gen 28:12	ladder	bridge between heaven/earth [John 1:47-51]

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

## 2.2 Last Four Books of Moses

### Exodus

“The name Exodus (Greek *exodos*, literally ‘the way out’ or ‘exit’) comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (known as the Septuagint [LXX]). It is an appropriate title since it captures the departure of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. The Greek word actually appears in the LXX in Exodus 19:1. The Hebrew title, ‘These are the names of,’ is taken from the first words of the book (similar to Genesis). Although this title does not capture the idea of leaving the bondage of Egypt, it does continue the lineage of the sons of Israel from Genesis 46:8. The parallel passage in Exodus appears in 1:2-5, but here the order is different in Exodus because it places the sons of Leah and Rachel before the four sons of the concubines.”<sup>14</sup>

“The Book of Exodus begins where Genesis left off. This characteristic aspect of the Old Testament presents each book as a separate, coherent work, yet it also presents each book in relation with the other.

- As [in] Genesis, the purity of the lineage of Abraham was important. We saw that in the mixed lines of Seth and Cain, which brought about the cataclysmic Flood. Also, we saw that Isaac and Jacob married women who were of their people from Mesopotamia from the lineage of Shem. They did not marry Hamites or Canaanites such as Ishmael (who married an Egyptian) and Esau (who married a Hittite). See also the story of the rape of Dinah. Hence, the Israelites were sent to Egypt in order to preserve their race and their pure Shemite lineage (i.e., Semitic).
- Gen. 12:2; Gen. 35:11-12, the assurance that Abraham’s descendants (as well as Jacob’s) would be fruitful and multiply [Ex. 1:7].
- Gen. 15:13-16, the prophecy made to Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for four hundred years.”<sup>15</sup>

### Date of the Exodus<sup>16</sup>

**Early date** (usually argued for by conservatives) The Exodus happened at 1446 (15 cent. BC) during the reign of Amunhotep II, based mainly on verses such as 1 Kings 6:1 and Judges 11:26, as well as some archeological evidence (e.g., *Merneptah Stele*).

**Late date** (usually argued for by liberals) The Exodus happened at 1290 (13th cent. BC) when Rameses II was Pharaoh. This view is based primarily upon archeological evidence such as the excavations of Jericho and the other cities taken during the Conquest. Those who hold this view date the destruction of these cities no earlier than the 13th century.

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<sup>14</sup>John Yeo, lecture notes.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

## Outline<sup>17</sup>

### Part 1 Exodus (Historical Narrative)

Oppression of Israel	Ch 1
Call of Moses	Ch 2-6
Ten Plagues	Ch 7-11
Exodus and Journey to Mount Sinai	Ch 12-18
Passover	Ch 12
Feast of Unleavened Bread	Ch 13:3-10

### Part 2 Legal Section

Book of the Covenant	Ch 19-24
Ten Commandments (Covenant Stipulations)	Ch 20

### Part 3 Worship

Instructions for Building the Tabernacle	
( <i>Ends with command to keep the Sabbath [31:12-17]</i> )	Ch 25-31
False Worship: The Golden Calf	Ch 32-34
Building of the Tabernacle	
( <i>Begins with command to keep the Sabbath [35:1-3]</i> )	Ch 35-40

## Moses

“The name Moses (Heb. *Moshe*) means ‘Drawn Out.’ It is probably of Semitic origin but it is also intriguingly similar to the Egyptian word Mose which means ‘is born’ (e.g., Thutmose or ‘Thut is born’). [Moses] may have been deliberately given a Semitic name by the Egyptian princess (cf. Acts 7:22). The ark of bulrushes as a type of ark. The same Hebrew term that was used of Noah’s ark is used in Ex. 2:3, a possible reference as a second Noah.”<sup>18</sup>

## Yahweh, the Divine Name

“God reveals himself as the great ‘I AM’ in Exodus 3:12, 13. The phrase, ‘I AM that I AM’ is most likely in parallel to the divine name Yahweh in v. 15. Thus, the name Yahweh is most likely the third person singular of the same verb, ‘to be,’ most likely meaning ‘He is’ or ‘He will be.’ The divine name is not pronounced by the Jews since it was held to be too sacred to be pronounced and it prevented them from taking the name in vain. Hence, the ‘four letters’ or the *tetragrammaton* is pronounced ‘adonai’ which means Lord (the vowels were later inserted into the four words and pronounced Jehovah). In modern translations it is written in all capitals, i.e., the LORD. Although the patriarchs knew the name, but they did not know the full dimensions of its meaning, as referred in Ex. 6:3. When Israel experienced God’s redemption from Egypt (6:6-7), the people would understand God’s grace more fully as Yahweh.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), p. 129.)

<sup>18</sup>John Yeo, lecture notes.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

## Judgment on the Egyptian ‘Gods’<sup>20</sup>

[Exod. 12:12]

1. *Hapi*, the god of the Nile, bringer of fertility. This plague sent a powerful message to the Egyptians due to the fact that the Nile was critical to their well-being. The blood-red color may have come from the tons of red soil carried by the Nile and combined with a type of algae called flagellates that were deadly to fish. [7:14-25]
2. *Heqt*, the frog-headed goddess of fruitfulness. Since *Heqt* was the goddess of fertility, the reference to frogs swarming into bedrooms in Ex. 8:3 may be an allusion to her accustomed role, but with a twist of irony. God proved his sovereignty over time when he responded to Moses’ prayer to remove the frogs. [8:1-15]
3. (Nothing for the gnats.) [8:16-19]
4. *Kheper(a)*, in the form of a beetle (if that may be included among the ‘swarm of flies’). He symbolizes the daily cycle of the sun across the sky. [8:20-32]
5. Many Egyptian gods and goddesses are pictured in the hieroglyphs zoomorphically: *Apis* was the sacred bull of *Ptah*, the well-known god of crafts; *Hathor*, a cow-headed goddess (of joy), or a goddess with human head adorned with horns or cow’s ears; *Khnum*, a ram-headed male figure; *Amon*, king of the gods and patron deity of the Pharaohs, a male figure with a ram’s head, or a ram wearing a triple crown; *Geb*, god of the earth, a goose or a male figure with his head surmounted by a goose; *Isis*, queen of the gods, a cow’s or ram’s horns on her head. [9:1-8]
6. (Nothing for the boils.) [9:8-12]
7. *Nut*, the sky goddess, also protectress of the dead. Normally Egypt received very little rainfall, especially in Upper Egypt, and since hailstorms of any nature were extremely rare, the impact of this storm would have been great. [9:13-35]
8. *Serapia*, protector from locusts. [10:1-20]
9. *Ra*, the personification of the sun, king of the gods, and father of mankind. Ra was a prominent deity in Egypt and this particular plague would have signaled his disfavor and, more certainly, his weakness. [10:21-29]
10. Possibly *Taurt*, goddess of maternity, who presided over childbirth; later a protective household deity. [11:1-12:36]

## Red Sea Crossing<sup>21</sup>

Gen 1:2	creation of the earth
Gen 7:11,12	uncreation of the earth
Gen 8:1	recreation of the earth
Ex 14:21	creation of Israel

<sup>20</sup>John Yeo, lecture notes.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

## Covenant at Sinai

“A covenant is a means of establishing a relationship (not naturally existing), which is sanctioned by an oath sworn in a ceremony of ratification. All the elements that make up a covenant are present at Sinai. In Exod. 19:3-8 Israel is summoned to a special relationship with God . . . Israel accepts the invitation to enter into covenant with Yahweh with the solemn affirmation: ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do’ (v.8). In 20:1-17 the covenant demands are set forth, and in 24:3-8 the covenant is ratified by a solemn ceremony. Here the oath is reaffirmed and given sanction by the sacrifice and the sprinkling of the blood, a reminder of the life-and-death importance of the covenant.

“This covenant relationship differs from the Abrahamic covenant only in the party to the covenant that is bound by oath. This change, however, produces covenants that differ in both form and function. In the Abrahamic covenant God places himself under oath, bound by irrevocable promises to Abraham and his posterity. In the Sinai covenant Israel takes the oath, and the obligation is obedience to the covenant stipulations.

“Recently the specific cultural background of the Sinai covenant has become clear. The covenant follows very closely the structure of the international treaty of the ancient Near East between an overlord (or suzerain) and his subject people (vassals). The form was widely known and used during the second millennium. The largest number of examples of the suzerain-vassal treaty – and the most complete – are to be found [in] fourteenth- and thirteenth-century Hittite texts . . . Most of the elements of this form may be found in the texts that deal with the Mosaic covenant, especially 20:1-17:

1. **Preamble** (identifying the author and giving his titles): ‘I am Yahweh, your God’ (v.2a). God needs no further titles, after the recent dramatic revelation of his name.
2. **Historical prologue** (setting forth the previous relations between the parties and emphasizing the suzerain’s kind deeds to the vassal: these acts are the grounds for the vassal’s gratitude and future loyalty): ‘who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.’ (v.2b). The historical survey here is brief and basic, since Israel’s memory of God’s dramatic deliverance is recent and fresh. In the covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem (Josh. 24), the historical prologue is long and detailed (vv.2-13).
3. **Stipulations** of the treaty, consisting of:
  - (a) the basic demand for allegiance: ‘You shall have no other gods before me’ (20:3).
  - (b) specific stipulations: in treaty use, normalizing relationships within the empire (vv.4-17).
4. Provisions for:
  - (a) **deposition** of the text (treaties were kept in the temple): the tablets containing vv.1-17 were placed in the ark of the covenant (25:16; Deut. 10:1-5).
  - (b) periodic **public reading** (Deut. 31:10-13).

5. **Curses and blessings:** invoked upon the vassal for breaking or keeping the covenant (Deut. 28:1-4 [blessings], 28:15-68 [curses]).

Also, provision was made for a formal ratification ceremony by which the vassal pledged obedience, often with blood sacrifices (cf. Exod. 24). The treaty was written in very personal terms, using an ‘I-Thou’ dialogue pattern.

“These close parallels show that the suzerain-vassal treaty form was adapted to serve the theological needs of this special relationship. Thus the Ten Commandments were never intended to institute a system of legal observances by which one could earn God’s acceptance. Rather they are the stipulations of a covenant relationship anchored in grace. The prologue to the covenant looks back to God’s gracious deliverance and so forms a *kerygma*, a proclamation of good news. Redemption already has been accomplished.

“But the covenant carries a dire threat. It offers Israel not only blessing for obedience, but curse for disobedience. Note the conditions posed in Exod. 19:5: ‘If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you among all the peoples shall be my own possession.’ The covenant stipulations are not only the Lord’s will for a redeemed people; they are threats of his wrath should the people fail to keep them. Under the Mosaic covenant, Israel lived in the tension between these two affirmations. Their history is only understandable in light of this covenant. Over time Israel broke the covenant so often that God had to invoke the curses. He sent the prophets to warn the people of the danger they were in. Without repentance, they would suffer the ultimate curse of exile.

“The Ten Commandments, then, are not law in the modern sense, for they are not carefully defined and contain no penalties. They are rather ‘legal policy,’ a basic statement of that kind of behaviour which the covenant community is willing to sustain by force. When Israel accepted the covenant, the need arose to place them in a form more suitable to ‘law.’ This development is found in the ‘Book of the Covenant’ (20:23-23:33). Careful examination shows that most of the stipulations of 20:1-17 are repeated in that section as specific laws.”<sup>22</sup>

## The Tabernacle

“The importance of the tabernacle is highlighted by the attention given to recording both God’s description of how the tent and its furnishings should be manufactured (25:1-31:11), and the subsequent construction (35:1-40:33). Altogether, including the details relating to the consecration of the priests, approximately one-quarter of Exodus is given over to describing the making of the tabernacle. Chapters 25-31 consist of a very long divine speech outlining the preparations necessary for the construction of a special tent and the appointment of priests. Much of this material is repeated in 36:8-39:31, where we have an almost word for word record of the fulfilment of the instructions given by the LORD to Moses. Such repetition is the author’s way of underlining the importance of the tabernacle.”<sup>23</sup>

“Exodus 25-30 emphasizes three aspects of the tabernacle: it was (a) a royal tent, (b) a holy tent, and (c) a ‘Tent of Meeting.’ The first two of these are clearly linked to God’s nature: he is a sovereign and holy God. The third aspect focuses on the special relationship which God established with the people of

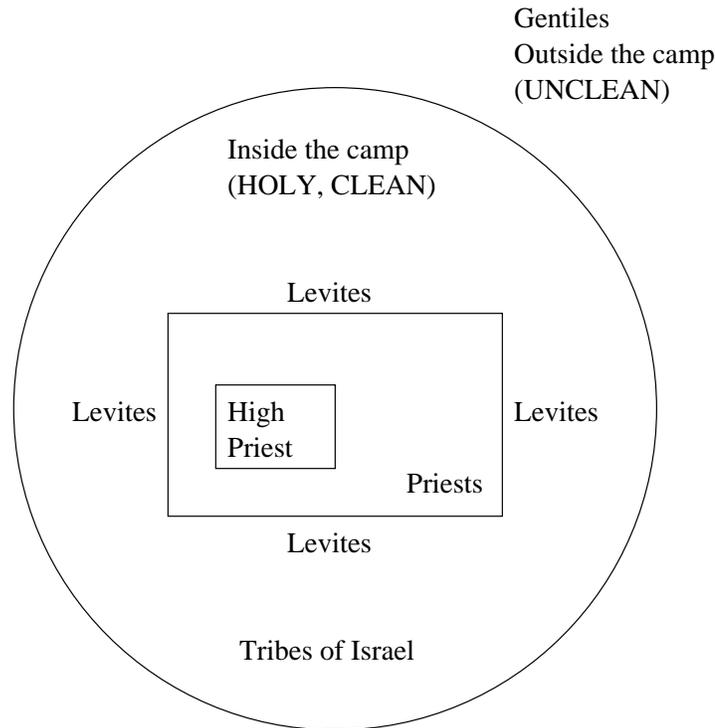
<sup>22</sup>Lasor, pp. 73-5.

<sup>23</sup>T.D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), p. 192.

Israel through the covenant at Sinai. The construction of the tabernacle enabled the people to commune more directly with their God and reassured them of his presence in their midst.”<sup>24</sup>

[John 1:14]

“There are circles of holiness surrounding the tabernacle:”<sup>25</sup>



### Christ our Passover

“God’s provision of the Passover lamb clearly shows that the demand of God’s justice must be met if His mercy is to be shown. A lamb without blemish was chosen by every Israelite household. The lamb was killed, and its blood put on the lintel and doorposts of the house. The angel of death, seeing the blood, passed over that household. The blood showed that death had taken place. The lamb had died in the place of the oldest son, and therefore also in the place of the others represented by the oldest son. Israel, in the symbolism of the Passover, was freed not just from the burden of bondage but from the guilt of sin. Their eating of the lamb, like their eating of the peace offerings, marked the restored fellowship with God that comes through the atonement God provides. They were to eat the Passover in their traveling clothes because God’s promise is sure.”<sup>26</sup>

[1 Cor 5:7]

<sup>24</sup>Alexander, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup>Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988), p. 98.

## Leviticus

“Leviticus is the third part of the Pentateuch. The concluding chapters of Exodus that focus on the construction of the tabernacle (chaps. 25-40) lead naturally to the opening of Leviticus, which describes the various sacrifices performed in the Holy Place (chaps. 1-7). The name Leviticus comes from the Septuagint via the Vulgate and highlights the main subject matter. The name means ‘pertaining to the Levites,’ . . . The Hebrew title, like those of the other books of the Pentateuch, derives from the initial words of the book. Leviticus is thus *wayyiqra*, ‘And he called.’<sup>27</sup>

### Outline<sup>28</sup>

1. **Sacrificial Laws** [1:1-7:38]
  - A. Instruction for the Laity [1:1-6:7]
  - B. Instruction for the Priests [6:8-7:38]
2. **Priestly Narrative** [8:1-10:20]
  - A. Formal Beginning of the Priesthood [8:1-9:24]
  - B. Limits on the Priesthood – Nadab and Abihu [10]
3. **Laws to Protect Ritual Cleanness** [11:1-16:34]
  - A. Dietary Prescriptions [11]
  - B. Birth Laws [12]
  - C. Discernment and Cleansing of Skin Diseases [13-14]
  - D. Laws About Bodily Discharges [15]
  - E. Day of Atonement [16]
4. **Holiness Code** [17:1-27:34]
  - A. Laws [17-25]
  - B. Blessings and Curses [26]
  - C. Gifts to the Lord [27]

## Sacrifices

“[The] covenant relationship [between God and his people Israel] is related to sacrifice in three ways. First of all . . . sacrifice is a *gift* on the part of the worshiper to his covenant Lord. Second, a number of sacrifices include a notion of *communion* or fellowship between covenant partners. Last, and perhaps most important, sacrifice plays a major role in healing rifts in the covenant community. This function is frequently described by the technical theological term *expiation*. . . .

“When the covenant relationship was broken through certain types of offenses, repentant Israelites could seek God’s forgiveness by offering a substitute

<sup>27</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 73.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-6.

to take the penalty of their sin. In this way, sacrifice served as the divinely sanctioned means for restoring covenant relationship.

“Sacrifice thus fits in very closely with the overarching theological concept of God’s holiness. God is holy and cannot tolerate the presence of sin and uncleanness. Sacrifice is a way of making the unholy pure again and restoring fellowship in the presence of God. It allows the unclean who have been forced from the presence of God to return once again to the camp that is the realm of the holy.”<sup>29</sup>

**Burnt Offering** [Lev 1; 6:8-13; 8:18-21; 16:24]<sup>30</sup>

- Bull, ram, or male bird (dove or young pigeon for the poor); wholly consumed; no defect
- Voluntary act of worship; atonement for unintentional sin in general; expression of devotion, commitment, and complete surrender to God

**Grain Offering** [Lev 2; 6:14-23]

- Grain, fine flour, olive oil, incense, baked bread (cakes or wafers), salt; no yeast or honey; accompanied burnt offering and fellowship offering (along with drink offering)
- Voluntary act of worship; recognition of God’s goodness and provisions; devotion to God

**Fellowship Offering** [Lev 3; 7:11-34]

- Any animal without defect from herd or flock; variety of breads
- Voluntary act of worship; thanksgiving and fellowship (it included a communal meal)

**Sin Offering** [Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30; 8:14-17; 16:3-22]

- Young bull (for high priest and congregation); male goat (for leader); female goat or lamb (for common person); dove or pigeon (for the poor); tenth of an ephah of fine flour (for the very poor)
- Mandatory atonement for specific unintentional sin; confession of sin; forgiveness of sin; cleansing from defilement

**Guilt Offering** [Lev 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6]

- Ram
- Mandatory atonement for unintentional sin requiring restitution; cleansing from defilement; make restitution; pay 20% fine

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<sup>29</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 77.

<sup>30</sup>*SofRSB*, p. 165.

## Animal Offering Five-Part Rite<sup>31</sup>

Action	Meaning
Laying hands	<i>substitution</i> – sinner draws near through another
Slaughter	<i>penalty for sin</i> – sinner must die
Presentation of blood	<i>evidence of penalty</i> – Passover
Burning	<i>transformation to smoke</i> – becomes food for God
Meal	<i>fellowship</i> – renewal of covenant

## Holy, Clean, Unclean

“The food regulations contained in the book of Leviticus highlight two important theological principles. The distinction between clean and unclean foods emphasizes the divine calling of Israel to be a holy nation, different from the other nations of the earth; the clean and unclean animals symbolize Israelites and non-Israelites respectively. The law prohibiting the eating of blood derives from the idea that all life, both human and animal, is sacred. Although God sanctions the eating of meat, due respect must be shown for the life of any animal slaughtered for food; blood, as the symbol of life, must not be eaten.”<sup>32</sup>

[John 6:53-56]

## Priesthood

“... the teaching on priesthood in the book of Leviticus accentuates the overall theme of God’s holiness. After all, the priests spend much of their time in the presence of the Holy One. As a result, much of their behaviour is regulated by the fact that they too must be holy.”<sup>33</sup>

[Lev 10]

“What is the enduring value of the book of Leviticus? ... For the Christian, the book of Hebrews provides guidance in that it presents Jesus Christ as the perfect High Priest who offers himself as the perfect sacrifice [Heb 9:26].”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Peter J. Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2000), p. 92.

<sup>32</sup>Alexander, p. 227.

<sup>33</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 80.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

## Numbers

“The descriptive, yet prosaic title Numbers (derived from the Septuagint *Arithmoi*) has contributed to a general lack of interest in the book by the Christian community at large. The title conjures up thoughts of censuses and other lists. . . . In Jewish circles the book goes by the name ‘In the wilderness’ (*bermidbar*, the fifth word in the text). This title names the setting of the entire book as the Israelites move from Sinai (1:12) to the wilderness of Paran (10:12) and finally to the plains of Moab (22:1; 36:13). Like Exodus and Leviticus, Numbers begins with the conjunction ‘and,’ showing the continuity that exists between the books of the Pentateuch.

“Numbers serves an important role as it narrates the transition from the old generation that left Egypt and sinned in the desert to the new generation that stands on the brink of the Promised Land. The book thus presents the reader with a vision of new beginnings and hope.”<sup>35</sup>

### Two-Part Outline<sup>36</sup>

1. **The End of the Old:** The First Generation of God’s People Out of Egypt on the March to the Wilderness [1:1-25:18]
  - A. The Preparation and Inauguration of the March of the Holy People of Israel [1:1-10:36]
  - B. The Cycle of Rebellion, Death, and Deliverance of the Holy People of Israel with Elements of Hope but Ultimate Failure and Death [11:1-25:18]
2. **The Birth of the New:** The Second Generation of God’s People Out of Egypt as They Prepare to Enter the Promised Land [26:1-36:13]
  - A. The Preparation and Organization of the New Holy People of God as They Prepare to Enter the Promised Land [26:1-36:13]
  - B. Will This Second Generation Be Faithful and Enter the Promised Land (Promise) or Rebel and Fail as the First Generation (Warning)?

### Geographic Outline<sup>37</sup>

1. **Sinai** [1:1-12:16]
  - Preparation for Departure [1:1-10:10]
  - Conclusion: Journey from Sinai to Kadesh [10:11-12:16]
2. **Kadesh** [13:1-22:1]
  - In the wilderness of Paran [13:1-20:13]
  - Conclusion: Journey from the Kadesh to the Plains of Moab [20:14-22:1]
3. **Moab** [22:2-36:13]
  - Preparations for Canaan [22:2-32:42]
  - Conclusion: A backward and forward look [33:1-36:13]

<sup>35</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 83.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>37</sup>Lasor, pp. 100-1.

“Numbers narrates an important transition in the history of redemption as it records the death of the first wilderness generation (the subject of the first twenty-five chapters) and its replacement by the second generation (Num 26-36).

“The story of the first part of the book is, therefore, a story of sin and judgment. Lay and priestly leaders rebel against Moses, God’s appointed leader (Num 12, 16-17). The people are constantly grumbling against God’s provision in the wilderness (e.g., Num 11). It is, however, the spy story, recorded in Numbers 13-14, that triggers God’s judgment, with the result that the first generation was doomed to die in the wilderness and not see the Promised Land. Only two spies, Caleb and Joshua, were exempted from this judgment (Num 26:26-35).

“Nonetheless, God continued to provide for the Israelites in the wilderness, and they continued to rebel and complain. Even Moses, according to an enigmatic passage (Num 20:1-13), displeased the Lord and was not permitted to enter the land of promise.

“Nonetheless, God continued to treat the Israelites as his special people. This status is highlighted in the Balaam narrative (Num 22-24).”<sup>38</sup>

“Whereas Numbers 11-25 catalogue a series of events that results in the death of the entire adult population which was delivered from Egypt [except Joshua and Caleb], Numbers 26-36 record no comparable events; no deaths are mentioned in the final section of the book. Even when the narrative recounts a major battle against the Midianites (31:1-24), it is specifically noted that not one soldier failed to return alive from the conflict (31:49). This contrast . . . is particularly striking and highlights the fact that the death of the exodus generation was due to their failure to trust God.”<sup>39</sup>

## The Promised Land

“In spite of the people’s rebellion and the death of the entire exodus generation of adult Israelites, the central chapters of Numbers contain clear indications that the occupation of the land of Canaan is still a priority in God’s dealings with the Israelites. . . . the lengthy account of the activities of Balaam son of Beor in Numbers 22-24 reveals God’s desire to bless rather than curse Israel. Although Balaam is hired by Balak king of Moab to curse the Israelites, he blesses them on four separate occasions (23:7-10; 23:18-24; 24:3-9; 24:15-19; cf. 22:12). In doing so he echoes briefly the promises made earlier to the patriarchs in Genesis: ‘Who can count the dust of Jacob’ (23:10; cf. Gen 13:16;15:5); ‘The LORD their God is with them’ (23:21; cf. Gen 17:8); ‘May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed’ (24:9; cf. 23:8,20; Gen 12:3); ‘A star will come out of Jacob; a sceptre will rise out of Israel’ (24:17; cf. Gen 17:6,16;49:10).”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Dillard and Longman, pp. 88-9.

<sup>39</sup>Alexander, p. 239.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

## Deuteronomy

“Bible students see the influence of Deuteronomy on Samuel and Elijah, on Hosea and Jeremiah, and on Jesus. The number of quotations or citations of Deuteronomy in the New Testament mark it as one of the most influential sources. Deuteronomy was one of the most valued works at Qumran, among the more than twenty fragments are found quotations or sections from every chapter of the book. Jesus thrice found strength in Deuteronomy to turn back Satan’s temptation [Matt. 4:1-11; cf. Deut. 8:3; 6:13,16]. When asked which commandment was greatest, he quoted Deut. 6:5 in reply.”<sup>41</sup>

“The book of Deuteronomy is largely a record of the speeches of Moses delivered shortly before his death east of the Jordan. In form it is the record of a covenant renewal ceremony on the plains of Moab where Israel once again affirmed its allegiance to God and its national commitment to keep his law (Deut 29:1-31:29). . . . Substantial portions of the book provide for the orderly governance of Israel after Moses’ death through a system of judges and courts, the priests and Levites, kings and prophets (Deut 16:18-18:22). More than any other book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy prepares the nation for the wars of conquest by stipulating laws governing holy war (chaps. 7, 20).”<sup>42</sup>

### Title

“Deuteronomy begins precisely as the ancient treaties began: ‘These are the words of . . . The Jewish custom of using the opening words of a book as its title turns out in the present case to be most felicitous, for it serves to identify this book at once as a treaty document.’<sup>43</sup>

“Altogether misleading, on the contrary, is the English title, which is apparently based on the Septuagint’s mistranslation of the phrase, ‘a copy of this law’ (17:18), as to *deuteronomion touto*, ‘this second law.’”<sup>44</sup>

### Structure

“... Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document which in its total structure exhibits the classic legal form of the suzerainty treaties of the Mosaic age.

1. Preamble [1:1-5]
2. Historical Prologue [1:6-4:49]
3. Stipulations [5-26]
4. Curses and Blessings or Covenant Ratification [27-30]
5. Succession Arrangements or Covenant Continuity, including the invocation of witnesses and the directions for the deposition and public reading of the treaty [31-34]”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Lasor, pp. 126-7.

<sup>42</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 92.

<sup>43</sup>Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 2nd edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock: 1989), p. 135.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 132-3.

## Horizons of Interpretation

“Under God’s provident guidance, Deuteronomy has special significance in three eras of Israel’s life. First was the *period of its original setting* on the plains of Moab when the people were poised to cross the Jordan without Moses as their leader. It was a time of covenant renewal, a reaffirmation and amplification of what God had commanded at Sinai, a generation earlier. All the changes the conquest and settlement called for were laid out in detail. . . .

“The second horizon occurred during the *period of the late monarchy*. The traditions safeguarded in the book certainly contributed to the reforms of Josiah begun in 621 BC. . . .

“The third horizon is *the return to Palestine* [after the Babylonian exile] where the covenant community has to survive without kings or princes. The law and the priests that taught it loomed larger than before. For the humbled and chastened Jews, Deuteronomy again became the handbook to guide them in their land. More than any other document it told their story – past, present, and future. It remained them of the divine grace by which they had first gained the land, the grievous sin by which they failed to retain the land, and the covenant love which alone explained how they had regained the land.”<sup>46</sup>

## Love and Obedience

“Loving God had very practical implications for the people. They must fulfil the obligations placed upon them by the covenant. Thus Moses repeatedly draws attention to the link between loving God and keeping ‘his requirements, his decrees, his laws, and his commands always’ (11:1; cf. 5:10; 7:9; 10:12; 11:13,22; 19:9; 30:16). True love will demonstrate itself in perfect obedience. On the other hand, disobedience indicates a failure to love God (cf. 13:3).

“Given this link between love and obedience – if you love me, you will obey me – it is no surprise that the central core of Deuteronomy consists of a long list of obligations which the Israelites were expected to keep. These obligations constitute the Book of the Law (*torah*), a designation used in 28:61, 29:21, and 31:26. . . .

“Since Israel’s obedience to the *torah* demonstrates her love for the LORD, Moses underlines the importance of being familiar with all that it demands. Consequently, he instructs the Israelites not only to mediate on all that he commands them, but also to teach it to their children (6:6-9) . . . For Moses the stipulations of the covenant were to be a vital part of everyday life for all God’s people, both young and old. Familiarity with them was essential for the maintenance of a harmonious relationship with the LORD; to ignore them would bring disaster.”<sup>47</sup>

## Election of Israel

[Deut 9:4-6] and [Deut 7:7]: “Deuteronomy is consistent in emphasizing that the LORD’s election of Israel was not due to some inherent quality found in the people; rather, it resulted from his unmerited love for them.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Lasor, pp. 117-8.

<sup>47</sup>Alexander, pp. 258-9.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

[Deut 4:6-8]: “Underlying this passage is the idea that Israel is divinely chosen to be an example for others to emulate.”<sup>49</sup> [Deut 28:9-10]

“Although Moses strongly exhorts the people to obey the covenant obligations, Deuteronomy as a whole conveys the idea that the Israelites will fail to keep them. While the possibility of failure is introduced as early as 4:25-31, it is in the concluding chapters that it becomes most prominent. . . .

“. . . even in the process of being punished by the LORD, the Israelites will still be a witness to the nations regarding the righteousness of the LORD (Deut 29:22-28) . . .

“Significantly, in anticipating the future restoration of exiled Israelites to the promised land, Moses alludes briefly to the fact that ‘the LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live’ (30:6). Here Moses envisages a time in the distant future when the LORD will intervene in order to overcome the inability of the Israelites to keep the covenant faithfully.”<sup>50</sup>

## God in History

“The concept that God has actually entered into history is a unique biblical doctrine. The consistency and sovereignty of God’s grace and judgment are unmatched in the literature of any other religion. In Deuteronomy this biblical theme is set forth in a unique way which greatly influences the later writings, especially the ‘Deuteronomic history.’

“To cite chapter and verse is largely superfluous; the entire book is a recital of God’s acts on behalf of the people: how God led Israel out of Egypt, gave them the law of Sinai, patiently endured their stubborn unbelief in the wilderness, and brought them to the verge of the Jordan. This sequence of events is summarized in chs. 6-12 . . .

“The Bible’s second account of the Ten Commandments (or Decalogue) is found in ch. 5; the first is in Exod. 20:1-17. The implications of these injunctions are set forth in the chapters that follow. The story moves back and forth between Israel’s future obligations in Canaan, and Israel’s past experiences of Yahweh’s words and deeds. This interplay of past and future gives rise to a ‘prophetic’ view of history, in which the past not only provides lessons for the future but also becomes the source of movements that influence the future. When God acted in the past – in the time of Abraham, for example – he said or did things which can be lessons for today or give hope for tomorrow. More than that, God revealed the nature of his ongoing activity, by which he will fulfill his redemptive purpose. So Moses, the prophets, and the New Testament writers understood the history of God’s activity. . . .

“This same concept of history – sometimes called *Heilsgeschichte*, the history of salvation – can be seen in the prophets. In the Former Prophets it is applied primarily to the contemporary situation; in the Latter Prophets, to the future as well. It pervades the work of the psalmist. It sustains the people of God in the Exile and afterwards, times that otherwise would have left them helpless. It is even intertwined with the events set forth in Esther – where the name of God does not appear at all. To God’s people, history becomes ‘his story.’ ”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup>Alexander, p. 269.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 273-5.

<sup>51</sup>Lasor, pp. 124-5.

## Chapter 3

# OT History

“In the covenant relationship, Yahweh honors his part (the promises) because of his love and because he is God. The Lord may punish Israel for disobedience, and may even chasten whole generations for stubborn disbelief. But the covenant remains in force – simply because of God’s nature.”<sup>1</sup>

“*Prophets or History?* In the English Bible, these six books [Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings] are included in the ‘historical’ division along with Ruth, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Why did the arrangers of the Hebrew canon call these books ‘Prophets?’ And why are they now considered as ‘History?’ ”<sup>2</sup>

“One motif unites all Old Testament narratives: the ideal of Israel’s national theocracy. The Mosaic history dealt with its establishment; the Deuteronomistic history examined its continuation and decline; and the Chronistic history focused on the restoration of Israel as a theocracy. . . . Nevertheless, the Old Testament vision of the theocracy was not limited to a nationalist focus. From the call of Abram, Israel was given a worldwide calling: ‘All peoples on earth will be blessed through you’ (Gen 12:3b). Throughout the Old Testament, the hope of extending the theocracy to the nations of the earth grew in intensity. From time to time Gentiles were incorporated into the nations (Josh 6:25; Ruth 4:13-22) . . . Solomon prayed specifically for the blessing of Gentiles coming to the temple (1 Kings 8:41-43). The hope of expansion to other nations grew to a feverish pitch in the prophetic visions (Isaiah 2:2; 11:10; 51:4,5; 65:1). With increasing revelation in the Old Testament period, it became evident that this expansion of the Kingdom to all the world would ultimately be accomplished by the glorious intervention of the Messiah.

“The New Testament confirms that these Messianic expectations were fulfilled in Christ. With His coming the theocratic ideal did not disappear; it was enlarged and lifted to a higher plane. The land of Canaan, the Jerusalem throne, and the temple were but foreshadowings of a new world introduced by Christ . . . ”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lasor, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990), pp. 351-2.

### 3.1 Deuteronomistic History

“The second major division of the traditional Hebrew Canon is the prophets. The prophetic material divides into groups: the ‘former prophets’ (*Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings*) and the remaining or ‘latter prophets.’ . . . ”<sup>4</sup>

*Deuteronomistic History* (DH) is another name for the “former prophets.”

“... Deuteronomy served the dual function of closing the Mosaic history [Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy] and providing a theological foundation for the Deuteronomistic History.”<sup>5</sup>

“This literary epic was built on the foundation of the law and the prophets. Deuteronomy contributed a sense of God’s grace and a call for exclusive obedience. The preexilic prophets supplied insights to divine judgment on Israel and Judah for religious disloyalty and social wrongdoing. While the book of Joshua introduces all the people, having left Egypt, inspiring fear in the Canaanites, Kings ends with a tragic reversal. In 2 Kings 25:26 ‘all the people . . . went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.’ ‘Why the exile?’ is the basic question this epic seeks to answer (see 1 Kings 9:8,9).”<sup>6</sup>

## Joshua

“Joshua divides into three main parts:

1. Conquest of the Land [1:1-12:24]
2. Inheritance of the Land [13:1-22:34]
3. Covenant Life in the Land [23:1-24:33]

“The book of Joshua focuses on the days of conquest to teach its readers *how to live in the land God had given them*. The successes and failures of Joshua’s warfare demonstrated how Israel was to continue to fight for the land (1). The establishment of land distribution and intertribal relations taught how Israel was to manage the inheritance of the land (2). The covenant renewal ceremony at the end of Joshua’s life showed the necessity of living in fidelity before God by commitment to the covenant (3).”<sup>7</sup>

[Josh 1:1-9]

[Josh 21:43-45]

[Josh 24:1-27]

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<sup>4</sup>Pratt, p. 287.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>6</sup>Lasor, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup>Pratt, p. 289.

## Literary Structure of Joshua 13-24<sup>8</sup>

- A. Instructions to Joshua, 13:1-7
- B. TransJordan tribes, 13:8-33
- C. Levites, 14:1-5
- D. Caleb, 14:6-15
- E. Judah, 15:1-63
- F. Joseph, 16:1-17:7
- G. Tabernacle at Shiloh, 18:1-10
- F1. Benjamin, 18:11-28
- E1. Simeon and others, 19:1-48
- D1. Joshua, 19:49-50
- C1. Levitical cities, 20:1-21:45
- B1. TransJordan tribes, 22:1-34
- A1. Joshua's farewell, 23:1-24:33

### Joshua the Man

“Joshua’s character is part of the theological message of the book. He is pictured both as a second Moses leading the people to victory in Yahweh’s name and power and as a prototype of ideal kingship in Israel. In righteousness, wisdom, and loyalty to the Lord he is seen to embody the traits necessary to all servant leaders. He stands alone in the Old Testament as a political and military hero whose story is untainted.”<sup>9</sup>

### Promised Rest

“Joshua was leading Israel into their inheritance, into their rest (Deut 3:20; 12:10; 25:19; Josh 1:13,15; 14:15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1). But at best, it was a temporary rest from enemies, for Israel would have many more foes in the centuries ahead. Although Yahweh had secured an inheritance for his people, it could still be taken away from them, and eventually would be when both northern and southern kingdoms were carried into exile. There is an open-endedness to the book of Joshua: the people have an inheritance, but there is land still as yet not possessed (Josh 13:1-7; 15:63; 17:12). From the vantage of the New Testament, Joshua’s successes were only partial at best, and therefore they pointed beyond themselves to a time when Joshua’s greater namesake, Jesus, would bring God’s people into an inheritance that could not be taken away from them (1 Pet 1:3-5). Jesus would provide the rest Joshua had not attained (Heb 3:11,18; 4:1-11).”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>David Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), p. 94.

<sup>9</sup>Lasor, p. 143.

<sup>10</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 116.

## Judges

“The book of Judges traces the period between the death of Joshua and the rise of the monarchy in Israel. In some respects the title of the book is a bit misleading to English readers. The ‘judges’ were not primarily judicial officials; rather, they were military leaders and clan chieftans who appeared periodically in different areas among the tribes to effect deliverance from enemies threatening parts of Israel.”<sup>11</sup>

“The book presents its material in three main sections:

1. Faltering Conquest [1:1-2:4]
2. Cycles Under the Judges [2:5-16:31]
3. Anarchy Under the Levites [17:1-21:25]

“The book of Judges is an *apologetic for Israel’s monarchy*. Why does Israel need a godly king? The books gives three answers: without a king the tribes faltered in the conquest (1); the office of judge could only bring sporadic relief from cycles of apostasy (2); and when there was no king, the Levites failed to provide stability in the cultic and social life of Israel (3).”<sup>12</sup>

[Judges 2:1-15]

[Judges 17:6]

[Judges 18:1]

[Judges 19:1]

[Judges 21:25]

“The author of the book used the following cycle to introduce certain judges:

- **Sin:** ‘The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD.’
- **War as Judgment:** ‘The LORD sold them into the hands of X (enemy nation) for X-years.’
- **Repentance:** ‘But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD . . .’
- **Deliverance:** ‘. . . he raised up for them a deliverer, X (name of judge), who saved them.’

“This is usually followed by a statement that the land had peace for X-years, while the judge was alive.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 119.

<sup>12</sup>Pratt, pp. 290-1.

<sup>13</sup>Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), p. 184.

## Declining Character Among Judges<sup>14</sup>

### Ideal:

Othniel	40 years of peace [3:11]
Ehud (Shamgar)	80 years of peace [3:30]
Deborah	40 years of peace [5:31b]

### Mixed:

Gideon/Abimelech	40 years of peace [8:28]
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### Negative:

(Minor judges)	No years of peace
Jephthah	”
(Minor judges)	”
Samson	”

## Samuel-Kings

“Originally one book, 1-2 Samuel was probably divided early in the Christian era; perhaps the division was first made in the LXX, which treats Samuel and Kings as parts of a unified work called the book of Kingdoms. . . . As with the Pentateuch, size seems to have prompted the divisions between some of the books.”<sup>15</sup>

“The book of Samuel may be outlined as follows:

1. Foundation of the Kingdom [1 Sam 1:1-7:17]
2. Saul’s Kingdom [8:1-15:35]
3. David’s Kingdom [16:1 - 2 Sam 20:26]
4. Future of the Kingdom [21:1-24:25]

“Central to the book is the theme that *Israel should hope in the Davidic line, despite the trouble caused by David’s shortcomings*. God’s blessing on Samuel established the legitimacy of David’s line because he anointed David as king (1). Saul and his family forfeited kingship by turning away from God (2). God blessed David as he was faithful but cursed him with trouble when he failed (3). Nevertheless, the last chapters demonstrate that David’s house was still the legitimate dynasty in which Israel must put its hope for all generations (4).”<sup>16</sup>

“The outline of Kings is straightforward:

1. Failure and Hope in Solomon’s Years [1 Kings 1:1-12:24]
2. Failure and Hope in the Divided Years [12:25 - 2 Kings 17:41]
3. Failure and Hope in Judah’s Final Years [18:1-25:30]

<sup>14</sup>Pratt, p. 135.

<sup>15</sup>Lasor, pp. 165-6.

<sup>16</sup>Pratt, p. 292.

“The book of Kings demonstrated that *the nation deserved the exile, but restoration was possible through full repentance*. The writer conveyed this message by focusing on Solomon’s glory when he was faithful and on the division and ruin his rebellion brought to the nation (1). He then turned to the examples of fidelity and apostasy in the divided period, highlighting especially the failure of northern Israel and the justice of their exile (2). Finally, he turned to the disobedience that led Judah into exile and closed with a flicker of hope in Jehoiachin’s release (3).”<sup>17</sup>

## Extended Outline<sup>18</sup>

### 1. Birth of the Monarchy [1 Sam 1:1 - 2 Sam 5:10]

Samuel – Priest, Prophet, Judge [1 Sam 1-7]

Samuel and Saul – Time of Transition [8:1-15:35]

David – Shepherd, Warrior, King-Elect [1 Sam 16:1 - 2 Sam 5:10]

### 2. Israel’s Golden Age: David and Solomon [2 Sam 5:11 - 1 Kings 11:43]

David’s Exercise of Kingship [2 Sam 5:11-24:25]

David’s Consolation of His Gains [5:11-8:18]

David’s Compassion and Cruelty [9:1-12:31]

Turmoil in the Court [13:1-18:33]

Restoration to Power [19:1-24:25]

David’s Transfer of Kingship [1 Kings 1:1-2:46]

Solomon in All His Glory [3:1-11:43]

### 3. Divided Monarchy [1 Kings 12:1 - 2 Kings 18:12]

Rehoboam and Jeroboam – The Kingdom Torn in Two [1 Kings 12:1-15:34]

House of Omri – Building the Northern Capital [16:1-34]

Elijah versus Ahab and Jezebel – Israel at the Crossroads [17:1-22:53]

Exploits of Elisha [2 Kings 1:1-8:29]

Jehu and His House – Trouble in Israel [9:1-14:29]

Last Days of Israel [15:1-18:12]

### 4. Judah Alone [2 Kings 18-25]

Hezekiah’s Reforms [18:1-20:21]

Manassah’s Rebellion [21:1-26]

Josiah’s Revival [22:1-23:30]

Jerusalem’s Fall [23:31-25:30]

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<sup>17</sup>Pratt, pp. 293-4.

<sup>18</sup>Lasor, pp. 165ff.

### Davidic Covenant

“This covenant was an administration of the same covenant that God had previously maintained under Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. As such, it included all the stipulations (laws, conditions, etc.) of the prior administrations of the covenant. It also extended the offers of blessing to include a Davidic king over Israel. This kingship was a blessing for David in that it honored him and gave him and his descendents significant power. But it was also a blessing for Israel in that a righteous Davidic king would give the nation great stability and international power, as well as lead the nation in covenant fidelity so that all Israelites would inherit the covenant blessings.”<sup>19</sup>

[Deut 17:14-20]

[1 Sam 2:1-10]

[2 Sam 5:1-5]

[2 Sam 7:1-29]

[2 Sam 8:15]

[1 Kin 2:1-4]

[1 Kin 11:1-13]

[2 Kin 17:1-23]

[2 Kin 22:1-20]

[2 Kin 24:18-20]

[2 Kin 25:27-30]

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

## 3.2 Chronistic History

“The Chronistic History, the third major family of Old Testament narratives, consists of *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*. . . .

“The books have significant interconnections. For instance, Ezra duplicated and elaborates on the account of the Cyrus edict in *Chronicles* (2 Chr 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4). All the books were written in Palestine within a short span of time. They share a deep interest in the temple and the purity of the people of God. The books exhibit a significant degree of unity. Yet this unity must not obscure their differences.”<sup>20</sup>

### Chronicles

“In the Hebrew canon the two books of *Chronicles* are counted as one; they stand at the end of the Writings and are the last books in the Hebrew Bible. . . . *Chronicles* is one of two books in the Bible to cover all of human history from creation to the author’s day . . . ”<sup>21</sup>

“The author-compiler of *Chronicles* did not choose to identify himself . . . He clearly lived in the postexilic period since he reports the decree of Cyrus (2 Chr 26:22-23).”<sup>22</sup>

“The restoration community is . . . asking questions about its relationship to its past: ‘In the judgment of the Exile, had God ended his covenant with Israel?’ ‘Are we still the people of God?’ ‘Is God still interested in us?’ ‘What do God’s promises to Israel, Jerusalem, and David before the Exile have to do with us who live after?’ ”<sup>23</sup>

“The Chronicler wrote his history to *direct the restoration of the kingdom during the post-exilic period*. His record divides into four main parts:

1. Genealogies of God’s People [1 Chr 1:1-9:44]
2. United Kingdom [10:1 - 2 Chr 9:31]
3. Divided Kingdom [10:1-28:26]
4. Reunited Kingdom [29:1-36:23]

“The Chronicler began his history with an account of the people who belonged in the restored nation, tracing the background of Israel and the extent of all of the tribes and the families among the early returnees (1). He then presented an idealized account of the reigns of David and Solomon, who ruled over all the tribes and dedicated themselves to temple construction (2). The Chronicler continued by showing how Judah’s prosperity and trouble depended on the nation’s trust in God, obedience, and commitment to the temple (3). Finally, he traced the kingdom reunited under Hezekiah as it moved toward exile and finally returned to the land of Israel (4).”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Pratt, pp.294-5.

<sup>21</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 169.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>24</sup>Pratt, pp. 297-8.

[1 Chr 17:12]

[1 Chr 29:20-22]

[2 Chr 7:14]

### Paradigmatic History

“It is clear that the book’s focus is the reigns of two kings, David and Solomon, to whom no less than twenty-nine chapters are devoted.”<sup>25</sup>

“In chs. 29-32 [2 Chr] Hezekiah is presented as a model of moral obedience and ensuing blessing by the framework ‘he did what was right in the sight of/before the Lord’ (29:2; 32:20) and ‘he prospered’ (31:21; 32:30).”<sup>26</sup>

“While Kings devotes only a single verse to his [Hezekiah’s] religious reform [2 Kings 18:4] . . . in Chronicles the reform occupies three chapters, and deals with the cleansing and rededication of the temple (Ch. 29), the celebration of the passover by representatives of all Israel (Ch. 30) and subsequent arrangements for the continuing temple worship (Ch. 31).”<sup>27</sup>

“In retelling the story of the coup against Athaliah (2 Kin 11) on 2 Chr 23 [the Chronicler] has openly and idealistically replaced the secular temple guards of the earlier narrative with Levite gatekeepers. It was his way of urging respect for the sanctity of the temple area.”<sup>28</sup>

“Even though the Chronicler relied heavily on the book of Samuel, he approached David’s life from a different perspective. The Chronicler idealized David. David is by no means free of shortcomings (1 Chr 13:5-13; 15:11-15; 21:1-22:1; 22:7,8), but by comparison the Chronicler’s portrait of David is remarkably unblemished. The Chronicler omitted several key passages from Samuel:

1 Sam 1:1 - 2 Sam 4:12	Pre-Davidic History
2 Sam 6:20b-23	Michal’s Reproach of David
2 Sam 9:1-13	David’s Concern for Saul’s House
2 Sam 11:1-21:14	Bathsheba and Ensuing Troubles

“... In this sense the Chronicler read Samuel thematically. He did not hide David’s weaknesses, but his interests in presenting David as an ideal for his post-exilic audience led him to focus on the positive side of the monarch.”<sup>29</sup>

### Book of Life

“Christian readers will find the books instructive in innumerable ways. At a macro-level the geneologies speak eloquently of the desire of believers to have their own names enrolled in the roster of God’s people (Dan 12:1; Phil 4:3;

<sup>25</sup>Lasor, p. 544.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 545.

<sup>27</sup>H.G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1982), p. 350.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 543-4.

<sup>29</sup>Pratt, p. 90.

Rev 3:5;13:8). They will see in the glorious David and Solomon described in Chronicles an anticipation of the glory of David's greater Son."<sup>30</sup>

## Ezra-Nehemiah

"The book of Ezra-Nehemiah divides into five parts:

1. Struggle and Success for Zerubbabel [Ezra 1:1-6:22]
2. Struggle and Success for Ezra [7:1-10:44]
3. Struggle and Success for Nehemiah [Neh 1:1-7:7]
4. Celebration of Successes [8:1-12:47]
5. Continuing Struggle for Restoration [13:1-31]

"The book of Ezra-Nehemiah was designed to *defend the legitimacy of the Ezra-Nehemiah program and the need to continue it*. Each major portion of the book contains an apologetical quality. It begins with the divine authorization of Zerubbabel's temple reconstruction, traces the opposition that occurred, and recounts the prophetic and royal support that made the rebuilding succeed in grand celebration (1). Then attention turns to the divine authorization of Ezra's reforms, the opposition he received, and his success in challenging intermarriage (2). Nehemiah's mission to rebuild and repopulate Jerusalem also received divine authorization, faced human opposition, and was finally successful (3). These successes climax in worshipful confession and celebration (4). But in the end, the book stresses the need for continuing the restoration program by reporting Nehemiah's further reforms (5)."<sup>31</sup>

*Cyrus Cylinder* (536 BC): permitting release of the Jewish exiles and reconstruction of the temple.

"... the time period of Ezra and Nehemiah witnessed a transformation from a time of elite leaders, narrow holiness, and oral authority to a time of community, spreading holiness, and the authority of written documents.

"... It is the community that accomplishes the task of rebuilding the temple and wall of Jerusalem. It is the people who turn to the Lord in corporate allegiance at the end.

"Second, holiness is no longer restricted to certain special places. ... When the walls are finished, they too are consecrated (Neh 3:1) indicating that they were considered a part of a rebuilt 'Holy City' (Neh 11:1). Once temple, city, and walls are rebuilt, then come the 'grand opening' ceremonies (Neh 8-13).

"... It is amazing to see the role of written documents in the book. Letters from kings initiate and stop action on both the level of actual events and the story. The most important written document, however, does not have human origin but is the Torah of Yahweh. The people rededicate themselves to this divinely given book at a great covenant renewal ceremony at the end of the book (Neh 8-10)."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 177.

<sup>31</sup>Pratt, p. 299.

<sup>32</sup>Dillard and Longman, pp. 186-7.

“If leaving Babylon is a new ‘exodus,’ entering the land is a new ‘conquest.’ The goal of this new ‘conquest,’ like the first, is to set up the Lord’s house in the land and to establish true worship.

“... there are almost no miracles or signs in this ‘second exodus.’ ... There’s no pillar of cloud and fire to lead the people through the wilderness. ... Instead, God begins to guide His people in a different way. He guides Israel less by visions, miracles, and spectacular signs, and more by the written word and through the teachers of Israel. This is the beginning of the ‘New Covenant’ that Jeremiah promises.”<sup>33</sup>

[Ezra 7:1-10]

[Neh 8:1-18]

“And so we come to the end of the history of Old Testament Israel, and things still don’t look the way the prophets said they would look. The house of the Lord has been rebuilt, but the temple mountain hasn’t risen to become chief of the mountains. Israel is back in the land, but the land doesn’t look quite like the garden of Eden. Yahweh has renewed His covenant with His people, but the law doesn’t seem to be written on their hearts. Nations have confessed the God of Israel, but the knowledge of the Lord does not cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

“Surely, something better must be coming.”<sup>34</sup>

### 3.3 Other Books

“A number of Old Testament narrative books do not belong to a particular theological tradition. In the Hebrew canon, they appear both with ‘the writings’ and ‘the prophets.’ ”<sup>35</sup>

#### Ruth

“The book of Ruth is a brief lull in the midst of a storm. ... In contrast to Judges, however, Ruth narrates the account of the moral strength of its characters, and its plot resolves peacefully.

“In most Hebrew Bibles it occurs immediately after Proverbs and before Song of Songs in the Writings ... This placement associates Proverbs 31, the poem of the virtuous woman, Ruth, and the Son of Songs together. These three texts extoll strong female characters.”<sup>36</sup>

“The book follows a simple outline forming a five-part narrative of resolution and an appendix:

1. Naomi’s Bitterness [1:1-22]
2. Ruth Discovers Potential Kinsman Redeemer [2:1-23]
3. Boaz Agrees to be Kinsman Redeemer [3:1-18]

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<sup>33</sup>Leithart, p. 231-2.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>35</sup>Pratt, p. 300.

<sup>36</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 129.

4. Boaz Acquires Right to be Kinsman Redeemer [4:1-12]
5. Naomi's Blessing [4:13-17]
6. Geneological Appendix [4:18-21]

"The book of Ruth could have served the cause of David early or late in his reign. If it was finally compiled as David rose to power, it supported him against those who opposed his leadership. If it was written after his establishment, it defended his right to continue to reign against those who sought to discredit him."<sup>37</sup>

"... the author likes to identify Ruth as 'the Moebite.' That label provides a clue to part of the message. The book stresses that God welcomes non-Israelites into the covenant. [1:16-17; 2:12] ...

"Further, the book promotes the practice of Israel's covenant ideal, the lifestyle of *hesed* or 'loyalty.' ... Ruth's stunning statement of love and devotion puts that lifestyle into words: 'Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God' (1:16). ...

"Finally, the book teaches the divine providence which brought forth David (4:17b). ... directed by God's hidden guidance, the faithfulness of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz achieved more than they knew. From their family stemmed the great David and, many generations later, great David's greater Son."<sup>38</sup>

"The story begins in the time of the judges, a time when there is 'no king in Israel.' It ends with a genealogy of David and the beginning of the time of the kings. This too shows the Lord's *hesed*. Though Israel serves idols, Yahweh does not abandon her. He is at work to fulfill His promises by giving food, land, and freedom to Israel. And His promises move ahead into a new phase of Israel's history. He is preparing to raise up a King to be her Husband."<sup>39</sup>

## Esther

"The book of Esther both troubles and delights its readers. Its events take place not in Israel but in Susa, Persia's winter capital. It never uses the word *God* or the name *Yahweh*, and its Jewish heroine marries an unbelieving Gentile king. Worse, her fellow Jews commit bloody acts of self-defense against their enemies."<sup>40</sup>

"The book forms a five-part narrative of resolution:

1. Esther and Mordecai in the Persian Court [1:1-2:23]
2. Trouble for the Jews [3:1-4:17]
3. Esther's Intervention [5:1-7:10]
4. Victory for the Jews [8:1-9:17]
5. Esther and Mordecai in the Persian Court [9:18-10:3]

<sup>37</sup>Pratt, p. 301.

<sup>38</sup>Lasor, p. 525.

<sup>39</sup>Leithart, pp. 121-2.

<sup>40</sup>Lasor, p. 532.

“One helpful way to approach Esther is in terms of the similarities among Esther, the story of Joseph in Egypt, and the opening chapters of Daniel. All three accounts deal with Israelite figures in foreign lands who overcome trials through divine assistance. . . . This pattern suggests that the book of Esther offered the original audience *a model for living in fidelity to God outside of the land.*”<sup>41</sup>

“*Purim* is a boisterous celebration, full of merriment and high spirits . . . ‘Drink wine until you can no longer distinguish between “Blessed be Mordecai” and “Cursed be Haman” ’ ”<sup>42</sup>

### Unfinished Business

“ . . . the story of Esther is deeply involved with other events of redemptive history, most particularly with the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Amalekites. . . . Mordecai is identified as a Benjamite from the clan of Kish (2:5), the father of Saul; Haman is a descendant of Agag (3:1), the Amalekite king against whom Saul had fought (1 Sam 15). [Ex 17:14-16; Deut 25:17-19; Judg 3:13; 5:14; 6:3,33; 7:12; 10:12; 1 Sam 28:18; 2 Sam 1:8; 1 Chr 4:43]

“ . . . Israel’s having rest from her enemies is tied to the destruction of the Amalekites (Deut 25:19); with this task completed, the Jews enjoy ‘rest from their enemies’ (9:22).”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Pratt, p.302.

<sup>42</sup>Lasor, p. 539.

<sup>43</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 197.



## Chapter 4

# OT Poetry

“When we use the expression ‘poetical books,’ we are referring to the Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. Poetry also occurs in many other Old Testament books, but these five books contain a large portion of it. Furthermore, in every poetical book except Ecclesiastes, poetry provides the predominant literary form. Ecclesiastes nevertheless became associated with the poetical books at some early time, probably because of its affinities with Hebrew wisdom literature.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, the poetical books are part in the *Writings*.

“The Writings analyze from different angles the rich and rewarding theme of human life in relation to God. Life is celebrated in the sexuality of the Song of Songs, in the exuberant gratitude of the hymns and thanksgiving songs of the Psalms, and in the down-to-earth enjoyment advocated in parts of Ecclesiastes. Life under threat is portrayed . . . [in] the communal complaints of the Psalms, and from an individual perspective in Job . . . and the personal complaints in the Psalms. Lessons on how to live a full and good life are taught in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.”<sup>2</sup>

“[The Writings] give dynamic expression to the depths of faith which God expects of his people. The impact of law, prophecy, and history on succeeding generations would have been less powerful if God had not also inspired and preserved the emotions, the instructions, even the frustrations represented in the Writings.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Arnold and Beyer, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup>Lasor, p. 427.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

## 4.1 Psalms

### Covenantal Prayerbook

“The psalms of praise, whether magnifying the majesty of Yahweh’s person or the wonder of his ways in creation or redemption, were a part of Israel’s tributary obligations; they were the spiritual sacrifices of the lips offered to the Great King. As vehicles of private and public devotion they were a continual resounding of Israel’s ‘Amen’ of covenant ratification. Psalms that rehearsed the course of covenant history (see, e.g., Pss. 78, 105-106, 135-136) were confessional responses of acknowledgment to the surveys of Yahweh’s mighty acts in Israel’s behalf which were contained in the historical prologues of the treaties, responses suitable for recitation in ceremonies of covenant reaffirmation where those acts were memorialized (cf. Deut. 26:1ff; Josh. 24:16-18). In the use of the psalms extolling the law of God, Israel submitted anew to the stipulations of the covenant. Plaint and penitential psalms might find a place in interaction with the prophetic indictment of Israel in the process of the covenant lawsuit. . . . the Psalter served broadly as a cultic instrument in the maintenance of a proper covenantal relationship with Yahweh.”<sup>4</sup>

“[W]hile the psalmist pours out his heart before the Lord in prayers of joy and sorrow, he understands himself to be in an intimate relationship with God. He knows that he is in covenant with the God of the universe.”<sup>5</sup>

### Division

“The closing verses of the last psalm in each collection typically contain some kind of doxology or ascription of praise to the Lord that serves to ‘tie off’ that part of the Book of Psalms. The one exception is Psalm 150, a grand psalm of praise that fittingly concludes the entire collection.”<sup>6</sup>

Book 1 – 1-41  
 Book 2 – 42-72  
 Book 3 – 73-89  
 Book 4 – 90-106  
 Book 5 – 107-150

### Types of Psalms<sup>7</sup>

**Laments** “Laments constitute the largest group of psalms in the Psalter. There are more than sixty . . . *Individual* laments (e.g., 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 120, 139, 142) help a person to express struggles, suffering, or disappointment to the Lord. *Corporate* laments (e.g., 12, 44, 80, 94, 137) do the same for a group of people . . . ”

**Thanksgiving Psalms** “These psalms were used, as the name suggests, in circumstances very opposite from those of the laments. . . . In all, there are six community (group) psalms of thanksgiving (65, 67, 75, 107, 124,

<sup>4</sup>*Structure*, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 228.

<sup>6</sup>Arnold and Beyer, p. 306.

<sup>7</sup>Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), pp. 194-6.

136), and ten individual psalms of thanksgiving (18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 66, 92, 116, 118, 138).

**Hymns of Praise** “These psalms, without particular reference to previous miseries or to recent joyful accomplishments, center on the praise of God for who he is, for his greatness and his beneficence toward the whole earth, as well as his own people. . . . [8, 19, 104, 148, 66, 100, 111, 114, 149, 33, 103, 113, 117, 145-147, etc.]

**Salvation History Psalms** “These few psalms (78, 105, 106, 135, 136) have as their focus a review of the history of God’s saving works among the people of Israel, especially his deliverance of them from bondage in Egypt and his creation of them as a people.

**Psalms of Celebration and Affirmation** “In this category are included several kinds of psalms.

**Covenant Renewal Liturgies** “ . . . [50 and 81] are designed to lead God’s people to a renewal of the covenant he first gave to them on Mount Sinai. . . . Psalms 89 and 132 are often categorized as Davidic covenant psalms . . .

**Royal Psalms** “There are nine psalms in the Psalter deal especially with the kingship (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 144). One of them (18) is a royal thanksgiving psalm and one of them (144) a royal lament. . . .

**Enthronement Psalms** “Related to the royal psalms . . . (24, 29, 47, 93, 95-99). It is likely that those psalms celebrated the enthronement of the king in ancient Israel, a ceremony that may have been repeated yearly. . . .

**Songs of Zion (City of Jerusalem)** “ . . . (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122). According to the predictions of God through Moses to the Israelites while they were yet in the wilderness (e.g., Deut. 12), Jerusalem became the central city of Israel, the place where the temple was built, and from which the kingship of David exercised authority. Jerusalem as the ‘holy city’ receives special attention and celebration in these songs. . . .

**Wisdom Psalms** “Eight psalms can be placed in this category (36, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133). We may note also that Proverbs chapter 8 is itself a psalm, praising, as these others do, the merits of wisdom and the wise life. . . . [*Ed.*: I think there are more than ten wisdom psalms.]

**Songs of Trust** “These ten psalms (11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131) center their attention upon the fact that God may be trusted, and that even in times of despair, his goodness and care for his people ought to be expressed. . . . ”

## Praying the Psalms<sup>8</sup>

Note: The Hebrew letters represent portions of Psalm 119.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>Rising</b>	9, 42, 84, 111, 139	8, 45, 48, 112, 147	5, 18, 66, 99	49, 93, 105, 118	28, 68, 100, 104	29, 33, 71, 136	30, 34, 47, 135
<b>Devotions</b>	Aleph- Gimel, 51, 73, 77, 95	Daleth- Vav, 6, 19, 53, 72	Zayin- Tet, 12, 67, 88, 109	Yod- Lamed, 7, 26, 37, 101	Mem- Samek, 36, 39, 55, 94	Ayin- Tsadeh, 32, 102, 127, 141	Qoph- Tau, 38, 57, 61, 86
<b>Mid-AM</b>	2, 50, 78, 122	10, 43, 81, 144	27, 79, 83, 90	22, 69, 80, 82	13, 87, 106, 140	17, 56, 59, 62	40, 64, 98, 132
<b>Noon</b>	46, 92	21, 91	23, 117	121, 131	20, 24	85	25
<b>Mid-PM</b>	3, 14, 15, 74	58, 76, 96, 120	31, 44, 52, 89	35, 54, 60, 130	16, 41, 116, 124	70, 97, 129, 142	65, 103, 139
<b>Dinner</b>	1	108	75, 115	11, 133	125	107	128, 134
<b>Retiring</b>	63, 138	4, 110	113, 145	143, 146	114, 148	123, 126	149, 150

## Laments

“By carefully comparing all the lament psalms, scholars have been able to isolate six elements that appear in one way or another in virtually all of them. These elements, in their typical order, are:

1. *Address*. The psalmist identifies the one to whom the psalm is prayed. This is, of course, the Lord.
2. *Complaint*. The psalmist pours out, honestly and forcefully, a complaint, identifying what the trouble is and why the Lord’s help is being sought.
3. *Trust*. The psalmist immediately expresses trust in God. (Why complain to God if you don’t trust him?) Moreover, you must trust him to answer your complaint in the way he sees fit, not necessarily as you would wish.
4. *Deliverance*. The psalmist pleads for God to deliver [him] from the situation described in the complaint.
5. *Assurance*. The psalmist expresses the assurance that God will deliver. This assurance is parallel somewhat to the expression of trust.

<sup>8</sup>T.M. Moore, *Praying the Psalms* (Linthicum Heights, MD: Chesapeake Publications, 1998), p. 17.

6. *Praise.* The psalmist offers praise, thanking and honoring God for the blessings of the past, present, and/or future.”<sup>9</sup>

Example: [Psalm 3]

1. [3:1a]
2. [3:1b-2]
3. [3:3-6]
4. [3:7a]
5. [3:7b]
6. [3:8]

### Thanksgiving Psalms

“Thanksgiving psalms have a different structure, as might be expected, because they have a different purpose in what they express. The elements of the thanksgiving psalm are as follows:

1. *Introduction.* Here the psalmist’s testimony of how God has helped is summarized.
2. *Distress.* The situation from which God gave deliverance is portrayed.
3. *Appeal.* The psalmist reiterates the appeal that he or she made to God.
4. *Deliverance.* The deliverance God provided is described.
5. *Testimony.* A word of praise for God’s mercy is given.”<sup>10</sup>

Example: [Psalm 138]

1. [138:1-2]
2. [138:3]
3. [138:3]
4. [138:6-7]
5. [138:4-5,8]

### Christ in the Psalms

[Luke 24:44] “Jesus is saying in no uncertain terms that the book of Psalms anticipated him and that his coming in some sense fulfilled that book. . . .

“Jesus is anticipated in the Psalter because he is the Son of God. The psalms are offered to God, and, as the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is the appropriate object of our praise and lament.

“. . . the psalms are properly thought of as the prayers of Jesus (Heb. 2:12) and prayers to Jesus.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Fee and Stuart, p. 197.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>11</sup>Dillard and Longman, pp. 233-4.

## 4.2 Wisdom Literature

“... the function of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament is the explication of the covenant. One way it performs this is by translating the covenant stipulations into maxims and instructions regulative of conduct in the different areas of life and under its varying conditions. But the wisdom books are equally concerned with the outworking of the covenant sanctions in human experience. [cf. The Song of Witness, Deut 32:1-43] ...

“... Old Testament wisdom sets forth the general order of divine providence and gives instruction as to the life stance appropriate to Yahweh’s servants living within that world order regulated by his covenants. ...

“There are close links between the wisdom books and Israel’s covenantal institutions, royal, prophetic, and cultic. Not a little of the canonical wisdom is attributable to King Solomon, who also figures as royal patron of the wisdom enterprise in general.”<sup>12</sup>

“Wisdom means generally ‘masterful understanding’ and ‘skill.’ It is used of technical and artistic skills (Exod. 28:3; 31:6), of the arts of magic (Exod. 7:11; Isa. 3:3), government (Eccl. 4:13; Jer. 50:35), diplomacy (1 Kings 5:7) and war (Isa. 10:3). One also rules a nation by the ability to judge (1 Kings 3:28; Isa. 11:1-6) and to separate the guilty from the community (Prov. 20:26) and, through cleverness, to master people and situations (2 Sam. 14:2; Job 39:15,17). Solomon also ruled by his encyclopedic knowledge (1 Kings 4:29-34 [5:9-14]) and by his ability to answer difficult questions (1 Kings 10:2-3).”<sup>13</sup>

“The wisdom literature of the ancient Near East may be categorized in two general groups.

- First, there are brief proverbial maxims stating observations about life in general. These tend to be instructional or didactic in nature and are usually optimistic about life. ...
- Second, sages of the ancient Near East produced documents containing lengthy discourses or essays grappling with life’s most difficult problems. These dialogues or monologues are frequently, but not always, pessimistic.”<sup>14</sup>

“The Mesopotamian dialogue material accepts the doctrine of *retribution* – goodness results in prosperity and wickedness leads to suffering. The problem arises when good people suffer. The Mesopotamian authors sought to explain the problem by asserting that the righteous person does not exist. The person who suffers does so because of crimes he has committed. Ultimately, the Mesopotamian solution to the problem of suffering is to place the blame on the sufferer, who can only accept the fate hurled upon him or her by the unfathomable gods. ... the problems posed by Job and Ecclesiastes are similar, though their solutions are very different.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Structure, pp. 64-6.

<sup>13</sup>Bruce Waltke, unpublished course handout, Reformed Theological Seminary, n.d.

<sup>14</sup>Arnold and Beyer, pp. 290-1.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 291-2.

## Job

“There is no consensus either among ancient rabbis or modern scholars about the date of Job. The marks of antiquity are apparent in the prose prologue (1:1-2:13) and epilogue (42:7-17):

1. Without priesthood or shrine, Job performed his own sacrifices (1:5).
2. His possessions, like Abraham’s and Jacob’s, were measured in sheep, camels, oxen, asses, and servants (1:3; cf. Gen. 12:16; 32:5).
3. His land was subject to raids of pillaging tribes (1:15-17).
4. Job’s life span of 140 years is matched only in the Pentateuch (42:16).
5. The epic character of the prose story has its closest parallels in Genesis and Ugaritic literature.
6. An ancient, righteous hero named Job is cited by Ezekiel in connection with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. 14:14,20).<sup>16</sup>

“The name of the author of Job is lost forever. Rarely has history left such a literary genius unnamed and unknown as to his circumstances or motive for composing such a magnificent work.”<sup>17</sup>

### Structure<sup>18</sup>

1-2	Prose prologue that introduces the character and plot
3-31	Job’s dialogues with his three “friends”
3	Job’s lament
4-27	Three cycles of dialogues
28	Poem on divine wisdom
29-31	Job’s last speech
32-37	Elihu’s monologue
38-42:6	Yahweh speaks from the whirlwind
42:7-17	Prose epilogue that draws the action to a close

### Summary

“Job is a wisdom book, and it relates to modern times insofar as wisdom tends to be relatively timeless. What was wise then is almost always still wise today.

“What makes Job particularly difficult is that it contains speeches from 6 different characters (excluding the narrative of the first two chapters), and many of these characters are unreliable sources of wisdom. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar each offer some legitimate observations based in conventional wisdom, but they draw incorrect conclusions from these observations. We know that their counsel cannot be trusted because God says so himself (Job 42:7-9). This demonstrates the limitations of conventional wisdom to fathom the depths of God’s wisdom.

“Elihu, who enters the discussion much later, is a bit more difficult to gauge because God neither affirms nor rebukes him.

<sup>16</sup>Lasor, p. 472.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 473.

<sup>18</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 201.

“God’s speeches, of course, are to be understood as completely reliable wisdom.

“The main character of the story is Job. His wisdom seems to grow throughout the book. In the beginning, he learns the basics (Job 1-2). Then he seems to hit the wall by realizing that all his friends’ conventional wisdom cannot find the truth in Job’s situation. He realizes its limitations, but he cannot determine true wisdom in his circumstances (Job 3-31).

“At this point, Elihu enters the discussion, offering words that seem to foreshadow much of what God says (Job 32-37). However, no other character in the story ever responds to Elihu, or even explicitly acknowledges his presence, so it is hard to figure out how to handle his counsel. The fact that God does not condemn his counsel may indicate that he speaks the truth. It is possible that Job alludes to Elihu’s words when he says, ‘My ears had heard of you’ (Job 42:5a), but certainly not beyond doubt.

“After this, God himself speaks (Job 38-41). He charges Job with reaching for wisdom beyond human ability to understand, and proclaims that humanity will never be able to see from God’s perspective.

“Seeing God (Job 42:5b), Job immediately repents and admits the limits of his conventional wisdom and of his own perspective (Job 42:1-6). In his repentance, and in God’s blessing of Job in this repentance, it appears that true wisdom which transcends conventional human wisdom can be found in things such as:

- a personal encounter with God, who alone governs the rational and irrational;
- trusting God’s character and intentions to be righteous;
- admitting the limitations of human wisdom;
- submission to God;
- repentance.

“None of this makes conventional wisdom illegitimate. Rather, it demonstrates the limitations of conventional wisdom, and it relegates all human wisdom to a position below God, so that human wisdom is incapable of calling into question or assailing God.”<sup>19</sup>

## School of Suffering

“ ‘Have you considered by servant Job?’ (1:8; 2:3) is a fitting question for all. James uses Job as an example of those who learn happiness in the school of suffering: ‘Indeed, we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful’ (James 5:11). Is there a better summary of the book’s message – a steadfast sufferer held in the arms of the God of purpose and compassion?’”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>20</sup>Lasor, p. 496.

## Proverbs

“The Book of Proverbs continues the themes of other portions of the Old Testament by contrasting two ways of living life. On the one hand, there are those who reject God’s laws and refuse to keep his covenant. Proverbs designates these individuals as ‘fools’ and their life choices as ‘folly.’ On the other hand, those who carefully maintain their relationship with God and adhere to his ways are called ‘wise’ and their lives are characterized by ‘wisdom.’ ”<sup>21</sup>

### Structure<sup>22</sup>

1. Title and Prologue [1:1-7]
2. Wisdom and Some Opponents [1:8-9:18]
  - (a) Criminals [1:8-19]
  - (b) Wisdom’s Call [1:20-33]
  - (c) Wisdom’s Rewards [2:1-4:27]
  - (d) Adultery [5:1-23]
  - (e) Business and Society [6:1-19]
  - (f) Adultery [6:20-7:27]
  - (g) Wisdom Praised [8:1-36]
  - (h) Human Choices [9:1-18]
3. Proverbs of Solomon [10:1-22:16]
4. Sayings of the Wise Men [22:17-24:34]
5. Solomonic Proverbs from Hezekiah’s Collection [25:1-29:27]
6. Sayings of Agur [30:1-33]
7. Sayings of Lemuel [31:1-9]
8. Postscript: The Excellent Wife [31:10-31]

### Wisdom and Knowledge<sup>23</sup>

“The possession of wisdom enables one to achieve what would otherwise be impossible. Through it weak and vulnerable creatures, such as the ant and the rock badger, cope and survive against insuperable odds (Prov. 30:24-28). In this preamble [Prov 1] ‘wisdom’ has its broadest sense as indicated by its many co-references. Here it denotes the mastery over experience through the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual state of knowing reality or truth, such as the deed-destiny nexus, as known and established by God, to the extent he has revealed it to his inspired sages. Moreover, it means to act upon it, thereby enabling its possessor to cope with enigma and adversity, to tear down strongholds, and so promote the life of an individual and/or a community (21:22; cf. 24:5; Eccl. 7:19; 9:13-16). It does not refer to the Greek conception of wisdom as philosophical theory or rhetorical sophistry (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-24).”

<sup>21</sup>Arnold and Beyer, p. 316.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Bruce Waltke, unpublished course handout.

“Wisdom in this summary statement entails all the other virtues listed in verses 2-5: knowledge (*da’at*), insight (*bina*), prudence (*haskil*), shrewdness (*’orma*), caginess (*mezimma*), learning (*leqah*) and guidance (*tahbulot*). To these 2:1-4 adds competence (*tebuna*) and resourcefulness (*tusiya*), and 8:14 planning (*’esa*) and heroic strength (*gebura*). Von Rad referred to the Old Testament proclivity for heaping up of terms for wisdom as a ‘stereometric’ way of thinking to achieve ‘the desired extension of the conceptual range.’ Moreover, as the preamble makes clear, in this book these capacities are exercised in the realms of righteous (*sedeq*), justice (*mispat*) and equity (*mesarim*), giving them a moral dimension. They also have a religious connotation, for wisdom in this book includes knowledge of the Holy One himself (see 9:10; 30:3). In sum, this book transforms the neutral term wisdom into virtue.”

“Moreover, this wisdom is a divine gift (2:6; cf. Exod. 31:3; 35:31; 1 Kings 3:4-14; Isa. 11:2) that is acquired by a single-minded decision to accept it in humility (2:1-4; 3:5-8) and to value it above everything else (3:13-18; 8:11-12). This kind of wisdom cannot be bought with money (17:16) or acquired merely by keen observation and cogent reflection upon the created order (i.e., based on experience), as Agur makes clear (30:1-6; cf. Eccl. 8:17; Isa. 19:11-12). Truth sometimes contradicts what depraved human beings think is right (Prov. 14:12; cf. Isa. 8:11-15; Judg. 17:6; 21:25). However, no sharp distinction should be made between general revelation through conscience and special revelation.”

“Knowledge (*da’at*). Wisdom and knowledge are inseparable, for mastery of life’s experience demands knowledge of the divine moral order, the nexus between cause and consequence. Knowledge is a term co-relative with and inseparable from the sage’s words (23:12) and instruction (1:7; 19:27), shrewdness (1:4; 8:12) and caginess (2:6,10) as well as wisdom (2:6,10ff.; 14:6) and insight (9:10). Like these co-references it too has a religious connotation (see 9:10; 22:12; 30:3). It is imperative that the gullible youth ‘seek’ it (15:14; 18:15), find it (8:9) and acquire it (18:15). But first he must become the sort of person that lives in the fear of the Lord (1:7). The ‘insightful’ (see v. 5b) love it (12:1), seek it (15:14; 18:15) and find that it commends itself (8:9), comes easily (14:6), and is pleasing (2:10). This transmitted knowledge, which is now in the disciple’s heart and on lips, will protect him in temptation (5:4), enable him to behave wisely and speak well (12:23; 15:2; 17:27), and increase in strength (24:25). By contrast fools hate it (1:22,29).”

## Women

“The material in the Book of Proverbs was probably part of the curriculum for training young men who were preparing to take positions of leadership in the Israelite monarchy. Such positions were not open to young women in that society and culture, which leads to a definite masculine inclination in the book. ‘My son’ is the often-repeated designation for the student.

“Yet the book holds womanhood in the highest regard. The instruction of the mother is on a par with that of the father (1:8; 10:1), and the joy of a good wife is valued above all else (12:4). In this light, it is interesting that the book concludes with the magnificent poem to the excellent woman (31:10-31).”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Arnold and Beyer, p. 317.

## Ecclesiastes

“Solomon, who wandered from God during a prosperous period of life, only to return to him later, is writing this book as a final testament to his son Rehoboam, in whom he must have seen some of the same tendencies that had led him into a life of vanity. Solomon appears to have come to his senses at the end of his days and is urgent to warn his son – and all subsequent readers – not to fall into the mistakes he did. . . .

“The book stands as a warning to those who hope to make sense out of their lives apart from God, calling them to use sound reason and common sense, to learn to be content with what God gives and to live in gratitude before him.”<sup>25</sup>

“The interpretation of the purpose of Ecclesiastes largely hangs on one’s understanding of the phrases ‘under the heavens’ and ‘under the sun.’ Most – but not all – commentators take these phrases as essentially equivalent, merely different ways of saying the same thing. I see them instead as opposing phrases, used throughout the book to set the discussion either in an earthbound or in a God-oriented frame of reference.”<sup>26</sup>

### Chapter Summaries<sup>27</sup>

#### 1. Chasing the Wind

*At the end of his life, Solomon reflects on his purpose and pursuits, recalling the futility and frustration he encountered when he lost his way.*

#### 2. Hating Life

*In more detail, Solomon reflects on his course of life “under the sun,” all his accomplishments and achievements, and expresses disdain for the futility of it all apart from God.*

#### 3. Eternity in Our Hearts

*Solomon shows that we are driven to discover meaning and purpose in life because, in fact, it is there, but only when we see life from God’s perspective and according to his eternal plan. Otherwise life makes no more sense for people than if they were mere beasts.*

#### 4. No One to Comfort Them

*His gaze now fixed back on matters under the sun, Solomon contemplates the injustice and oppression that he has witnessed around him.*

#### 5. Honest to God

*Solomon warns against duplicity before God, among rulers, and with oneself and others, and counsels contentment with one’s work as the most that people can hope for under the sun.*

#### 6. Full Lives, Empty Souls

*Solomon once again takes up his argument that life is more than things. People can fill their lives with every imaginable good thing and still be miserable, if they fail to satisfy the deep longings of their souls.*

<sup>25</sup>T.M. Moore, *Ecclesiastes: Ancient Wisdom When All Else Fails* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), p. 10.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp 16ff.

**7. Going to Extremes**

*By presenting a series of opposites, Solomon tears open the veil revealing the heart of wisdom and exposing the foolishness of trying to make sense of life apart from God.*

**8. Civic Wisdom**

*Solomon offers advice on the ways of people in civil society – before kings, in matters of justice and injustice, and in the work of wickedness and righteousness.*

**9. Alive (At Least)**

*Solomon warns of the inevitability of death and counsels contentment with the gifts of God in the face of life's fading glories.*

**10. The Blessings of Common Sense**

*Solomon compares the knowledge gained by common sense with his assertions about life under the sun, suggesting that the way of wisdom and of seeking God is far to be preferred to the way of the fool, apart from God.*

**11. Make the Most of It – While You Can**

*Given that life is short and young people are not inclined to think about eternity, Solomon advises making the most of it while you can.*

**12. The Whole of a Person**

*Solomon brings his argument to a conclusion, calling upon his readers to consider their Creator and devote themselves entirely to him.*

**Lasting Significance**

“Ecclesiastes is a very difficult book, and there are various theories on its proper interpretation. There are also at least two fairly common ways of answering the question [*Why does Solomon keep saying that everything is meaningless?*] . . . First, many scholars argue that everything is meaningless only without a proper focus on God. Second, others argue that there are two distinct voices in the book, perhaps a teacher and a student, and that the comments on meaninglessness are spoken by the student and are erroneous, left to be corrected by the teacher's voice.

“Personally, I have a somewhat different reading of the book, though I have yet to find many who agree with me (so take it with a healthy dose of salt). I think there is a pattern of metaphor established in chapter 1 that carries through the rest of the book. Verses 4-11 highlight the issues:

*4 A generation goes, and a generation comes,  
but the earth remains forever.*

People are ephemeral, but the earth is lasting.

*5 The sun rises, and the sun goes down,  
and hastens to the place where it rises.*

*6 The wind blows to the south  
and goes around to the north;  
around and around goes the wind,  
and on its circuits the wind returns.*

*7 All streams run to the sea,*

*but the sea is not full;  
to the place where the streams flow,  
there they flow again.*

These are examples of systems or aspects of the earth that demonstrate that the earth is lasting and unchanging.

*8 All things are full of weariness;  
a man cannot utter it;  
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,  
nor the ear filled with hearing.  
9 What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is what will be done,  
and there is nothing new under the sun.  
10 Is there a thing of which it is said,  
“See, this is new”?  
It has been already  
in the ages before us.*

Man would like to be able to do something new, to be able to be remembered for making a significant contribution to or mark on the earth. Man seeks lasting significance, but he is unable to do anything that has not been done before. As a result, he cannot attain the significance he desires.

*11 There is no remembrance of former things,  
nor will there be any remembrance  
of later things yet to be  
among those who come after.*

No matter how great his accomplishments, man will not achieve the lasting significance he desires.

“Verses 5-6 establish the two central metaphors that run through the rest of the book: the wind and the sun, as they appear in the phrases “striving after wind” and “under the sun.” In my mind, both these metaphors emphasize two things: 1) the lasting significance of the earth; and 2) man’s ephemeral nature by comparison. Man longs and strives for lasting significance, such as that of the earth, but he cannot attain it. His efforts are striving after the wind, that is, they are attempts to attain this perpetuity, but they inevitably fail. One cannot catch the wind, nor can one establish anything (memory, memorial, etc.) that will last as long as the wind will last. All that is done “under the sun” suffers the same fate – it cannot achieve the lasting significance of the sun in its courses. We cannot reach the sun to have the same kind of significance and impact it has; we labor under it. We also cannot do anything else that will have significance as lasting as the sun’s.

“Thus, rather than trying to establish lasting meaning in our lives by building monuments or doing great deeds, we ought to be content with the lives God has assigned us. We ought not to kill ourselves working for grand designs, and we ought not to base our happiness or contentment on great accomplishments. Rather, we ought to enjoy the lives God has given us, and to take pleasure in the little things like a meal with our family. The meaninglessness attaches only to those things that we try to do to establish legacies or to make significant impacts on the world. What really is significant is taking pleasure in God and his gifts and being content with our call.”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

## Song of Solomon

“Perhaps no other biblical book has been read so differently from one time period to another. In the Middle Ages, very few would interpret the book in connection with human sexuality. Indeed, to do so was dangerous and could result in excommunication or worse.”<sup>29</sup>

Also known as the *Song of Songs*, this book illustrates the wisdom expressed in Proverbs 5:15-20:

*Drink water from your own cistern,  
flowing water from your own well.  
Should your springs be scattered abroad,  
streams of water in the streets?  
Let them be for yourself alone,  
and not for strangers with you.  
Let your fountain be blessed,  
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,  
a lovely deer, a graceful doe.  
Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;  
be intoxicated always in her love.  
Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman,  
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?*

“At least in one instance, contemporary secular opinion invaded the church and distorted the perception of the ancient literary form. For centuries, the church did not permit anyone to read the Song of Songs as a love song; it was read as an allegory of the relationship between Christ and the church. Today, almost everyone recognizes that the Song is most naturally interpreted as a love song. How did the church lose touch with the, to us, obviously erotic nature of the imagery? The answer seems to be the influence of Hellenistic thought on certain sectors of the early church which led to the belief that the body and its sexual function were unclean and this inappropriate as a subject of divine revelation. The same beliefs which led to religious celibacy and the monastic movement also led to a ‘desexed’ interpretation of the Song. Interestingly . . . it was the recovery of Mesopotamian and Egyptian love poetry which contributed to a recovery of a more natural reading of the Song.”<sup>30</sup>

“We begin to see why God created the pleasures of sexual intimacy when we realize that God designed the marriage bond primarily to portray his covenant. Indeed, the other purposes – procreation, partnership, and pleasure – actually serve to express this principal purpose. Ephesians 5 quotes and then applies Genesis 2:24: “‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” [Eph 5:31,32]”<sup>31</sup>

[Rev 21:2,9]

<sup>29</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 257.

<sup>30</sup>Longman, “Evangelicals and the Comparative Method,” *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator*, p. 41.

<sup>31</sup>Larry Wilson, “Pure Sex,” *New Horizons*, March 2004, p. 4.

## Chapter 5

# OT Prophecy

“For the prophets, the covenant relationship becomes the cornerstone of their hope. There were three basic elements to that hope: (1) formation of the people God had chosen, (2) their inheritance of the land that he had promised the patriarchs and their descendants, and (3) establishment of the throne he had pledged to David and his posterity (2 Sam 7). Because their Lord is a God who keeps covenant promises, the prophets knew that ultimately God must redeem the people, restore them to the land, and establish the king on the throne. The elements of this hope are present already in Deuteronomy. In setting forth his convictions, Moses is truly the archtypal prophet (cf. Deut 9:26-29; 17:14-20; 18:15-18).”<sup>1</sup>

“The establishment of the prophetic office was itself a matter of treaty stipulation. Moses, prophet-mediator of the old covenant, arranged in the Deuteronomistic treaty for his covenantal task to be furthered by a succession of prophets like unto himself (Deut. 18:15ff; cf. Exod. 4:16; 7:1ff.)

“The particularly prophetic task was the elaboration and application of the ancient covenant sanctions. In actual practice this meant that their diplomatic mission to Israel was by and large one of prosecuting Yahweh’s patient covenant lawsuit with his incurably wayward vassal people.”<sup>2</sup>

“The classical prophets spoke God’s Word to the king, leaders, or people. They charged them in a *rîb* (‘accusation’) pattern, condemned the people, pronounced the judgment of a coming ‘Day of the Lord,’ and predicted a new era that the godly remnant would enjoy. . . .

“By the eighth century the prophetic function was enlarged to that of *preacher*, whose inspired message was cast into distinct forms of prophetic speech. The prophet was a *covenant prosecutor*, commissioned by the Lord to indict Judah, declare it guilty, and forewarn it of the coming judgments of the Lord. The prophet was also a *visionary*, speaking of a new age. This message of another day was marked by comfort, hope, and a call for an individual response of love for the Lord, with whom is mercy and forgiveness.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lasor, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>*Structure*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>*Progress*, p. 269.

## Chronological Order

8th Century	7th and 6th Centuries	Post-Exilic (6th and 5th)
Hosea Amos Isaiah Micah Jonah	Jeremiah Nahum Zephaniah Habakkuk Ezekiel Obadiah Daniel	Joel (?) Haggai Zechariah Malachi

## Types of Prophets<sup>4</sup>

True Prophets	False Prophets
1. Foundation: Revelation 2. Holistic proclamation 3. Independence from power structures 4. Members of a divine and social institution 5. Vision of the reality of the kingdom of God 6. Theocentric ethics 7. Suffering for the sake of God	Revelation and religion Selective proclamation Dependence on power structures Members of a social institution Guardians of status quo Man-center ethics Popularity and power

## 5.1 Major Prophets

In the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations and Daniel are part of the *Writings*.

### Isaiah

“For sheer grandeur and majesty probably no book in the Hebrew Bible can be compared with Isaiah. Because the New Testament writers made frequent appeal to the book in presenting their claims about the nature of Jesus and the church, Isaiah assumed a role of particular importance in Christian interpretation.”<sup>5</sup>

### Literary Structure<sup>6</sup>

- A. Condemnation of Israel and promises of restoration, 1:1-12:6
- B. Oracles to the nations, 13:1-27:13
- C. Woes: Don't trust in princes, 28:1-35:10
- D. Jerusalem delivered from Assyria, 36:1-39:8
- C1. Yahweh supreme over idols, 40:1-28:22
- B1. Servant messages, 49:1-54:17 (contrast with proud nations)
- A1. Condemnation and future restoration, 55:1-66:24

<sup>4</sup>*Prophetic Word*, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 267.

<sup>6</sup>Dorsey, p. 234.

## Two-Volume Structure<sup>7</sup>

“[This arrangement] was based in part on the presence of a three-line gap between chapters 33 and 34 in the great Isaiah scroll discovered at Qumran . . . ”

Volume 1	Volume 2
1. Ruin and restoration of Judah (1-5)	1. Paradise lost and regained (34-35)
2. Narrative (6-8)	2. Narrative (36-39)
3. Agents of blessing and judgment (9-12)	3. Agents of deliverance and judgment (40-45)
4. Oracles against foreign nations (13-23)	4. Oracles against Babylon (46-48)
5. Judgment and deliverance of God’s people (24-27)	5. Redemption through the Lord’s servant (49-55)
6. Ethical sermons (28-31)	6. Ethical sermons (56-59)
7. Restoration of Judah and Davidic kingdom (32-33)	7. Paradise regained (55-66)

## Jerusalem and the Davidic Line

“Isaiah was a covenant representative of God, as were all authoritative Old Testament prophets (just like the New Testament apostles). As such, his primary role was to act as God’s emissary to God’s people, prosecuting the terms of the covenant. . . . Isaiah’s view of God’s protection of the Davidic king and Jerusalem were based on his understanding of God’s covenant obligations regarding these. His views of the people’s traditions regarding these same things were based on how well these traditions compared to the truth.

“ . . . Isaiah viewed the Davidic covenant as God’s offer to provide a Davidic king for Israel on the condition that the Davidic king remained obedient to God’s law (i.e. to the stipulations of the covenant). . . . Isaiah, therefore, rightly considered it his responsibility to call the Davidic kings to be accountable to God’s law (both for the kings’ benefit and for the nation’s benefit). As Isaiah saw what the Davidic kings did, and compared their actions to the requirements of the covenant, he was able to advise, exhort, rebuke, warn and encourage them to greater faithfulness.

“Isaiah’s understanding of Jerusalem was very similar to his understanding of the Davidic covenant and Davidic kingship. Specifically, God’s offer to maintain his house and presence in Jerusalem was conditional – only if the people remained faithful to God would God continue to protect them and to dwell among them there. In the course of history, Judah (and Israel) failed to remain faithful, and was (were) exiled from the Promised Land and from Jerusalem. Isaiah knew this was a possibility during the years of his ministry, and warned that Jerusalem would fall because of Judah’s wickedness (e.g. Isa. 62:4; 64:8-10). But he also believed that God had long-term goals for Jerusalem he would bring to fruition during the restoration when God would cause many people to be faithful to him (thereby causing them to keep the covenant and to gain the covenant blessings). This hope for Jerusalem is evident throughout the latter chapters of the book. Ultimately, the restoration of Jerusalem that Isaiah prophesied will not be fulfilled until Jesus returns (Rev. 21:2).

<sup>7</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 281.

“Probably, the fact that the people did not appropriately heed Isaiah’s messages indicates that their own traditions regarding Davidic kingship and Jerusalem were erroneous. It does appear that by the time of Jeremiah’s ministry (perhaps 100 years or so after Isaiah was written), the traditions regarding the temple had begun to misinterpret God’s protection and covenant blessings as unconditional rather than conditional (Jer. 7:4). It is not unlikely that such errors also existed in Isaiah’s day.”<sup>8</sup>

### The Servant of the Lord

“There can be little question that Isaiah’s servant is at least to be identified as Israel; the servant is specifically called ‘my servant Israel/Jacob’ (41:8-9; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3-6). It is because the faithful remnant arises from a period of judgment that surviving Israel could be called the ‘suffering servant.’ . . . [Isa. 43:1-2; 41:8-14; 42:1-9; 43:5-13; 44:1-4]

“Yet Isaiah’s servant also points beyond the nation Israel. Isaiah had already made a distinction between Israel as a nation and Israel as a faithful remnant/servant (49:5-6). Isaiah also individualized this servant: he is born of a woman and he comes as one who is distinct from the nation, one who will restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back Israel (44:24; 46:3; 49:1). . . .

“Christian readers can readily understand how the New Testament writers were following the lead of Isaiah himself. In their eyes, Jesus had become a remnant of one. He was the embodiment of faithful Israel, the truly righteous and suffering servant. . . . As the remnant restored to life, he becomes the focus of the hopes for the continued existence of the people of God in a new kingdom, a new Israel of Jew and Gentile alike.”<sup>9</sup>

## Jeremiah

“The prophet Jeremiah is among the most accessible personalities of the Old Testament: we have a wealth of historical and biographical material bearing on his life, and the prophet openly bares his soul in a number of his prayers.

“Jeremiah ministered during the tumultuous years surrounding the decline of Assyria and the rise of the Babylonian Empire. . . . [Judah’s] independence was at an end, and Jeremiah would witness the destruction of the city and the temple.”<sup>10</sup>

Song of consolation: [Jer. 30-33]

### Rhetorical Analysis<sup>11</sup>

1. Prophecies and poems of Jeremiah, 1-20
2. Historical narratives from the time of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, 21-36
3. Events immediately prior to and following the fall of Jerusalem, 37-45
4. Oracles against the nations, 46-51
5. Historical appendix, 52

<sup>8</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>9</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 279.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p.285.

<sup>11</sup>*Prophetic Word*, p. 293.

## Hawks and Doves

“The book vividly describes the nationalism, the paranoia, the competing interests of pro-Babylonian and pro-Egyptian groups, the struggle between the ‘hawks’ and the ‘doves’ in Judah. In the midst of it all, Jeremiah was called to proclaim the word of God, first offering God’s blessing if the nation would repent, but then assuring her of a future restoration when divine judgment could no longer be averted.”<sup>12</sup>

## The “Renewed” Covenant

“Hebrews 8 indicates that Jesus is the mediator of the ‘new’ or ‘renewed’ covenant of which Jeremiah spoke (the Greek word *kainos* may be translated either way, as may the Hebrew word *chadash*). All of the things prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34 were already present to some degree in ancient Israel and Judah. Having God’s word written on their hearts was already a known blessing in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:6; 30:6; Isa. 51:7), God was the God of ancient Israel and Judah and they were his people (e.g. Exod. 3:7,10), and God forgave the sins of the faithful (Exod. 34:6-7). There were also those who knew the Lord and therefore did not need to be taught to know him (frequently demonstrated by contrast with those people who did not know the Lord [e.g. Exod. 5:2; Judg. 2:10; 1 Sam. 2:12; 3:7; Hos. 2:20; 5:4]).

“‘Know the Lord’ could mean a number of things in the Old Testament. One way to know the Lord was to experience his judgment and destruction (e.g. Ezek. 38:16). Clearly, however, this is not the meaning in Jeremiah 31:34 where knowing the Lord is a blessing rather than a curse. In the Old Testament, the most common meaning of ‘know the Lord’ is ‘be faithful to the Lord’ (e.g. Exod. 33:13; Jer. 4:22; 24:7; Hos. 2:20; 5:4; 6:3). This is also the meaning in Jeremiah 31:34 where knowing the Lord results from being forgiven by the Lord: ‘they will all know me ... for I will forgive ...’ In fact, the word translated ‘for’ (*ki*) may also be translated ‘because.’ Notice that ‘knowing the Lord’ follows repentance and forgiveness. It does not precede these things as does simple knowledge of the gospel. Thus, in the Old Testament, plenty of people knew the Lord, although imperfectly because they were not perfectly faithful to him.

“It is the same in our day. The people of God are faithful to the Lord, but not entirely faithful – there is no one among us who never sins. We realize the blessing of being faithful to the Lord (i.e. knowing the Lord) in part, but not in its complete fullness. When Christ returns, though, all his people will be finally and fully perfected and blessed, and none of us will ever sin again. Only then will we ‘know the Lord’ in a way that can be described entirely as ‘already’ and not at all as ‘not yet.’ Until then, we must exhort each other to be faithful to the Lord, just as Hebrews also teaches us to do (Heb. 10:24-25).

“Because all of the blessings in Jeremiah 31:31-34 were already present in the Old Testament administrations of the covenant, and because even the parties of the prophesied covenant were the same (Israel and Judah), it is better to translate Jeremiah 31:31 as prophesying a ‘renewed’ covenant rather than to a ‘new’ covenant. In order to be faithful to the Old Testament text of Jeremiah, the author of Hebrews retained the original meaning of Jeremiah 31. He did not invent a new meaning for Jeremiah’s prophecy. Thus, he too referred to a renewed covenant in which the covenant blessings would be offered afresh and

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<sup>12</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 287.

finally realized in full, but he did not say that the day of the prophecy's ultimate fulfillment had already come.

"The most common error related to Hebrews 8 in our day is the interpretation that only believers are in the renewed covenant. This is often asserted on the basis that the renewed covenant cannot be broken, or on the basis that everyone in the renewed covenant will 'know the Lord.' However, neither Jeremiah nor the author of Hebrews wrote that the renewed/new covenant could not be broken. This is an assumption drawn from the language which states that the renewed covenant will not be like the covenant which Judah and Israel broke. While it is true that this language helps create an expectation that eventually the new covenant will not be broken, as indeed will be the case for the faithful covenant people when Christ returns, there is no indication that unbreakableness must characterize the renewed covenant at every step. In fact, according to Jeremiah, the full realization of these blessings was to come about in the restoration of the kingdom when God restored the people to the land after the exile in Babylon (Jer. 29:1,10-14; 30:2-3; 31:27-34). Of course, the original restoration in the time of Ezra-Nehemiah did not realize these full blessings because the people were not faithful to God. Thus, we have biblical proof that the renewed covenant had already been broken by the time Hebrews was written. Moreover, Hebrews itself also teaches us that the renewed covenant can be broken when it tells us of the punishment that will fall upon some who have been 'sanctified' by the 'blood of the covenant' (Heb. 10:26-31).

"In summary, Hebrews quotes Jeremiah not to say that the prophecy has been fulfilled, but rather to say that Jesus is the one who will bring us the blessings offered in Jeremiah's prophecy. The broad argument of Hebrews is not that we now have all the covenant blessings in full, but that because we have Jesus, we are assured of receiving all the covenant blessings in full when Christ returns, if we persevere in our faith until that time (e.g. Heb. 9:28; 10:36-38). If we assume that one cannot break the renewed covenant, we brush aside the many severe warnings to Christians we find throughout Hebrews."<sup>13</sup>

## Lamentations

"Lamentations contemplates the last days of Jerusalem and covers the fall of Jerusalem, the reasons for and effects of the exile of Judah, and the experience of abandonment. The book consists of four acrostic poems of the alphabetical type (chaps. 1-4) and a nonacrostic poem (chap. 5). The first two and last two poems consist of twenty-two verses, whereas the central poem consists of sixty-six (3 x 22) verses. The number 22 is significant as it represents the number of consonants in the Hebrew alphabet.

"Though the authorship of Lamentations is often associated with Jeremiah (witness the English ordering of Lamentations after Jeremiah), the author is anonymous. The absence of a clear movement within the chapters heightens the importance of thematic repetition. The repetition of themes, the selection of certain literary forms (acrostics, dirge, complaints, and confession), and the poetic description of Judah's suffering have made the poetic work a lasting form of prayer, confession, and hope for God's people in subsequent centuries."<sup>14</sup>

[Lam. 3:19-26] and [Lam. 5:19-22]

<sup>13</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>14</sup>*Progress*, p. 287.

## Ezekiel

“The exiles among whom Ezekiel lived had come from the upper classes of Judean society. They were a privileged group that had not often heeded prophetic warnings in the past (2:3-8). They hoped for a short time of exile and a speedy return to their positions of wealth and privilege. They were hostile to Ezekiel’s message and dismissed his words as entertaining prattle (20:49; 33:30-32). But God would soon vindicate himself and his prophet (33:33). The exile would not be brief, and the city would not be spared.”<sup>15</sup>

### Literary Structure<sup>16</sup>

1. Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (1-24)
  - A. The prophet’s call (1-3)
  - B. Symbolic actions about the destruction of Jerusalem (4-5)
  - C. Oracle against the mountains of Israel (6)
  - D. The end (7)
  - E. A vision of judgment in Jerusalem (8-11)
  - F. Oracles about the sins of Israel and Jerusalem (12-24)
2. Oracles against foreign nations (25-32)
  - A. Ammon (25:1-7)
  - B. Moab (25:8-11)
  - C. Edom (25:12-14)
  - D. Philistia (25:25-17)
  - E. Tyre (26-28)
  - F. Egypt (29-32)
3. Blessing for Judah and Jerusalem (33-48)
  - A. Ezekiel the watchman (33)
  - B. The shepherds of Israel (34)
  - C. Against Edom (35)
  - D. A prophecy to the mountains of Israel (36)
  - E. The valley of dry bones (37:1-14)
  - F. Two sticks becoming one (37:15-28)
  - G. Gog and Magog (38-39)
  - H. A vision of a restored Jerusalem (40-48)

### The Big Picture

“Assyria had been the super-power of the day, but her power was starting to decline. Who would be the next leader of the world? And whom should Judah turn to for help and alliances?”

“During Ezekiel’s lifetime, Judah was waffling between giving allegiance to Egypt and Babylon. Eventually Babylon rose to rule the world. In doing this, Babylon began to deport the people of God from Judah. In 605 B.C. there was the first deportation as Judah became a vassal state to Babylon. Then the king of Judah (Jehoiakim) switched his allegiance back to Egypt, but died soon after. This did not please Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. After a brief siege in 597 B.C., he took the king of Judah (Jehoiakim’s son Jehoiachin) into exile. Many in Jerusalem, including Ezekiel, were exiled with him.

<sup>15</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 313.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 320-1.

“This historical background gives important background for Ezekiel 1-32. These deported Israelites hoped that their captivity would be short, and dreamed of a speedy return. They assumed that Jerusalem would be safe, for it was ‘God’s city.’ However, Ezekiel had a very different message. Their exile would not be brief or easy. And worse yet, their prized capital Jerusalem would be devastated. Thus, Ezekiel spends the first twenty-four chapters of his book addressing the sins of Judah and the coming judgment on Jerusalem. He then turns in chapters 25-32 to announce judgment against foreign nations.

“For the setting of the rest of Ezekiel’s book, we must return and finish the historical background. After King Jehoiachin was exiled to Babylon with Ezekiel, his uncle Zedekiah was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. When Zedekiah proved to be unfaithful to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and finally conquered it in 586 B.C.

“Ezekiel finds out about the fall of Jerusalem in 33:21,22. From there on the message of his book changes. In chapters 33-48 he speaks of hope and restoration. The fallen city will one day be restored, the temple rebuilt, and the land re-settled. He describes a time of profound blessing for God’s people.

“With that as the ‘big picture’ to Ezekiel, what can we say about modern application? Many things could be said here, but I will mention four:

- First, notice the greatness of God and our need for repentance. Ezekiel describes God in ways that stretch our imagination. For example, in Ezekiel 1 we learn that God is incomprehensible to us. He is holy and transcendent, separate from sin and calling sinners to repentance. The same is true today.
- Second, notice Ezekiel’s ‘remnant theology.’ Although God is a Holy Judge, he is calling individuals to himself, creating a remnant that will endure through judgment (Ezek. 6:8; 9:8; 11:12,13; 12:16; 14:22,23). God is doing this today as he calls men and women to himself.
- Third, as with other prophets, we see that God is in control of all things. He is in control even of the bad things that happen to his people. Chapters 25-32 also tell us that he is in control of every nation, all of the world.
- Fourth, we presently are living in the time of the restoration about which Ezekiel prophesied. Jesus has brought the restoration. It is not seen in its fullness yet, but it is breaking into the world in subtle ways now. For example, Ezekiel called for a time when there would be a ‘new heart’ for God’s people (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26). Jeremiah 31:33 tells us that this new heart comes under the New Covenant which Jesus inaugurated.”<sup>17</sup>

## Dry Bones

“Ezekiel’s vision [Ezek 37] probably does not describe a real valley of dry bones, nor does it probably correspond to any real valley with which Ezekiel or his contemporaries were aware. The ancient Hebrew practice was not to leave dead bodies exposed to the elements, but rather to bury them. Also, we have no historical record of such a valley. Finally, many of the things that Ezekiel saw in his other visions were not depictions of actual things in the world. . . .

“I suspect that the most appalling thing in the passage as far as Ezekiel and his audience were concerned was the fact that God’s own people were these

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<sup>17</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

abandoned bones. They had died, and no one had cared for them. And their revitalization required significant intervention by God and his prophet. But still, God renewed them and breathed new life into them.”<sup>18</sup>

## The Final Temple

“Ezekiel’s vision of the restoration included a glorious temple. He foresaw a time when the presence of God in the midst of his people was so overwhelming that under the form of a vision he could only describe it in terms of size and splendor. John writes that when Jesus came and templed in our midst, we saw ‘his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth’ (John 1:14). Jesus was ‘the radiance of God’s glory, the exact representation of his being’ (Heb. 1:3). There is no historical evidence that the visible cloud of God’s glory ever came to the second temple as it had to the tabernacle and Solomon’s temple; God’s glory came to the second temple when Jesus entered Jerusalem.”<sup>19</sup>

## Daniel

“Daniel’s ministry was unique. Nebuchadnezzar deported him to Babylon in 605 B.C. Here he enjoyed an education to prepare him for statecraft. Daniel’s natural gifts and unique and divine endowment gave him immediate recognition as the spokesman for the Lord, the God of heaven. Through the interpretation of the dreams (chaps. 2; 4), of handwriting on the wall (chap. 5), and of the visions of the four beasts (chap. 7), the ram and the he-goat (chap. 8), the seventy weeks (chap. 9), and troubles on earth and God’s ultimate victory (11:2-12:13), the Lord upheld his sovereignty over Babylon and the nations, while comforting his people with the message of hope. Hope lies in the God of heaven, who shall establish his sovereignty over all the nations and who will share his dominion with his saints.”<sup>20</sup>

## Aramaic Structure<sup>21</sup>

“Intriguingly, the book of Daniel is written partly in Aramaic, the international language of the day, and partly in Hebrew. Fittingly, the Aramaic portions are concerned mainly with the international setting and are arranged in chiasmic order:”

- Introduction: Daniel in Babylon, chapter 1
- A. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of a statue: four kingdoms, chapter 2
- B. Daniel’s friends refuse idolatry, chapter 3
- C. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Yahweh, chapter 4
- C1. Belshazzar ignores Yahweh’s claims, chapter 5
- B1. Daniel disobeys Darius’s order regarding claims, chapter 6
- A1. Daniel’s vision of four beasts, , chapter 7

<sup>18</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>19</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 327.

<sup>20</sup>*Progress*, p. 277.

<sup>21</sup>Leithart, p. 239.

## 5.2 Minor Prophets

“The term *Minor Prophets* is based on the size of the written oracles.”<sup>22</sup>

“The distinctive contribution of the prophets is related to the historical *and* canonical situation. By *historical* I mean the temporal and cultural context in which the prophet spoke God’s words of warning, judgment, exhortation, and hope. . . . The *canonical* dimension pertains to the process of collecting, writing, and transmitting the prophetic speech, permitting another generation to read these oracles as the Word of God inspired by the Spirit of God.”<sup>23</sup>

Prophet	Historical Context (Time)	Canonical Context (Book)	Message
Hosea	750 Israel	Judah	Yahweh is holy in his love
Joel	425 Locust plague	Remnant	The Spirit of God is the guarantee of the fullness of restoration
Amos	760 Israel	Judah	The Day of the Lord: Desolation and restoration
Obadiah	580 Exile	Exilic/post-exilic	The kingdoms of this world will become the Lord’s
Jonah	700 Evil of Ninevah	Exilic/post-exilic	The freedom of the Lord
Micah	725 Israel and Judah	Judah	The kingdom of God and his Messiah
Nahum	630 Ninevah	Judah	Yahweh is the Divine Warrior
Habakkuk	605 Rise of Babylon	Judah	Yahweh’s righteousness and the triumph of faith
Zephaniah	630 Josiah’s Reforms	Judah	The Day of the Lord: Vengeance, purification, and restoration
Haggai	520 New era	Remnant	Now is the day of fulfillment
Zechariah	520 New era	Remnant	Vision of Zion’s glory
Malachi	460 Apathy	Remnant	Yahweh loves the <i>segulla</i> (“the treasured possession”)

### Hosea

“Familiarity with the book of Hosea is usually limited to the first three chapters. In those chapters, Hosea confronts his readers with the striking analogy between his failed marriage and Israel’s relationship with God. While we are left with some profound issues of interpretation in these chapters, Hosea’s message of God’s judgment and love toward Israel is generally clear and indisputably striking.

“In contrast, the remaining chapters (4-14) are among the most difficult in the entire Bible.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup>*Prophetic Word*, p. 102.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>24</sup>Dillard and Longman, p. 353.

## Joel

“Little is known of the prophet Joel as well. Since the temple seems to have been standing when he wrote (e.g. Joel 1:14), a date between 586 and 515 BC can be ruled out. Since Joel refers to Judah as ‘Israel,’ he probably wrote after the fall of Samaria (the northern kingdom, known in its day as ‘Israel’) in 723 or 722 BC. It also seems likely that the destruction of Jerusalem was yet a future event when Joel wrote (Joel 2:1-11,32), suggesting a date prior to 586 BC rather than after 515 BC. Within the window of 722 BC to 586 BC, two historical occasions may match the reconstructed history from Joel’s word: 1) Sennacherib’s invasion in 701 BC; and 2) Nebuchadnezzar’s invasions from 597 to 586 BC. We think Nebuchadnezzar’s invasions are the more likely occasion.”<sup>25</sup>

“The literary contribution of Joel, however, is more important than rooting his message in a given socioreligious background, because the theological contribution is unaffected by dating his message. The significance of the prophetic word lies in its affirmation of hope, which comes through the experience of catastrophe, fasting, and repentance, and the promise of the new age of the Spirit. He is the Spirit of *restoration*, who bears witness to the certainty of blessing (2:18-26), of the covenant relationship (2:27), protection during the progression of the Day of the Lord (3:1-16), and of the progression of restoration of all things: the New Jerusalem (3:17-21). The message of Joel is always relevant . . . [1:3]”<sup>26</sup>

## Amos

“[Hosea and Amos] directed their attention to the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II (c. 790-750), truly the golden age of Israel. Yahweh was gracious in spite of their sin: the economic prosperity in Israel was due, not to the repentance of the people, but solely to God’s care for his people, lest they perish (2 Kings 14:26-27).

“Amos identified the sins of injustice, immorality, and idolatry (Amos 2:6-8) and declares the certainty of judgment upon Israel. . . . [Amos 3:14-15; cf. 9:4]

“Even so, both Hosea and Amos hold out hope that a remnant will return from the punishment of exile and be renewed by God’s grace (Hos. 14:4-5; Amos 9:11-12).”<sup>27</sup>

“Amos was the first classical prophet to redefine the popular concept of the Day of the Lord. The people had believed that the prosperity of the age of Jeroboam II could only get better. Their new-found power and prosperity seemed to prove to them that their economic, political, and social systems were all acceptable. Over against their popular expectations of a more glorious future, Amos described the terror of God’s involvement in human affairs. The Day of the Lord is characterized by psychological anguish and despair, loneliness, and inescapable troubles (Amos 5:18-20). The proper preparation before that day can only be repentance. Repentance includes returning to the Lord as well as living with justice and righteousness, in accordance with the rules of the kingdom (vv. 14-15).

<sup>25</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>26</sup>*Progress*, p. 289.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 255-6.

“... the Day of the Lord introduces the era of restoration. The great King comes to rescue his own and to vindicate them by taking revenge on all who have denied him. The Warrior-Judge avenges himself and his people against his enemies, opponents, and all who have not fully submitted to his reign.”<sup>28</sup>

## Obadiah

“Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It consists of an oracle against the Edomites (Obad. 1). They have been proud and violent toward God’s people (Obad. 10). Here God pronounces judgment on them.

“First, who were the Edomites? The Edomites lived on the mountain and plateau area just south of the Dead Sea. Their struggle with Israel traces all the way back to the fathers of these two nations. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, and they had been struggling with God’s people since Rebekah’s womb (Gen. 25). Notice how Obadiah alludes to this ancient struggle by referring to the Edomites as ‘Esau’ (Obad. 6) and by calling Israel ‘your brother Jacob’ (Obad. 10,12).

“Next, what had the Edomites done? According to verses 11-14 they had not helped their brothers. Instead, they had assisted in the downfall of Israel. Edom even cut off those who escaped and delivered them up to the attackers. Although we cannot be certain when this attack occurred, it could be when the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem in 586 B.C. According to Psalm 137 and Ezekiel 35:1-15, the Edomites had some sort of involvement in this attack.

“Beyond this background, it is important to note the message of Obadiah. He not only announces judgment on Edom, but in verse 15 he shifts his focus. For the rest of the book he announces the Day of the Lord and divine judgment against all nations, not just Edom. Israel will be vindicated and experience ultimate triumph. Obadiah prophesies of a time when Israel and its boundaries will be restored. No longer will its land and people be ruled by foreigners, but the captives will possess the land and ‘the kingdom shall be the Lord’s’ (Obad. 21). . . .

“Much could be said regarding application but I will mention five possibilities:

- First, Edom is a negative example for God’s people. We are to love our brothers and seek their welfare. Edom was seeking to get ahead of Israel and was gloating over her downfall. This is not a godly attitude. 1 Corinthians 13 calls Christians to a different mindset.
- Second, Obadiah’s message teaches the sovereignty of God. God does not just govern and control his people, but he is Lord over all nations – including Edom. He is the invisible hand guiding all of the events of history. This gives us hope today as we watch the events of history unfold. God has a plan. He is in control. He is the Sovereign Yahweh.
- Third, God is faithful to his covenant. In Genesis 12:3 God tells Abraham and his descendants, ‘I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse.’ Is this not what God is doing in Obadiah? He is cursing Edom for their failure to help his covenant people. Just as God kept his word in Obadiah’s day, so too he is true to his word today. He is faithful to all of his covenant promises to us.

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<sup>28</sup> *Progress*, pp. 450-1.

- Fourth, the kingdom of God has come! The New Testament teaches that the Day of the Lord began with Jesus. He inaugurated the kingdom of God. It has not come in its fullness yet, but we do see the steady advance of God's people possessing the promises that Obadiah puts forth. We do not have them in their fullness yet, but we strive toward them, looking forward to the day when 'the kingdom shall be the Lord's.' As Revelation 11:15 tells us, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.'
- Fifth, we see God engaging in holy war in Obadiah. Although this may sound contrary to the New Testament teaching of loving our enemies, it is not. There is still holy war in the New Testament as God's kingdom advances. We no longer fight nations and people groups; we fight against spiritual forces with spiritual weapons."<sup>29</sup>

## Jonah

"Jonah focuses on the theme of *Israel's prophetic role to the nations*. The book mocks Jonah for his self-righteousness and hypocrisy. It demonstrates that God receives other nations, even the Assyrians, and expected the Jewish people to serve as mediators to them. The universality of God's mercy and the mediatorial role of Israel are the central themes of the book.

"The book of Jonah divides into two main parts:"<sup>30</sup>

### Part One

1. First commission and Jonah's reaction (1:1-16)
2. God's response to Jonah (1:17-2:10)

### Part Two

1. Second commission and Jonah's reaction (3:1-10)
2. God's response to Jonah (4:1-11)

" [4:11] ... this ending is not unnatural. Although it may feel awkward for us, it is an appropriate ending that drives home some of the main points that are repeated throughout the entire book. These last verses succinctly sum up some of the main issues in the book, namely God's compassion and Jonah's hardness. As Jonah 4:1-2 tells us, Jonah was displeased when he saw that Nineveh would be spared. In his frustration he said, 'I knew you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.' He knows the right words, but his 'head knowledge' has not transformed his own outlook on life. That is, Jonah is not manifesting Godly character toward his enemies.

"Thus, it is appropriate that God have the last word in Jonah in order to highlight his own character again. The verses draw attention to the sharp contrast between God's attitude toward the people of Nineveh and Jonah's attitude toward the vine. Jonah has shown great concern about the vine while God is concerned for the people. What irony! What sarcasm! Jonah cares more for a plant than he does for human life. Has this not been his struggle throughout the entire book? Is it not then a fitting ending to leave Jonah

<sup>29</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>30</sup>Pratt, p. 303.

continuing with this struggle?”<sup>31</sup>

## Micah

“Broadly speaking, Micah’s prophecies primarily concerned the state of Israel and Judah around the time of the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.). The mention of Hezekiah places the date of the book after this event, and the listing of the three kings of Judah (Mic. 1:1) indicates that the Judahites were his main audience.

“Thematically, the book emphasizes oracles of judgment and blessing in order to motivate God’s people in Judah to obey God in order to avoid receiving the curses of the judgment oracles, and to gain the rewards of the oracles of blessing. It also emphasizes the restoration of the kingdom under the leadership of a messianic figure. This message is relevant for Christians because it typifies the judgment that God metes out to sinners, and the salvation that Christ brings. In Christ’s first coming, he inaugurated his kingdom – the very kingdom of the restoration that Micah offered – which now continues to grow and which will reach its consummation at Christ’s return. Besides providing this broad view of redemptive history, the book includes many practical applications in the form of instructions for godly living, and offers God’s kingdom blessings to those who will obey. One good way to think about application of the prophets in general is to note those aspects of the prophecies that Christ has already fulfilled (in which we may find security), those aspects which characterize our current lives (by which we may be sanctified, encouraged, and exhorted), and those aspects which relate to the future kingdom in its fullness (in which we may take great hope).”<sup>32</sup>

## Nahum

“When we open to Nahum 1:1, we find out that it is ‘an oracle concerning Nineveh.’ At first glance it would appear that he is speaking to Nineveh, as if his ministry was in this pagan city. However, this does not necessarily have to be the case. In determining the audience of Nahum’s ministry, there are four things that need to be considered.

- First, it is important to note that Nahum’s audience does not determine whether or not his oracles ‘end up’ in the Bible. The determining factor is whether or not this book is the Word of God. Even if Nahum had ministered to the pagan nation Nineveh, it would not exclude his words from being the very word of God and thus being worthy of being in the canon.

After all, many other oracles to foreign nations are in the Bible. For example, Amos 1 contains oracles against Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, and Ammon. Jonah’s prophetic oracle was given to Nineveh, yet his story and message are in the Bible. Simply because a prophet was addressing a different group of people does not mean that God’s people would not gain something as they heard it. It was as if they were overhearing a conversation that greatly affected them.

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<sup>31</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

Is this not what we do with any book of the Bible? For example, Paul wrote to specific churches with specific problems living in a specific time, yet when we read his letters, we ‘overhear his conversations’ and gain spiritual insight from them. The same could be true of Nahum’s prophecies. God’s people would have gained profound strength and assurance to hear Nineveh’s downfall prophesied. Judah had suffered terribly at their hand, and Israel had been overthrown by them. To hear that God would one day judge them would encourage God’s flock.

- That being said, it is important to note a second issue. Nineveh is not the only audience that Nahum is addressing. Note whom he addresses in Nahum 1:15:

*Look, there on the mountains,  
the feet of one who brings good news,  
who proclaims peace!  
Celebrate your festivals,  
O Judah, and fulfill your vows.  
No more will the wicked invade you;  
they will be completely destroyed.*

Nahum could have addressed Judah at the same time that he prophesied about Nineveh. God’s people needed to know that God was still in control of the world. It had not spun out of control. Assyria was not a force that God could not overthrow. Thus, Nahum addressed God’s people and gave them hope by pronouncing judgment on their enemies.

- Third, Nahum 1:1 must be considered. It tells us that Nahum was an Elkoshite. This may simply be telling us where Nahum was born, but it could also be telling us where he ministered. The exact location of Elkosh is uncertain and as with any uncertain issue in the Bible, there are many views. One tradition places Elkosh 25 miles north of Nineveh. This view could help to bolster the opinion that Nahum ministered within Nineveh, for it makes this area his home. However, it is important to note that this tradition cannot be traced back beyond the sixteenth century. It is most likely that Elkosh was a city in Judah.
- Finally, although this is not a ‘water-tight’ argument, I would also add that I doubt that Nahum ministered in Nineveh simply because of the harshness of his message against Nineveh. Could a person say such things boldly in the streets of Nineveh and live?

Nahum is ministering before the fall of Assyria. According to Nahum 1:13 the destruction of Nineveh is still in the future. It also appears that Nineveh is strong during Nahum’s ministry. As Nahum 1:12 says, Nineveh has allies and is numerous.

Nineveh was the super-power of its day, and there was no freedom of speech. Had Nahum said these things boldly in the streets of Nineveh, I doubt that his oracle would have been preserved because he would have been killed.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

## Habakkuk

“The prophet Habakkuk ministered God’s Word shortly after the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.). The people of Judah had witnessed the fall of Assyria and the ascendancy of the Babylonian Empire. . . . [The Lord] commands Habakkuk to write the vision of the end, which will extend from the fall of Jerusalem to the great judgment of humankind [2:3]. This vision assures the godly that God will judge all evil (vv. 5-20). Though the nations may cause great devastation on earth, the Lord is in his holy temple in heaven; his judgment will silence their swelling rage (v. 20).

“Habakkuk also speaks of the great era to come, when

*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,  
as the waters cover the sea. (2:14)*

“In the tension between the wickedness of the present age and the glory of the future age, the Lord exhorts the remnant to remain faithful:

*See, [the proud man] is puffed up; his desires are not upright – but  
the righteous will live by his faith. (2:4)*

The Lord is looking for those who trust in him. To them he extends his righteousness.

“Finally, the prophet is reconciled with the belief that the Lord is the victorious King who has shown his ability to lead and rule the nation he brought out of Egypt (chap. 3). Since God is the great God who is to be feared by all the nations, the prophet expresses in his prayer the conviction that the Lord is the strength of those who believe in him and that God’s people therefore need not fear (3:18-19).”<sup>34</sup>

## Zephaniah

“Zephaniah prophesied about 630 B.C., after the wicked reign of King Manasseh and at the beginning of Josiah’s kingship over Judah. He proclaimed that the Day of the Lord would come upon all flesh: human, animal, bird, and fish. This judgment rests upon all creation and includes both the people of Judah and the nations (chaps. 1-2). Zephaniah waxes poetic when he describes the terrible day of God’s ire:

*That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day  
of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds  
and blackness. (1:15; cf. 2:2)*

“Even though the judgment would come upon all flesh, the prophet also includes a word of encouragement for the godly. Redemption will extend to both Jew and Gentiles. The Gentiles will come to worship the Lord, and their worship will be acceptable to the Lord (2:11; 3:9). . . . [He] foresaw the great era of restoration that began after the Exile and was accentuated in the ministry of our Lord. This restoration extends to our own day in the proclamation of the gospel and will find its fullness and completion in the return of Jesus Christ.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup>*Progress*, pp. 276-7.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 275-6.

## Haggai

“[Haggai and Zechariah] encouraged the small remnant to rebuild the temple in 520 B.C. (Ezra 5:1-2). With their encouragement, the restored community renewed its allegiance to the Lord. They called on their contemporaries to reassess their priorities. If they continued justifying themselves because of the uncertainty associated with homesteading on land that had lain fallow for two generations, life would become more complex and less rewarding. On the other hand, a life given to seeking God’s honor would be richly blessed indeed.”<sup>36</sup>

## Zechariah

“Zechariah is the longest of the minor prophets. It is also perhaps the most difficult. Jerome called it the ‘most obscure’ book of the Hebrew Bible, an opinion often cited and widely shared by subsequent readers. . . . Yet it is also a very important book to Christian readers: Zechariah 9-14 is the most frequently cited portion of the Old Testament in the Passion narratives, and apart from Ezekiel, this book has exercised more influence than any other on the author of Revelation.”<sup>37</sup>

The book consists of two halves (1-8 and 9-14):<sup>38</sup>

1. Zechariah’s claim to authority (1:1-6)
2. The night visions (1:7-6:8)
  - A. The commander and his scouts (1:7-17)
  - B. Four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21)
  - C. Man with a measuring line (2:1-13)
  - D. The high priest in filthy clothes (3:1-10)
  - E. The menorah and olive trees (4:1-14)
  - F. The flying scroll (5:1-4)
  - G. The basket of wickedness (5:5-11)
  - H. Four chariots (6:1-8)
3. Crown for the high priest (6:9-15)
4. A question about fasting (7:1-8:23)
5. Two oracles (9-11; 12-14) about Israel’s enemies and the coming of Zion’s king and shepherd

## Malachi

“Malachi ministered to God’s people shortly before the work of Nehemiah. He prepared the Jews for the reforms instituted by Nehemiah, as he dealt with social problems, the priesthood, tithes, the Sabbath, and marriage with heathen wives (cf. Neh. 5:1-13; 13:7-27). Malachi’s disputational style consists of a series of rhetorical questions and answers, by which the prophet aims at bringing his audience to respond appropriately, lest they become subject to God’s judgment.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Progress*, pp. 288-9.

<sup>37</sup> Dillard and Longman, p. 427.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 432-3.

<sup>39</sup> *Progress*, p. 289.



# Chapter 6

## NT History

### The Intertestamental Period

“It is often assumed that Jesus taught a different doctrine from what is found in the Old Testament. Instead, it has become increasingly apparent that Jesus restored the authentic voice of God in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The voice of God had become muffled by systematization and by polemic and party concerns. Each group [Pharisees, Sadduces, Essenes, zealots, etc.] had its own system for applying and interpreting the Word, and each sought to show the other *the* way to be a true child of Abraham. The emphases were many – Torah, temple, apocalypticism, pragmatism, and realism – and each had its own schools, leaders, and historical justification. Through hundreds of years of facing political, cultural, and religious changes, the Old Testament message had become muddled. Jesus came to restore the teaching of Scripture as the voice of God through Moses and the prophets . . . ”<sup>1</sup>

### Why Four Gospels?

“We cannot give an absolutely certain answer to this, but at least one of the reasons is a simple and pragmatic one: different Christian communities each had need for a book about Jesus. . . . So one was written first (Mark, in the most common view), and that gospel was ‘rewritten’ twice (Matthew and Luke) for considerably different reasons, to meet considerably different needs. Independently of them (again, in the common view), John wrote a gospel of a different kind for still another set of reasons. All of this, we believe, was orchestrated by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

“The four Gospels present a multiple witness to Jesus, the Christ. The apostle John’s comment about the deeds of Jesus – ‘If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written’ (21:25) – expresses the unusual ministry of our Lord. Any attempt to put his life into a simplistic reconstruction or harmonization is resisted by the intricate relations of the four Gospels. The church received four Gospels and has never shown an interest in unifying them into a single account. Each gospel is a literary unit, whose value is independent of the others. Yet, the very existence of four Gospels deepens our comprehension of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup>*Progress*, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup>Fee and Stuart, p. 115.

The combined affect of the multifaceted witness is greater than an analysis of the constituent parts. The integrity of each gospel must therefore be left unaltered.”<sup>3</sup>

## Covenant

“In the case of the New Testament as in that of the Old Testament, acceptance of its own claims as to its primary divine authorship leads to recognition of its pervasively covenantal nature and purpose. For the New Testament so received will be understood as the word of the ascended Lord of the new covenant, by which he structures the community of the new covenant and orders the faith and life of his servant people in their consecrated relationship to him. And then the human authors of the New Testament books, authorized by their Lord to speak his word, will be seen to function as his ‘ministers of the new covenant’ (cf. 2 Cor. 3:6).”<sup>4</sup>

“[The covenantal functions of the New Testament books] can be readily related to particular sections of the foundational treaty form. . . . From the gospels and Acts the lines can be traced back through the Old Testament historical narratives to the Pentateuchal records of the founding of the old covenant, with the Genesis prologue thereto, and thus back to the historical prologue section of the Mosaic treaties. The gospels and Acts also perform the function of the treaty preambles by introducing the Messianic Lord of the covenant and identifying him through various witnesses as the divine King of Israel, son of David, and eternal Word.

“Like the covenant narrative in the Pentateuch, that in the gospels is chiefly concerned with the establishment of the covenant order. It is particularly in their dominant interest in the sacrificial death of Christ, the covenant mediator, that the gospels show themselves to be primarily testimonies to the ratification of God’s covenants. What precedes the passion narratives in the gospels serves a prologue function (like that of the Book of Genesis in connection with the Sinaitic covenant), relating the background of previous covenant history. What follows the gospel records of the ratification of the new covenant, that is, the history in the Book of Acts, corresponds to the post-Sinai narratives of the Old Testament as an account of the effective founding of the covenant community in its historical role and mission. In providing an historical framework for the epistolary portion of the New Testament canon, the Book of Acts functions in a manner similar to the Former Prophets in relation to the Latter Prophets in the Old Testament.”<sup>5</sup>

“[T]he new covenant is also a suzerain-vassal treaty. We don’t have it laid out as explicitly in all its details, at least not in updated form, but it has all the same parts. Also, it’s important to remember that the new covenant is a renewal of the old covenant found in Deuteronomy, Exodus, etc. . . . The Bible often speaks about different covenants, and so do theologians. But properly speaking, God only has one covenant with us, which has been variously administered under different covenant heads throughout history. Whatever was true about prior administrations continues to be true about the current administration under Christ, at least in principle. Some of the ways we observe those principles

<sup>3</sup>*Progress*, p. 336.

<sup>4</sup>*Structure*, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

change, such as our current reliance on the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ to satisfy the continuing requirement for an atoning sacrifice. But all the stipulations continue in force, as do the blessing and curses. Those who are saved inherit the blessings, and those who are in the church but who are not saved inherit the full covenant curses. Those in the third community, those outside the church, also fall under covenant curses (Adamic and Noahic) . . . If we look for them, we can also find in the New Testament such details as would normally be included in the ancient Near-Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties: description of God, history of redemption, God's Law, blessings of salvation, curses of damnation, ratification, and succession (Jesus is the final and permanent covenant head). The difference between the New Testament and Deuteronomy is that I don't think we can find all these aspects in one place. Probably the closest we come in the New Testament is the book of Hebrews . . . ”<sup>6</sup>

## The Law of God

“ . . . the entire law is still applicable because the entire law reflects God's unchanging character (compare Matt. 22:37-40). Nevertheless, the way in which we are to obey the law has changed significantly due to the coming of Christ and changes in other historical circumstances. For example, the sacrificial laws still apply because God still demands an adequate sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 9:26; 10:12,26; 1 John 2:1-2). Nevertheless, we observe those laws today not by offering animals according to the Mosaic system, but by trusting Christ as our sufficient sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:26; 10:12; 1 John 2:1-2) – Christ's one sacrifice for all time continues to satisfy the requirements of actual sacrifice. Similarly, just as Israel was to render civil obedience to laws pertaining to Israel's theocracy, we are now to render obedience to Jesus the king, the ruler of our Christian theocracy. The principles of God's character that the Old Testament laws reflected have not changed, but the ways in which we are to act in accordance with his character have changed. We must interpret all the Old Testament laws in light of changes that have taken place in the history of redemption (Christ has come), differences between our culture/society and that of the original audience, and personal differences between each of us as individuals. . . .

“In Matthew 5:17-19, Jesus indicated that the law had abiding validity ‘until all is accomplished.’ Now, it is possible to argue that all was accomplished with Jesus' life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. However, I would suggest that this is not the best interpretation of this phrase. First and most simply, it does not appear that all has been accomplished. We still await the final defeat of Christ's enemies, the last judgment, the final resurrection, and the new heavens and new earth (e.g. Acts 1:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:21-28; 1 Thess. 5:14-17). The kingdom of God has been inaugurated, but we still await its consummation.

“Second, Matthew's gospel was written after Jesus had ascended. I would argue that Matthew did not record the information in these verses simply for the sake of history (which would be the case if all had been accomplished with Jesus life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension). Rather, he recorded this information because he believed it to be relevant and important to his first-century audience. These verses were relevant to them (and they are relevant to us) because they were (and we are) in the kingdom of God/heaven (e.g. Matt 12:28; 1 Cor. 15:25; Rev. 1:9). Matthew alone used the phrase ‘kingdom of

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.thirdmill.org/>

heaven,' and used it synonymously with 'kingdom of God' (compare for example Matt. 11:11 and Luke 7:28). Thus, Matthew intended that his original audience (and we by extension) obey and apply even the smallest letter and stroke of the law (Matt. 5:18). James reinforced this idea (Jas. 2:9-11). Even Paul, who is often quoted as advocating rejection of the law, affirmed its ongoing validity (e.g. Rom. 3:27-31; 5:20-6:2; 7:12,16; Gal. 5:22-23). Paul simply rejected the law as the basis for justification (Rom. 3:20,28)."<sup>7</sup>

### The Self-Disclosure of Jesus<sup>8</sup>

**Messiah** "By the title 'Christ' (Heb. 'anointed one,' or 'messiah') the Christian community has expressed the office of Jesus as well as his relationship to the Old Testament. . . . The title 'messiah' derives from the Old Testament promises to David (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Ps. 132) and from the Old Testament prophets. The Davidic covenant was the basis for hope in the continuous rule of God's anointed servant, the Son of David. . . . Jesus is the long-awaited Deliverer, who himself had to suffer for human sin. . . . In all of his interactions Jesus did not reject the popular recognition of his being the Messiah, the son of David – as when the people explained, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:1-11). This emphasis accords with the theology of the early church, according to which the ground of fulfillment of the prophetic word lies in Jesus' being the Son of David (see Acts 2:25-36; 13:22-37).

**Son of God** "While Jesus is the Davidic Messiah, it is because he is also the *only begotten of the Father* that his messiahship is efficacious. During his ministry Jesus demonstrated his sonship by doing the works of the Father in his flesh – healing the blind, the lame, and the sick and teaching the Word of the Father regarding the kingdom of God and the way of salvation. But the ultimate sign of Jesus' being the only begotten of the Father is his death on the cross and resurrection. Jesus is clearly the God of the Old Testament incarnate, as he claims that he is the great 'I Am.'

**Son of Man** "The expression 'Son of Man' is our Lord's favorite way of speaking about himself and his mission. Its use is limited to the Gospels, except for Acts 7:56. Jesus' use of the title as a self-designation was an attempt to force his audience to shed their wrong messianic concepts and to consider other passages of Scripture, such as Daniel 7:13-14. In Daniel's vision the Son of Man is of heavenly origin and receives the universal kingdom from God. Jesus also includes the idea of suffering as a fulfillment of the Servant passages in Isaiah (52:13-53:12).

**Jesus** "The name 'Jesus' (which means 'salvation') signifies all that the names of our Lord mean singly and in totality. At his birth Mary called him 'Jesus' (Matt. 1:23), which Matthew associates with the Immanuel sign of Isaiah 7:14. The presence of God in Jesus is evident in so many ways that the name 'Jesus' evokes the association of each of the titles: Jesus the Son of Man, Jesus the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah, Jesus the Lord, and Jesus the Savior. God revealed his name in the Old Testament as Yahweh, and the New Testament affirms that Yahweh is present among

<sup>7</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>8</sup>*Progress*, pp. 339ff.

people in the God-man whose name is Jesus. ‘In his name’ the new people of God are baptized (Matt. 28:19), assemble together for worship (18:20), do good works (Mark 9:41; see Col. 3:17), and experience the joy of answered prayers (John 14:13; 16:24). The Christian lives in anticipation of the great revelation of Jesus’ glory, when every knee will bow to him and every tongue confess that he is Lord of all (Phil. 2:9-11).”

## The Kingdom of God

“The Old Testament presents us with a threefold perspective on the kingdom. First, God is the great King over all of his creation. His realm extends from shore to shore, over animals and humans, over subject and hostile nations. He is the sovereign Creator-King. Second, the Lord has established his kingdom in Israel (Ps. 114:2) and his ‘footstool’ in Jerusalem (Ps. 132:7, 13-15). He is the covenant God who is the Redeemer-King, by whose acts Israel receives provision, protection, and guidance (vv. 15-16). To this end, he also covenanted himself with David, confirming the promise of his glorious rule through the dynasty of David (vv. 17-18). The third aspect is the prophetic perspective: God’s kingdom is yet to come in fullness. Throughout the Old Testament the people of God long for a greater fulfillment of the promises, knowing that the present reality is a shadow in comparison with things to come.

“With Jesus’ coming, the angels, John the Baptist, and the heavenly voice from the Father all attest that the kingdom of God is present among human beings. In the Gospels, Jesus presents himself as the one sent by the Father to inaugurate the messianic kingdom. . . . the messianic titles reveal Jesus as the heavenly King, who, after his self-humiliation and suffering, arose and ascended to his sublime glory, which he will make known at his glorious coming, or Parusia. It is noteworthy that Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom assumes the *newness* and what we may call the *nowness* of the kingdom. The kingdom is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is the kingdom.”<sup>9</sup>

[Matthew 3:1-2]

[Matthew 11:12-13]

[Luke 16:16]

”Several points bring out the precise nature of the kingdom as it was manifested in Jesus:

1. Jesus came to be victorious over Satan (Matt. 12:28).
2. The mystery of the kingdom is at work and visible to the eyes of faith (Mark 4:11).
3. The nature of the kingdom is most evident in the community of believers (Luke 17:21).
4. The people of God are sent to witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 8:12).
5. The growth of the kingdom is inevitable (Matt. 13:24-30).
6. The personal fruit of the kingdom within the heart of the Christian is humility (Matt. 5:3).

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<sup>9</sup> *Progress*, pp. 348-9.

7. The hope of the kingdom lies in the coming of Jesus Christ (Matt.19:28).<sup>10</sup>

### Eschatology<sup>11</sup>

1. “The eschatology of the Bible (its view of history as culminating in Christ’s second coming) developed from Moses’ basic covenantal pattern of exile and return from exile.
2. Moses’ basic covenant pattern (exile and restoration) was endorsed by the early prophets. The later prophets, however, elaborated on this pattern in that they saw a delay of the latter days until an extended exile was complete for some 490 years.
3. The New Testament affirmed that Jesus was the fulfillment of the latter days hope of restoration and salvation for God’s people. Yet, the New Testament also teaches that Christ fulfills these hopes in three stages: the inauguration, continuation, and consummation of the kingdom.”

### Jewish Eschatological Hope<sup>12</sup>

“... the basic theological framework of the entire New Testament is eschatological. Eschatology has to do with the end, when God brings this age to its close. Most Jews in Jesus’ day were eschatological in their thinking. That is, they thought they lived at the very brink of time, when God would step into history and bring an end to this age and usher in the age to come. The Greek word for the end they were looking for is *eschaton*.”

The Eschaton	
This Age (Satan’s Time)	The Age to Come (The Time of God’s Rule)
characterized by: sin sickness demon possession evil men triumph	characterized by: the presence of the Spirit righteousness health peace

### New Testament Eschatological View<sup>13</sup>

“For [the early Christians] the events of Jesus’ coming, his death and resurrection, and his giving of the Spirit were all related to their expectations about the coming of the end. ... The coming of the end also meant a new beginning – the beginning of God’s new age, the messianic age. The new age was also referred to as the kingdom of God, which meant ‘the time of God’s rule.’ This new age would be a time of righteousness (e.g., Isa. 11:4-5), and people would live in peace (e.g., Isa. 2:2-4). It would be a time of the fullness of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-30) when the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah would be realized (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:38-40). Sin and sickness would be done away with (e.g., Zech. 13:1; Isa. 53:5). Even the material creation would feel the joyful affects of this

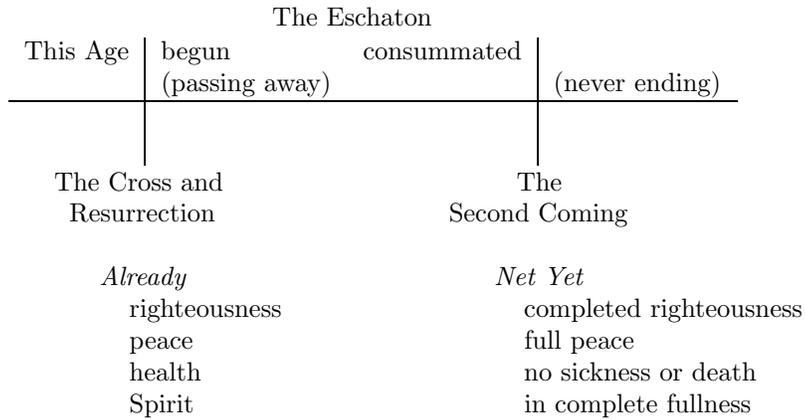
<sup>10</sup> *Progress*, p. 355.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.thirdmill.org/>

<sup>12</sup> Fee and Stuart, p. 131.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131-3.

new age (e.g., Isa. 11:6-9). ... Very early, beginning with Peter's sermon in Acts 3, the early Christians came to realize that Jesus had not come to usher in the 'final' end, but the 'beginning' of the end, as it were. Thus they came to see that with Jesus' death and resurrection, and with the coming of the Spirit, the blessings and benefits of the future had already come. ... But in another sense the end had not yet fully come. Thus it was *already*, but *not yet*."



## 6.1 Synoptic Gospels

“The first three gospels were first labeled the Synoptic Gospels by J.J. Griesbach, a German biblical scholar, at the end of the eighteenth century. The English adjective ‘synoptic’ comes from the Greek *synopsis*, which means ‘seeing together,’ and Griesbach chose the word because of the high degree of similarity found among Matthew, Mark, and Luke in their presentations of the ministry of Jesus. These similarities, which involve structure, content, and tone, are evident even to the casual reader. They serve not only to bind the first three gospels together but to separate them from the gospel of John.

“Matthew, Mark, and Luke structure the ministry of Jesus according to a general geographic sequence: ministry in Galilee, withdrawal to the North (with Peter’s confession as a climax and point of transition), ministry in Judea and Perea while Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (less clear in Luke), and final ministry in Jerusalem. Very little of this sequence can be found in John, where the focus is on Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem during his periodic visits to the city. In content, the first three evangelists narrate many of the same events, focusing on Jesus’ healings, exorcisms, and teaching in parables. John, while narrating several significant healings, has no exorcisms and no parables (at least of the type found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke).”<sup>14</sup>

### Mark

“The extrabiblical sources point to a Gentile Christian audience, probably in Rome. . . . the many Latinisms of the gospel are compatible with, if not conclusive for, a Roman audience. That Mark writes to Gentiles seems clear from his translation of Aramaic expressions, his explanation of Jewish customs, (such as the washing of hands before eating [7:3-4]), and, in the few texts he includes on the subject, his interest in the cessation of the ritual elements in the Mosaic law (see 7:1-23, esp. v. 19; 12:32-34).”<sup>15</sup>

“The brief extension of Christ’s ministry outside of Galilee and his teaching on the future mission to the Gentiles affirm the importance mark places on the Gentile mission. Galilee represents the world of the Gentiles, far away from Jerusalem, whereas Jerusalem represents the rejection of Jesus by institutionalized forms of Judaism.”<sup>16</sup>

“Little consensus has arisen on the purpose of the gospel, whether it is liturgical, catechetical, or polemical.”<sup>17</sup>

### Literary Structure<sup>18</sup>

“According to the best textual witnesses, Mark’s ending (16:9-20) is not authentic.”

<sup>14</sup>D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), p. 19.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>16</sup>*Progress*, p. 331.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Introduction (1:1-13)  
 Jesus in Galilee (1:14-5:43)  
   Jesus Around Galilee (chaps. 6-9)  
   Jesus to Jerusalem (chap. 10)  
   Jesus around Jerusalem (chaps. 11-13)  
 Jesus in Jerusalem (14:1-16:8)  
 Ending (16:9-20)

## Exodus

“Mark’s account of Jesus’s death (15:22-41) intimates how Jesus, at the climax of his warfare against the realm of iniquity, recapitulates and fulfills the themes of Exodus and Passover. The plague of darkness that fell upon Egypt before the Passover (Ex. 20:21-22) falls over the land of Judah as Jesus becomes the final Passover and substitutionary curse (15:33; cf. Gal. 3:13). Nature participates in the prelude to Jesus’ cry of dereliction as he suffers divine wrath on behalf of sinners. Because he has taken the space and the redemptive work of the temple into the true temple of his own person, the physical demolition of the old temple begins at his death with the tearing of the temple curtain, a sign that the rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the religious leaders will lead inexorably to the total demolition of the old house of sacrifice (v. 38; 13:2; 14:58; 15:29). Jesus has completed his invasion assault on the house of the strong man Satan, has bound him that he deceive the nations no longer, and has begun the final plundering of his goods. Since it is through the infinitely concentrated and archetypal spacetime of the crucified and risen Jesus that the further plundering of Satan’s goods will continue till the end of the eschatological age, Mark dramatically (and ironically) exhorts his readers to abandon enervating disbelief and claim the spoils of victory. His gospel is in the truest sense a document that witnesses to the ratification of the new covenant enacted by Jesus, Son of God, Conquerer.”<sup>19</sup>

## Matthew

“The usual assumption is that the evangelist wrote this gospel to meet the needs of believers in his own area. There is a *prima facie* realism to this assumption if we hold that Matthew was working in centers of large Jewish population, whether in Palestine or Syria, since the book betrays so many Jewish features; it is not easy to imagine that the author had a *predominately* Gentile audience in mind.”<sup>20</sup>

## Literary Structure<sup>21</sup>

“How did Matthew structure his material? To what extent did he depend on other sources, such as Mark, and how did he rework these materials so as to make an independent contribution to the portrait of Jesus, the Messiah? Although these questions have occupied New Testament scholars for a century, there is as yet no consensus regarding the answers – honestly said, it is not

<sup>19</sup>Royce Gordon Gruenler, “Old Testament Gospel as Prologue to New Testament Gospel,” in *Creator, Redeemer, Consummator*, p. 103.

<sup>20</sup>Carson, p. 79.

<sup>21</sup>*Progress.*, pp. 329-31.

clear how Matthew has structured his gospel. . . . In comparison with Mark, Matthew pays greater attention to the prologue and epilogue of Jesus' ministry on earth. Moreover he has arranged the materials of the gospel into literary cluster of proclamation (*kerygma*) and teaching (*didache*): the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7), the mission of the disciples (chap. 10), parables (chap. 13), parables and teachings on the church (chap. 18), woes to the Pharisees (chap. 23), and the Mount Olivet Discourse (chaps. 24-25)."

"The material unique to Matthew reveals five theological concerns of the writer:

- First, Matthew displays interest in the *fulfillment* of the prophetic word. He employs extensively the so-called fulfillment quotations (1:22-23; 2:5-6, 12-15, 17-18, 23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10). The frequent reference to Old Testament prophecies reflects a typological approach to the Old Testament. For Matthew, Jesus is the fulfillment not only of particular Old Testament prophecies, but . . . of the general outlines of Israel's history.
- Second, Matthew reveals a familiarity with the beginning of the *separation* of Christianity from Judaism. He makes clear that Jesus' concern was with sinners, whether Jewish or Gentile (1:21; 9:13; 11:19). . . . Matthew uses the word *ekklesia* ('church') to denote the new community (16:18; 18:17) and shows great care in presenting Jesus' teaching on the new community (chap. 18). The authority given to Peter and the officers of the new community of believers exists separately from the synagogue but is continuous with Jesus' authority to forgive sin and to exercise discipline (9:1-8; 16:19; 18:18).
- Third, Matthew is also concerned with the *continuity* of Christianity with Judaism. Christ did not reject the Jews (10:5-6) but encouraged them to seek God's kingdom as he exemplified it and to follow him (6:33; 11:28-29). He invited 'every teacher of the law' to learn of him, while holding on to the old (13:52; see also 5:17). Matthew leaves open a future for the Jews, as he quotes Jesus on how the Jews will welcome him at his return (23:39).
- Fourth, Jesus' coming brings with it an emphasis on the *radical nature* of obedience and discipleship. In spite of the elements of continuity, Jesus' mission was to separate the righteous to himself (10:34-39), to call for absolute loyalty to himself (vv. 37-42; 16:24-26), and to require unconditional submission to the will of the Father (7:21-23; 12:50; 13:41-43; 25:31-46). Jesus did not come to free people from God's eternal law (5:17-20), binding for both Jews and Gentiles. The law is no longer to be limited to Moses as the final authority but is to be understood particularly in the light of Jesus' mission (11:28-30). Jesus is *the* interpreter of Moses.
- Fifth, the *eschatological judgment* focuses on the role of Jesus as the teacher of the will of God. He will judge between the sheep and goats (25:31-46), and his judgment is based on loyalty to him and to his teaching (7:21-23; 13:41-43). Jesus does not call for an easy-believism. He calls for discipleship of the most radical kind – the denial of self and the taking up of one's cross (8:22; 10:38-39; 16:24-25) and the absolute allegiance to his will (7:21; 25:31-40)."

“The literary structure of Matthew unfolds these five emphases in its five divisions, each ending with a formulaic conclusion ‘when Jesus had finished saying these things’ (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). . . . [This schematization] gives a convenient summary of the history of redemption as God’s expectations for Israel are fulfilled in the ministry and life of Jesus, the Son of God. The theme throughout the book and connecting its various parts is the theological principle of promise and fulfillment. The fulfillment is here and now, but it is also eschatological.”

Introduction (chaps. 1:2)

Jesus and: the Old Testament law (chaps. 3-7)

discipleship (8:11-11:1)

the kingdom (11:2-13:53)

the new community, the church (13:54-19:2)

the eschaton, the new hope (19:3-25:46)

Climax (chaps. 26-28)

## Purpose<sup>22</sup>

“If we restrict ourselves to widely recognized themes, it is surely fair to infer that Matthew wishes to demonstrate, among other things, that:

1. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Son of Man, Immanuel, the one to whom the Old Testament points;
2. many Jews, especially Jewish leaders, sinfully failed to recognize Jesus during his ministry (and, by implication, are in great danger if they continue in that stance after the resurrection);
3. the promised eschatological kingdom has already dawned, inaugurated by the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus;
4. this messianic reign is continuing in the world, as believers, both Jews and Gentiles, submit to Jesus’ authority, overcome temptation, endure persecution, wholeheartedly embrace Jesus’ teaching, and thus demonstrate that they constitute the true locus of the people of God and the true witness to the world of the ‘gospel of the kingdom’; and
5. this messianic reign is not only the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes but the foretaste of the consummated kingdom that will dawn when Jesus the Messiah personally returns.”

## Luke

“Luke’s Gospel is the longest book in the New Testament, and it includes a good deal of material not found elsewhere.”<sup>23</sup>

“Luke’s distinct historical awareness comes out in his prologue (1:1-4), in which he explains how he intends to write an orderly gospel based on a careful investigation of everything pertaining to Jesus ‘from the beginning.’ This focus

<sup>22</sup>Carson, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

corresponds to a similar statement in Acts, ‘I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up into heaven’ (1:1-2). More than the other gospel writers, Luke seems to be preoccupied with Jesus’ place in redemptive history. This concern also explains why Luke wrote a history of the presence of the Spirit in the early church (Acts) as a sequel to the gospel.

“The life of Jesus unfolds in stages and reflects temporal and geographical concerns. Luke presents Jesus’ life in the geographical pattern introduced by Mark (Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem) and then projects the mission of the apostles as beginning in Jerusalem and extending to Judea, Galilee, and the ends of the world (Acts 1:8). Temporally, the good news of Jesus is also a further development in the history of redemption: ‘The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached’ (Luke 16:16). In Acts, Luke further develops the next stage as the period of the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). Each epoch shows continuity with the preceding one. Luke’s quotation of Jesus on his mission in relation to that of Moses clarifies the integral relationship: ‘It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law’ (Luke 16:17). As the eras of the Mosaic administration and the presence of God’s kingdom in Jesus are distinct, so is Jesus’ ministry on earth distinct from the age of the Spirit (Acts 1:1-5). Within the distinctives, however, there are vital elements of continuity.”<sup>24</sup>

## Literary Structure<sup>25</sup>

Prologue (1:1-4)

Birth and childhood narratives (1:5-2:52)

Beginning of Jesus’ ministry (3:1-4:13)

Jesus in Galilee (4:14-9:50)

Travel toward Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)

Death, resurrection, and postresurrection (19:28-24:53)

## Fulfillment

“Luke . . . develops the life of Jesus as a fulfillment of the promises. He works from the schema of progressive fulfillment, as all of Jesus’ life – from the birth narratives to his post-resurrection appearances – has been foreshadowed in the Old Testament. In Jesus’ words, ‘Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms’ (24:44). In his quotations from the Old Testament, the Scriptures of the Jews provide the context from which Jesus’ life is read and understood. Above all, Luke does not attempt to Christianize the Old Testament, but to let it speak its own voice of the coming salvation.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>*Progress*, pp. 332-3.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 333-4.

## 6.2 Gospel of John

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. [John 20:30]*

“John contributes a different perspective on Jesus. He is more interested in the words of Jesus and in the sign value of his miracles than in the events of Jesus’ life. . . . Even though John may have paraphrased Jesus’ words more than the other three gospel writers, he consciously adopted Jesus’ words to his argument that Jesus is the Word of God, by whose light men and women are taken out of darkness, which symbolizes judgment. Those who believe on him have life, receive the Spirit of God (the Comforter), are regenerated, and will understand that Jesus is the manifestation of the Father’s love and glory. There is no other way to come to the Father except through the Son. The theme running throughout the gospel is thus the necessity to believe on Jesus (see 20:30-31). After all, Jesus is the great I Am; the bread of life (6:35, 48), the light of the world (8:12), the gate (10:7, 9), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way and the truth and the life (14:6), and the true vine (15:1, 5).”<sup>27</sup>

“It is difficult to determine who the original audience was, whether Diaspora Jews, sectarian groups, people under the spell of docetic teaching, or Gentile believers. . . . The purpose throughout the gospel is to present the Jesus of faith. The historical dimension, so characteristic of the narrative sections in the other gospels, is therefore suppressed. John is not antihistorical, but he assumes the historical integrity and truth of the other gospels in presenting Jesus as the Christ.”<sup>28</sup>

### Literary Structure<sup>29</sup>

Prologue (1:1-18)

Jesus in the world (1:19-12:50)

Jesus’ return to the Father (chaps. 13-20)

Epilogue (chap. 21)

### Elijah and Elisha

“[Jesus] is the messianic prophet (4:19, 44; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17). Jesus bears a typological relationship to the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha, by whom God’s blessing and curse came on Israel. In structuring the miracles, John evokes the power of the prophets in presenting one greater than Elijah (see 1:19-27). Elisha, for example, purified water at Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22), and Jesus changed the water into wine (John 2:1-11). Elijah and Elisha brought a child back to life (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37), and Jesus healed the official’s son (John 4:46-54). In these and many other parallels, John invites the reader to faith in one greater than Elijah and Elisha!”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Progress*, p. 334.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

## 6.3 Acts

“Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. The gospel ends with Jesus’ affirmation of the Father’s promise of the Spirit and a charge to remain in Jerusalem (Luke 24:48-49). The prologue to Acts establishes the connection between the two books. The gospel sets forth ‘all the Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven’ (Acts 1:1-2), whereas Acts presents us with what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through the ministry of his apostles.”<sup>31</sup>

### Covenant

“On several occasions Acts appeals to Israel’s covenant history to identify the followers of the risen Jesus as the genuine heirs of the covenant. Acts accomplishes this without extensive reference to the word *diatheke* (which appears only twice: Acts 3:25; 7:8), using instead the word ‘promise’ (*epangelia*) to show how Christianity identified itself as God’s covenant people (Acts 1:4; 2:33, 39; 7:17; 13:23; 37; 23:21; 26:6). . . .

“Paul’s sermon at Pisidian Antioch explicitly links the message about Jesus with the covenant history of Israel. . . . This covenant history now includes another, for out of David’s posterity ‘God has brought to Israel as Savior, Jesus, as he promised’ (Acts 13:24; cf. Acts 26:6). Indeed, Paul’s gospel is that all of God’s covenantal promises find their fulfillment in Jesus (Acts 13:33). Paul’s sermon thus echoes the themes already heard in Peter’s and Stephen’s, namely, Christianity is the true heir of the Jewish covenantal promises. . . .

“If Israel’s covenant history could show that Jewish followers of Jesus were the genuine heirs, then an appeal to the covenant could also show that Gentiles, people traditionally thought to be outside the covenant, are (and always were?) also a part of it. This is best seen in the accounts of Cornelius’s conversion (Acts 10:1-11:18) and the apostolic council (Acts 15:1-29). . . .

“There is no ‘new’ Israel. The church is the true Israel, the true covenant people of God. Acts does not emphasize the inadequacy of the Mosaic covenant (but cf. Acts 13:39; 15:10) but only the disobedience of the people. Indeed, Acts underscores the prophetic character of the covenant: its narrative and promissory linkages with the message and movement surrounding Jesus. Acts consistently portrays the community and the message as the intended destiny of Israel.”<sup>32</sup>

### Literary Structure<sup>33</sup>

Prologue (1:1-5)

Ministry in Jerusalem (1:6-5:42)

    Extension and persecution (6:1-9:31)

        Extension and the Gentile mission (9:32-20:6)

        Conclusion of Paul’s Gentile mission (20:7-21:17)

    Paul’s incarceration (21:18-28:10)

Ministry in Rome (28:11-31)

<sup>31</sup> *Progress*, pp. 368-9.

<sup>32</sup> *Dictionary of the Later New Testament*, pp. 247-8.

<sup>33</sup> *Progress*, p. 371.

## Summary Narratives

“The so-called summary narratives form a characteristic literary device. Rather than provide a full-blown account of life and worship in the early church, Luke presents the reader with several brief glimpses of the church (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16, 41-42; 8:1-8; 9:31; 16:5). The newly established community of believers in Jesus Christ prospered by the superintendence of the Holy Spirit. The church was not a separatist or radical community but consisted of people who loved Jesus, lived in harmony with each other, and were rejected by institutionalized Judaism (see, e.g., 8:1-3).”<sup>34</sup>

[Acts 12:24]

[Acts 13:49]

[Acts 19:20]

## Structural Signposts<sup>35</sup>

“It is often observed that Acts 1:8, containing Jesus’ promise of the Spirit and of the apostles’ role as his witnesses, provides a preview of the phases of the gospel’s spread: in Jerusalem (chaps. 1-7), through Judea and Samaria (chaps. 8-12), to the last part of the earth (chaps. 13-28). This of course involves geographical expansion, but there is more afoot here than miles. Things begin in Jerusalem, ‘the city of the great King,’ (Ps. 48:2), the site of the sanctuary, the center of Israel’s worship of the living God. By the close of Acts, Paul, bearer of the Lord’s word, has reached Rome, the city of the Caesars, the center of Gentile world power. The word has crossed not only spatial distance, but also religious, ethnic, and cultural distance. . . .

“In Acts 9:15, another statement of Jesus’ complements the promise of Acts 1:8, suggesting in more detail the contents of the third major section of the book, the apostolic witness ‘to the ends of the earth.’ . . . As in Acts 1:8, we see here three spheres of witness: (1) Gentiles, (2) kings, and (3) sons of Israel. This threefold description nicely sums up the targets of Paul’s preaching as Luke has recorded it . . . Paul’s final words of witness in Acts contains a rebuke to Israel, reminiscent of Stephen’s prophetic testimony against stiffness of neck, and hardness of heart and hearing (see 7:51-53), and an expression of hopeful expectation that the gospel will be welcomed by the Gentiles (28:25-29).”

1-7	Jerusalem (Peter/Stephen/[Saul approves Stephen’s death])
8-12	Judea and Samaria ([Saul initiates dispersion]/Philip to Samaria, Ethiopian/[Saul converted]/Peter initiates Gentile mission)
13-28	The last part of the earth (Paul/[Peter confirms Gentile mission])
13-20	Before Gentiles
24-26	Before kings
22,28	Before Israel’s sons

<sup>34</sup>*Progress*, 371.

<sup>35</sup>Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997), pp. 8-9.

## Sermons and Speeches<sup>36</sup>

“Nearly one-third of the book is given to the spoken word. Rather than presenting merely a sampling of apostolic preaching, Luke has a theological purpose. First the sermons and speeches show that the preaching of the apostles is *in continuity* with the teaching of Jesus. . . .

“Second, the sermons and acts of the apostles also testify to a *progression* in the history of redemption. In his sermon at Pentacost, Peter explains the outpouring of the Spirit as the new act of God in fulfilling his word (Acts 2:16-21).

“Third, the *shift* from Peter to Paul highlights the theological perspective of Acts. Peter is a transition figure between the ministry of our Lord and Paul.

...

“Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles and the apostle of freedom, who understood more clearly the prophetic expectation (especially in Isaiah), who had a special call from Christ, and who focused more sharply on the theological issues raised by the churches during his missionary journeys.”

Text	Speaker	Occasion
2:14-41	Peter	Sermon at Pentacost
3:11-26	Peter	Sermon in Solomon’s Portico
4:8-12; 5:29-32	Peter	Speeches before the Sanhedrin
7:1-53	Stephen	Defense before the Sanhedrin
10:34-43	Peter	Sermon at Cornelius’ house
13:13-48	Paul	Sermon in Pisidian Antioch
14:15-17	Paul	Appeal to the crowd at Lystra
17:22-34	Paul	Sermon on the Areopagus
20:17-35	Paul	Address to the Ephesian elders
22:1-21	Paul	Defense before the crowd in Jerusalem
26:2-27	Paul	Defense before the authorities
28:25-28	Paul	Defense before the Jewish leaders

<sup>36</sup> *Progress*, pp. 369-70.

# Chapter 7

## NT Letters

“The Epistles witness to (1) the involvement of the triune God in the application of redemption, (2) the extension of the kingdom, (3) the establishment of churches, (4) the adaptation of the gospel to the Gentile world, and (5) the hope in the glorious kingdom that is to come.”<sup>1</sup>

“The epistolary genre was common in Greek and Latin literature. The secular epistle was a relatively short and artificial tractate on a literary, philosophical, or scientific subject. The New Testament epistles, compared with secular epistles, are generally much longer, were addressed to congregations, and contained theological and practical advice. . . .

“The Epistles generally follow a stylized form: salutation and prayer, the epistle proper, and a conclusion with a signature. . . . The apostles present the glorious Christ as Lord, explain the nature and application of Christ’s redemption, present the place of the Spirit in preparing God’s people for the restoration, and exhort God’s people to prepare themselves for that glorious day. Moreover, they warn the churches by example and by direct teaching to ward off any false teaching that does not perpetuate the sacred connection between the Old Testament, Jesus Christ, and the apostolic *paradosis*, or transmission of the gospel.

“In the present canonical ordering, the epistles of Paul follow Acts, linking closely Jesus’ ministry and Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. According to another tradition, the Catholic Epistles [the non-Pauline letters] followed Acts in the early church. The major difference between the Pauline and the Catholic Epistles is that Paul’s letters were generally first addressed to particular congregations, after which they were circulated. The Catholic Epistles were by their very nature circular letters, addressed to a larger body of believers.”<sup>2</sup>

“The canonical function of the Pauline letters, together with the other epistles, is to assure that the *paradosis* will be preserved and that the leadership raised up by the Spirit of God may advance the peace, purity, and love of the church of Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Progress*, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 372-3.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 379.

## Covenant Treaty Structure

“From the New Testament epistles the [covenant treaty] lines can be traced back primarily through the prophets, but also through the Old Testament books of wisdom and worship, to the law of the Mosaic treaties, both stipulations and sanctions, particularly to the element of parenesis there. . . . One aspect of the covenantal mission of Israel’s prophets which finds an illuminating counterpart in the letters of the apostle Paul is that of the prosecution of Yahweh’s covenant lawsuit. Although this is not as prominent in the first generation mission of the apostolic minister of the new covenant, arresting evidence of such a function is found in a recurring motif in Paul’s letters that has been called ‘the apostolic parusia.’ The epistle itself was an anticipatory surrogate for the apostle’s presence in disciplinary power. It was also by means of letters . . . that ancient suzerains conducted their covenant lawsuits. The judgment section of Paul’s letters, in particular, have been found to exhibit a purpose and pattern (introduction-offense-punishment-hortatory conclusion) in imitation of the prophetic judgments on Israel.

“Once again from the New Testament Apocalypse the lines can be traced through the Old Testament prophets to the eschatological curses and blessings of the sanction section of the treaties. The Book of Revelation is replete with treaty analogues from its opening preamble-like identification of the awesome Lord Christ; through the letters to the churches, administering Christ’s covenantal lordship after the manner of the ancient lawsuit; on through the elaborately expounded prophetic sanctions which constitute the major part of the book; and down to the closing documentary clause and canonical curse.

“As was the case in the Old Testament, the New Testament’s adaptation of the treaty structure is highly creative. Being far less directly related than was the Old Testament to that world of ancient diplomacy, the New Testament writings reflect here and there rather than reproduce en bloc its peculiar literary formularies. They were shaped by the special historical circumstances of their own origins and by the literary conventions of their day. Nevertheless, because of the fundamentally covenantal identity of the New Testament, it, like the Old Testament, was bound to consist of gospel and law – the gospel witnessing to God’s establishment of the covenant with his people by historic intervention in sovereign grace, and the law stipulating the community order and mission by which God’s people were to fulfill their covenantal service in hope of the parusia of their Lord in the glory of his kingdom.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Structure*, pp. 73-4.

## 7.1 Pauline Letters

“Paul’s epistles set forth clearly the nature of the benefits of Jesus, the fellowship of mature sons with the Father, and our life in the Spirit. More than any other New Testament writings, the Pauline Epistles clarify the inclusion of the Gentile believers into the Old Testament heritage found in Jesus Christ. As a pastor-teacher Paul writes to the churches with the hope that the apostolic *paradosis* be continued, even after his departure (1 Cor. 15:3-8; Col 2:8). The apostle is zealous that the churches go forward in their walk with the Spirit and not revert to Judaism or pervert the gospel to what is no longer the gospel. To accomplish these ends, he wrote letters to the churches in the Gentile world.”<sup>5</sup>

### Order of Composition<sup>6</sup>

Letter	Date
Galatians	? early 49
1 Thessalonians	50
2 Thessalonians	51
1 Corinthians	55
2 Corinthians	56
Romans	57
<i>Prison Epistles</i>	Imprisonments
Ephesians	Caesarea (57-59), Acts 23-26
Philippians	Rome (60-62), Acts 28
Colossians	
Philemon	These letters were probably written during the latter imprisonment.
<i>Pastoral Epistles</i>	
1 Timothy	? 65
Titus	? 65
2 Timothy	? 65

## Galatians

“To the Galatian Christians the apostle upholds the *freedom* of the children of God. Their status before God is different from that of the children of God in the Old Testament because of two related truths: the coming of Christ, the Son of God, and the outpouring of the Spirit of God. The new creation is a reality in Jesus. A reversal to an observance of Jewish Halakah (interpretations and norms derived from the law) is wholly contrary to the very purpose of Christ’s coming.”<sup>7</sup>

“Galatians has often been called a ‘charter of freedom.’ Of twenty-nine occurrences of the word *freedom* in Paul’s epistles, twelve occur in Galatians. The Galatians had once been enslaved to the gods and superstitions of pagan religion. They had found freedom in Christ. Paul did not want them to surrender

<sup>5</sup>Progress, p. 378.

<sup>6</sup>Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), p. 58.

<sup>7</sup>Progress, pp. 378-9.

that freedom for a new slavery to the law.”<sup>8</sup>

### Outline<sup>9</sup>

1. Introduction (1:1-9)
2. The Freedom of Paul’s Apostleship (1:10-2:21)
  - (a) The gospel that is not from humans (1:10-17)
  - (b) The independence of Paul’s apostleship (1:18-2:10)
  - (c) The testing of Paul’s gospel (2:11-21)
3. Appeal for the Galatians to Return to Freedom (3:1-4:31)
  - (a) Appeal from the Galatians’ experience (3:1-5)
  - (b) Appeal from the Scriptures (3:6-14)
  - (c) Appeal based on the limitations of the law (3:15-25)
  - (d) Appeal to be the true children of God (3:26-4:11)
  - (e) Appeal based on personal friendship (4:12-20)
  - (f) Concluding appeal from Scripture (4:21-31)
4. Responsible Freedom in Christ (5:1-6:10)
  - (a) Conduct in servitude and conduct in freedom (5:1-26)
  - (b) Free to serve (6:1-10)
5. Conclusion (6:11-18)

## 1-2 Thessalonians

“In the Epistles to the Thessalonians Paul develops the nature of Christian *hope*, focusing on the Day of the Lord, the Rapture, and the glory awaiting the Christian community.”<sup>10</sup>

### Outline of 1 Thessalonians<sup>11</sup>

1. Opening of the letter (1:1-10)
2. Paul’s Relationship with the Thessalonians (2:1-3:13)
3. Paul’s Pastoral Advice for the Thessalonians (4:1-5:22)
  - (a) Purity, both sexual and social (4:1-8)
  - (b) Living the quiet life in mutual love (4:9-12)
  - (c) Taking comfort in the Coming of the Lord (4:13-5:11)
  - (d) Living in peace with one another (5:12-15)
  - (e) Heeding general admonitions (5:16-22)
4. Conclusion of the letter (5:23-28)

<sup>8</sup>John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), p. 144.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 144-5.

<sup>10</sup>*Progress*, p. 379.

<sup>11</sup>Polhill, p. 189.

## Outline of 2 Thessalonians<sup>12</sup>

1. Introduction (1:1-12)
2. Appeal Not to Be Shaken by False Reports (2:1-3:5)
  - (a) False reports that the Day of the Lord has come (2:1-2)
  - (b) End-time events which have *not* come (2:3-12)
  - (c) Thanksgiving for their election and prayer to stand firm (2:13-17)
  - (d) Prayer for mutual empowerment (3:1-5)
3. Appeal to Shun the Disorderly (3:6-15)
4. Conclusion to the epistle (3:16-18)

## 1-2 Corinthians

“In the Epistles to the Corinthians the apostle vindicates his *apostolic authority*, all in the interest of the apostolic *paradosis*. He calls on the Corinthian Christians to manifest the fruits of the Spirit of Christ: unity, faith, hope, love, and a readiness to serve one another with the gifts of the Spirit. He develops more clearly the nature of the church, whose head is Christ but whose members are diverse, having different gifts but only one Spirit. Christian living is Spirit-filled living in anticipation of the resurrection of the body and the full establishment of the kingdom of God.”<sup>13</sup>

## Outline of 1 Corinthians<sup>14</sup>

1. Introduction (1:1-9)
2. Bad News from Corinth (1:10-6:20)
  - (a) Worldly wisdom and divisions in the community (1:10-4:21)
  - (b) An incidence of fornication (5:1-13)
  - (c) The church and the world (6:1-20)
3. Answers to the Corinthians' Letter (7:1-16:4)
  - (a) Marriage and related questions (7:1-40)
  - (b) Freedom and food offered to idols (8:1-11:1)
  - (c) The Christian assembly (11:2-34)
  - (d) Spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40)
  - (e) The resurrection (15:1-58)
  - (f) The collection (16:1-4)
4. Conclusion (16:5-24)

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<sup>12</sup>Polhill, p. 195.

<sup>13</sup>*Progress*, p. 378.

<sup>14</sup>Polhill, pp. 235-6.

## Outline of 2 Corinthians<sup>15</sup>

1. Paul's Ministry of Suffering (1:1-7:16)
  - (a) Introduction and Thanksgiving (1:1-11)
  - (b) Paul's change in travel plans (1:12-2:4)
  - (c) Appeal for milder discipline of an erring brother (2:5-11)
  - (d) Paul's apology for his apostleship (2:12-7:4)
    - i. Self-confidence in his divine commission (2:12-4:6)
    - ii. Paul's sufferings as an apostle (4:7-5:10)
    - iii. Paul's ministry of reconciliation (5:11-6:10)
    - iv. Paul's appeal to the congregation (6:11-13)
    - v. His warning against joining with unbelievers (6:14-7:1)
    - vi. A renewed appeal to the congregation (7:2-4)
  - (e) Completion of the prehistory of the epistle (7:5-16)
2. The Collection (8:1-9:15)
  - (a) The example of Macedonia (8:1-7)
  - (b) The basis in love (8:8-15)
  - (c) The role of Titus and the brothers (8:16-24)
  - (d) The expectations of the Macedonians (9:1-5)
  - (e) The true basis for cheerful giving (9:6-15)
3. Paul's Final Defense Against His Opponents (10:1-13:14)
  - (a) A new warning (10:1-8)
  - (b) "Foolish" self-praise in self-defense (11:1-12:13)
  - (c) Paul's plans for a third visit (12:14-13:10)
  - (d) Epistolary conclusion (13:11-14)

## Romans

"[Paul] wrote Romans to the Christians in the world capital, presenting an exposition of the *righteousness* of God in Jesus Christ and all the benefits that the Father bestows on his children in Christ through the Spirit. The Father expects his children to respond with lives devoted to him (Rom. 12:1-2). The apostle's teaching is continuous with that of our Lord, as he too upholds Christian ethics, consisting of living to the glory of God and of being filled with anticipation of the redemption to come."<sup>16</sup>

"The framing of the epistle brings out the christological and universal concern of the apostle. The gospel includes the message of human sin and of Jesus' atonement, but also contains much more. Paul affirms that this gospel of Jesus is in continuity with the Old Testament prophets. The gospel proclaims the risen Lord, the Messiah of whom the prophets had predicted. In this light we

<sup>15</sup>Polhill, pp. 263-4.

<sup>16</sup>*Progress*, p. 378.

must understand the many citations from, allusions to, and analogies with the Old Testament Scriptures and people (e.g., Adam and Abraham). The Old Testament finds its focus in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, who will usher in the fullness of the promises given in the Law and the Prophets. The prophets bore witness and still testify to God's righteousness, salvation, and the cosmic transformation. From this point of view, Paul expands the understanding of the gospel to include a call for a new obedience, a new relationship with God, the ministry of the Spirit, the cosmic implications on creation, and the application to both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus is the Messiah-Lord to whom all authority is given – the risen Christ whose dominion extends over all nations.”<sup>17</sup>

### Outline<sup>18</sup>

1. Epistolary Opening (1:1-17)
  - (a) Prescript (1:1-7)
  - (b) Thanksgiving and occasion (1:8-15)
  - (c) The theme of the letter (1:16-17)
2. The Universality of Sin and Condemnation (1:18-3:20)
  - (a) The sin and condemnation of the Gentiles (1:18-32)
  - (b) The sin and condemnation of the Jews (2:1-3:8)
  - (c) The sin and condemnation of all humanity (3:9-20)
3. The Provision of Righteousness by Faith (3:21-4:25)
  - (a) The righteousness of God (3:21-26)
  - (b) “By faith alone” (3:27-4:25)
    - i. “By faith alone:” initial statement (3:27-31)
    - ii. “By faith alone:” elaboration with respect to Abraham (4:1-25)
4. The Results and Implications of Justification (5-8)
  - (a) The hope of glory (5:1-21)
    - i. From justification to salvation (5:1-11)
    - ii. The reign of grace and life (5:12-21)
  - (b) Sin, grace, and law (6-7)
    - i. Sin and grace (6:1-14)
    - ii. Grace and law (6:15-7:6)
    - iii. Law and sin (7:7-25)
  - (c) Assurance of eternal life in the Spirit (8:1-39)
    - i. The Spirit of life (8:1-13)
    - ii. The Spirit of adoption (8:14-17)
    - iii. The Spirit of glory (8:18-30)
    - iv. The believer's security celebrated (8:31-39)

<sup>17</sup>*Progress*, pp. 380-1.

<sup>18</sup>William Barclay, unpublished lecture notes, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2003.

5. The Gospel and the Present and Future of Israel (9-11)
  - (a) Has the Word of God failed? God's electing grace (9:1-29)
  - (b) Human responsibility: The Jews sought to establish their own righteousness (9:30-10:21)
  - (c) God's purposes in hardening Israel (11:1-36)
6. Instructions for the New Covenant Community (12:1-15:13)
  - (a) As a new creation, love the body of Christ (12:1-21)
  - (b) Obey the governing authorities (13:1-7)
  - (c) Fulfill the law through love (13:8-14)
  - (d) Welcome the weak in faith (14:1-15:13)
7. Autobiographical Section: The Romans and Paul's Ministry Goals (15:14-33)
8. Greetings, Instructions, and Doxology (16)

## Prison Epistles

"The Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossian, and Philemon) were written during adverse conditions. In them, the reader witnesses a spirit of *joy and triumph* in Jesus Christ, as the apostle speaks of the glory awaiting those who persevere. He is thankful for any prayers and physical support, but even under duress, Paul shows an even greater concern for the churches and for people. He prays for the marks of the Spirit in the church: love, unity, and purity. He warned the Philippians of the Judaizers, and the Colossians of a heresy that minimized the work of Christ as Creator-Redeemer."<sup>19</sup>

## Outline of Philippians<sup>20</sup>

1. Epistolary Introduction (1:1-11)
2. The Advance of the Gospel (1:12-26)
  - (a) Advance through Paul's imprisonment (1:12-14)
  - (b) Advance despite the unworthiness of the proclaimer (1:15-18)
  - (c) Advance through life or death (1:19-26)
3. A Partnership Worthy of the Gospel (1:27-2:30)
  - (a) Partnership in suffering (1:27-30)
  - (b) Partnership of mind and purpose (2:1-11)
  - (c) Partnership of witness and joy (2:12-18)
  - (d) Partnership of concern (2:19-30)
4. Twin Obstacles in the Christian Path (3:1-4:1)

<sup>19</sup>*Progress*, p. 379.

<sup>20</sup>Polhill, pp. 169-70.

- (a) A false confidence in the flesh (3:1-11)
  - (b) A true struggle for Christian maturity (3:12-16)
  - (c) A false claim to freedom (3:17-4:1)
5. Matters Personal and Congregational (4:2-23)

### Outline of Ephesians<sup>21</sup>

1. The Letter's Greeting (1:1-2)
2. The Mystery of God's Will – the Unity of All Things in Christ (1:3-3:21)
  - (a) Doxology: praise to God for his eternal plan of reconciling all things (1:3-14)
  - (b) Prayer that the readers will understand this great mystery (1:15-23)
  - (c) The old life and the new life (2:1-22)
  - (d) The apostle: his commission and his prayer (3:1-21)
3. Living the Life of Those Who Have Been United in Christ (4:1-6:20)
  - (a) Promoting the unity of the church (4:1-16)
  - (b) Abandoning the old pagan lifestyle (4:17-5:20)
  - (c) Being subject to one another in family relationships (5:21-6:9)
  - (d) Fighting the battle for Christ (6:10-20)
4. Conclusion of the Letter (6:21-24)

### Outline of Colossians<sup>22</sup>

1. Introduction to the Epistle (1:1-2:3)
2. Attack on the False Teaching at Colosse (2:4-3:4)
  - (a) The danger of being led astray (2:4-8)
  - (b) The right view of the person and work of Christ (2:9-15)
  - (c) Direct attack on the Colossian error (2:16-19)
  - (d) The ultimate response to the error (2:20-3:4)
3. The Right Basis for Christian Conduct (3:5-4:6)
  - (a) "Put off" the older person (3:5-11)
  - (b) "Put on" the new (3:12-17)
  - (c) "Be subject" to one another (3:18-4:1)
  - (d) "Watch and pray" (4:2-6)
4. Conclusion of the Epistle (4:7-18)

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<sup>21</sup>Polhill, pp. 360-1.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 338-9.

## Outline of Philemon<sup>23</sup>

1. Salutation (1-3)
2. Thanksgiving (4-7)
3. Paul's Appeal on Behalf of Onesimus (8-16)
4. Paul's Request from Philemon (17-22)
5. Epistolary Conclusion (23-25)

## Pastoral Epistles

"In the Pastoral Epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus) the apostle affirms the importance of *sound doctrine* and the continuity of the apostolic *paradosis*. The future of the church depends no longer on the work of the Spirit in him but on the Spirit in Timothy and in the succession of faithful elders and deacons in the churches. They must be reliable men, who care for the church of Christ. Like the other apostles, Paul in his last letters thus hands over his apostolic mantle. With the death of Paul, Peter, James, Jude, John, and the other apostles and leaders of the early church, the future of the church lies in the hands of a new generation."<sup>24</sup>

## Outline of 1 Timothy<sup>25</sup>

1. Epistolary Introduction (1:1-2)
2. Initial Charge to Timothy (1:3-20)
  - (a) Confronting the false teachers (1:3-11)
  - (b) Remembering Paul's example (1:12-17)
  - (c) Contending for the faith (1:18-20)
3. Conduct Within the Household of God (2:1-3:16)
  - (a) Prayer for all people (2:1-7)
  - (b) The deportment of men and women in worship (2:8-15)
  - (c) Qualities befitting congregational leaders (3:1-13)
4. Instructions for Various Groups (4:1-6:2)
5. Final Injunctions (6:3-21)

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<sup>23</sup>Polhill, p. 246.

<sup>24</sup>*Progress*, p. 379.

<sup>25</sup>Polhill, pp. 407-8.

**Outline of Titus**<sup>26</sup>

1. Salutation (1:1-4)
2. Instructions to Titus (1:5-16)
3. Instructions for Various Groups (2:1-15)
4. Reminders for the Church (3:1-11)
5. Personal Messages (3:12-15)

**Outline of 2 Timothy**<sup>27</sup>

1. Salutation (1:1-2)
2. Following Good Examples (1:3-2:13)
3. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth (2:14-3:9)
4. Thoroughly Equipped for Ministry (3:10-4:8)
5. Personal Matters (4:9-22)

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<sup>26</sup>Polhill, p. 417.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 429.

## 7.2 Other Letters

### Catholic Epistles

“The designation ‘catholic’ (i.e., general) may be traced back to Eusebius, who referred to the seven epistles [James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude] as universal in intent, since they were not addressed to a particular congregation. Most of these books have raised questions of authenticity and canonicity at one time or another during the history of the church.”<sup>28</sup>

#### James

“The canonical function of James bears on the continuity of the Old Testament and Jesus’ teaching. . . . James’s powerfully written epistle presents wisdom as the essence of godliness. . . . For him, faith is both trust in God and works, because he operates from the Hebraic conception that faith is nothing but loyalty to God in Christ Jesus. . . . James presents a Christian understanding of how the Old Testament is to be understood in the light of Jesus’ coming and mission. . . . James wrote primarily to ‘the twelve tribes scattered among the nations’ (1:1) – that is, Jewish Christians. Their concern was not with the gospel or who Jesus was but with how the Old Testament functioned within the Christian life. To this issue James effectively responds by holding forth the continuity between the Law and Prophets and the coming of Jesus. In Jesus freedom is found, but the freedom is for the purpose of practicing ‘the royal law’ (2:8), which is ‘the word planted’ within the hearts of the believers (1:21).”<sup>29</sup>

#### Outline<sup>30</sup>

1. Address and Salutation (1:1)
2. Trials and Christian Maturity (1:2-18)
3. True Christianity Seen in its Works (1:19-2:26)
4. Dissensions Within the Community (3:1-4:12)
5. Implications of a Christian Worldview (4:13-5:11)
6. Concluding exhortations (5:12-20)

#### 1-2 Peter

“The first epistle, written probably in the early 60s, is addressed generally to ‘God’s elect in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia’ (1:1). The contents too, while addressed to a special historical situation, are of a general nature. The thrust of the epistle is to encourage the faithful to persevere, regardless of the persecutions and prevailing heresies. Peter summons and heartens the Christian community to remain loyal. By their calling and their new birth, Christians share in the hope of the fullness of salvation at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:3-12), for which reason they have

<sup>28</sup> *Progress*, p. 374.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374-5.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 56.

been called to be a holy people (1:13-3:11), ready to suffer for the sake of the gospel (3:12-4:19). . . . [In the second epistle], more than in 1 Peter, we hear the apostolic voice, as Peter, aware of his impending departure from this life (1:14), calls on the early Christian community to live holy lives (vv. 3-11), to authenticate the gospel of Jesus in the light of the Scriptures (vv. 12-21), and to keep the gospel untainted from heretical teaching and teachers (chap. 2). In so doing, they may prepare themselves for the Day of the Lord (chap. 3)."<sup>31</sup>

### Outline of 1 Peter<sup>32</sup>

1. Salutation (1:1-2)
2. General Doctrine: The Greatness of Your Salvation (1:3-2:10)
  - (a) You grow as Christians through joyful faith (1:3-12)
  - (b) Application: you must be holy in all your conduct (1:13-25)
  - (c) How to advance in holiness (2:1-10)
3. Specific Ethical Teaching: How to be Holy in the Midst of Unbelievers (2:11-5:11)
  - (a) General principles (2:11-12)
  - (b) Living as citizens: be subject to government authorities, for the Lord's sake (2:13-17)
  - (c) Living as servants: be subject to your masters (2:18-25)
  - (d) Living as married persons (3:1-7)
  - (e) Living as Christians generally (3:8-4:19)
  - (f) Living as church members and officers (5:1-7)
  - (g) Living as Christians in spiritual conflict (5:8-11)
4. Closing Greetings (5:12-14)

### Outline of 2 Peter<sup>33</sup>

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|----------|--|
| 1:1-2    | Address and salutation                                       |
| 1:3-11   | Theme: A summary of Peter's message                          |
| 1:12-15  | Occasion: Peter's testament                                  |
| 1:16-18  | Reply to objection 1: a) apostolic eyewitness                |
| 1:19     | Reply to objection 1: b) the value of OT prophecy            |
| 1:20-21  | Reply to objection 2: the inspiration of OT prophecy         |
| 2:1-3a   | Peter's prediction of false teachers                         |
| 2:3b-10a | Reply to objection 3: the certainty of judgment              |
| 2:10b-22 | Denunciation of the false teachers                           |
| 3:1-4    | Peter's prediction of scoffers (including objection 4 - v.4) |
| 3:5-7    | Reply to objection 4: a) the sovereignty of God's Word       |
| 3:8-10   | Reply to objection 4: b) the forbearance of the Lord         |
| 3:11-16  | Exhortation  |
| 3:17-18  | Conclusion   |

<sup>31</sup>*Progress*, p. 375.

<sup>32</sup>Wayne Grudem, *The First Epistle General of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 44-6.

<sup>33</sup>Michael Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 66.

### 1-3 John

“John’s concern is similar to Peter’s, as he too is about to lay aside the apostolic mantle. In his three letters, written A.D. 85-95, he reminds the Christian community of what he has taught them concerning Jesus. Through the incarnate Christ, the children of God may have fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:1-4), being assured of forgiveness of sin and being required to walk as children of the light (1:5-2:14). Fellowship with Christ requires separation from the world (2:15-17) and from heretical teachings concerning the Christ (vv. 18-27). The Epistles of John are also truly catholic epistles, as the apostle addresses the broad concerns of the Christian community, even while writing in a particular historical context. In the second and third epistles, the apostle is equally insistent on the importance of loyalty and love.”<sup>34</sup>

### Jude

“The final witness comes to us from Jude, the brother of James (v. 1), quite likely a brother of our Lord (see Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19). He too addresses his epistle generally, ‘to those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ’ (Jude 1). In its canonical role, the epistle reverberates with a warning against apostasy foretold by ‘the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (v. 17). . . . he summons the Christian community of any age not to forsake the teaching of the apostles but to persevere in the gospel of Jesus. The apostolic tradition is elevated to the status of ‘the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’ (v. 3). He also adds the eschatological perspective, encouraging the godly: ‘Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life’ (v. 21).”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>*Progress*, p. 376.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 376.

## Hebrews

“This epistle, written perhaps around A.D. 68, is one of the most problematic books of the New Testament. The authorship, audience, historical context, theological framework, and literary genre all represent issues of scholarly discussion. The designation ‘Hebrews’ or ‘to the Hebrews’ is probably not authentic but serves as a summary of the book’s major emphasis. If so, the book addresses believers who were well acquainted with Judaism, probably from birth, and who needed to be instructed on the relationship and differences between the administration under Moses, God’s servant, and Jesus, God’s Son. The difference is not the Old Testament versus the New Testament, because the same God who has spoken through the Son spoke to Moses and the prophets (Heb. 1:1-5). The divergence lies in the *excellence* of the Son in his present ministry before the Father. . . . Hebrews does not follow the formal elements of an epistle, as it omits an introductory salutation and prayer. In form it is closer to a sermon and could be designated as a tractate or as an epistle written in sermonic form. In broad outline the epistle presents the exaltation of Jesus over angels (by virtue of his victory over Satan; chaps. 1-2), over Moses (3:1-4:13), and over the Aaronic priesthood (4:14-10:18). The author also appeals to the faithful to submit themselves to Christ (10:19-13:25). The superiority of the covenantal administration of Christ over the previous administration lies at the heart of the epistle. The author argues that the superiority is *christological* and *eschatological*, because the eschaton is so much closer now that Jesus has entered into the heavenly tabernacle.

“The theological sections are broken up by horatory (or parenetic) segments. The interchange of theological and practical sections encourages the readers to persevere in their faith in the Son, by whom the Father has spoken in an ultimate way and in whom salvation from the great judgment is found (12:18-27).”<sup>36</sup>

“What in one sentence is the main theme of Hebrews? *Have faith in (by holding fast to and obeying) Jesus as the supreme, unique Son of God and priest of our faith.* Two words capsule the core of the purpose of Hebrews: Jesus and faith. From the opening sentence to the last command of the epistle, the author never seems to depart from a complex of truths revolving around these two ideas . . .”<sup>37</sup>

## Typology

“Perhaps no other element of biblical interpretation has been as often identified with the Book of Hebrews as typology. Typology views a place, person, event, institution, office, or object in the Bible as a pattern by which later persons or places are interpreted due to the unity of events with salvation-history. Generally, typology consists of two elements, a *type*, which is the original element, and an *antitype*, which is the later element that serves as the final expression of the original type. These two are in a temporal relationship, a crucial factor for the understanding of typology. . . .

“The writer of Hebrews make use of typology from the outset. His opening sentence makes quite clear that something happened in the past, and now has happened again in a definitive and final way in the readers’ own time. ‘Long

<sup>36</sup> *Progress*, pp. 373-4.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew H. Trotter, Jr., *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), pp. 93-4.

ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son . . .’ (Heb. 1:1-2). The strong eschatological emphasis at the beginning of the epistle creates a context for understanding the OT as a book consistently looking forward to Christ and builds that expectation in the reader.”<sup>38</sup>

### The New Covenant: Already/Not Yet<sup>39</sup>

“[T]he kingdom of God which was inaugurated by Jesus has not yet reached its full consummation, so that the new covenant has not yet come to its complete fulfillment. To see this more clearly, we really have to look at the Old Testament.

“Throughout the Old Testament prophets, there is much said about the future restoration of Israel, the time after their exile, when God would bring them back into the land and restore the nation. They were looking for a Messiah, the anointed one of God, who would lead them into this time. Whenever you read phrases in the Old Testament like ‘in later days’ or ‘in the last days,’ they usually refer to the time when Israel would be restored after her exile. In fact, the first time that phrase appears is not in the prophets but in Deuteronomy 4, spoken by Moses. In verses 1-24 he exhorts Israel to obedience. He then warns them that if they become corrupt and turn from the Lord, they will perish from the land they had possessed and will be scattered among the peoples – they will be exiled (vv. 25-28). But after all these things have happened (in exile), if they seek God again with all their heart, then ‘in later days’ they will return to the Lord for the Lord will not abandon them or his covenant promise to them (vv. 29-31; see also 30:1-5).

“Sometimes when you come across this term, it seems simply to be speaking of some indefinite future time (e.g. Jer. 48:47; 49:39; Ezekiel 38:16; Dan. 2:28; 10:14). But other times, it is specifically referring to the days of restoration after exile, as spoken of by Moses (Isa. 2:2; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 4:1).

“The New Testament looks to the coming of Christ as the fulfillment of this restoration that Moses foretold. Jesus came preaching the message, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near’ (Matt. 4:17). He was announcing the time of when the kingdom of God’s people would be restored.

“Now here’s the real kicker – it didn’t happen all at once. The Jews were expecting to be freed from Roman rule, and for national restoration to happen all at once. But Jesus came and inaugurated the Kingdom of God in a completely unexpected way. Jesus demonstrated spiritual power, and began to establish a spiritual kingdom, but there was no earthly, national restoration. Even John the Baptist had to ask if Jesus really was the one they had been waiting for. Jesus assured him that he was (Matt. 11:2-6).

“The Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated also continues in the church age. Even though we are still on this earth, suffering under the damaging effects of sin in the world, at the same time we are already in the kingdom as the people of God, united to Christ. Some theologians call this paradoxical age we live in the ‘already/not yet.’ That explains the fact that the New Testament promises both suffering and joy for the believer.

“Finally, when Jesus returns again, the kingdom of God will be consummated. Only then will everything be completely restored, sin and evil banished, and we will be made perfectly holy.

<sup>38</sup>Trotter, pp. 196-7.

<sup>39</sup><http://www.thirdmill.org/>

“The important thing to note here is that the phrase ‘last days’ in the New Testament is used of the inauguration, continuation, and consummation of our age (see Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2; Jam. 5:3; 1 Pet. 1:5,20; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:18).

“Now, back to Jeremiah: Jeremiah refers to the last days in your passage (31:31-34) – ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord in verse 31 (see also 31:27,38; 30:3). Look carefully at his words. Do they describe the age we live in today? I would say no. Verse 34: ‘No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying ‘know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.’ Question: Do we still need teachers and preachers? Do we still need to teach our neighbors and brothers to ‘know the Lord?’ Of course we do. But Jeremiah says that the days are coming when we will no longer need to do this. I conclude that those days have not yet arrived – we still need teachers because not all of us in the house of Israel (v. 33) know the Lord. Not yet. That will be true after Jesus returns, when the days of restoration are made complete. Only then will Jeremiah’s prophecy be completely fulfilled. But we’re not all the way there yet. We won’t need teachers then, because everyone in the house of Israel will know the Lord, and when that happens the covenant will never be broken again. But we’re not there yet.

“... Jeremiah’s prophecy does not describe the age we live in today – this strange, unexpected, already/not yet continuation stage. Rather, it describes the consummation stage. The final fulfillment of his prophecy won’t take place until the consummation, when Jesus returns. In the mean time, we need teachers because not everyone does know the Lord, and therefore [the] covenant can be – and is – broken. ...

This idea that the new covenant during the time of continuation, it seems to me, makes the most sense of passages like Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29. Those are clear warnings against falling away, and they clearly use covenant language. For example, in Hebrews 10:29 we learn that God will severely punish those who treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them. If salvation cannot be lost, whom can this verse possibly describe? It must be someone who, though not a true saint, was yet considered in covenant with God, someone who was ‘sanctified’ or ‘made holy’ by ‘the blood of the covenant’ – it must be an unbeliever in the visible church ... ”

Outline of Hebrews<sup>40</sup>

Reference	Doctrine	Exhortation
1:1-4	Introduction	
1:5-4:13	The superior Son	
1:5-14	The Son is superior to angels	
2:1-4		Warning to listen to God's salvation
2:5-9	Jesus made lower than Angels to die	
2:10-18	Jesus made like his brothers to die	
3:1-6	The Son is superior to Moses	
3:7-19		Scripture on believing and obeying
4:1-11		Scripture on entering the rest today
4:12-13	God's Word judges	
4:14-16	Jesus, Son and high priest	Is to be held on to and obeyed
5:1-10:18	Jesus the unique high priest	
5:1-10	Introduction to priesthood of Jesus	
5:11-6:3		Warning about slackness
6:4-8		Warning about apostasy
6:9-20		Encouragement to God's promise
7:1-10	Historical exegesis about Melchizedek	
7:11-28	Theological exegesis about Melchizedek	
8:1-2	Jesus the priest of heavenly realities	
8:3-5	Jesus has an offering	
8:6-13	Jesus' superior covenant	
9:1-10:18	Jesus superior offering and tabernacle	
10:19-25		Draw near, hold fast, stir up
10:26-13:19		Believe, persevere, obey
10:26-31		Warning about apostasy
10:32-39		Persevere on the promise of God
11:1-40	Example of faith	
12:1-3		Encouragement to persevere
12:4-13	Teaching on discipline	
12:14-17		Some calls to obedience
12:18-29	Summary of the sermon	Summary of the sermon
13:1-9		Godly exhortations
13:20-25	Conclusion	

<sup>40</sup>Trotter, pp. 93-4.

## Revelation

“Revelation is a unique, finely blended combination of three distinct literary types: apocalypse, prophecy, and letter. . . . this combination of apocalyptic and prophetic elements has been cast into the form of a letter. For example, read 1:4-7 and 22:21; you will note that all the characteristics of the letter form are present. Furthermore, John speaks to his readers in the first person/second person formula (I . . . you). Thus in its final form the Revelation is sent by John as a letter to the seven churches of Asia Minor.”<sup>41</sup>

### Rhetorical Structure<sup>42</sup>

1. Prologue, 1:1-3
2. Greeting, 1:4-5a
3. Body, 1:5b-22:20
  - (a) Thanksgiving, 1:5b-8
  - (b) Main part, 1:9-22:5
    - i. What you have seen, 1:9-20
    - ii. What is, 2:1-3:22
    - iii. What is to be, 4:1-22:5
      - A. Cycle 1: seven seals, 4:1-8:1
      - B. Cycle 2: seven trumpets, 8:2-11:19
      - C. Cycle 3: symbolic figures and the harvest, 12:1-14:20
      - D. Cycle 4: seven bowls, 15:1-16:21
      - E. Cycle 5: judgment of Babylon, 17:1-19:10
      - F. Cycle 6: white horse judgment, 19:11-21
      - G. Cycle 7: white throne judgment, 20:1-21:8
      - H. The eighth and culminating act: New Jerusalem, 21:9-22:5
  - (c) Final instructions and exhortations, 22:6-20
4. Closing salutation, 22:21

“The cycles parallel one another. All cover the same period leading up to the Second Coming. But each cycle does so from its own distinct vantage point. Moreover, later cycles concentrate more and more on the most intense phases of conflict and on the Second Coming itself. We may summarize the focus of the different cycles as follows:

#### Commission

- Seven seals, 4:1-8:1. Commission of covenant judgment in heaven. The origin of God’s triumph.

#### Prosecution of War

- Seven trumpets, 8:2-11:19. Effects on earth.

<sup>41</sup>Fee and Stuart, pp. 232,235.

<sup>42</sup>Vern S. Poythress, *The Returning King! A Guide to the Book of Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2000), p. 60.

- Seven symbolic histories, 12:1-14:20. Depth of conflict.
- Seven bowls, 15:1-16:21. Effects on earth, further intensity.

### Elimination

- Seven messages of judgment on Babylon, 17:1-19:10. Elimination of the seductress.
- White horse judgment, 19:11-21. Elimination of the power source.
- White throne judgment, 20:1-21:8. Elimination of all evil.”

### Counterfeit Trinity<sup>43</sup>

Original	Counterfeit	Function
The Father	Dragon	Originate, plan
Christ the Son	Beast	Execute
The Spirit as witness	False prophet	Witness, propagandize

### Exodus

“The apocalyptic temple-city seen by John imparts a distinctly architectural cast to the new heaven and new earth of which it is the glory (Rev. 21:1ff). The eschatological re-creation event is thus a divine house-building, and the account of it appropriately follows immediately after that of the final judgment-conquest of the dragon and his hosts (Rev. 20:10; cf. v. 2), by which the son of David secured rest forever from all the enemies round about.”<sup>44</sup>

### Come, Lord Jesus

“The glorious Jesus calls upon the seven churches of Asia Minor to be loyal, to persevere, to prepare for his coming, and to overcome (Rev. 2-3). The preparation for his coming keeps the church alive and composed so as to be ready whenever he comes. Great are the rewards to those who overcome this world in anticipation of the New Jerusalem, the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:4-5, 12, 21)!”<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Poythress, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup>*Structure*, p. 86.

<sup>45</sup>*Progress*, p. 468.

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