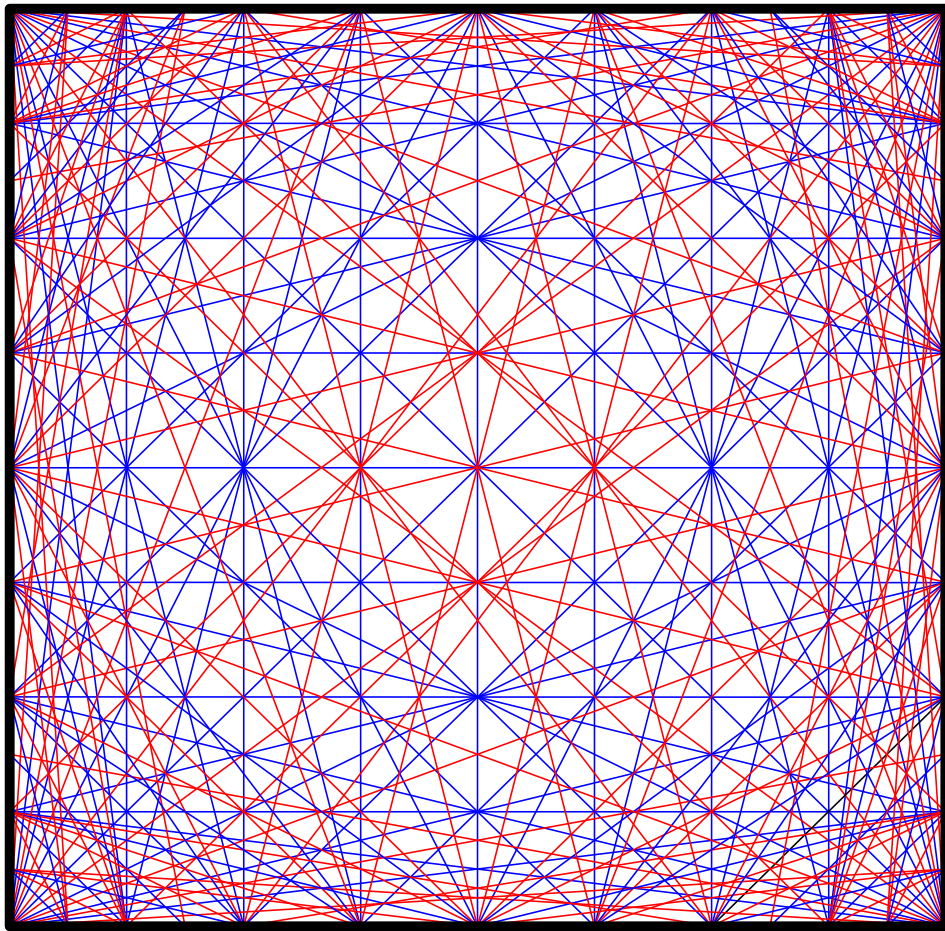


GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLAN



As Told in the Bible

Stuart R. Kerr, III

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A PERSONAL NOTE:

It should be understood by the reader that this literary work is an endeavor to summarize current-world Christian theology with a fresh perspective and positive outlook. It relies solely on the authority of the Bible for its inspiration, emphasizing the continuity and consistency of God's message as it is recorded from the very beginning of Genesis in the Old Testament proceeding unflinchingly through to the Book of Revelation at the very end of the New Testament.

Throughout much of mankind's collective history, God has many times expressed his divine purposes and plans for his creation – he has shared with humanity a comprehensive vision of revealed providence and destiny, a progressive revealment of truth and vision. The evolving themes on theology that permeate the Christian Bible were subjected to much analysis and reflection. The goal has been to determine our heavenly Father's ultimate purposes and plans as they are providentially impacting his creation.

This book relies on a 45-plus year search for inspired Biblical thoughts and insights deemed by the author to help construct a conceptual foundation for "God's Purpose and Plan – As Told in the Bible". My main contribution to this book's subject matter has been to construct these thoughts and insights into a comprehensive and cohesive presentation. Like a musical conductor of a symphonic composition, I have tried to interpret these twenty-first century themes of theological interpretation into a cohesive and final composition. On occasion, I offer my own personal perspectives into the subject matter, but apart from that, virtually all these insightful thoughts have originated elsewhere and are not herein formally referenced. Very much of this composition is comprised of inspirations, not originating from my own mind, but as generously gathered from many other sources of available authority and scholarship.

Essentially, this book is an expansion of my personal library of study notebooks. My mission has been to enhance and elevate these "notebooks" into a worthwhile reference book. It is the author's sincere intention that the reader learn and grow in elevated awareness as to the Bible's awesome panorama of revelatory inspiration.

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NOTE: All quotes contained herein are taken from the New International Version (NIV) of the Holy Bible. This translation is chosen because it is contemporary with modern literary expression while it remains faithful to the interpretive integrity of the ancient texts on which it relies. It benefits from the many archaeological and linguistic discoveries in the twentieth century (e.g., the Dead Sea scrolls) that help in clarifying accuracy and meaning. Its translators were openly committed to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's word in written form. Beginning in 1965, it was prepared by over a hundred trans-denominational scholars after several years of exploratory study by committees from the Christian Reformed Church and the National Association of Evangelicals. To safeguard this translation from sectarian bias, participating denominations included Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist,

Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and other churches.

Before releasing the final version for publication, the entire NIV Bible underwent three separate revisions after careful examinations for its precise faithfulness to the original languages and for its accuracy in expressing the true meaning of the source texts. The NIV New Testament was first published in 1973, while the first printing of the entire Bible occurred in 1978.

All Bible quotations that follow are cited by biblical book, chapter and verse (e.g. John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the much-valued and appreciated contributions of insight and critical analysis offered by my good and trusted friend, George Thornbury. His selfless dedication of countless hours critiquing the early stages of this book, “God’s Purpose and Plan – As Told in the Bible”, were beneficially critical in guiding me to bring this work to some form of acceptable completion. Thank you, George!

Bible Book Abbreviations

| Book | Abbreviation |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1 Chronicles | 1 Chron. |
| 1 Corinthians | 1 Cor. |
| 1 John | 1 John |
| 1 Kings | 1 Kings |
| 1 Peter | 1 Peter |
| 1 Samuel | 1 Sam. |
| 1 Thessalonians | 1 Thess. |
| 1 Timothy | 1 Tim. |
| 2 Chronicles | 2 Chron. |
| 2 Corinthians | 2 Cor. |
| 2 John | 2 John |
| 2 Kings | 2 Kings |
| 2 Peter | 2 Peter |
| 2 Samuel | 2 Sam. |
| 2 Thessalonians | 2 Thess. |
| 2 Timothy | 2 Tim. |
| 3 John | 3 John |
| Acts | Acts |
| Amos | Amos |
| Colossians | Col. |
| Daniel | Dan. |
| Deuteronomy | Deut. |
| Ecclesiastes | Ecc. |
| Ephesians | Eph. |
| Esther | Esther |
| Exodus | Ex. |
| Ezekiel | Ezek. |
| Ezra | Ezra |
| Galatians | Gal. |
| Genesis | Gen. |
| Habakkuk | Hab. |
| Haggai | Hag. |
| Hebrews | Heb. |

| Book | Abbreviation |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Hosea | Hos. |
| Isaiah | Is. |
| James | James |
| Jeremiah | Jer. |
| Job | Job |
| Joel | Joel |
| John | John |
| Jonah | Jonah |
| Joshua | Joshua |
| Judges | Judges |
| Jude | Jude |
| Lamentations | Lam. |
| Leviticus | Lev. |
| Luke | Luke |
| Malachi | Mal. |
| Micah | Micah |
| Mark | Mark |
| Matthew | Mat. |
| Nahum | Nahum |
| Nehemiah | Neh. |
| Numbers | Num. |
| Obadiah | Oba. |
| Philemon | Phile. |
| Philippians | Phil. |
| Proverbs | Prov. |
| Psalms | Psalms |
| Revelation | Rev. |
| Romans | Rom. |
| Ruth | Ruth |
| Solomon | Sol. |
| Titus | Titus |
| Zechariah | Zech. |
| Zephaniah | Zeph. |

INTRODUCTION

God's Will Bible Revelation

GOD'S WILL:

Our Father in heaven, Creator of heaven and earth, is a God of absolute and final purpose. From his place in eternity, God's expressed will is inexorable and relentless – his plan for his creation will assuredly be carried out. Our sovereign God rules over his creation. None of his purposes can fail. It is absolutely certain that all of God's plans for his creation will achieve everything that he intends; all of his purposes will be fulfilled:

I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
[Job 42:2]

Many are in the plans in man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.
[Prov. 19:21]

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord.
[Prov. 21:30]

I am God and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.
[Is. 46:9,10]

From eternity, God purposed to create mankind in "his image." As the crown of his creation, we are personal creatures who can interact with a personal Creator. We inhabit a physical body of flesh that is imbued with the intelligence of mind, endowed with free will and quickening soul, and indwelt with the presence of God's very own Spirit. Our Creator and divine Father in heaven desires to build a very special and personal relationship with each one of us. God has entrusted us with the gift of life and free will. He urges us to walk in righteousness and holiness, to be perfect as he is perfect. There is a glorious path that God has ordained for mankind that will, if followed, lead us to a future destiny of joy and accomplishment.



“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

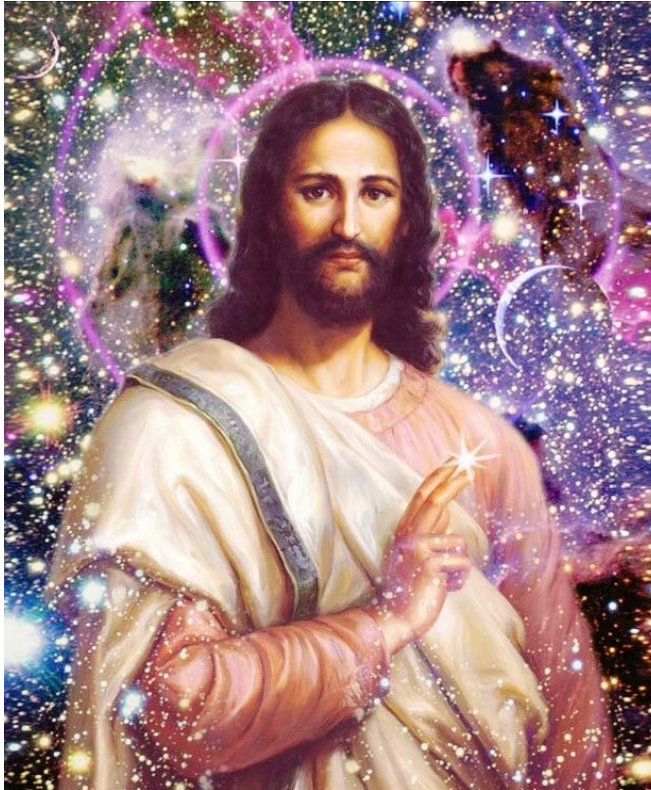
[Jer. 29:11-13]

The desire for God is written onto the human heart, because man is created by God and for God. God has created the heavens and the earth for his “glory and honor and power” [Rev. 4:11], and he created the first man Adam in the likeness of his own image – a living body, soul and spirit.

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

[Acts 17:26,27]

God exercises sovereign power over his creation, and this divine overcontrol is in full harmony with his eternal purposes and plans. God upholds all his creation by the power of his word, for “in him all things hold together.” [Col. 1:17] God is directing history towards the final goal of realizing this intended destiny. The Father has a purpose and plan originating from his loving goodness for the creation, redemption, and sanctification of man. The Father creates us, the Son redeems us, and the Spirit sanctifies us. The universe is created in a state of journeying toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained. This God-directed destiny is called divine providence.



He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who worked out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.
[Eph. 1:9-11]

God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own God-given free will. God and man cooperate with each other in the accomplishment of God's plan, human beings having been given the power of freely consenting to do his will and following his direction. Man is endowed with a spiritual and immortal soul allowing him to participate in the light and power of the Holy Spirit. Man's reason and understanding allow him to grasp the magnificence of God's creation. His freedom of freewill choice makes possible his drive toward the true good.

In loving what is true and good, man finds his perfection in spirit. By virtue of his soul, he exercises spiritual powers of intellect and will. By his reason, he understands the word of God which tells him what is good and what is evil. Being an outstanding manifestation of God's divine image, he desires to do good. But because mankind carries the wound of original sin, we are all subject to error and evil. The life that God gives us is beset by the struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness.

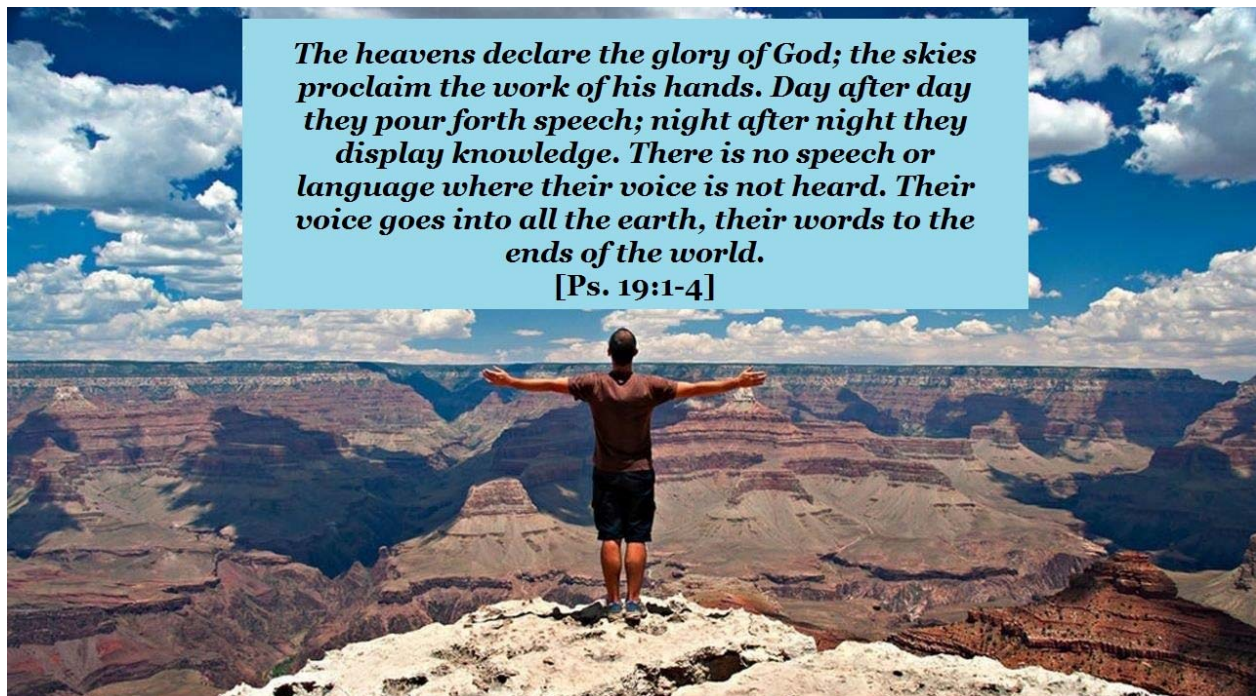
BIBLE REVELATION:

Collectively, all the books of the Bible present a complete and unified story that gradually unfolds across the wide expanse of mankind's history with God. The Bible is consistent and coherent in its divine message and import. Studying the Bible allows one to better comprehend the full breadth of God's word as it expresses his unified truth and divine will.

Christianity, Judaism and Islam have been called the religions of the Book because they all share something in common regarding accepted traditions and writings contained within the Bible, especially those contained in the earliest books of the Old Testament. Also, all three share the great biblical Patriarch Abraham as a common “father of many nations.” These religions require that man believe in that which is self-evident: that there is order in the universe, that this order is imposed from an intelligent source, and that this source is a personal God who reveals himself to his creation. Throughout the ages, God has spoken to all peoples willing to listen.

Revelation is the freewill act of communication by which our God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, makes known to his living children religious truths he wishes to reveal. The individual receives and accepts this divine revelation of God’s authority as an act of reasonable faith. The revelation of these principle truths often exceeds the ability of unassisted natural reason to discover or to fully understand them without God’s help. God’s Holy Spirit bolsters our reasoning with spiritual insight: “And God said, ‘Let there be light.’” [Gen. 1:3]

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever.
[Deut. 29:29]



There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.
[Dan. 2:28]

God gave us the scriptures of the Bible so that we may come to know him and to better understand his divine purpose and plans through his revelations. God's word illumines who

he is and gives us insight as to his special purposes and plans for us. His revealed word gives us guidance for living out our lives in accordance with his good will:

Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.
[Deut. 8:3]

I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.
[Job 23:12]

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.
[Ps. 119:9]

“Is not my word like fire” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces.”
[Jer. 23:29]

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.
[Mat. 24:35]

God's intentions for his creation are revealed throughout the full expanse of the Bible. These intentions have been revealed through the service of inspired human authors who themselves were not always aware of the full scope and depth of the divine meanings of that which they were prophesizing. Theirs was to give voice to God's word and will, and they were inspired by God's Spirit to do so. By his divine power and through his ever-present Spirit, God stimulated and moved men to author the texts of the Bible, assisting them in their writing so that they properly understood to write faithfully and suitably with divine truthfulness. In this way it may be understood that God is ultimately the author of the sacred scripture: "All scripture is God-breathed." [2Tim. 3:16] Therefore the early Church Fathers were convinced that the divine writings were free from religious error.

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
[2Pet. 1:21]

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.
[1Cor. 2:13]



[The Church] professes that one and the same God is the author of the Old and New Testaments, that is, of the Law, of the Prophets, and of the Gospel because the holy men of both Testaments have spoken under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

[The Council of Florence, 1438-45 AD – the Seventeenth Ecumenical Council]

By way of the Holy Spirit, God reveals his person and message to faithful men who wrote down his words for his people through a process of “inspiration”. Writing with their own minds, talents, language and style, these authors faithfully wrote down what God inspired them to write. The Bible is the inspired word of God given through people to people. God inspires the writers, so their message is authentic and reliable. God also inspires the reader of his Scripture so that he may fully embrace God's word.

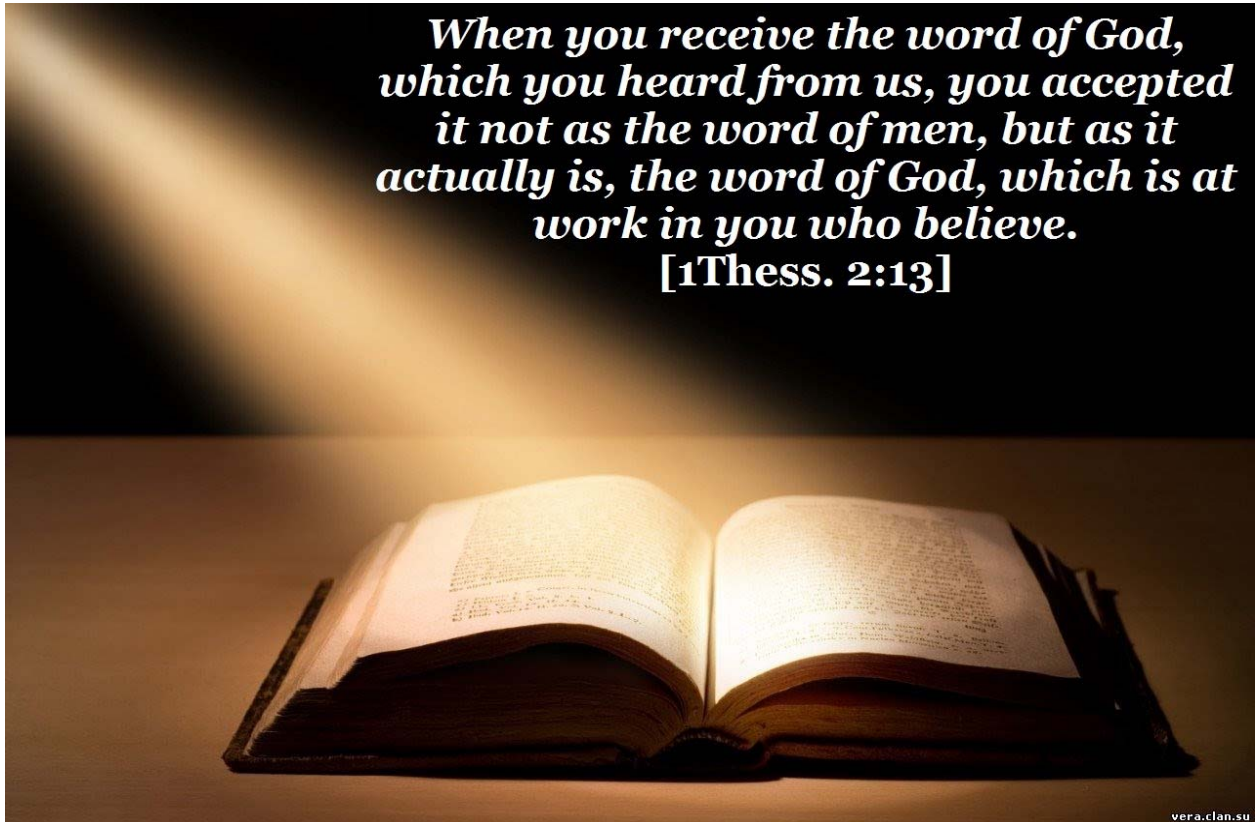
The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

[Deut. 30:14]

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.

[Is. 40:8]

Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
[Rom. 15:4]



When you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.
[1Thess. 2:13]

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
[Heb. 4:12]

There is a critical view regarding the Holy Scripture of the Bible that God intended and taught only that which is concerned with divine truth. All other topics, such as history or science, serve only as background context for presenting spiritual truth and are therefore not of themselves inspired. These extraneous details were permitted and left to the fallibility of the writers. So, it should not be surprising that there are details in the Bible regarding scientific and historical matters that are not reconcilable with present-day knowledge. Even so, the Israelites were outstanding historians in their day and time. They stood out among the other nations in their precise recording of their own history. These records extend very far back in time and they were faithful to the various events to which they refer.

The sacred writings of the Bible speak about physical nature in the way it naturally appears, while the inspired writers report on historical events as they have been traditionally reported

to and by the people, often without indicating the source of their information. Today, there is an ongoing practice of textual criticism used to edit the text of Bible scripture. The intent is to restore the original text as perfectly as possible, to remove corruptions caused by earlier copyists, and to correct the omissions, inversions, and repetitions of word, and further correcting any other kinds of mistakes that inevitably find their way into texts as they have been handed down through the ages. Most importantly, the focus is directed towards preserving the spiritual heart of the original written word.

To discover the sacred author's intentions, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current. Even Paul, in his letter to the Romans, concedes "I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves." [Rom. 6:19] Truth is variably presented and expressed in different types of Biblical writing, whether it be historical, prophetic, poetical, or other texts and forms of literary expression. But you can only take this approach so far – you must somewhere concede that God's hand is somehow at work in the deliverance of his revelation. There have always been and continue to be efforts to de-emphasize or even negate God's personal contribution to the writings of the Bible. In the nineteenth century, the trend of "rationalism" had attempted to humanize the Bible, having so affected Bible exegesis that liberal scholars were interpreting the Holy Scriptures as though these books were of merely human authorship, needing only to be judged by human criteria based on human reason and scholarship.

From the beginning to the end, the Bible tells the story of how God creates for himself a special people, his "chosen" people", whom he guides through history, and through whom he intends to channel his blessings to all mankind. This all-encompassing story embraces thousands of years of human history and is covered in two Testaments – the Old Testament focusing on Judaic history, and the New Testament which leads into the Christian era.

God starts by creating our world where he places the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve. He put them into the Garden of Eden to work and tend it. God has always intended there to be harmony between humanity and creation. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve are beguiled by God's enemy, Satan, and they fall into sin and disobedience against God.

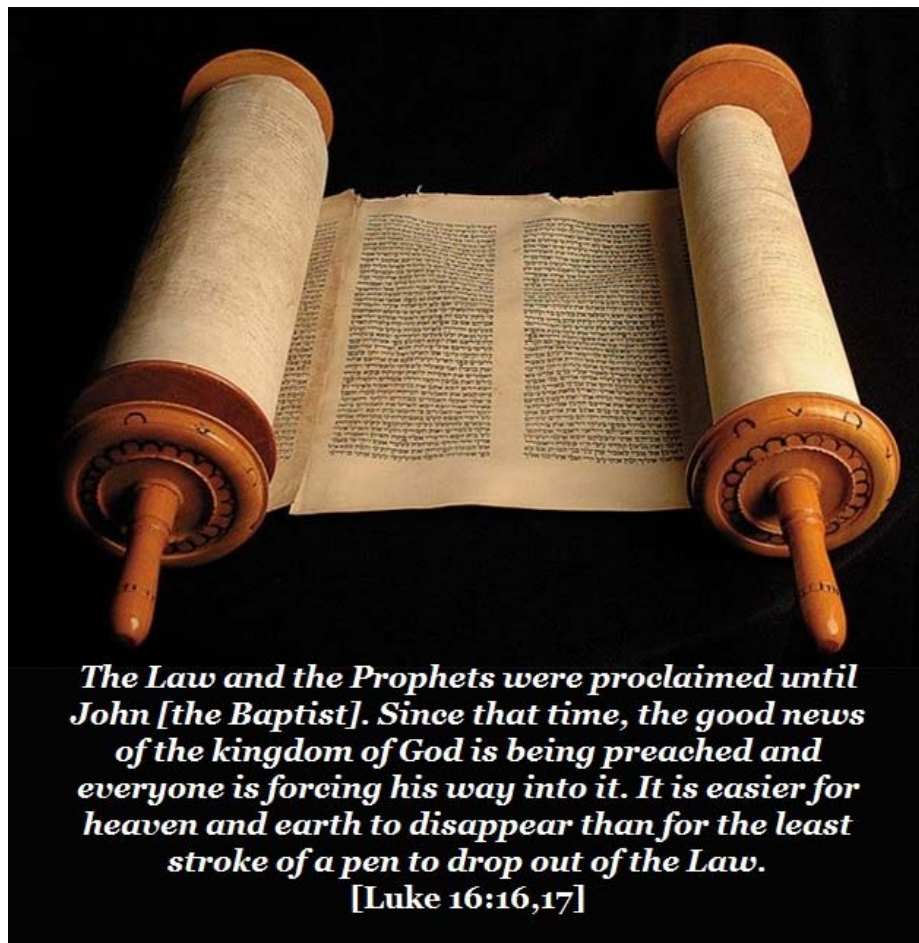
Generations later, God calls faithful Abraham into his covenant whereby God promises to make his seed into a great nation of people who will fall under God's directed guidance. Through these people, the Israelites, God's goal is to restore harmony to creation, removing the curse of sin, and to bring blessings to all the peoples on earth. After great demonstrations of his holy righteousness and divine power, God guides his chosen people to a land of "milk and honey" in Canaan; but these Israelites stubbornly prove again and again to be unfaithful to God and his covenant.

God consequently establishes a covenant with one of Israel's kings, David, a man of righteous faith, promising that another king, a future son of David, will bring God's people and the entire world back to God. God's promise is kept with the arrival onto this world of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnated Son of God and Son of Man.

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.
[Ps. 78:4]

The whole of the Old Testament represents a gradual revelation of truth that leads inexorably to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ by whose sacrificial death on the cross, sinful humanity is redeemed. The triumphal life of Jesus Christ defeats the very power behind sin and death, leading all mankind back into fellowship with God and giving man hope for eternal joy and life. The New Testament must be read in light of the Old. The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. The unity of the two Testaments proceeds from the unity of God's plan and his revelation. The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament fulfills the Old. They both shed light on each other. Both are the unified word of God.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.
[Mat. 5:17]



The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John [the Baptist]. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached and everyone is forcing his way into it. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.
[Luke 16:16,17]

We are going to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the Prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

[Luke 18:31]

“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

[Luke 24:44,45]

And the Father who has sent me has himself testified concerning me.

[John 5:37]

He [Apollos] vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

[Acts 18:28]

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

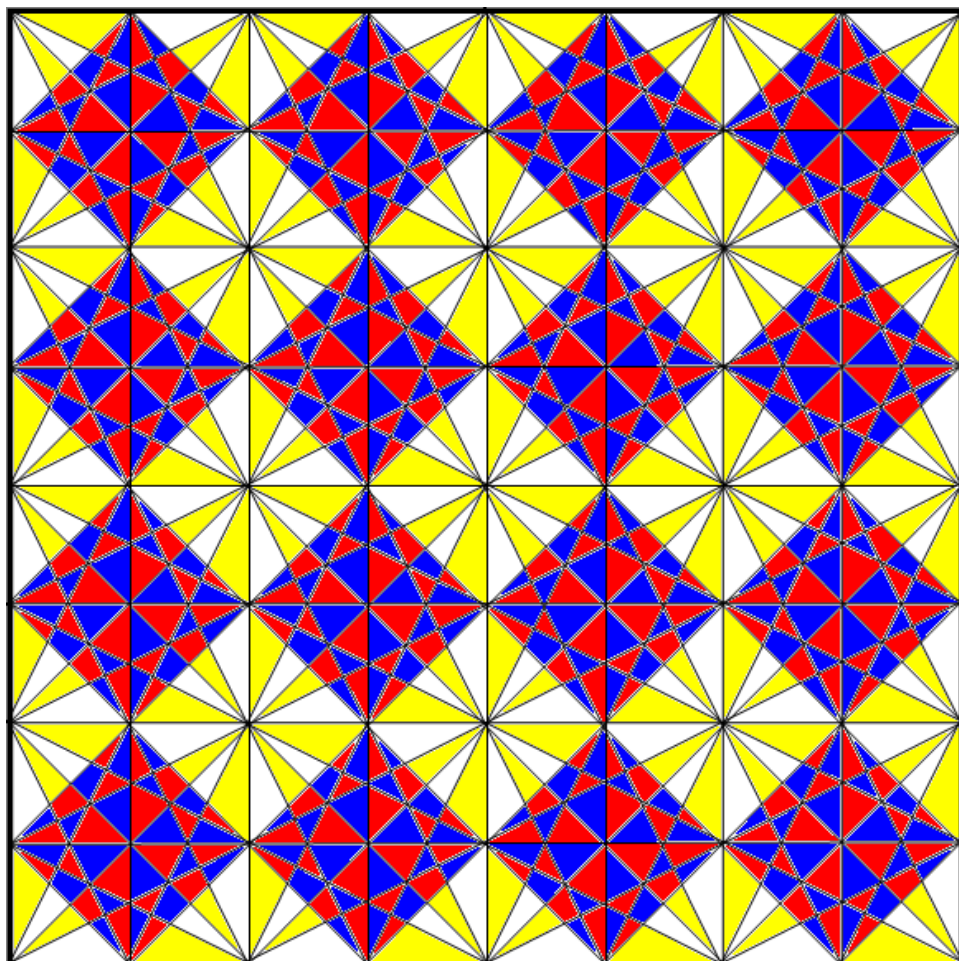
[Rom. 3:31]

We have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

[Rom. 7:6]

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the Prophets at many times in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

[Heb 1:1,2]



CHAPTER ONE

THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

Bible Canon

Bible Development and Translations:

- The Old Testament
- The Synoptic Gospels
- The Gospel of Mark
- The Gospel of Matthew
- The Gospel of Luke
- The Gospel of John
- Acts
- The New Testament of the Early Church

BIBLE CANON:

The books of the Bible have been entrusted to the religious authorities, and it has been their solemn duty to guard the Bible's integrity, to determine the authentic canonical books, to lay down the accepted norms of interpretation, and to pronounce the last word on the understanding of controversial texts. The Bible is a collection of divinely inspired books produced over hundreds of years by human authors and editors. Some of these authors have been identified, but many others have been lost to history. The books of the Old Testament are of composite authorship - few were written by the names they bear. Most of them have been edited and re-edited many times.

Though there was broad agreement among early Christians about which books belonged in the Biblical canon of scripture, this agreement was not always unanimous. The first Church Father to list the currently accepted 27 books of the New Testament was St. Athanasius in 367. The canon of the New Testament refers to those books of the Bible that were evaluated and found doctrinally sound by the early Church Fathers at the Council of Carthage in 397. These books were found to be authoritative, prophetic, and consistent with God's truth. In creating the canon of the New Testament, it was the intention to include only those writings of origin from the apostles.

The canon of the Old Testament had already been established by the time of Jesus. These books included the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. All sorts of literature are to be found in the Old Testament:

- **Legal** - the Pentateuch (Jewish name Torah; the first five books of the Hebrew Bible - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).
- **Historical** - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.
- **Prophetic** - the major and minor prophets.

- **Wisdom** - Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
- **Devotional** - Psalms.

Several Church councils in the latter part of the fourth century (in the years of 387, 392 and 393) listed all of the books of the Biblical canon, comprising both Old and New Testaments, that were accepted until challenged during the Protestant Reformation more than eleven centuries later. The Protestants reduced the total number of books of both Testaments from 73 down to 66.

Differences in the number of books in the Bible vary according to the different religious traditions – Jewish, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant. The Christian Churches all agree to the 27 books of the New Testament. Protestant Churches around the time of the Reformation tended to accept only those books of the Old Testament (or parts of these books) that were believed to have been written in Hebrew. Generally, there were 39 of these. Roman Catholics have traditionally accepted 46 books of the Old Testament that were included in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint – these 7 additional books, called the Apocrypha (the “hidden books”), were originally written in Greek during the period between the Old and New Testaments. The Greek language as used in these books of the Bible is not the classical Greek as we know it today, but a dialect spread throughout the empire at the time of Alexander the Great.

Although providing some historical value, these apocryphal books of the Septuagint are generally not considered to be inspired by God and are therefore not accepted as authentic by most non-Catholic Christian churches. These uncertain writings include Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach (sometimes called Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch. Parts of Daniel, Esther, and other books have also fallen into this category. In Catholic Bibles, these “hidden books” are placed throughout the Old Testament following the tradition of the Septuagint. Protestants tend not to include them at all, though some recent Protestant Bibles include these 7 books and the various parts of others in a separate section at the end of the Bible, while others insert them between the Old and the New Testaments.

Of the 66 books that make up the Christian Protestant Bible, the first 39 books that make up the Old Testament were written between 1500 years and 400 years BC. The second part comprising the 27 books of the New Testament were written primarily in Greek between 50 years and 100 years AD. Most of the books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew, while all of the New Testament, excepting some of Matthew, was written in Greek. The books of Wisdom and 2 Maccabees were also written in Greek. Portions of the book of Daniel, Ezra, Jeremiah, and Esther, and all of Tobit, Judith, and the gospel of Matthew were written in Aramaic.

BOOKS OF THE CHRISTIAN PROTESTANT BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT

LAW:

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

HISTORY:

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles

- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther

POETRY/WISDOM:

- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon

MAJOR PROPHETS:

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel

- Daniel

MINOR PROPHETS:

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

NEW TESTAMENT

GOSPELS:

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

HISTORY:

- Acts

PAUL'S LETTERS:

- Romans
- 1 Corinthians

- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

GENERAL LETTERS:

- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude

PROPHECY:

- Revelation

BIBLE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSLATIONS:

The Old Testament

Before the first millennium BC, there was not much writing among the Jews. Tradition was preserved by oral transmission from generation to generation. Among the oldest portions of the Old Testament are poems quoted from the lost “Book of Jashar”, “Book of the Word of Jahweh”, and a number of others (see Joshua 10:12,13). The oldest prose in the Old Testament is probably the narrative of the establishment of the kingdom of David followed by the Elijah stories and the reign of Jehu (842-815 BC). The writing of the historical books of the Old Testament began about 600 BC, their authors having had access to the lost book of “The Acts of the Kings of Judah and Israel” (see 2Chron. 25:26).

The books of the Old Testament are of composite authorship – few of these were actually written by the names they bear. Often these attributions of authorship were in reality a form of honorary dedication to the inspirational lives and words of the person whose name graces the title of the book. Most of these books have been edited and re-edited many times. With the advent of a written record, many of the oral traditions before 1000 BC were incorporated into these texts (see the “Song of Deborah” [Judg. 5], the “Song of Lamech” [Gen. 4:23], the “Song of Miriam” [Ex. 15:21], and the “Ode to the Ark” [Num. 10:35]).

The ninth and eighth centuries BC. saw the established framework of the books of Genesis, Hosea, Micah, and parts of Isaiah and Amos, while the seventh century BC. saw the arrival of Deuteronomy, Zephaniah, parts of Jeremiah, Nahum, and the first edition of the Book of Kings. Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Lamentations, the second edition of Kings, Haggai, Zechariah and the revised stories of Joshua, Judges and Samuel followed in the sixth century BC. The fifth century BC. saw Obadiah, Malachi, Ruth, and parts of Joel, while the fourth century BC. saw Proverbs and Joel. The third century BC. introduced Chronicles, Esther, Song of Solomon, Jonah and Ecclesiastes. Finally, the second century BC. added Daniel and the completed collection of Psalms. As this treasure of books came to full fruition, the Hebrew writers had well-earned their reputation for having produced the greatest literature of the ancient east – in fact it was the greatest religious literature of all time up to the appearance of the New Testament.

The first five books of the Old Testament are known as the Pentateuch (also known as the “Law” or the “Torah”) and they had been collated into final text by the fifth century BC. The sacred history of the Torah was formed within the bosom of early Israel, guided by the spirit of God. It was sung beside the desert campfires, it was commemorated during the liturgical feasts such as Passover, and it was transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation until it was finally brought together in writing. Although the writings of these five books are attributed to Moses, it is unrealistic to assign this authorship to him in a literal sense. Moses’ role was inspirational figurehead as lawgiver to God’s people – all later legislation is conceived in his spirit.

Theory has it that the Pentateuch was compiled in completion using at least four different sources of documents that piece it together. These documentary sources bring their own individual characteristics, their own theological viewpoints, and they are sometimes identifiable by tracing the divine names for God, such as Elohim and Jahweh (Jehovah). In 1753, attention was called to these alternating names for God in Genesis – Elohim and Jahweh. The claim pointed to two authors. Over the next hundred years, several scholars claimed that the Pentateuch was a compilation of “fragments.” In 1858 Hermann Hupfeld, a Protestant German commentator, claimed that there were two main source documents - the Elohim and the Jahweh narratives. In 1865, the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis (JEPD Theory) recognized the Elohim document (E) and the Jahweh (J) and claimed that the book found in the temple by Josiah was Deuteronomy (D) and that the editorial additions of the priests during and after the exile represented a fourth (P) factor.

The two oldest books of the Pentateuch, Genesis and Exodus, were thought to have begun their evolution by the eighth century BC, though they may have roots older than this. This ancient history comes from a time when the twelve tribes of Moses’ people had settled into two different kingdoms – Judah in the south and Israel in the north. The sources of the writings of Genesis and Exodus are the locales for these original Bible sources designated “J” originating from the kingdom of Judah while the “E” source was believed to have originated from within the kingdom of Israel. The earlier “J” document represents the tradition of the southern tribes with Hebron as its center, probably originating about 1000 BC. J uses the name Jahweh (Jehovah) by which God revealed himself to the Israelites at Sinai. The people of the J document entered Canaan from the East over Jordan at Jericho. They seemed to know very little about Moses. Sinai is the center of their history. In Genesis, the J source provides for the continuity of the book by virtue of its reason and its antiquity, continually drawing attention to the working out of God’s design through his interventions in the affairs of men.

The “E” document is found primarily in fragmentary form, using Elohim as the generic name for God. It likely originates about 700 B.C. following the fall of Samaria. In the E document, Jahweh is unknown until revealed by Moses, and Hebron is never mentioned. The Mosaic Covenant is given at Mt. Horeb. The Jordan is not crossed at Jericho but at Adamah. After crossing the Jordan, they go straight to Shechem. E depicts God’s manifestations through visions and dreams rather than direct theophanies. Angels are God’s intermediaries with men. It was designed to harmonize the J document with the traditions of the tribes having their center at Schechem. The Jahwist is concrete, imaginative, using many anthropomorphisms in its theological approach. Its narrative is made up of many disparate stories that have been reoriented and given a meaning within the context in which they now stand. In contrast, the Elohist is both sober and moralistic in tone.

Another source is “P” for Priestly document which represents the exilic and post-exilic additions of the priesthood. It emphasizes genealogies, lists and chronological data that construct the framework of Genesis and binds its content together. To the J and E sources, it adds such legal institutions as the Sabbath rest, circumcision and the binding covenants between God and man. P is theologically severe in tone and makes Jerusalem the center of Jewish life. After the successive exiles of the Jews from Israel and Judah, the writings of the

Priestly tradition P were inserted into Genesis and Exodus with the addition of two books – Numbers and Leviticus.

Compared to J's Jahweh and E's Elohim, P's Jahweh is more awesome and less approachable a personal deity; this is understandable in light of the people's recent exile from their promised land in Canaan. P's view of God is that he is beyond human perception. One can only glimpse the ineffable "glory" of God. Obviously, the Jewish people in their traumatic exile felt they must have transgressed against their God, and it was to the Priests they turned to lead them back into God's good graces. The purpose of P was to build morale after the trauma of the exile, to elevate the priesthood, to preach holiness, and to revive the Sabbath observance.

D represents the Deuteronomic document as characterized by its intense oratory style and by certain principles on which it relies such as the centralization of worship in the Jerusalem temple. The book of Deuteronomy was purportedly rediscovered in the temple in 621 BC (see II Kings 22). It is a blend of prophetic and legal literature, expounding and explaining. Deuteronomy is Israel's first homiletic literature – a book of sermons and laws, characterized by both eloquence and dignity, one of the most polished and artistic of all Hebrew literature. Within the J and P traditions there are many individual units that make up their own history and life-setting directives before they were even brought together into the present more or less connected narrative. By the sixth century, J and E were tapestried, and JED was accepted as Scripture by all Hebrews.

Supporting the idea that the Pentateuch is a compilation of "fragments", consider some of the following parallels that repeat a common event or theme as reported from different sources:

- Abraham twice presents his wife as his sister. Gen. 12:11-14; 20:2-5
- Isaac did the same thing. Gen. 26:6-11
- Abraham three times receives promise of a son. Gen. 15:4; 17:16; 18:10
- Three accounts of Sarah and Abraham. Gen. 17:17-19; 18:12,13; 21:6
- Hagar twice expelled. Gen. 16:4-14; 21:9-21
- Jacob twice names Bethel. Gen. 28:19; 35:6,15
- Jacob's name twice changed to Israel. Gen. 32:28; 35:10
- Name Yahweh twice revealed to Moses. Ex. 3:14,15; 6:2,3
- Moses commissioned twice. Ex. 3:10-18; 6:11
- Moses twice hesitates to accept. Ex. 4:10-13; 6:12
- Twice Moses receives Aaron as spokesman. Ex. 4:14-16; 7:1,2
- Twice the quails are given. Ex. 16:13; Num. 11:31,32
- Twice water comes from the rock. Ex. 17:1-7. Num. 20:1-13
- At Sinai, Moses three times commands observance of the feasts.
- Man and woman created together. Gen. 1:26,27. This was after the completion of creation. In Gen. 2:7 man is created first, then the trees and animals; at last woman is made from Adam's rib. Gen. 2:21,22

- Noah told to take into the ark one pair of animals. Gen. 6:19,20. In Gen. 7:2,3 told to take seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean.
- Gen. 7:12 records rain on the earth 40 days. In 7:24, 150 days.
- Moses' father-in-law named Reuel in Ex. 2:18,21. In Num. 10:29, Hobab. In Ex- 3:1 and other places--Jethro.
- According to Num. 2 the sacred tent was in the "midst of the camp"; Ex- 33:7 says it was "outside the camp."
- In Numbers 13:27 the spies tell Moses Palestine is fertile. In verse 32 they say it is no good.
- In Numbers 22:20 God gives Balaam permission to go to the princes of Balak--in verse 22 God is angry because he went.
- In Josh. 2:15 Rahab's house was on the wall of Jericho which collapsed. In 6:22 Joshua directs they bring her out of the house.
- There are many inconsistencies in the laws.
- Gen. 25:26. Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born. In 26:34 Esau is forty years old, so Isaac is 100 years old at this time, when he blesses Jacob on his deathbed. But according to 35:28 he did not die until he was 180--he was 80 years dying.

No original manuscripts of the Old Testament (or the New Testament for that matter) are in existence today. The Samaritan Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Old Testament) is a document that possibly dates back as early as the fourth century BC. It is interesting to note that there are 6000 differences between the text of this manuscript and that of later Hebrew versions. A complete manuscript of the entire Old Testament dates back to 1008 AD. The Dead Sea Scrolls (discovered 1947 in a cave near Jericho) has biblical fragments that date back as far as the fifth century BC. The oldest surviving manuscript of any part of the New Testament is a papyrus fragment containing verses from John 18; scholars estimate it was written about 125 AD.

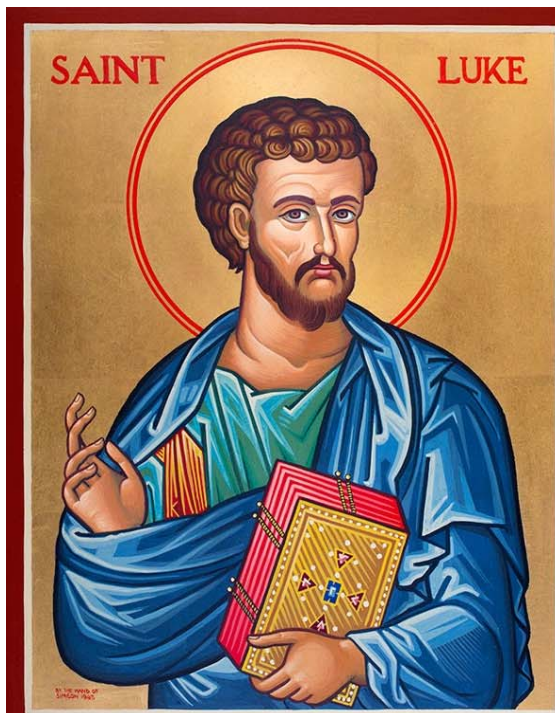
The Massoretes were of school of textual scholars who devoted themselves to the protection of the Hebrew Scriptural text, functioning up to the tenth century AD. They created vowel sounds and punctuation for the original Hebrew text (which lacked these distinctions). The first Hebrew text with vowel sounds was published in AD 1488. The Septuagint (LXX) is the oldest of the Greek translations of the Old Testament, being initiated in 250 BC and completed about 100 BC for the Alexandrian library. It was widely used in Palestine and the Greek-speaking peoples of the Mediterranean world during the time of Jesus and for the first century and longer into the Christian era. This was the version of the apostles, Paul and the early Christians. Quotations incorporated in the New Testament came from this source.

The Synoptic Gospels

The first witness to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ was oral rather than written. These oral traditions were preached and passed on by the Apostles (“apostle” means one who is sent) and others who knew the Master personally. Once the faith had spread throughout the Roman world and beyond, portions of this oral tradition were committed to writing and circulated among the scattered regional churches. These writings were usually recognized as reliable and authoritative accounts. By the mid-second century, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had all been accepted as reliable and divinely inspired.

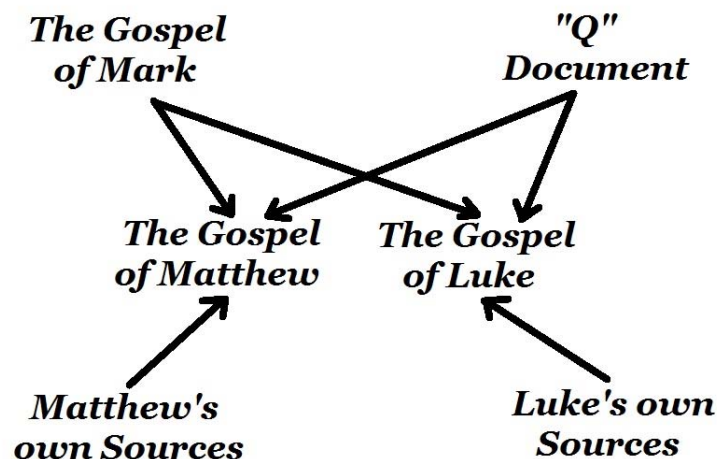
The first three of the canonical Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – are so similar at many points when viewed together, particularly when arranged in parallel columns or lines, that they have been called the “synoptic” Gospels. The fourth Gospel, John, often differs significantly from the synoptics in outline and approach.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke rely in large part on the older Gospel according to Mark and upon a large body of material (principally, the sayings of Jesus) not found in Mark. Bible scholars call this source material “Q” probably from the first letter of the German word Quelle meaning “source”. Q represents traditions, written and oral, used by both Matthew and Luke. Matthew’s gospel also contains material that is found only within itself (often designated “M”) that was available to the author. And some material present only in Luke might have come from an also unknown L source. Luke mentions that he knows of other written sources of Jesus’ life, and that he has investigated them to gather the most comprehensive information.



*“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were **eyewitnesses** and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully **investigated** everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an **orderly account** for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the **certainty** of the things you have been taught.” [Luke 1:1]*

By putting the two Gospels of Matthew and Luke beside that of Mark, scholars realized that when Matthew and Luke are telling the story about Jesus, for the most part they both follow the order and often even the wording of Mark. But, into this common narrative outline, Matthew and Luke each insert extra sayings and teachings of Jesus. Although Matthew and Luke do not put these sayings in the same order, they still each repeat many of the same sayings, often word for word. Since it seems unlikely that either Matthew or Luke could have copied from the other, it appears to be that Matthew and Luke each had two sources in common: The Gospel of Mark and another Gospel, now lost, a collection of sayings known only as Q.



Q is part of the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but not in the Gospel of Mark. According to this hypothesis, this material was drawn from the early oral tradition. For most scholars, Q accounts for what Matthew and Luke share - sometimes in exactly the same words - but that are absent in Mark. It is reasonable to deduce that Q was written in Greek. If the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which were both written in Greek were referring to a document that had been written in some other language (Aramaic for example), it is highly unlikely that two independent translations would have exactly the same wording.

In the early twentieth century, more than a dozen reconstructions of Q were attempted. But these reconstructions differed so much from each other that, as a result, interest in Q subsided and it was neglected for many decades. In the 1960s, after translations of a newly discovered and analogous sayings collection, the Gospel of Thomas became available from the Nag Hammadi Library. This burst of interest after the Gospel of Thomas's discovery led to increasingly more sophisticated literary reconstructions of Q. These reconstructed Qs do not describe the events of Jesus' life: Q does not mention Jesus' birth, his selection of the 12 Apostles, his crucifixion, or the resurrection. Instead, it appears to be a collection of Jesus' sayings and quotations.

Once Q's text was incorporated into the body of Matthew and Luke, it would no longer be necessary to preserve it. During the second century, when the canonizing process of the

Gospels was taking place, scribes would not make new copies of Q - they would prefer to make copies of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, where the sayings of Jesus from Q were properly scrutinized to avoid misunderstandings.

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel attributed to Matthew is the record of the Master's life which was written for the edification of Jewish Christians. This gospel constantly seeks to show in Jesus' life that much which he did was a fulfillment of that which was foretold by the prophets. Matthew's Gospel portrays Jesus as a son of David, picturing him as showing great respect for the law and the prophets. Scholars have doubted that Matthew wrote this Gospel himself because it does not seem that the author was an eyewitness to the events reported therein. More likely, it was a follower of Matthew who is responsible for this narrative basing it on Matthew's remembrances and then attributing this work, as was the common practice, to him in honor of his memory. They believe it was written about 75 to 80 AD.

The Gospel of Matthew was renowned among the available Christian documents. The position of the Gospel according to Matthew as the first of the four gospels in the New Testament reflects the esteem by which it was held by the early church. No other gospel was so frequently quoted in the non-canonical literature of earliest Christianity. Likely written for the edification of Jewish Christians, Jesus' work is constantly presented as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy - "that it might be fulfilled." This Gospel begins with a genealogy of Jesus who is portrayed as a son of David and as exalting the law and the prophets. Matthew is a complete and well-organized version of Jesus' life and teaching. Matthew is also a literary reorganization of Mark's chronological narrative. Matthew reproduces 90 per cent of Mark's material. Some features of Matthew are original, not to be found in Mark or elsewhere in earlier records.

The Gospel of Mark

Mark's Gospel is the earliest, briefest and most simple record of Jesus' life. He presented the Master as a minister, as a man among men. Scholars believe the book was written by Mark sometime between A.D. 64 and 85. As Mark was personally familiar with Peter, and later on with Paul, it is thought to be the Gospel most influenced by the teachings of Peter and the oral traditions of the church at Rome. Jesus' ministry to the people is highlighted by his exemplary humanity.

The original manuscript of this record by Mark has since been lost to church historians. This record is believed to have undergone numerous passage amendments that were documented in later copies as these were later shared with the other embryonic churches as established by Paul throughout the Roman Mediterranean basin. Mark's gospel was the written foundation for all subsequent Gospel narratives.

The Gospel of Luke

Luke, the physician of Antioch in Pisidia, was a gentile convert of Paul, and he presented a largely original telling of the Master's life. He began to follow Paul and learn of the life and teachings of Jesus in 47 AD. Luke preserves much of the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" in his record as he gathered up these facts from Paul and others. Luke presents the Master as "the friend of publicans and sinners." As material for the compilation of his Gospel, Luke first depended upon the story of Jesus' life as Paul had related it to him. But Luke had other sources of information. He interviewed scores of eyewitnesses to the numerous episodes of Jesus' life which he records.

Luke wrote more than one quarter of the whole New Testament - the book of Luke and the Acts. Luke was an educated man, a physician, a gentile convert, and sometime companion of Paul. He was with Paul on parts of both the second and third missionary tours. He was undoubtedly Paul's private physician - as Paul suffered from several physical ailments. Paul called him the "beloved physician." [Col. 4:14].

Luke was a good reporter and a capable historian. Along with recording the facts of Jesus' life as related by Paul, he talked with many eyewitnesses of Jesus' lifework. Luke desired to write a narrative of the same facts contained within Matthew and Mark bolstered by the accounts and information of eyewitnesses – this implies that he himself was not a witness to Jesus' life in the flesh. He also included information from the Apostles' preachings. Luke had available to him the documents of Matthew, Mark, and Q. About one-third of his Gospel comes from Mark. Along with Matthew, he derives much from Q (252 verses), but almost half of Luke is original. It was never intended that the book of Acts should be separated from The Gospel of Luke.

The Gospel of John

John is the "crown of the New Testament." It is the most simple and yet the most profound of all the New Testament books. It is the philosophical and theological Gospel - the story is subordinated to theological doctrine. The Gospel according to John relates much of Jesus' work in Judea and around Jerusalem which is not contained in the other records. When this record was made, John had the other Gospels, and he saw that much had been omitted.

The Gospel according to John is the latest of the four Gospels to have been committed to writing and is quite different in character from the three synoptic gospels. He very likely had for his availability the other three Gospels, and it is likely he undertook his own version to fill in the missing gaps as he remembered them. It is highly literary and symbolic work. It does not follow the same order or reproduce the same stories as the synoptic gospels. To a much greater degree, it is a product of a developed theological reflection, and it grows out of a different environment and tradition.

It was probably written in the 90's of the first century AD. The whole Gospel of John is a progressive revelation of the glory of God's only Son who comes to reveal the Father and

then returns in glory to the Father. The prologue outright proclaims Jesus as the preexistent and incarnate “Word of God.”

.....

All of the writers of the Gospels present sincere attempts to recollect the life and teachings of Jesus as they personally witnessed, remembered or learned from the many oral traditions. And to various degrees, they were affected by the developing theology of Paul’s own theology as expressed in his letters to the early core of scattered Christian churches.

Acts

At a very early date, it appears that the four Gospels were united in one collection, possibly having been brought together very soon after the writing of the Gospel according to John. This fourfold collection was known originally as 'The Gospel' narrated in four records, distinguished as 'according to Matthew,' 'according to Mark,' and so on. The arrangement of the New Testament canon that was finally adopted, with the four gospels grouped together at the beginning followed by Luke’s Acts, provides a massive focus upon Jesus and allows Acts to serve as a framework for the letters of Paul that follow. This order, however, conceals the fact that Luke’s two volumes, his gospel and Acts, were intended by their author to go together. It also obscures the fact that Paul’s letters were written before any of the gospels, though the sayings and ideas of Jesus undergird all of the New Testament writings.

Acts occupies a very important place in the New Testament canon, being the pivotal book of the New Testament linking the Gospels with Paul’s Epistles, and, by its record of the conversion, call, and missionary service of Paul, showed clearly how real an Apostolic authority lay behind the Pauline Epistles. The collection of Paul's letters was brought together about the same time as the collecting of the fourfold Gospel. Before long, the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews was bound up with the Pauline writings. Acts, as a matter of convenience, came to be bound up with the 'General Epistles' (those of Peter, James, John and Jude).

The New Testament of the Early Church

In the early days of Christianity, many writings on Jesus were in circulation. Their authenticity was often scrutinized, and the Church ordered many of them to be “expunged” (removed completely). Some of these texts had been well preserved because of their popularity (such as the Letter of Barnabas), but many others were regarded in disrepute where only fragments of them survived. Perhaps a hundred of these texts were suppressed. Works such as Thomas's Gospel and Barnabas's Gospel, the Gospels of the Nazarenes, the Gospels of the Hebrews and the Gospels of the Egyptians were known known through quotations cited by the early Fathers of the Church.

The early Christian church started out with the present-day canon of the Old Testament and Apocrypha as its Bible. The early New Testament collections were written in Greek and consisted of a half dozen separate books: the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), Acts and Revelation. Paul wrote ten letters (the Epistles) to seven churches (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica) in response to a variety of urgent needs and certain situations requiring immediate address. These letters were circulated in one book while the gospels were contained in a separate book. A few of the shorter Epistles not written by Paul (e.g. 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude) and the Revelation attributed to John were much longer in being generally accepted while a number of books which we do not now include in the New Testament were onetime received as canonical. The Codex Sinaiticus included the 'Epistle of Barnabas' and the Shepherd of Hermas, a Roman work of about 110 AD or earlier, while the Codex Alexandrinus included the writings known as the First and Second Epistles of Clement.

About 125 AD, Marcion used the gospel of Luke and Paul's letters as a new Bible, while Irenaeus of Lyons (180 AD) pronounced the New Testament to consist of the four gospels, Acts, the letters of Paul, Peter, and John, and the Shepherd of Hermas. Tertullian of Carthage (197-223 AD) added Jude to this scripture while rejecting the Shepherd of Hermas. Hebrews was the last book to gain inclusion and acceptance. In 367, Athanasius of Alexandria prepared a list of the accepted New Testament Books. This is the New Testament as we have it today.

New Testament Books Treated as Traditional Scripture by Early Writers

| Marcion (b. 85) | Irenaeus (b. 130) | Origen (b. 185) | Athanasius (b. 296) |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Matthew | Matthew | Matthew |
| | Mark | Mark | Mark |
| Luke | Luke | Luke | Luke |
| | John | John | John |
| | Acts | Acts | Acts |
| Romans | Romans | Romans | Romans |
| 1 Corinthians | 1 Corinthians | 1 Corinthians | 1 Corinthians |
| 2 Corinthians | 2 Corinthians | 2 Corinthians | 2 Corinthians |
| Galatians | Galatians | Galatians | Galatians |
| Ephesians | Ephesians | Ephesians | Ephesians |
| Philippians | Philippians | Philippians | Philippians |
| Colossians | Colossians | Colossians | Colossians |
| 1 Thessalonians | 1 Thessalonians | 1 Thessalonians | 1 Thessalonians |
| 2 Thessalonians | 2 Thessalonians | 2 Thessalonians | 2 Thessalonians |
| | 1 Timothy | 1 Timothy | 1 Timothy |
| | 2 Timothy | 2 Timothy | 2 Timothy |
| | Titus | Titus | Titus |
| Philemon | Philemon | Philemon | Philemon |
| | Hebrews | Hebrews | Hebrews |
| | James | James | James |
| | 1 Peter | 1 Peter | 1 Peter |
| | 2 Peter | 2 Peter | 2 Peter |
| | 1 John | 1 John | 1 John |
| | 2 John | 2 John | 2 John |
| | 3 John | 3 John | 3 John |
| | Jude | Jude | Jude |
| | Revelation | Revelation | Revelation* |

* The Revelation of John was first received and then rejected by many churches in Asia Minor.

The first Bible version in Latin (the “Old Latin”) originated in Carthage 250 AD, while the Vulgate (produced by St. Jerome) has been the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church ever since Jerome created it. Pope Damasus assigned St. Jerome to revise and correct a Latin New Testament which was completed in Rome about 383-4. After spending 34 years in the

Holy Land, Jerome occupied himself with translating the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin. These two versions of the Old and New Testaments comprise the finished Vulgate, or “people’s” Bible. Pope Damasus accepted Jerome’s Bible, and the New Testament of 27 books was finally settled for the western church.

By the ninth century, Jerome’s version was universally accepted. In 1450, Gutenberg had developed the art of printing so well that he was ready to print his very first book, the Bible in the Latin Vulgate translation. After final printing and binding, over 200 copies of this Bible were prepared by 1452. However, during the Middle Ages many New Testament versions in Germany, Spain, and England presented minor variations.

On April 8, 1546 at the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church formally designated the Vulgate as the official version of the Church. The rejected books became the New Testament Apocrypha (“hidden books”). While corrections were made to the Vulgate in 1592 under Pope Clement VIII, the Catholics have only recently made a more comprehensive Revised Version of the Vulgate.

The first translations of the whole Bible into English began in Britain when the Venerable Bede and Egbert made translations of the Lord’s Prayer, Apostle’s Creed and the gospels in the eighth century. Between 721 and 901, various writers are believed to have translated parts or all of the Bible into Old English. At great personal risk from church authorities and the Vatican who believed the Bible should only be read and spoken in Latin, the first English Bible was translated by Wycliffe (1324-1384) and published in 1382. It remained the only English Bible until the sixteenth century. This version was translated indirectly from the Latin Vulgate. Wycliffe died a natural death, but the Council of Constance (1415) ordered his bones and books burned.

William Tyndale (1484-1536) was one of the first Protestant translators of the Bible from the original Greek versions then available rather than from the traditional Vulgate. He printed the New Testament in 1525 at Cologne, but after imprisonment in Brussels he was burned at the stake in 1536. The situation soon changed when King Henry VIII broke away from the authority of the Vatican and established the Anglican Church. With the backing of King Henry VIII, Cromwell and Archbishop Latimer, Miles Coverdale (1488-1568) published the first printed English Bible in 1535. The first authorized English Bible “approved to be read in churches” was known as Cranmer’s “Great Bible” of 1539, though it was largely restricted to the upper classes. This was the first Bible “approved to be read in churches.” In 1546 the English began to burn all Bibles except this “Great Bible.”

The Bible as originally set down was not divided into chapter and verse as we know it today. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury in the thirteenth century, first divided the Bible into chapters. Santes Pagninus divided the Old Testament chapters into verses in 1528, and Robert Etienne, a printer in Paris, did the same for the New Testament in 1551. With the rise of Luther’s Reformation and the expansion of the Protestant movement, there appeared the Geneva Bible as translated into English by the brother-in-law of Calvin. This Bible reflected the distinctive theology of Calvin and Knox and was the most scholarly and accurate of all English translations up to this time. It was also the first English Bible with

complete division into chapters and verses. This was the Bible of Shakespeare and the Pilgrim Fathers.

When King James I ascended to the throne of England in 1603, various Protestant Bibles in English were in circulation. The highly regarded King James Bible was initiated in 1604 and published in 1611. It was produced by a corps of 50 translators and became the Bible of the Protestant world for 250 years, having had a great influence on the English language and culture. It wasn't until the publishing of the English Revised Version in 1885 that there was a serious alternative to the King James Version – over 30,000 editorial changes were made to this new text.

Today we have numerous English translations of the Christian Bible to choose from, each based on their own methodologies of approach. Literal translations of the Bible seek to translate the original Greek and Hebrew in a word for word manner. These include the King James Version (KJV), the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New American Standard (NAS), and the New King James Version (NKJV). Paraphrase translations of the Bible seek to present the ideas in the original text accurately as possible in modern phraseology. These include the Living Bible (LB) and The Message (by Eugene Peterson). Dynamic translations attempt a balance of both literal and paraphrase translations. These include the New International Version (NIV) [which is used throughout this book], the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), and the New American Bible (NAB).

CHAPTER TWO BIBLE HISTORY

Genesis

The Age of the Patriarchs – 2000 to 1500 B.C.

The Age of Moses – 1350 to 1250 B.C.

The Judges of Israel – 1220 to 1020 B.C.

The Early Monarchy – 1020 to 922 B.C.

The Divided Kingdom and the Rise of Prophecy – 922 to 722 B.C.

The Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles – 722 to 539 B.C.

The Persian Period – 539 to 336 B.C.

The Hellenistic to Maccabean Periods – 336 to 63 B.C.

The Roman Period and the Time of Jesus – 63 B.C. to A.D. 135

GENESIS:

The Book of “Genesis” (Hebrew: “In [the] beginning”) is the first book of the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament. It can be divided into two parts, the “primeval history” (chapters 1–11) and the “ancestral history” (chapters 12–50). The primeval history sets out the concepts of the nature of the Deity and of humankind's relationship with its maker. God creates a world which is good and fit for mankind; but when man corrupts it with sin, God decides to destroy his creation, saving only the righteous Noah to reestablish the relationship between man and God. The ancestral history (chapters 12–50) relates the prehistory of Israel, God's chosen people. At God's command, Noah's descendant Abraham journeys from his home at Ur of the Chaldeans into the land of Canaan, given to him by God. In this promised land, he dwells as a sojourner as does his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. Jacob's name is changed to Israel (“May God prevail”, “God perseveres”), and through the agency of his son Joseph, the children of Israel descend into Egypt (70 people in all with their households), and God promises them a future of greatness. Genesis ends with Israel's descendants in Egypt, ready for the coming of Moses and the Exodus. The narrative is punctuated by a series of covenants with God, successively narrowing in scope from all mankind (the covenant with Noah) to a special relationship with one people alone (Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob).

The history of the Jewish people is a story of a recurring pattern of captivity, exodus and restoration. There are two eras of captivities recorded in the Old Testament and two accounts of an exodus of the Jewish people from their captivity. The first captivity and great exodus was Israel's experience with Egypt at the time of Moses ending with the creation of the chosen people of God as a faithful and worshiping community. The purpose of the Egyptian exodus was for the creation of God's people as a faithful, worshipping community. The second captivity was Israel's experience with Assyria and Babylon (722-539 B.C.).

THE AGE OF THE PATRIARCHS – 2000 to 1500 B.C.:

Archaeology has contributed much to confirm the Bible record of these times of the Patriarchs. The more recent Mari tablets have in many ways confirmed the Bible story of these times. The ancient city of Mari, located in northern Syria, was a thriving metropolis ca. 2800-1760 BC. An archive of about 15,000 texts from the final years of Mari provides a detailed insight into the common social, economic and legal practices of that time. The findings at Mari show that the Patriarchal narratives accurately reflect the socioeconomic conditions of that time and place. The Patriarchal view of God was highly anthropomorphic - Yahweh often appeared to these Patriarchs in a very human form. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would appear to them in various manifestations, including in human form. He would consult with them regarding their many day-to-day concerns. Yahweh came to live in their tents; Abraham was called “a friend of God.” Abraham pleads with God over Sodom and Gomorrah:



Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me... Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?... Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.” Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?”
[Gen. 18:20,21,23,25-28]

Abraham is often considered the patriarch of monotheism and the common father of the Jews, Christians and Muslims. Mohammed the prophet of Islam came from the nations originating from the seed of Ishmael, the firstborn son of Abraham through the Egyptian slave handmaiden Hagar of Abraham’s wife Sarah (see Gen. 16:1,2).

I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.
[Gen. 21:13]

Muslims recognize Ishmael as the rightful firstborn of Abraham, deserving all of the rights of a firstborn male regardless that there may be later children from different wives and consorts. Mohammed therefore is considered to have come rightfully from the progeny of Abraham through Ishmael.

He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double share of all that he has. That son is the first sign of his father's strength.

[Deut. 21:17]

God promises Abraham that it will be through his second son Isaac that he will build his chosen people, the Israelites, through which his covenant will be carried out. Through his second son, Isaac, came all the Israelite patriarchs such as Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus. These great biblical figures were part of God's great promises to bless all of the nations of earth through the descendants of Abraham.

Abraham's God was the high God of Canaan sometimes called El Shaddai (God of the mountain) and El Elyon (the "Most High" God). The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was a friendly and personable God who would speak to them in dreams and would sometimes appear as a divine apparition (an epiphany) even assuming human form. Abraham is recognized as a man of great faith because he put his complete trust in God, believing that he would make good on his promises.

The brothers of Joseph, all sons of Jacob, sold him into Egypt as a slave. After a number of personal setbacks, Joseph eventually rose to a position of great power, second only to Pharaoh. Joseph learns to see God's larger plan to protect his family – his father Jacob (Israel) and the families of his eleven brothers – from a prolonged famine in Canaan.

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

[Gen. 50:20]

Joseph's extended family moves to Egypt and thrives for many generations. However, after 400 years, the Israelites had greatly multiplied to a population of over a million strong, and they had been denigrated to doing hard physical labor under conditions of near slavery.

THE AGE OF MOSES – 1350 to 1250 B.C.:

In Pharaoh's Egypt, the Israelites have become a growing and worrisome minority. Their value as a labor force was realized, but their overall numbers were now robust, and they were being seen as a threat.



The Israelites have become too numerous for us...So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor...But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.

[Ex. 1:9,11,12]

Egypt's Pharaoh attempts population control by ordering a form of selective infanticide whereby male newborns were to receive neglectful birthing care from the available midwives, but the midwives feared God and did not follow the orders of the Pharaoh.

The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.

[Ex. 1:17]

Moses killed an Egyptian who had struck a Hebrew laborer, and then fled to the East, where he lived with the Kenites. Moses there marries Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro. She bears him two sons. Moses then returns to Egypt and with his brother Aaron as his spokesman. There he initiates plans for the liberation of the Hebrews.

The Jewish peoples break out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. After the people's exodus from Egypt and their crossing of the Red Sea, the Lord gives the law to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai through Moses who mediates God's covenant with his chosen people. Hebrew religion starts at Mount Sinai ("Horeb"). Moses' father-in-law Jethro helped him organize the "multitudes." The God of Moses has become Jahweh Sabbath, the God of Armies, who is a jealous tribal deity with partisan compassion only for his chosen people, the Israelites. He becomes a brutal, partial and lethal God. Moses convinces the Israelites that Jahweh is the authoritative God of Israel, one and the same as El, the beloved God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But Jahweh, unlike El, inspires awesome fear and respectful distance.



On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.
[Exodus 19:16-19]

Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.” And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”
[Ex. 33:18-20]

When there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord.
[Num. 12:6-8]

Yahweh becomes a “God of history,” the God “who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” Yahweh’s new covenant with Moses is based on his oath to Abraham. From start to finish, the nature of Yahweh is holiness. In those days, the Hebrews admitted the existence of other gods, but Yahweh was the great “God of Israel” and he was a “jealous God.” The battle cry was: “You shall have no other God before me.” The Ten Commandments became the “hub” of all their law and the ark containing the Ten Commandments became the vital feature of their faith in their tribal God. The tabernacle “tent” became the center of their worship.

Moses did not enter the Promised Land, but he was allowed to view it from a distance at Mt. Nebo (Pisgah) (Deut, 32:49). Moses was buried in Moab. He had a “special resurrection” (Jude 9). Joshua (Moses’ assistant who became the leader of the Israelite tribes after the death of Moses) spearheaded the taking control of the Promised Land. When Moses turned over the command of the Hebrews to Joshua, he had already gathered up thousands of the collateral descendants of Abraham, Nahor, Lot, and other of the related tribes and had whipped them into a self-sustaining and partially self-regulating nation of pastoral warriors.

The Israelites had a choice between Jahweh and the indigenous gods of Canaan. The history of the Israelites in Canaan depicts the struggles of Jahweh to maintain sole and dominant focus of his people, to cast away and banish all other alien gods.

THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL – 1220 to 1020 B.C.:

God was Israel’s true leader, while the judges were his spokespersons to the people and the administrators of justice throughout the land. A judge was both a political and a religious leader. This period of the “Judges of Israel” spans the time between Joshua (approx. 1220 BC) to the beginning of Saul’s reign as the first king of the Israelites (1020 BC). God’s legacy of judges was an era of elected advocacy – it was their mission to lead his people and inspire them to be true in their devoted allegiance to their Lord.

Before the coming of Moses’ Israelites, Canaan was a land of many peoples - Huerians, Hittites, Canaanites, and Phoenicians. During much of these early times, Canaan existed as an Egyptian province. There was much “intermixing” of marriage, religion, and culture between the arriving Israelites and the Canaanites. Baal, god of fertility, was the primary god native to the land. Yahweh sought to continually establish his superiority over Baal. But the two gods coexisted together for a long time. The Israelites worshiped Yahweh as their chief Deity, but also paid some sort of homage to Baal in order to insure good crops and many cattle. As the Hebrews turned more and more to agriculture, they became progressively tainted with Baalism. Hosea 2:8 tells of those who looked to Baal for the grain and the wine. Gradually Yahweh eventually absorbs all of Baal’s titles and functions. Yahweh gives rain, grain, and wine. Yahweh has manifested as the “Lord of nature” (see I Kings 18 and 19. Hos 2).

The Book of Judges earns its title from the twelve heroes of Israel whose deeds it records. As needed, they served as military leaders sent by God to aid and relieve his people in times of trials and tribulation. Six of them – Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Jephtah and Samson – are treated in extended detail and have accordingly been styled the “major judges.” The other six, of whose activities this book preserves only a summary record, are called the “minor judges.”

There are two other judges, Eli and Samuel, whose judgeships are described in 1 Samuel. They appear to have ruled the entire nation of Israel just prior to the institution of the monarchy. The twelve leaders written about in the Book of Judges likely exercised their

authority over just one or another tribe of Israel, never over the entire nation. These books purpose to show that the fortunes of Israel depended upon the obedience or disobedience of the people to God. Whenever they rebelled against him, they were oppressed by the pagan nations; when they repented, God raised up judges to deliver them.

Samuel was the last and the greatest in a long line of Israel's judges. Samuel was all together prophet, priest and judge over Israel. He grew up assisting the high priest Eli in the people's tabernacle. Samuel's influence and leadership led to a successive monarchy of kings lasting nearly 300 years. Samuel became a counselor to Saul, Israel's first king. It was Samuel who anointed Saul and David, the first two kings of Israel:

The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.
[1Sam. 3:19,20]

Samuel declared that the Lord God of Israel was the upholder of all reality. The onetime exalted spirit of Horeb is revealed as an unchanging God of creator perfection. Under his teaching, the God of the Hebrews was beginning the ascent from an idea on the order of the tribal gods to the ideal of an all-powerful and eternal Creator of all creation. And so, throughout all Palestine there sounded the call back to the worship of the supreme Yahweh. Ever this prophetic teacher proclaimed, "You are great, O Lord God, for there is none like you, neither is there any God beside you." And this gradual development of the concept of the character of Yahweh continued under the ministry of Samuel's successors.

THE EARLY MONARCHY – 1020 to 922 B.C.:

Samuel, the last of the charismatic religious judges, was instrumental in translating Israel under the leadership of the Judges to an institutionalized monarchy. The united kingships of Saul, David and Solomon later gives way to the divided monarchies of the separate kingdoms of Israel in the north and Judah in the south in the ninth century BC.

The twelve tribes of Israel had problems working together in united harmony because each tribe had its own leader and territory. It was hoped that a king would one day unite the tribes into one nation and one army. From God's point of view, what they vitally needed was a uniform faith, not a uniform rule. The coronation of an Israelite was the political act of establishing a king who would rule. The anointment of an Israelite king was the people's intended act of making the king God's representative to the people.

The king was always anointed by a priest or a prophet. The anointment oil was a mixture of virgin olive oil and rare expensive spices, being poured over the king's head to symbolize the presence and power of God's holy spirit during his reign – Israel's king was to answer to God's higher authority. The tribe of Judah was the largest of the twelve tribes of Israel. Most

of Israel's kings would come from Judah, and it would be from the lineage of Judah that the promised Messiah would come.

When God's spirit came upon him, Saul (the son of Kish, of the family of the Matrites, and a member of the tribe of Benjamin) showed great promise, and he had the prophet Samuel to guide him. Still, King Saul disobeyed God and became an evil king. God took his favor away from Saul and anointed David, through Samuel, to become Israel's next king, though David had to wait many years for this promise to be fulfilled. Saul became jealous of David and succumbed to bouts of paranoia. He became obsessed with killing David. Saul ended his reign by committing suicide on the battlefield when all appeared to be lost.

Saul had won many battles for Israel, but over time he proved to be arrogant, sinful and rebellious, so God finally rejected him as king. A young shepherd and musician named David was privately anointed to be Israel's next king, unbeknownst to King Saul who had hired David to play his harp in Saul's palace. At that time, Saul grew to like David so much that he appointed him as his personal armor bearer. In a battle with the Philistines, David killed the giant Goliath, the Philistine's mightiest soldier.

The Israelites began praising David more than Saul, creating a growing enmity between the two of them. Saul tried to kill David because he was jealous of David's popularity. David maintained great respect for Saul even though Saul meant to do him harm. Although Saul was sinning and rebelling against God, David still respected the position he held as God's anointed king. David knew that he would someday be king, and he did not want to set a precedent for his opponents to remove him at some later time. God had placed Saul in power and had not yet removed him. David did not want to run ahead of God's timing.

When David was anointed king, it was done in secret. He was not publicly anointed until much later. Saul was still legally king, but God was preparing David for his future responsibilities. Saul's invitation for David to be in his service presented an excellent opportunity for the young shepherd and future king to gain firsthand study for leading a nation. David did not become king over all of Israel until he was 37 years old.

After Saul's death, the tribe of Judah crowned David king. Following fighting between Judah and the rest of the tribes of Israel, Israel eventually pledged loyalty to David as their rightful king. David was a man who followed God and he was considered the greatest king of Israel. He became a renowned warrior and a prolific poet, and an ancestor of Jesus. Although David was also a betrayer, liar, adulterer and murderer, David had an undying faith in the forgiving nature of God – David always remained humble to his God, and this endeared him to his Lord.

Born halfway between Abraham and Jesus, David becomes God's leader for all of the united Israel and the ancestor of the promised Messiah. It was David who completed the assigned conquest of the Promised Land begun long before by Joshua. As a human being, David was flawed, and he stumbled, falling into great temptation and sin. David was by no means a saintly personage, but he was unfailingly committed to God. Through sincere repentance, David restored his fellowship and peace with God. When David sinned, he

realized it and confessed his sins to God. David committed his life to God and remained loyal to him throughout his lifetime. David had forged a strong and united kingdom because he was a king who governed God's people by God's principles. David realized that God was always the driving force behind his successes. David had great faith in God. He always waited patiently for God to fulfill his promises.

David's military power was legendary. He recorded victories over the Jebusites, the Philistines, the Aramaeans, the Edomites and the Ammonites. One of David's first battles was to take the fortress of Zion (Jerusalem). David made this his capital of Judah, bringing to it the Ark of the Covenant and renewing this covenant with God. David built a strong united power, moving Israel forward from tribal independence to becoming a centralized power, from decentralized worship to worship centralized at Jerusalem. Although Israel would remain united for 75 years, David's dynasty would reign over the southern kingdom of Judah for over 400 years.

David knew that his greatness came only from God. David fought his battles the way God instructed him. God told David that his job was to unify and lead Israel, and to destroy its enemies. However, God did not want David, a warrior king, to build his temple for him. Instead, David prepared the plans and collected the materials so that his son Solomon would begin work on the temple as soon as he would become king. David accepted his part in God's plan and did not try to go beyond it. God was planning something greater in David's life than allowing him the prestige of building the temple. God promised to continue the dynasty of David forever through his covenant. Jesus Christ, a direct descendant of David, was the ultimate fulfillment of this promise. Christ will reign for eternity in his spiritual kingdom and in heaven.

David's son Solomon is anointed king. Solomon's foreign policy was one of expansion - by war and by marriage. He greatly expanded Israel's commerce. Trade in copper, horses, and other commodities flourished. This was Israel's golden age of economic prosperity. Solomon could make such extensive conquests at this time because both Egypt and Assyria were in a weakened quiescent condition. He eliminates all opposition to his throne, builds the temple and his palace in Jerusalem, establishes a strong army, and becomes rich and wise. But his many pagan wives lead him into idolatry, precipitating the spiritual decline of Israel.

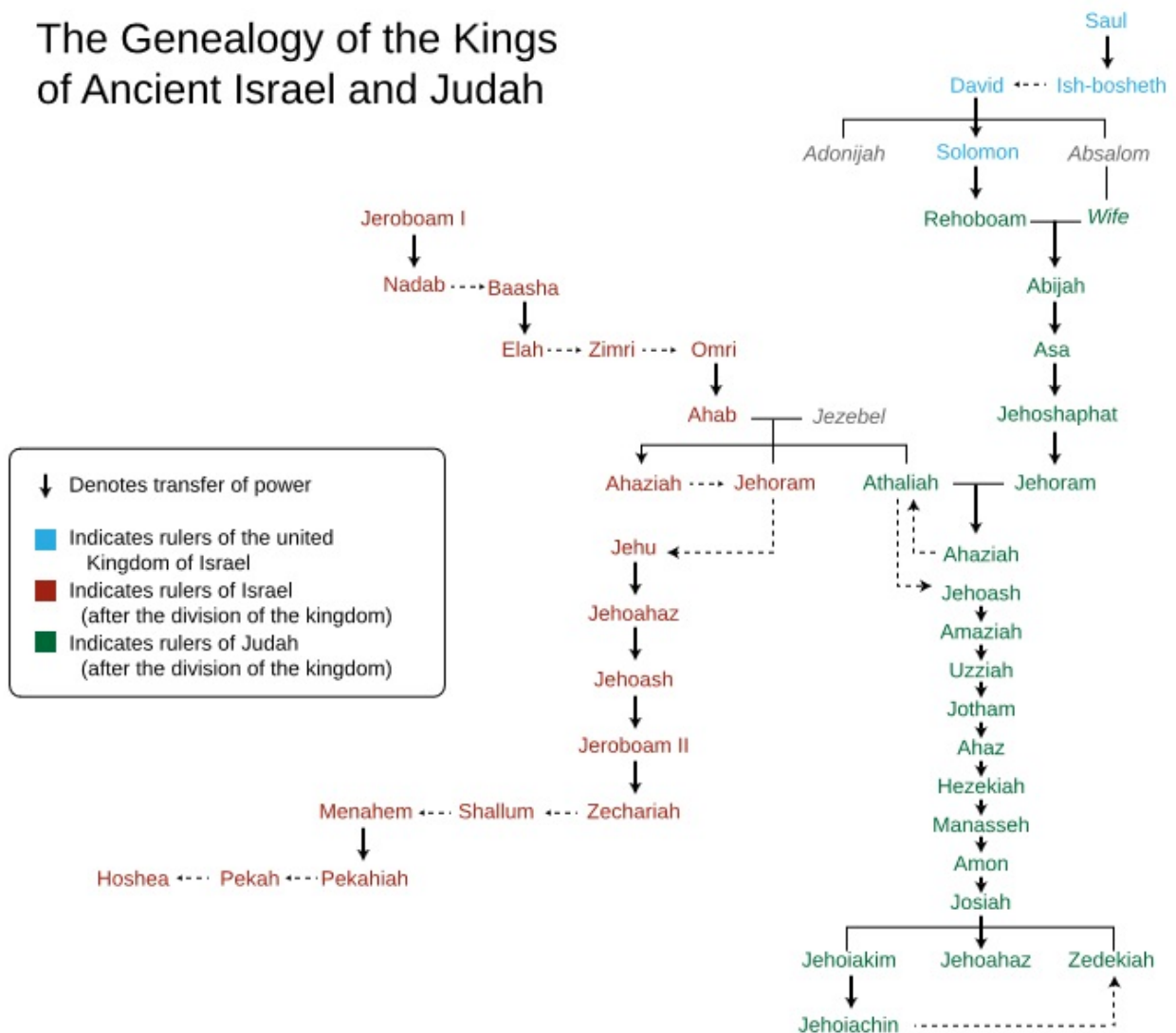
In the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, the kingdom splits with ten tribes in the north (the kingdom of Israel) ruled by Jeroboam, and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remaining in the south (the kingdom of Judah). Both kingdoms develop reigns of corruption and idolatry with only the prophets providing for the clear voice of the Lord God.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM AND THE RISE OF PROPHECY – 922 to 722 B.C.:

Israel and Judah had been a united kingdom under David and Solomon. After Solomon's reign, political and religious disputes had arisen – the land became divided into a northern kingdom (Israel, whose capital was in Samaria) and a southern kingdom Judah, whose

capital was Jerusalem). The northern kingdom survived for only two centuries after its break with Jerusalem before the Assyrians destroyed it. Judah survived 150 years longer than Israel before the Babylonians took Jerusalem.

The Genealogy of the Kings of Ancient Israel and Judah



House of David

- David (c. 1003–970 BC) – made Jerusalem the capital of Israel.
- Solomon (c. 970–930 BC)
- Rehoboam (c. 930–915 BC)

After Rehoboam reigned three years, the United Kingdom of Israel was divided in two – the northern Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam, with its capital, first in Shechem, then Penuel, Tirzah, and finally Samaria, and ruled by a series of dynasties beginning with Jeroboam;

and the southern Kingdom of Judah with its capital still in Jerusalem and ruled by the House of David. Under Hezekiah rule in the Kingdom of Judah, the Neo-Assyrian Empire conquered and destroyed the northern kingdom 722 BC, leaving only the southern kingdom of Judah.

Kingdom of Judah

- Abijah (r. 915–912 BC)
- Asa (r. 912–870 BC)
- Jehoshaphat (r. 870–849 BC)
- Jehoram (r. 849–842 BC)
- Ahaziah (r. 842–840 BC)
- Athaliah (Queen) (r. 840–836 BC)
- Jehoash (r. 836–796 BC)
- Amaziah (r. 796–767 BC)
- Uzziah (r. 767–750 BC)
- Jotham (r. 750–735 BC)
- Ahaz (r. 735–716 BC)
- Hezekiah (r. 729/716 – 697/687 BC)
- Manasseh (r. 697/687–643 BC)
- Amon (r. 643–640 BC)
- Josiah (r. 640–609 BC)
- Jehoahaz (r. 609 BC)
- Jehoiakim (r. 609–598 BC)
- Jeconiah (r. Dec 9, 598– March 15, 597 BC)
- Zedekiah (r. 597–586 BC)

God created man for a singular and noble purpose – to worship him and to lead a virtuous life based on his teachings and guidance. It is the express function of God's elected prophets to relay this clear and practical message to all nations and all men. God has chosen a prophet from every nation to convey this message to his peoples. A true prophet is infallible in relaying God's revelation. In both Old Testament and New Testament times there were also prophetesses – Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna.

Prophets are necessary for conveying God's instructions and guidance to mankind. We learn why we are created, what happens to us after death, our accountability for our actions, and about such things that cannot be answered without direct revelation from our divine Creator. God will never hold a people accountable for their actions unless he has made clear to them what he expects from them.

God's people were disobedient and rebellious, not beholden to the law of the Lord. When warned by the prophets to return to the way of the Lord, they would abuse and even kill God's prophets. They continued to perform evil in the sight of the Lord. They sinned against the Lord's ordinances and against the Lord's admonishments through his prophets. For their wickedness, they were to be handed over to their enemies who will oppress them. They were to be abandoned to the countries that will rule over them. The Israelites had failed to

follow God's law, and they avoided his commandments and warnings. They failed to serve their Lord.

The prophetic books of the Old Testament bear the names of four major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and twelve minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nathan, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). These books were the result of the institution of prophetism in which a succession of Israelites chosen by God and appointed by him to be prophets. They received communications from him and transmitted them to the people in his name. These prophets were spokespersons of God, intermediaries between him and his people. The communications they received came through visions, dreams, and ecstasies and these were communicated to the people through sermons, writings, and symbolic actions. The office of the prophet was due to a direct call from God, subject entirely to the divine will. By the power and permission of God, miracles sometimes reinforced their preaching, and their prophecies for the future intensified the expectation of the Messiah and of his coming kingdom.

The Lord's concern was for the holiness and reputation of his name. Both kingdoms worshiped the same God, but royal marriages kept Baal worship alive. The prophets began the battle for return to Yahweh. In their unrighteousness, God's people had profaned their Lord's name among the heathen. They had failed in their devotion and duty to God. The nations that lived around them could no longer see God's holiness displayed among his people.

I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.
[Ez. 36:21]

The religious practices of the Israelites had degraded to such an extent that they began practicing divination and sorcery – they were even sacrificing their children in fire. They had denigrated themselves to the same low level as the pagan peoples in their midst. Manasseh, king of Judah, erected altars to Baal and to all the starry hosts, made an Asherah pole and placed it in the temple of the Lord, sacrificed his own son in fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. These acts provoked the Lord to anger.

I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies.
[2Kings 21:13,14]

Elijah ("Jahweh is my God") was the embodiment of nomadic Jahwehism. Elijah appealed both to the "earthquake of Horeb," and "the gentle whisper." Elijah built his reform on "the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal." Elijah was one of the most important figures in the Old Testament. He struggled to preserve the knowledge and worship of Jahweh against the encroaching worship of Baal who was introduced into Israel by Jezebel the Tyrian wife of Ahab. The Elijah narratives include miracle stories, denunciations of kings,

and a preparation for the prophet's role as eschatological forerunner to the coming of the promised Messiah.

In the tenth century before Christ, the Hebrew nation became divided into two kingdoms. The reactionary tide of spiritual decadence had penetrated both factions, and this progressed unabated after the war of separation. This is the historical scenario wherein the great Elijah began his teaching. Elijah restored to the northern kingdom a concept of God comparable with that held in the days of Samuel. He was kept busy, as Samuel had been before him, overthrowing the altars of Baal and demolishing the idols of false gods.



The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

[1Kings 19:11-13]

Micaiah was an effective contemporary of Elijah. He was an antagonist of King Ahab. Elisha follows Elijah, but his career is fraught by much magic. Next comes Amos with a theology that foreshadows the progressive theology of the Second Isaiah. He comes near preaching a "social gospel." Amos is the first to preach an international gospel. Yahweh has become the "God of all nations." Now comes Hosea, repeating and adding to the proclamations of Amos. He uses his own domestic troubles as an illustration of Yahweh's relations to Israel. Hosea does not hesitate to declare that Yahweh has withdrawn from them (Hos. 5:6). But he preaches "redemption upon repentance."

Next comes Isaiah of Jerusalem, the aristocratic prophet. He was the earliest of the three major prophets (the other two being Jeremiah and Ezekiel) who left written records of their ministering of God's word to his people. Isaiah was active from 742 BC to at least 701 BC, serving before and after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC. He turned the messages of Amos and Hosea into proclamations both grand and musical. Under Isaiah, Yahweh becomes "the Holy One of Israel." He repeats the judgment, "Yahweh has abandoned his people." Isaiah condemns social injustice and denounces the commercialized priesthood. He tells the Jews they are going into captivity.

Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, appeared at a critical moment in Israel's history. The second half of the eighth century BC witnessed the collapse of the northern kingdom Israel

under the relentless attacks of Assyria (722 BC) and the ten tribes which made up this nation disappeared from history. This period also witnessed the assailing of Jerusalem itself in the southern kingdom of Judah. In the year that Uzzia, king of the southern kingdom, died (742 BC), Isaiah received his call to the prophetic office in the Jerusalem Temple. The vision of the Lord, enthroned in glory, stamps an indelible character on Isaiah's ministry and provides Isaiah the key to the understanding of his message.

The complete Book of Isaiah is an anthology of poems composed chiefly by the great prophet, but also by disciples some of whom came years after Isaiah. Chapters 1-9 mainly come from Isaiah and faithfully reflect the situation in eighth century Judah. Chapters 40-55, sometimes called Deutero-Isaiah, are general attributed to an anonymous poet who prophesied towards the end of the Babylonian exile. This is the period of the greatest spiritual progress of the Jews. Second Isaiah described Yahweh as the God of the universe and promises a Messiah to redeem the entire world. From this section comes the great messianic oracles known as the Songs of the Servant describing the mysterious destiny of suffering and glorification as a foreshadowing of the passion and glorification of Jesus Christ. Chapters 56-66 contain oracles from a later period and were composed by disciples who inherited the spirit of the great prophet and continued in his work.

Micah comes with the final threat of doom and destruction. Isaiah had declared the temple to be inviolate, but Micah consigns it to destruction. Micah sums up man's duty - "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.?" [Micah 6:8] Zephaniah and Habakkuk end this epoch, calling for a purge of Jerusalem.

When Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Judah, a priest named Ezekiel was among the 3,023 of Israel's elite citizens carried away into exile in Babylon. He was 25 years old at the time. Four years later, living among the exiles southeast of the great city of Babylon, Ezekiel received his call to prophesy. He was the first prophet to receive the call to prophesy outside the Holy Land. As one of the exiles deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC, his first task was to prepare his fellow countrymen in Babylon for the final destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 586 BC. Ezekiel believed that the exiles were the hope of Israel's restoration once God's allotted time for the exile had been accomplished.

In many ways, Ezekiel resembles the more primitive type of prophet represented by Elijah and Elisha, whereas his prophecy depends on all of his predecessors. Like his contemporary prophet Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest whose interests focused on the temple and liturgy and on post-exilic religion in general. For this reason, he has been called "the father of Judaism." The name Ezekiel means "God will strengthen." Though the captives of Judah had been scattered to distant lands, Ezekiel reveals that the Lord is still their God, and, though they may be far from the temple in Jerusalem, God is still their sanctuary. Ezekiel gave the Hebrews hope by pointing out that they could worship Yahweh in Babylon as well as Jerusalem and pictured the rise of a new nation in the future. The exiled people of God are promised that they will return to Israel, transformed by their experience and by God's mercy. Their hard, divided hearts will be transformed into hearts of flesh, animated by a "new spirit."



I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. They will follow my decrees and be careful to follow my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.
[Ez. 11:19,20]

The Lord assures Ezekiel that he will preserve a remnant among the exiles and through them restore his people. They no longer had the sanctuary of a temple in Jerusalem, but God himself will be their sanctuary, their protection and their provision until the remnant returns to Jerusalem some 70 years later. There is made a promise of restoration, a new covenant when the people will have a new heart and a new spirit.

Jeremiah, whose prophecies overlap with some of Ezekiel's, was not taken captive, though he did write letters to the captives at God's direction. The Book of Jeremiah combines history, biography and prophecy. Jeremiah was an extraordinary leader upon whom the Lord placed the heavy burden of prophetic office. He was born about 650 BC of a priestly family from the little village of Anathoth near Jerusalem. Jeremiah logically traced Israel's history from Moses to his day – and pronounced the doom of the nation. He urged surrender to the Babylonians. For this, he was persecuted and maltreated. He predicted a new kind of "inward revival" in later times after Israel's liberation. Meanwhile, Ezekiel backed up the doom of Jeremiah, but revived the "holiness cult" - he became the "prophet of hope."

Both Jeremiah and Isaiah the Second saw to it that their spoken sermons were reduced to writing during their lifetime. Jeremiah would dictate his words to Baruch son of Neriah.

So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the Lord had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll.
[Jer. 36:4]

The early prophets uttered threats of destruction. Later editors added hope, promises of salvation dependent on repentance. Isaiah the Second is an exception. He presented hope and salvation as a part of his original and core message. The latter-day prophets began to talk about the end of the world, the triumph of Israel as ruler of all nations. This apocalyptic message was centered in the Messiah who would come to sit on David's throne and rule the world. "The sons of the prophets" were counselors and religious teachers, very much like the evangelists of the Christian era. They had schools at Bethel, Gibeah, Gilgal, and Ramah. There were always to be found false and mercenary prophets. John the Baptist is spoken of as "the last of the prophets," but they still referred to other "prophets" during the apostolic days. In both Old Testament and New Testament times there were other prophetesses - Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna.

Strictly speaking, the Book of Daniel does not formally belong to the prophetic writings but rather to a distinctive type of literature known as "apocalyptic" of which this is an early example. Apocalyptic writing enjoyed its greatest popularity from 200 BC to 100 AD, a time of distress and persecution for the Jews, and later for Christians. Apocalyptic literature has its beginnings in the teachings of the prophets who often pointed ahead to the day of the coming Messiah and the consummation of history. Under this apocalyptic imagery are contained such prophetic teachings as the divine control over the events of history and the certainty that the kingdom of God will ultimately triumph.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were post-exilic prophets to Judah. With Malachi's death, the voice of God's prophets would be silent for 400 years, a time when John the Baptist would appear to herald the Messiah's coming.

THE ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN EXILES – 722 to 539 B.C.:

Around 800 BC, the Assyrians in the north began to gain strength, thus presenting a growing threat to the Jewish peoples. The Assyrian Empire eventually extended from the Persian Gulf across the Fertile Crescent in modern-day Iraq toward the Mediterranean Sea and southward to Egypt. It was one of the largest powers in ancient history. The King of Assyria invaded Canaan and deported the Israelites from the northern kingdom to Assyria – God allowed this because they had sinned against their Lord. They had worshipped other gods and built themselves high places. They had set up sacred stones and Asherah poles, burning incense and worshipping idols. The Lord had warned both Israel and Judah to repent and reform. Later, the Assyrian Empire fell to the Babylonians, never to rise again as a world power. In 612 BC, Nineveh the capital of Assyria was destroyed.



Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.
[2Kings 17:13]

So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left...So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria.
[2Kings 17:18,23]

After great masses of Israelites from the northern kingdom were deported to Assyria, the land left behind was resettled by foreigners from the Assyrian Empire. The mixture of the remaining Israelites and the resettled peoples in Israel became known as Samaritans. A deep hatred developed between the Jews of the southern kingdom of Judah and the Samaritans. The Judeans proudly claimed their descendancy directly back to Abraham, while the Samaritans were considered a mixed people.

Babylon became a great power after overthrowing Assyria in 612 BC and defeating Egypt in 605 BC. They had moved into Assyria's place in prominence as a world power. After this, Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar invaded and took captive Judah, taking Daniel to Babylon. The great divide in Israel's history was its destruction and exile at the hands of the Babylonians. This was a national disaster and a great crisis of faith for the people. The Babylonian army left Judah a shambles. Battle losses, executions, starvation, and disease almost depleted the country. Of 250,000, maybe 20,000 were left. Samaria was untouched. The exiles were well treated in Babylon, given considerable freedom. They built houses, farmed, and had some sort of religious life. There were in total three deportations - in 597, 587, and 582. Many Jews fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them (Jer. 43:7). Others went to Moab, Edom, and Ammon.

In the first Babylonian conquest of Judah in 597 BC, the Babylonian forces had been relatively merciful. Jerusalem was defeated but intact, and there was an Israelite puppet king, Zedekiah, on the throne. Its leaders and influential landowners, however, had been carried off to the city of their conquerors. However, when Zedekiah began plotting rebellion under the urging of the prophets both in exile and in Jerusalem, the invasion in 586 BC resulted in the complete fall of the southern kingdom of Judah and in the siege of Jerusalem where the walls were breached, and the temple was burned along with the palaces, houses, and other administrative buildings, and the walls to the city were torn down. The disheartened pessimism at this time of the Hebrew people is reflected in the book of Lamentations.

As the Lord had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the Lord and from the royal palace...he carried all Jerusalem into exile.

[2Kings 24:13,14]

Whereas the Assyrians removed their captives and resettled their lands with foreigners, the Babylonians took away only the strong and skilled, leaving the poor and weak to occupy the land. The exiled elite of Judah's people of Judah's people were allowed to live together and to find jobs to support themselves. This Babylonian policy helped keep the Jews united and faithful to their God and religion. When the exiles were eventually allowed to return to their homeland in Judah, God's people would become thoroughly chastened and reaffirmed in their loyalty to their Lord.

So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.

[2Kings 25:21]

Starting with the Babylonian captivity, there arose a great ideological battle between the patriotic priests and the prophets. The Jewish church (the "synagogue") appears and becomes established within the community. The prophet deuterio- ("Second") Isaiah tried to convince his people that, being God's people, their's was not a political but rather a spiritual mission that they were to become a beacon of light to all the nations of the world under one God of all nations. This Second Isaiah begins his work and the highest level of prophetic literature is achieved. Deuterio-Isaiah proclaims hope: "See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him." [Isa. 40:10] In Second Isaiah there appears "the servant of the Lord," foreshadowing the Messiah.

The priests on the other hand re-wrote what was to become the Old Testament from the collective traditions of the people with a patriotic and nationalistic viewpoint under the guidance and protection of Jehovah, their national God. The priests did more than to just edit and rewrite the Hebrew scriptures - they added numerous ancient fragments and reduced oral traditions to writing. Their objectives were to glorify the Jewish peoples and to construct a monotheistic ideology that was focused and centered on Jerusalem. The priestly code gave importance to:

- Avoidance of blood.
- Circumcision.
- Sabbath keeping.
- Holiness as reflected in conduct.

The Babylonian captivity and the massive dispersing of the Jewish people was the beginning of the long history of the “Diaspora”, the dispersing of the Jewish peoples throughout the civilized world. Because of this, all of the cities in the later rise of the Roman Empire had a Jewish population. With Jerusalem and the Temple being no longer available to the scattered peoples, the Jews of the Diaspora developed institutional synagogues and the office of the local rabbi. They began to think of their "world mission" – their duty to all nations and hope for universal deliverance. As a far-reaching result of God’s ultimate purpose and plan, Judaism becomes fully internationalized. All nations are intended to share in Jahweh's love and merciful redemption.



In 539 BC, Babylon fell to the Persians, and a year later King Cyrus issued an edict to end the captivity of the Hebrews arranged for them under the leadership of Ezra to return to Palestine and to rebuild Jerusalem:



This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The Lord, the God in heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.”
[Ezra 1:2,3]

But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, King of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon. However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon [Persia], King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild the house of God.
[Ezra 5:12,13]

Though we are slaves, our God has not forsaken us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.
[Ezra 9:9]

Both Babylon and Persia had similar liberal policies towards their Jewish captives. Many Jews such as Daniel, Mordecai, and Esther rose to prominent positions within their host nations. King Cyrus, who had allowed many groups of exiles to return to their homelands, had risen to power in the Near East by unifying the Medes and Persians into a strong and unified empire. He treated those he conquered with mercy and allowed the return of the Jews (nearly 50,000) to their homeland. 70 years span between the earlier destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BC until the exiles finished rebuilding it in 515 BC. After 48 years in captivity, the Jewish nation had been humbled before their God.

Isaiah the first had preached a beneficent king-deliverer. Jeremiah had proclaimed an era of inner righteousness - the covenant written on the tablets of the heart. The second Isaiah talked about salvation by sacrifice and redemption. Ezekiel proclaimed deliverance through the service of devotion, and Ezra promised prosperity by adherence to the law. But in spite

of all this, the people lingered on in bondage, and deliverance was deferred. Then Daniel presented the drama of the impending " crisis " - the smiting of the great image and the immediate establishment of the everlasting reign of righteousness, the Messianic kingdom.

THE PERSIAN PERIOD – 539 to 336 B.C.:

THE KINGS OF PERSIA WITH THE DATES OF THEIR REIGNS:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| • Cyrus | 538-529 B.C. |
| • Cambyses | 529-521 B.C. |
| • Darius I | 521-485 B.C. |
| • Xerxes | 485-464 B.C. |
| • Artaxerxes | 464-423 B.C. |
| • Darius II | 423-404 B.C. |
| • Artaxerxes II | 404-358 B.C. |

In the first year of his reign, King Cyrus of Persia had freed the Israelites from their captivity, allowing them to return to their homeland. Under the Persians, the Jewish peoples returned to their homeland to rebuild the Temple. They became an autonomous principality within the Persian empire. King Darius I continued Persia's pro-Israel policy, even threatening capital punishment to those who might hinder the Israelites from rebuilding their temple and resettling their land.

After returning from their many years in exile, the Jews began to worship in local synagogues throughout the Persian Empire, even after the Temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem. Worship in the synagogues centered on study of the religious law led by the scribes who were now the teachers and interpreters of this Law. Synagogues were established as places of worship on the Sabbath, and as schools for young boys during the week. They were administered by one leader and an assistant. The leader would often invite a visiting rabbi ("teacher") to read from the Scriptures and to teach. Both Jesus and Paul took advantage of this practice to help spread the good news

From heaven, God has heard his people and rescued them from their enemies. In his great mercy, the Lord did not put an end to his people. They suffered the hardships that befell them, their prophets, their priests, and their kings from their captivities in Assyria and Babylon. Upon the return of the Hebrews to Judah, the reading of the law in written form took on new significance. By 520 BC, the second temple was built and by 445 BC, the whole city of Jerusalem along with its protecting walls had been rebuilt. This began a period of comparative and prolonged peace in Israel's part of the ancient world. The Persians would collect taxes, but otherwise they were content to leave the Jews alone.

The book of Psalms is growing with great variety. The Hebrews were gifted in music – both vocal and instrumental. Psalms range from high hymns of praise to poems of hate and revenge. In the Psalms, Yahweh is judge, king, creator, keeper, shepherd, and redeemer.

The theme song of the Psalter is God's eternity. But this is not to the neglect of God's love and goodness. God in nature is featured in four Psalms - 8, 19, 29, and 104. There is little about animal sacrifice in the Psalms. The Psalter persists in upholding the philosophy of God's prosperity as rewards for obedience, and sickness and adversity as punishments for sin.

THE HELLENISTIC AND MACCABEAN PERIODS – 336 TO 63 B.C.:

When Persia fell to Alexander the Great, the age of the eastern empires ended. Powers from the west began to dominate the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Greek Empire became the largest the world had ever witnessed, extending all the way into western India. The Hellenistic age extends from the death of Alexander to the founding of the Roman Empire. The Jews lived and worshipped under the authority of this distant foreign rule. Culturally, they became progressively influenced by Greek (Hellenistic) civilization.

Some Jewish scholars at this time translated the Old Testament from its original Hebrew into Greek. In 198 BC, Israel came under the Hellenistic rule of Antiochus Epiphanies who desecrated the temple in Jerusalem, forbade sacrifices to God, outlawed circumcision, forced Jews to eat pork, and cancelled Sabbaths and feast days. The Jews who attempted to conciliate with Antiochus' demands were known as "Hellenists", and those that resisted were known as the "Hasidim" who were the forerunners of the Pharisees. Another group, loyal to the priests, became the precursors of the Sadducees.

Serious conflict began when the priest Mathathias refused to administer pagan sacrifices, ending up killing a Hellenistic officer and initiating rebellion in the hidden safety of the surrounding hills. Mathathias' son, Maccabeus, overcame the rule by the Greek Empire and achieved Israeli independence.

The canon of Scripture is taking shape. The religion of the law is formulating the theology of the Torah. The Jews seemed to sense that the age of the prophets had ended. Their future was to be organized around the Temple and the law. Twice in earlier Hebrew history, Yahweh had delivered them from bondage, but their recent third deliverance had come by means of military conquest. The synagogue took a new place in the Jewish community. It is here that in the synagogue service the first act was the reading of the law.

Israel was surrounded by paganism. Nehemiah and Ezra thought they must protect the remnant of Israel from moral contamination. The idea of the "holy people" grew. More and more the Jews withdrew from all contact with gentiles. Especially, they refused to have any dealings with Samaritans. They wrestled with the problem of evil, often attributing it to Satan. Allied with Satan were the fallen angels - demons and evil spirits. Divine justice and rewards after death claimed attention. The majority believed in the resurrection of the dead. More and more they taught the coming of the Messiah and the new age. The Jews were becoming more apocalyptic in vision. They studied anew the book of Daniel.

The new trend of apocalyptic literature promised salvation by the coming of a “new world” – the kingdoms of men become the everlasting kingdom of God. The book of Daniel was the high point of the “new age” teaching. This was not a Messianic theology - God himself was coming to:

- Judge the world.
- Resurrect the dead.
- Destroy all the wicked.
- Set up an everlasting kingdom.

THE ROMAN PERIOD AND THE TIME OF JESUS – 63 B.C. TO A.D. 135:

With independence achieved, serious infighting initiated between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and the country became unstable. In 63 BC, the Roman Empire's Pompey sacked Jerusalem with little resistance. Antipater was installed by Rome to rule over the Jews. He was followed by his son Herod the Great as the king of the Jews.

The Roman Empire extended its boundaries from throughout the Mediterranean basin and into Europe. The Jews were pacified under the Pax Romana (“The Peace of Rome”), and worship is primarily carried out in local synagogues scattered throughout the towns and villages. A governing body of overruling authority was deliberated by the high council of the Sanhedrin. By this time, there had not been a prophet of Israel for over 400 years. Although the Jews were allowed freedom of worship and limited oversight of their own affairs, they longed for the coming Messiah as foretold by the many prophecies of the Old Testament. They dream of a day where Israel would once again be a powerful nation as it was under King David.

The population of Palestine in Jesus' day was approximately 500,000 to 600,000. About 18,000 of these residents were clergy, priests and Levites. Jerusalem was a city of some 55,000, but during major feasts, could swell to 180,000.

In the times of Jesus, three languages were spoken in Palestine - Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. The official language was Latin. There is a considerable gap between Jesus' Galilean Aramaic and the Greek of the gospels. “Whosoever will may come” was the keynote of Jesus' teaching. Salvation was a matter of faith. The fatherhood of God was not a new idea in Israel, but to make use of the fact as the basis of the “brotherhood of man” was a new idea. Jesus advised against all fear, anxiety, and worry. His message was one of faith, confidence, and trust. Jesus knew and freely quoted the Scriptures. He exhorted to doing the will of God - to be perfect even as God is perfect. He healed sickness and restored the disordered mind. He came to reveal the Father and do his will. More and more, the resurrection of Jesus becomes the living core of the gospel.

Paul claims to have had a special and personal revelation of “Christ” on the Damascus Road. His conversion took place around 32 AD, when he was about 30 years old. He was

an active missionary about 33 years. He died 64 or 65 AD. Paul also claims to have received a mandate to preach the gospel to the gentiles. He was concerned with the “risen and glorified Christ” - the divine Christ. Paul’s controversy with the apostles was resolved during his second visit to Jerusalem when they extended to him “the right hand of fellowship.” Paul had specific ideas about the atonement and being “redeemed from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13).

The Pharisees of this time devoted themselves to the covenant and Law of Moses. They were an influential sect and they were strict interpreters of the Law in Israel. They were extremely zealous for ritual and tradition. They believed in eternal life. The Sadducees were more focused on temporal and political concerns. Both groups were threatened by the coming of Jesus who would offer a new covenant (testament) with God and would establish his spiritual kingdom. In accordance with God’s providential foresight, the time had become ripe for the coming gospel of Jesus to spread throughout the entire of the Roman Empire.

In 20 BC, Herod the Great began to remodel and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. This magnificent building project was not completed until 64 AD, though the Romans completely destroyed the temple and the entire city of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

For decades before and after the birth of Jesus, the atmosphere in the land of Israel was tense with the spirit of rebellion against Rome. The Jewish people chafed under this godless power and dreamed of deliverance. In September 66 AD, Florus, the Roman governor of Judea, provoked the Jews by raiding the Temple treasury and taking what he thought the Jews were withholding in taxes. This provoked a riot, and he ruthlessly crucified some of the citizens and allowed his troops to plunder part of the city. This enraged the people. Eleazar, the Jewish Captain of the Temple, persuaded the priests no longer to offer daily sacrifices for the welfare of the Roman emperor. This was an ominous sign of open revolt against Rome by a tiny vassal nation.

In a surge of courage and folly, the Jewish forces stormed the fortress of Antonius in the city and took it and wiped out the Roman soldiers. So, the die was cast, and there was no turning back. Vespasian, the Roman general, came to put down the revolt in 67 and took all of Israel except Jerusalem. He returned to Rome to become emperor and left the finishing of the work to his son, the general Titus. After a five-month siege, he broke through and burned the Temple to the ground in August of 70. A few Jewish groups held out for a while, but all eventually collapsed, including the force at Masada, who committed mass suicide in 73 rather than be handed over as captives.

That was the end of Judaism as it had been known for many hundreds of years. The priesthood was at an end; the animal sacrifices were at an end; the worship life that centered on Jerusalem and the Temple was at an end. And it has never been restored to our own day. Judaism as we know it today is not the same way of life practiced before 70 AD. Early Christianity gradually grew apart from Judaism during the first two centuries and established itself as a predominantly gentile religion in the Roman Empire.

The followers of Jesus were Galileans who followed the Hebrew religion of Abraham; Jews who observe the Sabbath, who observe the holidays, the festivals, who go with the pilgrimage to temple, who observe the Jewish food laws, the Jewish rituals, believe in the Jewish God, follow the ways by which to make the life holy, follow the dictates of the Torah in a kind of simple plain way. Simon was a zealot, a 1st century political group that espoused armed rebellion against Roman rule.

CHAPTER THREE COVENANTS

God's Covenants, Commands, Promises
God's Covenant with Adam
God's Covenant with Noah
God's Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
God's Covenant with Moses and the Israelites
God's Covenant with Phineas and the Priesthood
God's Covenant with Joshua
God's Covenant with David and Solomon
The New Covenant

GOD'S COVENANTS, COMMANDS, PROMISES:

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?
[Num. 23:19]

A covenant is a legal treaty – a formally agreed-upon relationship – between individuals, between nations, or, in the case of the Israelites, between a nation and its God. A covenant specifies rights, obligations, and responsibilities of the parties concerned entering into such an agreement. Promises are made within the covenant, conditions are established for maintaining the covenant, and penalties are ascertained in the event that the covenant is broken. In such a covenant involving Creator and creature, God's instructions, laws, decrees, and commandments are made manifest as guidelines and lamp posts for illuminating the directed paths of his spiritual children. They point at danger to warn us, and they point at achievement to encourage us and give us insight. Faith in God's promises establishes fidelity with his divine law. Willful disregard for his covenants invites spiritual lawlessness, which is the basis of rebellious sin and eventual death.



I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O Lord; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

[Ps. 119:9-13]

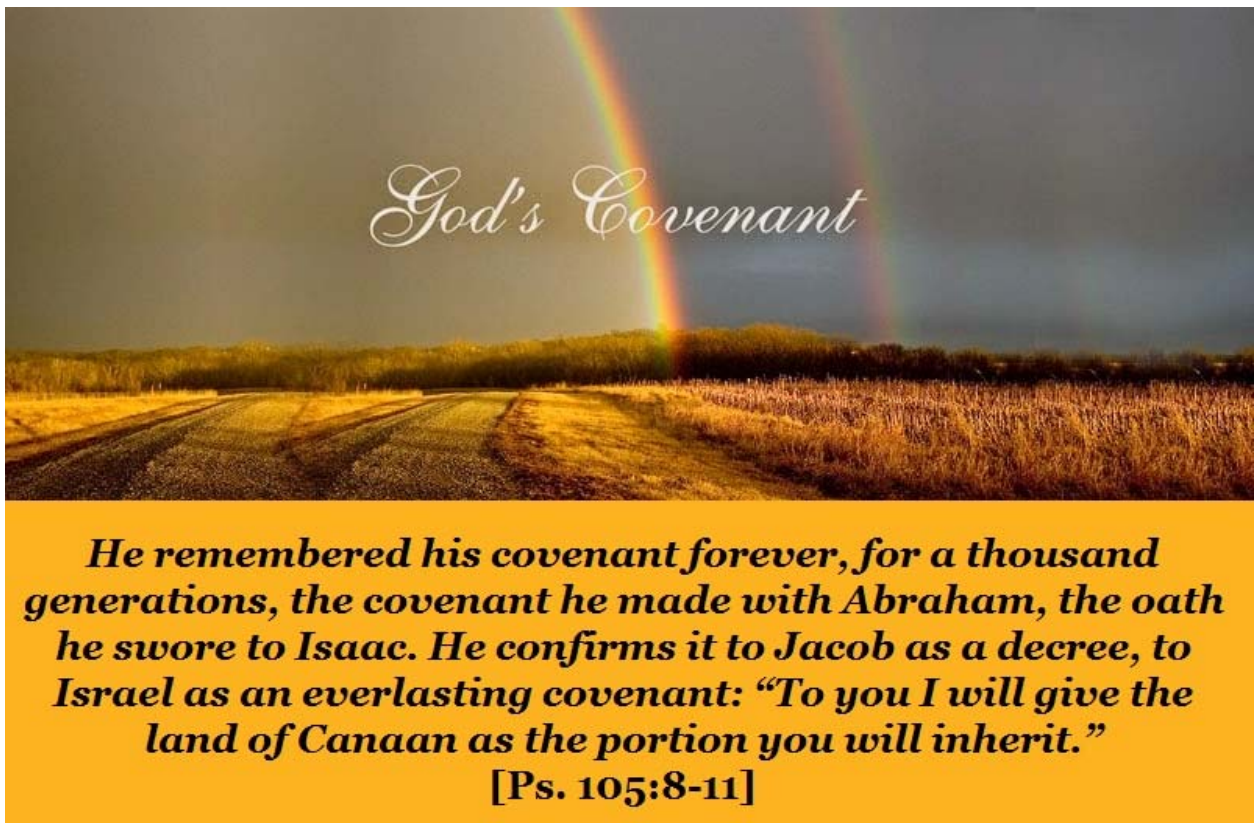
God has structured his relationship with humanity by a series of historical covenants that have established the major stages in his revelatory history with mankind. All of these covenants represent growing enhancements and deeper revealments of his all-encompassing eternal covenant of grace. These covenants of grace establish God's post-fall relationship to mankind. There is only one God-given promise of salvation by grace

through faith and this is God's eternal covenant of grace. All other biblical covenants are culminating expressions of this covenant of grace.

Phases of God's Redemptory History with Mankind:

1. God's Covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden
2. The Fall of Adam to Noah
3. God's Covenant with Noah to Abraham
4. God's Covenant with Abraham to Moses
5. The Law of Moses to Jesus Christ
6. The New Covenant of Jesus Christ to Pentecost
7. Pentecost to the Millennium

The Bible is essentially a recorded document of God's historical covenants between creature and Creator, between man and God. The Old and the New Testaments literally embody the Old and the New Covenants.



Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished....For I

tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.
[Mat. 5:17,18,20]

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.
[Luke 1:32,33]

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ADAM:



In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth....Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness"....So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them....The Lord formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being....God saw all that he had made, and it was very good....And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.
[Gen. 1:1-2,7]

Genesis relates how God created the world and the sun and the moon and the stars. God filled the earth with birds and the seas with fish. On the dry land flourished all the fruit-bearing trees and over which crept the wild animals and the cattle of the fields. God consecrated on the land a special Paradise on earth, the Garden of Eden.

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; and there it was separated into four headwaters.
[Gen. 2:10]

With paternal benevolence, God places within the garden the first man, Adam, and the first woman and companion to Adam, Eve. Adam is created in the image of God which firmly establishes his living relationship of friendship and fellowship with his God. With man, the crown of creation, God establishes his covenant of fellowship, privilege and responsibility. Through this covenant, God wants to institute a personal relationship with Adam and Eve, and consequently with all mankind. By this covenant, God gives man the privilege of subduing the earth and wielding dominion over the fish in the seas and the birds of heaven and every living thing that moves upon the land. God also plants within the garden a special tree of life. Adam can "reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever," [Gen. 3:22] providing him with the gift of immortality.

Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

[Gen. 1:26]

In return, God charges Adam with the responsibility to take care of the garden in which they live. Also, while Adam can feed on the various fruits of the garden, he commands Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, strongly implying that breaking this covenant demand would lead to the loss of Edenic innocence and certain mortal death. This command is meant to establish Adam's resolve to be faithfully obedient to the will of his God. Obedience means unending fellowship with an eternal God; disobedience breaks this relationship and brings both spiritual separation and mortal death. This covenant with Adam establishes God's promise of privilege, includes a condition for obedient faith and trust, and provides for a penalty of separation and death should Adam break his loyalty to this covenant.

The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

[Gen. 2:15-17]

A day comes when Eve is questioned by a cunning serpent as to why she cannot eat from this tree. Eve relates god's commandment not to eat of its fruit, saying that even if she touches the fruit, she will die. The serpent replies that not only will she not die, but that she and Adam would "be like God, knowing good and evil" [Gen. 3:5]. Eve eats the fruit and shares it with Adam, who also eats. They both become self-aware, knowing good and evil and realizing their nakedness. When God finds them, he indicts them for their disobedience and expels them from Eden. His covenant has been abrogated, and the due penalties subject to the covenant come into play. No longer would it be easy to harvest fruit. Thorns and weeds would make planting and harvesting hard labor. Men would have to work by the sweat of their brow to eat. Women would give birth in pain. Animals became dangerous and carnivorous.

That Adam or Eve could eat of the tree of life only becomes a concern to God after they have consumed fruit from the tree of knowledge. To prevent Adam and Eve from further access to the tree of life, God places cherubim with a "flaming sword" to guard against any future entry into the garden.



The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and live forever. So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.
[Gen. 3:22,23]

Adam's original sin was disobedience against his God, resulting in his breaking of their covenant and his ensuing disenfranchisement from Eden. With the fall of Adam and the subsequent loss of human innocence, all mankind inevitably shares the unfortunate repercussions of being separated from a righteous and holy God. Adam's sin of disobedience led to the sinful mortality of all mankind. Adam sinned and broke his covenant with God. This disobedience brought onto himself and to all his descendants the penalty of condemnation for covenant-breaking.

As at Adam, they have broken the covenant.
[Hosea 6:7]

Adam's original sin resulted in a general condition of sinfulness for all mankind. This condition is distinct from the actual sin that a person commits. This fallen state of deprivation represents a natural absence of holiness into which all humans are born. All of Adam's descendants are born into a fallen world. Human beings do not directly bear the "original guilt" from Adam and Eve's particular sin, but they do suffer from their inherited inclination to

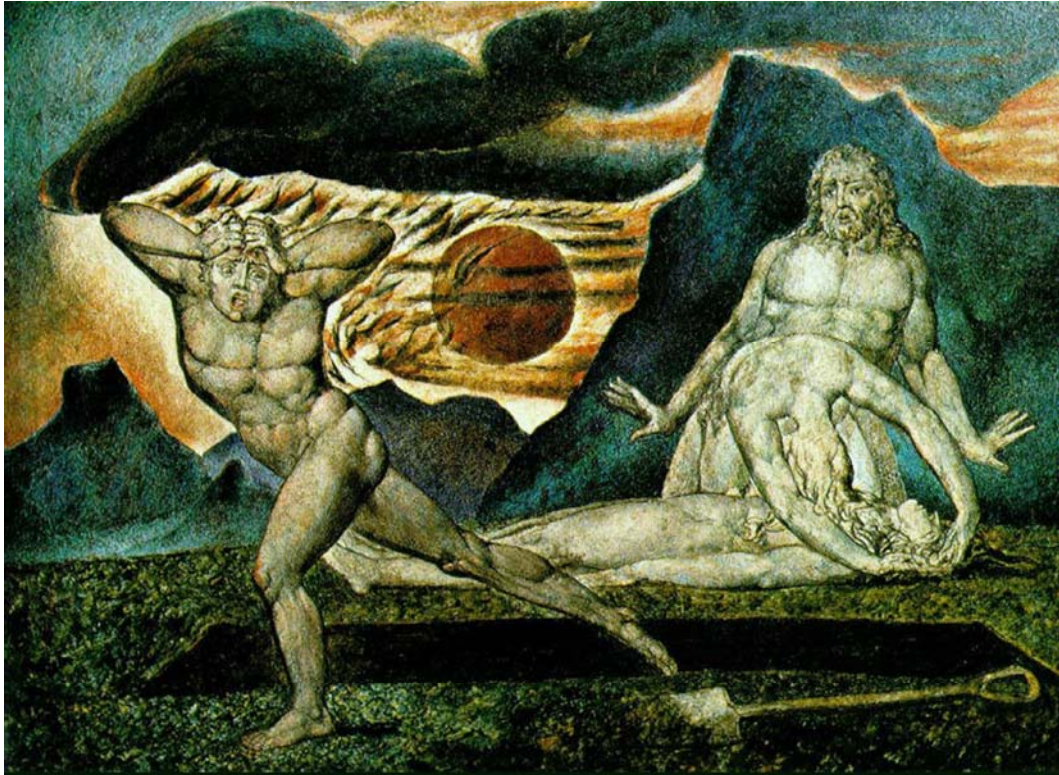
sin and are thus subject to the dominion of mortal death. Even so, all men retain their reason and free will for resisting the temptations of sin.

The soul who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.

[Ez. 18:20]

This intrinsic predisposition towards sin is a rebellion of the “flesh” against the “spirit” whereby the lustful appetites of man drive him against his good sense and reason. Because of his sin, Adam was unable to pass on to his descendants a human nature with the holiness it would otherwise have been endowed, in this way implicating them in his sin. Man’s moral and ethical faculties are constantly being jeopardized by his innate weakness and his unrestrained hungers. God in his goodness and mercy makes active his "covenant of grace" which he established from eternity promising redemption and eternal life to those who would believe in the coming redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Regarding the early-generation children of Adam and Eve, they were still genetically pure with little fear of family inter-marriage. This genetic purity likely accounted for their life-line longevity.



*Now Cain said to his brother Abel,
“Let’s go out to the field” And while
they were in the field, Cain attacked his
brother Abel and killed him....So Cain
went out from the Lord’s presence and
lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.
Cain lay with his wife, and she became
pregnant and gave birth to Enoch.*

[Gen. 4:8,16,17]

*[Adam] had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him
Seth. After Seth was born, Adam....had other sons and daughters.*

[Gen. 5:3-5]

*Enoch [progeny of Adam, not the same as Enoch son of Cain] walked faithfully
with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters... Enoch walked
faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.*

[Gen. 5:22,24]

When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.

[Gen. 6:1,2]

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were heroes of old, men of renown.

[Gen. 6:4]

GOD’S COVENANT WITH NOAH:

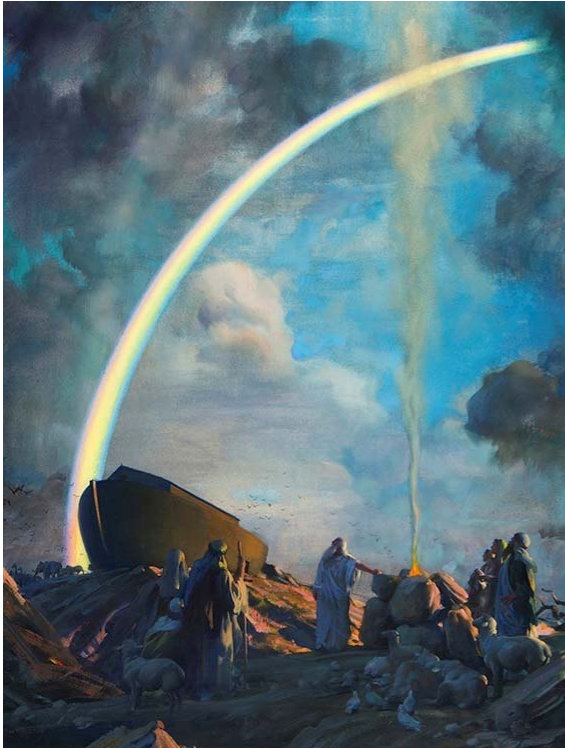
After Adam and Eve’s banishment from the Garden of Eden, the earth began to be filled with men and women, but their wickedness and evil inclinations grieved God so much that he desired to wipe away all life from the face of the earth – men, animals of the ground and birds of the air. Only Noah and his family found favor in God’s eyes, because Noah was righteous and walked with God.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

[Gen. 6:5]

Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.

[Gen. 6:11,12]



I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has life in it....but I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.
[Gen. 6:17-19]

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.
[Heb. 11:7]

God preserves one righteous man and his family and gives him the duty and blessing of filling the earth again: “Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.’” [Gen. 9:1] After the floods resided, Noah’s first act when he exited the Ark was to build an altar unto the Lord on which he offered clean animals and birds as burnt offerings to God: “The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: ‘Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.’” [Gen. 8:21] God, by his good grace, freely establishes this covenant with Noah who has demonstrated faithful obedience and trusting reverence to his God. God gives Noah and his sons his blessings, telling them to be fruitful and occupy the earth. God tells Noah that he will set his rainbow in the clouds as an everlasting sign of the covenant he will establish with Noah and his descendants.

The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.
[Gen. 9:2,3]

And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.

[Gen. 9:5,6]



I now establish my covenant with you and your descendants after and with every living creature that was with you – the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, and all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you; never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.

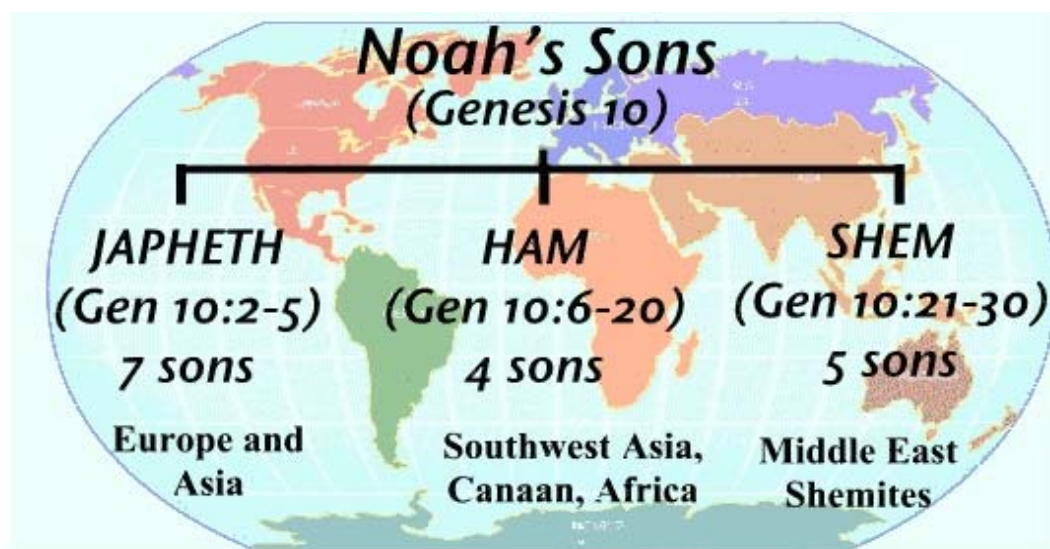
[Gen. 9:9-11]

As a result of the flood and the cleansing of the world's despicable and wicked inhabitants, Noah becomes the second father of the human race. Noah and his family are the sole eight survivors to continue the human race. This literal view of history presented by the Bible is

that all humans are descended from Noah's family, and thereby related. This suggests that the world's population is descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Tradition has it that the descendants of Japheth, Shem and Ham correspond to the various historic nations and peoples comprising three races: European, Semitic, and African.

The sons of Noah who came out of the Ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth.
[Gen. 9:18,19]

These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.
[Gen. 10:32]



JAPHETH:

- Greeks
- Thracians
- Scythians

HAM:

- Canaanites
- Egyptians
- Philistines
- Hittites
- Amorites

SHEM:

- Hebrews
- Chaldeans
- Assyrians
- Persians
- Arameans (Syrians)

Shem's descendants: Shem is traditionally held to be the ancestor of the Semitic people. Abraham, David, and the Jews are descended from Shem through Arpachshad.

1. Elam, son of Shem – The Elamites called themselves the *Haltamti* and had an empire (capital Susa) in what is now Khuzistan, modern Iran.
2. Ashur, son of Shem – The Assyrians traced themselves to the god-ancestor *Ashur* and the city he founded by that name on the Tigris.

3. Arpachshad, (also transcribed *Arphaxad*) son of Shem – He or his immediate descendants are credited in Jewish tradition with founding the city of Ur of the Chaldees.
 - a. Cainan, son of Arpachshad – The Greek Septuagint and genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:36 includes this name.
 - b. Shelah (also transcribed *Salah*), son of Arpachshad (or Cainan).
 - i. Eber, son of Shelah – Indicated as the ancestor of the Hebrews.
 - Peleg, son of Eber.
 - Joktan, son of Eber – Considered as Qahtan to be the ancestor of the "Pure Arabs", father of Almodad. Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Kiklah, Obal, Abimal, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, Jobab.
4. Lud, son of Shem – Ancient authorities assign this name to the Lydians of Eastern Anatolia (*Luddu* in Assyrian inscriptions from c. 700 BC).
5. Aram, son of Shem – There are references to a campaign against 'Aram' as early as 2300 BC in the inscriptions of Naram-Suen of Akkad. His descendants settled in the city of Haran. There were a number of places named Aram including one in Damascus and another called *Aram-Naharaim* or *Aram of two Rivers* since it was situated between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. There is also *Aram-Tzova* which is mentioned in Psalms 60.
 - a. Uz, son of Aram.
 - b. Hul, son of Aram.
 - c. Gether, son of Aram.
 - d. Mash, son of Aram (1 Chronicles has *Meshech*).

Ham's descendants: Africans were understood to be the sons of Ham, particularly his descendant Cush. Cushites are referred to throughout scripture as being the inhabitants of East Africa, and they and the Yoruba still trace their ancestry through Ham today. A relationship between the Semitic and Cushitic languages has been attributed.

1. Cush, son of Ham – The Empire of Kush to the south of Egypt is known from at least 1970 BC.
 - a. Seba, son of Cush – Has been connected with both Yemen and Eritrea.
 - b. Havilah, son of Cush – Usually considered to be a part of the Arabian peninsula near the Red Sea.
 - c. Sabtah, son of Cush – Connected with Hadhramis (their ancient capital being Saubatha) in eastern Yemen.
 - d. Raamah, son of Cush – a Connected with Rhammanitae in the southwest Arabian peninsula, and with an Arabian city of Regmah at the head of Persian Gulf.
 - i. Sheba, son of Raamah – Connected with Sabaeans and peoples on either side of the narrowest part of the Red Sea, in both Yemen/South Arabia, and Eritrea/Ethiopia/Somalia.
 - ii. Dedan, son of Raamah – Possibly a region of the Tabuk Province of Saudi Arabia.
 - e. Sabtechah, son of Cush – Possibly Sabaeans living around Eritrea.

- f. Nimrod, son of Cush – Identified as a *mighty hunter before God*, and the founder of ancient Babel, Akkad, Sumer.
- 2. Mizraim, son of Ham – Mizraim is a name for Upper and Lower Egypt.
 - a. Ludim, offspring of Mizraim.
 - b. Anamim, offspring of Mizraim – There is a reference in an Assyrian inscription from Sargon II's time to Anami, a tribe located in Cyrene, Libya.
 - c. Lehabim, offspring of Mizraim.
 - d. Naphtuhim, offspring of Mizraim – Connected with Na-Ptah, the Egyptian form of Memphis.
 - e. Pathrusim, offspring of Mizraim.
 - f. Casluhim ("from whom came the Philistim"), offspring of Mizraim.
 - g. Caphtorim, offspring of Mizraim.
- 3. Phut, son of Ham – Identified with the Libyans, neighbors of Egypt to the west.
- 4. Canaan, son of Ham – The name of a nation and people who settled the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean in what is now called Israel and Lebanon.
 - a. Sidon, firstborn son of Canaan – Name one of the oldest city-states on the Phoenician coast.
 - b. Heth, son of Canaan – Considered ancestor of "Hittites", a people of Canaan.
 - c. "The Jebusite", offspring of Canaan – A tribe that lived around Jerusalem, that was formerly known as *Jebus* according to the Books of Kings.
 - d. "The Amorite", offspring of Canaan – A people living between the Jordan and Euphrates rivers.
 - e. "The Gergasites", offspring of Canaan - Known to the Egyptians as the Kirkash.
 - f. "The Hivite", offspring of Canaan.
 - g. "The Arkite", offspring of Canaan – Probably city-state of Arqa in Phoenicia.
 - h. "The Sinite", offspring of Canaan.
 - i. "The Arvadite", offspring of Canaan – Refers to the Phoenician city-state of Arwad.
 - j. "The Zemarite", offspring of Canaan – Refers to the Phoenician city-state of Zemar.
 - k. "The Hamathite", offspring of Canaan – Refers to Syrian city of Hamath.

Japheth's descendants: Japheth is traditionally seen as the ancestor of Europeans. *Japhetic* has been used as a synonym for Caucasians and the tribe of Japheth was to have developed its distinctive racial characteristics in the Caucasus, where Mount Ararat is located. The term Japhetic has been applied to what has become known as the Indo-European language group.

- 1. Gomer, son of Japheth - Identified with the migratory *Gimirru* (Cimmerians).
 - a. Ashkenaz, son of Gomer – *Ashkuz* and *Ishkuz* were names used for the Scythians, who first appear in Assyrian records in the late 8th century in the Caucasus region, and at times occupied vast areas of Europe and Asia.
 - b. Riphath (*Diphath* in Chronicles), son of Gomer.
 - c. Togarmah, son of Gomer.
- 2. Magog, son of Japheth.

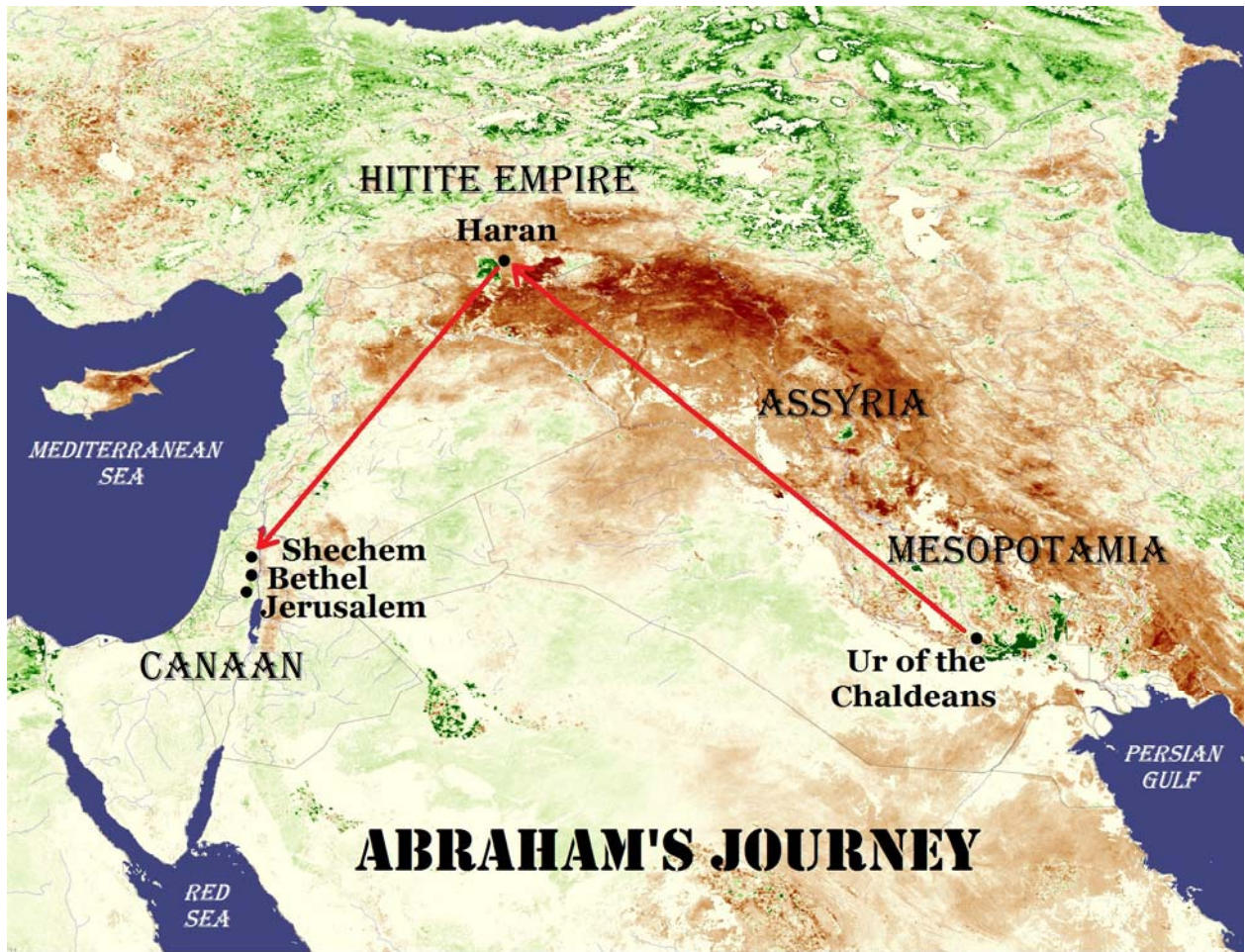
3. Madai, son of Japheth – The *Medes* of Northwest Iran first appear in Assyrian records as *Amadai* in about 844 BC.
4. Javan, son of Japheth. This name is said to be connected with the *Ionians*, one of the original Greek tribes.
 - a. Elishah, son of Javan.
 - b. Tarshish (*Tarshishah* in Chronicles), son of Javan.
 - c. Kittim, offspring of Javan.
 - d. Dodanim (*Rodanim* in Chronicles), offspring of Javan.
5. Tubal, son of Japheth – Connected with *Tabal*, an Anatolian kingdom.
6. Meshech, son of Japheth – Regarded as the eponym of the *Mushki* tribe of Anatolia.
7. Tiras, son of Japheth – Connected with the Thracians, an ancient nation first appearing in written records around 700 BC.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB:

You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perrizites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You kept your promise because you are righteous.

[Neh. 9:7,8]

Approximately two-thousand years BC, God chooses a tribal chieftain by the name of Abram and his people, and God brings them out of land of Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia to re-settle in the land of Canaan. This man Abram is a descendant of Shem, the son of Noah and the father of the Hebrew (Semitic) nation. God makes a covenant with Abram to give him and his descendants this land. Abram leaves his home in Haran for Canaan, the land promised him by the Lord.



Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse, and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

[Gen. 12:1–3]

When called to go to a land that he would later receive as an inheritance, Abraham obeyed the Lord in an act of faith and went. Even though he did not know to where he was going, by faith he made his new home in the promised land of Canaan where he was a stranger in a strange land. He lived in tents, as did his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob who were co-heirs of the same promise made by their Lord God. In the far-distant future, their descendants would build a great temple at Jerusalem whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

[Heb. 11:8]

Upon arriving in Canaan, the Lord clearly establishes his covenant with Abram, “To your offspring I will give this land.” [Gen. 12:7] There Abram built an altar to the Lord. Abram’s belief in the covenant of the Lord’s promise was counted unto him as righteousness.

Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.

[Gen. 13:14-17]



No longer will you be called Abram [exalted father]; your name will be Abraham [father of many], for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after for generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you; and I will be their God.
[Gen. 17:5-8]

You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

[Gen. 17:11]

If Abraham was to become the father of many nations, he would accordingly need to produce an heir with his seed. Both Abraham and his wife Sarai were at the time of God’s promise quite elderly and Sarai was considered to be well past the time of childbearing. Sarai had as yet produced no heir, so she determined that her maidservant Hagar would conceive with Abraham’s child.

So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.

[Gen. 16:15]

Regarding Ishmael, God tells Abraham;



I will surely bless him [Ishmael]; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac. [Gen. 17:20,21]

God promises to bless Abraham's wife Sarai and re-names her Sarah because he will bless her by giving her a son named Isaac.

I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her. [Gen. 17:16]

And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. [Heb. 11:11,12]

When God commanded Abraham as a condition of his covenant to sacrifice his beloved miracle child, his son Isaac, as a faith offering, Abraham faithfully humbled himself and submitted to God's command. Having proved his willingness to obey, Abraham's hand was held back by God at the very last moment. God was satisfied in Abraham's complete submission of will.



I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.
[Gen. 22:16-18]

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."
[Heb. 11:17,18]

Another crucial expectation by God from Abraham is stated in Genesis 18:19 where God says, "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." If the promises made to Abraham and his seed are to be fulfilled, then his household must keep the way of the Lord. The promises are conditional.

The covenant that God made with Abraham was renewed with his son Isaac. God appears to Isaac at Beersheba and passed on the covenant he had made with his father Abraham.

For to you [Isaac] and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them these lands and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.
[Gen. 26:3,4]

And then to Isaac's son, Jacob, God appeared (according to Gen. 28:13–15) and confirmed the covenant to him: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Jacob had returned to his grandfather Abraham's original homeland to find himself a wife from his own peoples. While asleep, he dreams of a ladder reaching up to heaven with angels going up and down. Jacob

sees God in heaven at the top of the ladder, who then repeats the promise he had made to Abraham and Isaac that his descendants would one day inherit the land of Canaan. Upon awakening, Jacob consecrates the ground on which he slept by taking the stone he had used as a pillow, setting it up as a sacred pillar and sanctifying it with oil. He thence calls that place Bethel (the house of God).

Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be called Israel [he struggles with God]....I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give to you this land to your descendants after you.
[Gen. 35:10-12]

In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God. He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there – the Lord God Almighty, the Lord is his name!
[Hosea 12:3-5]

Abraham's grandson Jacob settles in Shechem. Jacob becomes the father of the twelve patriarchs, the beginning of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob has twelve sons, including Joseph his favorite. Motivated by jealousy, Joseph's brothers sell him as a slave to Ishmaelite traders going to Egypt. Joseph rises from Egyptian slavery to become powerful in the house of Pharaoh. Jacob's descendants emigrate to Egypt during times of famine in Canaan. This famine forces Joseph's father and brothers to move from Canaan in the midst of this great upheaval. In time, Moses will lead his people from Egypt back to the land of Canaan. The Lord had earlier said to Abraham in a dream that his descendants will be captives in Egypt for four hundred years.

Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.
[Gen. 15:13,14]

Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years.
[Ex. 12:40]

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC & JACOB

*He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."
[1Chron. 16:14-18]*

***Jacob resided as a foreigner in the land of Ham. The Lord made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes, whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to conspire against his servants.
[Ps. 105:23-25]***

Abraham is considered throughout the Bible to be a great pillar of faith because of his unshakeable trust in God's word, even when all human reasoning would tend to judge otherwise. When told to uproot himself, his family and his people to set out for an unfamiliar land of promise, Abraham is obedient. When told that he would people many nations at an age that most men would consider implausible, Abraham trusts in his Lord's word. After having been gifted with his miraculous son and heir Isaac and being commanded to sacrifice the life of this living proof of God's trustworthiness, Abraham again is obedient to God's will and righteously passes God's testing of his faith.

Abraham is considered a man of great faith because he trusted in his Lord God who inevitably would make good all his promises. Abraham was considered a friend by God (Is. 41:8). Of all the personages mentioned in the Bible, Abraham stands out as a stellar example of righteous obedience and as an outstanding pillar of faith. Abraham's willingness and full intention to submit to his God proves his faithful worthiness and his full subservience to God, thereby earning his title as the great forefather of a mighty people. All of us who likewise give our faith unreservedly to God are also considered as Abraham's offspring, and as such we too inherit the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham as did Abraham's son Isaac, grandson Jacob and his descendants of the Israelite nation.

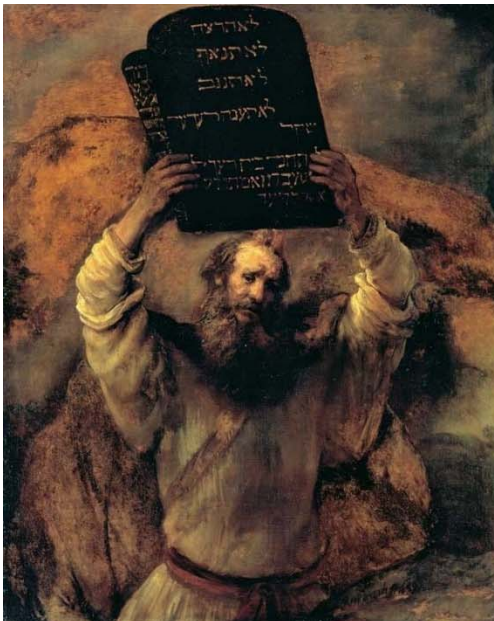
Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all of Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

[Rom. 4:16]

Understand then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

[Gal. 3:7-9]

GOD'S COVENANT WITH MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES:



You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses. In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

[Neh. 9:13-15]

The Book of Exodus recounts the return of the Israelites to Canaan after prolonged slavery in Egypt. Moses, God's elected prophet, through extraordinary circumstances, became a prince in Pharaoh's palace. He then became an outcast in the wilderness near Mt. Sinai. God visited him there telling him to return to Egypt to lead his people out from their captivity. This leads to the recorded exodus of Moses and the Israelites back to the promised land of Canaan.

No prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt.

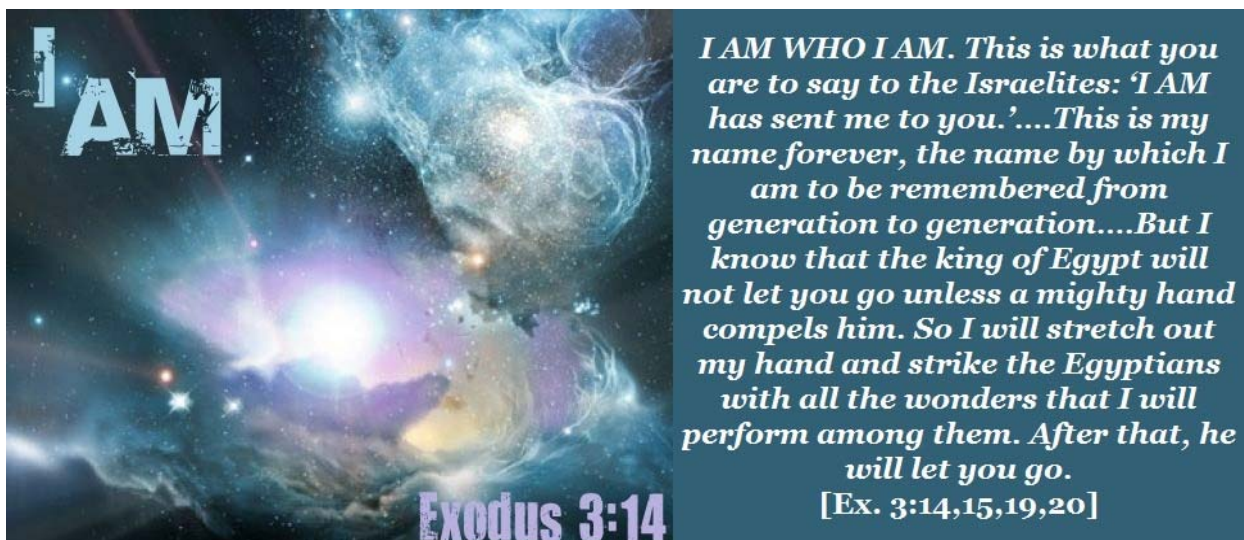
[Deut. 34:10,11]

Through the seed of Abraham, the Lord purposed to build himself a “chosen people” of God-centered faith and morality in the land of Canaan. God had used Joseph’s migration into Egypt and eventual captivity there as a preparation to preserve Abraham’s descendants (through Jacob) during severe and prolonged famine in Canaan. After 400 years in Egypt, Jacob’s descendants were fruitful and multiplied greatly. They had grown to a population of about two million.

As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased.
[Acts 7:17]

Because of their alarming numbers, the Egyptian Pharaoh decided to control the Israelites through imposed slavery. He began to oppress them – this Pharaoh decreed that every male born among the Israelites be killed in order to control their population. When Moses was born, in an attempt to save his life, he was placed in the Nile River floating in a papyrus basket where he was subsequently found by Pharaoh’s daughter. She adopted and protected him, even allowing his real mother to nursemaid him. Moses grew to manhood, being educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians and becoming an influential prince in the palace of Pharaoh. One day, Moses witnessed an Egyptian violently mistreating one of his fellow Israelites. In response to this, Moses killed this Egyptian and afterwards fled to the faraway land of Midian where he settled as a foreigner. He married and had two sons.

Meanwhile, God heard the groaning of the Israelites in their slavery and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: “So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.” [Ex. 2:25] One day, when Moses was tending his flocks near Horeb [Mount Sinai], the mountain of God, the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush. There, God told Moses not to come any closer, saying, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” [Ex. 3:5] God announces his presence, saying, “I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” [Acts 7:32] God promises Moses that, because of the misery of his people in Egypt, he would come down from Sinai and set them free. God would deliver them from Egypt and lead them into the good and spacious land of Canaan, a land that flowed with milk and honey. With the performance of many wonders and miraculous signs, Moses leads his people out of Egypt.



The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, had seen the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt. He sent through his prophet Moses miraculous signs against Pharaoh and his people for their mistreatment of the Israelites. Having raised up Moses as their liberator, he says, "Let my people go, so that they will worship me... I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." [Ex. 9:13,16] The Lord God separated the Red Sea to let his people pass on dry ground, but he swallowed up the armies of Pharaoh in the mighty waters as they pursued the Israelites. He led his people in the desert by day with a pillar of cloud and by night with a pillar of fire. Upon leaving the Red Sea and entering into the desert, God makes a decree and a law for them:

If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you.
[Ex. 15:26]

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
[Ex. 19:5,6]

You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken from heaven. Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.
[Ex. 20:22,23]

The Lord God led his people to the base of Mount Sinai where he spoke to them with a heavenly presence. He gave them commands, decrees and laws through his servant Moses. He fed them with manna from heaven and sated their thirst with water drawn from

rocks. He was present to lead them to take possession of the land of Canaan that he had promised them.

The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; for about forty years he endured their conduct in the wilderness; and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years.
[Acts 13:17-20]

God had exercised a powerful intervention on behalf of his chosen people. He is a jealous God who will not tolerate their lusting after the traditional gods that they will encounter on their way to and when they finally enter into the promised land of Canaan. If the Israelites violate the terms of God's covenant with them, God will severely chastise them. God's covenant means responsibility, not just privilege. He demands complete loyalty.

My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces... I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.
[Ex. 23:23,24,32,33]



I am making a covenant with you. Before all you people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you. Obey what I command you today.
[Ex. 34:10,11]

God's people are to consecrate themselves and be holy because God is holy. Because God has "consecrated" his people, setting them apart from the nations, he will give them possession of the land of Canaan as an inheritance, a land "flowing with milk and honey."

The Lord did not set his affection on you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.
[Deut. 7:7]

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?
[Deut 10:12,13]

I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
[Deut. 30:19,20]

As God had commanded circumcision to Abraham when he began to generate for himself a holy nation, he reaffirmed it through Moses. The circumcision ceremony is an important event to the family of a Jewish baby boy. The ceremony celebrates a boy's becoming part of God's covenant nation.

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.
[Deut. 30:6]

God's chosen people, the nation of Israel, were to:

1. Keep his righteousness in the world.
2. Reveal to the world the Lord their God and his divine nature.
3. Prepare the world for the coming Messiah.

God founded the nation of Israel to be a source of truth and salvation to all the world. He was forging a holy nation. Because of their general discontent, and because this first generation fresh out of Egypt had ingrained the weak mindset of a slavish people, God needed to purge and rebuild his people. This first generation would not enter into the promised land of Canaan. Forty years spent by the Israelite people wandering in the harsh wilderness provided a vast and hostile environment in which to test and reshape the character of his people by weeding out the weak and undesirable elements. This gave God the time and means necessary to raise a new generation to learn the ways of their God. This seemingly harsh reality of God's purposes and plans may challenge the finite-oriented

mind of mortal nature, but our heavenly Father's destiny-motivated actions are of divine impact for his bringing his full blessings to the entire world.

Through this renewed and hearty nation of Israel, God's "only begotten" Son would be born. God's chosen people had been put through a rigorous training program to make them a formidable and worthy channel for bringing his blessings to all the world. God was embedding into his people a whole new way of life, cleansing them from the many pagan practices they had acquired in Egypt and restoring true worship to himself. God designed laws and restrictions to keep his people separate, to consecrate them socially and spiritually, from the wicked pagan ways they would surely encounter in Canaan.

How great you are, O sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel – the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, O Lord, have become their God.
[2Sam. 7:22-24]

What Are the Covenant's Promises and Conditions?

1. Israel Will Be God's Prized Possession

In Exodus 19:5 God says, "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all the peoples; for all the earth is mine." God mentions that *all* the earth is his to show that when he calls Israel his "own possession," he means more than the general care and authority he has over the world. He will be Israel's God and they will be his possession in a special way. They will have blessings beyond all other nations. They will be God's prized possession—if they keep his covenant.

2. Israel Will Be a Kingdom of Royal Priests

The second promise in Exodus 19:6 is, "and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests." The most striking privilege of the priests was intimate access to God. They drew near on behalf of the people. Their inheritance was not the land, but the Lord. This privilege God promises to the whole nation. This privilege is heightened when God calls them a *royal* priesthood or priests in the services of the *King*. There is no greater privilege than to have intimate access to the King of the universe.

3. Israel Will Be a Holy Nation

The third promise of the covenant is that Israel will also be a "holy nation." Israel would be holy in two senses: one, she would be set apart and distinguished from all the other peoples; two, she would be granted a moral likeness to God. She would share God's

character. "Be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). *If* Israel keeps covenant with God, she will have the all-satisfying privilege of likeness to God. She will be a *holy* nation.

4. God Will Defend Israel from All Her Enemies

The fourth covenant promise is found in Exodus 23:22. "If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. " Anybody who opposes Israel will have to deal with almighty God - *if* Israel keeps covenant. This is probably what God means in Exodus 34:10 when he promises, " I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you." In defense of his people, God will do marvels to display his glory among the nations.

5. God Will Be Merciful and Gracious and Forgiving

Finally, God promises to be merciful, gracious, and forgive iniquity and transgression and sin: "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." [Exodus 34:6,7] So, the fifth great promise of the Mosaic covenant is that God will treat Israel with mercy and grace and will forgive her sins - if she keeps the covenant.

In summary, then, the five divine promises of the Mosaic covenant, which reconfirm the covenant with Abraham, are

1. Israel will be God's special possession,
2. Israel will be a kingdom of priests to God,
3. Israel will be a holy nation,
4. God will fight for Israel and overcome all her enemies, and
5. God will treat Israel with grace and mercy and forgive her sins.

These are the divine promises of the covenant. But they all depend on certain conditions being fulfilled by the people, as Exodus 19:5 says, "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall . . . " experience all these divine blessings.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH PHINEAS AND THE PRIESTHOOD:

This is one of the most interesting and unusual covenants which God occurred while Israel was still in the desert before they entered the promised land of Canaan, around 1400 BC. This covenant preceded the Davidic covenant by several hundred years. It is significant regarding the Levitical priesthood anticipating King David's ascension to the throne.

I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars in the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

[Jer. 33:22]

Phineas was a son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron, and his wife was one of the daughters of Putiel [Exodus 6:25]. Phineas joined with the congregation of Israel when they gathered at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting to weep over the immorality and idolatry of the Israelites with the Moabite and Midianite women [Numbers 25:1-18]. A leader of a clan in the tribe of Simeon, Zimri, brought his Midianite mistress Cozbi, daughter of a Midianite clan leader, into his tent publicly in full view of the congregation weeping before the Tent of Meeting. Seeing the two of them on, Phineas took a spear and ran it through both of them in their tent, averting God's wrath. A plague that followed killed 24,000 of the Israelites. The Lord was so pleased with Aaron's son that he made a covenant of peace with him, solidifying for his descendants his covenant of enduring priesthood.

Because of this action of zeal for the glory of God, atoning for the sons of Israel, God told Moses that Phinehas would have a 'covenant of peace', for him and his descendants after him, described as 'a covenant of perpetual priesthood' [Numbers 25:12-13]. The significance of God's pronouncement here was that although Phinehas was not yet succeeding his father in the high priesthood, God was at this time decreeing that the succession of the high priesthood would always come from the line of Phinehas son of Eleazar rather than from the other priestly line of Ithamar.

I am making my peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.

[Num. 25:13]

Aaron, brother of Moses, was made high priest over the people of Israel [Exodus 28:1], being from the tribe of Levi through Kohath [Exodus 6:16-27] along with Moses. The tribe of Levi was set apart as a whole tribe to be without inheritance, representing all the firstborn of Israel [Numbers 8:25-26] as the Lord's portion [Numbers 18:1-24. Deuteronomy 10:9; 18:2]. They served the congregation in the cities of Israel and served Aaron and his sons who ministered in the Tabernacle [Numbers 3:5-4:49]. Aaron with his four sons – Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar – were chosen to minister in the holy place of the Tabernacle [Exodus 28:1-29:44], set apart even from the rest of the tribe of Levi, as "the highest among his brothers" [Leviticus 21:10].

Israel was intended by God to be a nation of priests: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." [Ex. 19:5,6] They were to be the stewards of the oracles of God, the channels through whom God's knowledge and blessing were to be communicated to the world. In them all nations were to be blessed. Within the people of Israel, one tribe, the Levites, was specially set apart to embody and emphasize the priestly code. God chose this one tribe to be exclusively devoted to the work of proving what constitutes the spirit and the power of priesthood. Just as the priesthood of the whole people was part of God's covenant with them, so the special calling of Levi is spoken of as God's "covenant of life and peace being with him" (Mal. 2:5), as the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH JOSHUA:



THE BATTLE OF JERICO

JULIUS SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD (1794-1872)

The Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you....be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself am with you.

[Deut. 31:6,23]

Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord commanded Moses.

[Deut. 34:9]

The land of Canaan holds some of the most fertile land and strategic position in the whole of the near east. The coming of the Israelites into Canaan established a brand-new social culture with a keen focus on their covenant with their living God. God's commandments gave the Israelites a concrete expression of how God wanted his chosen to live. He wanted a people that loved and worshiped him alone. They were to keep themselves ritually clean, this outward purity ideally reflecting their inward purity. They were to resist the immoral practices of their neighboring nations. God wanted them to reflect his loving and compassionate nature by helping strangers, widows, orphans, and the poor.

The Israelites were to establish their society based on the just laws of the living God. Israel's entire society – its legal system, economic structure, family life, and individual communal ethics – reflected their allegiance to one God. These distinctive differences were a sign that the Israelites were set apart and consecrated to God's purposes. While the nations that surrounded Israel worshiped a variety of gods at numerous shrines all over the landscape, the Israelites were to worship one God in one way in one place – a place of God's choosing. God planned to bless his chosen people in the promised land. In turn, the Israelites were to live responsibly in a culture unlike any other that preceded it.

***In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.
[From the “Song of Moses and Miriam: Ex. 15:13]***

***When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, ‘...See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many.
[Num. 13:17,18]***

Joshua had a long history of faithful service as Moses’ attendant. He was with Moses after the Red Sea crossing and contributed to the defeat of the Amalekites. He was with Moses in the Israelites’ consecration at Mount Sinai when the Law covenant was made with Israel. Joshua was one of the spies who were sent into the land of Canaan to spy out the land. Only Joshua and Caleb came back with a favorable report. Their courageous words reflected full confidence in God’s ability to fulfill his word. [Num. 3:2,3,16 – 14:9,24,30,38] Because of this, both Joshua and Caleb found favor with God.

Toward the close of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness, the time came when it was necessary for God to appoint a replacement for Moses and Aaron. Neither of them was to be permitted to enter the promised land, because of an earlier act of disobedience. [Num. 20:1-13] “Aaron will be gathered to his people. He will not enter the land I give the Israelites, because both of you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah.” [Num. 20:24] God distinctly said to Moses: “Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water.” [Num. 20:8] However, Moses altered this clear instruction: “Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.” [Num. 20:11]

***But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”
[Num. 20:12]***

Therefore, God instructed Moses to commission Joshua as his successor. In the immediate presence of the new high priest (Aaron’s son Eleazar), and before the assembly of Israel, Moses placed his hands upon Joshua. Although appointed as Moses’ successor, Joshua was not to be like him in knowing God face to face. Not all Moses’ dignity was transferred to Joshua.

At its core, the book of Joshua reaffirms the covenant the Israelites had earlier established with God. God keeps his covenants. Beginning with the first chapter, the Lord reminded Joshua of this covenant that God had given to his predecessors — to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Moses, and now also Joshua as the one chosen by God to claim God’s promise. The Lord commanded Joshua to remind the nation of Israel not to forget the law of Moses. In chapter 8, Joshua instructed the nation of Israel to remember God’s covenant on Mount Ebal, and there he wrote again God’s covenant and read it to the whole nation of Israel.

Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had

commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them.
[Joshua 8:34]

The burden of the charge God instructed Moses to convey to Joshua was that he should lead the people in the way of the Lord according to the covenant the Lord had made with them at Mount Sinai. The words of the Lord spoken to Joshua are encouraging to all God's servants. "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them." [Josh. 1:2-6]

Do not let this Book of Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord will be with you wherever you go.
[Joshua 1:8,9]

On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord.
[Joshua 24:25,26]

Joshua was faithful to his commission. He served the Lord God and his people, the Israelites, according to the terms of the covenant. Toward the end of his life Joshua assembled Israel's older men and heads of the tribes, judges and officers, and admonished them to serve the Lord in faithfulness, warning them of the consequences of disobedience. [Josh. 23:1-16] He also called together the entire congregation of Israel and reminded them of God's dealings with them since they were a nation. [Josh. 24:16-28] His admonition was that they should be faithful to the covenant. Afterward, they renewed their covenant to obey Jehovah.

Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now... But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your

backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.
[Joshua 23:6-8, 12.13]

As told in the Book of Joshua, the united Israelites made swift and thorough conquest of the armies and cities of Canaan. The conquest of the land of Canaan took only seven years. The Israelites had finally taken a firm hold of the promised land. The Book of Judges continues the story of this conquest that had begun in the Book of Joshua. They had conquered many enemies and had overcome many challenges. Still, God's people were susceptible to the lure of regional Canaanite practices and devotions that threatened their spiritual relationship with their Lord God.

In accordance with God's covenant with his chosen people, he gave them the kingdoms and nations of Canaan extending to its most remote frontiers. As promised, God made these sons of Abraham as numerous as the stars of the sky. He had brought them into the land that he had told them to enter and possess. God had subdued the Canaanites, handing them along with their kings and their peoples to the Israelites. God's people captured fortified cities with their fertile lands, taking possession of their homes and belongings, their vineyards and olive groves and fruit trees.

After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, 'The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.' No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you.
[Deut. 9:4]

Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.
[1Sam. 15:3]

After the death of Joshua, Israel began to lose its grip on the land. Joshua had been an effective successor to Moses, but there was no obvious successor to Joshua to provide the necessary spiritual leadership. Canaan was comprised of many individual city-states, each with its own laws, government and army. They also had their own spiritual practices that were inharmonious with the Israelite's covenant with their God. The conquest of Canaan required the painstaking overpowering of one city at a time, and each conquest established new settlements exposed to the splintering influences of the unique social and spiritual practices prevalent to that time and place.

In the Book of Judges, the land of Canaan under the eventual control of the Israelites became divided and allotted to the 12 tribes of Israel. Each tribe was individually responsible for driving out the remaining enemies within their respective territories. This disjointed approach was ineffective and ultimately unsuccessful. After Joshua, power and authority were decentralized to these individual tribes of Israel – the Israelites had lost their unified purpose. In addition, their failure to fully expel the indigenous Canaanites from this promised land allowed for the process of spiritual decay from within. This failure of the

Israelites allowed the native remnants of the Canaanites to regroup and attempt the restoration of their power and prominence.

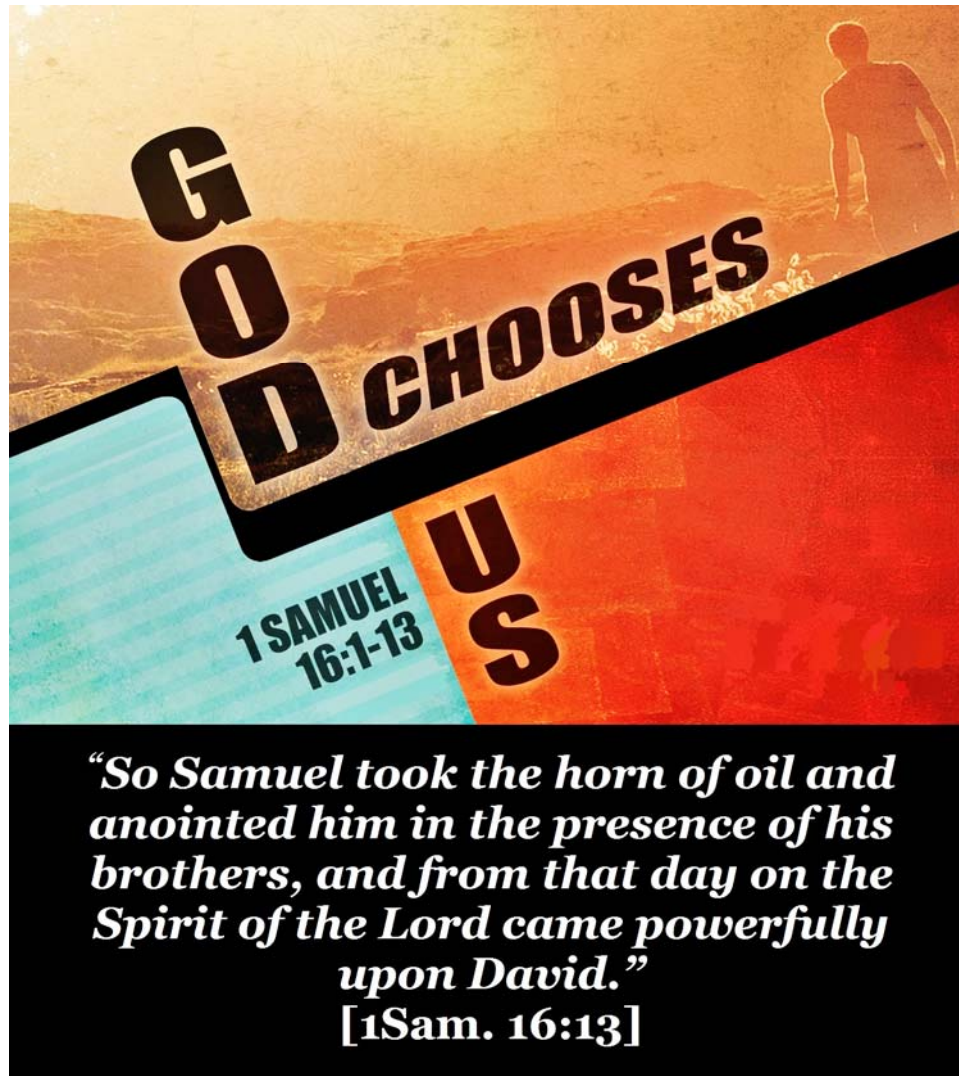
GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID AND SOLOMON:

David ("Beloved") was the second king of Israel. He was considered a righteous king although he possessed many faults in his general character. He was an acclaimed warrior, and he was a renowned musician and poet. Traditionally, he has been credited for composing many of the psalms contained in the Book of Psalms. Information about his life can be found in the Books of Samuel, 1 Kings, and 1 Chronicles.

Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive.
[1Sam. 27:9]

It was in the midst of great national crises that David was selected to rule over the nation of Israel. Saul, the first king of Israel, had proven to be a disappointing failure [1Sam. 15]. The Lord came to the prophet-judge Samuel and instructed him to anoint a new king who would replace him. At first, Samuel was afraid to follow God's instructions because he knew that Saul would kill him if he learned there was a conspiracy to replace him.

David was chosen by God to be king. God had withdrawn his favor from Saul, the first king of Israel. The prophet Samuel sought a new king from the sons of Jesse of Bethlehem, and all seven of Jesse's sons pass before Samuel. The Lord tells Samuel "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." [1Sam. 16:7] Samuel relates that the Lord has not chosen any of these sons initially presented. He then asks, "are these all the sons you have?" and Jesse answers that there is still the youngest but he is tending the sheep. David is brought to Samuel, and "the Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; this is the one.'" [1Sam. 16:12]



King Saul had made David a commander over his armies, but David's ensuing military successes and popularity with the people awakened Saul's jealousy. Saul seeks his death, David flees into the wilderness where he gathers a band of followers and develops a relationship with Israel's enemy, the Philistines. Saul and his son Jonathan are killed by the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. David mourns their death, then goes up to Hebron, where he is anointed king over Judah. Meanwhile in the north, Saul's son Ish-Bosheth is king of the tribes of Israel. War ensues between Ish-Bosheth and David, until Ish-Bosheth is murdered. With the death of the son of Saul, the elders of Israel come to Hebron, and David, at 30 years of age, is anointed King over Israel and Judah.

David conquers the Jebusite fortress of Jerusalem and makes it his capital. David brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and intends to build a temple, but God, speaking through the prophet Nathan, forbids it, saying the temple must wait for a future generation. God makes a covenant with David, promising that he will establish the house of David eternally: "Your throne will be established forever."



When your days are over
and you rest with your
fathers, I will raise up
your offspring to succeed
you, who will come from
your own body, and I will
establish his kingdom. He
is the one who will build
a house for my Name,
and I will establish the
throne of his kingdom
forever.

[2Sam. 7:12,13]

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

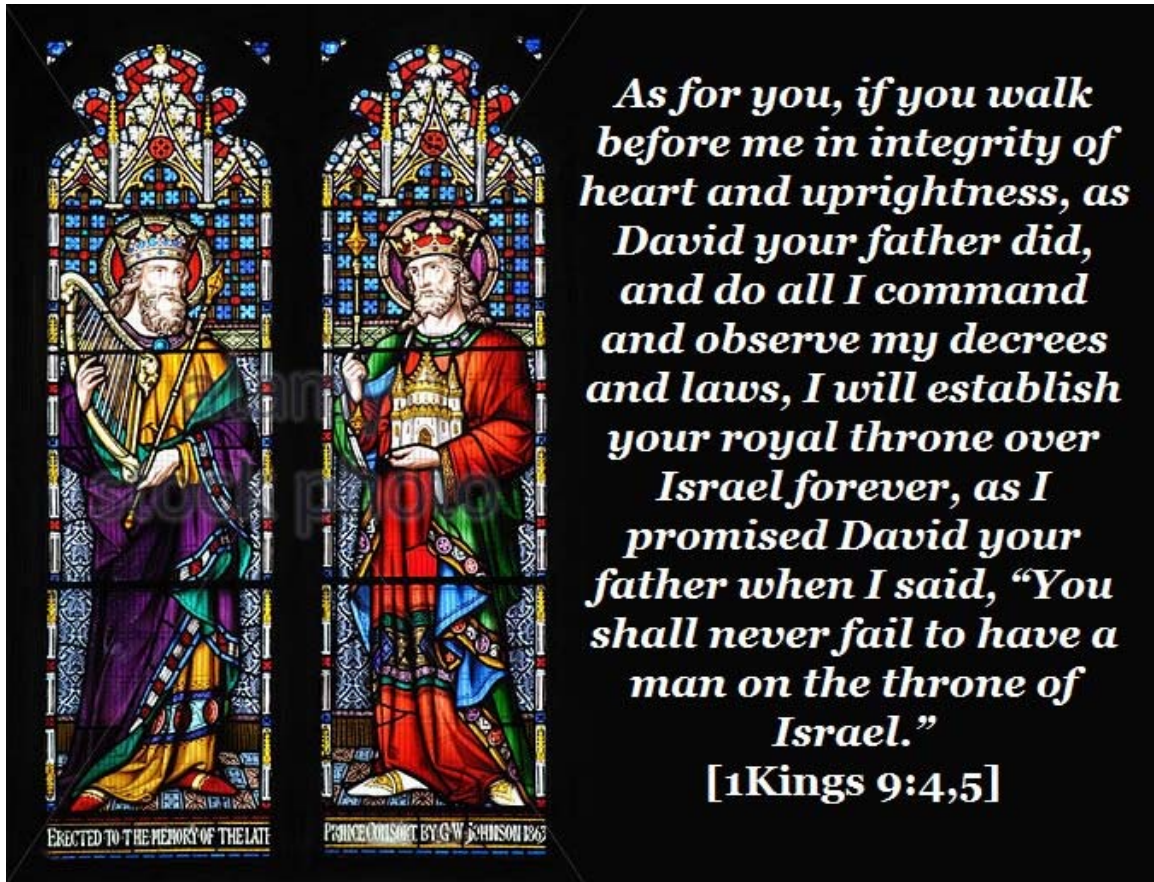
***Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,
and Jesse the father of King David.
David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,
Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,
Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,***

***Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to
Babylon.***

***After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,
Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the
mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.
Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen
from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.
[Matthew 1:1-17]***

The importance of God's covenant with David regarding the posterity of the Davidic Kingdom is that these promises are eventually fulfilled in Christ. This exegesis confirms the doctrine of a future reign of Christ on earth. The provisions of the Davidic covenant foretell that David is to have a child who shall succeed him and establish his kingdom, that this son (Solomon) shall build the temple instead of David, that the throne of his kingdom shall be established forever, and that David's kingdom shall be established forever.

When David became old and bedridden, Adonijah, his eldest surviving son and natural heir, declared himself king. Bathsheba, David's favorite wife, and Nathan the prophet went to David to procure his agreement that Solomon, Bathsheba's son, would sit on the throne. Adonijah's self-declared claim to the monarchy eventually collapsed, and Solomon becomes king. David gives his final instructions to him, including relating God's promise that the line of Solomon and David will inherit the throne of Judah forever. David dies and is buried in the City of David, having ruled forty years over Israel.



The Davidic authority shall never be taken from David's posterity; the line of David will always have the right to rule over Israel. Christ fulfills the covenant by his acceptance at the right hand of the Father in heaven and by the someday promise of his return in righteous sovereignty. God had in view a house and a kingdom much greater than Israel.

I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations... I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail... I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure... I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness - and I will not lie to David - that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.

[Psalm 89:3,4,28,29,34-37]

God's purpose and plan which he revealed to David was to put a ruler over the eventual Christian church and then over all the world. An angel says in Revelation, "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.'" The house of David will be the whole world. The Son of David now rules

transcendently from heaven. The kingdom of God now rules within the hearts of man: "Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David." [Isaiah 55:3] The eternal King of the world will one day come from heaven and establish a reign of joy and righteousness and peace over all his loyal subjects for ever and ever. Until that time Jesus Christ entreats to us "'I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.'" The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." [Rev. 22:16,17]

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior. [Jeremiah 23:5,6]

My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever. [Ezekiel 37:24-28]

THE NEW COVENANT:

The new covenant is the arrangement with God's people that he promised in Jeremiah 31:31. The book of Hebrews quotes the terms of this arrangement in Hebrews 8:10,12. It says, "This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.... For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." God had been at work for 2,000 years since Abraham, calling, preserving, judging, forgiving and blessing his people Israel. He had commanded an elaborate system of sacrifices and priestly ministries and feasts and rituals to define Israel among the nations and to make himself known to them and to point them to the future fulfillment.

The Mosaic Covenant conveyed God's gracious gift of the forgiveness of sins to those who had humbled themselves before him in faith. This covenant came from the very promises of God and it was powerfully accompanied by amazing miracles and wonders. But the New Covenant would be accompanied by the miracle of changed hearts and lives. The Spirit of God would enter people's lives in order to reinforce their allegiance to the covenant. No longer would priest or prophets have to stand between the people and God. This Spirit

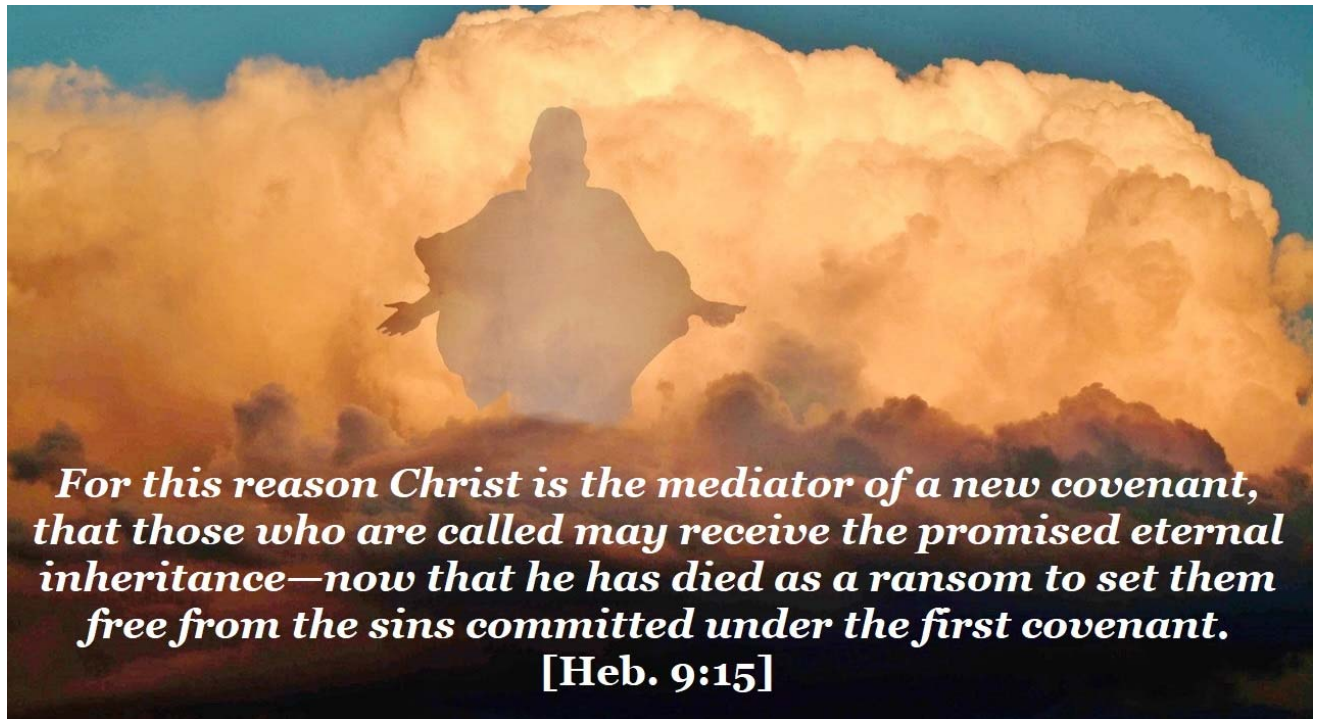
would teach the people the knowledge of God – a knowledge that would be evidenced through, faith, obedience, and devotion to the Lord. With Jesus' death on the cross, his lifeblood was given for all peoples, and redemption and forgiveness for sins was attained.

Moses emphasized God's Law and justice; Jesus highlighted God's mercy, love, faithfulness, and forgiveness. Moses was the giver of Law; Jesus came to fulfill the Law. Jesus becomes the living ladder between heaven and earth. The people of Israel entered into the Old Covenant with God after their exodus from Egypt whereby the people could approach God through the priests and the sacrificial system. The New Covenant completes, rather than replaces, the Old Covenant, fulfilling everything the Old Covenant looked forward to. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross allows all humanity to directly approach God and communicate with him.

The Israelites had camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for two years, a time for consecration and redemption h God: "Be holy because I am holy." [Lev. 19:2] their focus was on sacrificial offerings as an active symbol of repentance and obedience. Jesus, the lamb of God, gave up his life as a final sacrifice to God for the redemption of all mankind. We accept Jesus Christ as the only one who can redeem us from sin, restoring our relationship with God. God provides specific directions for acceptable worship and for addressing proper repentance for our sins. God gives clear standards for living a holy life, distinguishing his people from the pagan practices prevalent among the surrounding peoples.

Jesus is the high priest who has gone through the heavens. Because he has been tempted in every way, just as we are, he is able to sympathize with our many weaknesses. And through all of this, he has remained sinless, requiring no purification from sin. Not being subject to the weaknesses of the flesh, he has no obligation to offer sacrifices for his sins. He is a high priest forever of the order of Melchizedek. He has learned obedience to the Father through his suffering, and having been made perfect before his Father, he becomes the source and the way of eternal salvation.

The tabernacle of the Christ is in God's heaven, being greater and more perfect than that which has been built by man on earth. Christ did not enter his celestial tabernacle by means of the blood-sacrifice of goats and calves, "he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." [Heb. 9:12] The blood of Christ, who offered himself unblemished to the Lord cleanses our sinful natures, "acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" [Heb. 9:14]



The Lord's supper in some ways is a reversal of the traditional temple sacrifice. The beneficiaries are God's people with Jesus Christ acting both as high priest and sacrificial offering. He offered his Apostles bread, saying "take this and eat; this is my body," and, while giving them the cup of wine, saying "drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." [Mat. 26:26-28]

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.
[Mat. 5:17]

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.
[Mat. 5:20]

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.
[Mat. 7:28,29]

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
[John 1:17]

Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.

[Acts 13:39]

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

[Rom. 4:25]

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.

[Rom. 8:3]

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

[Heb. 7:27]

The Christian view of the New Covenant is a new relationship between God and humanity mediated by Christ Jesus which necessarily includes all people, both Jew and Gentile, upon sincere declaration that one believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and God. The New Covenant also breaks the generational curse of the original sin on all children of Adam if they believe in Jesus Christ – this occurs after the people are judged for their own sins, which is expected to happen with the second arrival of Jesus Christ.

The key New Testament chapter for the Christian concept of the New Covenant is Hebrews 8, a portion of which is quoted below:

But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

[Hebrews 8:6–13]

The authors of the New Testament and the early Christian leaders generally consider Jeremiah 31:31–34 to be a central Old Testament prophecy of the New Covenant:



Christ's work on the cross is the New Covenant, by which people are reconciled to God free of guilt, and it fulfills various promises given in Old Testament times. The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were temporary covenants (the latter were for the generally unbelieving people of God, the Israelites) and they find their fulfillment in the New Covenant. The New Covenant law is the Law of Christ, which includes the commands of his Apostles. Those included in the covenant are reconciled to God by grace alone, apart from anything they do. Jesus purchased a people by his death on the cross so that all those for whom he died receive full forgiveness of sins and become enlightened by the Holy Spirit. They have thus become his new creation.

New Covenant theologians believe that the Abrahamic covenant reveals God's plan to save a people and take them into his land. The Old Covenant with the Israelites and the promised

land is a temporary picture of what is accomplished by the New Covenant, where Jesus actually purchased a people and will take them to be with him forever in the "new heavens and new earth" [Rev 21–22].

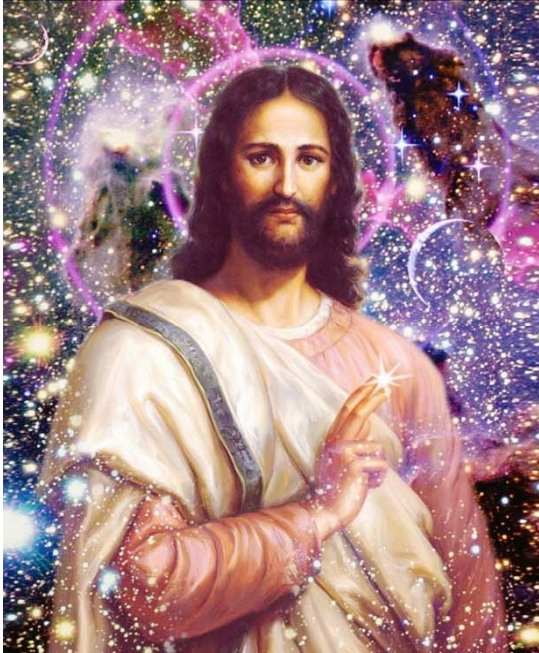
The old Mosaic covenant is a legal covenant that God made with Israel on Mount Sinai. This covenant is fulfilled at the cross. Its purpose was to demonstrate the inability of even God's own chosen people to eradicate sin and guilt until the coming of the Messiah. The fallen world, since the fall of Adam and Eve, can only increase in sin and guilt. Israel, under the Mosaic covenant, was the physical fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, a foreshadow of the superior New Covenant of grace.

New Covenant Theology holds that circumcision was the physical dedication of the changed heart promised to believers in Christ. It signified that you were physically born into the people of God, Israel. It was given to all Israelites, irrespective of repentance and faith. Baptism is the outward sign that regeneration has occurred. It signifies that you have been spiritually born into the believing people of God (a new creation), the church. It is given to all those who give evidence of regeneration, which is repentance and faith.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.
[Isaiah 9:6,7]

After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do. From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.
[Acts 13:22,23]

"After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent, its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things" - things known from long ago.
[Acts 15:16-18]



*You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.
[Luke 1:31-33]*