

He said to them, How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He interpreted for them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

- Luke 24:25-7, HCSB

4

Only by a *gradual* leading on has God made known His plans in the history of salvation.... Nor did this leading on take the form of a uniform progressive advance -- comparable to an ascending straight line; but in the form of sections of time with fixed boundaries, like steps of a staircase leading upward.

- Erich Sauer

THE DAWN OF WORLD REDEMPTION

The last chapter focused on the plight of fallen humanity from the Old Testament narrative. This chapter will revisit that narrative to see the beginnings of the outworking of God's plan for the redemption of the whole world. A chronological, sequential approach will prove to be the most helpful.¹

Early Anticipations of the Gospel

Eden. When God judged Adam and Eve for their disobedience, He gave the first hint of His wonderful plan to redeem lost mankind from sin. It is found in His curse upon the snake as Satan's mouthpiece: "**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel**" (Gen. 3:15). This most remarkable statement is both a judgment and a prophecy about the continuing conflict between God and Satan and their representatives. The language is very terse and enigmatic. The Hebrew word 'seed' can be either singular or plural, as in the English. However, it is not hard to understand the reference to Satan's seed (or descendants) since so many people in the world are under his power. It is seen in Christ's strong words to some religious leaders: "**You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him**" (Jn. 8:44). In trying to understand the reference to the seed of the woman, one wonders at this unique expression. The only human being to whom it could accurately apply is the Lord Jesus, who was virgin-born of a woman without a human father (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:20-25; Lk. 1:30-35). Biblical history confirms the enmity between Satan's people and Christ. Although all of fallen humanity is under the sway of Satan, it is clear

that some key people are at the forefront of hostility against Christ and His people.

This understanding clarifies the last two clauses of Genesis 3:15. The symbolism of a snake is developed here: Satan, like a snake, will attack and bruise the unique seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Approaching His crucifixion He said, **“I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world [Satan] is coming, and he has nothing in Me”** (Jn. 14:30). Satan had entered into Judas Iscariot to betray Him (Jn. 13:26-7). The cross was Satan’s supreme attempt to destroy God’s Messiah. When Christ died it seemed like a victory for Satan, but the resurrection turned the tables. It enabled Christ to bruise or crush the head of Satan. Note the apostolic clarification: **“...that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,”** (Heb. 2:14). So here in veiled and symbolic language, God intimated that He was beginning to implement a plan of salvation for lost mankind.

God rejected Adam and Eve’s futile attempt to cover the shame of their sin with a garment of fig leaves, since it did not involve the shedding of blood so necessary for forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). He Himself provided the garments of the skins of sacrificed animals. The expulsion from access to the tree of life had the positive impact of impressing Adam and Eve with their lost condition apart from the gracious salvation of God. They were now under the judgment of God and needed an atonement for their sin. Abel understood this; Cain did not! In his self-righteousness he tried to make a vegetable offering to God. Two others of the Sethite lineage who also clearly understood this were Enosh, who began to call upon God for salvation, and Enoch, who walked by faith in fellowship with God (Heb. 11:5).

Noah. This godly Sethite lineage became so corrupted that only Noah was left: **“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God”** (Gen. 6:8-9). Moses does not tell us how Noah became a righteous man, but again there is an apostolic clarification (Heb. 11:6-7, NIV):

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek Him. 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 comes by faith.

After the flood Noah worshiped by making an altar and offering up animal sacrifices, as God had stipulated (Gen. 8:20-21). God blessed Noah and his family and made a covenant with them. An important part of it emphasized the sacredness of blood, which should not be eaten by man (Gen. 9:4). And the death penalty for murder emphasized the sacredness of human life. Instead of revenge, there must now be civil justice administered by governments operating under God’s authority.

The incident of Noah's drunken nakedness confirms the indication in the garden of Eden that nakedness is a sign of the shame of sin. Note the carefulness of Shem and Japheth not to look on their father's nakedness (Gen. 9:20-23). Noah's prophecy over his sons seems to indicate that Shem had a deeper relationship to God, which was perpetuated in Abram's faith generations later. The terse statement, "**May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem**" (Gen. 9:27), predicts the widespread influence of Japhetic peoples and their coming under the influence of the faith of Shem. This was fulfilled in that faith in the Jewish Messiah has spread most widely among descendants of Japheth. Ham's indifference to the shame of his father's nakedness was passed on to his son Canaan, who came under God's curse. Centuries later the Canaanites became a corrupt and immoral people whom God judged through the Israelites.^A

Idolatry. A most significant descendant of Ham and Cush was Nimrod, who became a powerful leader and hunter in his day. He was the founder of the city of Babel (Babylon) and of Nineveh in Assyria (Gen. 10:8-12). Moses gives a fuller account of God's judgment upon the builders of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. This tower is easily identifiable as a ziggurat, remnants of which have been excavated in the Mesopotamian plain. Ziggurats had a religious significance as a place for idolatrous worship. So the indications are that Nimrod was the originator of idolatrous worship, out of which came the whole system of Babylonian idolatry, which spread throughout the Middle East.² This is the ultimate insult to the Creator God, yet continues to be a major problem in human culture over the millennia.

Gentile nations. Just before the record of the call of Abram, Moses gave the lineage of the seventy peoples who descended from Noah (Gen. 10). It is fascinating to connect them to nations in history and modern times.³ However, a major point must not be lost that in calling out one special people to be the bearers of the promise of redemption, God has not forgotten the Gentile nations. Although from this point on, most of the rest of the Old Testament focuses on the nation Israel, the goal of it all was the salvation of all peoples. This is alluded to from time to time throughout the Old Testament, but only comes back into focus in the end of Christ's ministry.

The Call of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel

Over half of the human race is connected to a religion, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, which believes that Abraham was an outstanding man of faith. God called Abraham from among the descendants of Shem, who

A. The curse on Canaan had nothing to do with race, since the Canaanites were not black. The descendants of the four sons of Ham are represented in Egyptian hieroglyphic friezes as having vastly differing racial characteristics. The issue here was moral failure, not race.

had degenerated into idolatry in the Mesopotamian plain near Babel's idolatrous center, in order to start a new nation which would not only worship the one true God, but also spread the message of His coming Messiah and Redeemer among the pagan nations. Abraham wasn't the only true believer of his day. His nephew Lot, who accompanied him at first; Melchizedek, king of Salem, whom he encountered in the promised land; and Job, a likely contemporary, are others mentioned in Scripture. *So this was not a call to salvation.* It was a call to a land at the crossroads of the continents, from which the message of the one true God could easily go out to Africa, Europe, and Asia. God made the purpose of the call very clear: **"And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; ... and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed"** (Gen. 12:2-3). *This was a call to be a witness and a missionary to the pagans living in the land.*

It was over forty years after God called Abraham to the promised land that He revealed *how* he would ultimately become the unique channel of blessing for the whole world. When he obeyed God in starting to offer up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, God gave additional intimation of the coming Messiah: **"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice"** (Gen. 22:18).^B God's plan was that Abraham himself and his family were to be a blessing and channel of truth to the nations, which was only partially fulfilled, and moreover that His unique descendant would be the ultimate cause of salvation's blessings to the nations. A major part of God's plan for blessing the nations was to be the nation Israel itself. This is why most of the Old Testament focuses upon the Jewish nation and its successes and failures in being the recipients of God's blessing and therefore channels of blessing to the whole world. Ralph Winter has suggested that the common assumption which minimizes the call of Abraham himself and the Jewish nation to be witnesses, should be called the "Theory of the Hibernating Mandate," that is, that the mandate hibernated for two thousand years until Christ. In this connection he said, "The greatest scandal in the Old Testament is that Israel tried to be blessed without trying very hard to be a blessing."⁴

God made many promises to Abraham, most of which He confirmed with a covenant contract. Some of these were unconditional, such as the ultimate giving of the land to his descendants. Others are to be understood as having conditional elements to them, such as, the enjoyment of the land by each generation of his descendants (see Deut. 19). The most important feature of Abraham's life, which is reinforced by the New Testament, is the faith by which he believed God's promises and was put into right standing with God as a result. When Abraham was yet childless and God promised

B. This is the only one of the many times God made promises to Abraham which precisely fulfills the Apostle Paul's explanation in Galatians 4:15-16 of this as a promise of the Messiah.

him descendants as numerous as the stars and sand on the seashore, Abraham's trust in this incredible promise is declared to be the basis of his salvation: "**Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness**" (Gen. 15:6). Remember that Abraham was pushing one hundred and his wife Sarah, ninety. Two thousand years later, the Apostle Paul made this the basis for explaining the glorious truth of justification by faith alone in Romans 3:24–4:25. Paul makes it clear that faith in the salvation promises of God is the only condition for salvation.

Although his faith was the only condition for his right standing with God, Abraham continued in faith to worship God by building altars in different places in the promised land and making the stipulated blood sacrifices thereupon (Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18, etc.). The covenant God made with him was sealed with the shed blood of animal sacrifices to certify to Abraham that God would surely give him the land (Gen. 15:9-21). That this was unconditional is clear in that only God passed between the parts of the sacrificed animals in Abraham's dream while he was in a deep sleep. Unfortunately, Abraham and his descendants did not always walk in obedience to God and enjoy the purposed blessing in that land. Nevertheless the promise of ultimate Messianic blessing was secure.

Ishmael. Abraham and Sarah compromised with the local corrupt culture in the birth of Ishmael through her handmaid, Hagar. This was a carnal way of trying to help God out in providing an offspring for themselves as childless. Although Ishmael was not to be the channel of Messianic blessing, God did promise to bless him and his descendants (Gen. 17:20-21):

As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.

God's blessing upon Ishmael (whose name means 'God hears') is a clear indication that he was a believer. The covenant to be reaffirmed to Isaac and Jacob did not exclude Ishmael and his descendants from faith and salvation but was rather about the chosen lineage through whom the Messiah would come. When Sarah insisted that Hagar and Ishmael should be expelled from the family, Abraham did not do it in an ethical way, so God had to intervene to preserve his life (Gen. 21:9-21). In recounting this story, Moses reaffirmed: "**God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer**" (Gen. 21:20). Clearly the selection of Isaac over Ishmael was not an issue of salvation.^C Unfortunately, the circumstances of Ishmael's expulsion must have negatively affected his walk with God and

C. It is significant that probably more Arab descendants of Ishmael today are believers in Christ than Hebrew Christians. Some misread Romans 9 to imply that God had sovereignly elected Isaac to salvation and Ishmael to go to hell. If God blessed him and "was with the lad," he must have been a believer.

that of his descendants, who reverted back into paganism.

Birth and resurrection. There are two significant things about Isaac which in a wonderful way look forward to the salvation God was to provide through his descendant, the Messiah. The first was his miraculous birth. For Sarah to bear a child at the age of ninety, when she was long past the child-bearing age, was an incredible miracle. Her menopause of some forty years earlier had to be totally reversed! Although Isaac had a human father, this is anticipatory of the miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus of a virgin. God was conditioning the minds of Isaac's descendants to be open to a miraculously born Messiah. For Abraham it involved a tremendous step of faith:

... in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. (Rom. 4:17-21)

The second signal event in Isaac's life was his being offered up as a sacrifice by his father. Adherents of all three monotheistic world religions believe that Abraham offered up his son on Mount Moriah, even though the Muslims think it was Ishmael who was offered. Although God did not allow him to be actually sacrificed, by providing a ram as His own sacrifice, this anticipated the sacrifice of God's own Son two thousand years later on that same mountain (2 Chron. 3:1). It was not just in the sacrifice that this anticipated the passion of Christ, but also in the anticipation of resurrection. **"Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you'"** (Gen. 22:5). Abraham expected to bring the lad back with him. There is a New Testament explanation of this:

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

In this connection Martin Luther said, "Faith reconciles contradictions." Thus Abraham had a resurrection faith, even though there was no actual resurrection necessary in this typological anticipation of Christ's resurrection two millenniums later. This indicates how God was laying the foundation for the ultimate realization and implementation of His plan of salvation through the cross and resurrection of Abraham's ultimate descendant, Jesus Christ.

Two nations. Isaac does not seem to have been a major player in the drama of the dawn of redemption. But when his wife Rebekah was barren, he prayed and God gave them twins, Jacob and Esau. When she asked the LORD about her difficult pregnancy, He answered, **“Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger”** (Gen. 25:23). It is known from the subsequent narrative that God chose the younger son, Jacob, to be the father of the Jewish nation. But God’s choice of Jacob over Esau did not pre-determine their salvation. God’s word to Rebekah makes it clear that the issue was all about two nations, the Jews and the Edomites, since the unfolding story shows that Esau never personally served Jacob. Indeed, Jacob served Esau the lentil stew, by which he got him to give up his birthright, and years later he bowed down in obeisance to his brother. But Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, did indeed serve the nation Israel from King David’s time until the Babylonian captivity.^D

Jacob’s relationship with Esau went from bad to worse. Defrauding him of his father’s blessing is an indication that Isaac and Rebekah had not nurtured their sons’ faith in the LORD (Gen. 27). Rather there seems to be little indication of any faith until Jacob had the dream at Bethel of the ladder from heaven to earth and God’s promise that the covenant would be perpetuated through him (Gen. 28:10-22). His understanding of God’s ways at that point seems minimal, and until his wrestling with the Angel of the LORD at Peniel years later his lifestyle did not show much impact of his faith.

Before his death, Jacob’s prophesying over his twelve sons was the high point of his life, especially since it included the clear Messianic reference to the Messiah coming through the line of Judah: **“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs, and to him, shall be the obedience of the peoples”** (Gen. 49:10, NAS, margin).^E Although Jacob’s eleventh son, Joseph, was not so honored, his life of faith and godliness was an outstanding testimony both to his own family and to the idolatrous Egyptians. There seems to be a disconnect between God’s choice of Judah for the Messiah’s lineage and Joseph’s far superior faith and life. In Roman 9 the Apostle Paul argues for God’s absolute sovereignty in His choice of the lineage of the chosen people of God and of the Messiah. This was a national issue.

D. Some Christians have misused reference in Romans 9 to this verse to teach that God sovereignly elected Jacob to salvation and Esau to hell. Although Esau was an unbeliever who despised his birthright (Heb. 12:16-17), his lack of faith is more attributable to the poor spiritual dynamic of Isaac’s family life and the impact of the pagan culture surrounding their family.

E. The Lord Jesus was the last possible candidate to fulfill this messianic prophecy, because the scepter of government had already departed from Judah before He was crucified. Herod Agrippa did not have the authority to execute Christ, which was retained by the Romans through Pontius Pilate. By AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem, any shred of governmental authority had totally departed from Judah.

Israel's Redemption out of Egypt

The development of God's plan of redemption seemed to have been on hold for four centuries, while Israel was growing to be a great nation in bondage in Egypt and the circumstances in the promised land were ripening for Israel's conquest in judgment upon the polluted Canaanites (Gen. 15:16). But Egyptian religion and culture was due for God's judgments as well. As an idolatrous and naturistic religion was a continuing insult to the one true Creator God, His plan for emancipating Israel from slavery in Egypt had a double purpose. Egyptians worshiped the Pharaoh as divine and many animals as manifestations of their polytheistic deities. The ten plagues which God brought upon them were judgments upon the blasphemous divine claims of Pharaoh and also exposed the absurd worship of God's creatures by the Egyptians. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were badly compromised by the polytheism of the Egyptians and were also subject to grinding slavery. Due to the rapid growth of the Hebrews, the Egyptians began a kind of genocide by killing the male Hebrew babies. God not only spared Moses, but also gave him an upbringing in Pharaoh's household. His abortive attempt to mitigate the slavery of his people forced him to spend forty years in the wilderness in preparation for leading Israel out of Egypt.

When the Hebrews cried out to the God of their fathers, He not only sent Moses to be the instrument of liberation (Gen. 2:23-25), but also began to reveal Himself more fully by His personal, covenant name, YAHWEH, the self-existent One (Gen. 3:14-16; 6:2-8).⁵ Redemption out of Egypt is a wonderful picture of our redemption in Christ. Israel had to recognize their need and cry out to God (Ex. 2:23-25). This is basic to our salvation as well.

Moses had to deal first with an arrogant Pharaoh. Five times Moses described Pharaoh's heart as being characteristically hard (Ex. 7:13-14, 22; 8:19; 9:7) and twice he said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15, 32). Since God had a purpose to bring judgment upon this idolatrous nation and its leader, He stated His intention beforehand, "**But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt**" (7:3). God fulfilled this in the five times He hardened Pharaoh's heart judgmentally (Ex. 9:12; 10:1, 20; 11:10; 14:8). Note carefully that Pharaoh had hardened his own heart first! He later said to Pharaoh, "**But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go**" (Ex. 9:16-7). So God's purpose was clearly to make an example of Pharaoh and his idolatrous system as a testimony to a whole world of idolaters.^F

F. Paul quoted this verse in Romans 9, not to prove that God reprobated Pharaoh to hell, but rather to make an example of this blasphemous leader of idolatrous religion as a testimony to the other nations, that they might see that He alone is the true God, the Creator. Paul had stated the principle in Romans 1:24, 26, 28 that God judgmentally gave the most hardened pagans over to a depraved mind.

On the first confrontation with Pharaoh and his magicians, God demonstrated their impotence by the miracle of Aaron's rod. The ten plagues which God then poured out upon the Egyptians can be directly connected with their worship of the elements of nature. They worshiped the Nile river so God turned it into blood (Ex. 7:14-25). They worshiped the sun so the ninth plague was darkness over the land. The issue of each confrontation was the Hebrews' request that they be allowed to go out of the land to make animal sacrifices to the LORD (8:25-29).

Passover. The Passover judgment on the firstborn sons of Egypt most clearly foreshadowed Christ's redemption. The Hebrews applied the blood of sacrificed lambs to the doorposts and lintels of their homes so that their firstborn sons would be passed over by the angel of death (Ex. 12:1-32). God's commands emphasized the centrality of blood: "**The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt**" (Ex. 12:13). In all of the plagues, God stated that He had set a division or *ransom* between the Egyptians and the Hebrews (Ex. 8:23, see note). God made the Passover feast the central ritual of Israel's worship as a memorial to His powerful intervention.

When the herald of Christ, John, said, "**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**" (Jn. 1:29), the Jews should have understood the implications. The Lord Jesus was crucified on the Passover feast, and when He celebrated the Passover with His Apostles, He transformed it into a new memorial feast, the Lord's Supper. Paul confirmed the connection: "**For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed**" (1 Cor. 5:7). Not only were the Jews to eat lamb each year in the Passover feast but also to observe the feast of unleavened bread. Christ claimed to be its fulfillment by saying, "**I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst**" (Jn. 6:35).

It should be noted that the blood of the lamb had not only to be shed, but it had to be applied with hyssop to the lintel and doorposts to be effective. In a parallel way Christ's blood had not only to be shed two millennia ago, but it must be applied by faith in Him to be effective in our lives. Christ emphasized the imperative of believing to receive eternal life (Jn. 6:35, 40, 47). Then He used exaggerated symbolism to emphasize the importance of personal appropriation by faith: "**Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you**" (Jn. 6:53, TNIV). This could not be a reference to the Lord's Supper, which had not yet been instituted. It rather emphasizes the necessity of appropriation of Christ's sacrifice personally by faith.

There are many details of the liberation out of Egypt which could be noted, but God wanted Israel to remember that He had ransomed them out of slavery in Egypt. Although not explained explicitly, it is understood that the blood of many lambs was the ransom price, and the main point is that they

were liberated. This clearly is a picture of Christ's redemption, which liberates us from the slavery of sin. Indeed, in bringing them into the promised land, God was beginning the process of freeing Israel from the idolatry and sin with which they had compromised in Egypt.

When Israel grumbled against God in the wilderness, He judged them with poisonous snakes, killing many people. When they pled for mercy, Moses lifted up a bronze image of a snake on a pole and those who looked on it were spared from death. Christ referred to this: "**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life**" (Jn. 3:14-15). The bronze snake represents judged sin, as did the cross of Christ. Sin was judged in the cross, but just as the Israelites needed to look to that bronze snake to be healed, just so people must look by faith to the Crucified One to receive eternal life. There must be a personal appropriation by faith.

The Giving of the Mosaic Law

A rule of life. The Ten Commandments were the foundation of the moral code, which spelled out in great detail the rule of life for this new nation. It also provided judicial laws for providing justice among the people of the nation. An important purpose in the giving of the law was to bring the people under the conviction of their sin so that they might look to God and His Messiah for salvation (Rom. 3:19-20). At its heart is the system of Levitical sacrifices, which were to be offered by the Aaronic priests in the tabernacle, which was to be made according to God's pattern. This would provide a system of temporary atonement for the sins of the people until the coming Messiah could pay the full penalty for their sins (Rom. 3:24-6; Heb. 7). In addition, it provided a system of worship for God's people. Thus in a sense, *it was both a way of death and a way of life for the nation Israel*. (The gospel is also a way of death and a way of life, cf. 2 Cor. 2:15-16.) As the New Testament clarifies, one major purpose of the moral code was to help people see themselves as lost sinners. Thus, it pointed to the sacrificial system as the remedy for sin, albeit only temporarily. The law was only a shadow of the full reality to be provided ultimately in God's Messiah.

Why the Law? After seeing the glories of the covenant which God made with Abraham, one wonders why God gave the law. Abraham came into right standing with God by faith alone and had an inward, simple, and personal relationship with God. Why add the law with its complexity, outwardness, and seeming negativity? But the significant failures in the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, certainly Jacob, and especially his sons, demonstrate the need for more specific guidance in living a life pleasing to God. Only Joseph seemed to have been able to live an exemplary life of faith without the burden of the law. Their descendants fell into such deep compromise with the religions and cultures of the Canaanites and Egyptians, that it took centuries of living under the law to root out the worst compromises

from the nation. Even in the golden age under Kings David and Solomon, the compromises were only too evident.

Symbols and types. Each feature of the Mosaic law had significance both for the Jews in their day and also as pictures of the coming realization of the plan of salvation in Christ. A most important part of the Mosaic system was the animal sacrifices because the shedding of blood is so important in the sight of God. As He emphasized to Noah, blood is sacred in His sight since it represents life. He made this clear in the law: **“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement”** (Lev. 17:11). Just as the blood atoned for the sins of the Israelites by covering them, far more profoundly the blood of Christ provided a complete propitiation and redemption price for the sins of all mankind.

God gave Israel a tabernacle in the wilderness as the only place where sacrifices could be made. The pagans made their sacrifices on every high hill, but God emphasized that there was only one place acceptable sacrifices to Him could be made. That tabernacle was later replaced with the temple in Jerusalem. That tabernacle was called the ‘tent of meeting’ because it was the special place where a Jew could meet with God. The ark of the covenant in the ‘holy of holies’ in the tabernacle was the ultimate place where the sins of Israel were dealt with on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) by the sprinkling of the blood by the high priest. Correspondingly, today we know that the fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ is the only way of salvation for sinful mankind (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

The Aaronic priests were the only ones permitted to offer up sacrifices on the brazen altar in the tabernacle, and the high priest was the only one allowed to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the ark of the covenant on Yom Kippur. Since Jesus Christ is the only one qualified as the supernatural Son of God, He alone could make the ultimate sacrifice for our sin.

It should be emphasized that the whole Levitical system, having been perfectly fulfilled in Christ’s offering up of Himself, was therefore only temporary. We must not in any way perpetuate features of the Levitical system today. Indeed, forty years after the sacrifice of Christ, God shut off any possibility of restoration it by having the Romans destroy the temple in Jerusalem (AD 70). There are now no qualified Aaronic priests, and God is no longer impressed with the blood of animals, since the blood of His Son is far more precious. It should also be noted that the token of the Mosaic Covenant, which was the sabbath, was also a temporary sign given only to Israel (Ex. 31:17) and is no longer binding on the church today,^G but was

G. There is a striking correspondence between the Levitical and Roman Catholic liturgical systems. Both have a priesthood, temples (cathedrals), and multiple sacrifices (the unbloody sacrifice of the mass). The New Testament church knows nothing of priests, temples, or sacrifices.

rather a picture of the coming salvation rest in the finished work of Christ.

Israel's Davidic Dynasty

After forty years in the wilderness, God brought Israel into the promised land under Joshua's military leadership and His supernatural power. Israel did very poorly in the land under a sequence of judges. They would forget the LORD and come under foreign domination. Then He would raise up a judge as deliverer from foreign oppression. The problem was that "**everyone did what was right in his own eyes**" (Jud. 21:25) and seemed ignorant of God's law. It was free will gone amok!^H God gave in to Israel's demand for a king, like the nations around them. In a sense it was a judgment upon them for rejecting Him as their king, since the first king, Saul, did not do well. His major sin was usurping the place of the priesthood in offering up sacrifices himself (1 Sam. 13:8-12).

God overruled their sin and disobedience by giving them a good king, David, who ultimately became the father of a kingly dynasty. David was in the prophesied lineage of Judah (Gen. 49:10). After David proved to be a man after God's own heart, God made a covenant with him which promised, not only a kingly dynasty for his descendants, but especially one unique descendant who would establish an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16). This was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, who was from the lineage of David, both from His actual mother, Mary, and also from His legal father, Joseph. It had seemed that the Davidic dynasty came to an end when Jerusalem was destroyed and King Zedekiah was taken captive to Babylon in 586 BC. He was the last of a lineage of good and bad kings in the Davidic dynasty. Unfortunately, the priestly lineage of Aaron was also marred by many who were not faithful to God. *But God in His own time restored the kingly dynasty of David in a supernaturally born Son. He would not be just a king, but also our Great High Priest and the ultimate prophet of God.*

Prophecies of the Coming Messiah

At the end of his ministry Moses had alerted the nation Israel that: "**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him**" (Deut. 18:15). In the first instance, it is a reference to the true prophets who would speak God's message to the nation over the centuries. They were to be both fore-tellers of the future as well as forth-tellers of God's will for the present. The final fulfillment of this prophecy is the Lord Jesus Himself. The Messiah was to be both a prophet and the subject of prediction by the prophets.

His unique lineage. The prophecies of His unique lineage were seen

H. The extremely negative narrative of Israel in the time of the judges must not be explained as God's predetermination of their apostasies, but rather a failure of a leadership ignorant of the Mosaic Law.

in Genesis 3:15, 22:18, and 49:10, which limits it to the tribe of Judah. The prophet Nathan was sent to King David to give him God's promise of a perpetual dynasty (2 Sam. 7 & 1 Chron. 17). Additionally, God sent many other prophets to reaffirm the Davidic dynasty. Isaiah was the channel for many of the most graphic portrayals of the coming Messiah. In Isaiah 4 and 11 there is a striking description of the reign of the Messiah, God's branch from the roots of Jesse (David's father). Centuries later, Jeremiah prophesied at the time of the Babylonian conquest, that although King Jeconiah had come under a curse for his sin (Jer. 22:28-30), the Messiah would nevertheless still come through David: "**'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He will reign as king and act wisely ... And this is His name by which He will be called, the LORD our righteousness'**" (Jer. 23:5-6). The way in which God worked out this seeming contradiction was that the Lord Jesus' legal father, Joseph, although Jeconiah's descendant, was not his actual father (Mt. 1). His lineage through Mary came down through another son of David, Nathan (Lk. 3). Only a legal son of Joseph of Nazareth and one who was not physically his son could qualify as the Messiah without coming under the curse on King Jeconiah. The Lord Jesus is the only person in history who can qualify to be the Messiah of prophecy.

A virgin-born divine Messiah. The explicit virgin-birth prophecy, given over seven centuries beforehand (Isa. 7:14) and the miraculous births of Isaac and John the Baptizer should have opened the minds of the nation Israel to the possibility of an even more supernatural birth of the Messiah Himself. Both Matthew and Luke gave explicit testimony to this birth—Matthew from Joseph's perspective, and Luke from Mary's.

It was the prophet Micah who gave the place of Christ's birth, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which was David's hometown (Micah 5:1-5). In this remarkable prophecy a clear indication is given that the Messiah would be not merely human, but also divine. In Isaiah it is clarified that the Messiah, although born in Bethlehem, would arise in Galilee, where Nazareth is located. The child to be born was also to be the Son given by God, who Himself would be properly called the "**Mighty God, Progenitor of Ages, Prince of Peace**" (Isa. 9:6, Unger).¹ The way in which this would be accomplished was revealed when Isaiah confronted King Ahaz, a representative of the house of David, that the Messiah's birth would be an outstanding miraculous sign of a virgin birth, and that the child born would actually be Emmanuel, 'God with

1. My Hebrew professor, Merrill F. Unger, suggested that this is a more appropriate translation, which has the advantage of avoiding confusion of the persons of the Trinity. This is confirmed by Hebrews 1:1-2, where *aion*, speaks of the time-space universe.

us' (Isa. 7:10-14).^J

King David himself also proved to be a prophet. Psalm 110 is quoted more times in the New Testament (7) than any other passage, and Peter used it on the day of Pentecost sermon as proof of the deity of the Messiah:

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." ... The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (Ps. 110:1-2, 4)

The point is that David calls the Messiah his Lord, while we know that physically the Lord Jesus was his son (descendant). Two other Psalms indicate that Israel should have been looking for a divine Messiah. In Psalm 45:6-7, the Messiah is addressed as God:

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows.

His predicted passion. Psalm 22 is the most extensive Messianic prophecy from David's pen, which amazingly describes the crucifixion hundreds of years before that cruel form of execution was invented. The Psalm opens with Christ's words from the cross. In 22:6-8, the prediction of Messiah's rejection by His own people includes the words of mockery by the rulers; in vv. 11-18, the mob of enemies surrounding Him, the thirst, the nakedness, the stress on the body, even the piercing of His hands and feet are described in 22:14-17, and the Roman soldiers casting lot for his clothing (22:18). His prayer (Heb. 5:7) for victory out of it by His glorious resurrection is implied in 22:22-31; and in vv. 25-31, the consequent global evangelization and kingdom. Just as David described the physical realities of the crucifixion, just so Isaiah described its spiritual significance in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Psalm 2:2, 7, 12 spoke of the glorious resurrection of Christ (cf. Acts 13:33):

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed [Messiah], ... I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' ... Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way.

J. The liberal translations, such as the RSV, sought to undermine this unique virgin birth prophesy by rendering *almah* as a young woman, but all seven usages of this word in the Hebrew are consistent with the translation 'virgin.' The Septuagint translators, over two centuries before Christ, rendered it into Greek as *parthenos*, which can only mean virgin. It is not a reference to a woman in Isaiah's day, as Hengstenberg showed over a century ago, but rather by prophetic perspective is distinguishing Shear-jashub, a sign for king Ahaz (7:16), from the sign for the future house of David, the virgin born Emmanuel.

Psalm 16:10-11 is the prophesy of the resurrection quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, which confirms the truth of Psalm Two: **“For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will you allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”**

Two centuries after Isaiah, God gave Daniel many revelations concerning the Messiah, including the time of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24-27). The angel Gabriel told him that **“... from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince ...”** there would be a period of sixty-nine weeks or heptads of years. Although the calculation is complex, the best date for the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus is 444 BC and for the crucifixion is AD 33. Understood rightly this is a remarkably accurate prediction.⁶

The Jewish nation puzzled for centuries about the two different and seemingly contradictory lines of Messianic prophesies. Peter gave, what seems obvious to us now, the answer of the two comings of the Messiah:

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come to you* made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the suffering of Christ and the glories to follow (1 Pet. 1:10-11).

Conclusions

The Old Testament foundation for the New Testament gospel message has been surveyed. In response to the depraved plight of a sinful human race, God made preparations for the coming of a divine Messiah, who would deal with sin once and for all by the shedding of His own blood. But before sinful mankind can respond to the offer of salvation, they must first recognize their sinful, lost condition. A major purpose of the giving of the Mosaic law was to expose man's sinfulness.⁷ The whole Old Testament looks forward to the coming Messiah, both in pictured anticipations and direct prophesies.

1. Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*.

2. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*.

3. Arthur C. Custance, *The Three Sons of Noah*.

4. Ralph Winter, “The Long Look: Eras of Missions History” *Perspectives* (1981 ed.), p. 168.

5. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 114-118.

6. Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*. Anderson's calculation, made a century ago, was based upon 445 BC and 32 AD, but more recent research indicates that both should be adjusted by one year.

7. Trevor McIlwain, *Building on Firm Foundations*. (Sanford, FL: New Tribes Mission, 1988)