

“Each book of the Bible is in and of itself God-breathed, infallible, and inerrant. Amazingly these sixty-six books written over 1,500 + years also present a unified overarching story. In recent years much has been written about the unifying ‘meta-narrative’ of Scripture. Sadly, much of what has been written focuses on the meta-narrative in such a way that the diversity of the individual books is lost. Some authors seem to force the story of redemption upon a text in such a way that the grammatical-historical meaning of the text is completely ignored. For some time, I have longed to read a book that effectively demonstrates the unifying story of redemption from Genesis to Revelation without damaging the uniqueness of each book of the Bible. My longtime search came to an end when I read the manuscript for the book you now hold in your hand. Jared August, Mark McGinniss, Kenneth Gardoski, and Wayne Slusser fill the need that other attempts miss. If you want to understand the overarching narrative of the Bible, without doing damage to the grammatical-historical realities of the text of the individual books, you need to read *Scripture’s Story: A Unifying Hope*. It is my joy to have read this monograph and to commend it to you.”

Mark H. Ballard

Founding President, Northeastern Baptist College
Bennington, VT

“*Scripture’s Story: A Unifying Hope* is the best I’ve read for seeing the big picture of the Bible, while grasping the uniqueness of every book. Its unique insights engage the mind, challenge the heart, and give hope for the future. I plan to add it to the books that I keep readily available to give to friends who want a better understanding of God’s Word. The work of these four men will become a lasting, influential contribution to the church.”

Phil Waldrep

Author, Evangelist and Conference Leader, Phil Waldrep Ministries
Decatur, AL

“One of the toughest challenges students of God’s Word face is understanding any given scriptural passage in light of the whole Bible. *Scripture’s Story* provides a guide for understanding the way each book of the Old and New Testament relates to the entire context of Scripture and, significantly, how every book of the Bible points to Jesus Christ. The authors’ style is accessible and clear, making this book a helpful resource for pastors and Bible teachers.”

Stephen Rummage

Senior Pastor, Quail Springs Baptist Church
Oklahoma City, OK

Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministry,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Kansas City, MO

“*Scripture’s Story* is a needed volume for the time in which we live. Our world needs nothing more than the hope available in Jesus Christ. Students of Scripture need nothing more than to be reminded that Jesus Christ is the central person of the Bible, and the hope available in Him is expressed in all the books of the Bible. These faithful authors demonstrate the highest regard for God’s Word as they walk the reader through the uniting hope of the biblical text. Any student of Scripture will benefit from the treasures presented in this book.”

Lee E. Brand Jr.

Vice President and Dean, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary
Memphis, TN
First Vice President, Southern Baptist Convention

“It is a pleasure for me to recommend the book *Scripture’s Story: A Unifying Hope* written by former students and colleagues. The book accomplishes its aim of showing the unity of the storyline of the entire Bible in a way that the average layperson in the local church can understand and from which they can greatly benefit. The work also shows that dispensationalists see unity to the flow of the entire Bible in spite of detractors’ claims that dispensationalists chop up the Bible into pieces that are not harmonized. Pastors will also benefit from the teaching, and local churches will be able to use this resource for Bible study groups and classes.”

Mike Stallard

Director of International Ministries,
The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministries
Bellmawr, NJ

scripture's story

A Unifying Hope

Jared M. August, Mark McGinniss,
Kenneth M. Gardoski & Wayne T. Slusser



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To our wives,

Allie

Joy

Sharon

Melissa

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Preface

Several years ago in a lively discussion at Baptist Bible Seminary, we concluded that there was a definite need for a single-volume resource that examines each section of Scripture on its own terms, yet simultaneously links the individual biblical books together as one narrative storyline that encompasses our Bible. We envisioned this project to be accessible to undergraduate students and laypeople. From that first conversation, this thematic narrative was born. Our goal has been to provide an overview of the biblical storyline that articulates the central hope held by believers throughout the Old and New Testaments.

It is certainly true that there are numerous proposals as to the center or theme of the Bible. Some scholars have advocated narrow themes, such as kingdom,¹ covenant,² or Christ.³ Others have taken a broader approach and dealt with more expansive themes such as the unfolding story of Israel,⁴ the dwelling place of God,⁵ or God and his sovereignty.⁶

¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981); Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

² Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

³ Wilhelm Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ* (London: Lutterworth, 1949).

⁴ C. Marvin Pate, J. Scott Duvall, J. Daniel Hays, E. Randolph Richards, W. Dennis Tucker, Jr. and Preben Vang, *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004).

⁵ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God's Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019); T. Desmond Alexander, *The City of God and the Goal of Creation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018).

⁶ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998).

Still, others reject the possibility of finding a single thematic center all together, and instead focus on the multiplex nature of Scripture.⁷

There is certainly a great deal of value to each of these proposals. The concept of covenant, for example, is central to any proper understanding of Scripture. After all, how can one understand the message of the Old Testament without comprehending the promises given to Abraham and David by the Lord? Related to a broader theme, who could deny that God himself stands as the Author of history? Or how could one diminish the sovereignty of God and his kingship over creation?

Without rejecting the value of these past studies, we believe that this volume is unique for its focus on a unifying hope. We propose that the central hope of all Scripture is that through the promised Offspring, God will eventually destroy evil, restore creation, and dwell with his people forever. It is this central expectation that unites all the biblical books and the faith of all believers throughout the ages.

We want to be clear about our theological convictions. We unashamedly hold to a grammatical-historical method of interpretation that examines each book within its own unique context and how it fits into the whole context of the Bible. As we examine biblical accounts on their own terms, we read the New Testament in light of the Old Testament, not vice-versa. We are premillennial in our eschatology and find a dispensational approach that sees a clear distinction between Israel and the church most convincing. Most importantly, we hold unwaveringly to the belief that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

Our prayer is that *Scripture's Story* will become a valuable resource for those who seek to better grasp how each book of the Bible fits together to tell God's story for his glory and our blessing. Ultimately, our desire is that the hope first offered by our Lord in Genesis might be embraced by the church today. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

Introduction

One of the authors begins his Introduction to New Testament class with an instructive activity in which he shows a clip from a Star Wars film. Two volunteers are selected, one who has never seen the series and another who is a true Star Wars fan. As the class watches the three-minute clip, each student is tasked with jotting down as many observations as possible. Both then describe the clip back to the class, attempting to make sense of what they saw.

Who do you think provides a more accurate summary? Sure, they can both describe what the characters look like, how they talk, the weapons they use, and the setting of the scene. Yet without fail, the Star Wars fan always wins. Not only is this student able to articulate the background situation, but also the characters' motivation, as well as the ultimate outcome of the film.

We would like to suggest that this is the same situation we encounter when we approach the Bible. Unless we start at the beginning, the message of Scripture is quite difficult to grasp. Think about the individual who opens her Bible first to The Gospel of Mark. What does she discover? She finds herself in the middle of a rather complex story. She reads about an incredible individual named Jesus. People call him Messiah. He casts out demons, heals the blind, and commissions his followers to preach his message of salvation.

But what does this mean? Well, she's not quite sure. It is as if she has stepped in during the middle of a movie. It is as if she started reading a novel three quarters of the way through. She is playing catch-up the whole time.

⁷ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

With the Bible, we have a single unified story that begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation. Although the sixty-six books that make up our English Bible are undoubtedly diverse, they all testify to the working out of the plan of the Lord God of Israel. He is the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things. Each book is different, yet each anticipates the same hope and same expectation.

Although critics of the Bible often point to its diversity as an obstacle to overcome, we believe it is just the opposite. The definitive unity that is found amidst this diversity demonstrates the beauty of this story. Each book builds and develops the same hope that is offered at the very beginning of Genesis.

The first chapter, “The Pentateuch: Introducing Hope,” provides the foundation for the rest of this book. The promises given in Genesis eventually blossom into the hope presented in the rest of the Old Testament and into the Gospels, ultimately finding fulfillment in Revelation. The threefold expectation that the promised Offspring of Genesis 3:15 will destroy evil, restore creation, and allow God to dwell with his people is central to our overarching theme of Scripture. This chapter considers God’s call to Abraham and the patriarchs, as well as the formation of the nation Israel and her entrance into the Promised Land. Along the way through the Pentateuch, God calls his people to remember his first promise.

The second chapter, “The Writings: Anticipated Hope,” examines the development of this threefold hope throughout the historical and poetic books of the Old Testament. Picking up where the Pentateuch leaves off, this chapter offers a broad survey of Israel’s history including major events such as the conquest of the Promised Land, the rise and fall of the Davidic monarchy, the exile to Babylon, and the return of God’s people to their homeland. This chapter demonstrates the Lord’s consistent faithfulness to his promise and the progressive expectation of his future cataclysmic intervention in history to fulfill this promise.

The third chapter, “The Prophets: Reconfirmed Hope,” examines the contribution of the Old Testament prophetic books to this future-orient-

ed hope. Through a synthetic overview and historical analysis of these seers, this chapter illustrates how this central expectation is woven into the message of each Old Testament prophetic book. Though distinct in the details of their messages and the specific circumstances of their ministries, all the prophets are unified in their hope for the future fulfillment of the promise.

The fourth chapter, “The Gospels & Acts: Arrival of Hope,” summarizes the first advent of Jesus Christ. This chapter demonstrates that throughout the Gospels and Acts, Jesus is identified as the Offspring first promised in Genesis. Frequently alluding back to earlier Scripture—especially the Pentateuch—these books illustrate how Jesus’ ministry was consistent with what was expected in the Old Testament and what many of the prophets swore would come to pass. Jesus is the long expected promised Savior who will bring blessing to all nations.

The fifth and final chapter, “The Letters: Coming Hope,” provides a summary and synthesis of the epistles from Romans through Revelation. In so doing, the central hope of the promised Offspring’s destruction of evil, restoration of creation, and allowing God to dwell with his people guides the lives of believers today. The hope first given in Genesis 3:15 is finally realized in the book of Revelation. Here we read of a future time when the promised Offspring (Jesus) and the Father will eventually destroy all evil, restore all creation, and physically dwell with his people forever.

Here we have in sixty-six books the one story that unites all believers from Adam and Abel to you and me. It is the unified Scripture’s Story, and it provides us with a singular hope for our today and our tomorrows.

1



The Pentateuch: Introducing Hope

The first five books of the Bible—known as the Pentateuch—consist of **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**. Credited to Moses, these books recount the history of the world from the dawn of creation to the time immediately preceding Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land. Recounting events that took place over the course of thousands of years, the Pentateuch stands as the basis for all subsequent Scripture. In it, we learn about the Lord God, the Creator of all things. We learn about the promises given to Israel, the genesis of God’s overarching plan of salvation, and humanity’s frailty and weakness. Yet perhaps most fundamentally, we learn about the central hope that stands as the basis of faith throughout history—the hope that through the promised Offspring, the Lord will eventually destroy evil, restore creation, and dwell with his people forever.

In the pages that follow, each of these five books are surveyed as their central themes are examined. We propose that this threefold hope—

the destruction of evil, restoration of creation, and dwelling of God with his people—is evident in each book of the Pentateuch.

The first book, Genesis, paints the picture of God's magnificent creation and humanity's horrific fall. Yet it also records the giving of a divine promise to the first humans, Adam and Eve, and traces the progressive development of this promise through the lives of divinely chosen individuals: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Exodus presents the deliverance of God's people, Israel, from Egyptian slavery and the construction plans of God's dwelling place among his people, the tabernacle. Exodus recounts that for the first time since the garden, God will once again dwell in the midst of his people in the tabernacle. And so it will continue when his people reach the Promised Land. Leviticus describes the finely detailed regulations of how a holy God could dwell in the midst of an unholy people. Numbers recounts Israel's many failures yet focuses on the Lord's continued fidelity to the promises he gave to Abraham to make them a great nation and give them their own land. As the final book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy reaffirms the covenant made between the Lord and his nation Israel, articulating the blessings for Israel's obedience and curses for their disobedience. In spite of the diversity of these five books, the intrinsically anticipatory hope found within offers an undeniable unity.

Genesis

As the first book of the Bible, Genesis records not only the creation of the world, but also the beginning of God's restorative work. This book provides us, its readers, with the unique opportunity to catch an ever so fleeting glimpse of the perfect world that God intended for his people to inhabit and enjoy his presence. It paints the historical picture of the creation of the first humans—Adam and Eve—and their perfect (albeit short) life in the garden. Yet as the story unfolds, it recounts Adam and Eve's rejection of their Maker, God's promise of restoration, the rise and fall of civilization, the divine calling of the desert nomad Abram, and the formation of the nation Israel. Perhaps one of the most diverse books in all of Scripture, Genesis is filled with narrative, poetry, prophecy, and

genealogy as it records the most important events of the earth's early years. And, the one divinely promised central hope which is woven from beginning to end.

Creation

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). The first two chapters of Genesis recount God's creation of all things in six literal 24-hour days by simply calling them into existence. Imagine the ability to sculpt the mountains with a word as easily as a potter molds his clay (1:9–10), the wisdom to place the seemingly infinite stars throughout the countless galaxies (1:14–18), and the power to bring forth life out of the dust of the earth (2:7). The book of Genesis is clear that there are none like the Lord, Yahweh; he alone is God. About this new world, the Creator proclaims all things "good"! (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Everything is as it should be. Nothing is out of place. This is the world that God intended to inhabit with his people: a place with no pain, sin, sickness, or death.

Into this flawless setting, we find God—the Author of all things—creating man and woman in his own image (1:27). This means that Adam and Eve were made unique from all the animals. Just as a mirror reflects the image of the one who looks upon it, this couple reflected many of the qualities and characteristics of their Creator. Qualities such as the Lord's holiness, righteousness, justice, love, care, and compassion were to be put on display through the lives and actions of Adam and Eve.

An often-overlooked aspect of the creation account is the function of the garden. The text records that "the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden" (2:8) and there placed Adam and Eve (2:15). There are striking similarities between the Lord's first sanctuary, the garden, and the eventual tabernacle and temple.

Consider, for example, that just as Yahweh "*walked* in the garden" (3:8), he later "*walked* among" the Israelites (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14) through the tabernacle and the temple (2 Sam 7:6–7). Even the command given to Adam to "*work* and *keep*" the garden (Gen 2:15) denotes priestly activity. That is, just as the later priests "*worked* at the tabernacle" (Num 3:7) and "*kept* [or guarded] the tent of meeting" (Num 3:8), Adam was

commissioned by Yahweh to *work* and *keep* the sacred space of the first sanctuary. The point is that the Garden of Eden functioned as the perfect place wherein God could freely dwell with his people and his people freely serve him. Only in the garden could the Creator and the created enjoy perfect community and relationship.

As God's chosen mediator, Adam was given a great responsibility. The command to "keep" or "guard" the garden (Gen 2:15) necessitated that he would ensure nothing impure would enter this sacred space and that all who dwelt within this space would honor the Lord through their obedience to his word. Immediately after this command in 2:15, the Lord proclaimed to Adam, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (2:16–17). Since this command is given exclusively to Adam before the Lord made Eve (2:21–22), it appears that Adam was entrusted with the great responsibility of both obeying this command and teaching it to those who would come after him.

Related to this concept is the Lord's commissioning of Adam as the divinely chosen regent between God and his creation in 1:28. This commission consists of five elements (blessing, multiplication, expansion, victory, and dominion):

[1] God blessed them; and God said to them, [2] "Be fruitful and multiply, and [3] fill the earth, and [4] subdue it; and [5] rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (1:28).

This commission emphasizes Adam's role as God's regent or mediator who was created to expand God's glory to the far reaches of the earth. He was to "rule" on behalf of God. The term "rule" is used throughout the Old Testament in reference to the action of a king exercising his power and having dominion (1 Kgs 4:24; Ps 72:8). Here, we read about Adam ruling not for his own sake, but on behalf of the Lord.

Overall, it may be summarized that Adam served as the first prophet, priest, and king appointed by the Lord. As *prophet*, Adam was to obey and communicate the Lord's command (Gen 2:16–22; 3:11); as *priest*, he was to protect the sanctuary of the Lord by working and keeping it (2:15); and as *king*, Adam was to rule over the earth with diligence (1:28).

By establishing these concepts, the Lord set a paradigm that is expanded throughout the Pentateuch as well as the rest of Scripture. God's intention has always been to increase his influence and glory to every inch of his creation through a divinely appointed mediator.

Fall

Upon reading the first two chapters of Genesis, one would assume that Adam and Eve would have been relentlessly grateful to the Lord for his many blessings. They lived in an unparalleled perfect paradise; they were given the freedom to enjoy life through meaningful work and perfect communion with each other and the Lord. They had no fear of hunger, sickness, pain, betrayal, or death. Quite simply, these things did not exist. They lived in a world of which we can only dream.

Yet in Genesis chapter three, we are introduced to another character in God's story: the serpent, later revealed to be Satan (Rev 12:9; 20:2). At first Adam and Eve apparently just saw him as another creature.

The importance of the serpent's role cannot be overstated. Throughout the entire Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—he is the perpetual antagonist, always at odds with God and God's people. He is a created being and thus his power is limited, yet it is later revealed that he is far stronger than either man or woman. As the story of Scripture unfolds, the serpent is ever present in mankind's background. No matter how good things may appear, this snake is always trying to entice humanity to place themselves above God by disobeying him. His goal is to steal the glory that belongs only to God, and ruin all that comes in his path.

As this account develops, it quickly becomes evident that the serpent is "crafty" (Gen 3:1), he lies (3:4), and he acts diabolically against God. He is the epitome of evil. Yet curiously, when the serpent appears

to Eve, she shows little surprise at his ability to talk and instead, engages him in conversation (3:1–2). During this encounter, the serpent calls God a liar and claims that contrary to the Lord's command, Adam and Eve *can* eat from the forbidden tree and they will *not* die. In fact, he asserts that once they eat of it, they “will be like God” (3:4–5).

Although the text is silent about whether or not Adam was with his wife during this conversation, when presented with the fruit, he sides with the serpent and his wife against his Creator (3:6). Failing to protect the wife that God entrusted to him, Adam instead follows her headlong into disaster. Rather than honor the Lord as God and obey him, Adam chooses to satisfy his desire and dismiss God's plan for his life. Here, we witness the first act of sin, that is, the first act of willful, conscious rebellion against God and his moral law. The presence of sin is a reality that pervades mankind and the rest of the Bible's storyline.

In a perfect environment, Adam rejects the divine command and eats from the forbidden tree. In so doing, he chooses to please himself rather than serve his Creator and thereby fails as God's chosen mediator. As prophet, Adam neither effectively communicates the Lord's command to his wife (2:16–17; 3:1–7, 11) nor obeys it himself (3:6–7). As priest, Adam does not protect the garden-sanctuary from the serpent's lies (2:15; 3:6, 11). And as king, Adam forsakes his duty to rule over creation and expand God's influence (1:26–28; 3:17–19).

Immediately, life as they knew it is transformed. Although Adam and Eve remain physically alive, death is introduced into creation and something inside them changes. Evidently, the “death” the Lord referred to in his prohibition (2:17) begins when “the eyes of both of them were opened” and they recognized their own nakedness (3:7). The emphasis here goes far beyond mere clothing, for even after they clothe themselves, they still hide from God (3:8). Ultimately, this nakedness appears to depict humanity's spiritual death and separation from the Lord; it reveals the bondage to which humanity willingly subjected itself. Here, innocence and purity are traded for fig leaf loincloths, and perfect fellowship with God is exchanged for a moment of pleasure.

When the Lord approaches Adam and Eve, he announces the results of the devastation brought upon all creation by their shameful choice:

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you will bring forth children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he will rule over you.”

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice
of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I com-
manded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’;

Cursed is the ground because of you;
In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.

“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;
By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return” (3:16–19).

God's point is that as a result of their choice, the world will no longer be as it was intended. Rather than peace and harmony, there is shame and hiding (3:10–11). In place of fellowship with God, Adam and Eve are cast from the garden (3:23–24). Instead of life, humanity is promised death (3:19). Yet even in the midst of this curse, hope remains.

Hope of Restoration

Genesis 3:15 is often referred to as the *protoevangelium*—that is, the *first gospel*. The Lord announces the sentence of death to the serpent yet offers a glimmer of hope for humanity. The Lord proclaims:

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 (3:15).

This prophecy presents the hope that a future individual “Seed” or “Offspring” will defeat the serpent. The Lord announces that enmity or hostility will exist between the woman and the serpent, as well as between the woman’s “Offspring” and the serpent’s “offspring.” The point is clear. Two groups will be at odds with each other from this time forward. The most important part of the verse comes at the conclusion: “He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” The first of these phrases might be better translated as “He, *even he*, shall bruise your head.” Grammatically, a single male individual is in view—a reality consistent with the concept of this Offspring’s “heel” being bruised. The focus of the passage is that a single future individual will defeat the serpent. His victory however, will not come without cost. In the process, God’s promised Offspring will suffer some sort of injury.

Contextually, the defeat of the serpent includes the defeat of his “offspring,” that is, his followers. Once the serpent and his followers are defeated, the effects of the curse brought upon the world through him—sin, sickness, pain, and death—will be eliminated. Evil will be destroyed as the willful rebellion and negative influence of the serpent and his followers is eliminated once and for all. In light of the previous “very good” state of Genesis 1-2, his victory also implies that something great will be accomplished. That is, once the world is rid of the serpent’s influence, it can be restored to its original intent, void of all aspects of the curse. Furthermore, in light of Adam and Eve’s perfect relationship with the Lord prior to the fall, the victory of this Offspring implies a restoration of relationship between God and humanity.

Ultimately, this promise consists of a threefold hope that through the victory of the promised Offspring, God will:

1. *Destroy evil* (defeat the serpent, its offspring, and thereby rid the world of evil);
2. *Restore creation* (to the Genesis 1-2 “very good” state); and
3. *Dwell with his people forever* (in the same way he previously dwelt with Adam and Eve).

In many ways, this threefold hope forms the basis of all subsequent Scripture.

This hope of restoration is recognized immediately. Up to this point, Adam’s wife had only been known as “the woman” (she is referred to as such eleven times in chapters two and three). However, in 3:20, right after the proclamation of the curse of death, she is officially given the name Eve: “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” The name “Eve” (*chavva*) sounds strikingly similar to the Hebrew word “life” (*chayyim*). By naming her Eve, Adam recognizes that the promised Skull-Crushing, Creation-Restoring Offspring will come through her line. He recognizes that *life* will come forth despite the curse of *death*.

In this account we also learn about the need for sacrifice. After the curse, the Lord provides Adam and Eve with “garments of skins” for clothes (3:21). Although implicit, this is the first instance of physical death in Genesis. In chapter four, the concept of sacrifice is mentioned again (though the regulations for sacrifice are not explicitly developed until Leviticus). Here, Cain brings an offering of fruit (4:3), while Abel offers an animal from his flock (4:4). The text records that “the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard” (4:4b-5a). As the story of Scripture develops, it is revealed that only through sacrificial death can humanity relate to God. As such, this passage establishes the important concept of substitution, where one dies in place of another. This concept of substitution is woven throughout the rest of Scripture, both in the Old Testament as well as the New.

In view of Adam’s failure as God’s chosen mediator, it becomes apparent that the promised Offspring of Genesis 3:15 will serve in this divinely appointed role and will minister on God’s behalf in place of

Adam. As Prophet, he will communicate God's Word accurately and obey it perfectly. As Priest, he will zealously protect God's sacred space by interceding between a holy God and sinful man. And as King (or Regent), he will righteously rule over creation as he expands God's influence to the entire world. As such, readers of Genesis are left wondering: *When will the Second Adam come and set us free from our bondage? When will we be able to dwell with God again?*

The Patriarchs

As the book of Genesis progressively unfolds, it becomes evident that at each point in history, God is working to destroy evil, restore creation, and dwell with his people. What is so remarkable about this expectation is that it consistently centers around the concept of a coming Offspring. At every step, all those who placed their faith in the Lord God recognized the intrinsically anticipatory nature of this threefold hope. At various points in Genesis, God acts in ways to progressively demonstrate his destruction of evil, restoration of creation, and dwelling with his people. However, each of these decisive interventions ultimately points to the eventual eschatological victory of the promised Offspring.

There are numerous instances that point to the destruction of evil in Genesis. The world-wide Flood is perhaps one of the clearest instances of God's discipline of the world and defeat of willfully rebellious creatures. Since "the wickedness of man was great on the earth" and "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (6:5), the Lord determines that he will "blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land" (6:7). Yet even a complete reset of humanity cannot adequately deal with the problem of the human heart.

As soon as Noah and his family exit the ark, Genesis records the shameful actions of Noah's son Ham (9:20–24). Again, the downward spiral begins. Other instances of God's destruction of evil include his confusion of the language of those at Babel (11:1–9) and his judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (19:23–29). In cases such as these, God judges disobedience so that others may recognize his sovereignty and justice. Other promises

of God's destruction of evil refer specifically to an eschatological event.

Two examples include the Lord's promise to Abraham that his Offspring will possess the gate of his enemies (22:17) and the prayer that Rebekah's Offspring will possess the gate of those who hate him (24:60).¹

Since possessing the gate of one's enemies involves complete victory over them, both these statements allude to the future and final victory of God's promised Offspring.

Instances of God's restoration of creation occur mostly in promises and prophecies of what is yet to come. For example, when Noah is born, his father Lamech alludes to the curse of 3:17 by quoting key words in 5:28–29:

And to Adam he said . . . "[1] *cursed* is the [2] *ground* because of you; in [3] *pain* you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (3:17).

[Lamech] fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the [2] *ground* that the LORD has [1] *cursed*, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the [3] *painful* toil of our hands" (5:28–29).

By referring back to the curse, Lamech demonstrates his anticipation that God will eventually act decisively to undo the curse. Since Lamech found himself in the genealogical line of the promised Offspring of Gen-

esis 3:15, he evidently expected the Lord to bring the world back to its "very good" Genesis 1–2 state.

Other instances of God's anticipated restoration include the many promises given to Abraham concerning the blessing that will be brought to "all the nations" (22:18) and "all the families of the earth" (12:3). This promise of blessing is repeated to both Isaac (26:4) and Jacob

¹ Although the NASB translates the pronouns of 22:17 and 24:60 as plural ("their enemies" and "those who hate them"), the Hebrew pronouns are both singular and are best translated as such ("his enemies" and "those who hate him").

(28:14). In addition to this universal blessing, each of the patriarchs is given the promise that his descendants will dwell in a fertile land forever (13:14–17; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13), a concept remarkably similar to the abundant and perfect state of the garden. Similarly, when Jacob blessed his sons right before his death, he announced that through the line of Judah, a future individual would come to whom “shall be the obedience of the peoples” (49:10). The conclusion of Genesis makes this expectation even more clear. Joseph announces to his brothers, “God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (50:24). Again, the expectation is that the promised Offspring of 3:15 will eventually rule perfectly as God’s chosen mediator in a restored world as he destroys all traces of evil.

The concept of God dwelling with his people is developed at several key points. For example, despite the wickedness of humanity, both Enoch and Noah are said to have “walked with God” (5:22; 6:9), a concept reminiscent of the Lord’s dwelling with his people as he “walked in the garden” (3:8). Additionally, in 9:27, Noah prophesies that God will eventually “dwell in the tents of Shem.” Shem is an ancestor to Abraham and this promise, though vague, indicates the expectation that God will eventually dwell among his people. This promise is expanded and reconfirmed to Abraham.

When the Lord declared that he would give the Promised Land to Abraham’s descendants as “an everlasting possession,” he further explained this promise by announcing that he “will be their God” (17:8). Given the contextual background of God’s relationship with Adam and Eve in the garden, the point is that God promises Abraham that he will dwell among his descendants in a unique way that harkens back to his relationship with his people in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall of man.

Israel

Few books of Scripture provide as clear an outline as does Genesis. Within this book, the phrase “these are the generations of” or “this is the account

of the generations of” is used ten times (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, [9]; 37:2). This phrase serves as the heading for each section of this book.

The grammatical structure indicates that five of these headings are to be viewed as “primary headings” (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 11:10; 37:2) and five are to be considered “subheadings” (10:1; 11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, [9]). The main difference is that the subheadings are connected to the prior headings with the word “and,” while the primary headings introduce new material. Ironically, most modern Bible translations omit the word “and” here (two exceptions being the NASB and KJV). The following outline takes this literary structure into account:

- Introduction (1:1–2:3)
- The Account of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
- The Account of Adam (5:1–6:8)
- The Account of Noah (6:9–9:28)
 - And the Account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1–11:9)
- The Account of Shem (11:10–26)
 - And the Account of Terah (11:27–25:11)
 - And the Account of Ishmael (25:12–18)
 - And the Account of Isaac (25:19–35:29)
 - And the Account of Esau (36:1 [9]–43)
- The Account of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

This literary outline brings the genealogical line of promise into view by funneling the focus from all creation (2:4) to humanity in general (5:1) to all living humanity after the flood (6:9) to a specific people group (11:10) to the nation Israel (37:2). That is, the book of Genesis brings the readers’ attention from the entire universe to a small tribe (through whom the promised Offspring would come) wandering around the desert, longing for the Lord to cataclysmically act in history and fulfill his promises.

Just as Adam and Eve, Lamech, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all given the hope that God would eventually destroy evil, restore creation, and dwell with his people, so were the Israelites who entered Egypt. These individuals longed for the day when God’s chosen Offspring—the Second Adam—would arrive and minister as the True Prophet, Priest, and King.

Ultimately, the book of Genesis leaves its readers on a note of anticipation, longing for God's promise to one day be realized.

Exodus

Similar to Genesis, Exodus is a powerful book of beginnings. Not only does this book recount the horrors endured by the Israelites as they suffered under the mighty hand of various Egyptian Pharaohs, but it also records their decisive deliverance by the Lord and their escape from Egypt and its slavery. It describes how the Lord revealed himself to Moses and commissioned him to lead the young nation to independence, freedom, and their own land, thereby realizing various promises given to Abraham (e.g., Gen 15:13–16; 17:8). At Mount Sinai, the Lord enters into a covenant relationship with the Israelites and proclaims the stipulations necessary for a holy God to dwell in the midst of an unholy people—a reality only possible by means of the tabernacle. From beginning to end, the book of Exodus is intrinsically built upon prior revelation given in Genesis that God will eventually destroy evil, restore creation, and dwell with his people forever.

The Call of Moses

The book of Exodus picks up where Genesis ended. Jacob's sons entered Egypt as a small family, yet quickly grew into a large nation (Exod 1:1–7). Alluding back to the commission given in Genesis (Gen 1:28; 35:11–12), Exodus records that “the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them” (Exod 1:7). God's hand of blessing was upon them as they eagerly awaited the fulfillment of his promise to set them free from the bondage and harsh Egyptian slavery put in place by Pharaoh (1:8, 11).

Israel's situation was in every way brutal. The biblical text records that the Egyptians “compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field” (1:13–14a). Not only that, but since the

Egyptians were afraid of the nation Israel growing larger, Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill all the newborn male children (1:16, 22). It does not take long for the Israelites to cry out to God:

And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them (2:23b–25).

Perhaps what is most remarkable about this passage is the Lord's commitment to fulfill the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the book of Genesis.

It is into this situation that the Lord appears to Moses in the burning bush (3:2–4). When Moses approaches this extraordinary sight, the Lord calls, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (3:6). In so doing, the Lord makes the assertion that what he is about to do accomplishes what was promised to the patriarchs. This striking connection is made clear by considering the Lord's covenant to Abraham in Genesis:

Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions (Gen 15:13–14).

Even the territorial boundaries promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18–21) are repeated to Moses (Exod 3:8). In view of these connections, it is apparent that the same hope given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the same hope offered to Moses and the downtrodden Israelites. At the proper time, God's promised Offspring will come to destroy evil, restore creation, and allow God to dwell with his people forever.

Additionally, it is at the burning bush encounter that the Lord God reveals his divine name to Moses:

Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations” (3:13–15).

The Hebrew word translated “I AM” is likely a wordplay on “LORD” (*Yahweh*) and reflects God’s self-existence. Although it is true that the name *Yahweh* was used in Genesis, it is not until this point in Exodus that this name is explained. From here on, the name *Yahweh* is frequently used to refer to the God who enters into covenant relationship with his people.

Through Moses, *Yahweh* begins his rescue operation of bringing the Israelites out of captivity and into their own land. He commands Moses to appear before Pharaoh and demand the release of his people, Israel (3:10). Although Moses is afraid, *Yahweh* promises that he will stretch out his hand “and strike Egypt with all my miracles which I shall do in the midst of it” (3:20). Through Moses and his brother Aaron (4:14–15), God announces that he will act as divine Warrior and deliver the nation Israel. He will bring them out from the burdens of slavery and redeem them.

Pharaoh is quite obviously not excited about the prospect of losing his free labor and angrily replies, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice and let Israel go?” (5:2). As such, *Yahweh* sends a series of ten plagues on the nation Egypt. Each plague appears to demonstrate how *Yahweh* God defeats Egypt’s gods. For example, the plague of hail (9:13–35) mocks the Egyptian sky gods; the infestation of locusts (10:1–20) mocks the Nile gods who were supposed to protect the crops; and the plague of darkness (10:21–29) mocks the sun god and his inability to provide light. The point is that at each step, the Lord demonstrates to both

the Israelites as well as the Egyptians that he alone is supreme over all creation.

As the plagues become progressively severe, Pharaoh repeatedly pleads with Moses to pray to the Lord to stop them. He even declares that if the plagues end, the Israelites can go free. Yet each time, Pharaoh reneges on his promises. That is, until the final plague, when *Yahweh* reveals that he is the true King, capable of delivering his people from any foe and defeating the evil that afflicts them. Nothing can stop him from keeping his promises to his people, Israel.

The Exodus Event

As the Israelites prepare to leave the land, they celebrate their first Passover meal. They are commanded to take a perfect “unblemished” lamb (12:5), kill it, and put the blood on the doorposts of their homes (12:7). In so doing, their homes are protected from the final plague on Egypt—the death of the firstborn. Moses explains this to the elders of Israel, “For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you” (12:23). Although the firstborn Israelites deserve to die just as much as the firstborn Egyptians (they too, are sinners), *Yahweh* graciously provides a way of escape for his people. As with the sacrifices of Genesis, the Passover lambs die as the substitutes for the firstborn Israelites. This event gave such a lasting impression to the Israelites, that it is often al-

luded to throughout both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Pss 78:12–13; 105:26–45; Hos 11:1; 1 Cor 10:1–3).

With the devastation of the last plague and the wailing of the Egyptians over the loss of their firstborns, Pharaoh finally relents and lets the Israelites go (12:31–32). Just as was promised to Abraham hundreds of years prior, in God’s perfect timing (1446/7 BC), he leads Abraham’s descendants out of captivity (12:40–41; cf. Gen 15:13–14). Subsequently, when Pharaoh realizes that he has lost all his slaves and gained nothing in return, he foolishly changes his mind and pursues the Israelites across

the Egyptian wilderness. He chases them as far as the Red Sea, where the Lord performs the most striking miracle yet. As slaves with no military training, the Israelites find themselves utterly powerless as the foremost army of the ancient world bears down upon them. Yet God decisively intervenes. He demonstrates his incredible power by parting the Red Sea long enough for the Israelites to walk through it on dry land. Yet as soon as Pharaoh's army follows, the waters come crashing down, silencing them once and for all. Freed at last, the Israelites no longer need to fear the Egyptians:

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses (Exod 14:30–31).

Through this event, Yahweh reveals himself to be the sovereign God, far more powerful than any nation or people. Only he is able to defeat human rebellion and sin.

As perhaps the most pivotal event in Israel's history, it is to the Exodus that the prophets often refer throughout the Old Testament. This event reveals many of God's characteristics to his people: He is faithful to his covenant, stronger than his enemies, gracious to his people, merciful to all who call upon his name, and has power over all elements of the natural world. It also reveals that each generation of Israel has its identity in that Exodus event even if they were born generations later. This is the event that made Israel a nation of God's people. In all the events surrounding the Exodus, Yahweh shows his commitment to defeat evil and thereby protect his people. God's destruction of evil is juxtaposed with the hope of his restoration of creation, as the Israelites looked forward to the day when they would live in an Eden-like land, wherein God would dwell among them.

Consider Yahweh's announcement to his people, when he states:

I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD (6:6b–8).

In this passage, Yahweh declares that he will *destroy evil* (“with great judgments”), *restore creation* (“bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”), and *dwell with his people* (“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God”). As the Israelites approach Mount Sinai, they soon learn of the regulations required to experience the fullness of joy brought about when God dwells among his people.

Mount Sinai

Once the Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai, they gather together for the first time as a newly independent nation, redeemed from Egypt by the Lord God. Here, the Lord declares his plans for Israel, “If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (19:5–6). Here, the Lord describes the nation with three concepts: “My own possession,” “a kingdom of priests,” and “a holy nation.”

As a treasured possession, the Israelites are acknowledged as precious to the Lord—they enter a unique relationship with him. As a kingdom of priests, the nation is given the privilege of mediating God's blessing to all other peoples. And as a holy nation, the Israelites are expected to seek moral purity as they are dedicated to the Lord. To a great extent, these three terms describe a single reality: Israel is gifted with the divine opportunity to dwell in special relationship with the Lord, similar to what was experienced by Adam and Eve prior to the Fall.

Consider, that just as the first couple was placed in a garden, Israel is led to a fertile land “flowing with milk and honey” (3:17). Just as Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to spread God’s influence to the far reaches of the earth, the Israelites are expected to be a “kingdom of priests” who brings blessing to all nations (19:6). And just as Adam and Eve dwelt freely and related intimately with the Lord, Israel is to be God’s people as he promises to be their God (6:7). Yet it quickly becomes evident that a holy God cannot dwell among a sinful people without strict regulation.

Exodus chapters 20–23 describe the Ten Commandments (20:1–17) and the Book of the Covenant (20:22–23:33) the Lord gave to his people. These detailed instructions outline what is required of the Israelites to maintain their special relationship with God. Furthermore, the specifications of the tabernacle are given as the Lord proclaims, “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them” (25:8). Clearly, this is no ordinary construction project. Although merely a large tent, the tabernacle is *the* defining characteristic of the Israelite community. There are many details about the contents of this mobile structure described in this passage—about the ark of the covenant (25:10–22), the table for the bread of presence (25:23–30), the golden lampstand (25:31–40), the tabernacle itself (26:1–37), the bronze altar (27:1–8), the tabernacle court (27:9–19), and the list goes on.

Yet what is perhaps most evident from these precise details is that the tabernacle is to serve as a reminder of the Garden of Eden. Consider the guarding cherubim (25:18–22; 26:1, 31; cf. Gen 3:24), the lampstand designed as a bountiful tree (Exod 25:31–40; cf. Gen 2:9), an abundance of gold and costly jewels (Exod 25:11–13, 36–39; cf. Gen 2:12), pomegranate fruit sewn into the priestly garments (Exod 28:33–34; cf. Gen 1:29; 2:16), and most importantly, the very presence of the Lord (Exod 40:34–38; cf. Gen 3:8). These connections would have both caused the Israelites to rejoice in their current privileged relationship with the Lord and simultaneously reminded them of the paradise to which the world would eventually be completely restored.

Yet as good as this relationship could be, the tabernacle itself served as a constant reminder both that sin separates and that an acceptable sac-

rifice is needed to approach God. Consider for example the fence around the tabernacle, the specific priestly garments, or the limited times available for priests to enter the Holy Place. While in no way minimizing the thrill of experiencing God’s localized presence through the tabernacle, the Israelites would have certainly longed for more, as Adam and Eve had freely walked with God in the Garden (cf. Gen 3:8). As such, the Israelites would have anticipated the eventual victory of God’s promised Offspring and the complete restoration of the world to the Genesis 1–2 “very good” state, void of all sin, all sickness, all death, and all separation from God. Overall, the tabernacle enabled the Israelites to delight in their current relationship with God as they longed for an unhindered relationship with him.

When Moses informs the people of what is expected of them for God to dwell in their midst, they gladly exclaim, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!” (Exod 24:3). They rejoice in the blessing of fellowship with their God and the chance to dwell with him. Yet just as Adam and Eve forsook their perfect relationship with God centuries prior, so do the Israelites. Just as Adam and Eve rejected God’s authority as they ate the forbidden fruit, the Israelites reject his authority as they worship the golden calf (32:1–24). The temptation offered by the serpent arises once again.

In both cases, humanity exchanges the glories of the immortal, unchanging Creator God, for a piece of his creation. In both cases, we read about the temptation and we cringe. Why would anyone exchange their extraordinary relationship with God for anything? What else could compare to so great a treasure? How could anything compete with so great a love? Yet something about humanity becomes increasingly evident as the story of Scripture continues on; there is something intrinsically wrong with the human heart. Again, the question is raised: *How can a holy God dwell among a sinful people without destroying them?*

Leviticus

Perhaps more so than any other book of the Old Testament, Leviticus meticulously details how sin must be dealt with for people to approach a holy God. Its description of how the Israelites were to live drastically different lives than their unbelieving neighbors has many relevant contemporary applications for today. This book discusses the various types of offerings and sacrifices, regulations about physical purity, as well as feasts and celebrations. Each aspect of the threefold hope is developed in substantial depth: *Evil is destroyed* by the righteous Israelites punishing wickedness; *creation is restored* as the land produces bountifully when the Israelites live obediently; and *God dwells among his people* as the Israelites sanctify themselves in view of God's holiness. Ultimately, each of these elements foreshadows the hope of eschatological victory when God's chosen Offspring will one day fully accomplish them at the end of the ages.

Laws for Israel

The most prominent theme of Leviticus is certainly the holiness of God. From beginning to end, this book deals with the strict rules and regulations required for the Israelites to have the Lord dwell in their midst within the land of promise. Although Leviticus does include some sections of narrative (the consecration of Aaron and his sons [Lev 8:1–36]; the Lord's acceptance of Aaron's offering [9:1–24]; and the death of Nadab and Abihu [10:1–20]), the vast majority of this book consists of legal codes describing how to approach the Lord. In many ways, Leviticus articulates how the Israelites were to function as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:5–6). In a fallen world, this book teaches how Israel was to distinguish between what is holy and what is profane; what is clean and what is unclean. The legal codes of Leviticus divide into four sections: (1) chapters 1–7 describe the sacrifices and offerings required, (2) chapters 11–15 discuss uncleanness in relation to food, skin diseases,

and bodily discharges, (3) chapter 16 deals with the Day of Atonement, and (4) chapters 17–27 deal with practical aspects of holy living.

Chapters 1–7 describe the various types of offerings prescribed by Yahweh, such as the burnt offering (Lev 1:1–17), grain offering (2:1–16), peace offering (3:1–17), sin offering (4:1–5:13), and guilt offering (5:14–6:7). Each offering had a specific purpose and involved the presentation of either a sacrificial animal or a sacrifice of grain. In every case where an animal is offered, it is commanded that it must be “without blemish” (e.g., 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 4:3, 23, 28, 32; 5:14, 18; 6:6).

In establishing the sacrificial system, Yahweh presents the way for sinful man to be reconciled with himself. As with the Passover lamb of Exodus, the concept of substitution is paramount. For the sin offerings—where an animal is required—the point is that the animal (bull, ram, ox, etc.) takes the place of the guilty person, thereby allowing God to judge the animal in place of the person. In a very real sense, this is how God destroys evil from the midst of his people. Their sinful deeds are not counted against them as they place their faith in the Lord and his substitutionary provision. Yet even here, as a result of the Fall, death is required.

At this point, it is vital for the larger context of the Pentateuch—especially the previous books of Genesis and Exodus—to inform our reading of Leviticus. From the beginning, true faith has always been in God's promised Offspring and his eschatological destruction of evil, restoration of creation, and making the way for God to dwell with his people. It is the promised Offspring of Genesis 3:15 that will ultimately defeat the serpent and bring about final reconciliation between God and man, not any sacrifice a human could ever offer.

The believing Israelites never placed their faith in these animal sacrifices alone. On the contrary, their faith was always in God and his promised Offspring. Therefore, if we read Leviticus in light of Genesis and Exodus, everything else must be viewed as *provisional*. The point is that each of the offerings and sacrifices described in Leviticus 1–7 served as an anticipatory reminder that one day, God's Chosen One would be victorious. Until then, however, the Israelites were given the immense

privilege of experiencing a daily reminder of their own frailty and God's overarching plan of redemption and restoration.

Chapters 11–15 describe the dietary regulations for the Israelites (11:1–47), purification after childbirth (12:1–8), laws about skin diseases (13:1–14:57), and regulations about bodily discharges (15:1–33). For the modern reader, these laws certainly sound archaic and quite odd. Various commentators have suggested different approaches to understanding the relevancy of these passages. However, perhaps the best explanation is that many of the things declared “unclean” are the results of the Fall and curse upon creation.

For example, the carcasses of dead animals (11:24–25, 39–40) are unclean because death was never Yahweh's desire. The details of childbirth and need for purification (12:1–8) may allude to the curse of increased pain in childbearing in Genesis 3:16. Skin diseases such as leprosy (Lev 13:1–14:57) were antithetical to the original creation void of disease. The point is that God could not tolerate certain sin-stained elements of the fallen world in his holy presence. As for the other things declared unclean—for example, seafood without scales (11:10–12)—it seems that God desired to draw a sharp distinction between his people and their unbelieving neighbors. Again, it must be kept in mind that the point of all this regulation was for a holy God to dwell among his people in a sinful world.

Chapter 16 describes the Day of Atonement and how the nation could be cleansed from their sinfulness so that Yahweh could dwell in their midst. This passage articulates one of the most important aspects of the sacrificial system. Once a year, the high priest—in Moses's day, Aaron—was instructed to cleanse himself (16:3–5), sacrifice a bull (16:6–11) and goat (16:15), enter the Holy Place of the tabernacle (16:16), and there make atonement for the nation's sins and for all those not covered by other sacrifices (16:18–19). The most intriguing part of the ceremony is then described:

Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand

of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness (16:21–22).

In Yahweh's divine wisdom, this ritual covered the nation's sins and allowed him to come close to his people. Yet it served another role as well. The Day of Atonement pictured the eschatological victory of God's promised Offspring, for the blood of bulls and goats could never fully satisfy the requirements of a holy God. This is self-evident in the fact this ceremony was to be continually repeated every year. Certainly the Israelites longed for the day when sin would climactically be done away with and they could dwell in perfect fellowship with their Creator, as Adam and Eve had experienced in the garden.

Chapters 17–27 describe many of the moral commands of Yahweh, such as unlawful sexual relations (18:1–30; 20:10–21), the necessity of loving one's neighbor (19:9–18), punishment for human sacrifice (20:1–9), more detailed requirements about priests (21:1–22:16), various feasts (23:1–44), blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (26:1–46), as well as other assorted laws. These laws certainly appear eclectic, though a clear unifying central theme is woven throughout. In regard to all these regulations, the Lord's desire for his people is summarized in his statement: “Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine” (20:26). From beginning to end, Leviticus paints the picture of Yahweh's great passion to dwell with his people in the Promised Land.

Numbers

The book of Numbers recounts the events after Yahweh gave the law to Israel at Mount Sinai. This nation possessed not only a unique law code, but also enjoyed the privilege of having the presence of the Lord God in their midst while they journeyed to the Promised Land. Unfortunately, when Israelite spies were sent to survey the land, they provided an alarming report—we can't possibly enter the land. The people are GI-

ANTS. Despite the protests of Caleb and Joshua, the Israelites lost faith in Yahweh's promise to give them the land. As a result of their faithless attitude, the Lord disciplined them by denying the first generation's entrance to the land of promise. Throughout Numbers, the fickle nature of the Israelites is contrasted with the faithfulness of the Lord. Although Israel may fail, the Lord remains true to his promises to Israel. This book offers glimpses of the threefold hope that God would eventually destroy evil, restore creation, and dwell with his people.

Concerning the Tabernacle

The book of Numbers is aptly named, considering the censuses given in chapters 1 and 26, as well as the many other detailed lists throughout (for example, chapters 7, 28, and 29). This book recounts the events experienced by the nation Israel during the wilderness wanderings in the Sinai Desert. As such, chapters 1 and 26 provide book endings for the beginning and the end of the forty-year desert wanderings (see 26:64–65). During this time, the nation experienced abundant provision and mercy from Yahweh, along with stern punishment for their rebellious attitude. As with Exodus and Leviticus, Numbers provides a glimpse into the Israelites' longing to dwell in their own land—the land first promised to Abraham in Genesis.

Although the tabernacle construction had already been described in Exodus, various aspects are repeated in Numbers. For example, the consecration of the tabernacle is discussed (7:1–89), as is the cloud covering and appearance of fire (9:15–23). Important to notice is the arrangement of the camp and the centrality of the tabernacle. Chapter 2 describes how each of the tribes of Israel were arranged in such a way that caused them to recognize the centrality of the Lord to all areas of life. The point is that God, being pleased to dwell with his people, desired their constant awareness of his presence among them:

“They shall camp around the tent of meeting” (2:2).

The tribes were divided into four groups of three tribes each:

East: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun (2:3–9)

South: Reuben, Simeon, Gad (2:10–16)

West: Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin (2:18–24)

North: Dan, Asher, Naphtali (2:25–31)

Furthermore, the Levites were to encamp between the tribes and the tabernacle (3:5–39). As the nation wandered for forty years in the wilderness due to their disobedience, this arrangement was to continually serve as a reminder of the nation's dependence upon Yahweh as their Guide.

Other examples of God's judgment of his own people in Numbers include his opposition to Miriam and Aaron when they oppose God's appointed leader, Moses (12:1–16), Israel's defeat in battle (14:39–45), a Sabbath-breaker's execution (15:32–36), the divine punishment of Korah (16:1–50), the prohibition of Moses from entering the land of promise (20:10–13), and the plague of fiery serpents (21:4–9). These events reveal the stern consequences of disobedience to the revealed will of Yahweh. Unless the nation commits themselves to follow the Lord completely, they hinder Yahweh's dwelling in their midst.

As Israel's King, Yahweh decided when the nation would set out and travel, and when they would remain at camp. The Lord provided a cloud (representing his divine presence) over the tabernacle during the day, and a pillar of fire during the night (9:15–16). The text records:

Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. At the command of the LORD the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the LORD they would camp (9:17–18a).

Not only did the Israelites have the privilege of serving a God who makes promises (Genesis), who rescues his people (Exodus), and who dwells among them (Leviticus), but they served a God who promised to lead them in the exact path to follow (Numbers).

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The Journey in the Wilderness

Beginning in chapter 10, Numbers recounts Israel's journey through the wilderness to the land of promise. Although one would think—considering their abundant blessings—that Israel would remain faithful to the Lord, this is clearly not the case. Despite the Lord's provision of food and water (Exod 16:1–17:7), the Israelites repeatedly cry out and complain against the Lord (Num 11:1–15; 20:2–13).

Throughout Numbers, the Lord's discipline of his own people is a prominent theme. As a result of Israel's complaints about the dangers of conquering the land, the Lord declares, "Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness . . . and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers" (14:22–23a). In this way, the Lord judges the rebellion of the nation. He punishes sin, yet at the same time promises those who diligently seek him a great hope for the future.

Other examples of God's judgment of his own people in Numbers include his opposition to Miriam and Aaron when they oppose God's appointed leader, Moses (12:1–16), Israel's defeat in battle (14:39–45), a Sabbath-breaker's execution (15:32–36), the divine punishment of Korah (16:1–50), the prohibition of Moses from entering the land of promise (20:10–13), and the plague of fiery serpents (21:4–9). These events reveal the stern consequences of disobedience to the revealed will of Yahweh. Unless the nation commits themselves to follow the Lord completely, they hinder Yahweh's dwelling in their midst.

As the Israelites continue their journey through the desert, they encounter a rather enigmatic character, Balaam. As a sort of "prophet-for-hire," Balaam is recruited by an enemy of Israel, Balak, to curse Israel because he views them as a threat to him and his people (22:10–11). However, Balaam declares, "The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak" (22:38; cf. 23:12). He declares four oracles, each of which surprisingly consists of a blessing for Israel (23:7–10; 23:18–24; 24:3–9; 24:15–24). Perhaps the final one is the most intriguing, as it describes the future victory of God's Chosen One over his enemies:

I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near;
A star shall come forth from Jacob,
A scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,
And tear down all the sons of Sheth.
Edom shall be a possession,
Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession,
While Israel performs valiantly.
One from Jacob shall have dominion,
And will destroy the remnant from the city
(24:17–19).

The similarity to the promise of Genesis 3:15 is striking: A single individual from Israel shall come forth to crush the head of his foes and rule victoriously. In an ironic twist of events, Balaam, an enemy of Israel, prophesies that God's promised Offspring will eventually accomplish that which Israel anticipated and destroy Israel's enemies.

As the book of Numbers concludes, Israel looks forward to its second generation's imminent entrance into the Promised Land. Encouraged by Yahweh's continued faithfulness and their victories over Sihon the king of the Amorites (21:21–30) and Og the king of Bashan (21:31–35), as well as the commissioning of Joshua as the successor to Moses (27:12–23), Israel awaits the day for the Lord to fulfill his many promises. Ultimately, Numbers aptly provides the background and context for the final book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy

As the concluding book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy documents Moses' final plea to Israel that they trust and obey Yahweh. As one of the most cited books in both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, the influence of Deuteronomy on the nation Israel cannot be overstated. There are many facets to this book; it records speeches given by Moses, recounts many of the laws previously given in Exodus and Leviticus,

describes the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, and chronicles the covenant renewal ceremony between Israel and the Lord. All throughout, Deuteronomy paints a clear picture of Israel's faith as consisting of the threefold hope first given in Genesis.

Giving of Commands

As with the other books of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy is firmly based upon the promises first given in Genesis. This book begins with Moses' command for the Israelites to enter "the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (1:8). Seven times throughout Deuteronomy, "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" are mentioned by name in reference to promises given to them (1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4). This links the faith of the Israelites with the hope offered to the patriarchs. This connection between Genesis and Deuteronomy strengthens the overarching unity of the Pentateuch as a collection of books developing the progressive realization of a single hope. The point is that the same hope offered in Genesis is the same hope found in Deuteronomy: At the proper time, God's promised Offspring will destroy evil, restore creation, and allow God to dwell with his people forever.

Many commentators note the literary similarity between Deuteronomy and vassal treaties of the Ancient Near East. In the ancient world, vassal treaties were given by a powerful king to a people-group under his influence. The king would pledge his loyalty to protect the people (his vassals), so long as they pledged their loyalty to honor him as supreme. In essence, the vassal treaty served as a covenant between two parties. Although there are slight variations in these treaties, the structure often appears in the same order and structure as the book of Deuteronomy:

Preamble (1:1–5)
 Historical Prologue (1:6–4:43)
 Ethical Stipulations (4:44–26:19)
 Blessings and Curses (27:1–30:20)
 Witnesses (31:1–34:12)

The *preamble* describes what the king has already done for his people. The *historical prologue* surveys the king's continued dealings with his people. The *ethical stipulations* detail what the king requires of his people. The *blessings and curses* describe what will happen if the people obey or disobey. The *witnesses* section records others who testify to the establishment of the vassal treaty (consider, for example, Moses' repeated summoning of "heaven and earth" [30:19; 31:28; 32:1]).

Overall, Deuteronomy's similarity to the ancient vassal treaty provided the Israelites with a document understandable in their own culture and society. It was the Lord who chose the nation, and for them to enjoy his presence in their midst, they were required to follow him:

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (7:6–8).

It is because of this reality—because of what the Lord had done—that the nation is to seek him. The Lord continues, "Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today" (7:11). In many ways, Deuteronomy functioned in the same way as would a modern nation's constitution, describing the form of government, societal structure, basic regulations, and reasons for existence. It was clear for the Israelites that the Lord was the one who entered into relationship with them. Therefore, to continue to enjoy his presence and protection, they must honor him with their allegiance and obey him with their actions.

Ultimately, the correspondence of Deuteronomy to the ancient vassal treaty, along with this book's repeated allusions to the promises

of Genesis, provides clear reasons for the commands given within. Far from baseless laws given by a capricious deity, a proper understanding of Deuteronomy demonstrates the immensely gracious nature of these commands. That is, the Israelites are not told to comply with meaningless rules for the mere sake of obedience. Rather, this book reveals that the Israelites submitted to a covenantal agreement so that the God who delivered them from Egypt might continue to lead them in the future. Since a holy God could only dwell in the midst of a holy people, certain ethical conditions must be met.

Overall, the commands of Deuteronomy served as a means for the Israelites to demonstrate their faith in the promises of God. Far from earning themselves a righteous status before God through their obedience, these laws simply allowed the Israelites the chance to live by faith and experience the Creator's localized presence in their midst. As Yahweh himself declared, these commands were never meant to be too burdensome or difficult: "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. . . . But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it" (30:11, 14).

Longing for a Second Adam

Deuteronomy 17–18 describe the regulations for the divinely ordained mediatory offices of kings (17:14–20), priests (18:1–8), and prophets (18:9–22), as well as how these individuals were to serve the nation on behalf of the Lord. Contextually, these passages reveal both immediate application as well as future expectation. First, consider their immediate application:

The *king* of Israel was to govern the nation on behalf of the Lord. According to this passage, he would be chosen by the Lord (17:15), he would trust in the Lord (17:16), he would be devoted to the Lord's will (17:17), and he would rely on the Lord's word (17:18–20).

The *priests* of Israel were to offer sacrifice on behalf of the nation for the Lord and thereby mediate between a holy God and unholy people (18:1–8).

The *prophets* of Israel were to speak to the Israelites on behalf of the Lord and thereby reveal the Lord's will and desire (18:9–22).

Each of these three offices finds immediate application in the life of the nation. Although it is certainly many years until Israel appoints a king—first Saul and later David—the offices of priest and prophet are active from this point going forward. However, in regard to each of these offices, there is also an intrinsically future oriented expectation.

In light of the numerous connections between Genesis and Deuteronomy, it is vital to consider how the hope of a future Prophet, Priest, and King first given in Genesis is expanded in this passage. As discussed above, Genesis 3:15 presented the hope that eventually, a second Adam-like figure would come and reign victorious. He would defeat his enemies, restore creation, and allow God to dwell with his people. Although Adam failed in his prophetic, priestly, and kingly roles, the Lord promised that this coming Offspring would not fail.

Due to the future-oriented outlook of Genesis, it appears that these mediatory offices served as temporary and provisional roles, pointing the nation to the eventual day when the Lord God would send the final Mediator to serve as Prophet, Priest, and King. As such, the book of Deuteronomy reconfirms the expectation first given immediately after the fall: Eventually, God's promised Offspring will come and restore the world to the way it was intended. Only he will be able to successfully mediate God's blessing to all the world and expand the Lord's glory to every inch of creation.

Blessings and Curses

The primary passage of the Pentateuch to which the prophets often allude is Deuteronomy 28–30. This passage articulates the blessings promised by Yahweh for obedience and the curses for disobedience. Chapter 28 introduces both the blessings and the curses. Consider the reason for the blessings:

Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which

I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God (28:1–2).

Yet also, consider the reason for curses:

But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you (28:15).

In both cases, Yahweh proclaims that the Israelites will prosper if they obey him, yet they will suffer if they disobey him. Unlike the unconditional covenant given to Abraham in Genesis 15, this covenant is conditional and agreed upon by both Yahweh and Israel (29:1–29). That is, Yahweh's blessings would only come if Israel were to uphold her end of the covenant. However, in obedience or disobedience Israel would always be God's chosen people. The blessings and curses of the Law validated that relationship.

The blessings of this passage are astounding. In many ways, they point back to the threefold hope first given in Genesis. Here in Deuteronomy, God promises to *destroy evil* ("The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you" [Deut 28:7a]), *restore creation* ("The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you" [28:11]), and *dwell with his people* ("The LORD will establish you as a holy people to himself" [28:9a]).

Point for point, the blessings of Deuteronomy 28 match the curse of Genesis 3 and demonstrate how aspects of the curse are systematically reversed. Consider, for example, how the curse on childbearing (Gen 3:16) is undone when the fruit of the womb abounds (Deut 28:4, 11). The curse on the unproductivity of the ground (Gen 3:17–18) is undone when the ground produces plentiful fruit (Deut 28:4, 11). The curse of enmi-

ty between God's faithful and the rebellious (Gen 3:15) is undone as the Lord brings victory to Israel over her enemies (Deut 28:7). In every way, the blessings promised by the Lord to Israel are striking.

Yet as amazing as these blessings may be, the curses are in every way dreadful. The curses for disobedience amplify the original curse brought upon creation in Genesis 3 and describe the reverse of the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1–14. If the nation rejects God's plan and forsakes the covenant, "The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me" (28:20). Whereas the blessing describes how Yahweh would defeat Israel's enemies (28:7), the curse describes how Israel's enemies would defeat Israel (28:25). Yet even though the list of curses is certainly extensive, none of these judgments are unprovoked. As has been seen throughout the Pentateuch, when God's people reject him, he disciplines them, rebukes them, and chastises them. Yet he never forsakes them.

In chapter 30, the Lord announces that despite the frailty and wickedness of the human heart, he will one day restore and renew it. The Lord acknowledges that even though the Israelites will reject him (30:1), he will still be merciful and bless them (30:2–5). In an incredible proclamation, Moses declares that one future day, "The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live" (30:6). Although humanity has desired only evil since the fall, in this passage the Lord announces through Moses that one day, he will fix this problem.

Just as the Israelites longed for the day when God's chosen Offspring would come in victory, here we learn that they also longed for the day when the problem of sin would be dealt with decisively. They anticipated a time when the stubbornness, wickedness, and foolishness of the human heart would forever be changed by the all-powerful, gracious, merciful, and compassionate God.

Ultimately, the Pentateuch ends in a manner quite similar to how it began. Just as the Lord set Adam and Eve in a garden and gave them a choice, he likewise sets the Israelites in a fertile land and offers them

a choice: *Will you trust me? Will you honor me? Will you follow me? Will you rejoice in my commands and enjoy true fellowship with me?*

Conclusion

Beginning in Genesis, the Pentateuch traces the storyline of Scripture from the creation of the world to Israel's entrance into the Promised Land. In the final chapter of Deuteronomy, we find the nation Israel standing on the plains of Moab, waiting to enter the land that was sworn "to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" hundreds of years prior (34:4). Deuteronomy ends on a note of anticipation:

Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (34:10–12).

When will this prophet like Moses come? It was, after all, Moses who announced, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him" (18:15; cf. 18:18). The Pentateuch does not give us an answer. Rather, it leaves the reader anticipating this Prophet's arrival. From beginning to end, the hope of the Pentateuch is that God's promised Offspring will destroy evil, restore creation, and make the way for God to dwell with his people forever.

2



The Writings: Anticipated Hope

Picking up where the Pentateuch leaves off, this chapter encompasses the historical books of the Old Testament plus Psalms and the Wisdom books. In so doing, it offers a broad survey of Israel's theological interpretation of major events such as the conquest of the Promised Land, the rise and fall of the Davidic monarchy, the exile to Babylon, and the return to Israel. This history was not simply informational to the original audience but motivational that God's people would walk with God as they waited for him to fulfill his promises to them. This chapter demonstrates the Lord's consistent faithfulness to his people and the progressive expectation of his cataclysmic intervention in history as God works to bring about his ever-expectant hope for his people.

What the Israelites had longed for in the Pentateuch is partially realized in the book of **Joshua**. In this book, Joshua, God's chosen protégé of Moses, led Israel to begin possession of the Promised Land that God had sworn to his people (Num 15:2). Now God would dwell with his peo-