Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q58. What is the Old Covenant?**

The Old Covenant was a temporary covenant made primarily with Israelites and was defined by the Abrahamic Covenant, conditioned by the Mosaic Covenant, and focused by the Davidic Covenant. This covenant offered temporary blessings but did not offer eternal life. Through promises, types, and shadows, it taught about the Messiah, who was to come to fulfill the law, establish the New Covenant, and redeem the elect.

**Genesis 17:1-2** When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”

**Deuteronomy 11:26-28** “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.”

**James 2:10** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

**Hebrews 10:1** (NASB) For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near

(Further study: Hebrews 8:4-5; Romans 4:2-3, 13, 16; Acts 4:12; Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18–21; 17:1-14; 22:16-18; Exodus 19-24; 2 Samuel 7)

* **Introduction**

In this lesson we conclude our brief study of the Old Covenant by looking at the Davidic Covenant and consider some other Old Covenant facts and happenings.

Keep in mind, again, that *A divine covenant is a relational agreement initiated by God that may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him.*

* **The Davidic Covenant**

As we have seen the last two lessons, the WoTC Old Covenant Q and A says ...

**Q58. What is the Old Covenant?**

The Old Covenant was a temporary covenant made primarily with Israelites and was defined by the Abrahamic Covenant, conditioned by the Mosaic Covenant, and focused by the Davidic Covenant. This covenant offered temporary blessings but did not offer eternal life. Through promises, types, and shadows, it taught about the Messiah, who was to come to fulfill the law, establish the New Covenant, and redeem the elect.

Our answer tells us “The Old Covenant…was focused by the Davidic Covenant.” That is our first primary topic tonight.

* **The history that gets us to the Davidic Covenant**

The story of David’s rise to the throne of Israel is found in 1 Samuel 16 through 2 Samuel 7. But before we get into that, we let’s consider a bit of the history—the context.

In the past Old Covenant interactions, God told Israel that He would give them kings. For example, God told Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 17 that kings would come from them. This promise was shaped and narrowed as time went on. So, Abraham’s line anticipated the formal establishment of Israelite kingship.

As we considered last week, the Mosaic Covenant thoroughly laid out for the people of the Abrahamic Covenant the laws they were to follow and the rewards and curses at stake.

The Mosaic Covenant conditioned and governed everything for the people, especially in regard to the *living in the land* they were striving for.

But where we left off last lesson, this chosen earthy people of God were not yet settled into the land that God had promised. As soon as the Mosaic Covenant was established, the Israelites broke the covenant. So, God poured out curses upon a generation by killing them in the wilderness—however, God did not kill all of Abraham’s descendants because His promises to Abraham had not yet been fulfilled.

While the Israelite people ongoingly proved to be foolish and disobedient, God’s promises to Abraham held back the full curse of the covenant. Eventually, under Joshua and Caleb, Israel entered the land of Canaan, obtaining the promised land inheritance from God.

At last, the earthly people of God now dealt on land promised to Abraham!

However, since the Old Covenant did not offer or produce new hearts in the people of the covenant, their floundering and foolishness continued even in the great land of Canaan. A new generation arose that grew up in the land—and they were lazy and idolatrous.

We see in the Old Testament text that there was not lasting peace in their land due to their sin. While God gave them judges, and they were a blessing to the people of Israel, the judges were insufficient compared to what true kingship could offer.

Due to the people’s sin, God allowed outside forces to afflict them. They were now in the land, but disobedient to the covenant so they were afflicted and oppressed. The laws of God were neglected and for that the people suffered. There was not peace, prosperity, or unity, instead, as Scripture says, “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (****Judges 17:6, 21:25****)*.

They needed a human king to rule them according to God’s law, but before God put in place a king of His wise choosing, the people impatiently demanded a king. This fleshly demand was especially problematic because the *kind of* king they demanded was not of the kind they needed.

They weren’t seeking a king who would lead them according to God’s law. Their foolish ways and foolish judgment meant they sought a king who was not a man after God’s own heart.

In 1 Samuel 8 we read about their demands—they sinfully asked for a king who would “**19**… be a king over us, **20***that we also may be like all the nations,* and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles” (**1 Samuel 8:19-20**).

They wanted to be like the world—*they wanted a king like the wicked nations had*—they thought living under that kind of reign was superior to living under God’s law. They longed to *put off* God’s reign and laws *to conform to* the ways of the world around them.

Pause here for a bit of personal application: The pride of putting off God’s reign and laws unto doing what is right in one’s own eyes has been the doom of man since the garden.

But, it is easy to see it in others, such as with Adam or the Israelites, and miss the opportunity to let the truth of God analyze *each of us*.

This same foolishness is what you and I struggle with every day. When we live according to broken thoughts or feelings—when we live according to the ways of the world—we are committing this very same sin.

But, may *this testimony* of Scripture today be used by God to convict and grow each of us. Let us long for the rule of King Jesus in all things. Let us truly seek to submit to all His word says for us.

Now, back to our context consideration…

God permitted the Israelites what they demanded unto Saul being named the first king of Israel. But Saul’s rule was broken from the start and proved to be a failure over time. While there were occasions of apparent prosperity and protection, Saul led the people not in the laws of God but in the ways of fallen, broken, prideful man. Therefore, in God’s timing, Saul and his influence would eventually fall from rule.

It was now time for God to bring about the king of *His choosing*, that is, David. In 1 Samuel 16, David is shown to be God’s chosen one for appointment to kingship. In the proceeding chapters of Scripture, we can read of David’s official appointment to the throne and success in driving out all of the enemies from the land, according to the sovereign hand of God.

* **The Davidic Covenant declared**

The covenant of our focus tonight is that which God makes with David.

It is primarily detailed in 2 Samuel 7.

Although the word or label of covenant is not found in this section of verses, Scripture elsewhere does refer to this as a covenant. For example, looking back on this, David speaks to the covenant that God made with him in 2 Samuel 23:5, and it is also specified as a covenant in Psalm 89:3.

Let’s read the key verses from 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

**2 Samuel 7:1-17**

**1**Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, **2**the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” **3**And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

**4**But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, **5**“Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? **6**I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. **7**In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’ **8**Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. **9**And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. **10**And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, **11**from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. **12**When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13**He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. **14**I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, **15**but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. **16**And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’” **17**In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

In this passage we see covenant terms—offerings and implications.

Sam Renihan writes, “Verse 16 states that David’s house, kingdom, and throne will be established and made sure. The kingship of Israel is not founded on the people’s desire to free themselves from God, as with Saul, but on God’s commitment to establish the throne of David. The stability of the throne of David becomes the stability of the entire nation. They can look to the king and see God’s appointed and anointed king, God’s chosen one whose throne will be established by God himself. It was God’s promise, God’s commitment.”

In the stablishing of this covenant, the earthy implications are that the earthly Davidic king was to reflect the righteous rule *of the divine King* and the earthly king was to lead Israel in the faithful observance of the Old Covenant law.

As we have being saying throughout this study, the Old Covenant includes the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants.

Here now, see the unity and building upon from one to the next. The Abrahamic Covenant promised a specific land to a specific people for an earthly kingdom. The Mosaic Covenant provided the law of the kingdom. And now, the Davidic Covenant provides the human kings for the earthly kingdom—to rule the people of the Abrahamic Covenant according to the law of the Mosaic Covenant. *All of this makes up the Old Covenant.*

* **The covenant rewards/blessings**

So, what were the Davidic Covenant rewards at stake for them?

We considered in our prior Old Covenant lessons that the Abrahamic Covenant defined an earthly people, with the offer of earthly rewards—earthly benefits. And the Mosaic Covenant dealt with these same people and rewards.

In alignment with that, see that *the people* of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants were the same, so was *the offer of blessed earthy life in the land of Canaan* the same. In the Davidic Covenant we see God expand upon what the blessed life they would experience with Old Covenant obedience would be. In the 2 Samuel 7 passage we find the offer of security and rest in the promised land for the people of the Old Covenant, *and, better yet, that God would dwell with them*—giving further special care and attention among them.

While God had given them the land—they *were now* dwelling there—the finalizing of its complete establishment and a maintaining of it (and in it) was still anticipated. Still at stake was Abraham’s line **perpetually** *staying, living, and thriving in* the promised land with the blessed presence of God.

* **“A” covenant of works**

And, like we’ve seen already in the Old Covenant, this would happen through obedience. In the Davidic Covenant, God gave promises to David and his descendants and he obligated them to obey the laws of the Old Covenant. In the covenant, God threatened discipline and punishment for covenant breaking. We see this in 2 Samuel 7:14, as well as when Solomon spoke in 1 Kings 8:

**1 Kings 8:25-26**

**25**Now therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, *saying*, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.’ **26**Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.

The covenantal requirement for obedience is spoken of as well in:

**Psalm 132:11-12**

**11**The Lord swore to David a sure oath
    from which he will not turn back:
“One of the sons of your body
    I will set on your throne.
**12**If your sons keep my covenant
    and my testimonies that I shall teach them,
*their sons also forever*
    shall sit on your throne.”

It should be clear. David and his sons must keep the terms of the covenant—they must obey God’s law. If they do, they will perpetually thrive and have an earthy throne to rule from, if they do not, they will be disciplined, even punished. In the Davidic Covenant, if Abraham’s line keeps the Mosaic Covenant, they enjoy the rewards/blessings of the Old Covenant—but if they disobey, the receive the Old Covenant curses.

What we have here, as David understood, and Solomon interpreted correctly as well, is a **covenant of works**. When a covenant requires obedience to law or commands of those covenanted with in order to receive the rewards it offers, it as “*a* covenant of works” to them.

Since it was in the Old Covenant with requirements to obey in order to receive the rewards, we can see that the Davidic Covenant, therefore, is not a covenant of grace; it is most certainly a covenant of works.

Building upon and reiterating the rewards and curses at stake in the prior covenants of the Old Covenant, they had to obey correctly and perpetually to fully *and continually* enjoy the covenant benefits.

* **The Old Covenant was focused** **by the Davidic Covenant**

Note as well, now in the Davidic Covenant, an extra emphasis of obedience *is placed on the king himself*. The Davidic Covenant establishes David and his sons, (the heirs of his throne), as a kind of federal headship in the kingdom. This is one way the Old Covenant was focused by the Davidic Covenant.

The Davidic king needed, (as we see in the passages cited above), to walk righteously according to God’s law. In this, the Davidic king was representing the people of the covenant. That means the king’s obedience or disobedience had heightened and significant consequences for those the king ruled over in the promised land.

The Davidic king was particularly tasked to construct the dwelling place of the Lord (the temple) and guard it. He was required to know, obey, and uphold for the people of the covenant all of God’s Old Covenant law (male circumcision and the other positive laws and the eternal moral law). And the Davidic king was to lead the people well according to his role of God appointed ruler of the promised land.

Righteousness in the king equaled blessing in the land, while wickedness equaled curses upon the people and their land. 1 Kings 9:4-9 (not reading for sake of time) is a helpful passage in seeing this reality, as the events we can read about in the books of Kings and Chronicles put this on display.

* + **One Old Covenant made up of three covenants**

Renihan has as great summary of things when he says, “With the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants put together we can clearly see the kingdom of Israel in full. It is what it is because of these covenants by which it was established and through which it was governed. They all have the same parties, precepts, promises, and penalties. They are all directed to Abraham's offspring in the land of Canaan. Abraham's federal headship continues to define the people in view in this kingdom. Abraham's inheritance of Canaan continues to determine the boundaries of the kingdom. The Mosaic Covenant simply expands on the obligations of the people in that land. And the Davidic Covenant focuses the kingdom into one person through whom obedience must be rendered, and through whom blessings and curses will fall on the nation. But the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants do not extend any further than the initial scope set down in the Abrahamic Covenant. In order to enjoy a blessed life in Canaan, God's covenant must be kept.

This is why the Old Covenant includes the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants. Moses controls Abraham and David. The Mosaic Covenant is the most prominent covenant in the Old Testament because it controls whether you enjoy Abraham's covenant and it stands over the Davidic kings who must copy and keep the law. It is impossible to refer only to the Mosaic Covenant when speaking of the Old Covenant because it unavoidably brings along with it the two other covenants that it controls. This argument is clear ...

The kingdom of the Abrahamic Covenant established and governed is the same as that which was further established and governed by the Mosaic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant. In sum, the old covenant governs the kingdom of Israel. It includes the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant.”

Those are very helpful and important points. We have been saying for weeks that the one Old Covenant made up of three covenants. I hope you can see that clearly now. The three Old Covenant covenants ultimately all have the same parties, rules, rewards, and penalties.

* + **The Messiah to come specifically from David’s line**

Now, before we wrap up our brief look at the Davidic Covenant, there is something of the upmost importance happening here as well. The most important thing about the Davidic Covenant is how it focuses the Old Covenant in regard to it serving to bring about the Covenant of Redemption Messiah promised to Abraham (and even before in Genesis 3:15). It would be through the line of Davidic king that God’s promise of blessing to the *nations* would be accomplished. When God said to David in 2 Samuel 7:16, "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure before me forever," He ultimately had in view a house and a kingdom much greater than that of ethnic Israel—there was a spiritual promise repeated to the Davidic line. God was declaring that the Messiah would come *specifically from David’s line*, and this Messiah would be the better and final King—a forever King over a diverse people from all nations. This is the most significant way the Old Covenant was focused by the Davidic Covenant.

Like the other covenants of the Old Covenant, the Davidic Covenant is a *step* towards something else still to come—something not like the earthly temporary Old Covenant, something definitively different and better—something with eternal rewards offered.

Remember, the promise that God made in Genesis 3 and repeated to Abraham must be fulfilled. That promise rests in the great unchanging plan of God, decreed before time began. That decree was covenanted between the three Persons of the triune God, who do not change. All of creation is set in the context of God’s eternal plan.

So, God shows in this Davidic Covenant that it is through David’s line that He will see through that promise, that plan, that decree, *that* trinitarian covenant.

All of this is happening to bring about and show how we get to the chosen One who establishes The Covenant of Grace—the New Covenant.

* **God did what He promised—Jesus, the son of David, the son of Abraham**

And surely, we see the fulfillment of this further step when indeed Jesus came.

(We’ll peer ahead for a moment into our next few lessons since it’s a great opportunity here to see God’s work.)

We see that God’s promise of Abraham’s seed is accomplished.

We see God’s even more focused promise of the Messiah coming from specifically David’s line within Abraham’s line is accomplished.

Matthew 1:1, for example, tells us…

**Matthew 1:1**

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

This is awesome! This is like God saying, “I did what I promised.”

Matthew’s gospel book is written primarily with a Jewish audience in mind. So, God inspiring Him to open this way is a *huge declaration* right from the get-go. He’s saying the plan to bring about the Messiah through Abraham’s family line was done *as promised*. The Old Covenant’s purpose of stepping the story towards The Covenant of Grace—the New Covenant—has worked.

Listen to a portion of the Apostle Paul’s preaching from Acts 13.

In this you should hear what we have seen and studied in the last three lessons *summarized*.

**Acts 13:16-23**

**16**So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:

“Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. **17**The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. **18**And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. **19**And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. **20**All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. **21**Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. **22**And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ **23**Of this man's offspring [of David’s offspring] God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.”

WOW!!! God did what He decreed to do and what He has been promising all along: Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, the seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15.

Hopefully in this you are seeing the connections, and the bringing about of the great plan of redemption!

Now, while there is much more we could say and see in Scripture about the Davidic Covenant, we need to begin to wrap up our study of the Old Covenant and prepare to see the New Covenant in our following lessons.

* **Promises, types, and shadows taught about the Messiah**

The line we have not yet *directly* discussed of our Word Of Truth Old Covenant catechism answer is that, “Through promises, types, and shadows [the Old Covenant] taught about the Messiah, who was to come to fulfill the law, establish the New Covenant, and redeem the elect.”

We’ve been hitting on this reality throughout these past few lessons, but I need to stress how important this is.

The Old Covenant was not the goal; it was an instrument used by God to put many things on display and bring about the different, better, and final covenant.

I want to take a moment to explain this part of the answer a bit further.

We’ve discussed ***promises*** *that stretched beyond the Old Covenant*, such as the promise to Abraham about his Offspring and the promise to David about his Offspring. Abraham was promised a real physical line, but more importantly he was promised the Messiah would come from his line. David was promised a real physical line of kings, but more importantly, he was promised the King of kings would come from him. So, we have promise realties that are of eternal importance and stretch past the Old Covenant for the benefit of the eternally chosen ones of God. These were not covenant benefits they had to earn, rather, these promises were planned realities God was certain to see through.

There were **shadows** in Old Covenant. Shadows are mere representations of better things—shadows are not permanent. Shadows are things that dimly show something else, something in anticipation. Such as, the places the priests ministered in were shadows of heavenly places and the things the priests ministered were shadows of the spiritual things of Christ. And we’re told in Hebrews 10:1 that, “the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.” The Old Covenant law foreshadowed—it dimly represented—the goodness, purity, and holiness of Christ and the work He would accomplish for true eternal redemption of the people He came to save.

And we’ve talked before that there are **types** in Old Covenant. A type is the thing foreshadowing something to come, the antitype. Types are not the antitype, but a picture of the antitype.

The Old Covenant was a typological covenant with typological people for typological life and typological blessing in the typological promised land of Canaan.

Consider these examples:

The Old Covenant heads were types, pointing to the One who would come as the flawless Head of a New Covenant.

The Old Covenant setting apart a particular earthly group was a type, pointing to the setting apart of the true spiritual people of God.

The physical land of Canaan promised in the Old Covenant was a type, pointing to the land still to come of the new creation to be enjoyed by Christ and His New Covenant people.

The exodus from slavery in the Old Covenant was a type, pointing to the greater deliverance from bondage experienced by those who God saves for eternity by the New Covenant.

The priests of the Old Covenant were a type, pointing to the great High Priest of the New Covenant, Christ Jesus.

The sacrificial system in the Old Covenant was a type, pointing to the greater sacrifice of Christ Jesus in the flesh.

The Passover in the Old Covenant was a type, pointing to the ultimate forgiveness of sin through Christ Jesus alone.

The victories and protection had by David in the Old Covenant were a type, pointing to the ultimate victory and protection had in his Offspring, Christ Jesus.

There are many examples of Old Covenant types—the types of this *type-antitype dynamic* are all throughout in the Old Covenant.

I mentioned before but to say again here: In the Old Testament, Christ is taught about in large part through types—though in mystery form, He is certainly revealed through types. Christ, His work, and His blessings where a mystery—a shadow—in the Old Covenant. Yet, declared sufficiently whereby all who saw the truth of and put their trust in the coming Messiah, were saved eternally—not by the Old Covenant, but by the person and work of New Covenant to come who was promised by God and foreshowed in the Old Testament.

Renihan says of these things, “The kingdom of Israel and its covenants were typical shadows of Christ, the substance. As types, they were their own entity serving their own purposes in their own context. Yet also as types, they pointed upward and onward to something greater than themselves. The promises of the prophets contributed a great deal to pushing the Israelite hopes beyond their present situation to something more ideal, something more perfect, something more permanent.

Yet, for all the quantity of revelation given to Israel, it was given through the mode of mystery and the medium of typology.”

These promises, types, and shadows are all over the Old Testament, and the better we can identify and understand them, the more we’ll get out of the word.

Ok, next I want touch briefly on some additional points about the Old Covenant.

* **God gave ethnic Israel earthy benefits**

First point: **God gave ethnic Israel earthy benefits.**

It must be noted in this study that God did in fact give ethnic Israel the Promised Land and other benefits of the Old Covenant. Look at…

**Joshua 21:43-45**

**43**Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. **44**And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. **45**Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

**1 Kings 4:20**

**20**Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy.

See in our study that God gave ethnic Israel land, rest and protection, kings, and multiplied them greatly.

For a time, they had rest on every side and enjoyed the blessing of being God’s covenant people. They multiplied and had earthly prosperity on the physical promised land.

Promises God made to Abraham and the others in the Old Covenant were kept and realized to the fullest extent when God caused the Davidic people to defeat all of Israel’s enemies and God dealt in their midst in Solomon’s temple.

In this, God is displaying His goodness as He gave earthy benefits. This is very significant. We must not disregard this reality. Earthly promises God made were kept and Abraham’s line experienced great, great blessings according to the plan of God.

* **Ethnic Israel broke the covenant**

But……... As we have stated, to *have or remain* in the benefits of the Old Covenant, those of Abraham’s line had to remain in obedience and submission to the terms of the covenant. See this so clearly in 1 Kings 9:6-8:

**1 Kings 9:6-8**

**6**…if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, **7**then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. **8**And this house will become a heap of ruins…

God makes this clear over and over in the Old Testament Old Covenant passages. “*Obey and live, or don’t obey and be cursed*.” In order to maintain in the covenantal blessings and gifts, the covenant people *needed to correctly and perpetually obey* the terms of the covenant. They needed to keep the law *ongoingly*. Once in the promised land, the extent to which they kept the law would be the extent to which they earned their stay in the promised land.

To their demise, Abraham’s line repeated in disobedience and covenant failure over and over. The covenant people fell terribly short of living according to the requirements of the Old Covenant. We saw blatant sin that they struggled with, we saw them complaining and demanding things of God, we saw them conforming to the world around them, and we saw them not trusting God’s word and the paths that He was taking them on. Ultimately, we saw them turn to idolatry—to what was wise in their own eyes.

AW Pink says of them, “*the law was despised, discipline was neglected, self-will and self-pleasing was rampant; and consequently, famines, pestilences, and wars frequently became their portion.”* “*In no way did Israel as a nation conduct themselves as the beloved, called, and redeemed people of God. They rendered not to the moral law the obedience which it required, and the mercies of the ceremonial law they perverted to God’s dishonor and their own spiritual undoing.”*

 To this God issued serious rebukes and hard words towards them, such as in:

**Amos 5:12**

**12** For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins…

**Jeremiah 2:19**

**19**Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord God of hosts.

**Hosea 9:1**

**1** Rejoice not, O Israel! Exult not like the peoples; for you have played the whore, forsaking your God.

God says they acted like a whore, like an adulterous bride. Those are serious words.

At times, God used marriage *metaphors* when speaking of His relationship with ethnic Israel in the Old Covenant. This was to display the special place He had put them by choosing them to be His Old Covenant people. It highlighted a heightened care He had for them.

But don’t over apply the metaphors—unlike real marriage, God was not in an unbreakable relationship with ethnic Israel (for the Old Covenant was decreed to be temporary and it was a CoW). The Old Covenant *did* place them in a unique relationship that *did* require marriage-like *faithfulness* from within Israel, but it was *not* the unbreakable union the spiritually redeemed have with Christ.

This Old Covenant marriage language further reveals them as a *type* pointing to God’s eternal chosen ones who are called the true bride of Jesus. It is not the same thing. Type-antitype.

In the testimony of Scripture, we can see clearly that the people of the Old Covenant were not faithful to the covenant that they were in with God. They broke the covenant, **and that meant they had no right to any of the works-based rewards offered in the covenant.** This is really important.

Because of their sin, God didn’t have to give them any covenantal blessing that was conditioned by law keeping.

But as we know, God is merciful, *and* He had a bigger plan that He was working. So, God treated Israel better than they deserved in many ways. For example, think about the patience He had time and time again in all the occasions of their sinful foolishness and outright disobedience—God would have been justified to enact the covenant curses much sooner and more harshly then He often did. Also, think about the fact that God even gave them ways to temporarily atone for certain sins in the OC sacrificial system.

God was patient and merciful as He called them back, over and over, away from their disobedience, instead of immediately cutting them off. He forbore much of their sin and kept moving the ultimate plan ahead.

The most important thing God gave as a blessing to them was that He always sought to find a people in the Old Covenant who He would not cut off in order to preserve the ethnic line until Christ came, and this is critical since this was the people that He chose to bring the Messiah through. Prior to the arrival of Christ, God maintained the Old Covenant and ethnic Israel was not crushed to the point of nonexistence. Many threats came against them, many did get cut off by God, but God always preserved a remnant.

* **The** **Old Covenant people were eventually *fully and finally* cursed**

But as their wickedness continued the Old Covenant people were eventually *fully and finally* cursed.Their work—their choices—their sin—earned the payment of curses.

2 Kings 17:7-20 is a powerful passage that puts on display God’s verdict and putting away of Israel because they didn’t obey the terms of the Old Covenant even after receiving mercy upon mercy. Verse 20 says:

**2 Kings 17:20**

…the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

Continuing with the marriage metaphor God used to symbolically speak of the happenings and relationship with ethnic Israel, God says this in…

**Jeremiah 3:8**

for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce…

Metaphorically, God divorced them. Israel broke the covenant, so God truly cut them off.

Despite God’s mercy to Judah, they too broke the covenant and God promised to cut them off as well. We see this judgement declared in

**2 Kings 23:27**

**27**And the Lord said, “I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.”

Judah broke the Old Covenant and was fully liable for its curses, so God would not remain with them in Old Covenant relationship—in His timing, He would cut them off and abolish the Old Covenant. This is yet another way the Old Covenant was proven to not God’s plan for salvation.

The Old Covenant began to fade away in Old Testament times, until eventually, many years later, being abolished altogether—that occurred after Christ came.

To summarize what has happened to get things here and what is happening in these curses, we must see that God would not pour out all of the Mosaic curses upon Abraham’s line before all God intended to do through them was fulfilled. Once the land promise was fulfilled, the remaining promise of the Messiah's birth was narrowed to the line of David—the tribe of Judah. The kingdom was divided into the 10 tribes of Israel and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The 10 tribes of Israel received the Mosaic curses—they were cut off. Judah was spared for a time, "for the sake of David,"—that is, the promise that the Messiah would be born from the line of David. But, after the promise of the Messiah was fulfilled, the full curse of the Mosaic covenant was also poured out upon Judah as well, and the Old Covenant was done away with.

Therefore…because the Old Covenant is abolished, being of ethnic descent from Israel no longer, *in and of itself*, means *anything unique* in relation to God and covenant with God.

* + **Dispensationalism: A broken system with wrong hermeneutics**

I stress this because this has become a major point of misunderstanding, especially popularized in the last couple hundred years. **Wrong approaches** of Bible interpretation have come about that deny what Christians have taught and understood on these things in prior centuries, for example contradicting the main Christian confessions.

One of these newer systems is called Dispensationalism. This modern belief of Dispensationalism misses or denies much of what we have seen here. Dispensationalism seeks to interpret Scripture differently than the historic Christian confessions on some of these things and that is driven by or produces a conclusion of the thinking that ethnic Israel *remains* special and is separate from non-Israelite believers.

Dispensationalism has two primary distinctives:

First, rather than rightly recognizing and interpreting the various forms of language used in Scripture such as literal, figurative, symbolic, anthropomorphic, analogies, prophetic idiom, et cetera, dispensationalism claims to take a literalistic interpretation of Scripture, especially in Bible prophecy.

Hopefully you are seeing in these lessons (and will continue to see) how proper interpretation of Scripture is needed.

And second, rather than seeing that God has had *one* spiritual people chosen for salvation from every tribe, tongue, and nation from all of eternity, Dispensationalism has a view that God has two spiritual peoples, seeing the Gentile elect *as separate from* ethnic Israel.

In a coming lesson we will see didactive passages in Scripture that inform us that God has one spiritual people, not two separate groups.

I light of all we have seen in this study, certainly dispensationalism is not where we’re at. We’re with the historic confessional Christians on these things. Dispensationalism has become popular in recent years, even being adopted by many without knowing the historic and confessional view—but we’re with the Christians of old.

* + **There is no longer any special national groups or lands**

Remember the threat of curse God laid out in many times, such as:

**1 Kings 9:6-8**

**6**…if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, **7**then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. **8**And this house will become a heap of ruins…

To answer some of dispensationalism errors, we see clearly in Scripture that Abraham’s line repeated in disobedience and covenant failure over and over, so, God ended the covenant relationship (Hebrews 8:9 & 13). Therefore, because the Old Covenant has been abolished, being of ethnic descent from Israel no longer, *in and of itself*, means *anything unique* in relation to God, covenant with God, or special benefits.

Spiritually, God’s people are from every tongue, tribe, and nation. The Covenant of Redemption and New Covenant inform us that God is concerned about His *chosen worldwide people*, not certain nations.

The unbiblical notion of elevating ethnic Israel or seeing them as still special in God’s eyes is not limited to only self-proclaimed dispensationalists. Others deny or don’t know what the Bible says on these things, so it’s important that this clarity is made in these lessons.

Horizontally, the nation of/the people of ethnic Israel should be loved and treated in the same way we would *any other nation or people group*. Ethnic Israelites are not more or less important than anyone else in the world. It is not more biblical to elevate ethnic/national Israel in New Covenant times. To do so is a misunderstanding of covenant, biblical realties.

In this, no person should take a sinful stance of pride, *nor* have ethnic defined partiality towards any specific ethnicities or nations. All humans are made in God’s image and we are called to love others justly. Let us love all our neighbors in the biblical way and see that *no nation* is superior than any other.

Additionally, see that, in light of the Old Covenant being abolished, Abraham’s line has no special or remaining covenantal claim to any earthly land, or any other covenant blessing that was offered in the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant (that offered special blessings to them) was done away with.

Abraham’s line did not earn the right to stay in the land of Canaan, so a cruse of the covenant was such that they no longer have a covenantal claim to Canaan *or any other land.*

What once was called “holy land” was *made common* by the abolishment of the Old Covenant and the formal establishment of the New Covenant *worldwide* reign of Christ.

The land that ethnic Israel had for time in the Old Covenant is no longer holy land—that land should be seen as any other land.

And, let us note, the true spiritual people of God—*the elect—*have a glorious *eternal land* (the *antitypical* “holy land”) awaiting us. It is not the land of Canaan on this broken earth. No, our eternal land of milk and honey (so to speak) has not come yet.

Therefore, on this first creation, there is no longer any special lands *or* national groups.

Despite what some people say, such as many modern politicians, the *post-Old Covenant* nation of Israel is not, (for biblical reasons), of special importance compared to other nations of the world. We should interact with the nation as we would any other.

Now,

* **God never fails**

In all of this talk of Old Covenant failure, let us note that the disobedience of the Old Covenant people was not *God failing*. No, the broken covenant was actually a part of His perfect, preordained plan to *display the need for and to take us to the Messiah and New Covenant*. Let’s not be mistaken there. AW Pink again:

“*There is no failure with the Most High, no breakdown in His plan, no thwarting of His imperial will. The very failure of Israel only served to [promote] the divine purpose, for it demonstrated the imperative need of something superior to that which Judaism, as such, supplied, and reserved for Christ the honor of bringing in that which is perfect.*”

Despite all the brokenness and failure in the covenant people, God preserved a remnant of Abraham’s line. He did not do this for never-ending physical covenantal blessings (they no longer have any claim to the broken covenant’s earthly rewards), but due to the spiritual promise still yet to be born in that time—that is the Messiah to come from Abraham and David’s line. Praise God for His eternal, unfailing plan.

* **Prophetic Idiom**

In fact, as found in the Old Testament books of Prophecy, God promises several times in a variety of different ways that He had yet to complete a mighty work for “Israel.” Since God used ethnic Israel as a shadow of His eternal chosen ones, the way He speaks about Israel in the Old Testament is sometimes not about the ethnic hearers of content, but for/about the true eternal people of God.

Prophetic Idiom is used often in Scripture. Prophetic Idiom is a form of speech in prophecy whereby *familiar names, terms, and concepts are used to speak of something else*, perhaps, something to come.

With this clarity, one is better suited to make correct interpretations of prophetic Scripture. For example, what God is declaring in Ezekiel 36 is not a promise to ethnic Israel as a whole, rather it is a promise to the eternal people of God made up of people from all nations:

**Ezekiel 36:22, 25-27**

**22**“Therefore say to the house of Israel ... **25**I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. **26**And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27**And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

This glorious truth about regeneration/redemption/salvation is a New Covenant benefit only for those chosen in the Covenant of Redemption. In passages like these, we must see that God is using the title of Israel to teach about the antitypical, eternal people of God.

We’ll consider how He does this further in a future lesson.

Being able to spot Prophetic Idiom in the Old Testament is very important to understanding some key portions of the Old Testament correctly. Prophetic Idiom is often used to speak to spiritual/eternal blessings in the Old Testament time—blessings the New Covenant provides. Like the forming of the eternal people of God, the beauty of eternal redemption, the new creation to come (the new “holy land”), and so on.

* **Only one way to be saved**

As we complete our main consideration of the Old Covenant, we need to stress again how a person in any time of human history can be redeemed. As I hope you see so clearly by now, there is one answer to this which is based off the Covenant of Redemption, because of an unchangeable God, because of an unbreakable eternal promise. Salvation has always been by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

In our time after Jesus’ death, we look back to the finished work of Jesus for salvation. But before Jesus came, they looked forward to the person and work of Jesus for salvation. Same Jesus, same one way to salvation. There has never been any other way. The New Covenant worked in time and space even before it was formally established.

Remember, the gospel was made public right at the fall, so humans had the information required for faith in the Messiah to come. And this same gospel was additionally revealed and promised all through the Old Testament.

That’s all we have time for in this lesson.

But, again, the story doesn’t end here. The most important part is still coming.

Through all the ups and downs of the Old Covenant, God is setting the stage for the incredible Messiah to come, to do His Covenant of Redemption work in order to establish the New Covenant.

We have lots ahead stull in this series, and we hope you are learning a lot, unto a heightened worship of God.

Since we’re out of time, we won’t close with additional application tonight—but I trust you have plenty of content here to consider, know, and apply.

Let’s pray…

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See you next week.