

Bible Overview

The Redemption of Humanity and Creation

The Bible begins with how Yahweh created a good and orderly creation where He would dwell with humanity. However, humanity lost this good life with Yahweh in the Garden of Eden because of its rebellion against Yahweh. The Bible then develops Yahweh's choosing of the nation of Israel in order to work through them the redemption of humanity and creation back into a right relationship with Him so that they could dwell with Him in the garden for all eternity. This was fulfilled through His Son Jesus' death, resurrection, and enthronement over heaven and earth. Now through Him we have become the new Israel, can have life with Yahweh, and one day will live in the Garden of Eden with Yahweh.

There are five major metanarratives that are woven throughout the biblical narrative. These metanarratives will be developed throughout this document.

- Yahweh is the sovereign and loving Creator and King of heaven and earth.
- Humans were created to be the image of God rooted in the land of blessing.
- Humans live in exile as sinners in rebellion against Yahweh.
- Israel is the chosen people whose purpose is to be a blessing to the nations.
- Yahweh is redeeming humanity and creation from their exile back into the garden.

Creation

The Bible begins by stating, "In the beginning God created the heavens (sky) and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This statement reveals that Yahweh has no origin story; He simply exists. The narrator goes on to show how Yahweh created everything that is in the sky (including the galaxies), land, and sea, demonstrating that He has ultimate authority and control over all things. In the pagan creation accounts, each of the gods were responsible for creating only a couple of things, and so their power was limited to those things. In contrast, Yahweh is the all-powerful, sovereign King over the universe.

The pre-created universe is described as formless and empty, covered in darkness, and a watery abyss (Gen. 1:1-2a). These descriptors are metaphors that describe a lifeless chaos (disorder) that existed before Yahweh created and ordered the creation, and then filled it with life. It is Yahweh's reversal of the state of these three descriptors that brings about the creation of the universe.

First, He undoes the watery chaos. "...But the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the water" (Gen. 1:2b-3). The chaotic "water" (*tehom*) of Gen. 1:2 is subdued into the life-giving "water" (*mayim*) of Gen. 1:2b by the "spirit/wind" (*ruach*) of Yahweh. Second, Yahweh removed the darkness, in which no life can exist, by speaking His light into the universe (Gen. 1:3-5). Third, Yahweh formed the light, the sky, the waters, and the land (days 1-3) and then filled those things with the sun, moon, and stars, birds, fish, animals, and humans (days 4-6) (Gen. 1:3-31). Unlike the pagan gods, Yahweh did not create out of the chaos; rather He subdued the chaos and then ordered it into a life-giving creation through His word.

The focus and climax of all creation is the creation of humans. Yahweh made humans, male and female, as equals to one another, in His image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26-28).

“God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground’” (Gen. 1:27-28).

To be the image of God is to rule and subdue creation as Yahweh’s representative (Gen. 1:26, 27). Yahweh commanded the humans to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill all the earth. They were to multiply the image of Yahweh across the earth. Thus, humanity, as male and female, were to rule over creation as vice regents by maintaining the order and goodness of creation and to reflect the nature and character of Yahweh in creation.

On the seventh day, Yahweh entered into and rested in His creation (Gen. 2:3-4). The word *rest* means to cease from one’s work and to enjoy the goodness of what has been created. Yahweh declared everything good, meaning it was functioning the way it was designed to function.

Genesis 2 focuses on the creation of Adam (“man/humanity”) and Eve (“life”) and their placement in the Garden of Eden. The two most important things that Yahweh created were the land and humans. In the pagan accounts of creation, the first thing that appears out of the chaotic waters is a cosmic mountain where the gods live, above and separated from the humans. In the Biblical account, the cosmic mountain (land) is revealed by the separating of the subdued waters. It is on this mountain that Yahweh created the Garden of Eden and placed humans in the Garden in order to dwell with Him.

The Hebrew word for “man/human” is *adam*, and the word for “soil/land” is *adama*. The human (*adam*) was formed out of the soil (*adama*) and was placed in the land (*adama*) to rule over and subdue (Gen. 2:7). The soil (*adama*) would then bless the humans (*adam*) as they cultivated it. Therefore, Yahweh, as creator of both the land and humanity, has the authority to place humans in the land and also remove them from the land. This becomes the justification for everything Yahweh does with humanity and the land from this point on.

Yahweh then placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, which is portrayed as the tabernacle of Yahweh (Gen. 2:15-16). All creation is described as the tabernacle of Yahweh, and the Garden of Eden is like the Holy of Holies where Yahweh dwells. Thus, heaven and earth are joined together in the Garden of Eden. By placing Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden/tabernacle, they were able to dwell with Yahweh, and they served as high priests in addition to being rulers. Humans as the king-priest servants were to multiply and expand the garden into all of creation. Although Yahweh did not need humanity to create an orderly and good creation, He chose to invite humanity into a relationship with Him and gave them the power and the privilege of joining Him in ruling and subduing the creation.

Yahweh gave every tree in the garden to humanity to eat except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:16-17). This tree represented humanity’s choice between trusting and accepting Yahweh’s definition of good and evil or defining it for themselves. Sin is when we think our understanding is superior to Yahweh’s and when we desire to act contrary to the will of Yahweh and define truth for ourselves. We do what is good for ourselves even if it is at the expense of others. The test was whether humans would achieve this wisdom under Yahweh’s teaching or by their own autonomous means.

Understanding the nature of the Garden of Eden and the purpose of humans as the image of God is absolutely essential in understanding what was lost in the fall of humanity and creation (Gen.

3-11) and Yahweh redeeming humanity back to the fullness of the image of God and life in the Garden of Eden. Yahweh's plan redemption throughout the Bible is humanity's restoration back to the Garden of Eden.

The Fall of Humanity and Creation

Then the serpent, who opposed the will of Yahweh, entered the garden in order to bring chaos (Gen. 3:1-5). All throughout the ancient Near East and the Bible, the serpent is a symbol of chaos that threatens the order of creation. The serpent persuaded Adam and Eve to act contrary to and become autonomous from Yahweh and, in so doing, to define good and evil for themselves. Adam and Eve as rulers and subduers were meant to either redeem the serpent or drive the serpent out of the garden. Instead, they chose to embrace the chaos of the serpent by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 3:6-7).

When humanity rejected Yahweh's rule, they lost their intimate relationship with Him and the life and blessings that came with it. Because Yahweh cannot dwell with sin, they were cast out of the garden, eastward into exile. Thus, the kingdom of Yahweh/heaven and the kingdom of humanity/earth were torn apart. Humans lost their kingship and priesthood, and conflict and suffering entered into humanity's relationships with Yahweh, each other, and creation (Gen. 3:14-24). As a result of this separation from Yahweh all of humanity and creation was thrown into chaos, sin, and death.

Adam and Eve had many children, including Abel and Cain, despite the death that had been brought into creation (Gen. 4:1-18). Cain did not pursue Yahweh with all his heart; Abel did and thus received Yahweh's blessings. Cain was so jealous of this blessing that he was willing to kill his own brother, bringing destruction into the family. His actions showed that sin had infiltrated and corrupted the family of Adam and Eve. Yahweh judged Cain, and Cain moved eastward and built a city in his own image in rebellion against Yahweh. This was the beginning of the city/nation, which represents human power in rebellion against Yahweh. Cain's descendants continued to sin, some of them amassing wives like property and others fashioning counterfeit tools (Gen. 4:19-16). Thus, sin and separation from Yahweh resulted in a curse on the land being cursed (Gen. 3:17-19) and the eventual death of all humans (Gen. 5).

Later humans began to intermarry with the sons of God (supernatural beings) in order to replace Yahweh with new gods and gain power (Gen. 6:1-3). Humanity/society had become corrupted with sin, and Yahweh was grieved by the sin that had permeated His good creation (Gen. 6:5). As judgment for their sin, Yahweh cleansed creation of its defilement with the waters of creation (Gen. 6:6-7). Yet in His mercy, Yahweh preserved the righteous Noah and his family so that they could restart humanity in His cleansed creation (Gen. 8). After the flood, however, Noah got drunk and passed out. His son Ham saw Noah's nakedness and sought to denigrate his father (Gen. 9:20-28). This shows that humans went on sinning, because though the earth had been cleansed, the human heart had not (Gen. 9:18-29).

After the flood, humans moved eastward and built a great tower in the city of Babylon (Gen. 11:1-9). This Tower of Babylon was a symbol of their new unified government where they would ascend to godhood, exercise their own power over creation, and let their fame fill the earth. They had decided to multiply their own rebellious image rather than the image of Yahweh. To prevent the total chaos that this government would bring upon creation, Yahweh dismantled their government, confused their languages, and scattered them across the earth. At this point

humanity had officially established its own kingdom that stands in opposition to the Kingdom of Yahweh. Throughout the Bible Babylon is the symbolic name for the kingdom of humanity.

The point of Genesis 3–11 is that once the individuals are separated from Yahweh, then the family, society, and the governments and institutions they build all become corrupted. Yahweh gave humanity a good creation and kept giving them the chance to do what was right with His creation and expand His kingdom of blessing across the earth. Yet humans continually seized autonomy for themselves and brought tragedy and death to their lives and creation.

After the Tower of Babylon, Yahweh disinherited the nations. He would no longer rule directly over them and use them to work out His plan of redemption for humanity and creation. Instead, He divided up the nations under the rule of the Sons of God/angels (Deut. 32:8-9; 1 Sam. 26:17-19; 2 Kgs. 5:17-10; Dan. 10:13, 20-21; 12:1). Over time these Sons of God rebelled and seduced the nations into worshipping false gods who were opposed to Yahweh (Deut. 4:19; 17:2-3; 29:24-26; 32:8-9, 17).

The Family of Abraham (Israel)

The nation of Israel was not listed in the table of nations that were assigned to the Sons of God, for they did not exist yet (Gen. 10; Deut. 32:8-9). Yahweh came to Abraham, a nomad who was not a part of the nations, and called him to leave his pagan culture and family and follow Yahweh by faith (Gen. 12:1; Josh. 24:2-4).

“Now Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’” (Gen. 12:1-3).

Yahweh promised to give Abraham a land of his own (Garden of Eden), to make him into a great nation with numerous descendants (be fruitful and multiply), to bless him abundantly (the fruit of the land), and to use him as a blessing to the world (expand the garden) (Gen. 12:1-3). All these promises recall humanity’s connection with Yahweh and the land in the Garden of Eden. All these promises hinged on Yahweh providing a son to the barren Abraham and his wife Sarah (Gen. 11:30).

Yahweh chose Abraham and his descendants to be His new inheritance, the nation of Israel, so that they could be a blessing to the world (Gen. 12:3b). Yahweh was going to use Israel to gather the people of the nations back to Himself and restore them back to the Garden of Eden. By leaving their nations of origin and becoming part of the nation of Israel, they would become Yahweh’s inheritance once again. This is only possible through faith, which is the belief that the kingdom of Yahweh will come to earth, not by one’s own will and works but by the will and work of Yahweh.

Abraham responded in faith and over time grew in his knowledge and relationship with Yahweh, becoming a great man of faith. Yet three different times Abraham and Sarah threatened the promises of Yahweh. Two times Abraham gave Sarah away to other rulers by denying that she was his wife because he feared for his life (Gen. 12:10-20; 20). Sarah being with another man would threaten Yahweh’s promise of a child (Gen. 12:1; 15:4). And Sarah’s lack of patience in

Yahweh led her to give her maidservant Hagar to Abraham in order to have a child, which then caused grievous problems in the family (Gen. 16).

Yet despite this, Yahweh made His promises into an unconditional covenant with Abraham, known as the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15). Here He specified that He would give Abraham's descendants all the land between the El-Arish River in the Sinai Peninsula and the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18-19). The sign of this covenant was circumcision (Gen. 17). It was from the male and female reproductive organs that Yahweh would resurrect the womb of Sarah and bless Abraham with a child from whom Israel would come. This organ is the only organ in the body that produces both life (seed) and death (urine). Only if Abraham and his descendants were marked by Yahweh could they produce life and blessing instead of dead works. This idea of circumcision becomes important later when it is connected to the heart of humans.

Abraham eventually had a son by the name of Isaac (Gen. 21), and Isaac had twins named Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:19-26). Yahweh chose Jacob (Gen. 25:23-26; 28:10-15) and renamed him Israel (Gen. 32:27-28). Jacob did not trust Yahweh to give him the blessing, so he cheated his brother Esau out of his inheritance and then fled his family to live with his uncle, Laban (Gen. 25:27-34; 27). There he married four women and had twelve sons by them (Gen. 29-30). These sons would become the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 48-49). Jacob did not trust Yahweh during most of his life. He was a horrible husband and father, and he and his family fell into the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites who surrounded them. Later in his life, Jacob repented and turned back to Yahweh, and slowly his sons began to change as well (Gen. 35). But Jacob continued to favor his son Joseph. His other sons responded with hatred for Joseph and sold him into slavery. It was Yahweh's plan all along, however, to take Joseph to Egypt so He could raise him up as a ruler who would bring all of Jacob's family to Egypt to escape the famine that threatened to kill the line of Abraham and the promises of Yahweh (Gen. 46-47).

In each generation of Abraham's descendants, Yahweh kept renewing His promises with the family and blessing them. Despite the fact that Jacob's family kept choosing evil, Yahweh continued to bless them and to use them as a blessing to others (Gen. 45:3-8; 50:17). At the end of Jacob's life Yahweh promised this family that one day He would bring forth a king from the tribe of Judah who would establish the kingdom of Yahweh on earth (Gen. 49:8-12).

“Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies, your father's sons will bow down before you. You are a lion's cub, Judah, from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches and lies down like a lion; like a lioness – who will rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; the nations will obey him. Binding his foal to the vine, and his colt to the choicest vine, he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be dark from wine, and his teeth white from milk” (Gen. 49:8-12).

This king is described as one whose character (symbolized by the garments and eyes) and kingdom (symbolized by the scepter and donkey) will bring an abundance of joy (symbolized by wine that comes from the vine) and life (symbolized by the milk). Human rulers through history are characterized by power, greed, and oppression, not joy and life. The prophecy of this unique king points to the coming of Jesus as king.

The Deliverance and Formation of Israel

After four hundred years, Israel was now enslaved in Egypt under the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ex. 1-2). Pharaoh was the embodiment of the Tower of Babylon, for he gained power through the dehumanizing oppression of others. Despite this, Yahweh multiplied the people of Israel so that they swarmed the land.

One day Yahweh appeared before Moses through a burning bush (Ex. 3-4). This fire is called the Shekinah (“Dwelling”) Glory of Yahweh. Here He revealed His name as *Yahweh*, which means “I AM the eternal and sovereign God who is always with you” (Ex. 3:14). Yahweh sent Moses to Egypt in order to deliver His people from their bondage.

Through a series of ten devastating plagues, Yahweh attacked the Egyptian gods, brought judgment on the evil and oppressive Pharaoh, and delivered His people out of their slavery to sin and death in Egypt (Ex. 7-11). The last plague was the death of all the firstborn males in Egypt—Yahweh’s response to Pharaoh’s killing the firstborn males of the Israelites (Ex. 1:22). However, anyone, regardless of their nationality, who sacrificed the Passover lamb and put its blood on the doorpost of their homes would escape the judgment and become a part of the Israelite community (Ex. 12-13). The next morning the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh led Israel in their exodus out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, which was their baptism (Ex. 14-15). At the same time, He lured the evil Egyptian army into its own destruction in the waters of chaos. Many Egyptians put their faith in Yahweh and left with Israel. This means from the very inception of Israel as a nation they were a mixed ethnic people.

Despite Yahweh’s amazing act of deliverance, the people of Israel began to complain of the lack of provisions in the wilderness and accused Yahweh of trying to kill them (Ex. 16-17). Yet Yahweh, in His mercy, kept providing for them.

Yahweh brought Israel to Mount Sinai in order to make a covenant with them as His chosen people (Ex. 19). He came down on Mount Sinai in a storm of fire, making it His cosmic mountain. There He spoke directly to them and invited them up onto the mountain, but Israel, who had a heart of rebellion, refused to come into His presence due to a displaced fear. Instead, they chose Moses to enter the presence of Yahweh and be their representative. From the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh, Yahweh initiated the Mosaic Covenant with His people.

“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I lifted you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. And now, if you will diligently listen to me and keep my covenant, then you will be my special possession out of all the nations, for all the earth is mine, and you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you will speak to the Israelites” (Ex. 19:4-6).

Yahweh promised Israel that if they obeyed Him, He would adopt them as His chosen people, make them a kingdom of priests, and make them a holy nation (Ex. 19:4-6). The people of Israel agreed to enter into the Mosaic covenant with Yahweh (Ex. 24). This was a conditional covenant based on their obedience. The sign of the covenant was resting with Yahweh on the Sabbath. Up until this point Yahweh had not asked them to do anything. He had done everything to deliver them out of Egypt. Israel was to be what Adam and Eve had failed to be as the image of God: rulers and subduers of the chaotic creation, and priests to bring the nations into a covenant relationship with Yahweh. Just as Yahweh choose and blessed Abraham in order to make him a

blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1-3) so now Yahweh was choosing and blessing Israel to be a kingdom of priests to the nations.

The Mosaic Covenant consisted of the Law, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system. The requirements of the Law were to love Yahweh with “your whole heart, your whole life, and your everything (Deut. 6:5) and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). Yahweh then gave them examples, through the ten commandments, of how to live out these requirements (Ex. 20). Then He gave them a series of specific scenarios on how to live out the law practically. If they obeyed the Law, then they would be in a right relationship with Yahweh and would be able to dwell with Him.

The tabernacle consisted of a tent surrounded by a courtyard, which was a micro-Garden of Eden, where heaven (the throne of Yahweh) and the earth were linked together through the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh (Ex. 25-31; 35-40) that dwelt in the tent. Like the garden, it had a tree of life (the lampstand), with fruit (the table of showbread) and a gate in the east. When the tabernacle was built, all of Israel camped around it, and Yahweh came down off Mount Sinai and entered the tabernacle. Unlike the pagan temples, which were removed from their people and high on mountains, Yahweh came down and dwelt right in their midst. Yet because no one could perfectly obey the Law because they were sinners, they could not enter the tabernacle without an animal sacrifice to atone for their sin.

The sacrificial system was a set of animal sacrifices and grain and wine offerings that cleansed them of their sins so that they could dwell with Yahweh and enjoy the blessings of a relationship with Him (Lev. 1-6). This was the foundation of the entire Mosaic Covenant. Without daily sacrifices they could not initiate the Mosaic Covenant nor maintain their right standing in the covenant because of their sin. Though no one could be righteous in the truest sense, they could maintain a functional righteousness by pursuing Yahweh in obedience and by repenting of their sins through animal sacrifices. These actions did not save them but were the means by which they demonstrated their faith in Yahweh.

The whole purpose of the Mosaic Covenant was to reveal Yahweh’s standard of righteousness (Ps. 24:3-5; Rom. 7:12; 1 Pet. 1:15), which would expose humanity’s sinfulness through their inability to live righteously (Matt. 5:20; Rom. 7:7-11; Gal. 3:9-10, 19). This would then reveal their need for a savior found only in Jesus (Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 3:13-14). The heart of humans is innately selfish (autonomous) and so the motivation for obedience is out of a desire for a reward or a fear of punishment not out of a true selfless love for Yahweh and others. Thus, until the death and resurrection of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit came to give the hearts of humans the desire and ability to obey Yahweh out of love the judgments of the Law would regulate the sin of humanity.

Before Yahweh could even finish detailing out the Mosaic Covenant, Israel fashioned a golden calf and began to worship it (Ex. 32). This was a serious violation of the Law and a relational offense to Yahweh. The Law required death, but Moses interceded on Israel’s behalf, and because of Yahweh is a compassionate and merciful God He was quick to forgive them of the full penalty of the Law (Ex 34:6-7). Yet they lost the right to be a kingdom of priests and only the tribe of Levi was allowed to maintain their priesthood because they stood with Moses against the golden calf (Num 3:12-13).

After this Yahweh led Israel to the Promised Land in order to give them possession of the land. The wilderness was a training ground to grow Israel’s faith in Yahweh and to act as the image of

God before they went into the Promised Land to redeem the land. Yahweh wanted them to join Him in cleansing the land of the sinful Canaanites (Num. 13). He wanted them, as the image of God, to drive the serpents out of the chaotic garden and restore the land. However, the Israelites did not trust that Yahweh could defeat the Canaanites living in the land and give them possession of it. Because of their unbelief and their contemptuous treatment of Yahweh, He made the nation of Israel wander in the wilderness until everyone who was twenty years or older died (Num. 14). Yahweh honored their choice and gave them what they wanted, and He let them walk away from Him to face the consequences.

Israel then went back into the wilderness for forty years. During that time, they continued to rebel against Him (Num. 16-17; 20-21; 25). Even Moses disobeyed Yahweh and lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land (Num. 20:6-13). But Yahweh kept sustaining them, providing them with water, bread, and quail over and over again. At the end of their time in the wilderness, Balak, the king of the Moabites, hired the sorcerer Balaam to curse Israel, but Yahweh only allowed him to bless Israel.

“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not close at hand. A star will march forth out of Jacob, and a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the skulls of Moab, and the heads of all the sons of Sheth. Edom will be a possession, Seir, his enemy, will also be a possession; but Israel will act valiantly. A ruler will be established from Jacob; he will destroy the remains of the city” (Num. 24:17-19).

Balaam prophesied that one day Yahweh would raise up a victorious king (“star”) who would defeat the surrounding pagan nations and set up his kingdom on earth (Num. 24:17-19). This prophecy builds on the one from Gen. 49:8-12 but emphasizes the power of the king and his future defeat of all the surrounding evil nations. This is fulfilled in the second coming of Jesus.

In Deuteronomy Moses gave three speeches to Israel before they entered the Promised Land. Moses recounted Israel’s time in the wilderness, where they continually rebelled against Yahweh, yet Yahweh continually forgave them in His mercy and provided for them even when they ungratefully complained against Him. Yahweh never gave up on them. Moses urged this new generation to remember Yahweh’s great acts of faithfulness so that they would obey Yahweh out of love and not out of fear of punishment or for a reward. If they remained faithful to Him, they would experience life and blessings in the Promised Land. Yet Moses knew the human heart was so calloused and self-centered that they would continue to rebel, and the condemnation of their sin would continue to build until it would destroy Israel, resulting in their rejection and exile. Moses told them that they needed their hearts to be circumcised (Deut. 10:16; 30:6) because he knew that the condition of the human heart is the true source of the problem of sin. The heart metaphorically can produce life or death (Prov. 4:23) because it is the center of our being, thoughts, emotions, and desires. But because the heart is sinful and rebellious (Jer. 17:9-10; Jam. 1:13-15), it needs to be marked by Yahweh, and the hardened, calloused part of it needs to be “circumcised” in order to produce life.

Because Yahweh knew that Israel would eventually go into exile for their sin, Yahweh established the Restoration Covenant in which He promised that He would restore them to the Promised Land, circumcise their hearts, destroy their enemies, and give them the ability to obey Him so that they could prosper (Deut. 30).

Yahweh told the people that one day a prophet like Moses would be lifted up and lead the people of Yahweh (Deut. 18:15-19). Moses was a unique prophet who had a greater access to Yahweh

than anyone else ever had and served as prophet, king, and priest (Ex. 20:18-21; Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 34:10-12).

“Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of Yahweh your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God or see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’ And Yahweh said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him’” (Deut. 18:15-19).

The Israelites believed that this promised prophet was also the king whom Yahweh had earlier prophesied (Gen. 49:8-12; Num. 24:15-19). Jesus as the coming king would also be the prophet of Yahweh and represent the will of Yahweh to the people and bring the people into a relationship with Yahweh.

The Conquest of the Promised Land

Joshua succeeded Moses as leader over the people of Israel and led them into the Promised Land. The Canaanites had become so evil in their idolatry, child sacrifices, sexual immorality, and so on that Yahweh’s judgment upon them was death. Yet out of this depraved Canaanite people, Rahab and her family saw the uniqueness of Yahweh, and her faith rescued them from the coming judgment and made them a part of the covenant people of Yahweh (Josh. 2). Israel’s faith in Yahweh allowed them to successfully enter Canaan and destroy the city of Jericho and then every city to which Yahweh brought them after that, until they had taken control of most of the land of Canaan (Josh. 6; 10-12).

Yet Israel did fail to trust in Yahweh in many ways. Achan stole from Jericho when Yahweh had told them to destroy everything as a first fruits offering to Him (Josh. 8). As a result, their sin led to their defeat at the next city, Ai. Joshua failed to go to Yahweh when the Gibeonites deceived Israel into thinking that they were not Canaanites (Josh. 9). As a result, Israel made a treaty with the Canaanites, who would then live among them and lead them astray over the years to come. Three tribes of Israel chose to live outside the Promised Land, which would eventually lead to the breakdown of Israel’s unity (Josh. 22).

After the initial conquest of the land, Yahweh assigned each tribe its own land allotment in the Promised Land, and he gave to the priestly Levites cities scattered throughout the land (Josh. 13-21). This land of Israel was to become the new Garden of Eden. Here Yahweh would dwell with Israel in the land, and if they were faithful to Him, He would make it an abundantly fruitful land of blessing. They were then to join Yahweh, as His image, in driving out the serpents, redeeming the land, and making it a place of blessing so that the nations would want to become part of the covenant people of Yahweh by faith. To live outside the land was to be outside the blessings of Yahweh.

Over time Israel’s faith began to drift from Yahweh, and since they failed to destroy the Canaanites, they began to worship the Canaanite gods and adopt their immoral practices (Judg. 2:11-19). As a result, Yahweh withdrew His blessings and protection and allowed the pagan nations that they wanted to be like to oppress them (Deut. 27-28). Yahweh honored their choice to worship the other gods who did not love them or protect them like He had. As a result of their

oppression, they cried out to Yahweh to save them, and in His compassion and mercy He lifted up judges to deliver them.

The first two judges, Othniel (Judg. 3:7-11) and Ehud (Judg. 3:12-30), trusted in Yahweh and quickly delivered Israel from their enemy and faithfully led Israelites in peace for years to come. But over time, the judges began to decline in their faith. Barak said he would obey Yahweh's command to defeat the enemy only if the prophetess Deborah went with him (Judg. 4). He had more faith in the human prophet than in Yahweh. As a result, Yahweh gave the defeat of the enemy to a woman. Gideon constantly questioned Yahweh, asking Yahweh to prove Himself before he finally obeyed (Judg. 6-7). Afterward he ended up oppressing His own people and then leading them back into idolatry (Judg. 8). Jephthah declared that he would worship Yahweh only if Yahweh gave him victory in battle (Judg. 11-12). After his victory he sacrificed his daughter to Yahweh, showing that he viewed Yahweh as a pagan god. Samson did not really even acknowledge Yahweh and constantly killed the enemy out of his own selfishness and vengeance (Judg. 13-16). Eventually he died a tragic death at his own hands. In the end, the people of Israel fell into a violent civil war that almost wiped out the entire tribe of Benjamin (Judg. 19-21). To save Benjamin from extinction, the other tribes agreed to the kidnapping and forced marriage of hundreds of women. In the final chapters of the book of Judges, the narrator repeats the phrase "In those days Israel had no king, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). Israel no longer knew the character of Yahweh and had become like all the other nations.

Yet in the midst of all this cultural and moral chaos is a story Ruth, another foreigner like Rahab, who chose to leave her gods and people and return to Israel with her mother-in-law Naomi and join the covenant people of Yahweh (Ruth 1:16-18). Yahweh used Boaz, the descendant of Rahab, to bless Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 2:8-12; 4:9-12). Eventually Boaz and Ruth married, and Yahweh used them to continue the line of Judah that would produce the prophesied king (Gen. 49:8-12; Num. 24:15-19; Deut. 18:15-19). Despite Israel's gross immoral unfaithfulness, Yahweh continued to honor His promises and develop His plan of redemption for all the nations through the nation of Israel.

Boaz became Naomi and Ruth's kinsman redeemer, which is a person who redeems their relative from debt or slavery or their property (Lev. 27:9-25, 25:47-55). Boaz, as the descendant of Rahab was part Israelite and gentile as the descendant of Rahab who redeemed Naomi, an Israelite, and Ruth, a gentile into his family. Thus, he foreshadows Jesus who is our kinsman redeemer. Jesus was a Jew and a gentile, as a descendant of Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth (Gen. 38:1-6; Judg. 2:1-3; Ruth 1:3-4; Matt. 1:3, 5) redeemed the Jews and the Gentiles into Himself as one family (Eph. 2:11-22).

The Kings

By the 1100s BC, the political leaders of the judges and the religious leaders of the priests had become thoroughly corrupt (1 Sam. 2:12-36). Yahweh called Samuel to be judge and prophet over Israel and to deliver Israel from their enemy in a way that the previous judges had failed to do (1 Sam. 3; 7). Samuel faithfully served Yahweh and led the people throughout his entire life. The prophet is the one who speaks the will of Yahweh to the people. He is the only one who has the right to speak the will of Yahweh to the people because he is the only human who sits on the divine council of Yahweh. Only the prophets were anointed by Yahweh to enter His presence through visions of the divine council of Yahweh. Therefore, the prophets were the only ones who were connected to the will of Yahweh and could speak it to the king and the people. As one who

knew the will of Yahweh, the prophet also had the authority to enforce the will of Yahweh and to punish all violations of the Law 447183

. Thus, the prophet was also the guardian of the covenant law of Yahweh with the people. The king is the one who executes the will of Yahweh as spoken through the prophet.

Over time the people feared what would happen to them when Samuel died, so they went to him and asked for a king like all the other nations (1 Sam. 8:4-5). This was an insult to Yahweh, for they had rejected Him as their king and wanted to conform themselves to the image of all the other pagan nations. But Yahweh had called them to be unique from all the other nations in order to draw the nations into Israel as the covenant people of Yahweh. They believed that a visible human king could do a better job than Yahweh.

Therefore, Yahweh honored their choice and gave them what they wanted in the kingship of Saul (1 Sam. 8:6-22; 12). Saul successfully defeated the nations that surrounded Israel when they attacked Israel (1 Sam. 11; 14:47-48), but he failed to drive out the Philistines who already lived within the land and were physically bigger and more technologically advanced than Israel (1 Sam. 13-14; 17). But ultimately, Saul did not trust nor obey Yahweh. On two different occasions he directly disobeyed Yahweh, and as a judgment the kingship over Israel was taken from his descendants and then from him (1 Sam. 13:1-15; 15). Whenever Samuel confronted Saul on his sin, Saul always justified his actions and refused to repent. Over time he became mentally unstable (1 Sam. 16:14-23), tried to repeatedly kill Yahweh's chosen king (1 Sam. 18-20; 23-24; 26), and killed many priests of Yahweh and their families (1 Sam. 23:6-23). He was a king like those of all the other nations.

Yahweh then chose David to become the next king (1 Sam. 16:1-13). David was a man after Yahweh's own heart (1 Sam. 13:15; 15:28). This did not mean that David was perfect, rather it meant he had a desire to pursue Yahweh, and when he sinned, even when it was horrific, he quickly repented. David stayed true in his devotion to Yahweh throughout his life, which is seen in the Psalms. David did what no other before him had done—he defeated and drove back the Philistines who lived in Israel and began to expand the borders of the land to include the land Yahweh had promised to Abraham (2 Sam. 5:17-25; 8; 10).

Yahweh made a covenant with David in which He promised to give the land peace and establish David's line forever; his line would be given a kingdom that lasted forever (2 Sam. 7:8-17). This covenant would become the foundation for the messianic theology of the prophets (Ps. 2; 110 based on 2 Sam. 7:8-17).

Yet even this man after Yahweh's own heart failed to be the king that Israel needed and that Yahweh had predicted (Gen. 49:8-12; Num. 24:15-19; Deut. 18:15-19). Not only did he seek money and power (1 Sam. 17:25-31, 51; 25) and collect wives (1 Sam. 25:41-44; 2 Sam. 5:13-16), which the law had forbidden (Deut. 17:14-20), but he violated Bathsheba and murdered her husband because he had the power to take what he wanted (2 Sam. 11-12). As a judgment from Yahweh and as a result of being a passive and absent father, his children destroyed each other and threw David's kingdom into chaos (2 Sam. 13-20).

After David's death, his son Solomon became king. When he asked for wisdom, which pleased Yahweh, he looked very much like the king whom Yahweh had foretold (2 Kgs. 3). However, he eventually chose to use that wisdom for his own power rather than the benefit of the people in the kingdom. Then he built a temple, which Yahweh did not want (2 Sam. 7:1-7), to replace the tabernacle, which Yahweh had commanded to be built. Yet Yahweh chose to indwell the temple

and use it, just as He chose to dwell with Israel and use them even though they were not living in obedience to Yahweh.

Over time Solomon collected a thousand wives from other nations, and they turned Solomon's heart away from Yahweh and toward the worship of many false gods. (2 Kgs. 11:1-13). As a judgment, Yahweh split the kingdom in 930 BC, allowing David's line to keep the tribe of Judah in fulfillment of the promise Yahweh had made to David (2 Sam. 7:8-17). The kingdom split into the kingdom of Israel, which was the northern tribes, and the kingdom of Judah in the south.

All the kings of Israel in the north were wicked kings who promoted idolatry, declined morally, and oppressed the people. Many of the righteous people moved to Judah in the south to escape this decline. Though there were a handful of godly kings in Judah, they also eventually fell into idolatry and moral decline (2 Kgs. 12-16).

During the 800s BC, Yahweh sent the prophets Elijah and Elisha to judge the northern kings and to call the people back to Yahweh. Elijah's actions and miracles (2 Kgs. 17-18) made him seem like the awaited prophet (Deut. 18:15-19), but he too failed when he directly disobeyed the commands of Yahweh (2 Kgs. 19:15-18). Elisha continued the ministry Elijah failed to complete but also did not become the awaited prophet (2 Kgs. 2-8).

The kings and people of both kingdoms continued to decline until they had become worse than the Canaanites before them. (2 Kgs. 9-16). Yahweh had warned Israel through Moses that when the people pursued the sins of the nations around them without remorse and repentance He would judge them like He had the nations before them and take them into exile. During the 700s BC, Yahweh sent many prophets to warn them of the coming exile for their sins and called them to repentance so that they could escape the judgment. But Israel did not heed the warning to turn back to Yahweh.

Therefore, in 722 BC Yahweh sent the Assyrians to sack Israel in the north and take the people into exile (2 Kgs. 17). Because Israel was so wicked, most of the people were killed in the attacks. Judah was spared only because King Hezekiah repented and turned back to Yahweh when the Assyrians were attacking them (2 Kgs. 18-20). But Judah fell back into idolatry and immoral practices (2 Kgs. 21-24), so in 586 BC Yahweh's glory left the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 10) no longer dwelling with His people because of their sin. Yahweh sent the Babylonians to sack Judah, destroy the temple, and take the people into exile (2 Kgs. 25). Only the poor were left behind in the territory of Judah.

The Prophets

During the 700s and 600s Yahweh sent the pre-exilic prophets Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel to rebuke Israel and the surrounding nations for their idolatry and injustice against others and to warn of the coming exile if they did not repent. It had become clear after all these years that humans were incapable of being the selfless image of God and of renewing and expanding the Garden of Eden so that it would cover all the earth and bring all the nations into the garden. It was through these prophets that Yahweh began to reveal in greater detail who this prophesied messianic king was to be and how he would bring a New Jerusalem (Gen. 49:8-12; Num. 24:15-19; Deut. 18:15-19). The Hebrew word *messiah* means "anointed one" and refers to the judges, priests, kings, and prophets Yahweh chose to put His Spirit upon so that they could lead Israel.

Yahweh promised that one day He will return Israel to the Promised Land (Hos. 2:14-15; Isa. 49:8-13; Jer. 30:1-31:40; 33:6-26), which will be flowing with an abundance of grain, wine, and olive oil (Joel 2:19, 24; Jer. 31:12).

“Therefore say: ‘This is what the sovereign Yahweh says: When I regather you from the peoples and assemble you from the lands where you have been dispersed, I will give you back the country of Israel.’ When they return to it, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. I will give them one heart and I will put a new spirit within them; I will remove the hearts of stone from their bodies and I will give them tender hearts, so that they may follow my statutes and observe my regulations and carry them out. Then they will be my people, and I will be their God. But those whose hearts are devoted to detestable things and abominations, I hereby repay them for what they have done, says the sovereign Yahweh” (Ezek. 11:17-21).

In that day Yahweh will raise up His righteous Davidic king (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; 42:1-7; Jer. 23:5) to establish and rule over a New Jerusalem (Mic. 4:1-7).

“For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us. He shoulders responsibility and is called Wonderful Adviser, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His dominion will be vast, and he will bring immeasurable prosperity. He will rule on David’s throne and over David’s kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness, from this time forward and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh’s of Heaven’s Armies will accomplish this” (Isa. 9:6-7).

This New Jerusalem will also be Yahweh’s holy cosmic mountain, where He will dwell with His covenant people (Ezek. 37:27-28; 39:29). Yahweh’s glory will then return to the New Jerusalem, making the whole city the temple of Yahweh (Ezek. 40-49). It will be like the Garden of Eden (Amos 9:13-15; Hos. 2:14-23; Ezek. 47:1-12), which will cover all the world (Zeph. 3:9-12), and there will be no evil in the land (Isa. 2:4; 11:6-9; 24:21-23; 27:1). People from all the nations will come streaming to His holy city/mountain (Isa. 2:2-4; 56:3-8; Jer. 3:16-18).

“And in future days Yahweh’s Temple Mount will be the most important mountain of all; it will be more prominent than other hills. People will stream to it. Many nations will come, saying, ‘Come on! Let’s go up to Yahweh’s mountain, to the temple of Jacob’s God, so He can teach us His ways and we can live by his laws.’ For instruction will proceed from Zion, Yahweh’s message from Jerusalem. He will arbitrate between many peoples and settle disputes between many distant nations. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not use weapons against other nations, and they will no longer train for war. Each will sit under his own grapevine or under his own fig tree without any fear. Yahweh of Heaven’s Armies has decreed it. Though all the nations follow their respective gods, we will follow Yahweh our God forever. ‘In that day,’ says Yahweh, ‘I will gather the lame and assemble the outcasts whom I injured. I will transform the lame into the nucleus of a new nation, and those far off into a mighty nation. Yahweh will reign over them on Mount Zion, from that day forward and forevermore’” (Mic. 4:1-7).

Yahweh will make this possible through a New Covenant that He will establish with His covenant people (Hos. 2:18-23; Jer. 31:31-34) This covenant will remove and forgive their sins (Jer. 33:8; 50:20; Ezek. 36:25-32). Yahweh will make them a faithful people (Hos. 14:4; Zeph. 3:11-13) because He will pour His Spirit into their hearts (Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:1-14; 39:29) and write His Law on their hearts and minds (Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:26-27) so that they will all

know His will (Jer. 31:33-34). No longer would His people be depended on a prophet to know the will of Yahweh but all people who have His Spirit will know His will for their lives.

“‘Indeed, a time is coming,’ says Yahweh, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I delivered them from Egypt. For they violated that covenant, even though I was like a faithful husband to them,’ says Yahweh. ‘But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land,’ says Yahweh. ‘I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people. People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me,’ says Yahweh. ‘For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done’” (Jer. 31:31-34).

Yet no human is righteous enough, according to the Law, to be able to dwell in this New Jerusalem. Therefore, this coming Messianic King would have to first function as humanity’s high priest and provide atonement for their sins. But as high priest He would also offer Himself as the sacrificial lamb for the atonement of humanity’s sins. Once He had freed humanity from sin and the prenatality of the Law then He could rule as King and usher us into the New Jerusalem.

“He sprouted up like a twig before God, like a root out of parched soil; he had no stately form or majesty that might catch our attention, no special appearance that we should want to follow him. He was despised and rejected by people, one who experienced pain and was acquainted with illness; people hid their faces from him; he was despised, and we considered him insignificant. But he lifted up our illnesses, he carried our pain; even though we thought he was being punished, attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done. He was wounded because of our rebellious deeds, crushed because of our sins; he endured punishment that made us well; because of his wounds we have been healed. All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but the Lord caused the sin of all of us to attack him. He was treated harshly and afflicted, but he did not even open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughtering block, like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not even open his mouth. He was led away after an unjust trial—but who even cared? Indeed, he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the rebellion of his own people he was wounded” (Isa. 53:2-8).

The Exile and Return

Though the Israelites were scattered in exile, Yahweh had not abandoned His covenant people. He went with them into exile and preserved them as He had promised He would. When Ezekiel was first taken into exile, he had a vision of the coming judgment of Yahweh with the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh left the temple and then the Promised Land (Ezek. 10). Yet He also saw the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh going with Israel into exile showing that even though the exile was their judgement He was not abandoning them and that He was going to go through it with them. Ezekiel then had another vision of the temple being rebuilt and the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh reentering it (Ezek. 40-48). Unlike the first it had small walls and many gates meaning the point is that many were going to enter it. And a river flowed out of its side and went into all the world turning it into a garden. Yahweh was giving His people hope that He would never leave them and eventually one day He would restore the Garden of Eden as He had promised.

While in exile Yahweh took care of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah while they were in Babylonian captivity, as they demonstrated great faith in the presence of powerful and corrupt kings (Dan. 1-6). Yahweh blessed them and used them to bring King Nebuchadnezzar III of Babylon into the covenant community and guide the pagan nations of Babylon and Persia. Yahweh gave visions to Daniel, showing him there were many more powerful and corrupt nations to come (Dan. 2:31-45; 7-8), but one day Yahweh would destroy them with the coming messianic king who would then build the kingdom of Yahweh on earth. In one of his visions Daniel saw the messianic king approaching the throne of Yahweh (Dan. 7:13-14).

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14).

The phrase “son of man” states that this figure was a human. But by the fact that he is approaching the throne of Yahweh on the clouds points to his deity for only the gods and angels exist above the clouds. And that he is going to the throne without being surrounded by angels and not being condemned before Yahweh means that he is without sin. Finally gave him all sovereign power and authority to be worshiped and rule over a kingdom that will never end where all nations worship him. This clearly points to the fact that He is Yahweh, yet Yahweh is already on the throne. This clearly points to the fact that Jesus as the Messiah would be the sinless God-man. During Jesus’ ministry He referred to Himself by the title Son of Man more than any other title and even made reference to Himself as coming with the clouds (Matt. 26:64).

For almost seventy years the Israelites had lived in exile under the rule of the Babylonian empire. In 539 BC Yahweh called His people back to the Promised Land through the edict of the Persian king Cyrus II. The first return to Judah was under the governorship of Sheshbazzar in 538 BC. Under the following governor, Zerubbabel, they began to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1-3). But due to protest by the surrounding nations, they gave up and focused on their own lives and on amassing material wealth for themselves (Ezra 4-5). The prophet Haggai rebuked them and told them they needed a temple for sacrifices so that Yahweh could bless them in the land. Eventually they finished building the temple, in 515 BC (Ezra 6). However, the glory of Yahweh did not return to dwell with the people.

The second return to the Promised Land was in 458 BC, under the leadership of Ezra (Ezra 7-8). Ezra discovered that the Jewish leaders had divorced their wives and married pagan women (Ezra 9). Ezra commanded them to all get a divorce in order to maintain the purity of the covenant community (Ezra 10). The third return was in 445 BC under the leadership of Nehemiah, who rebuilt the city walls (Neh. 1-6). He too discovered that the exile had not changed the hearts of the people and that they were returning to their old sinful ways (Neh. 13).

But most of the Jews did not return to the Promised Land, even though Yahweh had commanded it through Jeremiah (Jer. 29:4-7). Outside of the Promised Land, the vice regent Haman of the Persian Empire put a plan into action to exterminate all the Jews of the empire on a specific day of the year (Esth. 3). Yahweh used the intellect and courage of Mordecai and Esther to save the Jews from annihilation by issuing a counter edict that allowed the Jews to defend themselves on that day (Esth. 4; 8:1-9:11). However, Esther sought revenge and issued a second edict to have all those whom the Jews suspected of being their enemy to be killed on the following day

(Esth. 9:12-19). Despite the continued sin and rebellion of the Jewish people, Yahweh used them to restore His people to the Promised Land, rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem, and bless His people.

It was during the years of the three returns that Yahweh sent the post-exilic prophets Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi to rebuke Israel for their continued sin despite the judgment of the exile. No matter how many times Israel repented, they always went back to their sinful ways. The physical exile was over, but their spiritual exile would not be over until they truly repented and were faithful to Yahweh. This could only happen when Israel's heart was changed, as the pre-exilic prophets had foretold. In harmony with the pre-exilic prophets, Yahweh promised through the post-exilic prophets that He would establish a New Jerusalem, where He would pour out His Spirit on His covenant people and dwell with them and defeat their enemies (Joel 2:28-32; Hag. 2:6-9, 20-23; Zech. 3:8-9; 4:1-14; 6:9-15; 8:3, 20-23; 9:9-17; 12:1-9; 14:1-21; Mal. 3:1).

“After all of this I will pour out my Spirit on all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your elderly will have revelatory dreams; your young men will see prophetic visions. Even on male and female servants I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28).

The same Spirit that subdued the chaos at creation and the waters of chaos of the Red Sea as He delivered Israel from Egypt would come and indwell the believers to subdue the chaos of sin and rebellion in their hearts. And through Jesus the Spirit would no longer temporarily rest upon just kings, prophets, and priests, but would permanently indwell the believers and circumcise their hearts.

The post-exilic prophets also developed the idea of the messianic king also being a priest who would cleanse Israel of their sins (Ps. 110; Zech. 4:1-14; 6:9-15).

“Take some silver and gold to make a crown and set it on the head of Joshua the high priest, the son of Jehozadak. Then say to him, ‘Yahweh of Heaven’s Armies says, Look—here is the man whose name is Branch, who will sprout up from his place and build the temple of Yahweh. Indeed, he will build the temple of Yahweh, and he will be clothed in splendor, sitting as king on his throne. Moreover, there will be a priest with him on his throne and they will see eye to eye on everything’” (Zech. 6:11-13).

Yahweh had Zechariah, the prophet, temporarily place a king's crown on the head of Joshua, the high priest, in order to symbolically show that one day the Messiah would be both king and high priest over Israel and the nations. The prophets called this Messianic king-priest the Branch. In The bible portrayed Israel as a tree cut down by Assyrians and Babylonians as judgment from Yahweh for their sins. The Branch is the promised Messiah that would be a new shoot that would grow up out of Israel and the Davidic line and redeem Israel and world. As king the Branch would destroy all evil and righteously rule over the nations. As high priest the Branch would make atonement for all sin bring the faithful into an intimate relationship with Yahweh.

Despite the return to Judah, the glory of Yahweh had not returned. There was no promised king ruling in Jerusalem, Judah was under the rule of foreign empires, and the prophets dwindled in number and then went silent. For the next 400 years, though, Yahweh watched over His people. However, there was no word or revelation from Him, and Israel was largely given over to their own will. The first Testament had revealed the utter and hopeless sin and rebellion of humans

regardless of Yahweh's judgments or blessings. Yet Yahweh remained true to His character and promises and continued to work out His plan of redemption through His covenant people in order to bless them and the surrounding nations through them. During this time, Israel's hope in the coming messiah who would bring the New Jerusalem grew in anticipation of His arrival and deliverance.

Over and over again the First Testament has developed three major ideas. First that no matter how Yahweh blesses or punishes humans and gives them every chance to change all humans continually sin and rebel and fail to fully be the image of God as Yahweh had created them to be. Second, that despite humanity's sin and rebellion Yahweh continuously remains faithful to them and shows them compassion and mercy, always pursuing them in His love no matter how far they stray or walk away from Him. Third, that His love for them compelled Him to establish a plan of redemption for humanity. One day Yahweh would send His promised Messiah to redeem humanity and establish the New Jerusalem where people of faith from all nations would be welcomed into the restored Garden of Eden.

Jesus the King

After 400 years, around 6 BC, the silence was broken when Yahweh sent an angel to Zechariah announcing the birth of the prophet John, who would announce and anoint the coming king (Lk. 1:5-25). Then Yahweh sent an angel to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus the king, who would deliver His covenant people (Lk. 1:26-38). Then the heavenly army of Yahweh announced to a group of shepherds that the awaited savior and king (Christ) had finally been born to them (Lk. 2:8-20; Matt. 1:1). The word "Christ" is the Greek word for the Hebrew word "messiah."

Jesus had the right to represent humanity and Israel as their king because He was the true descendant of Adam, Abraham, Judah, and David (Matt. 1:1; Mk. 1:1; Lk. 3:38). Yet this Jesus was more than just a human king. He was God Himself in a human body (Jn. 1:1-14; Heb. 1:1-4; Phil. 2:5-11). Since history had shown that no human had been able to be the true image of God and fulfill the promises of Yahweh, the promised king would also have to be God so that He could do what no human could do: remove evil and sin, circumcise the hearts of humanity, and restore the Garden of Eden on earth. But before He could truly become king, He would have to be humanity's prophet and priest.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. The Word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it. A man came, sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognize him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God's children—children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's decision, but by God. Now the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father" (Jn. 1:1-14).

“After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, in these last days He has spoken to us in a son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He created the world. The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of His essence, and He sustains all things by His powerful word, and so when He had accomplished cleansing for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thus He became so far better than the angels as He has inherited a name superior to theirs” (Heb. 1:1-4).

“You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:5-11).

Years later the prophet John was calling the Jews to repent, for the kingdom of Yahweh was about to come (Lk. 3:1-19). Israel’s exile was about to come to an end, but they had to be baptized to show their desire that their hearts be cleansed and to pledge their total allegiance to Yahweh. When Jesus arrived on the scene, John baptized Jesus, showing that Jesus identified with John’s message and would continue John’s ministry (Matt. 3:13-17). At that moment, the Spirit of Yahweh came down and anointed Jesus as His prophet, king, and priest.

Jesus was then led into the wilderness for forty days by the Spirit in order to duplicate Israel’s forty-year journey through the wilderness, where they failed to trust Yahweh and rebelled (Lk. 4:1-30). Jesus, however, resisted the temptation of Satan and remained faithful to Yahweh and His law, proving that He was the more perfect Israel. Thus, He would become what Israel never could and redeem humanity. He truly was the sinless God-man messiah (Dan. 7:13-14).

The first miracle Jesus did was turning water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11). Jesus took the ceremonial water that was used for the cleansing of sin and turned it into wine, a symbol of the coming messianic king (Gen. 49:8-12). In doing so, he was connecting the priesthood and kingship into Himself (Ps. 110; Zech. 4:1-14; 6:9-15). Many times throughout His ministry He multiplied bread for the masses (Lk. 9:10-17). The fact that He was miraculously providing the bread showed that He was like Yahweh, who provided bread for Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16). By bringing an abundance of wine and grain, He was showing that He was the awaited messiah whom the prophets had foretold (Gen. 49:8-12; Joel 2:19, 24; Jer. 31:12).

Jesus then went to His hometown and read from Isa. 61:1-2, which proclaimed the coming of the prophet-king who would deliver the poor, heal the sick, and set the captives free (Lk. 4:14-30). This passage was about freeing those oppressed by the corrupt systems of the world as well as by the bondage of sin. As the image of God, Jesus was subduing the chaos and driving the serpents out of the garden. Jesus declared that He was the fulfillment of this prophecy. Because they could not see Him as this, they rejected His claim and drove Him out of the town. This was the beginning of Israel’s rejection of Jesus that would lead to His crucifixion.

Jesus began to preach the kingdom of Yahweh and the love of Yahweh for all people regardless of social status, gender, ethnicity, and even nationality. He also validated His message by doing miracles of healing the sick and raising the dead. He was subduing the chaos and driving the

serpents out of the garden. He spoke with an authority and commanded a power that was unlike anything that anyone had ever seen, validating that Yahweh was truly at work through Him. Yet the Jewish leaders and many of the people denied this and resisted Him just as their ancestors had in the wilderness and in the Promised Land. Jesus had chosen twelve disciples, in connection to the twelve tribes of Israel, to show He was the new Israel (Lk. 5:1-11). And in alignment with His teachings, these men were from all classes and backgrounds who did not get along with each other. In addition to them, many women and other people became His close disciples. Jesus disciplined them into a powerful force of love and unity in the world.

Jesus then went into the temple in Jerusalem and cleansed it of the corruption that had turned it into a place of greed and oppression rather than a place of worship (Jn. 2:13-22). Jesus referred to the temple as His Father's house and told the Pharisees that the temple would be destroyed and that He would raise it up again in three days. Jesus was referring to His body in His death and resurrection, making the point that His body was the true temple and the Father's house. Therefore, Jesus as the God-man was the more perfect temple (2 Pet. 2:4-8).

Just like Moses (Ex. 19–20), Jesus went up a mountain and gave the Law to the people in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29). Jesus unpacked the deeper meaning of the Mosaic Law in a way that Moses had not, showing that He was the more perfect prophet and law giver. Jesus also showed that He was God by the fact that He had the authority to forgive sins, which only Yahweh could do (Lk. 5:17-26). By healing a man on the Sabbath (Lk. 6:1-11), Jesus demonstrated to the Pharisees that He was the Lord over the Sabbath. This was significant because the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, and the Pharisees believed that even Yahweh obeyed the Sabbath when He rested at creation. By acting on the Sabbath as He saw fit, Jesus demonstrated that He was God over creation and over the Mosaic Law.

Jesus also went to the Gentiles and not only taught and healed them, but He also received them into the Kingdom of Yahweh through their faith (Matt. 8:5-13, 28-34; 15; 21-28; Lk. 17:12-19; Jn. 4:5-42). He did what the Jews had failed to do. He not only lived a righteous life in such a way that it attracted the Gentiles, but He actually sought them out and brought them into the covenant community (Matt. 24:14).

Jesus then took three of the disciples up on a mountain and transfigured into the glory of Yahweh (Lk. 9:28-36). Next to him appeared Moses and Elijah, the two great prophets who had failed to be the Messiah. Jesus is the ultimate prophet of the Divine Council of Yahweh because He is the Word and Will of Yahweh (Jn. 1:1-14; Heb. 1:1-4; Phil. 2:5-11).

Jesus then began to make His way to Jerusalem in order to die (Lk. 9:21-27). Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, declaring Himself to be the awaited King who would bring the New Jerusalem and rule over it (Lk. 19:28-44). But what the people did not realize is that in order to become their King, He had to first conquer sin and death as their high priest and become their sacrificial lamb in atonement for their sins. This victory would give Him the right to rule over all of creation (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18-22; Heb. 1:1-4; Phil. 2:5-11; Rev. 5:6-14). Jesus then cleansed the temple a second time, but this time He called the temple His house, reinforcing the idea that He was the temple and the Father's house (Lk. 19:45-48). By revealing Himself to be the Glory of Yahweh, entering the temple, and declaring Himself to be the true temple of Yahweh, Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel that the Glory of Yahweh would return to the temple one day (Ezek. 40–48).

Two weeks later, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal in order to reveal to the disciples that He was their sacrifice for sin and that His death would inaugurate a New Covenant (Lk. 22:14-38). The bread, Yahweh's provision for Israel in the wilderness and a central element in the tabernacle, represented His body that had to be broken so they would not have to be broken for their sins. The wine, which was the sign of the messianic king and the cleansing of sin by the high priest (Jn. 2:1-12), represented the blood atonement of the sacrificial lamb. These two things were the signs of the New Covenant that would cleanse the covenant people of Yahweh of their sin and allow them to enter into the Garden of Eden/Temple of Yahweh and dwell with Him. Jesus then said that in His Father's house are many rooms and that He was going to the cross to prepare a room for His covenant people (Jn. 14:1-4). The tabernacle and the temple building had only one room where Yahweh dwelt, and no one could enter except the high priest, once a year. Jesus had already established that His Father's house was His own body, the new temple. Jesus was going to establish a new temple as His body that would have many rooms for all believers. They would be able to enter and dwell with Yahweh because Jesus was going to become the more perfect sacrifice and more expansive temple. This is why the veil tore in the temple building—in order to show that there was now total access to Yahweh for all through Jesus (Matt. 27:50-51). Jesus was the new temple of Ezekiel's vision and the glory of Yahweh returning to it (Ezek. 40-48).

That night Jesus was arrested and put on trial and was crucified the next day (Lk. 23:26-56). Jesus became the more perfect high priest when He willingly offered Himself and became the eternal and perfect sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world. Each day, in the First Testament bulls and lambs had to be sacrificed for the sins of the people because an animal cannot truly take away the sins of the people. Unlike the sacrificial lamb of the First Testament, Jesus willingly offered Himself as the sacrifice for all humanity once and for all. (Heb. 9:11-15; 10:1-4). No one could meet the righteous requirements of the Mosaic Law and thus enter into the presence of Yahweh and have a true intimate relationship with Him, without sin. Thus, under the penalty of the Law all humans had to die (Rom. 3:21-26). Yet, Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life and so was not under the penalty of the Mosaic Law. Therefore, He was able to take our place and die for our sins so that we would be freed from the death penalty of the Mosaic Law and live with Yahweh in an intimate relationship without sin (Jn. 3:16-17; Rom. 8:1-4). Jesus had to be God in order to live a sinless life and to conquer death through His resurrection, neither of which humans could do. He had to be human in order to take the sins of humanity as its representative since only humans are sinners and to die. He had to die under the penalty of the law, which only humans could do. The water flowing out of His side when He was stabbed (Jn. 19:34) alludes to the river coming out of the side of Ezekiel's temple (Ezek. 47:1-12), symbolic of the water of life and the Spirit that would be poured out on the world (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:25-27; Jn. 3:5; 4:14; 7:37-39; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Three days later, Jesus conquered death and raised Himself from the grave (Lk. 24; 1 Cor. 15:20; Heb. 2:14-15). It is through His resurrection we are able to live with Yahweh for all eternity. Jesus then appeared to many people in order to help them understand the full significance of who He was. He was the God-man who is king over creation (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18-22; Heb. 1:1-4; Phil. 2:5-11). Forty days later He took His disciples to a mountain, where He gave them a final command (Matt. 28:18-20).

“Then Jesus came up and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20).

Jesus declared that His authority was equal to Yahweh’s and that they were to obey everything He had commanded them to do. They were then to go out to all the earth and make disciples of all nations and baptize them into total allegiance to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is one of the clearest statements of the trinity in the Bible. Just as Yahweh commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and expand the Garden so now Jesus was commanding His disciples to make disciples and expand the kingdom of Yahweh. And just as Yahweh choose Abraham to be a blessing to the world so now Jesus was calling His disciples to go into all the world in order to bless them with the gospel message.

Jesus told them that when He departed, He would send the Holy Spirit to come upon them. The Holy Spirit would give them the supernatural power to be His witnesses to all people and all nations of the earth (Acts. 1:8). Then Jesus ascended into heaven to sit on the right hand of Yahweh as King over creation in fulfillment of Dan. 7:13-14, where He approached the throne of Yahweh and was given all authority, honor, and power over an eternal kingdom (Lk. 24:50-53). Then two angels appeared to the disciples and told them that Jesus would return one day in the same way He had left (Acts 1:9-11).

In the beginning of the Gospels Jesus is developed primarily as the better and more perfect King who has come to rule over Israel. Then as His ministry begins, He is primarily developed as the better and more perfect prophet who has come to make the will of Yahweh made known to the people. Then by the end of His life He is primarily developed as the better and more perfect High Priest how has come to make atonement for humanity’s sins. What make Him the King, Prophet, and Priest that Adam and Israel could not be is that He is the God-man in order to reconnect Yahweh with humanity in an intimate relationship in the Garden once again. Thus, Jesus became the better and more perfect sacrificial lamb atonement for sins, so that humanity could dwell with Yahweh without sin through a relationship with Jesus as the better and more perfect tabernacle. Jesus became and did what Adam and Israel could never be and do.

The Expansion of the Covenant People

Ten days after Jesus’ ascension, at the Festival of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples of Jesus, appearing as little pillars of fire, and filled them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13). In the First Testament the Spirit of Yahweh never indwelt anyone; He only rested on them for a time, because, they being sinners, the Spirit of Yahweh could not indwell them. And the Spirit came upon only a select few, mostly the prophets, priests, and kings. Yet now, with the atonement of sin through Jesus’ death, the Spirit of Yahweh could indwell any human of faith regardless of their social status or ethnicity (Hos. 2:16-17; Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 11:17-21; Joel 2:28). Thus, they all became prophets knowing the will of Yahweh.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-5).

The Holy Spirit coming as fire connects back to the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh. Just as the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20) and indwelt the

tabernacle/temple (Ex. 40:34-38), so now the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh was entering the believers, making them the new cosmic mountain (Garden of Eden) and the new temple with “the many rooms” (Jn. 14:1-4; Eph. 2:19-22; 2 Pet. 2:4-8). This was the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s temple (Ezek. 40–48). Christ and His body are the believers who fill the whole earth, making it a garden as they make disciples of all nations. The believers are the New Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem.

Just as the Shekinah Glory of Yahweh wrote the Law on tablets at Mount Sinai, so now the Holy Spirit was writing the Law on the hearts of the believers (Jer. 31:33). This was the beginning of the circumcision of their hearts (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28-29), where they would be transformed into people who would have the desire and ability to love and obey Yahweh (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:17).

“For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something that is outward in the flesh, but someone is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit and not by the letter. This person’s praise is not from people but from God” (Rom. 2:28-29).

“Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice —alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service. Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect” (Rom. 12:1-2).

Those who come to Jesus by faith and receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit become the new Temple and Israel. This is seen by the fact that Peter uses the same language of the New Covenant believers as Yahweh did of Israel when He initiated the Mosaic Covenant (1 Pet. 2:9-10 alluding to Ex. 19:4-6).

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. You once were not a people, but now you are God’s people. You were shown no mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

The phrase “tongues [languages] of fire” (Acts. 2:3) means the Holy Spirit was communicating to people of every language, nation, and ethnicity in their own language. Yahweh was undoing the judgment at the Tower of Babylon and uniting humanity into the New Jerusalem in order to expand the Kingdom of Yahweh rather than their own corrupt kingdom.

Throughout the book of Acts the disciples were empowered and emboldened through the Holy Spirit to share the gospel of Christ to all those who lived in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts. 2:14-42; 3:11-26; 4:1-22) They healed many people as Christ had (Acts. 3:1-10; 5:12-16). The covenant people of Yahweh, through the Holy Spirit, were doing what Israel had failed to do, to be the image of God subduing the chaos and driving the serpents out of the garden. But the early believers did not move out to the other nations like they had been commanded to do. Soon the Jewish leaders rejected the gospel of Christ and began to persecute them (Acts. 4:13-22; 5:17-42; 6:8-8:3; 12). Yahweh used this persecution to drive the early Christians out of Judah and into the other nations (Acts 8:4-8, 26-40; 10; 13-14).

One day Jesus appeared to the Jewish Pharisee Saul and rebuked him for persecuting the Christians, who were His people (Acts 9). This experience was so powerful that it changed

Saul's life. He dedicated all of his knowledge and skills to understanding the character and story of Yahweh's redemption in the First Testament and how it led to Christ. His name was changed to Paul, and he became a great thinker, missionary, and key person in the formation of the early Church.

Two major shifts began to happen in the early Church. First, it had become very clear at this point that the Jewish leaders and people as a whole had rejected Christ and His covenant. Second, Yahweh was actively pursuing the Gentiles in their inclusion in the covenant community by faith. The Jewish Christian leaders struggled with the inclusion of the Gentiles and wanted to put them under the Mosaic Law, asking them to be circumcised in order to be saved and included in the covenant community (Acts 15). Paul challenged this idea as contrary to the plan of Yahweh. Yahweh through the prophets and the Holy Spirit had made it clear that one did not have to go through the Mosaic Law in order to be saved through Jesus. All that was required for salvation was faith in Jesus to become a part of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (Rom. 2:18-29).

“For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him” (Jn. 3:16-17).

“For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Paul argued that followers of Christ were no longer under the Mosaic Law because no one can meet the requirements of the Law (Rom. 1–3), and therefore the Law only brings death. Christ came to fulfill the requirements of the Law by the fact that He lived a perfectly righteous life, and therefore He was not under the death penalty of the Law (Rom. 3:21-26; Matt. 5:17). But He died in our place, freeing us from the penalty of the Law. Therefore, we are no longer under the Law (Jer. 31:31-34; Rom. 8:1-4; 10:4; Gal. 3:23-26; Heb. 8:6-13) but are saved by grace and faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9). Now that Christ and the Holy Spirit indwell us, we meet the requirements of the Law when we surrender to their transformation of our mind and heart and submit to their will (Jn. 3:16-17; Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 2:8-9). This is the inward circumcision of the heart, which is the more perfect circumcision than outward physical circumcision (Rom. 2:25-29).

“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:21-26).

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. For God achieved what the law could not do because it was weakened through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1-4).

It was also clear that Yahweh had always accepted the Gentiles in the covenant community by faith in the First Testament. This was also made clear through Jesus’ ministry and Yahweh’s vision to Peter of the clean (Jews) and unclean (Gentiles) animals that were now all to be included in the kingdom of Yahweh (Act 10). Yahweh was moving away from the Jews and toward the Gentiles as the new covenant people of Yahweh because the Jews had rejected Jesus as their Christ (1 Pet. 2:9-10). But this did not mean that the Jews were no longer the chosen people (Rom. 11). For it was out of them that Jesus had come, and it was to them that Yahweh made promises to restore them one day. They were merely in timeout, and one day the Jewish people as a whole would come back to Yahweh. One day the tree (Jews) and the grafted-in branch (Gentiles) would be whole and united as the covenant people of Yahweh (Eph. 2:11-22).

“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh—who are called ‘uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘circumcision’ that is performed on the body by human hands—that you were at that time without the Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, the one who made both groups into one and who destroyed the middle wall of partition, the hostility, when He nullified in his flesh the law of commandments in decrees. He did this to create in himself one new man out of two, thus making peace, and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by which the hostility has been killed.

“And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, so that through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:11-22).

Paul and the disciples continued to branch out past Judea to many people of all ethnicities, nations, social status, and genders. People of all kinds came to faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Church was fruitful and multiplied as it filled the world. Yet at the same time, the powers and governments resented the kingdom of Yahweh and the threat it posed to their power hold, and they persecuted the Church. Yet the Church grew all the more and looked forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ and the New Jerusalem.

The Garden of Eden Restored

In Revelation John saw a vision of Yahweh sitting on a throne in heaven, and before the throne was a sea of glass, which symbolizes the fact that there is no chaos in heaven (Rev. 4). Also around the throne were twenty-four elders, who represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples of the Church united together as one covenant people. This is also seen in the great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-17).

Then Yahweh held out a scroll, which represents the word and promises of Yahweh to take back creation, restore the Garden of Eden / New Jerusalem on earth, and unite heaven and earth together under the rule of Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:1-3). The only being in all the earth who was worthy to open and execute the promise of the scroll was Jesus Christ, the Lamb, because He had purchased humanity and the earth with His own blood (Rev. 5:4-14).

“Then I saw standing in the middle of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the middle of the elders, a Lamb that appeared to have been killed. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then he came and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne, and when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders threw themselves to the ground before the Lamb. Each of them had a harp and golden bowls full of incense (which are the prayers of the saints). They were singing a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were killed, and at the cost of your own blood you have purchased for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You have appointed them as a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth’” (Rev. 5:6-10).

One day in the future, Jesus Christ will return to the earth and destroy Babylon (“Tower of Babylon”) (Rev. 19:11-20), which represents the sin and corruption of human institutions and governments and evil on earth (Rev. 18-19). Then Yahweh will resurrect all the dead and judge all humans according to their standing with Jesus. Those who rejected Jesus and His sacrifice will be put under the Law, which only brings death, and will be sent to a place where Yahweh does not dwell, therefore honoring their choice to live without Him. And the covenant people of Yahweh will dwell on the renewed earth with Yahweh for all eternity (Rev. 19:11-15). Then Yahweh will renew the sky and earth into the Garden of Eden once again, and Yahweh will dwell with humanity on the earth (Rev. 21:1-4). Yahweh’s dwelling on earth is portrayed as the New Jerusalem from heaven coming down to earth (Rev. 20:9-27). There is no need for a temple on the renewed earth because the Lamb and His covenant people are the temple.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had ceased to exist, and the sea existed no more. And I saw the holy city—the new Jerusalem—descending out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: ‘Look! The residence of God is among human beings. He will live among them, and they will be His people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist anymore—or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist’” (Rev. 21:1-4).

“Now I saw no temple in the city, because Yahweh God—the All-Powerful—and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God lights it up, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their grandeur into it. Its gates will never be closed during the day (and there will be no night there)” (Rev. 21:22-25).

And just like the Garden of Eden and Ezekiel’s temple, a river will flow out of the New Jerusalem with two Trees of Life, one on each side (Rev. 22:1-5). The presence of two Trees of Life and the absence of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represent the fact that there will not be a choice to sin against Yahweh, for we have already made our choice to pledge our allegiance to Him and obey Him when we entered into the covenant community. Now with the

removal of sin and evil, we are finally able to honor that choice. Despite all sin and evil being removed, humans and creation still have damaged emotionally and psychologically, and so the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the earth and the nations.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life—water as clear as crystal—pouring out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, flowing down the middle of the city’s main street. On each side of the river is the tree of life producing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month of the year. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations. And there will no longer be any curse, and the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city. His servants will worship him, and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more, and they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:1-5).

Because of Jesus’ work on the cross, all sin and evil will be removed from the earth, heaven and earth will be rejoined, and humans will be resurrected from death to live in the Garden of Eden on earth again. Most importantly, Yahweh and Jesus will dwell with humanity in the land in a right and good relationship with humanity. Humanity will continue to expand the garden throughout creation as they were originally meant to do.

The fact that the leaves of the trees of life are for the healing of the nation’s implies that there will be work to do in the continued expansion of the Garden of Eden. From humanity’s original purpose in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:26-28), to Yahweh’s promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), to Yahweh’s covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. 9:4-6), to Jesus’ commission to His disciples (Matt. 28:18-22), to the Kingdom of Yahweh coming down to earth (Rev. 21-22), the mission of humanity as the image of Yahweh has always been to expand the garden and be a blessing to others.

Until then, we are to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our minds into the image of the Father, to love and forgive others in a radical way as Christ did, to allow the Holy Spirit to make all this possible, to expand the garden into the lives and institutions of which we are a part, and to work towards and pray for the kingdom of Yahweh to come to earth.

“So pray this way: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored, may your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt 6:9-13).

Bible Timeline

Beginnings (?–2100 BC)	Creation Fall Flood Tower of Babylon
Patriarchs (2100–1800 BC)	Abraham Isaac Jacob Judah and Joseph
Deliverance (1800–1406 BC)	400 Years of Slavery The Exodus (1446) Moses Tabernacle (1444)
Conquest (1406–1100 BC)	Joshua The Judges Boaz and Ruth
United Kingdom (1100–970 BC)	Samuel Saul David
Divided Kingdom (970–539 BC)	Solomon First Temple (966) Kingdom Split (930) Kings and Prophets Israel’s Exile (722) Judah’s Exile (586) Daniel
Restored Kingdom (539–6 BC)	The Return (539) Second Temple (515) 400 Silent Years
Fulfillment (6 BC–35 AD)	Jesus Christ Death and Resurrection Pentecost
Church Era (35–65 AD)	Peter Paul Missionary Journeys
Consummation (65–? AD)	Tribulation Christ’s Return New Jerusalem