­Tenets of the Faith

Week 8 Eschatology

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1. What is it? (definition; summary of the doctrine)

What is *eschatology*? Comes from two Greek words: eschatos (“last”) and logos (“word”). Eschatology has been defined as the “doctrine of the last things“ in relation to both the individual (e.g. death and the intermediate state [the state and the fate of each individual immediately after death but before the final resurrection]) and to spiritual history (e.g. the return of Christ, the general resurrection, the final judgment, heaven, and hell). Although most studies of “the final word” are limited to events that have yet to occur—events at the end of the individual’s life or events at the end of history,[[1]](#endnote-1) in a broader sense, however, eschatology is what Scripture teaches about *God's purposes in Christ* throughout history. With eschatology including a study of the consummation of God's purposes at the **end** of history, *it also includes a study of the* ***stages*** *in the* ***unfolding*** *of those purposes*.[[2]](#endnote-2) God’s preparation in history for the *final word* of eschatology **must involve a historical study of redemption and the plan of God for man that is threaded through the entire Bible**.

And so we are going to talk a summary walk through Scripture, beginning with Genesis, to see God’s **covenant** with us throughout the history of mankind, so that we can more clearly see from His Word what His purposes and intentions have been from the beginning and better understand what has yet to be seen in His *final Word* at the end*.* We will see that the *King of Kings and Lord of Lords* has made a covenant with us from the beginning of creation and has never let it go. We will trust Him to fulfill the covenant with His people and trust Him like never before.

What is a Covenant? (This is DIFFERENT from *Covenant Theology;* this is a **study** of the covenants of God in Scripture).[[3]](#endnote-3)

Covenant = A covenant is a set of promises with rules and conditions, whereby an agreeable or profitable relationship may exist between two parties. One type of covenant is the express will and testament of one party, by which the other party, if compliant, gains an inheritance.[[4]](#endnote-4)

* Biblically, a covenant between God and human beings is observed to be a set of promises made by God.
* The covenant may include laws and conditions, rewards and punishments.
* The offering of a sacrifice may be required.
* Such a covenant can come from God directly, or through a mediator.
1. Taught in the Old Testament – an overview of God’s purposes in Christ for history – the stages in the unfolding purposes of the *end times, last things, “eschatology.”*

A. **God’s Covenant with Adam**

God made promises to Adam, made laws for him to obey, and decreed rewards and punishments, and the laws included offerings and sacrifices. So then, then God made a covenant with Adam. God decreed several things for Adam to honor and obey. **Adam’s spiritual life, through fellowship with God, depended on Adam’s respect for God’s laws**. *There were punishments for transgressions and disobedience, and of course rewards for faithful obedience*.[[5]](#endnote-5)

After Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden, they continued to be under the covenant. Most of the promises and laws (listed in footnote 4) extended beyond the expulsion from the garden. Adam and Eve’s sin did not cancel the covenant that God decreed for Adam. Furthermore, their children also were required to abide by the covenant.[[6]](#endnote-6) [[7]](#endnote-7)

B. **God’s Covenant with Abram**

Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12.1-3)

* Man's sin has resulted in God's curse (Gen. 3.14, 17; 4.11; 5.29; 9.25), but here God promises to form a people for himself and to *restore his original purposes* *of blessing* for mankind. (cf. Gen. 1,28).[[8]](#endnote-8)
* Five times the key terms "bless” or "blessing" are used. Also important is the repetition of the word "you" and "your." *Abram is ... going to be the mediator of this restored blessing.*
* Abram is promised offspring, a land, and personal blessing in order that he might be the *mediator* of God's blessing to all the families of the earth.[[9]](#endnote-9)

We then see that "he went down to Egypt" (vv.10-20), to escape the famine. Beware of the world that Egypt typifies; don’t be so fast to head there *when famines come.*[[10]](#endnote-10)The Lord had to step in and speak to Pharaoh since Abram wasn’t hearing. The expedition into Egypt resulted in fear, falsehoods, and failure.[[11]](#endnote-11) Abram had to get back to Bethel where he built his altar “as at the first,” just as we often need to return to the point of moral or spiritual departure to learn by our mistakes and be restored to the Lord.[[12]](#endnote-12)

The Elements of the Abrahamic covenant are in your footnotes, but I want to point out here the **Sacrifice for Sins:[[13]](#endnote-13)**

**Sacrifice for Sins.** The blazing torch passes between the slain animals to foreshadow Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. The covenant God makes with Abram causes him to fall into a deep sleep and God alone walks through the slain animals **to show that He will fulfill both parts of the covenant that Abram receives through faith**.

C. **God’s Covenant with Noah[[14]](#endnote-14)**

* Noah found grace: There are two contrasting statements at the beginning of the story. "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth... but Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:5,8).
* This reminds us that "no creature is hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4,13).
* God sees all and acts on what he sees. "...the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. " (2 Chronicles 16.9).
* The frightening thing about this story, is how few escaped the flood --only "a few, that is eight persons, were saved" (1 Peter 3.20).
* Jesus says of eternal life that "few there be who find it" (Matthew 7.14). Of all the things that concerns us, this fact prays on our minds the most. No doubt Noah must have considered the question too: Why are we so few?[[15]](#endnote-15)

D. **God’s Covenant with Moses**

The old covenant mediated through Moses was never meant to be valid within itself. It was meant to foreshadow, and be dependent upon, the covenant to be mediated by Jesus Christ. The "seed" promise to Abraham, centuries before the law of Moses, was in fact a covenant in force which allowed people to be justified by faith. The law of Moses was "added" later, but justification did not come through that covenant, rather it continued to come through faith. The law and the prophets themselves proclaimed this.

The Elements of the God’s covenant with Moses are in your footnotes,[[16]](#endnote-16) but I want to point out here:

* **Promises to believe.** If you obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my special possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. (Ex 19.5-6) ...if you hearken attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. (Ex 23.22) There are five divine promises of the covenant. But they all depend on certain conditions being fulfilled by the people, as Exodus 19,5 says, "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall . . . " experience all these divine blessings.
* **Commands and laws to obey.** This type of covenant makes promises that are **conditional upon the beneficiary doing something specified**.

The lengthy recitation of blessings and curses is followed in chapters 29–30 by Moses' third major address to the people. In this final address, **he reminds them of all that God has done for them and appeals for covenant faithfulnes**s (ch. 29). **He then places before them a choice between life and death and demands a decision** (ch. 30).

* **Sacrifice for Sins.** In his final address, Moses foresees
	+ that the people will not remain true to God and that the curses of the covenant, including exile, will ultimately fall upon them (cf. 30:1).
	+ that Israel will eventually repent and be restored from exile (vv. 2–10).[[17]](#endnote-17)

This foreseen restoration from exile raises an important question: ... even if Israel repents and is restored from exile, what is to prevent the entire cycle of disobedience and curses from occurring again? An answer to the problem is found in Deuteronomy 30.6 where Moses declares, "And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." **What God had commanded in Deuteronomy 10.16, he promises that he himself will do in 30.6.** **The answer to the problem of Israel's stubborn infidelity ultimately rests in God himself. *"He will somehow enable his people ultimately to do what they cannot do in their strength, namely, to obey him out of the conviction and devotion of their own hearts."[[18]](#endnote-18)*** **God's promise to circumcise their hearts anticipates the promise of a new heart and new covenant found in the prophets. (Jer. 3.,31–34; Ezek. 36.22–28)** **In effect, God is telling Israel in Deuteronomy that she cannot in her own strength obey the very law that he is giving her. Because of Israel's stubborn self-confidence, however, *this is something that she will have to learn the hard way*.**

* **Forgiveness of sins.** Now the question is, what becomes of the covenant? They had broken it before it was even completed. If this covenant were based on works or on strict justice alone Israel would be done for. But to show that the covenant is based on grace, God renews the covenant and uses words which make this gracious foundation clear. In Exodus 34,1 God tells Moses to make a new set of stone tables and to come up again. In 34,6–7 God reveals himself and the basis of the renewed covenant: "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, **'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and children's children, to the third and fourth generation."**' Moses pleads in verse 9, "Pardon our iniquity and our sin and take us for thine inheritance." And the Lord responds in verse 10, "Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth or in any nation."

**E. God’s Covenant with David**

Elements of the Davidic covenant are found in the footnotes.[[19]](#endnote-19)

John is going to go over the Davidic Covenant in detail in Lesson 10. Here I will list a few things to note in connection with connecting the Davidic Covenant with the unfolding of God’s eschatological plan:

* The anointing of David is also crucial for understanding the Old Testament concept of the Messiah, a righteous king, one who would be like David.[[20]](#endnote-20)
* David's prayer of gratitude is found in 2 Samuel 7.18–29. **In this prayer, he refers to God's promise as "instruction for mankind," indicating that this covenant will involve the destiny of all mankind** (2 Sam. 7.19).[[21]](#endnote-21)
* Although the Hebrew term for "covenant" (berit) is not found in this chapter, Scripture elsewhere does refer to this promise as a covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 23.5; Ps. 89.3).
* The Davidic covenant had been anticipated in God's covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 17.6). It would be through the Davidic king that God's promise of blessing to the nations would be accomplished (cf. 2 Sam. 7.19; Ps. 72.8–11, 17).
* The Davidic covenant had also been anticipated in the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deut. 17.14–20). **The Davidic king would be the expression of God's theocratic rule in Israel.** He was to reflect the righteous rule of the divine King. He was also to lead Israel in the faithful observance of the Mosaic law. **The Abrahamic covenant had promised a realm and a people for God's kingdom. The Mosaic covenant provided the law of the kingdom. The Davidic covenant now provides a human king for the kingdom**.
* One of the major emphases of the Davidic covenant is the idea of perpetuity. David had wanted to build for God a permanent dwelling place, but God instead promised that he would establish for David a permanent dynasty.[[22]](#endnote-22) **The Hebrew term 'ad -'olam, or "forever," is found eight times in this chapter emphasizing the significance of this aspect of the covenant. "The main feature of this kingship will be its permanent stability: it will last forever** (2 Sam. 7.13b, 16)."[[23]](#endnote-23) Although God warns that he will discipline David's offspring if he commits iniquity, God also promises that his steadfast love will not depart from David as it was taken from Saul (2 Sam. 7.14b-15). "... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7.16).
* In Genesis 49.10, Jacob had prophesied that the scepter would belong to the tribe of Judah **until the coming of the one to whom such royal status truly belonged. This prophecy finds its initial fulfillment in the establishment of the Davidic kingship**.[[24]](#endnote-24) It’s further fulfillment will be when Jesus comes back to earth.
* The Davidic covenant looks not only to the fulfillment of past prophecies, it also looks forward, laying the foundation for **Israel's eschatological** hopes. The Davidic covenant becomes **the foundation for the messianic prophecies of the later prophets**.[[25]](#endnote-25) “The **Davidic throne "was a typological representation of the throne of God itself.**"[[26]](#endnote-26) The relationship is **so close that the throne of David is referred to in Scripture as the "throne of Yahweh"** (1 Chron. 29.23). With the coming of the Davidic monarchy, then, God's kingdom had already come to some extent, **but it remained a shadow of a greater future reality**.[[27]](#endnote-27)
* **The Davidic covenant became "the nucleus around which messages of hope proclaimed by Hebrew prophets of later generations were built…**"[[28]](#endnote-28) This covenant is mentioned or alluded to in several of the Psalms (cf. Ps. 21, 72, 89, 110, 132), and is also alluded to in the prophetic writings. **As the monarchy eventually began to slide into wickedness, the prophets began to understand the promises of the Davidic covenant eschatologically.**
* **The primary foundation of the messianic idea rests in the covenant God made with David** (2 Sam. 7), although the roots of the messianic idea are found in several texts in the Pentateuch (Gen. 17,6, 16; 35,11; 49,10; Num. 24,17; Deut. 17,14–20).[[29]](#endnote-29)
* According to the prophets, the coming Messiah will establish God's kingdom, transforming creation and bringing blessing to all the nations, thereby fulfilling the purpose of God's covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 12,3; Ps. 72,17).[[30]](#endnote-30)

**The prophets taught that David's "booth would be repaired (Am. 9.11); a Davidic child would establish his throne with justice and with righteousness (Is. 9.6–7); a branch from the stump of Jesse would yet create an ideal kingdom (Is. 11.1–9; cf. Je. 23.5; Zec. 3.8).[[31]](#endnote-31) The promises that had not yet been fulfilled would be fulfilled in the future.[[32]](#endnote-32) Ultimately, these messianic hopes would be fulfilled in Jesus, the true Son of David. Jesus is the Son of David who will build a “house” for God, a new temple made without hands. He is the Son of David whose kingdom is established forever**.[[33]](#endnote-33)

F. **God’s Covenant with His People Foretold**

**The Pre-Exile Prophets (you can read all about them in the footnotes)[[34]](#endnote-34)**

Four main themes run through the pre-exilic prophets:

* First, Israel is Yahweh’s covenant people. Yahweh continuously reminds Israel that they made a covenant with Him (Ex. 19-24), to obey Him and that He would bless them in return. If they did not obey Him or repent of their sins, then He would bring judgments upon them that would end in their exile from the Promised Land (Deut. 27-28).
* Second, Israel had rejected their covenant God. Over and over, despite their promise and covenant with Yahweh, they pursued autonomy and sinned and rebelled against Yahweh. Despite many judgments, warnings, and acts of grace, they continued to reject Him and go after other gods.
* Third, Yahweh had to judge them for their sins as He said He would in the Mosaic Covenant. He would do this with the coming of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires that would take them into exile.
* Fourth, Yahweh promised them that He would restore His people back to the Promised Land. **Despite their sin, Yahweh’s greatest desire was to dwell with His people in an intimate relationship. Therefore, He would one day bring them back to the Promised Land and restore His relationship with them as well as His blessings. But not just them—the restoration of Israel would also include people from all the nations streaming into the new Jerusalem.**[[35]](#endnote-35)

**The Coming King described by the *never wrong* Prophet Isaiah**

**The unifying theme of Isaiah 6–12 is the coming Messianic king.** Chapters 6 and 12 frame the entire subsection, with chapter 6 telling of the call and cleansing of Isaiah and chapter 12 recording the song of salvation sung by the saved community.

* Chapter 6 begins with the death of King Uzziah, the embodiment of the Davidic house. Chapters 7–11 then center on the coming of a holy and divine monarch.
* **The two kingships, the divine and the Davidic, will ultimately merge in a Messianic King from the house of David** (cf. 7.14; 9.6–7; 11.1–10).
* The call of Isaiah is narrated in Isaiah 6. The chapter serves as an important transition because the previous chapters have raised a serious question. **How is sinful and rebellious Israel ever to be the center of worldwide blessing (Isa. 2.2–4)? What will it take for a city that is now described as a “harlot” (1.21) to become “the city of righteousness, the faithful city” (1.26)**? In Isaiah’s personal experience of **having his guilt taken away and his sin atoned for** (6.7), we find the first hints of the answer. **Isaiah's** experience must become **Israel’s** experience.[[36]](#endnote-36)

The holiness of God is the focal point of Isaiah’s vision.

In fact, the adjective “holy” is used in Isaiah more than it is used in the remainder of the Old Testament combined. (It is used 33 times in Isaiah and 26 times in the remainder of the Old Testament.)

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah sees a vision that shapes the entire course of his ministry (6.1–7). Isaiah sees the Lord sitting exalted upon a throne, surrounded by seraphim who continuously sing: “**Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory**!” (6.3). The Hebrew language expresses superlatives by means of repetition, but this is [one of only four places] in the Old Testament where a threefold repetition is found.[[37]](#endnote-37) It is as if to say that “the divine holiness is so far beyond anything the human mind can grasp that a 'super-superlative' has to be invented to express it . . . ”[[38]](#endnote-38) The impact of this vision on Isaiah can be seen in the dominance of the theme of holiness in his work.[[39]](#endnote-39)

**But how will God end war? He will accomplish this through the birth of a child:**

*For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.* (Isaiah 9.6-7)

This prophecy looks forward to the **ultimate fulfillment** of the Immanuel with the “down-payment” of the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 1.18–23).

**God’s creational purpose to establish his kingdom on earth will be accomplished through this Messianic King.[[40]](#endnote-40)**

G. **God’s Covenant Written on our Hearts described by the *never wrong* Prophet Jeremiah**

* Earlier chapters of Jeremiah had occasional references to future restoration after the judgment of exile, but the theme in the earlier chapters are more about *judgment*.
* Chapters 30–33 of Jeremiah are often referred to as the "Book of Consolation,[[41]](#endnote-41) because  **"it gives expression to hopes for the future rather than judgment which characterizes earlier chapters.**"[[42]](#endnote-42)
* **Here the themes of restoration and hope move to the forefront and are developed extensively. This section of the book reaches its climax in Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant in chapter 31.**

*For behold days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says Yahweh, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.* (Jer. 30,3)

* **The Lord also promises to renew his covenant relationship, telling the people that in that day, "you shall be my people, and I will be your God"** (Jer. 30,22).
* **Jeremiah 31 contains one of the most significant prophecies in the Old Testament, the promise of a new covenant** (vv. 31–34).
* Jeremiah begins chapter 31 by describing Israel's captivity using the imagery of the wilderness wandering (31,1–6), then celebrates the coming restoration of Israel to her homeland (vv. 7–14), uses the imagery of Rachel weeping for her children to describe the extreme grief caused by the exile (v. 15) and then details the promised restoration of Israel from exile means the end of Rachel's mourning (vv. 16–22).

*"There is hope for your future, declares Yahweh, and your children shall come back to their own country"* (v. 17). Following another promise of restoration (31,23–26), Jeremiah speaks of the days to come using the six words found in 1,10, *"And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares Yahweh"* (v. 28).

* One of the most fundamental teachings found within the pre-exilic prophets is that Israel has failed to keep God's covenant and that due to this failure to obey, judgment is coming.
* The history of Israel from the time of Moses onward is a history of almost continual disobedience and apostasy.
* Both Moses and Joshua had indicated that Israel was incapable of obeying God's law, and Israel had proven them correct (cf. Deut. 31,16–18, 20–21; Josh. 24,19).
* Now exile is imminent, but God is promising restoration. If the covenant relationship is to be restored, how will this happen?

Isaiah had hinted at the prospects of a new covenant many times (cf. Isa. 42,6; 49,8; 54,10; 55,1–5; 59,21; 61,1–9). Now Jeremiah brings the nature of this covenant into clearer focus in 31,31–34.

***Behold the days are coming declares Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares Yahweh. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares Yahweh. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.***

I wish we had time to go over everything relating to this *new covenant* but you will find it in your footnotes,[[43]](#endnote-43) but I’ll go over the key points:

* Jeremiah places the inauguration of the new covenant at an unspecified time in the future: "the days are coming" (Jeremiah 31.31). The expression "days are coming" is fairly common among the prophets, and it simply refers to an unspecified future time (cf. Isa. 39.6; Jeremiah 7.32; Amos 8.11; 9.13).[[44]](#endnote-44)
* The covenant will be made with *the house of Israel and the house of Judah*. In other words, a new covenant will be made with those who broke the old covenant.

The emphasis in verses 32–33 is upon the discontinuity between the old covenant and the new covenant, but it is not a total discontinuity.

* The Lord emphasizes discontinuity when he declares that the new covenant is "not like the covenant that I made with their fathers" (v. 32).
* Both discontinuity and continuity are evident in the next verse, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts" (v. 33).
* Under the old covenant, the law was written on tablets of stone (cf. Exod. 24,12; 34,1). Under the new covenant, the law will be written on the hearts of God's people. Yet the continuity is evident in that it is "the law" that is written on the hearts of his people. God himself will make the necessary changes within the hearts of his people (cf. Deut. 30,6). (Thompson, Jeremiah, 581.)
* Finally, in one of the most profound promises involved with the new covenant, the Lord says, ***I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.***
* Under the old covenant, provisions were made for the forgiveness of sin by means of the various sacrifices, which had to be constantly repeated, indicating that they had no inherent power within themselves to remove sin (cf. Heb. 10.1–10); under the new covenant, the shadows will be replaced by the reality, and God will not only *forgive their iniquit*y but also *remember their sin no more*.

Following the prophecy of the new covenant is a declaration of the inseparable bond between God and Israel. **The permanence of God's relationship with Israel is compared to the permanence of the created order.**

*Thus says Yahweh, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—Yahweh of hosts is his name:* ***"If this fixed order departs from before me, declares Yahweh, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever." Thus says Yahweh: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares Yahweh****"* (vv. 35–37).

**This promise is noteworthy because it is stated in absolutely unconditional terms. For those facing the prospect of seventy years of exile, it is a source of great hope for the future of Israel**.[[45]](#endnote-45)

**The Post-Exile Prophets[[46]](#endnote-46)**

The exile was a major turning point in the history of Israel.[[47]](#endnote-47)

Were the prophecies of restoration now to be fulfilled? Would the messianic kingdom of God now be established? These are the questions faced by the post-exilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These post-exilic prophets faced a daunting task:

* Earlier prophets had foreseen a glorious restoration following the judgment of exile (cf. Amos 9.11, 14–15; Micah 4.6–7).
* Daniel, on the other hand, had borne witness to a sevenfold extension of the punishment of exile (cf. Dan. 9.24–27).
* Yet Cyrus had now permitted the Jews in Babylon to return to their land.

***Was this the promised time of restoration or not?*** The post-exilic prophets reveal an eschatological tension in their writings. They bear witness to the **beginning** of eschatological restoration, but also proclaim that **the fullness is yet to come**.[[48]](#endnote-48) **They provide the first hints that the promised restoration from exile is not to occur all at once.**

**The transformation of creation associated with the coming of the Kingdom of God ties together God's creational purposes and his redemptive purposes. According to the prophets, "there is no redemption unless it affects the whole of creation.**"[[49]](#endnote-49) The prophets recognize that there is something radically wrong in the present creation, but unlike the followers of many pagan religions, they do not assert that the physical world is itself inherently evil. *The present corruption of God's creation is due to sin. The prophets, therefore, affirm that all of creation will be transformed and what is wrong will be set right* ***in the eschatological victory over evil***.[[50]](#endnote-50)

H. **God’s Covenant through Christ**

The Bible tells us that "Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry, because he is the mediator of a better covenant, which is based on better promises" (Hebrews 8.6-8). This makes us realize that, if we want an involvement with God that accords with God's grace and will, then we must comply with the covenant Jesus Christ has mediated to us.

Jesus is called "the mediator of a better covenant enacted upon better promises" (Hebrews 8,6),[[51]](#endnote-51) for two reasons:

**(1)** His was the only blood that could be shed for the forgiveness of sins. He was the perfect sacrifice and nobody else had that necessary perfection “without spot” (Hebrews 9.14).[[52]](#endnote-52)

**(2)** Jesus is the person of highest authority whom God could send. No other person among angels or men has the authority of the Son of God. After dying on the cross, being raised from the dead, and exalted to God's right hand, he was given "the name which is above every name" —the authority which is above every authority (Philippians 2.5-11). When this mediator delivers a covenant from God, we had better listen![[53]](#endnote-53)

**The covenant is mediated to all men.** Our relationship with God is often described as *a covenant relationship with God*. The Holy Spirit never speaks of *a covenant relationship*. This unscriptural term may be connected to the idea that the covenant of Christ has application only to those who honor it. The Bible's view on the scope of this covenant is quite different...

Humanity got at odds with God. Humanity was helpless to reverse that situation. So God had a plan. His unique Son would become man and would mediate a covenant to humankind. He would shed his blood as a unique sacrifice without which there could be no such covenant. Jesus said, ***This is my blood of the covenant****, to be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins* (Matthew 26.28).

Under the new covenant, *everyone in the world* has a “covenant relationship” with God. A person is in a relationship either of condemnation or of grace, being made accountable to God by the covenant. The new covenant divides the world in two. It is a covenant of magnificent promises to those who by faith *keep its commandments*. For those who don't, it has dire warnings. God has revealed his will in the new covenant, so that *anyone* can become heirs of God. His will promises certain blessings, stipulates certain conditions, and decrees the penalty for non-compliance.[[54]](#endnote-54)

* “There is one mediator between God and men” and he became "a ransom for all" and through him God "desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1Timothy 2.4-6).
* How can a covenant not apply to one to whom it has been mediated?
* To whomever the covenant is mediated, upon them the covenant is binding.
* The covenant in Christ's blood applies to all for whom his blood was shed.
* Christ's blood is the "blood of the new covenant" (Matthew 26,28). His blood was shed "for the whole world" (1 John 2.2).
* How can a covenant not apply to one for whom the blood of the covenant was shed? For whomever the blood was shed, to them the covenant is ratified.
* The covenant applies to all for whom God confirmed his promise by an oath.
* God made a promise to all mankind (John 3.16). God backed up that promise by making an oath to Christ concerning the validity of his high priesthood under the new covenant (Hebrews 6,16-20, Hebrews 7.21-22).
* How can a covenant not apply to one to whom God has made a promise that the covenant contains and guarantees with an oath?
* Whoever are able to believe like Abraham the promise and oath of God, to them the covenant applies.
* The covenant applies to all who are accountable in the day of judgment.
* Christ, at his second coming, will deal out "retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thessalonians 1.8-10).
* How can a covenant not apply to one who is condemned for not obeying it?
* Whoever is accountable for not obeying the covenant, to them the covenant applies.
* The covenant dispenses both blessings and curses.
* The old covenant, mediated by Moses, contained both "blessings and curses" (Deuteronomy 28.58-63, Deuteronomy 30.9-10, 15-20).
* The new covenant, mediated by Christ, also contains blessings and curses.
* Fortunately, the blood of that covenant, Christ’s own blood, provides the means of removing its curses and bestowing its blessings (Galatians 3.6-28).
* The covenant applies not only to those whom it blesses, but also to those whom it curses so that the curses can be replaced with the blessing.

Elements of the God’s covenant through Christ are found in the footnotes.[[55]](#endnote-55)

1. Taught in the New Testament

**The Births of Jesus and John the Baptist**

* Luke 1–2 also announces that the closing chapter in the history of God's people has begun. The hope of Israel is on the verge of realization.[[56]](#endnote-56)
* In other words, Luke uses these introductory chapters to indicate that the fulfillment of all of Israel's eschatological hopes is found in Jesus. All of the ancient promises of redemption are to be realized in him.[[57]](#endnote-57)
* The angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah.[[58]](#endnote-58) **Gabriel's appearance itself is already a hint of the eschatological significance of these events because Gabriel's only previous appearances in Scripture have been in the Book of Daniel when he explained Daniel's eschatological visions** (Dan. 8.16–17; 9.21–23). **His appearance here in the infancy narratives of Luke hints that the births of John and Jesus are closely associated with the fulfillment of Daniel's eschatological visions.**[[59]](#endnote-59)
* Luke sets forth John's role in God's redemptive plan. **John is to be a prophet calling God's people to repentance. The reference to Elijah places John's work in an eschatological framework. He is to prepare a remnant for the long-awaited coming of the Lord.**[[60]](#endnote-60)

There is so *much* eschatologically in the births of John and Jesus, but you will have to read through the footnotes[[61]](#endnote-61) because time doesn’t allow us to go over all that here. I will highlight some of the key connectors continuing God’s heart and covenant with His people:

* Again Gabriel is sent to bear the news, but this time he is sent to the one who will be the child's mother, a virgin named Mary (Luke 1.26–28). In his announcement he tells Mary: *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High****.*** *And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end* (vv. 31–33). This is not a direct quotation of any particular Old Testament verse. Instead, it is a summary of several Old Testament prophetic expectations, in particular God's promise to David (2 Sam. 7.9–16; cf. Ps. 89.26–29, 36; Isa. 7.14; 9.6–7; Dan. 7.14).[[62]](#endnote-62)
* Although the manner of Jesus' conception is miraculous, the nature of the conception itself is not the focus of the passage. The focus is upon the identity of this unique child. The nature of his conception and the content of the angel's announcement serve to identify this child as the Son of God and the Davidic Messiah.[[63]](#endnote-63) Concerning John, the angel had said, "*he will be great before the Lord*" (v. 15). But of Jesus, he says, "he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." Zechariah's child will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Mary's child will be the Lord.
* When Mary responds to Elizabeth with a song that is known as the “Magnificat” in Luke 1.46-55, she seems to speak as the representative of the people of Israel.[[64]](#endnote-64) Throughout the song, two images of God are seen. God is described as the divine warrior who delivers his people from their enemies. He is also described as the God who is great in mercy toward his people, ending with:

 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

 as he spoke to our fathers,

 to Abraham and to his offspring forever.[[65]](#endnote-65)

* In the Benedictus, Zechariah speaks of both John and Jesus, tying their redemptive roles together. Jesus will be the "horn of salvation" (cf. Ps. 18.2; 132.17; Ezek. 29.21). Jesus is the Messiah, and he will come to the people who sit in darkness and death and will be a light of salvation for them.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* (Luke 1.67-79)

* While in Bethlehem, Mary gives birth to Jesus (vv. 6–7). Luke then describes the appearance of an angel to some shepherds, who were watching over flocks in a field. The angel declares, "**Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord**" (vv. 10–11). The angel is proclaiming the fulfillment of Isaiah 9.6–7. Jesus is the promised child. He is the Savior. He is the Christ, or Messiah. And he is the Lord. After declaring all of these titles of the child, the angel tells the shepherds, "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (v. 12). The paradox here is that Israel's long-awaited Messiah is to be found lying in a feeding trough.
* In Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph encounter a righteous man named Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah (vv. 25–27). When Joseph and Mary present Jesus in the Temple, Simeon takes the child, blesses God, and says, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for **my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel**" (Luke 2.29–32). Simeon here speaks of Jesus as not only the salvation of Israel, but of the Gentiles as well. **He is the one who will bless the nations in fulfillment of the ancient promise to Abraham.**
* Simeon blesses the child's parents (Luke 2.33–35). He tells Mary, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." Simeon's first statement recalls Isaiah’s prophecy of the stone of offense upon which many will stumble (Isa. 8.14–15). Many will stumble over the claims of Jesus. He will also be a sign that will be opposed. Simeon tells Mary of the anguish she will suffer because of the rejection of her son, a rejection that will culminate in his death.

**Resurrection Life**

One of John's few explicitly eschatological passages is found in chapter 5. The occasion is the healing of a lame man at the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath. Because Jesus heals the man on a Sabbath, the Jews persecute him (John 5.16). Jesus then says to them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (John 5.17). The response infuriates the Jewish leaders even more because "not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5.18). Jesus then says:

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. (John 5.19–20). Jesus' point here is that he is what he is "only in humble obedience to and complete dependence upon the Father."[[66]](#endnote-66)

Jesus then says, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father" (John 5.21–23). **While the Father is the source of life and judgment, he has delegated to the Son the authority to raise the dead and to judge. Jesus continues, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life" (John 5,24). The emphasis here is clearly on that which is already true of the believer. He already has eternal life. He has already passed from death to life.**

Spiritual resurrection is the subject of the following verse, as Jesus continues his discourse, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5.25). The coming "hour" is the eschatological future age. However, because the Messiah who raises the dead is now here, the eschatological age has already been inaugurated.[[67]](#endnote-67) Jesus says that hour is coming "and now is" (kai nun estin). **He is referring, therefore, to the life that is given now to the spiritually dead**. The dead referred to in this verse are not the physically dead is confirmed by the fact that they are not (like those of v. 28) said to be in the tombs; the aorist participle suggests those who at the time of writing have been [given life] by the Word of Christ.[[68]](#endnote-68)

The resurrection life of the future age reaches back into the present and is available now to the spiritually dead.[[69]](#endnote-69) Believers now receive a foretaste of the resurrection life that they will experience in fullness on the last day.

Jesus says, "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man" (John 5.26–27). Here there is a possible allusion to Daniel 7.13–14, the Old Testament prophecy in which all authority is given to the Son of Man. Jesus continues,

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5.28–29).

Unlike verse 25, which speaks of present spiritual resurrection, verses 28–29 speak of the future bodily resurrection of the dead.[[70]](#endnote-70)

It is important to note that the future form of verse 28 ("an hour is coming") does not include the present ("and is now here") that is found in verse 25. In other words, John does not teach a *completely realized* eschatology.[[71]](#endnote-71)

The spiritually dead who "hear" the voice of the Son of God in the days of their flesh and are raised by him to life will hear that voice again, calling them to enter upon the fullness of resurrection life for the kingdom of glory. Similarly, those who are deaf to the voice of the Son of God in life must in the end respond to that voice and rise to hear the word of condemnation pronounced upon them.[[72]](#endnote-72)

**The relationship between present and future eschatology is nowhere more intricately connected than it is here in these verses.** The resurrection life of the age to come is experienced in part now by believers. They are no longer spiritually dead. Their bodies, however, will die. But on the last day, they will experience the fullness of resurrection life when the voice of God calls them from the grave and their corruptible bodies are raised incorruptible (cf. 1 Cor. 1.35–49).

I. **God’s Covenant Fulfilled – *the Final Word***

Eschatology moves to the foreground in 1 Corinthians 15. Here Paul turns his full attention to the doctrine of the resurrection. The question to which Paul is responding is not stated explicitly until verse 12. Paul informs us there that some of the Corinthians were saying that "there is no resurrection of the dead." **As we examine the text it will become clear that what they were denying was the future bodily resurrection of believers**. **Paul makes very clear in this chapter how central the doctrine of the resurrection is to the Christian faith.** He proceeds in two stages. **In verses 1–34, he demonstrates the reality of the resurrection of the dead. In verses 35–58, he explains how it is that the bodily resurrection of believers is possible.**

Because we studied the Resurrection thoroughly in Lesson 6, I will succinctly go over a few reminders and put further study in the footnotes:[[73]](#endnote-73)

* Paul states the content of his Gospel that he had preached to them and that they had believed (15.1) in verses 3–5, saying, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."
* The death and resurrection of Jesus are the center of Paul's proclamation of the Gospel.
* **Christ's death on the cross is God's solution to the problem of sin, and Christ's resurrection from the grave is God's solution to the problem of death.**
* Paul asks, "how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (15.12). In this, they were simply expressing the beliefs of ancient paganism, which denied the very possibility of such a thing.
	+ Paul explains, "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised" (v. 13).
	+ Here Paul is showing the contradictory nature of their beliefs. They profess belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ while at the same time denying the possibility of bodily resurrection, but their denial of the resurrection of the dead necessitates the conclusion that Christ was not raised. **Their denial of the resurrection of the dead is a denial of the very heart of Christianity**.
* In verses 13–19, Paul expands on the consequences of their denial of the resurrection of the dead.
	+ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not raised, and if Christ is not raised Paul's preaching is in vain, and the Corinthians' faith is in vain (v. 14).
	+ If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christians are bearing false witness against God by claiming that he raised Jesus from the dead (v. 15).
	+ If Christ has not been raised, the Corinthians are still in their sins (vv. 16–17) and those who have died are without hope (v. 18).
	+ If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christians are the most pitiful of people for believing in a delusion (v. 19).
	+ In short, what Paul is telling the Corinthians is that if their denial of the resurrection of the dead is true, then Christianity is worthless nonsense.

Paul changes course slightly in verses 20–28 by moving back to the point of agreement between himself and the Corinthians.

* He writes, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (v. 20).
	+ The word "firstfruits" (aparche) refers to the first and representative portion of an agricultural harvest. It implies more "fruit" to come, and it implies a relationship between the firstfruits and the remaining harvest.

Paul establishes that, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (vv. 21–22).

Paul elaborates, picturing Christ's resurrection as the inauguration of the eschatological resurrection; it is all one harvest. Jesus' resurrection is the first stage in the eschatological resurrection, and the resurrection of Christians is the second stage. "But each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, then (epeita) at his coming (meaning it is a future event) those who belong to Christ. Then (eita) comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" (15.23–24).

Paul concludes this section by building on Psalm 110,1. He writes, "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (vv. 25–26). Paul then quotes Psalm 8.6 as he envisions the subjection of all things to God (vv. 27–28). The full manifestation of the kingdom of God is Christ's ultimate goal. Through Christ, God defeats every enemy in order that his reign might be established over all. **The eschatological importance of the resurrection could not be made any clearer than it is in this section of Paul's epistle.**

The reason behind the Corinthians' denial of the resurrection of the dead was a worldview that abhorred the idea of bodily resurrection, with some thinking that "resurrection" meant nothing more than the mere reanimation of a corpse. Paul turns his attention to this issue in 15,35–49, writing, "But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"" (v. 35). The word translated "body" is the Greek word *soma*. Paul uses the word in relation to human beings to speak of the physical body, "precisely because the physicality of the resurrection is central to his soteriology."

Paul then uses an agricultural analogy to illustrate continuity and discontinuity between the present body and the resurrected body (v. 37). He then describes the many different kinds of bodies that God has created: for humans, animals, birds, fish, heavenly bodies, earthly bodies, sun, moon, and stars (vv. 38–41). Reading Paul's list here reminds one of the creation account of Genesis. (Paul's later mention of Adam adds weight to the comparison.) By mentioning all aspects of God's creation in the context of a discussion of resurrection, Paul may be hinting at the idea of the new creation, when everything will be set free from the effects of the curse.

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (15,42–44).[[74]](#endnote-74)

Paul's point is here is that just as our present body is like Adam's physical body, so our future body will be like Jesus' resurrection body. In short, Paul is portraying Jesus as the one who inaugurates the new creation and the new humanity.

The conclusion to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 ties the resurrection of the dead to God's triumphant victory over death, the last enemy (vv. 50–58). Paul reiterates what he has already said, when he states that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (v. 50). These two clauses are in synonymous parallelism and indicate the same truth, namely, that our present bodies must be transformed in order to participate in the consummation of the kingdom. Paul then writes, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (vv. 51–53). What Paul describes here is the same event he described in his first epistle to the Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess. 4.13–18). It is the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of those still living at the time of Christ's Second Coming.

Paul concludes, by quoting the eschatological vision found in Isaiah 25.8. He writes, "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 54–57). **Death has wielded its reign of terror over man since the Fall. The resurrection of Jesus sets into motion the eschatological events that will culminate in the resurrection of His people, an event which will mark the final defeat of death itself.**

 **The Dead in Christ**

In 1 Thessalonians 4.13–18, Paul turns to a specifically eschatological question regarding believers who have died. He writes, "But we do not want you to be uninformed brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4.13). A question has arisen among the Thessalonians because one or more of their fellow believers has died since Paul left.[[75]](#endnote-75)  Paul's basic response to their concern is to tell them that they have no reason to worry.

Paul tells the Thessalonians not to grieve over the dead like the unbelievers who have no hope. "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4.14; cf. Acts 17.3). Paul points the Thessalonians back to the resurrection of Jesus as the foundation of their hope for the dead in Christ. Jesus was raised from the dead, and those who are in Christ will be raised from the dead as well (cf. 2 Cor. 4.14). The eschatological resurrection began with the resurrection of Jesus. Believers now have hope because they know that they too will be raised to everlasting life.

Paul continues by explaining what will happen at the Lord's coming, "For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming (parousian) of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4.15).[[76]](#endnote-76)

Paul does not ever claim to know when he will die or exactly when the Second Coming of Jesus will occur.[[77]](#endnote-77) The "we" is simply an expression of corporate solidarity.[[78]](#endnote-78) Essentially, all that Paul means here is that those Christians who are alive at "the coming of the Lord" will not precede those who are dead.[[79]](#endnote-79)

Paul tells the Thessalonians, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4.16). It is important to observe that Paul specifically describes this event in terms of Christ's descent from heaven.[[80]](#endnote-80) As we have already seen, Jesus often spoke of "the coming of the Son of Man," alluding to the prophecy of Daniel 7.13–14. Daniel 7 spoke of one like a Son of Man coming up to the Ancient of Days. In other words, Daniel 7 used the imagery of an ascent. Daniel's prophecy of the Son of Man's ascent to receive his kingdom was fulfilled in connection with the first advent of Jesus. What Paul is speaking of here, on the other hand, is Christ's descent from heaven.[[81]](#endnote-81)

Christ's descent from heaven is the fulfillment of the promise made to the apostles by the two men in white at the time of the ascension (Acts 1.11). **In other words, at the time of Jesus' ascension to heaven (itself part of the fulfillment of Daniel 7.13–14), there is a promise of a future coming from heaven.** **The ascension to heaven and the promised coming from heaven are not the same events.** In 1 Thessalonians 4.16, Paul is speaking of the future coming from heaven—the Second Advent.[[82]](#endnote-82) At the time of the Second Coming, Christ will call out a "cry of command" (4.16). Jesus' cry of command is likely the command to the dead calling them to rise from the grave (John 5.28–29; cf. also John 11.43). At his command, "the dead in Christ will rise first."

Paul continues, "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (4.17). The word translated "to meet" is the word apantesin. This word was used in the Graeco-Roman world to describe the meeting of a king or other important official who has come to visit a city.[[83]](#endnote-83) As F.F. Bruce explains, "When a dignitary paid an official visit (parousia) to a city in Hellenistic times, the action of the leading citizens in going out to meet him and escort him back on the final stage of his journey was called the apantesin."[[84]](#endnote-84)

According to Paul, after the dead in Christ are raised, those who are still alive will be caught up together with them so that all will meet the Lord in the air and then be with him forever. Paul does not explicitly say at this point where we will be with the Lord forever. Some suggest that after meeting Christ in the air, we will go with Christ into heaven.[[85]](#endnote-85) However, if Paul is describing the meeting of Christians in the air with the Lord in terms of the known customs involving official visits of dignitaries and kings, then the idea is that believers will meet the coming Lord and escort him back to the earth. The Thessalonians are to encourage one another with these words (4.18).

How do we ***know that we know*** that Jesus is coming again?

* In Ephesians 1.14 the Bible says the Holy Spirit is *the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.* What does that mean? The Holy Spirit is our *down payment* to show us that Jesus is coming again![[86]](#endnote-86)

J. **God’s Covenant Contested**

The main body of Peter's second epistle begins with Peter's replies to several objections to his eschatological doctrine (2 Peter 1.16–21). Peter assures his readers that the apostles did not follow cleverly devised myths but were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty. At the Transfiguration of Jesus, they were even witnesses to a foretaste of the glory to be revealed at the Second Advent (vv. 17–18). Peter also argues that the eschatological doctrine of the apostles is based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets (v. 19), men who spoke the very Word of God (vv. 20–21).

Peter introduces the main topic of his letter in 2.1–3a, explaining,

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2.1–3)

Just as false prophets arose during the Old Testament era to obscure the eschatological message of the true prophets, **so too will false prophets obscure and debate the eschatological teaching of the apostles**. That these false prophets would arise had been predicted by the apostles.[[87]](#endnote-87) In verses 3b–10a, Peter explains that God reserves these false prophets for judgment, but he rescues godly men. The false prophets, according to Peter, are characterized particularly by their arrogance (2.10b–13a) and by their sensuality (vv. 13b–16). Peter strongly denounces this godless behavior.[[88]](#endnote-88)

In chapter 3, Peter tells his readers that they need to remember the predictions of the Old Testament prophets and know "that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation" (vv. 3–4). Peter responds to such statements by noting that the scoffers fail to take into account the judgment that occurred at the time of the flood (vv. 5–6). He assures his readers that the world will be judged again (v. 7). It is being preserved by God until that time.

Peter continues, saying:

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (2 Peter 3,8–10).[[89]](#endnote-89)

In the context, Peter is responding to those who are saying that God is slow to fulfill his promises. His response is threefold.

* First, Peter asserts that God's perspective on time is not the same as man's perspective (v. 8).[[90]](#endnote-90)
* Second, he explains that what the scoffers count as slowness is really God's patience on display (v. 9). He is providing the opportunity for repentance.
* Finally, Peter warns his readers that God will not delay his judgment forever (v. 10). Judgment will come. The language Peter uses to describe the coming judgment in verse 10 is the kind of highly figurative language the Old Testament prophets used to describe coming judgments (cf. Isa. 34.4; Joel 2.31).

Peter concludes this section saying,

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3.11–13)

The judgment that is coming is to provide grounds for holy living now. But Peter also quickly adds the glorious promise that we are waiting for: *new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* Judgment will also be accompanied by renewal. There will be new heavens and new earth (cf. Genesis 1.1). The fulfillment, the *final word,* of the covenant of the ages from the *King of Kings* and the *Lord of Lords.* Then ...*always (through the eternity of the eternities) we shall be with the Lord!* (1 Thessalonians 4.17) We should take heed to *Therefore comfort and encourage one another with these words.* (1 Thessalonians 4.18)

1. E.g., William Hendriksen, The Bible on the Life Hereafter (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959); Paul Helm, The Last Things (Carlisle: PA: Banner of Truth, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Stephen S. Smalley, John: Evangelist & Interpreter, 2d ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 265. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Covenant Theology is that system of theology interpreted by men which represents the whole of Scripture as being covered by two or three covenants. It explains all relationships between God and man from the beginning to the end of time under the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace, and (sometimes) the Covenant of Redemption. Reformed/Covenant theologians teach that Old Testament Israelites and New Testament believers are one people and that the church is but a continuation and successor of Israel. The church is usually understood as including the saints of all the ages. They teach that the church, as the successor of Israel, has now absorbed and appropriated Old Testament prophecies and promises. According to their thinking, the promises which God made to Israel are now being fulfilled by the church or they have been forfeited because of Israel’s unbelief. The aspect of Covenant Theology which teaches that the church has inherited God’s promises made to Israel is known as Replacement Theology. Covenant Theology is directly opposed to Dispensationalism which makes a clear and Biblical distinction between God’s program for Israel and God’s program for the church. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.simplybible.com/f216-word-study-covenant.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. God created Adam and Eve uniquely in God’s own image, and he called them “mankind’ He commanded them to " be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over... every living thing" (Genesis 1:27-28, 5:1-2).

God ordained that herbs and trees should provide food, and God "took Adam and put him in the garden of Eden, to tend and keep it" (Genesis 1:29, 2:8,15). So God appointed Adam a place and an occupation

God warned Adam not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. "For in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

God said, "It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). God made a woman and decreed that "a man shall be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

God foretold and promised that the seed (a descendant) of the woman would bruise the serpent's head and the serpent would bruise his heel (Genesis 3:15). This is thought, with good reason, to be the first Messianic promise —a promise that, although Satan would cause Christ to suffer, Christ would conquer Satan.

God said to Eve, "Your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:10).

God said to Adam, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

"God made tunics of skin and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). It is thought, with good reason, that the killing of animals to obtain the skins was the first sacrifice of flesh and blood for sins, and this foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ.

God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden where grew the tree of life. God appointed angels to guard the way back (Genesis 3:23-24). (https://www.simplybible.com/f46e-orig-gods-covenant-with-adam.htm) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cain and Abel, sons of Adam and Eve, were apparently required to offer sacrifices of the firstborn of the flock (Genesis 4:1-7).

Cain committed murder and told a lie, breaking God’s law. Cain was cursed by God and lost his livelihood as punishment (Genesis 4:8-12).

As human beings began to multiply, "people began to call on the name of the LORD." (Genesis 4:26).

However, Later, by the time of Noah, humanity had become universally wicked —except for Noah and his family. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:8). Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Elements of the Adamic covenant:

**Promises to believe.** (Tree of life held promises of eternal life. See Rev 22. Seed of Eve would bruises Satan’s head. See Gen 22.15-18, Gal 3.16, Heb 6.11-20.)

**Commands and laws to obey.** (Tend & keep garden; produce children, rule creation, keep away from forbidden tree.)

**Manifold Grace from God.** (Very good world [Gen 1.31]; man in His image and given a companion; clothes of animals [Gen 3.2-3]; Cain granted immunity [Gen 4.13-15]; plan of salvation ready [Gen 3.15].)

**Reward for Faithfulness.** (Enoch in Gen 5.24 and Heb 1.5; Noah Gen 6.8.)

**Wrath for disobedience and unbelief.** (Gen 2.16-17; Gen 3.23.)

**Sacrifice for Sins.** (Gen 3.9-11 and 21; Gen 4.4; Gen 8.20)

**Forgiveness of sins.** (Heb 10.4; Rom 3.25; Heb 9.15) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See Thomas E. McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 15–58.] [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Within God's call of Abram there are four basic promises:

(1) Offspring. In Genesis 12.2, God promises that he will make of Abram "a great nation." This promise will be fulfilled initially in the birth of the nation of Israel. This promise necessarily implies that Abram will have offspring, but like the promise of land, the promise of offspring is only made explicit when Abram reaches Canaan (cf. 12.7). The promise of offspring is also related to God's ultimate kingdom purposes. Just as the land promise provides a realm for God's kingdom in the midst of his creation, the promise of offspring anticipates a people for his kingdom.

(2) Land. When in v 1 God commands Abram to leave his home and go to the land that he will show Abram. The promise of land is not explicit in this initial command. It is only made explicit when Abram reaches the land of Canaan. At that point, God promises Abram, "To your offspring I will give this land" (12.7). This promise of land becomes a key theme throughout the remainder of the Old Testament.

(3) The blessing of Abram himself. God then promises to bless Abram and make his name great so that he will be a blessing.

 (4) The blessing of the nations through Abram. The fourth element of God's promise is that in Abram "all the families of the earth shall be blessed". Abraham will be the head of the "one family by whom all of the other families of the earth will be blessed." In fact, the blessing of all the families of the earth is the primary purpose behind God's calling of Abram. His calling and the promises he is given are not ends in themselves.

[T.D. Alexander, From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 85–86. Allusions to this promise are found in prophetic texts such as Isaiah 19.24 and Jeremiah 4.2.] As we proceed, the eschatological significance of God's promises to Abram and his determination to bless all the families of the earth will become clearer. As we will see, this blessing will come through the establishment of God's kingdom. From this point forward in Genesis, "the writer's primary concern is to trace the development of God's resolution to bless." [Allen P. Ross, Creation and Blessing (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1988), 253.] [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Taken in part from http://www.believersmagazine.com/bm.php?i=20140211 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10.12). Abram then makes a selfish proposition to Sarah (vv.11-13); he was prepared to put his wife in danger to save himself "that it may be well with *me" (*v.13)!

And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. Gen 12.7 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. God in His merciful providence overruled his servant's folly (what a comfort to us who often fail). Abram was soon despatched unceremoniously by Pharaoh. That’s when he retraced his steps to Bethel where he pitched his tent and built his altar "as at the first" (13.3-4), as we often do after learning from our mistakes. Abram repeated the same prayer and again "called on the *name*of the Lord". What infinite pardon and pity there is in that Name! It was a humble prayer of repentance because forgiveness was immediately granted; the memory of his former sweet communion was revived. Have we strayed from the path of faith and lost our focus? Let us "call upon the *Name*of the Lord" (Jer 33.3). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Elements of the Abrahamic covenant:

**Promises to believe.** (Offspring, a land, and personal blessing. I am your shield,
your very great reward (Gen 15.1).

**Commands and laws to obey.** God "credited,” "counted," or "reckoned" that faith to him as righteousness.

**Manifold Grace from God.**

During the **day** he can look at the **innumerable grains of fine dust** and recall God's promise: "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth" (13:16).

During the **nights** he can look up at the **innumerable stars** and recall God's promise, "So shall your offspring be" (15:5).

What wonderful, constant reminders as Abraham waits for the fulfillment of the promise!

**Reward for Faithfulness.**

Now Abram believes that God will fulfill his promise of offspring. "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Gen 15: 6) This key verse is a mainstay of Paul's teaching on justification by faith (Romans 4:3-6, 9, 20, 25; Galatians 3:6-9; James 2:23)

Gen 17.1-2 (AMP) WHEN ABRAM was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, I am the Almighty God; walk and live habitually before Me and be perfect (blameless, wholehearted, complete). And I will make My covenant (solemn pledge) between Me and you and will multiply you exceedingly.

Gen 22.18 (AMP) And in your Seed [Christ] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed and [by Him] bless themselves, **because you have heard and obeyed My voice.**

**Sacrifice for Sins.** The blazing torch passes between the slain animals to foreshadow Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. The covenant God makes with Abram causes him to fall into a deep sleep and God alone walks through the slain animals **to show that He will fulfill both parts of the covenant that Abram receives through faith**.

Yahweh now solemnly enters into covenant with Abraham:

"When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram...." (15:17-18a)

The word "covenant" is the Hebrew noun berit. Between nations it is a "treaty, alliance of friendship." Between individuals it is "a pledge or agreement, with obligation between a monarch and subjects: a constitution." Between God and man it is "a covenant accompanied by signs, sacrifices, and a solemn oath that sealed the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking it."[27] In our study, the covenant is between God and an individual (and his offspring). When the Biblical account moves to the Exodus, God makes a covenant with his people, on the pattern of the suzerain-vassal treaty found in the ancient Near East.

But what is going on here with the animals cut in half? The word "made" as in "made a covenant" in 15:15 is the Hebrew verb kārat, with the root meaning "to cut off." It is used in the phrase "to cut" or "make" a covenant. "A covenant must be cut because the slaughter of animals was a part of the covenant ritual."[23]

There is widespread evidence that in the biblical world animals were slaughtered in treaty contraction ceremonies. When the parties to the treaty walked between the rows of freshly killed animal flesh, they placed a curse upon themselves -- May they too be cut limb from limb if they violate the treaty or covenant. This explains a passage from Jeremiah:

"The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces. The leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf, I will hand over to their enemies who seek their lives. Their dead bodies will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth." (Jeremiah 34:18-20)

The smoking firepot[24] and blazing torch[25] that Abraham observes represent God himself walking between the animal carcasses -- binding himself solemnly to his promise. Abraham doesn't walk between the pieces, Yahweh does, making it a unilateral promise that God pledges to fulfill in the most solemn and binding way.

We Christians know the end of the story, where God himself bears -- in the broken body of his innocent Son -- the penalty for man's breaking of the covenant.

"And so the Creator of the universe binds himself through this theophany-ritual to an unconditional promise ratified by blood. The binding is symbolized by the smoking furnace and flaming torch passing between the pieces of the slain victims. Perhaps it was a symbol that ultimate fulfillment would come only when the God-man as an innocent victim bore the curse of a broken body in behalf of those who have broken the Covenant" (Elmer B. Smick, TWOT #1048).

Taken primarily from https://www.jesuswalk.com/abraham/4\_covenant.htm. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Elements of God’s Covenant with Noah:

**Promises to believe.**  "As for me, I establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you... This is the sign of the covenant which I make... I set my rainbow in the cloud..." (Genesis 9:9,13).

**Commands and laws to obey.** Although sometimes *covenant* means a formal *negotiated* agreement, this is the type of covenant or solemn promise or vow by one party to benefit a second party without requiring the other party to fulfill any obligations.,

**Manifold Grace from God.** God's rainbow promise is also such a covenant as described in #2 above. God made a promise never again to destroy the whole world with a flood, and he set his bow in the sky as a sign of this covenant (Genesis 9:8-17). The people of Earth are not required to do anything to benefit from this promise. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. How could this vulnerable remnant of life survive? Well "God remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1). He sent a strong wind to dry the earth for Noah, and called him out of the ark. Sometimes in our lives there can be such devastation that we wonder how we shall survive. But God remembers us and comes to our aid. Even the dead and buried God will remember. He will send Christ to call them out of the graves (John 5:28-29). If they, like Noah, have obeyed the Lord, God will usher them into a new world 2 Peter 3:13. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Elements of God’s Covenant with Moses:

**Promises to believe.** If you obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my special possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. (Ex 19.5-6) ...if you hearken attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. (Ex 23.22) The fifth great promise of the Mosaic covenant is that God will treat Israel with mercy and grace and will forgive her sins—if she keeps the covenant. (Ex 34.6-7) In summary, then, five divine promises of the Mosaic covenant, which reconfirm the covenant with Abraham, are

that Israel will be God's special possession,

Israel will be a kingdom of priests to God,

Israel will be a holy nation,

God will fight for Israel and overcome all her enemies, and

God will treat Israel with grace and mercy and forgive her sins.

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

**Commands and laws to obey.** This type of covenant makes promises that are conditional upon the beneficiary doing something specified.

An insurance policy legally binds the insurer to cover the insured against certain losses provided the insured pays premiums and looks after the property.

A persons last will and testament may have certain conditions that the beneficiary must comply with in order to inherit.

The lengthy recitation of blessings and curses is followed in chapters 29–30 by Moses' third major address to the people. In this final address, he reminds them of all that God has done for them and appeals for covenant faithfulness (ch. 29). He then places before them a choice between life and death and demands a decision (ch. 30).

**Manifold Grace from God.** But during the forty days the people had already broken their covenant promise and made an idol. In Exodus 32:8 God says, "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them." Moses prays for the people and God withholds his destruction (32:11–14). When Moses comes down to the camp (v. 19), he smashes the two tables of the covenant to show how the people have broken the covenant. The sons of Levi slaughter 3,000 men (32:28) and God sends a plague (v. 35) but the nation as a whole is spared through Moses' prayer.

**Reward for Faithfulness AND**

**Wrath for disobedience and unbelief.** Deuteronomy 27–30 is important for an understanding of biblical eschatology because it contains God's pronouncement of the blessings that will result from obedience to the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant and the curses that will result from disobedience (cf. Lev. 26).

In chapter 27, Moses commands the people to set up plastered stones at Mount Ebal upon which they are to write all the words of the law (vv. 1–8). After the people enter the land, six of the tribes are to stand on Mount Gerizim and six are to stand on Mount Ebal (vv. 11–13). The Levites are then to recite a summary of the curses of the covenant (vv. 14–26). Chapter 28 outlines in great detail the blessings for obedience to God's covenant stipulations (vv. 1–14) and the curses for disobedience (vv. 15–68).

Among the curses is the ultimate punishment, namely exile from the land (vv. 36, 64–65).

**Sacrifice for Sins.** In his final address, Moses foresees that the people will not remain true to God and that the curses of the covenant, including exile, will ultimately fall upon them (cf. 30:1). But he also foresees that Israel will eventually repent and be restored from exile (vv. 2–10). T.D. Alexander, From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 275.

This foreseen restoration from exile, however, raises an important question: ... even if Israel repents and is restored from exile, what is to prevent the entire cycle of disobedience and curses from occurring again? An answer to the problem is found in Deuteronomy 30.6 where Moses declares, "And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." What God had commanded in Deuteronomy 10.16, he promises that he himself will do in 30.6. The answer to the problem of Israel's stubborn infidelity ultimately rests in God himself. *"He will somehow enable his people ultimately to do what they cannot do in their strength, namely, to obey him out of the conviction and devotion of their own hearts."* (McConville, Grace in the End, 137). God's promise to circumcise their hearts anticipates the promise of a new heart and new covenant found in the prophets. (Jer. 3.:31–34; Ezek. 36.22–28) In effect, God is telling Israel in Deuteronomy that she cannot in her own strength obey the very law that he is giving her. Because of Israel's stubborn self-confidence, however, this is something that she will have to learn the hard way.

**Forgiveness of sins.** Now the question is, what becomes of the covenant? They had broken it before it was even completed. If this covenant were based on works or on strict justice alone Israel would be done for. But to show that the covenant is based on grace, God renews the covenant and uses words which make this gracious foundation clear. In Exodus 34:1 God tells Moses to make a new set of stone tables and to come up again. In 34:6–7 God reveals himself and the basis of the renewed covenant: "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and children's children, to the third and fourth generation."' Moses pleads in verse 9, "Pardon our iniquity and our sin and take us for thine inheritance." And the Lord responds in verse 10, "Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth or in any nation." [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. T.D. Alexander, From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 275. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. (McConville, Grace in the End, 137). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. **Promises to believe.** After God rehearses His mercies over David (see #3 below), He then promises David:

He will make for David a great name (2 Sam. 7.9b).

He will give Israel rest from her enemies and

He will make a house for David (2 Sam. 7.10–11).

He will establish the kingdom of David's offspring (2 Sam. 7.12).

That David's offspring will build a house for God, and that he will establish David's kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7.13).

"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (2 Sam. 7.14a)

Although God warns that he will discipline David's offspring if he commits iniquity, but God also promises that his steadfast love will not depart from David as it was taken from Saul (2 Sam. 7.14b–15).

**"... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever"** (2 Sam. 7.16).

**Commands and laws to obey.** The Davidic Covenant is unconditional because God does not place any conditions of obedience upon its fulfillment. The surety of the promises made rests solely on God’s faithfulness and does not depend at all on David or Israel’s obedience.

**Manifold Grace from God.** In 2 Samuel 7.4–16, God reminds David that since the time he brought Israel out of Egypt he has moved with the people in the tabernacle (2 Sam. 7.4–7). He reminds David that he has been with him wherever he went and has defeated David's enemies (2 Sam. 7.8–9a). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. The king is God's anointed one, that is, his "messiah." The rule of David as God's anointed one, his "messiah," is later used by the prophets to picture the coming eschatological king. (cf. 1 Sam. 16.3, 6, 12–13; 24.6; 26.9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam. 1.14, 16; 3.39; 19.21).

 (Heb. mashiah). As Dillard and Longman explain, "The Hebrew term mashiah means 'anointed one,' and the idea of a Messiah for Israel grows out of her ideology about a righteous king, one who would be like David." Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 146. Throughout the books of Samuel, the "Lord's anointed" is a major theme”. (William J. Dumbrell, The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology is Focus (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 64.J) [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. [Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation, 152.] [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. . [O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1980), 232.] [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Anderson, 2 Samuel, 122. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1996), 336.] [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. .[^16] [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. [O. Palmer Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, 249.] [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. [Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, 241.] [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. [Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 337.] [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Daniel Block, "My Servant David: Ancient Israel's Vision of the Messiah" in Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, ed. Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic: 2003), 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. VanGemeren, Interpreting the Prophetic Word, 233. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. [Joyce G. Baldwin, 1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary, TOTC 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 213.] [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. (cf. Isa. 713–25; 16.5; 55.3; Jer. 30.8; 33:14–26; Ezek. 34.20–24; 37.24–25; Hos. 3.5; Zech. 6.12–13; 12.7–8) [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. (cf. Matt. 1.1; Acts 13.22–23). [Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 337–8..] [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. The pre-exilic prophets can be divided into the pre-Assyrian and pre-Babylonian prophets. The pre-Assyrian prophets were **Jonah**, **Amos**, **Hosea**, **Micah**, and **Isaiah**. They ministered from 734 to 722 BC and warned of the coming of the Assyrian empire, who took the northern tribes of Israel into exile in 722 BC. The pre-Babylonian prophets were **Nahum**, **Zephaniah**, **Habakkuk**, **Jeremiah**, and **Ezekiel**. They ministered from 722 to 586 BC and warned of the coming of the Babylonian empire, who took the southern tribe of Judah into exile. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. https://www.knowingthebible.net/bible-studies/the-pre-exilic-prophets [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. John N. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 174–5. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Old Testament:

 1) Holy, Holy, Holy (Isaiah 6:3)

 2) Temple Lord, Temple Lord, Temple Lord (Jeremiah 7:4)

 3) Land, Land, Land (Jeremiah 22:29)

 4) Ruin, Ruin, Ruin (Ezekiel 21:32 in Hebrew, Ezekiel 21:27 in LXX and English)

 New Testament

 1) Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Luke 13:33-34)

 2) Holy, Holy, Holy (Revelation 4:8)

﻿ 3) Woe, Woe, Woe (Revelation 8:13) [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. J. Alec Motyer, Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999), 71. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. After declaring that the nation in whom Judah trusted for deliverance would turn against Judah (8.5–10), and

After calling upon Judah to trust in God (8.11–22),

**Isaiah again points forward to the coming Messiah** (9.1–7).

Verses 2–3 describe the unbounded joy of the people. This joy is due to their deliverance from oppression (v. 9.4), and their deliverance from oppression is due to the end of all war (v. 9.5).

**But how will God end war? He will accomplish this through the birth of a child.** [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. "The perfection of this King is seen in his qualifications for ruling (Wonderful Counselor), his person and power (Mighty God), his relationship to his subjects (Everlasting Father) and the security his rule creates (Prince of Peace)."

The reign of this Messianic king will have no end. He will be the final king who will once and for all replace unfaithful kings like Ahaz. (Brevard S. Childs, Isaiah [Louisville: Westminster, 2001], 81) [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Cf. Jack R. Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36 (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 368; J. A. Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 551; R. K. Harrison, Jeremiah and Lamentations (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 133. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Thompson, Jeremiah, 551. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Jeremiah places the inauguration of the new covenant at an unspecified time in the future: "the days are coming" (v. 31).

All that is certain, in light of the context, is that it will not occur until after the time of exile.

The concept of a "new covenant" is found elsewhere in the prophets (e.g. Ezek. 37:26). However, the specific term (berit hadashah) is found only here in the Old Testament. The need for this new covenant is evident. The covenant that was established at Sinai has been broken by Israel. It must be superseded by another covenant. (O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 272; cf. also William J. Dumbrell, Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants, 1984], 164.)

This is precisely what the Lord promises to do. The covenant will be made with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah." In other words, a new covenant will be made with those who broke the old covenant.

In our examination of the New Testament, the relationship between "Israel" and believing Gentiles will be explored in more detail. Here it is only necessary to make a few observations that will prepare for that discussion. First, it is evident from our reading of the history of God's people that any Gentile could become a part of "Israel" by confessing faith in Yahweh (e.g. Ruth). Gentiles could become "my people" and Jews could become "not my people" (cf. Exod. 12:43–48; Hos. 1:9). However, although this is an important truth, it must also be remembered that in Jeremiah's day, at this stage in the progress of God's revelation, "Israel" was primarily understood as the ethnic community descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Israel" was a people distinguishable from the surrounding Gentile peoples, whether they were Assyrians, Egyptians, or Philistines. This is how Jeremiah uses the term here.

The emphasis in verses 32–33 is upon the discontinuity between the old covenant and the new covenant, but it is not a total discontinuity.

	* The Lord emphasizes discontinuity when he declares that the new covenant is "not like the covenant that I made with their fathers" (v. 32).
	* Both discontinuity and continuity are evident in the next verse, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts" (v. 33).
	* Under the old covenant, the law was written on tablets of stone (cf. Exod. 24:12; 34:1). Under the new covenant, the law will be written on the hearts of God's people. Herein lies one major element of discontinuity.
	* Yet the continuity is evident in that it is "the law" that is written on the hearts of his people.(Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, 281–82.) God himself will make the necessary changes within the hearts of his people (cf. Deut. 30:6). (Thompson, Jeremiah, 581.)
	* Under the old covenant, the people had to be continually instructed to do the law and to remember the law (cf. Deut. 4:23; 5:1, 32; 6:3, 12; 8:11; etc.).
	* In verse 34, the Lord declares that with the law inscribed on the people's hearts, this will no longer be necessary because all will know the Lord.
	* Finally, in one of the most profound promises involved with the new covenant, the Lord says, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
	* Under the old covenant, provisions were made for the forgiveness of sin by means of the various sacrifices. But these sacrifices had to be constantly repeated, indicating that they had no inherent power within themselves to remove sin (cf. Heb. 10:1–10).
	* Under the new covenant, the shadows will be replaced by the reality, and God will not only "forgive their iniquity" but also "remember their sin no more." [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Thompson, Jeremiah, 553. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. It is a hope that will also be echoed in the New Testament in the writings of the Apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 11:1, 28–29). [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. The post-exilic prophets were **Haggai**, **Zechariah**, and **Malachi**. They ministered from 520 to 431 BC, confronted Israel’s continued corruption, and called the Israelites to a life of holiness. There is no date attached to the prophets Obadiah and Joel, and so some prophets put them with the pre-exilic prophets because they are located in the Bible along with these prophets. However, the fact that they never mention the coming of the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish Israel or the exile of Israel points to the probability that the exile has already happened. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. The ultimate curse of the covenant had been realized.

Judah and Jerusalem had fallen to the armies of Nebuchadnezzar.

Many of the people of the land had been taken captive to Babylon, while others had fled to Egypt and parts unknown.

A small number of the poor had remained behind in Judah.

After centuries of prophetic warnings, the death penalty had been carried out on Israel.

The land was in ruins, and the people were in exile.

In 539 B.C., Babylon fell to the Persians.

In 538, Cyrus issued a decree permitting the exiled Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the temple. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Willem A. VanGemeren, Interpreting the Prophetic Word: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 87. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. VanGemeren, Interpreting the Prophetic Word, 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Donald E. Gowan, Eschatology in the Old Testament, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. **Old and new covenants compared (See *The Better Covenant* handout for more extensive comparison)**

2 Corinthians 3:6-18 “...a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.”

Galatians 3:6-29 “...the blessing of Abraham... the promise of the Spirit through faith... Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed... Christ. The law which came 430 years later does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.”

Galatians 4:21-28 “...an allegory... [Hagar the bondwoman and Sarah the freewoman] are two covenants... ” [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. **The blood of the new covenant**

Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24 “...my blood of the new covenant...”

Luke 22:20, 1Corinthians 11:25 “...the new covenant in my blood...”

Hebrews 9:19-22, 10:16,29, 13:20 “...the blood of the [everlasting] covenant...” [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. **Mediator of the new covenant**

Hebrews 8:6-10 “...the mediator of a better covenant...”

Hebrews 9:15, 12:24 “...mediator of the new covenant...”

1Timothy 2:5-6 “...one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for many, the testimony borne at the proper time.” Note: “testimony” here refers to the covenant. Compare Exodus 31:18 with Deuteronomy 9:9 where “testimony” and “covenant” are interchangeable terms. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. https://www.simplybible.com/f45b-new-covenant-how-instituted.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Elements of the God’s covenant through Christ:

**Promises to believe.**

...*if any man sin,* ***we have an advocate with the Father****, Jesus Christ the righteous:* ***And he is the propitiation for our sins****: and not for ours only, but also* ***for the sins of the whole world****. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.But* ***whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected****: hereby know we that we are in him.He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* (1 John 2:1-6).

**Commands and laws to obey.** Is the new covenant mediated by Jesus Christ a covenant in which the promises are *conditional*? Yes, it is. It's important to understand that the new covenant of Christ is not a negotiated agreement, nor an unconditional promise, but a law that is gracious to those who keep it and wrathful to those who don't. People either accept the covenant and are subject to grace as saints and sons of God through obedience of faith, or they violate the covenant and are subject to wrath as enemies of God through disobedience and unbelief. Either way they are involved with God within the scope of Christ’s covenant.

**Manifold Grace from God.** John 3.16, Rom 3.24, James 4.6, Eph 2.8, 1 Cor 1.3, Phil 1.2, 2 Peter 1.2, Titus 2.11, 1 Cor 1.4, 2 Cor 6.1, 2 Cor 4.15, Acts 20.32, 1 Peter 5.10, Heb 4.16, Eph 1.3-6, 2 Cor 9.8

**Reward for Faithfulness.** If we obey the covenant of Christ, then we "have our access to the Father in one Spirit... no longer aliens and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and are of God's household" (Ephesians 2:4-10, Ephesians 2:18-22).

**Wrath for disobedience and unbelief.** If we are not compliant with the covenant mediated by Jesus, then we are "dead in trespasses and sins... sons of disobedience... children of wrath... strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:1-3,11-12).

**Sacrifice for Sins.** 1 John 2.2 *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* See also John 1.29, Heb 9.22, Eph 5.2, Eph 1.7, Rom 5.8, Heb 10.10, 2 Cor 5.21, Rom 6.4, Rev 13.8, 1 Peter 3.18, 1 Peter 2.24, Heb 10.12, Heb 9.25-28; Heb 9.14, 1 Tim 2.5, 1 Cor15.3, Rom 6.23, John 14.6, Rev 1.17-18, Rev 1.5, 1 John 4.10, 1 John 3.5, 1 John 1.9, 1 Peter 1.18-20, Heb 7.27, Eph 2.13, Gal 3.13, Gal 2.20, Gal 1.4) [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. John T. Carroll, Response to the End of History: Eschatology and Situation in Luke-Acts(Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. See Joel B. Green, The Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 47. Mark L. Strauss points out the specific mention of the promises to David in 1:26–38, 68–79; and 2:1–20 [The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic,1995, 76)]. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. The narratives begin with the promise of the birth of John the Baptist in 1:5–25. Zechariah, a priest of God, and his wife Elizabeth are an elderly righteous couple, but they are childless (vv. 5–7). While in the Temple burning incense, the angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah (vv. 8–12, cf. v. 19). He promises Zechariah that he and his wife shall bear a son whose name will be John (v. 13). [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Raymond E. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), 270–71. Gabriel tells Zechariah that the birth of John will bring him joy and gladness and that many will rejoice at his birth (v. 14). The child will be great before the Lord and will be filled with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, like the Nazirites of the Old Testament, the child is not to drink wine or strong drink (v. 15; cf. Num. 6:2–3). Gabriel then says of John, "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (vv. 16–17). [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Darrell L. Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 99–100. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. The promise of John's birth is followed by Luke's narrative of the promise of Jesus' birth in 1:26–38. Again Gabriel is sent to bear the news, but this time he is sent to the one who will be the child's mother, a virgin named Mary (vv. 26–28). Mary is troubled by the appearance of the angel, but he tells her not to be afraid for she has found favor with God (29–30). The phrase "found favor" is common in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 6:8; 18:3; 39:21; 43:14; Judg. 6:17; 1 Sam. 1:18; 2 Sam. 15:25). The angel then makes his announcement:

*And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High****.*** *And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end* (vv. 31–33).

Concerning John, the angel had said, "*he will be great before the Lord*" (v. 15). But of Jesus, he says, "he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." Zechariah's child will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Mary's child will be the Lord.

The first thing then that Luke tells us about Jesus is that in him the promises made to David will be fulfilled. All the hopes of Israel and the world rest with this child. The angel Gabriel tells Mary that her child will be given the throne of his father David and that he will reign over Jacob forever in a kingdom without end. This is not a direct quotation of any particular Old Testament verse. Instead it is a summary of several Old Testament prophetic expectations, in particular God's promise to David (2 Sam. 7:9–16; cf. Ps. 89:26–29, 36; Isa. 7:14; 9:6–7; Dan. 7:14). Strauss, The Davidic Messiah, 88–89.

Although the manner of Jesus' conception is miraculous, the nature of the conception itself is not the focus of the passage. The focus is upon the identity of this unique child. The nature of his conception and the content of the angel's announcement serve to identify this child as the Son of God and the Davidic Messiah. (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke [I – IX] [New York: Doubleday, 1981], 340; cf. also Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50, 127)

There is more in your notes, but when Mary visits Elizabeth, and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit acknowledging Mary is the *...mother of my Lord* (Luke 1.43), Mary responds with a song that is known as the “Magnificat” in vv. 46-55. In the song, Mary seems to speak as the representative of the people of Israel. (Luke Timothy Johnson, The Gospel of Luke [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991], 43.) Throughout the song, two images of God are seen. God is described as the divine warrior who delivers his people from their enemies. He is also described as the God who is great in mercy toward his people, (Green, The Gospel of Luke, 102) ending with:

 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

 as he spoke to our fathers,

 to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

he has brought down the mighty from their thrones

and exalted those of humble estate;

he has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

as he spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

The Magnificat most closely resembles Hannah's song of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1–10, but it alludes to numerous other Old Testament texts as well. The opening verses (vv. 46–47) closely resemble Psalm 35:9 and Habakkuk 3:18. The first half of verse 48 echoes 1 Samuel 1:11, while the second half echoes Genesis 30:13. Verse 49 resembles Deuteronomy 10:21. Verse 50 is very similar to Psalm 103:17. Verses 51–53 are similar to 1 Samuel 2:7–8. And verses 54–55 echo several Old Testament texts, including Isaiah 41:8–9; Psalm 98:3; and Micah 7:20.

More connections to fulfillment of prophecies

The birth of John the Baptist and Zechariah's response are narrated by Luke in 1:57–80. The response to John's birth is Zechariah's prophecy, known as the "Benedictus" (vv. 68–79), which you can find in your notes, where Zechariah proclaims:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

In the announcement of John's birth, the angel Gabriel had spoken of John as the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah. In the Magnificat, Mary had spoken of Jesus as the one in whom Israel's eschatological hopes rest. In the Benedictus, Zechariah speaks of both John and Jesus, tying their redemptive roles together. Jesus will be the "horn of salvation" (cf. Ps. 18:2; 132:17; Ezek. 29:21). Jesus is the Messiah, and he will come to the people who sit in darkness and death and will be a light of salvation for them.

The birth of Jesus and the immediate responses to it are narrated in 2:1–40. Luke places the birth of Jesus in its specific historical context. He writes, "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria" (2:1–2). (Note: A number of historical questions surround these verses. For a helpful discussion, see Darrell L. Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 903–909.) Augustus had restored peace to Rome after a century of civil wars. He is referred to in inscriptions from the era as "savior." His birthday is referred to as the beginning of the "gospel." (Hans-Josef Klauck, The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 296–98; cf. Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 46.) Luke's infancy narratives indicate that Jesus is the true Savior. His advent is the true "good news.” (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke [I – IX] [New York: Doubleday, 1981], 394)

Because of the census, Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered (2:3–5). While in Bethlehem, Mary gives birth to Jesus (vv. 6–7). Luke then describes the appearance of an angel to some shepherds, who were watching over flocks in a field. The angel declares, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord" (vv. 10–11). The angel is proclaiming the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6–7. Jesus is the promised child. He is the Savior. He is the Christ, or Messiah. And he is the Lord. After declaring all of these titles of the child, the angel tells the shepherds, "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (v. 12). The paradox here is that Israel's long-awaited Messiah is to be found lying in a feeding trough.

According to the law of Moses, a woman was considered unclean for forty days following the birth of a child (Lev. 12:2–4). After the forty days, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord as was necessary with all firstborn sons (Luke 2:22–23; cf. Exod. 13:2, 12, 15; Num. 18:15–16). In Jerusalem, they encounter a righteous man named Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah (vv. 25–27). When Joseph and Mary present Jesus in the Temple, Simeon takes the child, blesses God, and says, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (vv. 29–32). Simeon here speaks of Jesus as not only the salvation of Israel, but of the Gentiles as well. He is the one who will bless the nations in fulfillment of the ancient promise to Abraham.

Having offered his blessing to God for the birth of the Messiah, Simeon blesses the child's parents (vv. 33–35). He tells Mary, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." Simeon's first statement recalls Isaiah’s prophecy of the stone of offense upon which many will stumble (Isa. 8:14–15). Many will stumble over the claims of Jesus. He will also be a sign that will be opposed. Simeon tells Mary of the anguish she will suffer because of the rejection of her son, a rejection that will culminate in his death. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Strauss, The Davidic Messiah, 88–89. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke [I – IX] [New York: Doubleday, 1981], 340; cf. also Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50, 127) [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. (Luke Timothy Johnson, The Gospel of Luke [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991], 43.) [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. (Luke Timothy Johnson, The Gospel of Luke [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991], 43.) [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St John (London: SPCK, 1960), 214. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Cf. Beasley-Murray, John, 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Barrett, Gospel According to St John, 218. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Cf. George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 341; Carson, Gospel According to John, 256. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Barrett, Gospel According to St John, 219; Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John I-XII (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 218–21; F.F. Bruce, The Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 131–33; Carson, Gospel According to John, 258. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of John: A Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:654–55. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Beasley-Murray, John, 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the Gospel that he had preached to them and that they had believed (15:1). In

other words, Paul begins his argument by stating a belief on which they agree, and from there he moves to the necessary consequences of that belief. Paul states the content of his Gospel that he had preached to them and that they had believed (15:1) in verses 3–5, saying, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

The death and resurrection of Jesus are the center of Paul's proclamation of the Gospel.

It is by means of Christ's death and resurrection that the two evils introduced into the world at the time of the Fall are overcome.

**Christ's death on the cross is God's solution to the problem of sin, and Christ's resurrection from the grave is God's solution to the problem of death.**

When Paul says that "Christ died for our sins," he is alluding to Isaiah 53:5–6 and its language of substitutionary atonement.

But when Paul says that Christ died and was raised "in accordance with the Scriptures," he has more in mind than the fulfillment of specific individual texts. Rather, **the death and resurrection of Christ are the climactic fulfillment of the entire Old Testament narrative**. (Anthony C. Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 1195; cf. also C.K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians [New York: Harper & Row, 1968], 338.)

This is the Gospel that the Corinthians believed. They professed belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Sure of their faith in the resurrection of Christ, Paul asks, "how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (15:12). The remainder of the chapter makes it clear that what the Corinthians were denying was the idea of a future bodily resurrection. (See Joost Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 40; Richard B. Hays, First Corinthians [Louisville: John Knox, 1997], 253; David E. Garland, 1 Corinthians [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 699; I Howard Marshall, New Testament Theology [Downers Grove: IVP, 2004], 264.)

In this, they were simply expressing the beliefs of ancient paganism, which denied the very possibility of such a thing. (For a discussion of ancient pagan views of the afterlife, see N.T. Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 32–84.)

In verses 12–19, Paul explains the consequences of such a denial. Paul explains, "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised" (v. 13).

Here Paul is showing the contradictory nature of their beliefs. They profess belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ while at the same time denying the possibility of bodily resurrection, but their denial of the resurrection of the dead necessitates the conclusion that Christ was not raised. **Their denial of the resurrection of the dead is a denial of the very heart of Christianity**. (Barrett, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 346.)

In verses 13–19, Paul expands on the consequences of their denial of the resurrection of the dead.

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not raised, and if Christ is not raised Paul's preaching is in vain, and the Corinthians' faith is in vain (v. 14).

If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christians are bearing false witness against God by claiming that he raised Jesus from the dead (v. 15).

If Christ has not been raised, the Corinthians are still in their sins (vv. 16–17) and those who have died are without hope (v. 18).

If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christians are the most pitiful of people for believing in a delusion (v. 19).

In short, what Paul is telling the Corinthians is that if their denial of the resurrection of the dead is true, then Christianity is worthless nonsense. (Hays, First Corinthians, 260; cf. Thiselton, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1218.)

 Paul changes course slightly in verses 20–28 by moving back to the point of agreement between himself and the Corinthians.

He writes, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (v. 20).

The word "firstfruits" (aparche) refers to the first and representative portion of an agricultural harvest. (Raymond F. Collins, First Corinthians [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999], 547–48; cf. Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia, 50.) It implies more "fruit" to come, and it implies a relationship between the firstfruits and the remaining harvest.

**"The designation of the risen Jesus as the 'first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep' (v. 20) means that Jesus has been raised as the first and the representative of those who will be raised.**" (Raymond F. Collins, Ibid, 51.)

In other words, Christ's resurrection and the future bodily resurrection of Christ's people form "an unbreakable unity.” (Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 538.)

 Paul continues, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (vv. 21–22).

[Paul] establishes that, just as death came into the world through Adam, resulting in the death of all people who are represented by Adam, so resurrection came into the world through Christ, resulting in the resurrection of all people who are represented by Christ." Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia, 55. He explains further, "The parallelism between the two clauses of verse 22 does not lie in the fact that both groups are identical, but in the fact that for both groups the representative determines the fate of the group. The unity with Adam leads to death, the unity with Christ leads to resurrection. Since only Christians are united with Christ, only Christians will be made alive through Christ" (p. 53).

 Paul elaborates on the sequence of resurrection, saying, "But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then (epeita) at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then (eita) comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" (15:23–24).

Paul pictures Christ's resurrection as the inauguration of the eschatological resurrection; it is all one harvest. Jesus' resurrection is the first stage in the eschatological resurrection, and the resurrection of Christians is the second stage. Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia, 1; cf. Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 746; N.T. Wright, The Climax of the Covenant (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 27.

The resurrection of believers occurs "at his coming," which means that it is a future event.

 Paul concludes this section by building on Psalm 110:1. He writes, "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (vv. 25–26). Paul then quotes Psalm 8:6 as he envisions the subjection of all things to God (vv. 27–28). The full manifestation of the kingdom of God is Christ's ultimate goal. Through Christ, God defeats every enemy in order that his reign might be established over all. Collins, First Corinthians, 555; Holleman, Resurrection and Parousia, 60.The eschatological importance of the resurrection could not be made any clearer than it is in this section of Paul's epistle.

 Paul concludes his argument for the reality of the resurrection of the dead in 15:29–34. He asks several rhetorical questions to add weight to his argument... "Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?" (v. 29). Numerous interpretations of the meaning of this verse have been suggested. ...Thiselton's suggestion is that baptism on behalf of the dead "refers to the decision of a person or persons to ask for, and to receive baptism as a result of the desire to be united with their believing relatives who have died." Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1248.In other words, dying believers would urge their unbelieving family members to become Christians in order that they might be together again. Paul, then, is referring to those unbelievers who converted to Christ for this reason as those who were "baptized on behalf of the dead." If there is no resurrection of the dead, their conversion/baptism was for naught. Paul's second question concerns the dangers he places himself in (vv. 30–34). If there is no resurrection, then what he is doing is foolish in the extreme.

 The reason behind the Corinthians' denial of the resurrection of the dead was a worldview that abhorred the idea of bodily resurrection. They may have thought that "resurrection" meant nothing more than the mere reanimation of a corpse. Paul turns his attention to this issue in 15:35–49. He writes, "But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"" (v. 35). The word translated "body" is the Greek word soma. Paul uses the word in relation to human beings to speak of the physical body. (See Robert H. Gundry, Soma in Biblical Theology [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 80; cf. also James D.G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 61.) As Gundry explains, Paul uses this word "precisely because the physicality of the resurrection is central to his soteriology." (Gundry, Soma, 169.)

 Paul rebukes his hypothetical questioner (15:36a) and then uses an agricultural analogy to illustrate continuity and discontinuity between the present body and the resurrected body (v. 37). As Hays explains, "The analogy of the seed enables Paul to walk a fine line, asserting both the radical transformation of the body in its resurrected state and yet its organic continuity with the mortal body that precedes it." (Hays, First Corinthians, 270; cf. also Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1264; Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 341.) Paul then describes the many different kinds of bodies that God has created: for humans, animals, birds, fish, heavenly bodies, earthly bodies, sun, moon, and stars (vv. 38–41). Reading Paul's list here reminds one of the creation account of Genesis. (Paul's later mention of Adam adds weight to the comparison.) The whole creation was affected by the Fall (cf. Rom. 8:20–21). By mentioning all aspects of God's creation in the context of a discussion of resurrection, Paul may be hinting at the idea of the new creation, when everything will be set free from the effects of the curse. (Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 313.) Paul continues,

 So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (15:42–44).

 Paul's words indicate both continuity and transformation.  (Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 777.) The continuity is seen in the fact that the same "it" that is sown is also raised. The transformation is seen in the contrasts that Paul describes: perishable vs. imperishable; dishonor vs. glory; weakness vs. power; natural vs. spiritual.

 Paul's use of the words "spiritual body" to describe the resurrection body has led some to deny the corporeal nature of the resurrection of the dead, but the words themselves lend no weight to such an argument. In verse 44, Paul says "It is sown a natural body (soma psychikon); it is raised a spiritual body (soma pneumatikon)." To say that the resurrection body is a soma pneumatikon does not mean that it is composed of a pneumatic substance. (See Geerhardus Vos, The Pauline Eschatology [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1991], 166–67; Ridderbos, Paul, 544; Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 786.) The contrast Paul is making is between a "natural body" (i.e., a body animated by the breath of life given to Adam) and a "spiritual body" (i.e., a body animated by the Holy Spirit). (Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 354; cf. Ridderbos, Paul, 541–42.) Richard Hays suggests that the Jerusalem Bible is perhaps the best translation of this phrase: "When it is sown it embodies the soul, when it is raised it embodies the spirit. If the soul has its own embodiment, so does the spirit have its own embodiment." (Hays, First Corinthians, 272.)

 Paul writes, "Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (15:45–49). Paul's point is here is that just as our present body is like Adam's physical body, so our future body will be like Jesus' resurrection body. (Wright, The Climax of the Covenant, 32.)  In short, Paul is portraying Jesus as the one who inaugurates the new creation and the new humanity. (Ridderbos, Paul, 56.)

 The conclusion to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 ties the resurrection of the dead to God's triumphant victory over death, the last enemy (vv. 50–58). Paul reiterates what he has already said, when he states that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (v. 50). These two clauses are in synonymous parallelism and indicate the same truth, namely, that our present bodies must be transformed in order to participate in the consummation of the kingdom. Paul then writes, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (vv. 51–53). What Paul describes here is the same event he described in his first epistle to the Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–18). It is the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of those still living at the time of Christ's Second Coming.

 Paul concludes, by quoting the eschatological vision found in Isaiah 25:8. He writes, "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 54–57). Death has wielded its reign of terror over man since the Fall. The resurrection of Jesus sets into motion the eschatological events that will culminate in the resurrection of his people, an event which will mark the final defeat of death itself. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Paul's use of the words "spiritual body" to describe the resurrection body has led some to deny the corporeal nature of the resurrection of the dead, **but the words themselves lend no weight to such an argument.** In verse 44, Paul says "It is sown a natural body (soma psychikon); it is raised a spiritual body (soma pneumatikon)." To say that the resurrection body is a soma pneumatikon does not mean that it is composed of a pneumatic substance. The contrast Paul is making is between a "natural body" (i.e., a body animated by the breath of life given to Adam) and a "spiritual body" (i.e., a body animated by the Holy Spirit).  "When it is sown it embodies the soul, when it is raised it embodies the spirit. If the soul has its own embodiment, so does the spirit have its own embodiment." [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Sleep" is a common euphemism for death in the Jewish and Christian literature of this time period (F.F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Waco: Word Books, 1982, 95). While not stated explicitly, the death of the Thessalonian believer(s) may very well have been at the hands of those who were persecuting them. Based on what Paul says in this and the following verses, it appears that the Thessalonians were concerned about the position of deceased believers at the Lord's Second Coming. Their question indicates that this was one topic that they did not understand fully. Apparently, Paul had taught them something about the resurrection of the dead but was forced to leave the city before teaching them as much as they needed to know. Ernest Best, A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 180. Gene L. Green, The Letters to the Thessalonians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 216. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. The first question that must be addressed in connection with this verse is whether or not Paul taught here that he would definitely live until the time of the coming of Christ to raise the dead. According to some, Paul's use of the word "we" indicates that he definitely believed he would live to see the Second Coming of Jesus and the final resurrection. (E.g., Charles A. Wanamaker, The Epistles to the Thessalonians (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1990), 171–72.) This interpretation, however, is unlikely. First, in the immediate context of this passage, Paul indicates the possibility that he might live to see these things and the possibility that he might not. He says that Christ died for us so that whether "we are awake [alive] or asleep [dead] we might live with him" (5:10). Paul also entertains the possibility that he might die before the final resurrection in his other letters (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:20–24; 2:17). [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Therefore, as Witherington explains, he could not have said "we who are dead and not left around to see the parousia of the Lord." He does not know for sure that he will be dead, "so the only category in which he can logically place himself and the Christians he writes to here is the 'living.'" Ben Witherington III, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 134. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. As Gregory K. Beale (1–2 Thessalonians, [Downers Grove: IVP, 2003], 140) explains, a similar concept is used throughout the Old Testament. A contemporary generation of Israel could be addressed as if they themselves had actually participated in the historical events of the past or would participate in historical events of the future, even if the individuals of that generation did not or would not participate. In Deuteronomy 4:20–31, for example, Moses speaks to the second generation of Israel after the Exodus telling them that God brought "you" out of Egypt even though it was the first generation who actually experienced the Exodus firsthand. He also tells this generation that they will experience exile if they disobey God and that they will be restored if they repent. Hundreds of years later, Israel was exiled, and many years after that, Israel was restored, but none of the individual Israelites to whom Moses spoke experienced these events firsthand. They had all died many years before the exile. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. The word Paul uses to refer to the coming of the Lord here is parousia. As we have already seen, Paul uses this word to speak of the presence or the arrival of someone, sometimes Jesus and sometimes other individuals. In the Graeco-Roman world, the word was sometimes used to describe either the coming of a deity or the official visit of a ruler to a city. Such visits were important events, and the city would have great celebrations in honor of the visiting king. The important city officials and the citizens would go out of the city to meet the visiting sovereign and escort him back to the city in a glorious procession. If Paul had this imagery in mind in this context, perhaps a misunderstanding of it is one reason the Thessalonians were confused about those who had died. It is possible they believed that those who had died would not enjoy the honor of going out to meet the coming Messiah in this official parousia. If that is the case, Paul puts the concern to rest, telling the Thessalonians that those who are alive "will not precede those who have fallen asleep." Those believers who have died will participate in this glorious event and will in fact have a place of honor. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. BDAG, s.v. katabaino. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. It should be recalled that when Jesus spoke of Daniel's "coming of the Son of Man," a coming up to the Father, he sometimes used the word parousia (e.g., Matt. 24:27; 24:37, 39) and sometimes used the word erchomai (e.g., Matt. 16:28; 24:30, 44; 26:64). In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus alternates the terms throughout. Paul, on the other hand, uses the word parousia in this context to refer to Jesus' descent from heaven, his coming to earth, and as we've already seen, he also uses the term elsewhere to refer to the presence or arrival of people other than Jesus. What all of this means is that the term parousia, by itself, is not a synonym for the Second Coming of Jesus. It is simply a word that means "presence" or "arrival" or "coming." Whose coming is meant and the direction they are coming can only be determined from the context. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. Much of the confusion on this subject is due to the fact that the word "coming" is used to describe these two different events (and other things as well). Daniel speaks of the "coming of the Son of Man" to refer to one event, while Paul and others often use the word "coming" to speak of the other event. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Helmut Koester, "Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians" in Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 160. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 102; cf. also Green, Letters to the Thessalonians, 226–27. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. E.g., John F. Walvoord, The Thessalonian Epistles (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1955), 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Ephesians 1.13-14 *In Him you also who have heard the Word of Truth, the glad tidings (Gospel) of your salvation, and have believed in and adhered to and relied on Him, were stamped with the seal of the long-promised Holy Spirit. That [Spirit] is the guarantee of our inheritance [the firstfruits, the pledge and foretaste, the down payment on our heritage], in anticipation of its full redemption and our acquiring [complete] possession of it—to the praise of His glory.* [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Richard Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, WBC 50 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 243. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. The two metaphors with which this section begins condemn the author's opponents as people who purport to be religious teachers. Like dry wells which disappoint the thirsty, and hazy mists which are blown away without relieving the heat of the atmosphere, these people have in reality nothing to offer those who look to them for spiritual sustenance.

The arrogance and godlessness of these false prophets combined with the uselessness of their teaching renders them fit for judgment on the last day. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. These verses have been used in the past to support numerological interpretations such as those that view all of world history in terms of a six or seven day period of time with each "day" lasting one thousand years. Such interpretations are based more on reader imagination than authorial intent. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. As Michael Green (The Second Epistle of Peter, TNTC 18 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 146) and Bauckham (Jude, 2 Peter, 309) demonstrate, this interpretation has parallels in the Jewish literature of the first century. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)