



God, Land, and Man

**A Biblical Theology of the Land
in the History of Redemption**

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Preface

In the Preface of According to Plan Graeme Goldsworthy wrote,

In this work I have attempted to do three things. First, to introduce the reader to an integrated theology of the whole Bible. Second, to write this introduction fully accepting the full inspiration and authority of the Bible as the word of God. Third, to write for ordinary Christians at a level that avoids unnecessary technicalities. Behind this endeavor is the conviction that learning to grasp the unity of the Bible, of its one overall message from Genesis to Revelation, is necessary for a right understanding of the meaning of any individual text.¹

As I write this paper, I have sought to attempt to do the same three things regarding a theology of the biblical concept of “the land.” I believe the whole Bible has an integrated theology of the land, which needs to be seen and understood. I certainly do accept the full inspiration and authority of the Bible as the word of God. I have tried to write for an ordinary Christian reader at a level that is thoughtful, but not technical. I do have the conviction that grasping the unity of the Bible is necessary for a right understanding of the meaning of any individual text. In this case especially, the meaning of the whole is more than simply the sum of its parts.

Why is a study of the teaching of the Bible on “the land” a needed task? Two answers demonstrate the reason. First, “the land” is a major subject of the whole Bible. In the Old Testament, “erets,” the primary word for “land,” occurs 2,504 times. In the New Testament, “ge,” the primary word, occurs 252 times. The combined total indicates that the subject is worthy of study and understanding. Second, “the land” is a major point of contention between dispensational theology and covenant theology. How the subject is understood has a significant impact on some major doctrines, especially eschatology. Both systematic theologies begin and end in the same place -- Genesis 1 and Revelation 22, but in between they significantly differ from each other. In dispensational theology, emphasis is placed on a specific portion of “the land” -- the land promised to the nation of Israel in the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. This

1. Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding of God in the Bible* (DownersGrove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 7.

emphasis greatly affects how the New Testament is understood and what is expected in eschatological events. Covenant theology involves a broader spectrum of millennial views, but it sees, both before and after, the specific land promise to the nation of Israel as typical² of a larger issue in the redemptive history of God for mankind.

Based on the need for understanding “the land” from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, I have written a comprehensive survey of the uses of the two primary terms for “the land.” Hopefully, the end result will help clarify the whole teaching of the Bible on this subject and produce a systematic understanding of “the land.” The study is not exhaustive, but it is thorough, and I hope it will stimulate the reader to significant thought and further study.

* * * * *

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2. See Appendix 1: Typology

Chapter 1

The Creation Of The Land

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

The history and theology of “the land” begins naturally and supernaturally in Genesis 1:1. Every use of “erets” throughout the rest of the Old Testament arises from this first foundational statement. The word is used in several ways in the Bible: as the whole earth (Genesis 1:1), as the dry ground in contrast to the sea (Genesis 1:10), as a specific portion of land (Genesis 2:11), and even as a personification (Jeremiah 22:29). In addition, “erets” is translated in several ways: principally as land, earth, country, and ground. In whatever way it is used or translated, the word is rooted in its use in Genesis 1:1, and “erets” occurs 29 times in Genesis 1-2.

The Bible begins with an initial summary statement affirming that God created the earth. While we know that the universe is not geo-centric, theologically the earth is the center of God’s creative activity. He is the Maker of the earth, and thus he is the Owner, too. The “erets” belongs to God (Psalm 24:1-2).

The rest of Genesis 1 shows the progressive preparation of the land to fulfill God’s intended purpose. The created land is developed from an uninhabited barren mass covered with water, to land masses out of the water, to land with abundant vegetation, to land with all kinds of animals, and finally to a place of habitation for mankind made in the image of God. God, the Creator of the land, gives mankind the responsibility of stewardship of the land, *i.e.*, the whole earth. God blesses mankind, and he commands them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). God creates the land for the habitation of mankind and as the sphere of human labor and enjoyment as his viceroys.

In Genesis 2, the LORD God -- LORD being Yahweh, the personal, covenantal name of God -- reveals more about his purpose for the earth in relation to mankind. After the LORD God creates Adam, the male, he places him in a garden that he has prepared. Adam is given a specific portion of the land. The portion is called Eden, which means delight. Though God intends mankind to fill

the whole earth, yet the LORD places him in a special portion of land and gives Adam directives to work and keep it (Genesis 2:15). C. F. Keil notes,

As nature was created for man, it was his vocation not only to ennoble it by his work, to make it subservient to himself, but also to raise it into the sphere of the spirit and further its glorification. This applied not merely to the soil beyond the limits of paradise, but to the garden itself, which, although the most perfect portion of the terrestrial creation, was nevertheless susceptible of development, and which was allotted to man, in order that by his care and culture he might make it into a transparent mirror of the glory of the Creator.³

While the garden was filled with trees of which Adam could freely eat, the LORD gave special theological significance to two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam is forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which, if he does, will result in death. Following this, the LORD God puts Adam to sleep, forms Eve, the female, out of his side, and brings her to the man. Thus, the first pair of humans assumes residency and stewardship in the Garden of Eden, a portion of the land prepared especially for them and as a dwelling place where he dwelt, met and fellowshiped with them.

MAIN POINTS

- The LORD God created the earth and is its sole Owner.
- The LORD God filled the earth with creatures and plants and gave to mankind the responsibility of the stewardship of the land.
- The LORD God placed mankind in a particular portion of the land and called it the Garden of Eden.
- The LORD God dwelt there with mankind.

3. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, Vol. 1: The Pentateuch, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), 84.

Chapter 2

The Land From The Fall To The Flood

And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (Genesis 6:12)

Genesis 3 is crucial in understanding the message of the Bible, including the land. Although “erets” is not used in the chapter, the impact on the land is evident. In spite of being in an ideal environment of the Garden of Eden with all of its advantages, mankind acts in unbelief and disobedience toward their Creator and LORD. They immediately discover that God’s warning regarding death is true and fulfilled. Their blessed fellowship with the LORD is changed, and they begin to die physically. The ground is cursed. Two issues regarding the land are established. First, the whole creation becomes enslaved to a process of decay (Romans 8:19-22) and is in need of redemption and regeneration. Second, mankind is exiled from the special place in the Garden of Eden, is denied access to the tree of life, is forced to struggle in the dominion over the land, and loses the enjoyment of the LORD’s immediate, abiding presence. Francis Schaeffer called this “The Abnormal Universe,” and he remarked, “It is interesting that almost all of the results of God’s judgment because of man’s rebellion relate in some way to the external world.”⁴ No longer does humanity have access to a “holy place” of the LORD’s presence. C. F. Keil observed, “... because man himself had fallen into the power of the evil one, therefore God cursed the earth, not merely withdrawing the divine powers of life which pervaded Eden, but changing its relation to man.”⁵ However, the LORD starts to reveal his eternal purpose. Redemption and regeneration will come through the Seed of the woman for mankind and the land (Genesis 3:15). The nature of this redemption is revealed by type of Christ in the provision of a substitutionary sacrifice and covering for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). With these initial revelations, redemption in history begins to unfold in time for God’s people and the land.

4. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time: The Flow Of Biblical History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 95.

5. C. F. Keil, *ibid.*, 104.

In Genesis 4-6, the consequences of sin in the land mushroom, beginning with Cain's murder of Abel. Cain has great difficulty in finding a place to settle in the land (Genesis 4:12-16). Violence, wickedness, and corruption increase to such a full and persistent degree that the LORD determines to purge the land of its human and animal life by a flood (Genesis 6:4-7, 11-13, 17). The divine judgment of death falls on the whole land and its inhabitants. Only by the grace of the LORD is a remnant, particularly one man, Noah, rescued from the destruction of his just wrath (Genesis 6:8, 6:14-8:14). Through Noah, the LORD sustains his promise of the ultimate redemption of humanity and the land through the Seed of the woman (Genesis 6:8, 6:14-8:14).

MAIN POINTS

- By mankind's sins of unbelief and disobedience, the whole creation becomes enslaved to the process of decay and the need of redemption and regeneration.
- By their sins of unbelief and disobedience, mankind is exiled from their special place in the Garden of Eden, is denied access to the tree of life, is forced to struggle in the dominion over the land, and loses the enjoyment of the LORD's immediate, abiding presence.
- The consequences of mankind's sin in the land mushroom to such a full and persistent degree that the LORD determines to purge the land of its human and animal life by a flood.
- Only by the grace of the LORD is a remnant, Noah and his family, rescued from the destruction of his just wrath in order to sustain his promise of the ultimate redemption of humanity and the land.

Chapter 3

The Land From The Flood To Abraham

... and from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:9b)

The LORD gives mankind, animal life, and the land a fresh start. However, no unique place for the divine presence to dwell is established in the renewed land. Mankind can only approach God by personal sacrifice (Genesis 8:20-21). Though the human heart remains evil, the LORD promises not to send judgment again with a flood (Genesis 8:21, 9:11). Life on the land remains difficult, but the LORD blesses the remnant of mankind and directs them to continue their creation stewardship in the earth (Genesis 9:1). In addition, the LORD establishes a perpetual covenant with Noah, his descendents, every land creature, and the land. The covenant involves more of what the LORD promises not do than what he will do. The covenant is also general in nature and unconditional. The LORD will not bring a universal judgment by flood again on the land and its life. The sign of the covenant is the rainbow in the cloud. Graeme Goldsworthy noted, “God is refusing to allow human rebellion to divert him from his purpose to create a people to be his people in a perfect universe.”⁶ In addition, this perfect universe will include the land and the living creatures of the land. Thus, the LORD guarantees the security of the whole land until its ultimate redemption and regeneration come (Genesis 9:8-17).

Human life begins to flourish in the whole land again, but sin begins to spread again, too (Genesis 9:19-27, 10:1-32, 10:8-9). Nations start to form in various portions of the land (Genesis 10:5, 20, 31-32). However, before humanity spreads out into all the earth, they resist the mandate of the LORD and try by their own efforts to gain their own secure and sacred place in the land apart from the LORD. Because of this, the LORD intervenes with a judgment that forces mankind to obey his directive to fill the earth (Genesis 11:1-9). Geerhardus Vos wrote, “The building of the city and tower was inspired first by the desire to obtain a centre [*sic*] of unity, such as should keep the human race together ... Unity was to afford the possibility for founding a

6. Graeme Goldsworthy, *ibid.*, 115

gigantic empire, glorifying man in his independence from God.”⁷ Eden, the holy and blessed land, cannot be regained by human acts of rebellion apart from and against the LORD.

As the human race expands throughout the earth, the line of Shem becomes the focus of unfolding the LORD’s redemptive purpose in history. Though Shem’s line becomes corrupt idolaters like the rest of mankind, the LORD sustains humanity and chooses one man out of Shem’s line, Abram, to be recipient of his grace and the father of a great remnant. Through him and his Seed the LORD will bless all the nations of the earth. Included in the redemptive purpose of the LORD for Abram is a special land for him in the earth as an inheritance (Genesis 11:27-12:3). The return to a New Eden begins.

MAIN POINTS

- The LORD gives mankind, animal life, and the land a fresh start. However, no unique place for his presence to dwell is established yet in the renewed land.
- Life on the land remains difficult, but the LORD blesses the remnant of mankind and directs them to continue their creation stewardship in all the earth.
- Human life begins to flourish in the whole land again, but sin begins to spread again, too.
- At Babel, the LORD intervenes with a judgment on mankind’s attempt to regain “Eden” by rebellion apart from and against Him, but Eden, the holy and blessed land, cannot be regained by human acts of rebellion apart from and against the LORD.
- As the human race expands throughout the earth, the line of Shem becomes corrupt idolaters like the rest of mankind, but the LORD sustains humanity and by grace chooses one man out of Shem’s line, Abram, to be the means of blessing all the families of the earth.
- Included in his redemptive purpose the LORD promises to Abraham and his Seed a special land for him in the earth as an inheritance -- a step toward a New Eden.

7. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948; Reprint for Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 59.

Chapter 4

The Land And The Patriarchs

*Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."
(Genesis 12:7a)*

In Genesis 12 the course of redemptive history and its relationship to the land takes a significant step forward in the Abrahamic Covenant and its reaffirmations to Isaac and Jacob. However, this step has continuity with the previous eleven chapters; it is not a distinct break from them. As the LORD had done in creating one man, Adam, and then twice in starting new generations of the redeemed in one man -- Seth and Noah -- so now he begins again with one man, Abram. After the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden, the LORD connected the land as a whole with mankind in a general way. However, for Abram, the issue of the land becomes a promise of a specific land. The new revelation regarding the land becomes another step toward the redemption and restoration of the whole land. In addition, it will have a portion of the land designated for the manifest presence and dwelling of the LORD, whereby his people will have access to him -- a step toward a restored Eden.

The initial meeting of the LORD with Abram is one in which the LORD makes significant promises, both particular and universal, to him. The promises must be seen as a whole and in relation to one another, not magnifying one over another (Genesis 12:1-3). Although the LORD gives particular promises to Abram, the ultimate goal is the universal blessing of all the families of the earth in Abram. Shortly after the initial meeting, the LORD gives Abram and his Seed a specific land promise of Canaan (Genesis 12:5-7).

The next advance in the LORD's making known the specific land promise to Abraham comes in a crisis moment when a separation takes place between Abram and Lot. Abram gives Lot the choice of the land, and Lot chooses the best land, leaving Abram with the rest. After Lot's departure, the LORD tells Abram to look in every direction, and he promises unconditionally to him and his offspring forever all the land he can see (Genesis 13:14-18).

In another time of distress, conflict, victory and fear of retaliation, Melchizedek reminds Abram of God Most High, who is the Possessor of heaven and earth. The reminder of the Lord's universal ownership of the land enables Abraham to have confidence, freeing him from fear of those who controlled or sought control of some portion of the land (Genesis 14:17-24). Following this, the LORD holds a covenant ceremony for Abram in which he confirms that Abram and his offspring will possess the land of Canaan. The LORD specifies two boundaries (from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates), the seven peoples who currently inhabit the land, and when his descendants will come into the land (Genesis 15:7-21).

Once more in a time of hopelessness of having a son, the LORD comes to Abram and reaffirms his covenant promises to him (Genesis 17:1-8). The LORD changes and universalizes Abram's name to Abraham, promising him he will become a father of not only one nation, but of a multitude of nations. These many nations will be included in his offspring as part of the covenant, too. H. C. Leupold observes,

To be the ancestor of one prominent nation would be a gracious prospect. To become the ancestor of a multitude of nations is almost without precedent, except in the case of Noah's sons. As a matter of fact the Ishmaelites and the sons of Ketura, as well as all Israelites acknowledge him as father. *Besides, he becomes "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13) by virtue of all true believers of all nations, who through faith become his children (emphasis added).*⁸

Then to Abram and to his (multiplied) offspring the LORD promises all the land of Canaan in a covenant renewal as an everlasting possession. The inclusion of the many nations is most significant, and it will be noted again, though it will lie dormant until Jesus Christ comes as the Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:14-16, 27-29). With the birth of Isaac, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant continues to unfold.

The rest of Abraham's life has a few other significant notes about the land. In revealing his will to Abraham in his judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, the LORD makes a universal reference to the land in saying "all the nations of the earth (erets) shall be blessed" in Abraham (Genesis 18:18). The LORD makes another universal reference to the land at Mount Moriah after Abraham obeys regarding the offering of Isaac: "in your Seed shall all the nations of the earth (erets) be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). In his sojourn in the land of promise, Abraham actually possesses only a small piece of land, which he himself bought for burial purposes (Genesis 23). He lives out the rest of his life as a pilgrim and stranger in the land promised to him.

Therefore, in regard to Abraham and the covenant, the land promise has both a particular, local aspect and a universal aspect. Details will be added and clarified in the unfolding of the history of redemption. However, both aspects must be kept clearly in mind regarding the LORD's purpose in redemption.

8. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1942, Twelfth Printing, 1980), 515-16.

Isaac, the second of the patriarchs, has only one significant moment regarding the land. The LORD reaffirms to him the Abrahamic Covenant. The reaffirmation includes both a local reference -- “this land” -- and a universal reference -- “will give all these lands to your offspring” and “in your offspring all the nations of the earth (erets) shall be blessed” (Genesis 26:1-5).

Jacob, the third of the patriarchs, has three significant moments regarding the land. First, when he leaves home to find a wife, his father Jacob invokes the blessing of Abraham upon him including the possession of the land that God promised to Abraham (Genesis 28:4). Second, and most notably, the LORD reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant and its land promise with him at Bethel in a wholly universal sense. The LORD said,

I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land (Genesis 28:13-15).

When the offspring indeed becomes like the dust of the “erets,” then they will have to spread to all directions, even beyond the set boundaries of Canaan, and their presence will become a blessing to all the families of the “erets.” In fact, the LORD gives this word to Jacob as a promise that will extend to the whole earth and all its families (Revelation 5:9-10, 7:9). In his commentary on Genesis 28:14, H. C. Leupold remarks,

The second portion of the blessing that is especially confirmed to him is that of numerous descendents like “the dust of the earth” (13:16 cf. 22:17). For “spread out” the Hebrew uses *parats*, in the sense of bursting all restraining bonds. Emphasis is added to the thought by letting the expansion extend to all points of the compass.⁹ (Leupold, 774)

While the land promised in Canaan becomes the focus of the rest of the Old Testament, this seminal idea of the whole earth will lie dormant until Christ, the ultimate Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob comes. Third, when Jacob returns home and wrestles with God, the Abrahamic blessing and land promise are affirmed once more with both particular (a nation) and universal (a company of nations) aspects (Genesis 35:11-12).

The rest of Genesis focuses on the sons of Jacob, especially Joseph. However, for the most part the land references are to “the land of Egypt” where the family of Jacob dwells for several generations. Yet, in the last chapter Joseph reminds his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (Genesis 50:24).

9. H. C. Leupold, *ibid.*, Vol 2, 774.

When the book of Exodus begins, the people of Israel have become an extremely large group who are in bondage in Egypt. The LORD had determined and foretold to Abraham their presence, servitude, and suffering in Egypt. He had also determined to judge Egypt and bring his people out of Egypt into the land of promise. (Genesis 15:13-14). The time of judgment and redemption has now arrived, both historically and typologically of the ultimate judgment, redemption, and fulfillment of the promises (including the land) in Christ.

MAIN POINTS

- In the Abrahamic Covenant, the LORD makes significant particular and universal promises to Abraham and his Seed, including a specific portion of land as an inheritance forever.
- The LORD promises to designate a portion of the land for his manifest presence and dwelling where his people will have access to him -- another step toward a New Eden for mankind.
- The LORD specifies two boundaries (from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates), the seven peoples who currently inhabit the land, and when his descendants will come into the land.
- The entire Abrahamic Covenant is renewed with Isaac and Jacob.
- With each of the Patriarchs a universal aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant to bless all the nations of the earth is affirmed.
- The Patriarchs live in the land of promise, but they never possess it.
- When the book of Exodus begins, the people of Israel have become an extremely large group who are in bondage in Egypt, outside the land of promise.
- The LORD had determined to judge Egypt and bring his people out of Egypt into the land of promise.
- A historic time of judgment and redemption arrives for Israel in which the LORD frees them from the bondage of Egypt and leads them into the land of promise.
- The redemption of Israel from Egypt is typological of the LORD's ultimate judgment, redemption, and fulfillment of his covenant promises (including the land) in Christ.

Chapter 5

The Land And The Mosaic Covenant

I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD. (Exodus 6:6)

The usage of “erets” in Exodus pertains mostly to Egypt. The intent of the LORD is to bring Israel *out of* Egypt. This is a great and thorough redemptive act of the LORD. An additional emphasis on “erets” in Exodus pertains to the land of Canaan and the intent of the LORD to bring Israel *into* the land and to give it to them as he had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He chooses to describe the land of Canaan as “good and large,” “flowing with milk and honey,” and a “heritage” or “inheritance.” Together his “bringing out” and “bringing in” comprise a full redemption that they are forever to remember and celebrate in the Passover. Yet, this historic redemption foreshadows the greater, ultimate redemption to come in Christ, bringing his people *out of* the bondage of sin and *into* their eternal inheritance, a new Eden where the LORD dwells among them. A third emphasis on “erets” is on its universal nature: that “you may know that the earth is the LORD’s” (Exodus 9:29) and that “all the earth is mine [the LORD’s]” (Exodus 19:5). Twice in relation to affirming the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the LORD stresses that he will give the land to the Seed of Abraham (Exodus 32:13 and 33:1). As made clear later in Galatians 3:16, the reference to the “seed” ultimately is to Christ himself. This ultimate sense of the Seed individually does not diminish the corporate nature of the Seed, but it does indicate that the corporate nature was typological of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant in Christ. An added feature related to the land in Exodus is that the LORD gives Moses and Israel a means for “holy land” in their midst: the tabernacle, in which he would dwell. With the construction and institution of the tabernacle and the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood, the unfolding of the history of redemption proceeds toward a renewal of the Garden of Eden and the unhindered access of the people to the manifest presence of the LORD.

Leviticus reinforces the lessons of Exodus regarding “erets.” The LORD has brought *out* Israel from the land of Egypt. He determines to bring Israel *into* the land of Canaan and to give it to

them as a possession and an inheritance. The LORD tells Israel that the land of Canaan will be “your” land, but he continues to stress that the land is still “mine” (Leviticus 25:23). The new directive of the LORD regarding the land of promise given in Leviticus 26 makes possession of it contingent on obedience in walking in his statutes and doing his commandments. Persistent disobedience would lead to forfeiture of the land. Yet, even in the dispersion, the LORD will not forget his covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, especially if they truly turn to him.

Numbers records the history of Israel between being brought *out* of the land of Egypt and being brought *into* the land of Canaan. The emphasis is clearly on the land to which the LORD will bring them. Many descriptive terms are given to this land: sworn to them, given to them, possession, inheritance, flowing with milk and honey, exceeding good, and “your.” These are true and historic descriptions, but in the unfolding of redemptive history they are typological of the ultimate land sworn, given, possession, inheritance, flowing with milk and honey, exceeding good, and “your” to Christ and his people, who will be brought *out* of the greater “Egypt” and brought *into* the greater and final “land” with him. Sadly, by receiving the report of eight unbelieving spies and not the faithful report of Joshua and Caleb, the adult generation spends the rest of their lives wandering in the “erets” of the wilderness and does not enter into the land of promise. Once more, this is true and historic, but it is typological as referenced in Hebrews 3:12-4:11 regarding entrance into the ultimate resting place of the LORD that remains for his people.

Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal with the generation that finally enters and possesses the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Deuteronomy has 197 references to “erets” (more than the references in Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers), and the majority of the uses is Canaan, the land of promise. All the lessons that have been taught in Exodus through Numbers under the Mosaic Covenant are strongly reinforced in Deuteronomy. The distinctive natures of the Abrahamic Covenant to the Seed and of the Mosaic Covenant to the people redeemed out of Egypt are clear. While participation in the Abrahamic Covenant was obtained by faith, the covenant with the Seed (*i.e.*, Christ) is unconditional regarding the land of promise. However, the Mosaic Covenant with the nation of Israel is conditional regarding their continued possession of the land of promise. The LORD not only warns them of the loss and curses that will come upon them for disobedience, but he also declares that they will indeed disobey, lose the land, and experience his curses (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The LORD promises rich blessings if they love him, obey all his commandments, and walk in all his ways (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Every blood descendent of Abraham in Israel has failed to obey the Mosaic Covenant stipulations except one. The one Jewish person who has fully kept the law is Jesus Christ, and by his obedience he is the true, ultimate heir of the Abrahamic promises and the Mosaic blessings, including the land. The LORD does promise that he will do a heart circumcision of his people that will enable them to return to him and to possess the promises and blessings (Deuteronomy 30:6). Colossians 2:11 indicates that this heart circumcision has taken place for all who are in Christ. In addition, a further step toward the ultimate “holy land” is promised when the LORD indicates that he will choose a place to put his name and make his habitation (Deuteronomy

12:5-7) in the promised land. When the LORD designates this place, all sacrifices offered elsewhere to him will no longer be acceptable to him.

The Pentateuch is the foundational canon for the rest of the history of Israel recorded in the Old Testament books of history, poetry, prophecy, and also in the New Testament. All other interpretations and applications are rooted here. These books are true and historic. Yet they, in each part and the whole, point to Christ, the ultimate Seed of Abraham and the one faithful Israelite, in whom the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants find their fulfillment and in whom believing Jews and Gentiles have the promises and blessings of these covenants by faith through the circumcision of the heart made without hands as their eternal inheritance.

MAIN POINTS

- The intent of the LORD is to bring Israel out of Egypt in a great and thorough redemptive act.
- The intent of the LORD is to bring Israel into the land of Canaan and to give it to them as he had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- This historic redemption of Israel foreshadows the greater, ultimate redemption to come in Christ, bringing all his people out of the bondage of sin and into their eternal inheritance.
- The LORD gives Moses and Israel a means for “holy land” in their midst: the tabernacle, in which he would dwell. With the construction and institution of the tabernacle and the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood, the unfolding of the history of redemption continues to proceed toward a renewal of the Garden of Eden and the unhindered access of his people to the manifest presence of the LORD.
- In the Mosaic Covenant (unlike the Abrahamic Covenant), possession of the land of promise is contingent on obedience in walking in his statutes and doing his commandments. Persistent disobedience will lead to forfeiture of the land.
- Yet, even in the dispersion, the LORD will not forget his covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, especially if the people truly turn to him.
- True and historic descriptions of the blessings of the land of promise are given, but in the unfolding of redemptive history they are typological of the ultimate land sworn, given, possession, inheritance, flowing with milk and honey, exceeding good, and “your” made to Christ and his people, who will be brought out of the greater “Egypt” and brought into the greater and final “land” inheritance with him.
- All the lessons that are taught in Exodus through Numbers under the Mosaic Covenant are strongly reinforced in Deuteronomy as a covenant renewal.

- The LORD not only warns the nation of the loss and curses that will come upon them for disobedience, but he also declares that they will indeed disobey, lose the land, and experience his curses. However, the LORD promises rich blessings if they will love him, obey all his commandments, and walk in all his ways.
- **The one Jewish person who fully has kept the law is Jesus Christ, and by his obedience he is the sole, true, and ultimate heir of the Abrahamic promises and the Mosaic blessings, including the land.**
- The LORD does promise that he will do a heart circumcision of his people that will enable them to return to him and to possess the promises and blessings (Deuteronomy 30:6). Colossians 2:11 indicates that this heart circumcision has now begun for all (Jew and Gentile) who are in Christ.
- The Pentateuch is the foundational canon for the rest of the history of Israel recorded in the Old Testament books of history, poetry, prophecy, and also in the New Testament. All other interpretations and applications are rooted here.

Chapter 6

The Land And The History Of Israel

Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. (Joshua 21:43)

With the beginning of Joshua, Israel enters the land of promise to possess and inhabit it. The possession of the land continues for approximately 900 years until they are sent into exile due to their persistent disobedience. Following the exile, a remnant returns to live in the land again, but the land and the people remain under the Mosaic Covenant and the rule of Gentile nations until the time of Christ.

In Joshua, certain issues regarding the land are fulfilled -- both historically and typologically. Three issues of the land are stressed: the LORD is giving the land to them, they are to possess it, and it is their inheritance (Joshua 14:1). The history of Joshua involves securing the land by conquest (Joshua 11:23) and dividing the land to the tribes of Israel (Joshua 14:5 and 18:10). Universal aspects of the land are mentioned early in the book (Joshua 2:11; 3:11, 13; and 4:24). At the close of the book, Joshua emphasizes two great truths about the land. First, the LORD has given all the land he had sworn to their fathers, and they possess it and dwell in it. Though their conquest is incomplete, they have full possession of the land that the LORD promised and gave to them (Joshua 21:43). Second, Joshua gives the people a prophetic warning that in time they will perish off the good land that the LORD has given them (Joshua 23:16).

Judges is the history of the incomplete obedience of Israel in the land and the consequences that follow. Very little new information is given regarding the land. Perhaps the most significant verse is Judges 2:1, "Then the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, I will never break my covenant with you." However, another significant verse follows in which the angel of the LORD describes the course of the book, "... But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them (the inhabitants of the

land) out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you (Judges 2:2b-3).

Ruth is a personal history set in the times of the judges in Israel. Though short, the book has significant purposes historically, typologically, and theologically. Though the land is mentioned only four times, it is a significant factor in understanding the meaning of the land. Naomi and her family leave the land of promise in a time of famine (Ruth 1:1). Then after significant loss, Naomi returns to the land of promise with Ruth, her Gentile daughter-in-law, who has become a proselyte of the LORD God of Israel (Ruth 1:7, 16-19a). The rest of the story shows how by the providence of the LORD through Boaz, a kinsman redeemer, Ruth, a Gentile, becomes by marriage a member of the covenant community of Israel and an heiress of the covenant blessings and promises of the LORD to Israel, including the land inheritance (Ruth 4:3-5, 9-12). This, too, is historical and typological regarding the unfolding of redemption in history in Christ toward Jew and Gentile.

First and Second Samuel covers the history of Israel as a united kingdom under Samuel, Saul, and David. Other than a few references to the nature of the land and Israel's presence there, very little emphasis is placed upon the land. The land is simply taken for granted as the inhabited inheritance of Israel. Many of the issues simply relate to the ongoing conflict with the Philistines over the control of the land. Three universal statements regarding the land are recorded (1 Samuel 2:8, 2:10 and 2 Samuel 14:20). The universal references in 1 Samuel 2:8, 10 are part of a song sung or prayed by Hannah and extol the redemptive work of the LORD throughout history. Her song has special meaning to her circumstance, but it reviews and foretells the whole work of the LORD in redemption, including all the "erets."

First and Second Kings recount the history of Israel from the unified kingdom to the divided kingdom, the destruction of the northern kingdom, the destruction of the southern kingdom, and the exile to Babylon. The story brings to fulfillment the terrible course of the people begun in the early history of the nation. In the covenant law of Moses, the LORD had warned them of the consequences of disobedience. After centuries of his patience and repeated calls to covenant renewal by his prophets, whom Israel refused to hear, the LORD reaches his "limit," his judgment comes, and he drives them from the land into exile. One of the significant events in the early reign of Solomon is the revealing of the LORD's chosen place to put his name and inhabit -- Jerusalem. This place becomes the site of the Temple, which is built and indwelt by the presence of the LORD. Real "holy land," *i.e.* where God manifests his dwelling presence, is now settled, but it has the same limited accessibility as the Tabernacle (see Hebrews 9:8), and so it is not the ultimate, accessible dwelling place among his people. At the dedication of the Temple, the most important statements in First and Second Kings are made about the land. The universal aspect of the land is especially stressed in Solomon's dedicatory prayer (1 Kings 8:23, 8:27, 8:43, and 8:60). Solomon sees beyond a nationalistic conception of the land and the Temple to a universal acknowledgement and inclusion of them by all the peoples of the earth. Solomon also acknowledges that the land may be lost by Israel's sin (1 Kings 8:46) and that it may be

recovered if genuine repentance occurs (1 Kings 8:47-53). The universal aspect is noted a few times in 2 Kings, too (5:15; 19:15, 19). Yet, in the end, the fixed “holy land” of the Temple is defiled and destroyed, and the people are sent into exile out of the land of promise, which has too long been taken for granted.

First and Second Chronicles are a summary of Genesis through Second Kings with an emphasis on the regal line of David. Most of what is written is an amplification of the lives of David, Solomon, and the Kingdom of Judah found in 1 Samuel through 2 Kings. Little additional information is given about the land. In 1 Chronicles 16, David composes a psalm to be sung when the ark is returned to the Tabernacle. The universal nature of the “erets” is stressed several times (1 Chronicles 16:14, 23, 30, 31, and 33). A historic event is turned into an ultimate, universal redemptive anticipation. The universal understanding of David above and beyond his kingdom is also stated in 1 Chronicles 22:5, 29:11, and 29:30. David also emphasizes the conditional nature of the possession and transmission of the land to his people (1 Chronicles 28:8). In 2 Chronicles 6:32-33 (see also 1 Kings 8:41-43), Solomon raises a condition of a “stranger,” *i.e.* Gentile, who comes and prays toward the LORD at the Temple, that the LORD will heed and do as he asks him, “in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you.” This is an amazing prophetic statement of Gentile inclusion. Solomon is not an exclusivist in his outlook regarding Israel. Perhaps his memory of Ruth in his family line led him to become inclusive in his outlook. In 2 Chronicles 9:26, Solomon’s actual rule over all the land promised to Abraham is reached (Genesis 15:18). This is the apex of the fulfillment of the land promise in the history of the Old Testament; hereafter, it is never as great. Though Judah has moments of revival in observing the word of the LORD and calling upon him (2 Chronicles 20:9ff), the nation slowly and thoroughly forsakes the LORD until Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed in 586 BC, and the people are carried away in exile to Babylon.

Three books of history (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther) describe life for Israel after the Babylonian exile. A remnant does return to the land, but very little emphasis is placed on the land since no independent kingdom is re-established. The history is one of subjection to foreign powers with an ethical tone and a messianic hope, but still under the Mosaic Covenant. The population of Israel is a mixed multitude of Jews and Gentiles (Ezra and Nehemiah), and many Jews continue in the dispersion caused by exile (Esther). In Nehemiah 9, in worship the people recount the history of Israel in the land, they confess their condition of bondage in the land due to their sin (Nehemiah 9:36), and they make a covenant with the LORD to be faithful to him and his word. Yet as before, the revival is short-lived. In Esther 8:17, another remarkable event of a major Gentile inclusion among the Jews is recorded.

The history of the people of Israel follows exactly the course that the LORD had spoken through Moses. Without a circumcised heart, and in spite of some great, godly people and times of revival, Israel failed the conditions of the Mosaic covenant and lost the possession of the land of promise. Yet, the LORD remains faithful to all his covenants. In addition to the faithfulness of the LORD and the existence of a remnant, the history of Israel has significant instances of Gentile

inclusion in both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants, which are all a foreshadowing of good things to come “in Christ.”

MAIN POINTS

- The history of Joshua involves securing the land by conquest and dividing the land to the tribes of Israel for their possession.
- The LORD gives Israel all the land he had sworn to their fathers, and they possess it and dwell in it. Though their conquest is incomplete, they have full possession of the inheritance that the LORD promised and gave to them.
- While Israel’s possession of the land is historical, it is incomplete and only typical of the final eternal possession (Hebrews 4:1-11).
- The book of Ruth shows how by the providence of the LORD through Boaz, a kinsman redeemer, Ruth, a Gentile, becomes by marriage a member of the covenant community of Israel and an heiress of the covenant blessings and promises of the LORD to Israel, including the land inheritance -- another typological foreshadowing in the history of the redemption of his people (Jew and Gentile in Christ) and the land.
- One of the significant events in the early reign of Solomon is the revealing of the LORD’s chosen place to put his name and inhabit -- Jerusalem. This place becomes the site of the Temple, which is built and indwelt by the presence of the LORD. Real “holy land,” *i.e.* where God manifests his dwelling presence, is now settled, but it has the same limited accessibility as the Tabernacle (see Hebrews 9:8).
- Solomon sees beyond a nationalistic conception of the land and the Temple to a universal acknowledgement and inclusion of them by all the peoples of the earth.
- In 2 Chronicles 9:26, Solomon’s actual rule over all the land promised to Abraham is reached (Genesis 15:18). This is the apex of the fulfillment of the land promise in the history of the Old Testament; hereafter, it is never again as great.
- After centuries of patience and repeated calls of Israel to covenant renewal by his prophets, whom they refused to hear, the LORD reaches his “limit,” his judgment comes, he drives them from the land of promise, and the Temple is destroyed.
- A remnant does return to the land, but very little emphasis is placed on the land since no independent kingdom is re-established. The history is one of subjection to foreign powers with an ethical tone and a messianic hope under the Mosaic Covenant.
- Without a circumcised heart, and in spite of some great, godly people and times of revival, Israel fails the conditions of the Mosaic covenant and loses the possession of the land of promise. Yet, the LORD remains faithful to all his covenants.

- In addition to the faithfulness of the LORD and the existence of a remnant, the history of Israel has significant instances of Gentile inclusion in both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants, which are all a foreshadowing of good things to come “in Christ.”

Chapter 7

The Land And The Poetry Of Israel

For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.
(Proverbs 2:21-22)

The Old Testament books of poetry are predominantly written in the reign of David and following. They give a unique outlook on the “erets.” While historical references are cited regarding the land of promise in its narrow sense, the greater use of “erets” is universal in scope. The emphasis is theological in relation to God as Creator and prophetic in relation to the Messiah and the ultimate outcome of redeemed and regenerated mankind and the “erets.”

Job is somewhat an enigma. Historically, Job is likely written about the time of the patriarchs like Abraham. The covenant name of Yahweh is used both in the beginning and the conclusion of the book. Yet, Job is a believing Gentile outside the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Thus, all the references to the “erets” are universal in regard to God as Creator, Sustainer, and Judge from a Gentile perspective. Perhaps one interesting note is a poetical description of land in relation to death. In Job 10:20-22, Job says, “Are not my days few? ... before I go ... and I shall return ... to the land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of gloom and thick darkness, like deep shadow without any order, where light is as thick as darkness.”

The Psalms are most remarkable in the use of “erets.” Israel’s possession of the land of promise is presumed throughout the Psalms, and certain Psalms retell the history of Israel in the land, e.g. Psalm 105 and 106. However, the Psalms have a universal theme that is often messianic and ultimate. The universal theme fits the view particularly of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. The first significant use of “erets” is Psalm 2:8. The Psalm and the verse are truly messianic (and so understood by the apostles: Acts 4:23-28 and Acts 13:33). Three significant covenantal words are in the verse: “I [LORD] will give” (make), inheritance (heritage), and possession. What is unique, and yet common, in messianic texts like this is that the fulfillment not only equals, but exceeds the original promise. In this case, the promised

“possession” equals the land of Canaan, but exceeds it to include *the ends of the earth*. Psalm 37 has five references to inheriting the earth or land (Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29, and 34). Those who will inherit it are those who wait on the LORD, are meek, are blessed of him [LORD], and are righteous, but evildoers are cut off. While these covenant promises and curses are given to Israel, they also include every person who either believes in the LORD or does evil. Likewise, the only person who *inherently* meets all these qualifications is Jesus Christ. All others are included only by grace through faith in him alone. The Psalm writers consistently refer to the LORD as king in, over, and above *all* the earth (Psalm 24:1, 46:10, 47:2, 48:10, 57:5, 65:5, and 89:11). They consistently call to *all* the nations of the earth and foretell their inclusion in the salvation of the LORD (Psalm 66:4, 67:2, 67:7, 72:8, 72:19, 82:8, 96:1, 96:9, 102:15, and 115:16). They clearly have an ultimate messianic expectancy for the whole earth, but it is not explicitly foreseen as being in time (millennial) or beyond time (eternal) (Psalm 2:8-12, 22:27-28, 89:27). The overarching theme of all the Psalms is the praise and worship of the LORD led by Israel and involving *all* the nations of the earth for his great glory, judgment, and salvation of his creation.

The three books of Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon), like the Psalms, presume Israel’s possession of the land. In Proverbs, Solomon makes numerous references to the land in general in his insights about life. The principal verses that relate to the issue of the land are in an ultimate, universal sense. “For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it” (Proverbs 2:21-22). “The righteous shall never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land” (Proverbs 10:30). “If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner” (Proverbs 11:31). These verses reflect the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant, yet they have universal application, and again only one person has fully met the conditions of blessing -- Jesus Christ. All hope rests in him and for those who by grace trust in him alone. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon makes further insights to life on the earth, but none of the references add to an understanding of the land, specifically or generally. In Song of Solomon, no significant land issue is addressed.

The flow of redemptive history broadens and deepens very much in this portion of the Bible. Overall, the books of poetry look at the “erets” in a wide, ultimate, and universal sense rather than a narrow, nationalistic one. Israel’s possession of the land is presumed, but the point of view extends beyond the land of Canaan to all the earth and all of its people, especially in relation to the Messiah.

MAIN POINTS

- While historical references are cited regarding the land of promise in its narrow sense, the greater use of “erets” is universal in scope in the poetical books. Their emphasis is theological in relation to God as Creator and prophetic in relation to the Messiah and the ultimate outcome of redeemed and regenerated mankind and the “erets.”

- What is unique, and yet common, in messianic texts like Psalm 2 is that the fulfillment not only equals, but exceeds the original covenant promise. In this case, the promised “possession” equals the land of Canaan, but exceeds it to include *the ends of the earth*.
- In Psalm 37, those who will inherit the land are those who wait on the LORD, are meek, are blessed of him [LORD], and are righteous. While these promises are given to Israel, they also include every person who believes in the LORD. Likewise, the only person who *inherently* has met all these qualifications is Jesus Christ. All others are included only by grace through faith in him alone.
- The Psalm writers consistently refer to the LORD as king in, over, and above *all* the earth and consistently call to *all* the nations of the earth and foretell their inclusion in the salvation of the LORD.
- The Psalm writers clearly have an ultimate messianic expectancy for the whole earth, but it is not explicitly foreseen as being in time (a millennial kingdom) or beyond time (the eternal state).
- The overarching theme of all the Psalms is the praise and worship of the LORD led by Israel and involving *all* the nations of the earth for his great glory, judgment, and salvation of his creation.
- Overall, the books of poetry look at the “erets” in a wide, ultimate, and universal sense rather than a narrow , nationalistic one.

Chapter 8

The Land And The Prophets Of Israel

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. (Jeremiah 33:15-16a)

The history and theology of the land (erets) find their most challenging portions in the Old Testament prophetic books. The writing prophets begin a new era in the history of Israel and in redemptive history. Prophets had existed and ministered previously. However, from the time of the divided kingdom to a short time after the restoration, the writing prophets have a major role. Willem A. VanGemeren wrote,

The prophetic message of the classical prophets includes a statement of God's legal suit against his people, an announcement of judgment, a call for repentance, and a proclamation of the good news of God's deliverance. They affirmed that Yahweh is faithful in his commitment to renew the covenants, to usher in his kingdom, and to fulfill his promises. The prophets were God's appointed covenant prosecutors, but in this function they did not cease praying that God's people might turn to the Lord, undergo a transformation by the Spirit, and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom.¹⁰

While the prophets are primarily sent with a message to Israel and Judah, their messages also abundantly address the nations. By this emphasis, the prophetic messages have an inclusive nature rather than an exclusively ethnic one. VanGemeren adds,

The prophets spoke God's word to Israel and Judah before the Exile and to the remnant of the twelve tribes after the Exile. They also extended the oracles of salvation and judgment to the nations. It is not surprising that the judgment is emphasized, because the nations had harassed, troubled, seduced, and oppressed

10. Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 39.

the people of God. Nevertheless, the prophets also spoke of the inclusion of the Gentiles within God's redemptive purposes.¹¹

Thus, while the focus of the prophets is on Israel and the land of promise, it is not upon them exclusively. Rather, they become a step toward the ultimate universal fulfillment of redemption as promised in the Abrahamic Covenant in regard to all the nations and the earth (erets).

Numerous factors are involved in understanding the prophets. The specific people addressed include Judah (most often), Israel (the northern kingdom), Edom (Obadiah), and Assyria (Jonah and Nahum). However, several other nations throughout the Ancient Near East are referenced in the prophets, especially Babylon and Egypt. The prophets cite one, more, or all of the following issues: warning of impending judgment, call to repentance, exile, and restoration. How and when the prophets' messages are fulfilled are two of the most difficult problems of interpretation. They may be fulfilled in impending/immediate events, varied intermediate events to come, First Advent events, Second Advent events, or the Eternal State. The literary styles can make it difficult to distinguish between a strict or a poetic understanding of the words used.¹² This issue of interpretation has caused significant division in understanding the Old Testament prophets. On this issue Vern Poythress significantly wrote,

But then the symbolic and typological significances do not disappear when we go over to Old Testament prophecy. Old Testament prophecy is written against the background of Mosaic revelation. If the sacrifices, temple, land, priesthood, and kingship have symbolic significance in Mosaic times, that significance still clings to them when the same themes are mentioned or alluded to in prophecy. In fact, if anything, it will be increased and filled out as the later revelation of the prophets throws light on certain things that may have been in relative obscurity before.¹³

The principle cited in Poythress' quotation has application in the transition to the understanding of New Testament, too. Thus, according to Luke 24:27 and 24:44, the most significant factor in understanding the prophets is the messianic one. Christ declares the Old Testament message is Christo-centric, not merely ethno-centric about Israel. In the Old Testament, elements of his First Advent (its events and consequences) are often mingled in the same texts that have elements of his Second Advent (its events and consequences). Confusion can occur regarding distinguishing "millennial" and eternal state concepts, too. Thus, trying to separate these into two or three neat categories is not only difficult, but also it can become a hindrance if understood incorrectly. In all these factors, one must be careful to observe context, not only the immediate context, but the context of all that precedes the prophets in the Old Testament and

11. Op.cit., 241

12. Note: The use of poetic or figurative language does not undermine literal interpretation. Behind poetic or figurative language is always something very literal, which must be ascertained.

13. Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 112-113.

all that follows them in the New Testament. All of these factors affect the understanding of “erets.”

The writing prophets historically fall into three periods: pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic. They are treated in this order and in their probable order of their composition.

The Pre-exilic Prophets

The pre-exilic prophets include two Major Prophets (Isaiah and Jeremiah) and nine Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah).

Obadiah uses “erets” only once. The book is prophecy of the LORD against Edom. Edom will lose its land (1:3-4, 19-21), but nothing particular addresses the land of promise.

Jonah uses “erets” twice. Jonah is a prophet sent by the LORD with a message of judgment of the LORD against Nineveh and Assyria. The warning has a saving effect on Nineveh. However, nothing significant regarding the land of promise is included.

Amos uses “erets” twenty-four times. Amos is a prophet from Judah who brings a message of the judgment of the LORD against the nations and particularly Israel. Amos speaks to his specific time and the sins of the people. He warns of the curses and consequences of covenant unfaithfulness, but he ends with a message of hope and restoration. In 9:11-15, the LORD makes a universal, messianic promise that is related to the land. While the word “erets” is not used in 9:11-15, a synonymous term (adamah)¹⁴ is used twice in 9:15 as a message of promise and hope: “I will plant them [my people Israel] on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them, says the LORD your God.” The exact placement of this restoration in the future is not specified, and one’s understanding of eschatology will influence where it is placed. Interestingly, in Acts 15:16-17, James cites Amos 9:11-12 in explaining the visitation of God to take from the Gentiles a people for his name. His use of the text clearly implies he understood that God is rebuilding the tent of David and restoring it, *i.e.* the Davidic kingdom, in the first century AD so that the promised inclusion of the Gentiles was taking place.

Isaiah uses “erets” 199 times. Isaiah is perhaps the most majestic of the Old Testament books. Isaiah speaks specifically to the events of his time and beyond ultimately to the coming of Messiah, both as the suffering Servant and as the conquering and reigning King. While the people of God are the primary focus of both the judgment and salvation of the LORD, the book is strongly universal regarding both of these themes. Therefore, in Isaiah the use of “erets” can have general, universal, and local meaning in its uses. Context determines which of these uses is in view in each text. In 1:18-20 Judah and Jerusalem are called to either the covenant blessings or curses regarding their “erets.” In 2:19-21 a universal warning of the LORD is pronounced twice that he will shake all the “erets.” In 4:2, the blessing of the “erets” is connected to the “branch of the LORD” (a messianic title). While the synonymous word (adamah) is used in Isaiah

14. See Appendix 2.

14:1-3, the LORD speaks of the future hope of Israel in the midst of a judgment pronounced on Babylon and its king without a time of fulfillment being specified:

For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and sojourners will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD's land as male and female slaves. They will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.

Isaiah 24 uses "erets" sixteen times in describing the universal judgment of the earth. Isaiah 26:15 describes what the LORD will do to extend Israel's "erets" -- "You have enlarged all the borders of the land." Following in 26:19 is a promise of the resurrection of his people -- "and the earth will give birth to the dead." In Isaiah 32:1-2 a promise is made of a king who will reign in righteousness and who will be "like the shade of a great rock in a weary land." Another promise regarding the king and the land is given in Isaiah 33:17: "Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; they will see a land that stretches afar." With the beginning of chapter 40, Isaiah soars to majestic heights in regard to the salvation of the LORD in the Messiah. In chapters 40-60, "erets" is used sixty-three times; at least forty-five uses are universal, and at most eight refer to the land of Israel. A few of the verses that refer to the land of Israel have additional insights. In the promised restoration of Israel the LORD says, "Surely your waste and desolate places and your devastated land -- surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away. The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: 'The place is too narrow for me; make me room to dwell in.'" (Isaiah 49:19-20). In Isaiah 54: 2-3, the LORD says to his redeemed people, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities." Thus, while the land of Israel is held out in hope to those who will be saved by the LORD, the borders of that land will increase very significantly. In addition, though Israel's inheritance of land is certain, the objective of the LORD extends far beyond that to include all the earth and all who put their trust in him, whether Jew or Gentile (Isaiah 45:22 and 57:13), and it finally culminates in the new earth (Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22).

Micah is a contemporary of Isaiah who writes to Samaria and Jerusalem. He uses "erets" fifteen times. The letter is primarily a letter of indictment and coming judgment from the LORD on Israel (Micah 6:2). However, hope is proclaimed to Jew and Gentile who turn to him (Micah 4:1-5). Their hope, including the blessing of the land, will reside in the promised Messiah and his work (Micah 5:2-5a).

Hosea speaks the word of the LORD to Israel, the northern kingdom. He uses "erets" twenty-one times. Six times he refers to the land of Egypt, out of which the Lord has redeemed Israel in the beginning. His message is primarily one of judgment against Israel and the land for forsaking the LORD (Hosea 1:2, 4:1-3, and 9:1-3) and bringing covenant curses upon themselves (Hosea

2:3). Yet, the Lord graciously extends hope to unfaithful Israel with a promise of a new redemption and return to the land (Hosea 2:14-23).

Nahum is an epilogue to Jonah of the LORD's promised judgment of Nineveh (Assyria). He uses "erets" three times. The judgment stands as a warning to all the earth and its inhabitants (Nahum 1:5, 2:13, and 3:13). Yet, a door of hope is left open to those who take refuge in the LORD (Nahum 1:7), perhaps reminiscent of Noah in Genesis 6:11-18. In Nahum's pronouncement of judgment on Assyria, Israel is also to hear and see its own expectation of judgment for its unfaithfulness and of hope for a place of refuge.

Zephaniah and his message go to Judah in one of the nation's better times under Josiah (Zephaniah 1:1). Warnings of judgment may come in times of national blessing. He uses "erets" eight times. The warnings of judgment are addressed to Judah and all the earth (Zephaniah 1:2 [adamah], 1:18, 2:5, 2:11, and 3:8). Hope is extended to "all the meek of the earth" (see also Psalm 37:11 and Matthew 5:5) who seek the LORD and his righteousness and who do his commands (Zephaniah 2:3). The LORD also promises to redeem his people and make them renowned and praised in all the earth (Zephaniah 3:19-20).

Jeremiah is the LORD's final major prophet to Judah before the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people from the land. He uses "erets" two hundred-seventy-five times, which is the most of any prophet. From Jeremiah 1:1 to Jeremiah 25:20 "erets" occurs one hundred-twenty two times. Overwhelmingly these uses are warnings of coming judgment upon Judah, Jerusalem, and the land. A few promises of restoration to the land are scattered in these chapters (Jeremiah 3:16, 3:18, 7:7, 12:15, 16:15, 17:26, 23:3, 23:8, 24:6). None of these promises are time specific in fulfillment. In addition, Jeremiah 16:19 tells of the coming of the Gentiles to Israel from the ends of the earth, and Jeremiah 23:5 is messianic in its emphasis regarding the land. From Jeremiah 25:26 through Jeremiah 46:16 the references to the "erets" are quite general regarding Israel, Egypt, the whole earth, and the invading Babylonians. Promises of Israel being restored to the land are common in chapters 30 through 33 (30:3, 30:10, 31:8, 31:16, 31:22, 31:23, 31:37, 32:15, 32:37, 32:41, 32:43, 33:9, 33:11, and 33:13). These references, as well, are not time specific. However, Jeremiah 33:15 is particularly Messianic. References to the "erets" after Jeremiah 46:16 are almost exclusively universal and focus on Babylon. The lack of specific time fulfillment references regarding a restoration of Israel to the land seems to leave the restoration open-ended of times when it will occur. Three types kinds of fulfillment can be in view: (1) after the Babylonian captivity (when it did happen), (2) other events like Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11) or a pre-millennial earthly kingdom, or (3) in the New Earth (when it will ultimately happen). The promises of restoration that are clearly messianic must take place in either the second or third type of fulfillment. For, though the Jews who returned to the land of promise after the Babylonian captivity had messianic expectations, their expectations were not fulfilled.

Habakkuk is a prophet who grieves over the sins of Jerusalem and hears how Babylon is coming to judge Judah and Jerusalem. He uses “erets” ten times. Only one reference is prospective, and it is universal (Habakkuk 2:14).

The placement of Joel chronologically is difficult. The season preceding the fall of Jerusalem is the latest likely time for his prophecy. He uses “erets” twelve times. Most of the uses pertain to the judgment of the LORD on the people and the land of Israel. Joel 2:18 and 2:20 express hope and restoration. Joel 3:2 refers to the judgment of the LORD upon the nations. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter cites Joel 2:30-32 as being fulfilled (Acts 2:19). Joel ends with the expectation of Israel dwelling safely in the land with perpetual blessing, though no use of “erets” is made (Joel 3:17-21). Some would interpret this as an earthly millennial kingdom. However, the words, especially of 3:17, seem to fit better the Eternal State in the ultimate New Jerusalem, which will be holy and endure forever (Revelation 21:10, 16, 27; 22:1-2, 3, and 14-15).

The Exilic Prophets

The exilic prophets include three books of the Major Prophets: Ezekiel, Lamentations, and Daniel.

Ezekiel uses “erets” two hundred times. Ezekiel lived in exile between the first deportation to Babylon and the fall of Jerusalem and deportation in 586 BC. In the first twenty-four chapters, in which “erets” is used eighty-two times, the major theme is judgment through carrying out of the covenant curses on the people and the land. Two passages use the word in a way of promised restoration (Ezekiel 11:15-17 and 20:40-42). Each of these passages is associated with promises of the New Covenant.¹⁵ Ezekiel 11:19 has a connection with Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 31:33, John 3:1-10, Acts 2:38-39, Romans 2:28-29, and Colossians 2:11. Ezekiel chapters 25-32 focus on the judgment of Ammon, Moab, Tyre, and Egypt and their lands; in them “erets” occurs fifty-one times. Ezekiel 33 resumes the description of the judgment on Israel and its land and emphasizes their vain hope of holding on to the land of promise (33:24-26). Ezekiel 34 is filled with messianic hope for Israel and the land and contains seven references to the “erets.” Ezekiel 34:11-16 is of special note in regard to this hope:

For thus says the LORD God, Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the LORD God. I will seek the

15. See Appendix 3

lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

The imagery and motif are used of Christ all through the Gospels (especially in John 10), in the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation. What he begins with the Jews in Acts 2 extends to his “other sheep” (John 10:16) among the Gentiles and continues to this day toward its ultimate fulfillment. Ezekiel 36 returns to judgment upon the people and land of Edom and Israel, but the chapter ends and continues into chapter 37 with promises of Israel’s restoration to the land (36:24, 28, 34, 35, and 37:22, 25). Ezekiel 38-39 deals with prophecy regarding Gog and Magog and their attack on Israel, who is safely in the land. John makes reference to God and Magog in Revelation 20:7-10, which may describe the ultimate fulfillment of these chapters. Yet, Ezekiel 39:29 speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit on the house of Israel, which certainly began to be fulfilled in Acts 2. Ezekiel 40-48 are some of the most difficult chapters in the Bible and in which “erets” occurs seventeen times. The two main themes are the description of a new Temple and the division of the land to Israel, including borders. The way this passage is explained will be reflected in the understanding of two eschatological issues: the Millennium and the Eternal State. However, of special note is the reference to the participation of the sojourners with Israel in the land inheritance (Ezekiel 47:21-23). If the number of these sojourners (see Acts 2:39 and 11:17-18) includes the Gentiles who come to trust in Christ and are baptized with the Holy Spirit, then certainly the borders of the ultimate promised land will of necessity far exceed the borders given to the patriarchs and defined in Ezekiel 47:13-23, extending even to the whole earth.

Lamentations is written by Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem. The book uses “erets” ten times. Jeremiah’s laments cover the outcome of the covenant curses upon Israel and Jerusalem in particular. No use of the word goes beyond a generic use of the term as earth or ground, though the book ends with a prayer for restoration and renewal of the people.

Daniel is written in exile in Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem. Daniel uses “erets” nineteen times. The LORD foretells the course of human history, especially among the Gentile world empires. Nearly all the “erets” uses are generic referring to the earth or ground. Two or three uses pertain to the land of Israel (Daniel 9:6, 11:16, and 11:41), but none of them address a future of Israel in the land of promise. The future emphasis of Daniel is upon the ultimate coming and reign of the Messiah in a kingdom that will fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:35), will stand forever (Daniel 2:44, 7:13-14, 7:27), and thus have perpetual possession of the whole earth. Perhaps, without mentioning the land specifically, the most significant passage is Daniel 9:24-27: a command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, the people of the prince, and the sanctuary. Another significant reference pertains to the resurrection of Daniel’s people out of the dust of the earth (Daniel 12:1-2, 7, and 13). While these texts in chapter 9 and 12 are instructive, they in themselves do not fully and clearly address the issue of Israel and the “erets.”

The Post-exilic Prophets

The post-exilic prophets include Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These are written after the Jews return from captivity to the land of promise, first to rebuild the Temple and then to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Being post-exilic, these three books give insight into the “erets” at the close of the Old Testament canon, and the emphasis is upon the consequences of the covenant curses past, present, and future. The universal emphasis on the “erets” is stronger than the national emphasis of the land for Israel.

Haggai uses “erets” five times. The setting of Haggai is the first return of the Jews to rebuild the Temple. The first two uses are a warning of covenant curses for neglecting the rebuilding of the Temple (Haggai 1:10-11). The third use is a call to the people of the land to be strong and work with the promise of the LORD’s presence (Haggai 2:4). The last two uses are prophetic utterances of the LORD that he will shake the earth (universal) (Haggai 2:6, 2:21). Ultimate hope is implied, but nothing about the future of the “erets” is specified.

Zechariah uses “erets” forty-two times. The majority uses of the word are generic and universal. Only thirteen uses, at most, refer to the land of promise, and seven of them refer to the LORD’s judgment of the land or the captivity. Of the other six uses, at least three are messianic (Zechariah 3:9 and 31:2), and could well be fulfilled in the First Advent. The three remaining citations do anticipate a future for Israel in the land (Zechariah 12:12, 13:8, and 14:8-11). Of special interest are Zechariah 9:9-10, which defines the borders of the messianic dominion as “from the river to the ends of the earth” and Zechariah 14:9, which affirms that “the LORD shall be king over all the earth.”

Malachi ends the Old Testament with restored Jews dwelling in the land of promise and still under the Mosaic covenant conditions of blessing and cursing. He uses “erets” twice. One reference is a general promise for blessing in the land when Israel obeys the word of the LORD (Malachi 3:12). The other reference is a warning of a curse on the land if the word of the LORD is not heeded (Malachi 4:6). Ultimate hope is promised, but nothing about the “erets” is stressed.

MAIN POINTS

- The writing prophets begin a new era in the history of Israel and in redemptive history. Prophets existed and ministered previously. However, from the time of the divided kingdom to a short time after the restoration, the writing prophets have a major role. While they address contemporary and future historical events, like the scriptures before them, they are typological in their content of the ultimate outworking of the judgment and redemption of the LORD in his covenant faithfulness in Christ.
- The use of poetic language does not undermine strict interpretation. Behind poetic or figurative language is always something very literal, which must be ascertained.

- According to Luke 24:27 and 24:44, the most significant factor in understanding the prophets is the Messianic one. Christ declares the Old Testament message is Christo-centric, not merely ethno-centric regarding the nation of Israel.
- The writing prophets historically fall into three periods: pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic.
- Most of the prophets warn of the curses and consequences of covenant unfaithfulness, but they contain or end with a messianic message of hope and restoration for Israel and the nations.
- References to the land, both contemporary and future, are particular and universal. Though Israel's inheritance of land is certain, the objective of the LORD extends far beyond this to include all the earth and all who put their trust in him, whether Jew or Gentile, and it will culminate finally in the new earth of the Eternal State.
- The lack of specific time fulfillment references regarding a restoration of Israel to the land seems to leave the restoration open-ended. Three kinds of fulfillment can be in view: (1) after the Babylonian captivity (when it did happen), (2) other events like Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11) or a pre-millennial earthly kingdom, or (3) in the New Earth (when it will ultimately happen). The promises of restoration that are clearly messianic must take place in either the second or third type of fulfillment.
- Motifs regarding the outpouring of the Spirit on the house of Israel are common in the prophets. This certainly begins to be fulfilled in Acts 2.
- The post-exilic prophets give insight into the "erets" at the close of the Old Testament canon, and they emphasize the consequences of the Mosaic covenant curses past, present, and future. They place a stronger universal emphasis on the "erets" than the national emphasis of the land for Israel.

Chapter 9

The Land And The New Testament

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God." (Revelation 21:1-3)

When a person studies biblical theology, movement from the Old Testament to the New Testament raises certain issues. One issue involves a shift in language from Hebrew to Greek. In Hebrew the primary word for "land" is "erets." In Greek the most equivalent term is "ge," which is used 252 times. In the New Testament two other words ("kosmos" and "oikumene") are used infrequently in reference to the land, and their use is universal, encompassing the whole earth.

Another issue involves continuity. Does what has been progressively revealed in the Old Testament continue to be revealed in the New Testament, or is there a discontinuity between them? Most realize to answer yes or no is overly simplistic. The right answer is that both continuity and discontinuity exist, and the difficulty is distinguishing between the two as redemptive history continues progressively to unfold and be fulfilled in Christ. The Bible is one book with two testaments, or one work with two volumes, not two distinct books bound together.

A third major issue surrounds Christ and his Apostles' use and interpretation of the Old Testament in the New Testament. This issue certainly involves understanding of the land promise to Israel. One cannot simply and selectively choose what is included in a Christo-centric interpretation of the Old Testament. For example, to understand Christ as the Seed of Abraham and to deny his right to the land of promise land is inconsistent. To take seriously the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant and its priestly and sacrificial types, while denying Christ's

fulfillment and exclusive right to the land of promise and all its blessings is an error. Probably the most significant texts in treating the issue are found in Luke 24:27 and 24:44-49:

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he (Christ) interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:44-49)

To these could also be added John 5:39-40 where Jesus says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." This Christo-centric principle of interpretation is the primary principle for arriving at the God intended meaning of the Old Testament regarding the LORD's redemptive purpose, which includes the land promise with all the other messianic promises. This is the interpretive model that Christ taught and the Apostles follow throughout their New Testament preaching and teaching, and it should remain today as the primary way to interpret and understand both the Old and the New Testaments together.

A fourth issue, which bears strongly on understanding the land of promise, is the role of Israel in the New Testament. This is a dividing issue between dispensational and covenantal theology. Who is Israel? How does the continuity of the Old Testament promises to Israel work out in the New Testament? How these questions are answered becomes crucial in understanding the land promise. As a person weighs this question, the significance of Pentecost must be understood. Pentecost is a Jewish feast to which all adult male Jews are required to attend at Jerusalem. In Acts 2 on Pentecost the outpouring of the Spirit takes place, fulfilling the promises both of Christ (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8) and the Old Testament prophets, especially Joel 2:28-32. On that day, 3,000 Jewish men with the Apostles and the rest, who were in the upper room, form New Covenant Israel. With the unfolding of the rest of Acts and to this day, a huge harvest of Gentiles has been added to this new body of Christ. That which no other Jew had been able to do, Jesus Christ has done in fulfilling perfectly all the stipulations of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants. He is the one true Israelite, the Seed of Abraham, and the Son of David. All the promises of God are now, and ever will continue to be, fulfilled in Christ and in all those who are in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.

With these issues in view, we can begin to see the further unfolding of the land promise in the New Testament.

MAIN POINTS

- In the New Testament a shift in language is made from Hebrew to Greek. In Hebrew the primary word for “land” is “erets,” and in Greek the most equivalent term is “ge.”
- The relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament includes both continuity and discontinuity. The difficulty is distinguishing between the two as redemptive history continues progressively to unfold and be fulfilled in Christ. The Bible, God’s word, is one book with two testaments, not two distinct books bound together.
- Jesus Christ uses a Christo-centric principle as the primary means in interpreting the Old Testament. This is the model of interpretation that the apostles also follow throughout their New Testament preaching and teaching, and it should remain today as the primary way to interpret and understand both the Old and the New Testament together.
- The role of Israel in the New Testament bears strongly on an understanding of the land of promise. This is a major dividing issue between dispensational and covenantal theology.
- The teaching of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ fulfilled perfectly all the stipulations of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants. He is the one true Israelite, the Seed of Abraham, and the Son of David. All the promises of God, including the land, are now, and ever will continue to be, fulfilled in Christ and in all those who are “in Christ,” whether Jew or Gentile.

Chapter 10

The Land And The Gospels

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)

The gospels logically start the New Testament. They present four portraits of Jesus Christ from four similar, yet different, points of view. The gospels have three major contexts. The most evident context is the historic life and ministry of Jesus as the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah of the Jews, and the Savior of the world. This context places Jesus Christ in early first century AD Israel; this is the historic setting. A second context is the relationship of Jesus Christ to Old Covenant Israel, which connects historic issues from the Old Testament in continuity to himself and his times; this is the fulfillment context. A third context involves the mid-first century audiences of these gospels in relationship to the inauguration of the New Covenant with Israel and its expansion to include the Gentiles according to the promises of the Old Testament; this is the application fulfillment. The third context emphasizes continuity in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises as well as a measure of discontinuity in the New Covenant's progressive development and inclusion of believing Gentiles toward the ultimate consummation of all things.

Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ to demonstrate the continuity of his lineage from Abraham (and his covenant) through David (and his covenant) to Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1). One of the characteristics of Matthew is the frequent use of the phrase "that it might be fulfilled." One of the main purposes of Matthew is to establish the continuity and fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ. Matthew makes use of the term "ge" forty-two times. His first use establishes the continuity and historic fulfillment of an Old Testament promise concerning the birthplace of the Messiah, the King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-6). His second and third uses describe Jesus being taken out of the land of Israel to Egypt (Matthew 2:20) and being returned from Egypt to the land of Israel (Matthew 2:21). Matthew cites this as a fulfillment of Hosea 11:1 (Matthew 2:15). The fourth and fifth uses are in Matthew 4:15 as Matthew cites the reason for Jesus locating his initial ministry in Capernaum as being the

fulfillment of the promise in Isaiah 9:1. The placement of Jesus' ministry in these "lands" has a significant relationship not only to Israel but also to being a light to "Galilee of the Gentiles." Thus, a universal perspective of fulfillment is introduced early. The sixth use is in the Beatitudes in Jesus' first major sermon that defines his kingdom. He is speaking to a multitude of Jews, but his attention is focused on instructing his disciples. In the third beatitude he states "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). His statement connects to Psalm 37:11 specifically and tentatively to Isaiah 61:7 (Septuagint). While these two Old Testament citations refer to a land promise, they are sufficiently broad to include all (Jew and Gentile) who are "meek." The beatitude of Jesus also, though given to Jews and especially his disciples, is sufficiently broad to extend to the "meek" called out from among the Gentiles and to land encompassing not only the land of Israel, but the whole earth. That the use of "ge" in Matthew 5:5 is most likely to be understood in a universal sense seems clear from the five other uses of "ge" in the Sermon on the Mount that are either general or universal, not specific to the land of Israel. From this point forward until the last use of "ge," all uses are generic and or universal.

The use of "kosmos" in Matthew 4:8 has a significant implication about the land. When the Devil tempted Jesus, the third temptation was an offer to receive all the kingdoms of the earth (kosmos) in exchange for bowing in worship to the Devil. The offer of the Devil is a commentary on how he understood the messianic land promise -- as universal. Since Jesus had come to fulfill the messianic promises, the Devil offered all the kingdoms of the earth to Jesus, not simply the land of the kingdom of Israel. Jesus knew he could only receive the kingdoms of the all the earth through the cross, and he accomplished it this way according to Matthew 28:18-20.

In Matthew's gospel, which focuses on Old Testament fulfillments in Christ, the issue of the promised land of Israel is amazingly silent. While an argument from silence is not necessarily compelling, if Matthew's objective is to focus on messianic fulfillment in Christ, one would expect specific, significant references to the land of promise. One of Christ's parables does speak to the issue of the land of promise in strong terms (Matthew 21:33-46, which is repeated in Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 20:9-19):

"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you

never read in the Scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet. (Matthew 21:33-46)

Jesus’ parable speaks specifically to the land promise. While the land (“ge”) was promised forever to Abraham and his seed, the vineyard was leased to the nation of Israel as tenants, conditioned on obedience to Yahweh and the Mosaic covenant. The tenants refuse to hear or give fruit to the servants sent by the landowner, which clearly identifies the history of Israel in the land up to the time Jesus spoke this parable. Finally, the tenants refuse to hear even the landowner’s son who is the heir of the vineyard, they seek to kill the son and take his inheritance for themselves. Jesus identifies himself as that son who is the heir as the Seed of Abraham. Jesus asks a direct question about the landowner’s judgment of these wicked tenants. His hearers give the right answer: the landowner will put those tenants to death and lease out the vineyard to other tenants who will use it rightly. Jesus concludes by saying that the kingdom of God will be taken from these unbelieving Jews and be given to a people producing its fruits. Jesus is promising to end their right to the land and give it to another people -- New Covenant Israel, which includes all who are in Christ, Jew and Gentile. Jesus Christ is the heir, the land is his, and he gives it to whom he will give it and who will produce its fruits. The final use of “ge” in Matthew is a most significant summary of continuity and fulfillment in Christ and a directive reaching to the consummation of the age and his return for his inheritance.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:16-20)

Following his death and resurrection, Jesus receives all authority (not only Davidic Covenant authority, but worldwide/universal/cosmic authority) in heaven and on earth (“ge”). This expands his authority far beyond the limits of the land of Canaan to the whole earth (see Psalm 2 and Daniel 2:35, 44-45). He directs his eleven Jewish disciples, as New Covenant Israel, to begin and continue to make disciples of all nations (Israel and the Gentile nations) until the consummation. These will be the meek, fruit-bearing tenants that will forever care for his inheritance, the “vineyard,” even the whole earth. Thus, Matthew includes in his portrait of Jesus Christ a much larger and inclusive picture of the land of promise.

Mark targets a different audience in his gospel portrait of Christ. The audience is likely Roman slaves by the emphases he employs. This audience would not be as concerned about the continuity and fulfillment of the Old Testament. Mark does use “ge” nineteen times, but none of them bear significance regarding the land of promise other than repetition of the “vineyard” parable cited in Matthew. “Kosmos” is used once significantly in 16:15 where the disciples are commanded to preach the gospel to the entire world -- a universal application.

Luke presents his gospel portrait of Christ to another audience. The audience seems to be a Greek one in search of a perfect humanity, which Luke demonstrates to be in Jesus Christ. He uses “ge” twenty-six times. His uses are almost entirely generic references to the ground or universal references to the whole earth. Luke 4:25 is a historic citation relating to the land in the time of Elijah and the covenant curse of famine. In addition to the “vineyard” parable cited in Matthew, Luke adds another related parable in Luke 13:6-9:

And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The parable appears to represent a covenant curse upon the last generation of Old Covenant Israel. Having been unproductive in the land, it is given a final chance to produce with special treatment. This “year” seems to have been extended to the year 70 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem. In the meantime, multitudes of Jews believed the gospel and became part of the New Covenant Israel in Christ. The hope of the promises of fruitfulness now rests in Christ and New Covenant Israel, which includes a vast number of Gentiles, too. One other “ge” reference to the land of promise is in Luke 21:23. Though the placement of the fulfillment of this prophecy in time is disputed among interpreters, it is most likely referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and Old Covenant Israel in 70 AD in the land of Canaan. “Oikumene” occurs one significant time in 4:5, which parallels Matthew 4:8, only Luke uses “oikumene” instead of “kosmos” as Matthew did, and again it stresses the universal nature of messiah’s kingdom and land.

John presents a fourth portrait of Jesus Christ to his audience. The purpose seems to include an evangelistic aim, presenting Christ as the Savior of the world, and an apologetic aim, establishing the deity of Christ. The church at the end of the first century needed this picture as the heresy of incipient Gnosticism began to arise. John uses “ge” only thirteen times, and other than one reference to coming into the land of Judea (John 3:22), the references are all generic to the ground or earth.

The thrust of the Gospels, which focus on the person, works and teaching of the Messiah of Israel, is essentially and unexpectedly silent regarding the land of Israel; references are typically general and universal of the whole earth. Covenant curses are prophesied to fall on Old

Covenant Israel and the land. The limited references of promise regarding the land seem to broaden to the whole earth and to expand to all who are in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles. These insights from the Gospels ought to carry great weight in working out the New Covenant understanding of the land promise.

MAIN POINTS

- One of the main purposes of Matthew is to establish the continuity and fulfillment of all the Old Testament in Jesus the Messiah of Israel.
- Matthew paints in his portrait of Jesus Christ a much larger and inclusive picture of the land of promise. Following his death and resurrection, Jesus receives all authority in heaven and on earth (“ge”). This expands his authority far beyond the limits of the land of Canaan to the whole earth. He directs his eleven Jewish disciples, New Covenant Israel, to begin and continue to make disciples of all nations (Israel and the Gentile nations) until the consummation.
- Mark targets a different audience in his gospel portrait of Christ, likely Roman slaves, who would not be as concerned about the continuity and fulfillment of the Old Testament. Mark does use “ge” nineteen times, but none of them bear significance regarding the land of promise other than the parable cited in Matthew.
- Luke presents his portrait of Christ likely to a Greek audience in search of a perfect humanity. He uses “ge” twenty-six times. His uses are almost entirely generic references to the ground or universal references to the whole earth.
- Luke adds a parable that appears to be a covenant curse on the last generation of Old Covenant Israel (70 AD). The hope of the covenant promises of fruitfulness now rest “in Christ” and New Covenant Israel, which includes a vast number of Gentiles, too.
- John uses “ge” only thirteen times, and other than one reference to coming into the land of Judea (John 3:22), the references are all generic to the ground or earth.
- The thrust of the Gospels regarding the land of Canaan is essentially and unexpectedly silent. The limited references of promise regarding the land seem to broaden to the whole earth and expand to all who are “in Christ,” whether Jews or Gentiles.

Chapter 11

The Land And Acts

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Acts is a companion volume to the Gospel of Luke. Acts continues to record the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah) through his Apostles. The book documents the progress of the gospel from the ascension of Christ to the Roman imprisonment of Paul. Luke uses “ge” thirty-four times, and seventeen of the uses are generic or universal in nature. Eleven are historic references and nearly all of them are in Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7. Six uses remain that relate in some way to the land of promise. Before these six uses are considered, two other issues need clarification.

First, in Acts 1:6, Jesus’ apostles ask him a significant question related to Israel and the land: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” What prompts their question? Acts 1:2-3 describe the forty days between his death, resurrection and ascension. During this time, he spoke to them about the kingdom of God. Yet in all these days and hearing about the kingdom of God, they have not seen much happen that they had expected from the Messiah, especially the restoring of the kingdom to Israel. Jesus’ answer to their question is both cryptic and clear. The cryptic part of the answer is “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.” Some take this to mean that the restoration of the kingdom to Israel has been postponed while the Church is developed from then to this day. However, Jesus’ may actually be restraining their nationalistic, messianic expectations for what the plan for Israel and the kingdom really is. The Jews were expecting a messianic appearance and victory that would exalt them as a nation again. The apostles still have this lingering expectation, especially now after Jesus’ resurrection. However, the messianic plan will go in a “new” direction. Jesus had taught this to them before he died (Luke 13:6-9 and 20:9-19). This new direction will not be unexpected if they had read their Scriptures correctly about the Messiah and the outcome of his suffering and resurrection (Luke 24:44-49) -- for example Psalm 22:22-31. Therefore, Jesus’ final

words to his Jewish apostles are corrective, preparing them for a messianic kingdom task expanding to the whole earth in being a witness to Him by the coming outpouring and empowering of the Holy Spirit. This concept continues throughout the rest of Acts, climaxing with Paul's ministry in Rome in Acts 28:23-30 with a developed and fulfilled concept of the new kingdom in Messiah and the church:

When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: "'Go to this people and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah) with all boldness and without hindrance.

In this, the parables of Luke regarding the vineyard and the fig tree are worked out. The Jews who believe the gospel regarding Christ and the kingdom of God become a part of New Covenant Israel and spread the witness of Messiah from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the earth. However, those Jews, who do not believe, are preparing themselves to be "broken off" Old Covenant Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD (Romans 11:17-20).

Second, clarification is needed regarding the significance of Pentecost and its outworking. Pentecost does not get its name because of what happened on that day. Pentecost is a Jewish feast day fifty days after Passover that celebrates the beginning of the harvest. The great beginning of the ingathering of those in Messiah begins on this particular day. The feast is one of three to which adult Jewish men are to gather at Jerusalem. Thus, the Lord draws back to Jerusalem on that day Jews from all over the Dispersion, and he does a mighty work among them according to his Old Testament promise and the promise of Christ regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Israel. Peter's message is directed particularly to the men of Israel and to the house of Israel (Acts 2:22 and 2:36). This body of three thousand Jewish men, in addition to the Apostles and those already with them, constitute New Covenant Israel, promised in Deuteronomy 31:6 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. On this day two other factors set the stage for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the new community of God's people in Messiah. First, in the prophecy of Joel that Peter cites (Acts 2:16-21), two portions are noteworthy: his Spirit will "be poured out on all flesh" (including in due time the Gentiles - Acts 10:45 and 11:17-18) and

“everyone (including Gentiles) who calls on the Lord shall be saved” (Isaiah 45:22 and Acts 15:6-11). Second, Peter speaks truly, but beyond his present understanding, when he says this outpoured gift of the Spirit is not only for these believing Jews, but also for the Gentiles: “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off (*i.e.* the Gentiles), everyone whom the Lord our God (which is covenant language) calls to himself” (Acts 2:39). Later, Peter’s understanding catches up to what he said (Acts 10:1-48 and 11:1-18). The expansion of the New Covenant community continues to extend to believing Jews and Gentiles from that day, to this day, and until the consummation of the one flock (John 10:16).

Regarding the remaining six significant uses of “ge” in Acts, consider the following. First, the plan of the Father for Messiah and his followers begins in Jerusalem and will expand beyond the land of Israel to the ends of the earth (“ge”) (Acts 1:8). Second, in Joel God had promised to show “signs in the earth beneath,” which he did abundantly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, before the outpouring of his Spirit on Israel and all flesh (Acts 2:19). Third, Peter speaks of the responsibility and privilege of New Covenant Israel to see the fulfillment the Abrahamic Covenant and to usher in the “restoring of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago” (Acts 2:21) and in them blessing all the families of the earth (“ge”). That, which the Apostles were expecting, will come not only to Israel, but to the whole earth in the consummation. Fourth, in his sermon of defense Stephen addresses the false expectation of the Jews regarding the permanence of their Temple as God’s dwelling place by citing the word of the LORD in Isaiah 66:1-2: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth (“ge”) is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hands make all these things?” Fifth, Paul states his understanding of the work of New Covenant Israel in turning to the Gentiles with the gospel at Antioch in Pisidia by citing Isaiah 49:6, “For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth (“ge”)’” (Acts 13:47). Last, in his sermon on the Areopagus in Athens Paul states an abiding rule of the Lord regarding all the earth: “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth (“ge”), having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:26-27). All nations have their allotted times and boundaries by the Lord. He controls all the earth as he determines.

Nothing particular is recorded in Acts regarding the land of promise. However, much is written about the purpose of God in Messiah to expand from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth with a witness to Jesus Christ and the gospel. By this the New Covenant people of God in Messiah fulfill their Old Testament destiny of bringing the Abrahamic blessing to all nations of the earth.

MAIN POINTS

- The Jews expected a messianic appearance and victory that would exalt them as a nation again. The Apostles still have this lingering expectation, especially after Jesus' resurrection. However, the messianic plan would go in a "new" direction. Jesus had taught this to them before he died (Luke 13:6-9 and 20:9-19). The new direction would not be unexpected if they had read their (Old Testament) Scriptures correctly about the Messiah and the outcome of his suffering and resurrection (Luke 24:44-49). Therefore, Jesus' final words to his Jewish Apostles are corrective, preparing them for a messianic kingdom task expanding to the whole earth through their witness to Him by the coming outpouring and empowering of the Holy Spirit.
- Pentecost is a Jewish feast day fifty days after Passover on which they celebrate the beginning of the harvest. The great beginning of the ingathering of those in Messiah begins on this particular day. The feast is one of three to which adult Jewish men are to gather at Jerusalem. Thus, the Lord drew back to Jerusalem on that day Jews from all over the Dispersion, and he does a mighty work among them according to his Old Testament promise and the promise of Messiah regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- Nothing particular is recorded in Acts regarding the land of Canaan. However, much is written about the purpose of God in Messiah to expand from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth with a witness to Jesus Christ and the gospel. By this the New Covenant people of God in Messiah fulfill their Old Testament destiny of bringing the Abrahamic blessing to all nations of the earth.

Chapter 12

The Land And The Pauline Epistles

“For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he should be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13)

Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles. In his twelve epistles he uses “ge” only fifteen times in four of his letters. However, Paul is very clear about the people of Israel regarding their historic spiritual heritage that culminates in Messiah (Romans 9:1-5). He is also clear to distinguish in the descendents of Israel who are and are not the children of Abraham (Romans 2:28-29, 9:6-8) and who are called of God, both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 9:25-33). He desires the salvation of his fellow Jews and laments their unbelief (Romans 10:1-4). He emphatically stresses that God has not rejected his people, citing himself as an example in Romans 11:1 (Romans 11:7-10). He sees clearly the progress of New Covenant Israel in the olive tree and its branches (natural branches, grafted wild branches [Gentiles], and regrafted natural branches) until finally all (New Covenant) Israel is saved (Romans 11:11-32). In addition, everywhere that Paul goes with the gospel, he always goes to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles.

In Romans, Paul uses “ge” three times, and all of them are in the section regarding Israel (Romans 9-11). First, in Romans 9:17 Paul uses the term in a universal sense regarding his dealing with Pharaoh “that God’s name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Second, in Romans 9:27-29 Paul tells of the judgment of God and the remnant of Israel:

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”

Though the remnant is inclusive of all the saved of Israel, yet the one and only Offspring who secures the remnant is Jesus Christ because he alone fulfilled all the stipulations of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants. Third, in Romans 10:18 Paul cites Psalm 19:4 that

“Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” Preceding this, Paul wrote, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call upon him (Romans 10:12). The gospel and all its blessings make no distinction between Jew and Greek; the distinction is transcended “in Christ” by faith in calling upon him in all the earth.

Paul makes one other very significant reference to the land promise in Romans 4:13. He does not use “ge,” but rather “kosmos.” “For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he should be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.” The unqualified inheritance of the land promise is in the Abrahamic Covenant, not the Mosaic Covenant. The inheritance is granted on the basis of the righteousness of faith. Though the LORD made the land promise to Abraham unconditionally through the righteousness of faith, his further promise of the land to Israel in the Mosaic Covenant was conditioned on their continued obedience. If Israel disobeyed the Mosaic Covenant, they would be cursed and expelled from the land. The Lord did extend a promise of recovery of the land in the Mosaic Covenant, but it would be determined by the exercise of faith through the circumcision of their hearts by the LORD (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). Further, as Paul argues in Galatians 3:16, Christ is the one true Offspring of Abraham and ultimately his sole heir. All, who are “in him” by faith, become joint heirs with him without distinction (Galatians 3:26-29). Vern Poythress observed,

The question remains, “What does union with Jesus Christ bring to Christians?” The church receives the complete fullness of God’s blessing through Christ (Eph. 1:23, Col. 2:10), including being made coheirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). That is to say we inherit what he inherits. We are sons of Abraham because he is (Gal. 3:29). In being united to him, we possess the whole world (1 Cor. 3:21-23).¹⁶

So the Offspring cited in Romans 4:13 is Christ, and being “in him” is the essential to the inheritance, not only of the land of promise, but of the entire world. This is the ultimate objective of the Lord regarding the land promise, of which the land of Canaan was a miniature expression in time.

In First Corinthians Paul uses “ge” four times. None of them have particular reference to the land promise. In First Corinthians 10:26 and 10:28, regarding the eating of meat, Paul cites Psalm 24:1 that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” All the earth is the Lord’s and for his people.

In Ephesians Paul uses “ge” four times. His first use of the term in Ephesians 1:10 is very important in regard to the land promise. He writes, “Making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things in earth (Ephesians 1:9-10).” The New Covenant does have something new revealed. The new revelation does not contradict the Old Testament promises, but rather it expands on them to unite all things in Christ -- things in heaven and

16. Vern Poythress, *ibid.*, 126-127.

things on earth. This uniting “in Christ” has begun with believing Jews and Gentiles being made into one new man (Ephesians 2:11-22, especially 2:15 and 2:19-21). The union “in one new man” as “a holy temple” for a “dwelling place of God” will never be broken, and it will increase “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). His second (Ephesians 3:15) and third (Ephesians 4:9) uses do not relate to the land promise. His last use in Ephesians 6:3 cites a Mosaic Covenant promise that is valid in the New Covenant for Jew and Gentile -- “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land (“ge”).” As in the Mosaic Covenant, obedience is the path to blessing in limited ways in the present world and with the hope of the unending blessed life of eternity. One other passage in Ephesians 2:11-22, while not mentioning the land, connects directly to the idea. Gentile believers in Christ (Messiah) were previously “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise.” The commonwealth of Israel is its national, ethnic existence. The covenants of promise certainly include the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants. Gentiles, as unbelieving Gentiles, have no part in the covenants of promise or the commonwealth of Israel. However, by being in Christ, the former separation between Jew and Gentile has ceased. Both believing Jews and believing Gentiles now form one new man -- one body in Christ. As a result, believing Gentiles in Christ are no longer strangers (to the covenants of promise) or foreigners (to the commonwealth of Israel), but they are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. This is New Covenant Israel. This is the Temple (the holy land where God dwells in the midst), being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit, which anticipates the full restoration of God’s dwelling place on earth to come and that now gives access to all in Christ by one Spirit to the Father. These fulfill the Old Testament types of the Temple, the presence of the Lord, and the land in a fresh way, but they still await the consummation to come in eternity. They are the last major steps begun toward the full redemption and restoration of mankind in the land where the LORD dwells with his people and where they have direct, unhindered access to him.

In Colossians Paul uses “ge” four more times. Two of the uses (Colossians 1:16 and 1:20) are in the universal and ultimate sense that parallel Ephesians 1:10. The other two references do not relate to the land promise (Colossians 3:2 and 3:5).

Paul loves the word of God and his Jewish heritage. However, in his writings he foresees and writes of the grand fulfillment that surpasses and transcends the Old Testament promises to Israel to include all who are “in Christ” now and forevermore. He does not deny the promises to Israel (including the land), which is obtained only by faith in Christ. Disobedience and unbelief in Old Covenant Israel would lead to forfeiture of the land, and only a believing, regenerated remnant of grace would return. He does not replace Israel with the Church. He does not make the Church a parenthesis in redemptive history. He takes an amazing step forward in the progressive revelation of God’s redemptive and regenerative purpose as revealed now in Christ for the fulfillment of all things in the new heavens and earth (Romans 8:16-23).

MAIN POINTS

- Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles. Yet, he always goes to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles with the gospel of the Messiah.
- Paul is very clear about the people of Israel regarding their historic spiritual heritage that culminates in Christ (Messiah), and he defines which descendents of Israel are and are not the children of Abraham, his desire for the salvation of his fellow Jews, his certainty that God has not rejected his people (citing himself as an example - Romans 11:1), and the progress of New Covenant Israel in the olive tree and its branches until finally all (New Covenant) Israel will be saved.
- The gospel and all its blessings make no distinction between Jew and Greek; the distinction is transcended “in Christ” by faith in calling upon him in all the earth.
- The inheritance of the land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant is not by ritual (circumcision) or ethnic/blood connection. According to Romans 4:13-25, the inheritance is granted on the basis of the righteousness of faith alone.
- The Offspring cited in Romans 4:13 is Christ, and being “in him” is the essential factor of the inheritance, including the land of promise, which is the entire world. This is the ultimate objective of the Lord regarding the land promise.
- The New Covenant has a new revelation. This new revelation does not contradict the Old Testament promises, but rather it expands them to unite all believers and the renewed creation in Christ -- things in heaven and things on earth. This uniting “in Christ” has begun with the forming of believing Jews and Gentiles into one new man and as one Temple for the Lord to indwell (Ephesians 2:11-22, especially 2:15 and 2:19-21).
- The union “in one new man” as “a holy temple” for a “dwelling place of God” by the Spirit involves the last step toward the ultimate fulfillment of an accessible dwelling place among his people ... a new Eden. This will never be broken, and it will increase “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”
- In his writings Paul foresees and writes of the grand fulfillment that surpasses and transcends the Old Testament promises to Israel to include all who are “in Christ” now and forevermore. He does not deny the promises to Israel (including the land). He does not replace Israel with the Church. He does not make the Church a parenthesis in redemptive history. He takes a great step forward in the progressive revelation of God’s redemptive and regenerative purpose as revealed now in Christ for the fulfillment of all things.

Chapter 13

The Land, Hebrews And The General Epistles

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:13)

The General Epistles include James through Jude, but Hebrews will be added to them. All of these epistles are written to believers in Christ, but they all are written especially to Jewish believers. All the writers are Jewish in their lineage and outlook, especially Peter who is called the Apostle of the Circumcision (Galatians 2:8). Based on these factors, a person might expect significant references to the future of Israel and the land promise. However, little is said. While an argument from silence is not necessarily a strong argument, yet in this case with these circumstances of the writers, readers, and content of the letters, it is very significant. They all seem to be focusing on an expanded fulfillment which has been initiated, but not yet consummated, not on an ethnic, national land fulfillment.

Hebrews appears to be written to Jewish Christians who are considering a return to Old Covenant Israel when being a Christian has exposed them to danger and death. The author is warning them not to turn back to the Old Covenant, but to persevere and press on in the New Covenant. They will find no hope in going backward; their only hope is to keep pressing forward. The writer uses “ge” ten times. Seven times he uses it in a generic or universal sense (Hebrews 1:10, 6:7, 8:4, 11:38, 12:25, and 12:26 [twice]). The other three uses are historical citations regarding Israel (Hebrews 8:9, 11:9, and 11:13). None of these addresses a future regarding the land promise and Israel. However, the author cites two references that are connected to the promise of land in Hebrews 4:8-10 and 11:13-16, although “ge” is not used.

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. (Hebrews 4:8-10)

In this passage the author is arguing why the readers should not return to the Old Covenant: they will find no rest in doing so. When Joshua led Israel into the land of promise, their rest was only limited and typological. The author cites Psalm 95:7-8 as his reason for this conclusion since God spoke of another day of rest yet to come, which has not happened, and so is still to come. He exhorts them to strive to enter the coming Sabbath rest. Some might conclude that the coming rest would be during a pre-millennial reign of Christ. However, as increased as rest would be in such a time, it also would still be limited and typological. The final, enduring Sabbath rest must be in the Eternal State of the “new earth,” and it is likely referenced in Revelation 14:13.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

The patriarchs of Israel lived “by faith in the land of promise, as in a foreign land” (Hebrews 11:9). However, Abraham “was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). These texts indicate that the land promise has its ultimate fulfillment in something that did not exist in the days of the patriarchs, although they lived in the land of promise. These texts also indicate that the land that Israel dwelt in for centuries, though it was a gift from the LORD, also lacked something that did not then exist: “a city whose builder and maker is God” and “a better country, that is, a heavenly one.” Together, these texts and their fulfillment treat the Old Testament experience in the land of promise as typological and anticipatory of the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven (Revelation 21:1-22:21). The author is encouraging his readers not to go back to former ways and expectations (even if they were instituted by the LORD). Instead, he urges them to move forward in faith, as Abraham and others had done, to the ultimate fulfillment of all things (Hebrews 12:1-2 and 12:18-29).

James uses “ge” five times. Being a Jewish Christian and writing one of the earliest New Testament epistles, one might expect James to direct the Jewish Christians to a renewed hope of the land promise. However, he does not. All five of his uses of “ge” are generic in nature.

Like James, Peter, who is called the Apostle to the Circumcision, who delivered the message of Pentecost to the men of Israel, and who struggled with the inclusion of the Gentiles as equals, might be expected to direct Jewish Christians to a renewed hope of the land promise. However, in First Peter he makes no use of “ge,” even though his letter is filled with Old Testament citations and terms of Old Covenant Israel applied to the New Covenant community, *e.g.*, 1 Peter 2:4-10. In Second Peter he uses “ge” four times. Three of them are generic and universal (2 Peter 3:5, 3:7, 3:10). His last use of “ge” does relate to a land promise, and it clearly refers to the

Eternal State: “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). The promise in view is from Isaiah 65:17-25 and Isaiah 66:18-24. Dispensationalists interpret these Isaiah texts as millennial, but they would more likely fit the character of the Eternal State. The Isaiah promises, as are all the messages of the prophets, are rooted in the covenantal promises of the Pentateuch, even back to the original creation and the Garden of Eden. This is Peter’s expectation of the fulfillment of all the promises, including the land. He calls his Christian brethren, Jews and Gentiles, to focus on this hope and live accordingly until then (2 Peter 2:11-12 and 2:14).

John writes First, Second and Third John. Yet, in these epistles he uses “ge” only once, and it is a generic use (1 John 5:8). He makes no reference to the land of promise, but only the promised Savior’s return and the transformation that will take place at that time (First John 3:2).

Jude exhorts his readers to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). He cites numerous Old Testament illustrations. However, he uses “ge” only once and in a historic sense (Jude 5). He also makes no reference to the land of promise, but simply exhorts his readers to persevere and “wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life” (Jude 21).

MAIN POINTS

- Hebrews appears to be written to Jewish Christians who are considering a return to Old Covenant Israel when being Christian has exposed them to danger and death. The author is warning them not to turn back to the Old Covenant, but to persevere and press on in the New Covenant.
- None of the “earth” references in Hebrews addresses a future regarding the land promise and Israel. However, the author cites two references that do connect to the promise of land in Hebrews 4:8-10 and 11:13-16, although he does not use “ge.”
- According to Hebrews 4:8-10, the final, enduring Sabbath rest must be in the Eternal State of the “new earth,” and it is likely referenced in Revelation 14:13.
- According to Hebrews 11:9-10, 13-16, these texts and their fulfillment treat the Old Testament experience as typological and anticipatory of the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven (Revelation 21:1-22:21). The author is encouraging his readers not to go back to former ways and expectations (even if they were instituted by the LORD). Instead, he urges them to move forward in faith, as Abraham and others have done, toward the ultimate fulfillment of all things (Hebrews 12:1-2 and 12:18-29).
- Being a Jewish Christian and writing one of the earliest New Testament epistles, James might be expected to direct the Jewish Christians to a renewed hope of the land promise. However, he does not. All five of his uses of “ge” are generic.

- In his first letter, Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision, makes no use of “ge,” even though his letter is filled with Old Testament citations and terms of Old Covenant Israel applied to the New Covenant community.
- In his second letter, Peter’s last use of “ge” does relate to the land promise, and it clearly refers to the Eternal State: “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). This is Peter’s expectation of the fulfillment of all the promises, including the land.
- The letters of John and Jude make no references to the land of promise, but only to the expectancy of the return of Christ.

Chapter 14

The Culmination Of The Land In The Revelation

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10)

Revelation is the last word of Christ to his churches until he comes in power and glory. Revelation unveils the rest of redemptive history in quite an amazing way. Revelation is a prophetic book. Like the Old Testament prophets, John does not simply or primarily speak to the future. He calls the people of God back to their covenant with him, and in this case the covenant is the New Covenant. Those things that are prophetic are simply covenant warnings of judgment for their disobedient unbelief and covenant promises of blessing for their obedient faith in Christ. Like a few of the Old Testament prophets (Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah), John uses apocalyptic imagery that is poetically exaggerated, but great, literal truths underlie the imagery. The end of all things in Revelation 21-22 is especially clear and hopeful, even though it is a vision and wrapped in vivid imagery.

John uses "ge" eighty-two times. Often the use is connected to some phrase, *e.g.* "those who dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 13:8), to some imagery, *e.g.* "a beast coming up out of the earth" (Revelation 13:11), or a personification, *e.g.* "the earth opened her mouth" (Revelation 12:16). Out of all the uses, only four are not generic or universal and relate to the land of promise. This is amazing in that the book is filled with Old Testament citations, terms, and imagery, especially from Revelation 4-20.

John's first use of "ge" in Revelation 1:5 relates to the person of Jesus Christ. John reveals him as "the ruler of kings on earth." The implication is not that this is something he will one day be, but something he was at that moment and continues to be to this day. Christ, the Messiah, is king of the earth now, even though he has not fully manifested himself as such (see Psalm 2 and Matthew 28:18). His full manifestation is coming (Revelation 19:16). Being ruler of the kings of

the earth does not contradict the Abrahamic land promise or the Davidic promise of a king on his throne. Rather, it fulfills, expands, and transcends them in a most glorious way.

John's second use of "ge" in Revelation 5:10 relates to the innumerable company of people from every tribe and language and people and nation that surrounds the heavenly throne and the Lamb. This universal company pronounces the Lamb worthy to open the sealed scroll (*i.e.* unfold the consummation of the world) because he has ransomed them by his blood to be a "people for God," which is covenant language). Then these people declare that the Lamb "has made them a kingdom and priests of our God, and they shall reign on the earth." This again does not contradict the promises to Israel about itself and the land. Rather, it fulfills, expands, and transcends the promises in a most glorious way. At this time the promise of the Abrahamic covenant, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed", will be completely fulfilled (Genesis 12:3). At this point "the thousand years" of Revelation 20:4-6 has significance because twice some are said "to reign with Christ for a thousand years." Although people tend to divide over their interpretation and understanding of the millennial reign of Christ, the his reign will be fulfilled regardless of how it is interpreted (premillennial, postmillennial, or amillennial). Those who reign with Christ are from more peoples than only Israel, and the reign is the whole earth and so beyond the proscribed boundaries of a limited land of promise. Whatever interpretation one makes of Revelation 20:4-6, the ultimate fulfillment of reigning on the earth remains to be fully experienced in the consummation of the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 22:5).

John's third use of "ge" refers to the new earth (Revelation 21:1). This is far more than a "millennial" renovation of the earth, because "the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." John sees a new heaven, a new earth, and the holy city -- New Jerusalem -- coming down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:2). This is the ultimate object of Abraham's hope (see Hebrews 11:10 and 16). This is the Eternal State. The final land of promise will not only fulfill the limited boundaries of the Lord's promise to Israel, but it will expand to include the whole earth where God will dwell, he will be with all his people, and he will be the God of all his people (Revelation 21:3). This is all covenant language. That, which mankind lost in Adam, including Eden and the whole earth, Christ will have regained, resurrected, and settled forever.

John's fourth use of "ge" refers to the events that happen on the new earth. "By its light the nations will walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it" (Revelation 21:24). The significance of this may be explained in Jesus' parable in Luke 19:11-27. Jesus taught that when people will be judged finally for their labor in the absence of the nobleman, they will receive authority over cities according to their faithful stewardship (Luke 19:17 and 19:19). This may simply be part of the parable promising a great reward for faithful service, or it may be strictly fulfilled and apportioned in the new earth forever. First Corinthians 15:41-42 Paul implies that the resurrected saints will vary in the degree of their glory -- "star differs from star in glory." Thus, the degree of glory one possesses will be manifest in the new earth, but all glory will be brought to Jesus Christ. If this is so, one other item of interest might be considered. **If** portions and cities are assigned in the new earth, perhaps the saints of Old Testament Israel will be

apportioned the specific land and boundaries promised in the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants to be their dwelling place forever.

The Revelation ends fittingly with these words: “He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen” (Revelation 22:20-21). The consummation of redemptive history now awaits for all in Christ at his coming and in the Eternal State.

MAIN POINTS

- Revelation is the last word of Christ to his churches until he comes in power and glory.
- Like the Old Testament prophets, John does not simply or primarily speak to the future. He calls the people of God back to their covenant with him, and in this case the covenant is the New Covenant. Those things that are prophetic are simply covenant warnings of judgment for their disobedient unbelief and covenant promises of blessing for their obedient faith in Christ. Like some of the Old Testament prophets (Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah), John uses apocalyptic imagery that is poetically exaggerated, but great truths underlie the imagery. The end of all things in Revelation 21-22 is especially clear and hopeful even though it is a vision that is wrapped in vivid imagery.
- Christ, the Messiah, is king of the earth now, even though he has not fully manifested himself as such (see Psalm 2 and Matthew 28:18). His full manifestation is coming (Revelation 19:16). Being ruler of the kings of the earth does not contradict the Abrahamic land promise or the Davidic promise of a king on his throne. Rather, it has fulfilled, expanded, and transcended them in a most glorious way.
- Those who reign with Christ will be from more peoples than only Israel, and the reign will be in the whole earth ... beyond the proscribed Old Testament boundaries of a limited land of promise.
- In Revelation 21:1, John sees a new heaven, a new earth, and the holy city -- New Jerusalem -- coming down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:2). This is the ultimate object of Abraham’s hope, even Adam’s hope, -- the Eternal State. The new earth will not only fulfill the limited boundaries of the Lord’s promise to Israel, but it will expand to include the whole earth where God will dwell, he will be with all his people, and he will be the God of all his people (Revelation 21:3). All that mankind lost in Adam, Christ will have regained, resurrected, and settled forever.
- If portions and cities are assigned in the new earth, perhaps the saints of Old Testament Israel will be apportioned the specific land and boundaries promised in the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants as their dwelling place forever.

Chapter 15

The Land In Summary

*The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.
(Psalm 24:1)*

If the Bible is simply taken as written without seeing the whole flow of redemptive history from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, one might come to the conclusion that national Israel must yet be reconstituted in the land of Canaan due to Old Testament declarations. Yet, to take a such a simplistic approach could lead and has led some to wrong interpretation and application of “clear” texts. The purpose of this survey of the “land” issue has been to show that the LORD God has had from the beginning in Genesis 1:1 something greater in mind than simply giving Israel a piece of land in the Middle East. In his book, Beginning at Moses, Michael P. V. Barrett makes this statement, “Do not confuse literal interpretation of Scripture with surface interpretation.”¹⁷ While he was writing regarding the interpretation of typology, I believe the principle applies to the interpretation of the entire Bible. In the interpretation of Scripture, many factors must be considered beyond the simple, seemingly apparent text in order to correctly understand it. Such factors include context, both the immediate and the entirety of Scripture, literary devices such as genre and typology, the progressive revelation of redemptive history, and above all the integral message regarding Jesus Christ, his person and work of redemption.

Genesis 1-11 lays the foundation for understanding the theology of the land. These chapters are fundamental to understanding the Abrahamic Covenant promises that begin to unfold in Genesis 12. The LORD God is the Creator and Sovereign Owner of the land, even all of creation. He bestowed the management and stewardship of the land to mankind, whom he made in his image. In the beginning, the LORD God dwelt in the land among his creatures. The LORD God gave Adam and Eve unlimited access to himself in a particular place called the Garden of Eden.

17. Michael P. V. Barrett, *Beginning at Moses: A Guide to Finding Christ in the Old Testament* (Greenville, South Carolina: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999), 254.

However, mankind chose to disobey their Creator and LORD. As a result, judgment fell upon them. They lost their unlimited access to the LORD God. They were exiled from the Garden of Eden, their particular place where the LORD God dwelt among them. The ground was cursed. Adam and Eve began to die physically, having already suffered a spiritual death toward the LORD God. However, the LORD God began to make known to sinful mankind his intent to redeem them from their sin (Genesis 3:15, 21). Genesis 4-11 shows the course of human history leading to the gracious call of Abraham: humanity continues to rebel and suffer the consequences of their rebellion, but the LORD God continues to intervene graciously and to secure a remnant by which he keeps his redemptive promises, even if it extends to only one individual, *e.g.*, Seth, Noah, and Abraham.

Redemptive history takes a major step forward in the Abrahamic Covenant, which is repeated often to Abraham and reaffirmed to his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. While the covenant is conditional based on the righteousness of faith alone followed by the outward seal of circumcision, the land promise is unconditional. Three significant promises are included in the covenant: the Seed, the inheritance of a specific portion of the earth (which is specified by borders), and the blessing of all the nations of the earth. By this covenant, the promised redemption of the LORD God progresses. The Seed will be the means of accomplishing the redemption. The redemption will include the land, and especially a particular portion of the land, *i.e.*, a renewed Eden, in which the LORD will dwell among his people. The redemption will be worldwide in scope, extending to all the families of the earth. At this point, no mention is made of a renewed, unlimited access to the presence of the LORD or to his dwelling place among mankind. While Abraham lived in the land of promise, he never possessed any of the land except a burial plot, which he bought for himself. In Romans 4:13 Paul makes it clear that Abraham is to be heir of the world -- more than a limited portion of land (see also Hebrews 1:2 where the Son of God is appointed heir of all things). In addition, the writer of Hebrews indicates that Abraham understood his inheritance to be something more than a simple, significant piece of land in Canaan (Hebrews 11:9-10, 13-16). To him the promises were "literal," but they were more extensive than a "surface literalism."

In Exodus, the history of redemption takes another major step forward. The descendents of the Patriarchs are slaves in bondage in Egypt. The LORD God intervenes this time not only in one man, Moses, but in one nation, Israel, to carry out his redemption. The deliverance of Israel from the bondage in Egypt and the bringing of them into the land of promise become the major instructive type of the ultimate redemption to come for mankind and the earth. The limited nature of this typical redemption is evident in the Mosaic Covenant, which is fully laid out in Deuteronomy. The possession of the land of promise is conditioned upon their personal and national obedience. If they obeyed, blessings would ensue. If they disobeyed, exile from the land would happen along with many other curses. However, the LORD God included in the covenant another limited typology of redemption. He gave the people a renewed "holy land" in which he would dwell among them, *i.e.*, the Tabernacle, and he gave them a limited means by which they

could have access to him, *i.e.*, the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifices. He also assured them of an eventual circumcision of the heart, which would truly transform them (Deuteronomy 30:6).

In the next millennium, Israel took possession of the entire land portion promised to them (Joshua 21:43), and in the reign of Solomon Israel actually controlled all the land of promise (2 Chronicles 9:26). In Psalm 95 and in Hebrews 4:4:1-11, the Bible is clear that Israel only had a “typical” rest in the land of promise, a rest that is yet to come in its fullness, since Joshua did not give them the full rest in the land, only an occupation of it, and since in Solomon’s time when the land was fully occupied, the rest in the land was still conditional and incomplete. Though the era was nationalistic for Israel, the Psalmists, including David, often foresaw the LORD God’s blessing of all the nations. Provisions were made in the law for Gentiles to enter into the covenant people and their blessings, Ruth being an outstanding example of such. The LORD God promised another unconditional covenant to David, which included a perpetual throne for his Son. The whole era was marked by times of blessing and by times of judgment. Late in the era, the writing prophets were sent to Israel. Their primary function was to call the nation to repentance and covenant renewal. In doing so, they issued warnings of the covenant curses to come for disobedience and promises of covenant blessings for obedience. Their calls to Israel also extended to the nations with similar warnings of judgment and promises of blessings. All the promised blessings became focused in one to come -- the Messiah. Land promises were still held out to Israel, and especially of a new earth (Isaiah 66:22-23). However, as Barrett wrote, “literal interpretation is not to be confused with surface literalism.” Israel failed. The Temple was destroyed. The people were exiled into foreign lands. The LORD did extend to Israel the hope of the unconditional New Covenant, which would secure and fulfill all his promised blessings for them. The LORD God did bring a remnant of Israel back and gave them hope, but the nation was subjugated by the Gentile nations until the first century A.D. and was still under the national stipulations of the conditional Mosaic Covenant.

In the coming of Jesus Christ (Messiah), the course of redemptive history shifts from temporary, typological steps to final fulfillment. By his genealogical heritage and his perfect obedience, Jesus Christ became the ultimate Seed of Abraham (Matthew 1:1, Galatians 3:16), the one fully, faithful Israelite, and the Son of David (Matthew 1:1). He becomes the fulfillment and the possessor of all the covenantal promises (Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic). Before and in his death, Jesus Christ instituted the New Covenant with his Apostles, who, though only eleven in number, became believing Israel. He fulfilled all the typology necessary for the enactment of the New Covenant -- the once-for-all sacrifice for sin and forgiveness. In himself he began to build the ultimate Temple in which the LORD God will dwell among his people and through which they all draw near to him. In Him all believers, Jew and Gentile, become heirs of all the covenant promises and blessings (Galatians 3:27-29, Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 2:11-22).

Following his resurrection, Jesus Christ commanded his believing, Jewish disciples to take the gospel to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21-23, and Acts 1:8). He constituted them as the New Covenant Israel (Matthew 21:33-

44, especially 21:43). After his ascension, he poured out the Holy Spirit and so inaugurated the era of New Covenant fulfillment (Acts 2 with Deuteronomy 31:6, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Joel 2:28-32). The Church, the New Covenant “called out assembly,” was wholly Jewish in its beginnings. Through the promise made to Abraham, all the families of the earth are now being drawn into the covenantal blessings in anticipation of the consummation. Throughout the New Testament epistles, minimal references are made to the land. Especially in Hebrews and the General Epistles, which were written to Christians with Jewish roots, no emphasis is placed on the land other than promises of inheritance at the advent of Christ and the new heaven and new earth.

Revelation is the consummation of redemptive history. That which the Old Testament typified and that which the New Testament began to fulfill, all come to their climax and completion in Revelation. Most of the references to the land in Revelation are of the whole earth as God’s wrath is poured out. Though Revelation 20:4-10 makes no specific mention about the land (except the entire earth - 22:8-9), pre-millennialists pour into this text the fulfillment of all the land promises to national Israel. However, a better fulfillment of the land comes in Revelation 21-22, and this fulfillment is something to which all believers can agree in the end. The hope of Abraham and all the covenant promises (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New) become fulfilled finally and forever in Christ and in the new heaven, new earth, and New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the final holy place on earth where the LORD God dwells with his people and where they have full access to his presence. In this new earth all the redeemed of Israel and the nations live free from any further defilement as they serve and worship the LORD God forever. Eden, the earth, and the whole universe is fully restored and renewed forever to the glory of the LORD God and the good and blessing of his redeemed people. Regarding this, John Milton finished his epic poem, *Paradise Regained*, with these words:

"True Image of the Father, whether throned
 In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
 Conceiving, or, remote from Heaven, enshrined
 In fleshly tabernacle and human form,
 Wandering the wilderness--whatever place,
 Habit, or state, or motion, still expressing
 The Son of God, with Godlike force endued
 Against the attempter of thy Father's throne
 And thief of Paradise! Him long of old
 Thou didst rebel, and down from Heaven cast
 With all his army; now thou hast avenged
 Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
 Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise,
 And frustrated the conquest fraudulent.
 He never more henceforth will dare set foot
 In paradise to tempt; his snares are broke.
 For, though that seat of earthly bliss be failed,

A fairer Paradise is founded now
For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou,
A Saviour, art come down to reinstall;
Where they shall dwell secure, when time shall be,
Of tempter and temptation without fear.
But thou, Infernal Serpent! shalt not long
Rule in the clouds. Like an autumnal star,
Or lightning, thou shalt fall from Heaven, trod down
Under his feet. For proof, ere this thou feel'st
Thy wound (yet not thy last and deadliest wound)
By this repulse received, and hold'st in Hell
No triumph; in all her gates Abaddon rues
Thy bold attempt. Hereafter learn with awe
To dread the Son of God. He, all unarmed,
Shall chase thee, with the terror of his voice,
From thy demoniac holds, possession foul--
Thee and thy legions; yelling they shall fly,
And beg to hide them in a herd of swine,
Lest he command them down into the Deep,
Bound, and to torment sent before their time.
Hail, Son of the Most High, heir of both Worlds,
Queller of Satan! On thy glorious work
Now enter, and begin to save Mankind."
Thus they the Son of God, our Saviour meek,
Sung victor, and, from heavenly feast refreshed,
Brought on his way with joy. He, unobserved,
Home to his mother's house private returned.¹⁸

18. John Milton, *Paradise Regained*, Retrieved September 29, 2010, from <http://www.literature.org/authors/milton-john/paradise-regained/chapter-04.html>.

Appendix 1: Typology

All Christian theologies, in some degree, use typology in their interpretation of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. However, settling on a consistent definition and application of typology creates difficulties and disagreements. Whole books have been written on typology. For a more thorough treatment, I recommend that further study be done. I will address only a few issues that I believe pertain to this paper.

What is typology, or what is a type? Bernard Ramm wrote,

Typological interpretation is specifically the interpretation of the Old Testament based on the fundamental theological unity of the two Testaments whereby something in the Old shadows, prefigures, adumbrates something in the New. Hence what is interpreted in the Old is not foreign or peculiar or hidden, but rises naturally out of the text due to the relationship of the two Testaments.¹⁹

Ramm sets this in contrast to a similar, but very different method called allegorical interpretation. He wrote, "*Allegorical interpretation* is the interpretation of a document whereby something *foreign, peculiar, or hidden* is introduced into the meaning of the text giving it a proposed deeper or real meaning."²⁰

Is typological interpretation justified, and even required, to properly understand the Bible? The answer is found in numerous New Testament references. Perhaps the most significant references are made by Christ. In John 5:39, he told the Jews, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me." In Luke 24:27, "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Later in Luke 24:44-46,

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

Evidently the heart of typology is centered in understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ. So, paraphrasing Ramm, truths about him in the Old Testament shadow, prefigure, adumbrate something in the New Testament. They are truths not foreign or peculiar or hidden, but rise naturally out of the text due to the relationship of the two Testaments.

19. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics for Conservative Protestants*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956), 204.

20. *Op. cit.*, 204.

Three examples of typology in the preaching of Jesus can be found in Matthew 12. In 12:6, Jesus says, "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here" (referring to himself, see also John 2:18-22). What the Temple historically was, Christ historically and ultimately is. In 12:41-42, Jesus identifies himself as greater than Jonah and Solomon. These historic persons anticipated and illustrated what Jesus historically and ultimately is and did. In these three statements Jesus cites three examples from the Old Testament that typified or prefigured what he fulfilled in himself and his ministry. Two texts in the writings of Paul are significant regarding typology: Romans 15:4 and First Corinthians 10:1-6. Peter uses typology in 1 Peter 3:18-22. Hebrews is filled with Old Testament typology, which finds its fulfillment in Christ.

In understanding the right use of typology, the following extended citation from Michael Lawrence is very helpful:

Are there any restraints on identifying types? Yes, there are. Are there any interpretive rules for recognizing and interpreting the relationship between type and anti-type across epochs of Scripture? Yes, there are. Of course, sometimes, the biblical writers themselves make the connection between type and antitype. That's what most the book of Hebrews is doing, as it explains how the Old Testament temple, priesthood, and sacrificial system all pointed as types to Christ. It is what Paul does in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 10. Once a biblical author makes a typological connection explicit in one text, it's fair to see that connection in every instance of the type.

But do we have any basis for recognizing types not explicitly identified by a biblical author? I think we do, but only when we follow the pattern already set by Scripture itself. Pastor and scholar Gordon Hugenberger, following Louis Berkhof, has offered the following guidelines:

- 1) There must be a real, historical, and essential resemblance or analogy between the type and the antitype.

EXAMPLE: King David, who was really God's anointed king over his Old Testament people, and King Jesus, who is the King of kings, God's anointed King over his universal people. Jesus is descended from David and heir to the promises of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.

- 2) The type must be providentially designed to foreshadow God's ultimate redemptive activity in Christ. This means that accidental or even thematic similarity is not enough to make a type/antitype connection. "There must be some Scriptural evidence that it was designed by God."

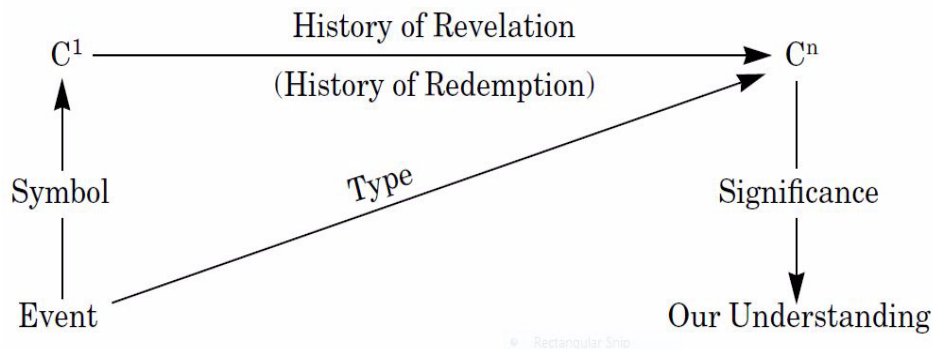
EXAMPLE: Balaam's ass rebukes a false teacher. Jesus rebukes false teachers. But this by itself doesn't make Balaam's ass a type of Christ. The point of the

donkey speaking in Numbers 22 is to highlight Balaam's obtuseness, rather than in some obscure way to point forward to Jesus.

3) Unlike a mere symbol, which represents a general truth or idea, a type by its very nature must look forward to its specific and greater fulfillment in the anti-type.

EXAMPLE: In the Old Testament, blood is a symbol for life in general. Christ gives life, but blood is not a type of Christ. It remains a symbol for life. However, the sacrificial lamb, whose blood is shed as a substitute for the sinner is a type. This is because, as Hebrews points out, the type pointed forward to a greater sacrifice, one that would be truly effective and finally sufficient.²¹

Another helpful guide in interpreting typology is Clowney's Rectangle. The method is pictured and explained below:



Edmund Clowney explains:

We may represent the history of revelation as a horizontal line. Along that line concepts such as the "dwelling of God" motif move forward. Many figures and metaphors are used to represent these concepts. The figures add to the elaboration and communication of the concepts. We may therefore project a line of symbolism in which a particular event, ceremony, or role points to the concept being revealed. In the fullness of revelation the concept reaches its realization in Jesus Christ. Therefore wherever the line of symbolism exists in the history of revelation, the line of typology can also be validly drawn. There are no concepts that drop out of the plan of redemption. In one way or another all point forward to Christ. A concept in the first stages of revelation we may call C¹ (C to the first power). That concept as fulfilled in Christ is Cⁿ (C to the nth power). The significance of the event for our understanding is not to be read directly across the bottom of the rectangle. That does not take

21. Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 77-78.

seriously the presence or absence of symbolism in the O.T. text, nor the development of the history of revelation. Similarly, the full significance of the concept C¹ will escape us if we fail to carry it forward to its realization and fulfillment in Christ.²²

While variations in understanding and applying typology are wide, it does remain as a significant tool in understanding the unfolding revelation of the history of redemption. Typology must be used carefully and wisely, but it significantly helps in seeing the meaning of the purpose of God fulfilled in Christ.

In addition, interpreters need to face the question: "Were most, or all, aspects of Old Covenant Israel intended by the LORD to serve both a historical purpose at the time, and a typological purpose in the unfolding of God's plan of redemption?" If people, places and events like Moses, Aaron, animal sacrifices, the Temple, and God dwelling in the land are God intended types, then is not "the land" also a type? If we add "types" where none exist we misrepresent what the Lord has to say to us. But, if we miss the types, which He designed, we miss hearing what He has revealed in Christ. For example, how instructive for the people of God now is the type of Christ given long ago of the serpent lifted up on the pole by Moses (John 3:14-16). If the typology of the land in God's history of redemption is missed, then we will not now hear what the Lord has spoken to His people regarding the hope of inheritance set before us in Christ.

22. E. P. Clowney, "Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church: A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology," *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization* (ed. D. A. Carson; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) esp. 83-95. Cf. also Hugenerberger's summary of Clowney's approach ("Notes" 339-341), 90. Cited in *Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion* by W. Edward Glenny in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40:4 (March 1997): 627-638.

Appendix 2: “adamah”

Besides “erets,” another synonymous Hebrew word for land, “adamah”, is used 225 times in the Old Testament. According to the Theological Workbook of the Old Testament, “Originally this word signified the red arable soil. From this it came to denote any cultivated, plantable ground and/or landed property.”²³ Strong’s Concordance shows that the word is translated as follows: land(s) (125 times), earth (53 times), ground (43 times), country (once), husbandman (twice), and husbandry (once). The word is used throughout the whole Old Testament, but three books use it most significantly: Genesis (43 times), Deuteronomy (36 times), and Ezekiel (28 times).

In Genesis, “adamah” is used twenty-seven times of the ground generally in the first nine chapters. In the initial Abrahamic Covenant, the LORD promises that in Abram “shall all the families of the earth (“adamah”) be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). All other uses are general and make no significant addition to the theology of “the land.”

In Deuteronomy, two major uses are often repeated. First, the “adamah” is referred to eight times as “the land the LORD your God gives you (Israel).” Second, it is called “the land ... sworn ... to the fathers” six times. Many of the uses involve conditional covenant warnings of judgment or covenant promises of blessing.

In Ezekiel, the “adamah” is called the “land of Israel” fifteen times and “your/their own land” nine times. A return of the people to the “adamah” through the action of the LORD is referred to nine times; some of the most significant are Ezekiel 11:17, 20:42, 36:24, 37:12, and 37:14. These references are not necessarily time specific as to their fulfillment, whether soon, future, or the Eternal State, which certainly is the final gathering of Israel, his people.

Overall, covenant warnings of judgment regarding “adamah” are common, *e.g.* Joshua 23:13, 15, 1 Kings 9:7, 14:15, Isaiah 6:11, Jeremiah 24:10, and Amos 7:17. Likewise, covenant promises of blessing of “adamah” are common, *e.g.* 1 Kings 8:34, 40, 2 Kings 21:8, Isaiah 14:1, 2, Jeremiah 16:15, 42:12, Amos 9:15, Zechariah 2:12, and 9:16. Hope remains for Israel and the land in these Old Testament promises of the LORD. The only issues are the manner and time in which these promises will be kept. The New Covenant initiated and applied is the key, and the Eternal State in the new earth is the last, abiding, and unending fulfillment of the promises in Christ, who alone is the one truly qualified Israelite, Seed of Abraham, and Son of David.

23. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 10.

Appendix 3: The New Covenant

In the progression of redemptive history, covenants have a crucial role. The covenants that are specifically given in the Old Testament are the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and the New Covenants.

The Noahic Covenant involves the whole earth and mankind (Genesis 9:8-17), and expresses the LORD's commitment to a promise he will not do -- bring a judgment by a worldwide flood again. 2 Peter 3:5-7 gives the New Testament commentary on the carrying out of this covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant involves Abraham and his Seed. In the covenant, the LORD promises to bless Abraham and his Seed and through them to bless all the nations (Genesis 12:1-3). In addition, the LORD promises to give unconditionally to Abraham and his Seed a specific portion of the earth (Genesis 15:17-21). This covenant was reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 26:1-5 and Genesis 28:10-17). In the history of Israel two times are significant in regard to the promise's borders. In the time of Joshua, Israel possessed all the land promised to Abraham (Joshua 21:43). In the reign of Solomon, Israel controlled all the land promised to Abraham (2 Chronicles 9:26). In the New Testament three significant commentaries on the Abrahamic Covenant are given. In Romans 4:13, Abraham and his Offspring are called the "heir of the world." In Hebrews 11:9-16, Abraham, while dwelling in the land of promise, looked for "a city whose builder and maker is God," and he "desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one." In Galatians 3:16 and 3:28-29, Paul identifies Christ as the Seed of Abraham, and all who are "in Christ" as "Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

The Mosaic Covenant involves the nation of Israel. Unlike the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant is conditional in regard to the land of promise. Covenant curses are pronounced on Israel if they disobey the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Covenant blessings are pronounced on Israel if they obey the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). The LORD tells Israel that they will disobey and forfeit the land, but he promises to save his people with the foretelling of a "New Covenant" promise (Deuteronomy 30:1-10, especially 30:6). Israel did indeed lose the land in 586 BC. While Israel had faithful people throughout its history, no one perfectly kept the covenant. Only one Israelite has ever kept the covenant perfectly, and that is Jesus Christ. He alone qualifies for all the covenant blessings pronounced on Israel and none of the covenant curses. The message of the New Testament, foreshadowed throughout all the Old Testament, is the gracious work of Christ whereby he took the covenant curses of his people on himself and has given his own covenant blessings to his people, e.g. Second Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:10-14, and Romans 8:1-4.

The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional promise to David of a Seed who will build a house for the LORD's name, establish his throne forever, and have a father/son relationship with the LORD (2 Samuel 7:4-17). Solomon, David's son, did build the first Temple in Jerusalem, but his reign was only typological of the Greater Son of David to come. In the New Testament, Christ

became the Son of David who builds the house of the LORD (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 2:19-22, and 1 Peter 2:4-5). He establishes the throne of David forever (Acts 2:29-36, 13:32-37, 15:15-17, 17:7, and 28:30). He has the father/son relationship with God (Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, Romans 1:4, and Hebrews 1:1-14).

Knowing that the Old Covenant would not make Israel perfect, the LORD promised the New Covenant unconditionally. The necessity and promise of the New Covenant are given in Deuteronomy 30:6. In the prophets, further promises of the New Covenant are made. However, the New Covenant is specified in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The specifications are 1) it is a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 2) it will include putting His law in them by writing it on their heart, 3) he will be their God and they will be his people, 4) they shall all know the LORD, and 5) he will forgive their iniquity and will remember their sins no more.

The fulfillment of the New Covenant has been a divisive issue in the contemporary church. Traditional dispensationalists put the New Covenant into the Millennium for ethnic/national Israel. Charles Ryrie believes there are two New Covenants -- one for Israel and one for the Church.²⁴ Homer Kent believes the Church inherits spiritual promises of the New Covenant, but the physical promises still will belong to ethnic/national Israel.²⁵ Progressive dispensationalists take Kent's view farther, but they maintain an ultimate distinction between the Church and Israel.²⁶ Covenant theologians have treated the New Covenant in several ways, but they agree in its essential institution and fulfillment. They, early on, along with the dispensationalists have called the view "replacement theology." However, the proper way to understand the view is "fulfillment."

What does the New Testament say about the New Covenant and its specifications? Regarding the first specification, the night before his crucifixion at the Last Supper, Jesus Christ institutes the New Covenant with his Apostles, who are redeemed Israelites (Luke 22:20). Then on Pentecost, the New Covenant is inaugurated with the house of Israel, as 3,000 Jews are saved. The first specification has been fulfilled, and it continues to be fulfilled as Jews are added to this day. In addition, Gentiles, who by faith are "in Christ," are included in the New Covenant Israel, the Church, even as Gentiles were added to Old Covenant Israel (Genesis 17:12, Exodus 12:48, Ruth 1:16-17), only now on a massive scale. Regarding the second specification, Paul writes to the Corinthian church,

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us,

24. Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953; 3rd printing, 1966), 124-125.

25. Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1972; paperback edition, 4th printing, Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1995), 158-160.

26. Darrell L. Bock, "Hermeneutics of Progressive Dispensationalism" in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, Herbert W. Bateman IV, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 92-94.

written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:2-6)

The second specification is also identified as being fulfilled in Hebrews 10:16 and Romans 2:28-29 with Deut. 30:6. Regarding the third specification, Peter shows how it has been fulfilled in Christians in 1 Peter 2:9-10 and 1 Cor. 6:16-17. Regarding the fourth specification, though the visible Church tends to be a mixture of regenerate and unregenerate members, the true Church consists of regenerate members only. Christ's description of his church (Matthew 16:18) and discipline for his church (Matthew 18:15-20) emphasize the regenerate nature of it. Paul declares that those who are "in Christ" do receive the circumcision of the heart, not made with hands (Colossians 2:11-15). Regarding the fifth specification, the writer of Hebrews stresses the fulfillment of it in Hebrews 8:12-13 and 10:17-18 (see also Acts 13:38-39).

All covenant theologians agree on this introduction, inauguration, and progression of the New Covenant. Differences arise among them on the consummation of the New Covenant. Some see the consummation in a future historic millennial era (historic premillennialism²⁷ and postmillennialism²⁸). Others see the consummation at the Second Advent and the beginning of the New Heaven and the New Earth (amillennialism²⁹).

27. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Donald A. Hagner, ed., revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993; reprint, 1998), 678-681.

28. Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971; reprint, 1991), 232-238.

29. Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 137-138.

Appendix 4: The Significance Of Pentecost

Pentecost is not directly connected to the question of the land. Yet, that day has major significance for understanding the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Pentecost is interpreted in three major ways although each way has several variations. First, Pentecostal theology focuses its interpretation on the phenomena of Pentecost, especially the baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues. Second, Dispensational theology focuses its interpretation on the birth of the Church and as the beginning of a parenthesis in God's dealing with Israel. While acknowledging the dominant presence of Jews at Pentecost, dispensationalists deny and postpone the fulfillment of all prophecy for Israel until the end of the Church Age and the Second Advent of Christ. Dispensational theologians tend to treat prophecy related to Israel as "all or nothing." By "all or nothing" they mean that if a prophecy is not fulfilled totally and exactly in an event, it is, at best, only an illustration of the total and exact prophetic event still to come. Third, Covenant theology focuses its attention on the fulfillment of promises to Israel, which inaugurate the New Covenant and will in due time consummate with the Second Advent of Christ. Covenant theologians look at prophecy incrementally as "already and not yet" or as an inauguration resulting in a process that is completed in the future consummation.

How should the significance of Pentecost in Acts 2 be understood? Several important elements need to be clearly comprehended.

First, when the LORD gave the law to Moses for Israel, he designated three feasts when the men of Israel were to gather before him at the place he chose (Deuteronomy 16:16-17). Later the meeting place was designated as Jerusalem. The Feast of Weeks, the second of the three required feasts, followed the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the first of the feasts by fifty days (Deuteronomy 16:9-12). The Greek word for the Feast of Weeks was Pentecost (fifty days). Some think that Pentecost was so named because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and the birth of the Church. Actually, Pentecost was simply the regular annual feast of the gathered Jews celebrating the beginning of the harvest. This was a Jewish feast that would have happened whether the promise of the Holy Spirit had been poured out or not.

Second, on this particular Pentecost, its prophetic fulfillment of the ingathering of the harvest for Israel took place (previously of grain, but now of people in Christ), even as the Passover Feast was fulfilled in Christ fifty days previously. Historically, the Feast of Weeks was designated to joyfully celebrate the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the offering of first fruits of the harvest to the LORD. Traditionally, the Jews held that the LORD gave them the Law fifty days after the Passover, so it became a celebration of the Law of God, too. The LORD revealed no prophetic significance in the Old Testament for the Feast of Weeks, but it surely has a typological shadowing of the harvest that begins in Christ by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 with 3,000 Jewish men and the gathering now continues until the final harvest of the consummation. In addition, the outpouring of the Spirit marks a fulfillment of a promise

regarding the Law being written in the heart of his New Covenant Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-33 with 2 Corinthians 3:3-6 and Hebrews 10:15-18).

Third, the Old Testament promised Israel a time of regathering and blessing. The day of Pentecost providentially was, at least, an inauguration of the promise to be fulfilled in the Second Coming and the restoration of all things (Acts 3:17-21). On that day Jews were gathered from the Dispersion in the land of promise and in Jerusalem, and they heard the gospel and witnessed the fulfillment of the promised outpouring of the Spirit. In explaining what they saw, Peter proclaimed the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, the fulfillment of the salvation of the Lord for Israel in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (Psalm 16:8-11 and 110:1), and the call of the house of Israel (Acts 2:36) to repent and identify with Jesus as their Lord and Christ (Messiah). In so doing, they received the promise of the Holy Spirit that the LORD had made to them in the New Covenant along with the circumcision of their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:5-6, Romans 2:28-29, and Colossians 2:11). The promised restoration has now begun (Acts 2:41, 2:37, 3:22-26, and 13:32-41).

Fourth, in Acts 2:39 (probably speaking beyond his understanding) Peter testified that what had begun on this day for these men of Israel will be extended to their children and to all who are afar off, *i.e.*, the Gentiles. The rest of Acts substantiates this (Acts 13:32-43 and 15:13-21), as does the history of the gospel to this present day.

Fifth, Pentecost initiated a time of transition for ethnic and national Israel. Between Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the gospel was faithfully extended to the nation of Israel. Multitudes of Jews did believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41, 5:14, 6:1, 6:7, 9:31, 21:20). Did these Jews lose their ethnicity? Certainly they did not. They are the first generation of the New Covenant community, the Church as the “called out assembly” of God’s redeemed, regenerate people. They had become the beginning of the ultimate house of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34). They struggled with their new identity, but in due time they understood that the inclusion of the Gentiles in their New Covenant community had been ordained and planned by God (Acts 15:6-35). The Church did not become a replacement of national Israel, but it began to be the fulfillment of New Covenant Israel as the Lord Jesus had prophesied in a parable:

Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those

wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits (Matthew 21:33-43).

The Church, comprised of regenerated ethnic Jews and regenerated Gentiles, became the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophetic parable. This new kingdom will continue to grow and fill the whole earth until the Second Advent and the Consummation. Pentecost is the “now/already” of the New Covenant people of God, originating in Israel with regenerated ethnic Jews. The Consummation is the “not yet” of the New Covenant people of God. After a generation of extended grace, Old Covenant Israel, being centered in Jerusalem and the Temple, experienced the judgment of God for persistent unbelief at the hands of Imperial Rome as a Mosaic covenant curse. The only hope for any and all ethnic Jews is found now only “in Christ.”

Sixth, in his Pentecost message, Peter witnessed to and exhorted the house of Israel, especially the Jews who were “cut to the heart” at his message, “Save yourself from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40). This terminal generation would reflect the initial generation that was delivered from Egypt. In spite of the great signs and wonders shown to them in Jesus Christ, they, like the first generation, would murmur in unbelief and perish, and a new generation would arise in its place. The New Covenant generation would be by the Holy Spirit’s gracious work in Christ of regeneration and baptism become superior to the Old Covenant, second generation Israel coming out of Egypt into the land of promise. On this verse and subject, F. F. Bruce wrote,

In this way, then, Peter bore his reasoned witness to the gospel facts and to the promise of salvation. The generation to which his hearers belonged had been upbraided by Jesus Himself as a “faithless and perverse generation” (Luke 9:41), as an “evil generation” because of its repudiation of Him whom God sent as Israel’s anointed Saviour [sic] (Luke 11:29; 17:25). But there was a way of deliverance from the judgment which such faithlessness incurred. The salvation of which Joel had spoken was to be enjoyed by a “remnant” of the whole people; so now Peter urged his hearers to make sure by repentant calling upon the Lord that they would belong to this remnant and so save themselves from that “crooked generation.” The new believing community was, in fact, the faithful remnant of the old Israel and at the same time the nucleus of the new Israel, the Christian church.³⁰

Therefore, the fulfilled Passover in Christ and the fulfilled Pentecost in the Holy Spirit became the turning points for ethnic and national Israel. Old Covenant Israel was judged and

30. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes in The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Ned B. Stonehouse, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954; 6th printing, 1968), 79.

passed away in 70 AD. New Covenant Israel was inaugurated with regenerate ethnic Jews. The New Covenant people have since spread worldwide to include regenerate Gentiles, fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant promises to bless all the families of the earth. Ultimately the New Covenant people of God will reach their complete fulfillment of all covenant blessings and promises in the Eternal State of the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem forever. In addition, the historical fulfillment of prophecy, typology, and the apostolic understanding of the events and prophecies relating to Pentecost should serve as an example and a consistent guide for interpreting Old Testament Scripture.

Appendix 5: An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties

The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel

Recently a number of leaders in the Protestant community of the United States have urged the endorsement of far-reaching and unilateral political commitments to the people and land of Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, citing Holy Scripture as the basis for those commitments. To strengthen their endorsement, several of these leaders have also insisted that they speak on behalf of the seventy million people who constitute the American evangelical community.

It is good and necessary for evangelical leaders to speak out on the great moral issues of our day in obedience to Christ's call for his disciples to be salt and light in the world. It is quite another thing, however, when leaders call for commitments that are based upon a serious misreading of Holy Scripture. In such instances, it is good and necessary for other evangelical leaders to speak out as well. We do so here in the hope that we may contribute to the cause of the Lord Christ, apart from whom there can never be true and lasting peace in the world.

At the heart of the political commitments in question are two fatally flawed propositions. First, some are teaching that God's alleged favor toward Israel today is based upon ethnic descent rather than upon the grace of Christ alone, as proclaimed in the Gospel. Second, others are teaching that the Bible's promises concerning the land are fulfilled in a special political region or "Holy Land," perpetually set apart by God for one ethnic group alone. As a result of these false claims, large segments of the evangelical community, our fellow citizens, and our government are being misled with regard to the Bible's teachings regarding the people of God, the land of Israel, and the impartiality of the Gospel.

In what follows, we make our convictions public. We do so acknowledging the genuine evangelical faith of many who will not agree with us. Knowing that we may incur their disfavor, we are nevertheless constrained by Scripture and by conscience to publish the following propositions for the cause of Christ and truth.

1. The Gospel offers eternal life in heaven to Jews and Gentiles alike as a free gift in Jesus Christ. Eternal life in heaven is not earned or deserved, nor is it based upon ethnic descent or natural birth.
2. All human beings, Jews and Gentiles alike, are sinners, and, as such, they are under God's judgment of death. Because God's standard is perfect obedience and all are sinners, it is impossible for anyone to gain temporal peace or eternal life by his own efforts. Moreover, apart from Christ, there is no special divine favor upon any member of any ethnic group; nor, apart from Christ, is there any divine promise of an earthly land or a heavenly inheritance to anyone,

whether Jew or Gentile. To teach or imply otherwise is nothing less than to compromise the Gospel itself.

3. God, the Creator of all mankind, is merciful and takes no pleasure in punishing sinners. Yet God is also holy and just and must punish sin. Therefore, to satisfy both his justice and his mercy, God has appointed one way of salvation for all, whether Jew or Gentile, in Jesus Christ alone.

4. Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, came into the world to save sinners. In his death upon the cross, Jesus was the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, of Jew and of Gentile alike. The death of Jesus forever fulfilled and eternally ended the sacrifices of the Jewish temple. All who would worship God, whether Jew or Gentile, must now come to him in spirit and truth through Jesus Christ alone. The worship of God is no longer identified with any specific earthly sanctuary. He receives worship only through Jesus Christ, the eternal and heavenly Temple.

5. To as many as receive and rest upon Christ alone through faith alone, to Jews and Gentiles alike, God gives eternal life in his heavenly inheritance.

6. The inheritance promises that God gave to Abraham were made effective through Christ, Abraham's True Seed. These promises were not and cannot be made effective through sinful man's keeping of God's law. Rather, the promise of an inheritance is made to those only who have faith in Jesus, the True Heir of Abraham. All spiritual benefits are derived from Jesus, and apart from him there is no participation in the promises. Since Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the Abrahamic Covenant, all who bless him and his people will be blessed of God, and all who curse him and his people will be cursed of God. These promises do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel. The people of God, whether the church of Israel in the wilderness in the Old Testament or the Israel of God among the Gentile Galatians in the New Testament, are one body who through Jesus will receive the promise of the heavenly city, the everlasting Zion. This heavenly inheritance has been the expectation of the people of God in all ages.

7. Jesus taught that his resurrection was the raising of the True Temple of Israel. He has replaced the priesthood, sacrifices, and sanctuary of Israel by fulfilling them in his own glorious priestly ministry and by offering, once and for all, his sacrifice for the world, that is, for both Jew and Gentile. Believers from all nations are now being built up through him into this Third Temple, the church that Jesus promised to build.

8. Simon Peter spoke of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus in conjunction with the final judgment and the punishment of sinners. Instructively, this same Simon Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision, says nothing about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel in the land of Palestine. Instead, as his readers contemplate the promise of Jesus' Second Coming, he fixes their hope upon the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

9. The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the "Holy Land" cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the

Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua. The New Testament speaks clearly and prophetically about the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70. No New Testament writer foresees a regathering of ethnic Israel in the land, as did the prophets of the Old Testament after the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C. Moreover, the land promises of the Old Covenant are consistently and deliberately expanded in the New Testament to show the universal dominion of Jesus, who reigns from heaven upon the throne of David, inviting all the nations through the Gospel of Grace to partake of his universal and everlasting dominion.

10. Bad Christian theology regarding the "Holy Land" contributed to the tragic cruelty of the Crusades in the Middle Ages. Lamentably, bad Christian theology is today attributing to secular Israel a divine mandate to conquer and hold Palestine, with the consequence that the Palestinian people are marginalized and regarded as virtual "Canaanites." This doctrine is both contrary to the teaching of the New Testament and a violation of the Gospel mandate. In addition, this theology puts those Christians who are urging the violent seizure and occupation of Palestinian land in moral jeopardy of their own bloodguiltiness. Are we as Christians not called to pray for and work for peace, warning both parties to this conflict that those who live by the sword will die by the sword? Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can bring both temporal reconciliation and the hope of an eternal and heavenly inheritance to the Israeli and the Palestinian. Only through Jesus Christ can anyone know peace on earth.

The promised Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ has been inaugurated. Its advent marks the focal point of human history. This kingdom of the Messiah is continuing to realize its fullness as believing Jews and Gentiles are added to the community of the redeemed in every generation. The same kingdom will be manifested in its final and eternal form with the return of Christ the King in all his glory.

Of all the nations, the Jewish people played the primary role in the coming of the Messianic kingdom. New Testament Scripture declares that to them were given the oracles of God, the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. Theirs are the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and from them, according to the flesh, came Christ. Salvation is, indeed, of the Jews. While affirming the Scriptural teaching that there is no salvation outside of Christ, Christians should acknowledge with heartfelt sorrow and grief the frequent oppression of the Jews in history, sometimes tragically done in the name of the cross.

But what are we to make of the unbelief of Israel? Has their unbelief made the faithfulness of God without effect for them? No, God has not completely rejected the people of Israel, and we join the apostle Paul in his earnest prayer for the salvation of his Jewish kinsmen according to the flesh. There always has been and always will be a remnant that is saved. While not all Israel will experience the blessing of participation in the Messianic kingdom, yet Jews who do come to faith in Christ will share in his reign throughout the present age and into eternity. In addition, it is not as though the rejection of some in Israel for unbelief serves no purpose. On the contrary, because they were broken off in unbelief, the Gospel has gone to the Gentiles, who now,

through faith, partake of the blessings to the fathers and join with believing Jews to constitute the true Israel of God, the church of Jesus Christ.

The present secular state of Israel, however, is not an authentic or prophetic realization of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in "the land," by its constituency, or by its ceremonial institutions and practices. Instead, this present age will come to a climactic conclusion with the arrival of the final, eternal phase of the kingdom of the Messiah. At that time, all eyes, even of those who pierced him, will see the King in his glory. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.

In light of the grand prophetic expectation of the New Testament, we urge our evangelical brothers and sisters to return to the proclamation of the free offer of Christ's grace in the Gospel to all the children of Abraham, to pray for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and to promise all humanitarian sympathy and practical support for those on both sides who are suffering in this current vicious cycle of atrocity and displacement. We also invite those Christian educators and pastors who share our convictions on the people of God, the land of Israel, and the impartiality of the Gospel to join their names with ours as signatories to this open letter.

Advent

In the Year of our Lord 2002

Soli Deo Gloria

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