



# **BIBLE**FRAMEWORK

**for Worship and Obedience  
in an Age of Global Deception**

**Part III:  
DISRUPTIVE TRUTHS OF  
GOD'S KINGDOM**

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## INTRODUCTION

Part III of the Framework course covers the early history of God's Kingdom program from immediately after the cataclysmic flood in Noah's day through the birth of the nation Israel to the reign of King David. This is that period of time known as the "rise of civilization" and "ancient history". This is the time when God did a unique historic work in starting the national existence of Israel. As we read in Deuteronomy, "What nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them, . . . that hath the statutes and judgments so righteous as this law?" (4:7-8) Indeed, at the end of history this work with Israel is the object of a heavenly anthem (Rev. 15:3) and the last war (Rev. 20:9).

Part III discusses truths that are treated by the world in a somewhat different manner than the truths covered in Part II. Part II discussed truths of origins that the pagan mind has buried in a sort of "global amnesia"--a deliberate "forgetting" of the recent creation of the universe and man's fall into sin. Such historical events lie on the other side of the great flood and re-birth of humanity through Noah. They no longer speak of our immediate experience. The truths of origins have all been perverted into various schemes of pagan idolatry.

God's work on this side of the great flood, however, is not quite so easily buried. In this study you will discover why God rejected every race, every culture, and every nation as the instruments of His kingdom work. You will learn how He began His kingdom work by creating an entirely new nation with new laws and new leadership forms, a "counter-culture" clearly visible to all the nations.

Such a separatist work is viewed by the pagan world as profoundly disruptive. It offends. The idea that one group of people have the truth and no one else strikes mankind as arrogant, unfair, undemocratic, and a dangerous fanaticism. What right does God have to elect some but not all? Why would He so disrupt the cultures of the nations with such a method?

To suppress this Old Testament message, unbelieving scholars have labored for nearly three centuries to "re-interpret" Israel's existence. Through their pagan framework they have sought to write ancient history after the manner of the carnal mind that is at such great enmity with God. Ancient history must fit with the evolutionary Continuity of Being (see Part II). All historical events must be explained in terms of natural processes going on today (cf. II Pet 3:4). The biblical text is thus subjected to "higher criticism", re-arranged chronologically, and fractured into thousands of supposedly "contradictory" traditions.

Then the "assured results" of such higher criticism is distributed throughout the public education system, the academies, and even some professedly Christian seminaries. Just as the public is forced through government power to sponsor evolution as the official origin-myth, so it is likewise compelled to finance the destruction of the Bible in the name of education.

Part III builds upon the truths of Part II: everything follows logically once you begin with the Creator-creature distinction instead of the pagan Continuity of Being; God's disruptive intervention into global history is quite reasonable if you correctly see the results of the fall. If the Lord God of Israel is the Creator of the universe, if our existence has become "abnormal" and all our social institutions contaminated by sin, then God's kingdom program must disrupt our present life. There is no need for you to follow a strategy of capitulation or accommodation in your Bible study.

This study, therefore, should encourage you to reject such deceitful scholarship and, instead, trust fully in God's record of His work in ages past. Only as you acquire trust in God as the Lord of all history, will you find victory in trusting Him with the details of your life. Think about it--two thirds of the Bible has to do with God's kingdom program through Israel! Why is that? The early events of Israel's history were written that "we might have hope", not doubt (Rom. 15:4).

Some suggestions on getting the most out of this material: (1) read quickly through the large sections of the Old Testament being studied (e.g., in the second chapter read from Genesis 12 to Genesis 50 as you would a novel); (2) use scrap paper to write down your observations on the grand themes being discussed as they appear in story after story; (3) interact with the exercises and pursue those questions that especially interest you by going to the Appendices and suggested sources for more extensive materials; and (4) when you can in full conscience do it, start using what you learn about God's greatness in prayer and praise to Him.

"Disruptive Truths of God's Kingdom" is dedicated to those who seek Him and want to know Him with both heart and mind. Salvation and sanctification always interfere with "the way things are" because the way things are is an abnormal, dying condition. Thank God He disrupts our fleshly ways! We must learn to hear His call out of this dead-end existence into His Kingdom program that goes from eternity to eternity! Only then will we experience Him and know Him as we ought.

## CHAPTER 1: THE TRAGIC FLAW IN CIVILIZED SOCIETY

Lesson 34

Part II of this series concluded with discussion of the covenant God made to establish the new "Noahic world order" after the great global flood had subsided (Gen. 9). Noah and his family stepped into an entirely new universe from the one they had known. Within only a few centuries this family and its progeny had established our present civilization, migrated with their animals into every continent, and formed every major racial and linguistic sub-group of mankind. Such a view of civilization's origin obviously conflicts with the traditional view of ancient history.

Noah's "new world order" began with great possibilities. All eight people were believers. The universe and man were under a new contractual arrangement with God, the first great biblical covenant (Gen. 8:15-9:17). It pictured the ultimate eternal state yet to come of total security and peace in a redeemed universe. God "signed" this covenant with an atmospheric phenomenon, the rainbow, analogous to the glory around His throne (Ezk. 1:28; Rev. 4:3).

Mankind was thus assured that nature was going to settle down after the great global flood and become predictable. With nature operating in a steady-state mode under the Word of God, human natural knowledge could expand rapidly. Mankind's basic social structures were re-installed: the divine institutions of responsible dominion, marriage, and family. A fourth structure was added, the divine institution of civil government.

There was a spiritual flaw, however, in this new world order. The effects of the fall were still present. The incident of Noah's drunkenness in Genesis 9:20-27 was a warning that civilization though physically and intellectually glorious is seriously lacking in spiritual life. To remind us of this fact, God made civilization fundamentally dependent upon death through its carnivorous diet. Animals must die that we may live. Civil government is given the power to take life from those who murder.

Genesis 9-11 records the first five centuries or so of Noah's new world order. Because the real historical situation was so different from popular views of civilization's birth, I will survey in this chapter some details of that situation. Then I will discuss mankind's response to that situation so you will be prepared for God's disruption of this new world order with His elect nation of Israel.

## THE EARLY POSTDILUVIAN ENVIRONMENT

One way to look at the historical situation facing Noah's family after the flood is to examine both nature and man at the dawn of civilization. First, let's observe what sort of world they had to live in during the immediate aftermath of the global flood. With such a cosmic cataclysm[1], it would take centuries for the earth's geophysics to settle down. This "settling period" had enormous effects on man's body and his migration routes into the new continents.

### Postdiluvian Land, Sea, and Atmosphere

Creationists in recent years have begun to reconstruct earth history utilizing all the existing scientific data by reinterpreting it within the biblical framework. This reconstruction effort has grown out of the failure of the capitulation and accommodation strategies that were tried by Bible-believing scholars in the nineteen and early twentieth centuries[2]. While much work obviously remains to be done, from their work so far I believe a rough outline of the early postdiluvian environment is now possible. What here follows, therefore, is such an outline.

1. Mountain-Building and Continental Draining of the Flood Waters. The sedimentary rock formed during stages of the great flood was thrust upward in the great mountain ranges we see today. Thus recent-appearing sedimentary strata with marine fossils are seen at altitudes thousands of feet above sea level. Psalm 104:5-9 reports on this mountain-building action and simultaneous draining of flood waters when God set His covenantal limitation against another such flood. These post-flood mountains apparently were higher than those which existed prior to the flood.

Various "land bridges" and exposed continental shelves may have existed during this time of continental uplift. Evidences of such exposure of these areas which now are below sea level consist of animal fossils on islands and in shallow ocean areas within these bridge areas as well as submarine canyons located far from today's mainlands.

Continuing "after-shocks" of this post-flood mountain-building would be accompanied by widespread volcanism on an unprecedented scale. Thus widespread lava fields like those of the Pacific Northwest cover areas many times larger than the worst volcanoes active today.

While continental areas were being uplifted, the ocean basins were sinking. These basins even today show their youth by the relative lack of sediments on the sea floors compared with the thick sedimentation on the

continents. Toward these basins vast quantities of water filled with eroded material from the continents cut out the world's great river valleys. Thus today large river deltas and alluvial plains exist with areas many times larger than present river runoff can account for. Evidence of large inland lakes in areas that are now arid deserts (e.g., Utah and the Sahara) point to giant "puddles" left during this draining of flood waters into the oceans. Some creationists think that the Grand Canyon formed during this era due to tectonic processes combined with large drainage from the western US.

2. Oceans. Since most of the waters of the flood came not from rain but from the "fountains of the deep" (Gen. 7) and because the interior of the earth is hot, the oceans immediately after the flood would have been much warmer than the present average global ocean temperature of 4oC (39oF). Even before the flood began, the oceans would have been warmer throughout the world to have supported warm-environment fossils now found near both north and south poles. Michael Oard has proposed a scenario of the ocean average temperature immediately after the flood event of 30oC (86oF) due to both the higher initial temperature and the flood extruded water!

Carbon-dioxide levels would have been high due to the warm water as well as large amount of decaying organic material from the flood. Moreover, both temperature and carbon dioxide would have been relatively uniform throughout the ocean due to the violent mixing that had just recently occurred.

3. Atmosphere. Oard has pointed out that widespread volcanism during and after the flood would have left massive amounts of volcanic dust in the atmosphere. If a global vapor-canopy actually existed in the antediluvian world and collapsed during the flood, the atmosphere would have become cooler in the northern and southern polar areas.

The combination of continental uplift, uniformly very warm oceans, and an atmosphere filled with volcanic debris would account for an "ice age". Oard writes:

*The picture that emerges at the end of the Flood catastrophe is a barren world with no trees, plants, animals, or birds (except in the Ark). All air-breathing, land-based animals had died and were fossilized, or were in the process of being fossilized, in the sediments of the Flood. . . .The newly-formed stratosphere would contain a thick shroud of volcanic dust and aerosols, due to the extensive volcanic and tectonic activity during the Flood. It probably was a dark, depressing world. The oceans would have been uniformly warm. The initial conditions would be established for a second, much-lesser catastrophe--a post Flood transition to the present-day climate. This would be a post-Flood ice age.[4]*

4. The "Ice Age". Oddly enough it is precisely this biblical picture of the flood cataclysm that can explain the heretofore dilemma of how to account for an ice age. Uniformitarian science can't get it started. Just as evolutionary biology can't account for the "jumps" between the higher level taxonomic groupings and just as uniformitarian geology can't account for the evidence of large-scale sedimentary catastrophism, so uniformitarian paleo-climatology can't account for evidence of widespread glaciation. In each case the problem is the same: high-energy and/or high-information events are required to produce the effects, but both of these are virtually excluded by the pagan principle of the Continuity of Being that is always assumed by these schools.

On the uniformitarian basis multiple ice-ages are envisioned taking hundreds of thousands of years to cycle through. To get glaciers started that don't melt back in the summer, the uniformitarians require a very cold atmosphere. Such frigid conditions, however, eliminate the necessary moisture to fuel the glaciers and the storm dynamics to generate snow in the proper areas.

Oard's model, operating instead on the creation-catastrophic basis, posits one ice age lasting only approximately 700 years. Utilizing the immediate postdiluvian conditions of land, ocean, and atmosphere, it readily accounts for both the necessary cooling as well as the large and frequent snowfalls in precisely the areas where glaciation evidence exists. It also implies radical modification of dates based upon radiocarbon and deep-ocean cores due to postdiluvian high levels of dissolved nutrients, warm ocean temperatures, and abundant carbon dioxide in the air and sea. This 700 year period accompanied the growth and dispersion of the human race between Noah and Abraham (Genesis 10-11) and must have played a crucial role in the origins of civilization.

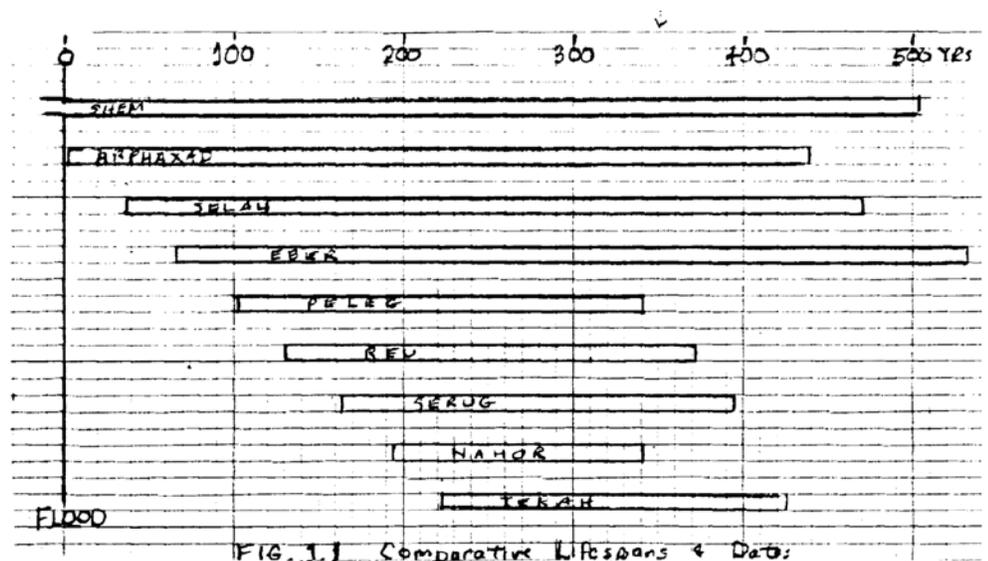
Much evidence points to the presence of abundant rain and even snow at the low latitudes of the Middle East during this period of history. Modern surveys as well as the ancient historian Herodotus show that the Sahara Desert had great lakes with much runoff. Apparently writing during this period, Job testifies of solid ice (Job 38:29-30). Abraham notes that the Dead Sea area as well as Egypt were "well watered everywhere" (Gen. 13:10). By the time of Abraham's grandson, Jacob, great droughts lasting many years in these areas (Gen. 41:54 speaks of "all lands") point to big climatic change at exactly the time Oard's model shows glacial retreat.

Postdiluvian nature, therefore, presented Noah and his family and their animals a uniquely stressful situation on land and sea and even from the weather. What were some effects upon these people and their animals?

## Postdiluvian Man and Animals

Not only was Noah's natural environment utterly different from what he had known and considerable different from what we experience today, but so was the physiology of his descendents. Radical changes were affecting human and animal life as well as the environment. Today's civilization arose in a unique situation unparalleled in human history. For this reason pagan attempts as historical reconstruction based upon the uniformitarian principle must fail.

1. Human Physiology. The key evidence in the Genesis text that supplies the true cause of the "sudden" rise of civilization in the Middle East and, then, elsewhere on other continents is the high longevity figures of Genesis 11. Any intelligent reader can compare this chapter with Genesis 5 and present day experience and see that between Noah and Abraham something unique was happening. If you plot the duration of each of Noah's progeny, as in Figure 1.1 you discover that Noah and his sons were clearly far superior physiologically to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



The simultaneous co-existence of Noah, Shem, Japheth, and Ham with their distant progeny must have made for a dramatic contrast. The founding patriarchs would have seemed as "gods" to the weaker future generations. As Pilkey notes:

*"The high longevities of Noah's immediate family combined with the gentile Pentecost of human government to make that family the most astounding aristocracy the world has known. Nothing in human experience can compare with it short of the Christian Apocalypse. . .*

*.During this period, all but one of the twenty-five dynasties of the Sumerian King list and the first twelve dynasties of Egypt ran their course. Shem outlived most of them. . . .[5]*

This era of the cohabitation of the earth by men who were virtual "gods" alongside men of more obvious mortality parallels the future Millennial Kingdom when resurrected saints will coexist with mortal humanity in building the greatest civilization history has ever seen.[6]

World population would have mushroomed rapidly since all generations simultaneously existed for the first five centuries. During this early rapid growth of each cultural and racial group, all of them would have had direct knowledge of Noah and his sons. Their names, however, are not obvious in the memory of the various world cultures. What happened?

Figure 1.1 hints at the solution. Immediately prior to Abraham all of Noah's progeny--the entire set of transitional fathers--died within a few centuries of each other. The effects of this "dying out" cannot be underestimated. The historical memory of mankind was suddenly lost. Add to that the linguistic confusion of Babel (see second part of this chapter), and a "curtain" descended upon the real story of civilization's origin.

Noah and his sons must be known in world cultural origin myths under alien names. Buried in the diversity of post-Babel language, they await biblical scholars who can "decode" their identities. Pilkey is one such scholar who believes he has decoded many of these identities. For example, he thinks Shem is remembered as Balih of First Kish, as Dadasig of Second Kish, as Tata of Awan, as Sahlamu of the Amorites, and as Melchizedek of Canaan.[7]

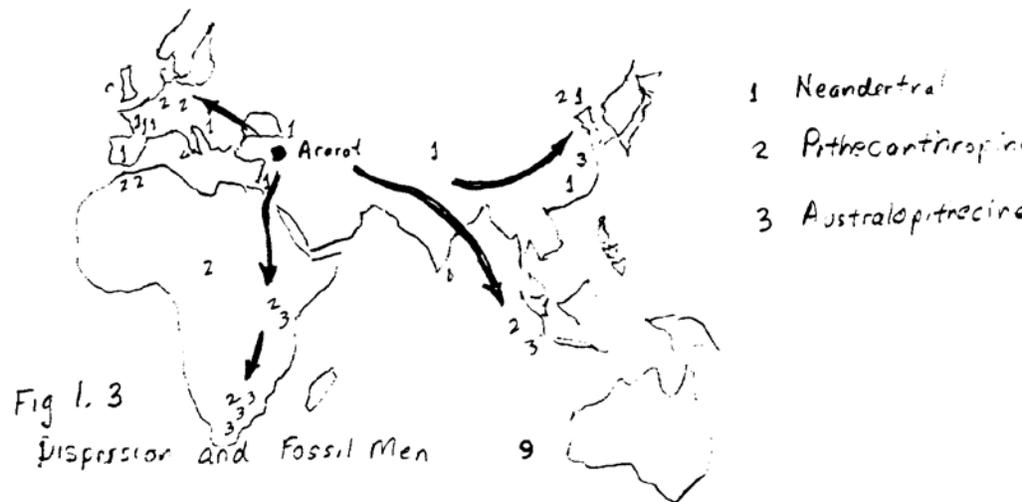
In addition to the civilization's "sudden" origin, the new physiology had other effects which I will discuss in the next section that deals with mankind's dispersion from Ararat.

2. Human Dispersion and Migration. To properly visualize the dispersion of Noahic mankind, we must recall the natural environment in which they had to live. For all five centuries between Noah and Abraham the Ice Age dominated the globe. Migration routes were changed as the glaciers expanded. Storm tracks overran what is now the dry Middle East. The natural environment shaped human as well as animal dispersion routes and timing from the Ark's landing sight. In fact, Paul may have had this process in mind when in Acts 17:26 he appears to refer obliquely to the "bounds" of inhabitable land which are linked to climate in Psalm 74:17. Lesson 36

In Figure 1.2 I have indicated how Oard's model pictures the areas where glaciation began due to the geophysical post-flood adjustments and where the glaciers reached at the Ice Age maximum. Viewing the changes, it is clear that the Noahic race would have used different; land routes of dispersion depending upon when they migrated out from the Middle East.



With the climate deteriorating in the centuries that followed the flood and the vastly longer lifespans than at present, physiological stress would [Lesson 35](#) have been significant. The further men migrated away from the Ararat area, the more primitive conditions and less advanced culture they enjoyed. This implication appears to be the only way to explain the peculiar observation shown in Figure 1.3 that human fossil skulls become more "primitive" in form the further their location from Ararat. Human "primitive" fossil finds apparently show, not stages of evolution, but degrees of stress along the land migratory routes into the new postdiluvian world. In isolated regions of the earth, early settlers lived in caves. Job refers to the stressful living conditions of cave dweller and city dweller alike (Job 12:24-25; 30:3-8).



The first settlements, therefore, even in the Middle East were not the permanent structures of later Sumerian and Egyptian cultures but lowly shelters of mud and clay. The Ice Age storm tracks with frequent heavy rains repeatedly destroyed them. Thus in the lowest levels of ancient cities, archeologists find many layers of rebuilt dwellings. Unfortunately, the uniformitarian interpretation of these findings, thinking in terms of today's drier climate, estimates each such layer to be as long, perhaps, as a century or two. Then these multiple levels are seen as proof of a "predynastic" historic period lasting thousands of years. In fact, they show only a few decades of marginal survival of Noah's immediate descendents.

3. Animal Dispersion and Migration. Animals leaving the Ark experienced the same environmental stress. If the original Ark pairs shared the vigor of antediluvian mankind, for several centuries they, too, would have multiplied rapidly. Their migration routes into the new world would also have been shaped by the climate just as mankind's routes. The earliest waves spread into relatively warm climatic regions before the Ice Age took hold. As the climate cooled and the glaciers grew, many populations of these early animals would have been trapped and destroyed such as happened in the famous woolly mammoth event.[8]

Animals dispersed not only through land migration but also through human shepherding by land and sea. A creationist student of postdiluvian animal dispersion, Woodmorappe, notes that the fossil record shows that:

*"many if not most living things have had a more widespread distribution than they do today. . . As humans were forced to leave their habitations around Babel, they undoubtedly took animals with them for husbandry, game, and a reminder of their former area of living. . . Introductions into barren continents had a much greater effect on biogeography than the later introductions of living things into already-populated continents.[9]*

Thus the very unique marsupial animals found nearly exclusively today in Australia probably were introduced to that continent by early pioneers from the Ararat area. As Woodmorappe points out, marsupials have traits that make them suitable for long voyages: low rates of postnatal growth and lesser food requirements.[10] Instead of showing "evolution in place", such specialized animal groups bear witness to the pre-Abrahamic dispersion.

Such dispersion also explains why antediluvian animals like the dinosaur seemed to have survived after the flood in gradually weakening form. Tribes across the earth remember them in art and myth. Job speaks of their presence (Job 40:15-40:34). Modern fisherman have photographed at least one dinosaur-like catch.[11]

Between Noah and Abraham, then, the environment for man and animal was utterly unlike anything we can easily imagine. It was in that very different, "transitional" world that our civilization arose. I now turn to a brief examination of what our civilization looked like in its infancy, an examination that will show why God spiritually abandoned it to begin a new work through Abraham.

## THE EARLY POSTDILUVIAN CIVILIZATION

The civilization that arose in the environment just described was the result of an unprecedented, incredible program of global colonization by those listed in Genesis 10. Their program has largely been forgotten, buried by the evolutionary insistence that early civilization could not have come from high intelligence and advanced technology. It had to have come about, it is believed, through a lengthy process of upward evolution from primitive humanoids.

In the following paragraphs I describe, in contrast, a civilization arising quickly--within a few centuries--from humans as intelligent or more so than ourselves. I refer to evidence now coming to light of the Noahic new world order that coexisted with the Ice Age and suffered from local pockets of "stone age" culture. Then I move on to civilization's first major crisis under Nimrod in Babylon and God's resulting judgment upon it.

### Early Intelligence and High Technology

In the evolutionary view millions of years were required for man's IQ to evolve high enough to support the cultural skills necessary for civilization. To support this belief, evidences are cited such as primitive man's lack of inventiveness, the simplicity of his artifacts, the extreme conservatism of his customs, and his smaller skull size.

The Canadian physiologist, Dr. Arthur Custance, years ago refuted each of these evidences as IQ indicators. The majority of intelligent people have never invented anything. Simplicity of artifacts are often the best indicator of inventive genius. Conservative customs in an extremely stressful environment is the safest way of survival. The most intelligent people would have to limit themselves to well-tried technologies of obtaining food, clothing, shelter, and warmth. Finally, small skull size is not necessarily an indicator of low IQ, a crucial example being the modern writer Anatole France whose cranial capacity was only 1100cc. [12]

Custance also noted that present-day "primitive" cultural people when placed into a modern educational environment show no sign of lower IQ at all. Many Eskimos and Australian aboriginals still live in what would be classified as Old Stone Age cultures. Yet their children do as well in school as any child from advanced Western culture. He cites an authority who wrote:

*The mental distance between a living so-called "primitive" and a "civilized" person is regarded as equivalent to thousands of years, but experience proves that this distance, where it exists, is equivalent to no more than a few days, for man is everywhere and always man.[13]*

The Old Stone Age evidences, therefore, indicate nothing of their owners' intelligence. They only point to local conditions of marginal survival during certain phases of world colonization by Noah's progeny. We are about to see that they were contemporary with higher Bronze Age culture elsewhere because both originated during the short Ice Age following the flood.

Where are the evidences of high technology by Noah and his immediate family besides early Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures? The evidence is slowly coming to light. We must be reminded of what famed Ancient Near Eastern scholar Cyrus Gordon wrote:

*Mankind. . .often lapses into collective amnesia. The Egyptians forgot how to read their ancestors' hieroglyphs, and the Persians lost their knowledge not only the script but also of the history and very names of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Xerxes who made their ancestors the rulers of the world. . . We [Americans] believe, at least tacitly, that white men did not come to America before Columbus' discovery of our continent in 1492--or certainly not before the Vikings around A.D.1000. And yet. . .the Greek author Theopompus in the fourth century B.C. wrote of an enormous land inhabited by a race quite unlike the Greeks. Three centuries later, Diodorus of Sicily described a great land, with navigable rivers, west of Africa, discovered by*

Phoenicians blown across the ocean by strong winds.[14] Details evidences of ancient Egypt and Sumer, we must recall, have really only been unearthed and studied during the last two centuries. Do we really think that all the evidence of civilization's origins has been found?

Enough evidence, I believe, has already been found that points to a coordinated world-wide colonization by a Semitic culture with high technology during the Ice Age at the time Egypt and Mesopotamian cultures were beginning. This evidence consists of two parts: detailed regional maps of every continent composed as glaciers were retreating in the northern hemisphere (but before the Antarctic icecap grew to its present size); and a worldwide presence of key names of Semitic origin.

1. Ice Age World Maps. Geography professor Charles Hapgood spent most of the 1950s and 1960s analyzing certain world maps available to medieval navigators. He and his students worked with librarians, cartographers, and historians in order to determine the sources behind these maps. Using the tools of projective geometry and trigonometry, Hapgood showed that several key world maps of the medieval period depended upon very ancient originals. These original sources featured: (1) a value for the circumference of the earth more accurate than that of Eratosthenes the Egyptian; (2) great details of local regions on every continent far exceeding the accuracy of medieval cartographers; (3) evidences of spherical trigonometry before the Greeks; (4) details of Antarctica's shorelines now buried under its icecap; and (5) remnant glaciers in Britain, Sweden, and Germany.

Hapgood summarizes:

*"The evidence presented by the ancient maps appears to suggest that in remote times, before the rise of any of the known cultures, of a true civilization, of a comparatively advanced sort, which either was localized in one area but had worldwide commerce, or was, in a real sense, a worldwide culture. . . .In astronomy, nautical science, mapmaking and possibly ship-building, it was perhaps more advanced than any state of culture before the 18th century of the Christian Era. . . . Mapping on such a scale. . . suggests both economic motivations and economic resources. Organized government is indicated. The mapping of a continent like Antarctica implies much organization, many exploring expeditions, many stages in the compilation of local observations and local maps into a general map, all under a central direction."*[15]

If it be remembered that Noah's family operated under the four divine institutions and had to quickly discover natural resources in a virtually new planet, evidences of very early global mapping are not surprising.

2. Worldwide Key Words of Semitic Origin. While Hapgood was investigating maps during the 1950s and 1960s, another innovative researcher was investigating the occurrence around the world of certain key words. John Cohane assembled a rather short list of word stems that appear in languages across the earth.

For example, he points to Eber/Ber/Bar. There is the noun Hebrew, the name of Abraham and his descendents who were the progeny of the Genesis 10 patriarch Eber. There is the Iberian peninsula named from the Ebro river where the first known inhabitants settled. There is the classic name for Ireland, Hibernia as well as one of the founders of Ireland in mythology, Eber. There is the area which is now known as Georgia in what was the old Soviet Empire, known since its ancient settlements as Iberia. Cohane traces other key words like Adam, Eve, and Eloah (=God) throughout cultures in both Western and Eastern hemispheres. [e.g., Eve/Hawah/Hawaii; Aloha/Eloah; etc.] He summarizes his findings:

*"In prehistoric times. . .there were two dispersions from the Mediterranean, the first truly worldwide, the second petering out along the eastern coast of the Americas in one direction, in Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand in the other direction.[16]*

Besides the Ice Age maps and worldwide Semitic key words, there is the obvious rapid rise of sophisticated architecture with common forms (pyramids in Egypt and Mexico), advanced medicine including drilling of teeth (Egypt), gears, levers, wheels, animal breeding, and a host of other evidences of high technology right from the dawn of civilization.

Interestingly, the general area of the first postdiluvian settlements--eastern Turkey, Palestine, and Mesopotamia--is the area closest to all other areas of planet earth for surface travel. It literally is the "center of the earth" as shown by computer research over two decades ago.[17] How fitting that God had Noah's Ark come to rest in exactly the area that was the best place to begin filling the earth!

### **Crisis at Babel/Babylon**

[Lesson 37](#)

The high intelligence and technology of Noah's new world order made a great potential for a flourishing civilization on earth. Through His covenant God had reinstated the divine institutions after the flood beginning with responsible dominion.[18] He ordered man to "fill the earth" (Gen.9:1). That meant the sons of Noah would have to colonize

the newly "resurfaced" planet. The story of their response to His Word in the postdiluvian environment and God's reaction is given in Genesis 10:1-11:9.

1. The "Filling of the Earth". Genesis 10:1-11:9 is one of many sections in the original language marked off by the introductory statement "these are the generations of X"(note 5:1; 6:9; 11:10). Each section describes the history of X's progeny. Thus Genesis proceeds from X=universe, to X=Adam, to X=Noah, and now here to X=Noah's three sons in this section (10:1). It then proceeds to give the history of only one of the three sons (X=Shem in 11:10).

Within the Genesis 10:1 section the general history of Noah's three sons is given in the first part (10:1-32). Then a crucial event within this general history is expanded and discussed in a second part (11:1-9). The general history section is known as the Table of Nations--a unique document of the founding order of human civilization on planet earth. It documents the fulfillment of God's mandate in 9:1. The Table of Nations shows that civilization had "filled the earth" by the time of Abraham.

Each son's role in filling the earth is given in terms of four criteria: associated tribes, geographical domain, linguistic stock, and national identities. Chapter 10 is not, therefore, strict genealogy like Genesis 5 and 11. The "sons" here include entire people groups (e.g., names ending in "im" and "ites"). Japheth's group apparently "filled" distant lands (note the emphasis in 10:5 compared to 10:20, 31) spawning some of the European and Asiatic peoples. Ham's group seems to have "filled" parts of the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Africa spawning many very diverse races from white to black. Shem's group "filled" many different areas of the Middle East and possibly Asia.

Genesis 10:1-32 lists seventy names. Moses points out that there is a correspondence between this 70-fold structure in civilization and the 70 descendents of Jacob (cf. Gen. 46:27; Deut. 32:8), a fact we shall return to in a later chapter.

2. The Rebellion at Babel/Babylon. Notice in Genesis 10 there is a small "action narrative" that interrupts the flow of the text in 10:9-11 concerning the first "kingdom" in the Bible, a kingdom of man built by Nimrod at Babel. Another "action" comment occurs in 10:25 about the earth being divided. In the centuries between the flood and Abraham, only this event or events was worth mentioning in the Word of God. It must, therefore, be critical in understanding the plan of God for history.

What exactly happened at Babel is revisited in Genesis 11:1-9. If Genesis 10 tell us that mankind did fill the earth, Genesis 11 tells us how God's command was fulfilled. It turns out that mankind filled the earth only after being forced to do it (in much the same way as the Church in Acts became a witness only after being forced out of Palestine by persecution). The "filling of the earth" was not, therefore, an act of obedience by the new Noahic race.

The Tower of Babel story begins with mankind opposing God's command to fill the earth (11:4). Instead of submitting to the Word of God, fallen man wants to be his own authority ("let us build for ourselves", "let us make for ourselves a name"). Here is the perversion of the first divine institution (responsible dominion) I spoke about in Section II of this Framework series. Man has eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and wants, therefore, to decide matters for himself independently of God's Word. He insists upon interpreting ("naming") all things as though he has omniscience and can give meaning out of his own finite resources.

If we follow the traditional view that the Tower of Babel was a project initiated under the leadership of Nimrod, we discover another feature. Nimrod built the first "kingdom" (first occurrence of this word in the Bible). Such a kingdom would have involved one-world political unity by coercion. Coerced race-wide unification in the Tower project would have been the only way to guarantee that there could be one and only one "name" or meaning or interpretation for all mankind. Absolute authority outside of God can only come by coercion. Without such political and social tyranny, every fallen man would do what is right in his own eyes.

*This is confirmed by Jewish tradition through Josephus: [Nimrod] persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny--seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power.[19]*

The Tower of Babel itself, according to Josephus, was to secure man against another flood-judgment of God, "being made of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water." [20] Autonomous man tried, in addition to define the meaning and goal of world society, to erect a place of perfect security--even from God's judgments! The high intelligence and technology of early postdiluvian man had become prideful and arrogant.

Significantly, this event occurred at Babel or what became later, Babylon. Babylon occurs throughout the Bible as a virtual synonym for Satan's world system (see Isa. 13-14, 47; Jer. 50-51; Dan. 2; Rev. 17-18). It has great military and political strength (Isa. 14:4,6,16; 47:6; Jer. 51:25,55) and later forms the very foundation of the "times of the Gentiles" (Dan. 2:37-38). Ultimately, Babylon politically dominates the world (Rev. 17:18).

Babylon has vast wealth (Isa. 13:19; 14:4; Jer. 51:13) including slavery (Rev. 18:13) and comes eventually to control world trade (Rev. 18:3, 7-19). It elevates man's knowledge (Isa. 47:10) including astrology and other occultic arts (Isa. 47:12-13; Rev. 18:23). Babylon epitomizes Satanic pride and defiance of God (Isa. 14:13-14; Jer. 50:24) and is pictured simultaneously as a perpetual virgin (Isa. 47:1,7) and as a queenly whore drunk with the blood of the saints (Isa. 47:5; Rev. 17:5-6; 18:7,24).

Thus the Babel crisis begins the work of the "mystery of iniquity" that will be consummated in the coming great Tribulation and Judgment by God on the earth. The arrogant Nimrodian agenda of ultimate human autonomy derailed the godly potential of the Noahic new world order.

3. God's Judgment. The text of Genesis 11:5-9 gives God's counterpoint to this rebellion. The Tower doesn't reach to heaven; God has to come down to even see it! Because of the potential for further evil with this newly created absolute authority independent of God, the Lord destroyed the very heart of the project: the unified language which now carried a perverted unified thought and meaning shared by all men. Forever after Babel rebellion and perversion could never be universal.

Just as the Lord in Genesis 3:22 bounded evil by imposing limits on mortal life through death, so at Babel He further bounded evil by fragmenting human language and thought. All such attempts at creating an absolute standard independently of God will be frustrated and remain unfinished projects like the Tower was. God alone is omniscient and holy and, therefore, our absolute authority in all things. Our continual "distance" from other people of different cultures and languages is the residue of Babel.

Ancient texts remember this event:

*"In those days the land of Shuber (East),  
the place of plenty, of righteous decrees,  
Harmony-tongued Sumer (South), the great land of the  
'decrees of princesship',*

*Uri (north), the land having all that is needful,  
The land Martu (West), resting in security,  
The whole universe, the people in unison,  
To Enlil in one tongue gave praise. [21]*

Ancient languages show the effects of Babel: most of them are pictographic rather than alphabetic. Pictographic languages were not due to a lack of an alphabet; they were probably a reaction to the linguistic confusion of Babel. As an illustration today, Chinese is an ancient pictographic script that can be understood by all Chinese even though many cannot understand each other's present oral dialects. The script was begun before the dialects developed and separated from each other.

In like fashion, some believe that the language spoken in Genesis 11:1 was some sort of proto-Semitic language. Evidence from the Bible and history point in this direction.[22] As this language broke up, Noah's progeny separated and filled the earth in the pattern of Genesis 10. With their intelligence and high technology, early postdiluvian mankind migrated away from the Middle East into all the continents, mapping them, building architectural masterpieces, and leaving traces of their still Semitic-like language wherever they went.

## FROM THE NEW WORLD ORDER TO THE PAGAN WORLD-SYSTEM

Lesson 38

The new world order under Noah could have been a millennial kingdom. Every vestige of the old order with its sin, violence, and demonic infiltration has been destroyed in God's judgment. His salvation of the eight remaining believers provided a fresh start for humanity. He provided an utterly unique situation for a quick "start up" of civilization.

For the first four or five centuries human leaders who were virtual gods and goddesses cohabited with their more obviously mortal progeny to shepherd and mentor them. Mankind had for the first time a legal, clear-cut covenant that obligated God to maintain environmental stability and to preserve the race forever. Men everywhere possessed special revelation of God's purposes (Gen.1-9). They were clearly aware that relationship with God was based upon blood atonement as shown in the covenant through Noah. The principle that their life depended upon sacrificial death faced them each day they partook of their new carnivorous diet.

The most remarkable tool available to mankind, however, was the new post-fall divine institution, civil government, the power of the sword.

Into their hands God delivered a function previously reserved for Himself and His angels: judgment upon evil through the restitutionary principle of "life for life". This kingship authority looked into the future toward the time when men will judge angels (I Cor. 6:3) and when with Jesus they will rule the coming Kingdom of God (Rev. 2:26-27).

Yet in spite of what was accomplished during these centuries--worldwide exploration, dispersion of the Ark animals into every continent, the founding of many nations--only one event was selected by the Holy Spirit for remembrance: the Tower of Babel and God's subsequent judgment. I conclude this chapter by reflecting on the far-reaching implications of the Babel crisis in transforming the new order filled with promise into the spiritually corrupt thing called in the New Testament the world (cosmos), the Satanic system of paganism.

### **The Rapid Corruption of Postdiluvian Mankind**

It took only a few centuries for civilization's spiritual flaw, first seen in the Noah-Ham incident of Genesis 9:20-27, to manifest itself in the very structure of the new world order. In tracing the transformation of the new order into the cosmos, I follow the three-fold outline given by the Apostle John: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17). Each of these elements arise from rebelliousness toward God according to the Apostle Paul (Rom. 1:18-32).

1. The Corruption of Human Imagination: the lust of the eyes. The only alternative to submitting to God as Creator is to exalt self as a god, to deny in principle and in action the Creator-creature distinction. Paul notes in Romans 1:23 that mankind universally replaced the glory of God seen in creation with "an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and of four-footed animals and crawling creatures." Note that "image" is singular, not plural, and that these four classes of creatures are exactly those destroyed in the flood (Gen. 7:23).

When we make ourselves the final point of reference, then all else relative to us (from God to animals to rocks) is seen as a set of objects to be classified under our autonomous viewpoint. We automatically produce the false doctrine of the Continuity of Being, the axiom of all unbelief and paganism, the replacement of the Creator-creature truth. Rushdoony comments:

*"Apart from biblically governed thought, the prevailing concept of being has been that being is one and continuous. God, or the gods, man, and the universe are all aspects of one continuous being; degrees of being may exist, so that a hierarchy of gods as well as a hierarchy of men can be described, but all consist of one, undivided and continuous being. The*

*creation of any new aspect of being is thus not a creation out of nothing, but a creation out of being. . . ."[23]*

As I pointed out in Section II of this course, paganism always holds to one-level view of existence whereas the Bible insists upon a two-level view existence. The difference is radical, and you will encounter it again and again throughout the Bible.

Not only did early paganism reject creation, it rejected the fall. As Section II noted, paganism always insists upon the "normalcy" of evil, death, and chaos as part of eternal existence. Note in Romans 1:23 Paul contrasts the incorruptibility of God with the corruptibility of the idolatrous replacement. Continuity of Being plus this normalcy of evil, death, and chaos forms the heart of every pagan system, ancient and modern. Rushdoony explains the pagan image:

*Both gods and men developed or evolved. . .out of the original chaos of being. . . .Chaos or darkness generates life; it is both the source of life and the enemy of life. . . .Chaos and life are thus in a necessary tension."[24]*

Thus paganism always features a return to chaos, Mardi Gras-like orgies, to rejuvenate life. Then, once again, the eternal cycle returns to death.

This resultant paganism, according to Paul, came from God's turning mankind over "to the desires of their hearts to uncleanness". Their imaginative powers succumbed to the power of sin and falsehood.

2. The Corruption of Human Devotion: the lust of the flesh. Once the imagination is filled with a false view of reality, behavioral consequences quickly follow. Daily life is expended in service to idols and, ultimately, to self (Rom. 1:25). God furthers the slide into paganism by unleashing profoundly unnatural passions such as homosexuality that cannot be controlled in the flesh (1:26-27). A falsified vision of life with its misguided devotion to self, therefore, eventually tries to redefine reality itself at the most intimate level of human experience. Homosexuality is a hallmark of every pagan society.

3. The Corruption of Human Judgment: the pride of life. Essential to the sinful agenda of redefining reality is to purge any consciousness of God and His righteous standards from view. Such reminders of absolute accountability to Him stand in the way of rebellious living (Rom. 1:28,32a). God, therefore, lets sin take over in every form the autonomous human heart (1:29-31) with the result that mankind not only lives out such sin, but goes on to call evil good and good evil (1:32b). In the end pagan society always redefines deviancy.

God, according to Paul, allowed the nations to slide into paganism (Acts 14:16; 17:30a). The cosmos developed out of Noahic civilization as Noah's progeny rebelled against God and suffered the downward spiritual spiral that resulted from it. How did this downward spiral differ from the original fall in Genesis 3 and its outworking before the flood?

### **The Manipulation of Civil Government by Human Corruption**

After the flood, mankind had access to the power of the sword and kingship authority. A new area existed, therefore, into which corruption could spread. In the postdiluvian order spiritually-corrupt mankind could do a new thing--erect a corrupt kingdom. A one-world kingdom or government would be able to enforce the new apostate, religious vision of the Continuity of Being upon all men everywhere. All humanity could be controlled with a deception ultimately from Satan.[25]

This is what Nimrod's kingdom attempt at Babel/Babylon tried to do. Rushdoony comments on the symbolism of the Tower:

*"The place of creation is the primeval. . .mountain, or pyramid, arising out of the waters of chaos to establish order. This sacred mountain or tower is. . .where communication is established [in the Continuity of Being]. . .The significance of the Tower of Babel is thus apparent: it denied the discontinuity of God's being and asserted man's claim to a continuity of being with God and heaven. The Tower was the gate to God. . .signifying that man's social order made possible an ascent of being into the divine order." [26]*

If the Tower was like later Mesopotamian ziggurats or the stepped pyramids of Egypt and Central America, it appeared from every side like a staircase to heaven. It symbolized man saving himself by his own effort through ascending to the level of the gods. Salvation was seen as an evolution of being rather than a radical regeneration of ethical nature.

God's judgment imposed a boundary upon evil, preventing it from ever attaining global status through a one-world government. Educated Bible-believers, therefore, oppose trends toward one-world government as a harmful delusion.

### **END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1**

1. See II Peter 3:5-7 which clearly implies extra-terrestrial effects of the flood cataclysm and Section II of this series.
2. See discussion of these strategies in Section II.

3. Michael Oard, An Ice Age Caused by the Genesis Flood (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1990), p. 97
4. Ibid., p. 31.
5. John Pilkey, Origin of the Nations (San Diego, CA: Master Book Publishers, 1984), p. 17.
6. Besides this event, two other times are with angels before the flood and with resurrected saints in the Millennium.
7. Pilkey, p. 17.
8. Oard discusses how fossils of animals associated with different climatic regimes came to be juxtaposed, including the famous woolly mammoth findings where their carcasses were found frozen with fresh food in them, pp. 80-91.
9. John Woodmorappe, "Causes for the Biogeographical Distribution of Land Vertebrates After the Flood" originally published in Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Creationism (1990), pp. 362,364 and republished in the monograph collection, Studies in Flood Geology (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1993).
10. Ibid., p. 365.
11. This famous incident on April 10, 1977 was photographed and honored by Japan with a postage stamp. See the picture in Paul S. Taylor, The Great Dinosaur Mystery (El Cajon, CA: Master Books, 1987), p. 47.
12. Arthur C. Custance, "Establishing a Paleolithic I.Q.", in his out-of-print series, Doorway Papers published privately in Brockville, Ontario, Canada during the 1960s and 1970s.
13. The authority cited by Custance is Frithjof Schoon in his book, Light On the Ancient Worlds (London: Perennial Books, 1965), pp. 107-108.
14. From Cyrus Gordon's preface in John Phillip Cohane, The Key (New York: Crown Publishers, 1969), p. 14.
15. Charles H. Hapgood, Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1966), p. 193.
16. Cohane, p. 21.
17. Andrew J. Woods did a computer-aided study of the minimum average distance along the earth's surface from every point of land area to any arbitrary point. The result was that the area of Ararat, Jerusalem, and Babylon had the least average distance to any other point on the earth's

land surface. The Center of the Earth (El Cajon, CA: Institute of Creation Research, 1973).

18. See Section II of this course on the re-installment of the divine institutions after the flood.

19. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, I, iv.

20. Ibid.

21. Frontispiece in Samuel N. Kramer, Sumerian Mythology (Torchbook ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961).

22. Augustine had suggested the pre-Babel language was Hebrew (City of God, XVI, ix), but Custance relaxes the requirement to a "proto-Semitic" language because: (1) Semitic languages change relatively little through time compared to all other languages so they should more closely approximate this earlier language; and (2) words and names in Genesis 1-11, though remembered in other languages, have contextual meaning only in Semitic languages.

23. Rousas John Rushdoony, The One and the Many (Philadelphia: Craig Press, 1971), p. 36.

24. Ibid., p. 37

25. See Henry M. Morris' recent suggestion that Satan could have originated this concept by falsely interpreting his environment immediately after he was created in The Long War Against God (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), pp. 255-260.

26. Rushdoony, p. 40.

## CHAPTER 2: GOD'S CALL TO ABRAHAM: THE DISRUPTIVE TRUTH OF MAN'S KINGDOM REJECTED

Lesson 39

Perhaps the most offensive part of the gospel to modern man is that it claims to be the only way to God. "That's so bigoted!" they say. To emphasize the point many will say, "What about the heathen who've never heard?" hoping you don't have an answer. A more subtle "New Age" approach goes like this: "I don't believe in missionary religion; every group of people needs to follow their own culture without outside interference."

This chapter will deal with answering these objections using the natural flow of divine revelation in biblical history. According to that history, the heathen have heard. Every people group once did have the truth. This so-called "heathen problem" occurs just as so many other pseudo-problems occur: people take a piece of biblical truth without taking the whole picture given in the Bible. They hear the New Testament gospel message that "there is no other name under heaven . . . by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), but they don't hear Genesis 1-11 that shows why there can't be any other name. You must learn, if you haven't already, that the Bible has been taken as a unit.[1]

As early civilization slipped spiritually into the bondage of paganism, mankind's body of special revelation--the "Noahic Bible" (Genesis 1-9)--suffered more and more distortion. The traditions and memories of the 70 people groups gradually became filled with mythology and vain speculations (see Appendix A). The Word of God was no longer universally available in clear form.

God, however, had promised in the Garden of Eden that He would send a Savior, the Seed of the Woman, to restore life to man (Gen. 3:15,21). He also had promised in the new world covenant of Noah's day that the human race would survive forever (Gen. 8:21). This gospel promise had to be kept pure and available so that men and women could be saved by faith in it.

How could it be kept available? Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth who knew the whole story would all be dead five centuries after the flood. The Babel judgment had shut down clear global communication. As the Ice Age ended, tribes and nations would become further separated geographically. What God did to advance the gospel plan of salvation was to make a radical and unexpected move. In this chapter I will examine His new work by discussing His call to Abraham, His new covenant with Abraham, and the great truths of election, justification, and

faith which would forever be associated with Abraham by New Testament authors.

### ABRAM CALLED OUT OF MAN'S KINGDOM

The rest of Genesis is taken up with God's call to Abram and its consequences through four generations of his family. The familiar literary "marker" ("these are the generations of X") occurs in 11:27 (X=Terah), 25:12 (X=Ishmael), 25:19 (X=Isaac), 36:1 (X=Esau), and 37:2 (X=Jacob). This remaining section of Genesis has 39 chapters of material compared with only 11 chapters devoted to pre-Abrahamic history. Clearly, the Holy Spirit wants us to see the overarching importance of the Father's work in this first Jewish family.

#### The Old Universal Order

The light of the Noahic Bible had grown very dim by the time of Terah, Abraham's father. The new pagans tried again and again to build social orders uniting mankind in their separation from God, environments comfortable for fallen man, and safe from God's interference--secondary "Babels" if you will. Along with these efforts historical chronology began to be "inflated" to replace eternity with vast stretches of time (see Appendix B).

This pagan trend was opposed, however, in various locations and tribes by faithful believers who continued stubborn adherence to the God of Noah. The Bible gives us a glimpse of them in the meeting between Melchizedek, the King-Priest of Salem, and Abraham (then known as Abram) in Genesis 14:17-21. Here was the ruler of a small settlement in the thoroughly pagan Canaanite land, yet he remained true to the Noahic Bible. As B. F. Westcott wrote:

*"Melchizedek appears at a crisis in the religious history of the world as a representative of primitive revelation. . .still preserved in some isolated tribe. . . .Before the fresh order is established we have a vision of the old in its superior majesty; and this on the eve of disappearance, gives its blessing on the new." [2]*

Since the blessing was given by Melchizedek to Abraham, and not the other way around, this event teaches that whatever God does in history through Abraham, it is ultimately for a universal, race-wide purpose and not just for a particular, nationalistic goal. As the New Testament book Hebrews points out, using Psalm 110, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is not the national, Jewish, Levitical priesthood but the universal, gentile, Melchizedekian one (Heb. 5:5-10; 6:20-7:22; cf. Ps. 110:4).

Even today occasional surviving memories of this ancient Noahic revelation, like Melchizedek, can be found among various people groups of the world. Don Richardson comments:

*"God has indeed prepared the Gentile world to receive the gospel. Significant numbers of non-Christians, therefore, have proved themselves many time more willing to receive the gospel than we Christians historically have been willing to share it with them." [3]*

He continues with examples of such remnant survivals from every continent discovered within the last several centuries. Here is the answer to the so-called "heathen problem"!

### **The New Exclusivism**

Immediately after Abraham had received the blessing from Melchizedek (King of Righteousness), he was offered war booty left over from his defense of the land. This offer came from another king, the king of Sodom (Gen. 14:21-24). Abraham refused the offer, saying "I will not take. . . anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'" In accepting blessing from the King of Righteousness but rejecting material goods from the King of Sodom, Abraham clearly aligned himself with the residual Noahic order over against the growing pagan order.

A profound separatist movement had begun. Genesis 11:27-12:9 provides us the story. Originally from the Mesopotamian heartland near Babel, Abraham was called by God to separate from that pagan culture to wherever He would direct him. God was "leaving" the worldwide pagan culture to its own ways as I showed in the last chapter (Acts 14:16; 17:30a; Rom. 1:23-32). For Abraham and his family to have continued living in Mesopotamia would have meant that they would have to "serve other gods" (cf. Gen. 31:53; Josh. 24:2).[4]

From this point forward in history, God would reach out to the world only indirectly through Abraham's progeny. Here is the biblical repudiation of every non-Israelite religion. Every religion outside of Israel (except for possible remnant survivals of Noahic faith) is formed by human work built upon depravity. Israel's religion alone is of divine construction built upon grace. Truth becomes the exclusive property of God's elect people, "open minded" pagan objections to the contrary notwithstanding.

Let's look at the logical flaw in the pagan objection—the so-called "heathen problem". The argument looks like this: (1) vast numbers of mankind have never heard the New Testament; (2) the New Testament insists upon Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation; (3) therefore Christianity is unjust to insist mankind cannot be saved except through a message they have never heard. The flaw is found in (1) and (3). All people groups originally possessed the Noahic Bible and, therefore, not only were God-conscious but also had the gospel message, whether or not they ever heard the New Testament. It simply is not true that the nations

never have heard a Word from God. The truth is, they all heard it and turned deliberately away from it. Because of sin in all men, God has elected to work with a special people group in a special way in order to call all mankind to repentance (Acts 17:30).

### **Missionary Implications**

Besides the exclusiveness of separatistic biblical religion, paradoxically there is the missionary obligation to go back into the world with the truth. Abraham was told to "go forth from your country" in order that finally "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:1,3). The former head of Missions at Dallas Theological Seminary, George W. Peters has observed that Israel was to become both a separatist "divine counterculture" and also "a channel, not a storehouse, of blessing" to the world.[5] He sums up the Old Testament faith:

*"Raised up by God to declare normative religion, it has been assailed from its beginning and repeatedly threatened with destruction and corruption, but God has graciously and miraculously preserved both the books of its content (the Old Testament) and the people as its bearer (Israel). Indeed the Old Testament is a missionary book and Israel a missionary people." [6]*

Missions and evangelism, therefore, are automatically implied in the Old Testament. Abraham and his seed were to separate from paganism so they could accomplish their mission toward it. The gospel message is not 100% new or "foreign" to any "target" culture; it is linked to the residue of early revelation from Noah still left in that culture. The gospel fulfills the heart-longings of every heathen nation for what they have buried during their descent from Noah.

## **THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

Lesson 40

After Abraham responded by faith to God's call (Gen. 12), God announced a new covenant with him (Gen. 15). God's previous covenant or contract with the new world of Noah's day had four elements: the parties to the contract, the signing of the contract, the legal terms involved, and a founding sacrifice. Why this contract form? I said in Part II that "people and nations make contracts and treaties when either there has been a ruptured relationship in the past or there is a threat of discord in the future." A covenant concerns "a relationship that must be verified with a witnessed record of compliance to specific terms." [7] Once made, a covenant is not to be arbitrarily tampered with as the Apostle Paul noted in Galatians 3:15.

As W. F. Albright observed, of all religions in the world only in biblical Judaism are there actual contracts between God and man.[8] The reason, of course, is that only in the Bible is there an infinite-personal

Creator Who speaks words of revelation! Paganism opposes this truth at the most foundational level. At Babel, paganism said that man must make for himself a name and a meaning (Gen. 11:4). To Abraham God said He, not man, would make Abraham a name and a meaning, indeed, a "great name" (Gen. 12:2). God profoundly disrupts the pagan agenda. Which is it to be with you? Who will make your name? Who will define the meaning of your life? You can't have it both ways!

God's covenant with Abraham defines His program of "disrupting" salvation for the world from about 2000BC forward into eternity. Because it is a salvation program that requires faith in Him, rather than autonomous works of man, God offers a verifiable contract to measure His compliance that our trust in Him may grow. God is known in the Bible as a "covenant-keeping" God.

### **The Parties to the Abrahamic Covenant**

Whereas in the new world covenant of Noah's day, the parties included all descendents of Noah--all the nations of men, in this covenant the parties are more limited. Only God on one hand, and Abraham together with his progeny on the other hand (Gen. 17:7) are parties to it. Thus arises the exclusivism, the rejection of mankind who are not of the "seed of Abraham".

There is a mystery here. Paul claims in Galatians 3:29 that every believer saved in Christ is considered as being part of Abraham's progeny. If the blessing of salvation is to be limited to Abraham's progeny which comes into existence after the 70 nation groups in Genesis 10, how can "all nations"--obviously not descendents from Abraham--be blessed? How, for example, could Egyptians or Ethiopians who pre-existed all of Abraham's physical children be blessed in him? Just how is Abraham "father" to Egyptians or Ethiopians who are not descended physically from him? Is Paul merely allegorizing the Abrahamic Covenant rather than taking it literally? Has the contract lost its legal force? I discuss this problem below under the legal terms.

### **The Signing of the Abrahamic Covenant**

Contracts are signed by the parties responsible for carrying out the terms. In the prior new world covenant God alone was responsible for carrying out its terms, so God alone signed it with physical replica of His throne's glory--the rainbow. [8] In this covenant, too, God alone is responsible for carrying out its terms so He alone signs it.

In a dramatic act, God's revelation of Himself passed between the halves of the animals Abraham had slaughtered (Gen. 15:7-17). Passing between halves of cut animals was a way of signing serious contracts in biblical times (cf. Jer. 34:18-19). This act, along with God's later solitary oath to uphold this contract (Gen. 22:15-18), reveals that God alone is

required to bring the covenant's legal terms to pass. Abraham couldn't do anything to sign it; he was asleep! By omitting man's works, it is therefore a covenant of sovereign grace.

Nevertheless, because the covenant involved actual family units headed by responsible fathers (the divine institution of family), for a specific family to qualify for full covenant blessings, the father-head had to see that all males in his house were circumcised (Gen. 17:9-14). Circumcision was a covenant ritual of obedience showing faith. This ritual was divinely-designed to point at critical spiritual truths.

1. Circumcision revealed that the fallen flesh is present from birth so it was administered in Israel to infants rather than to adolescents as in pagan cultures (Lev. 12:2-3).

2. Circumcision identified sexual propagation, particularly the male sperm, as responsible for linking all mankind into the sin of Adam (Gen. 5:3; Rom. 5:12-14; Heb. 7:4-10). This radically devalues sex as "the" creative force as it universally is considered in paganism.

3. Circumcision did not necessarily imply that the child was regenerate (Ishmael was circumcised in Genesis 17:25 but apparently was an unbeliever--Gen. 21:9; Rom. 2:25-29; 4:11-12). Rituals do not always imply reality.

4. Circumcision testified to an analogy between surgery performed on the organ of fleshly reproduction of physical life and miraculous surgery on the organ of spiritual life—the "heart" (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Col. 2:11-13).

### **The Legal Terms of the Abrahamic Covenant**

The legal commitments God made can be summarized in three promises, each having both a particular application to Israel and a universal application to all mankind. Both are important to verifying God's performance and thus His trustworthy nature.

1. Land. God promised that this family would possess eternal title to specific real estate from near Egypt northward to at least Syria [9] (Gen. 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:8). This promise included land not only for the nation Israel but also for the location of the eternal location of the cosmic Temple of God, the everlasting New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22). This promise does far more than assure various borders in future history; it virtually shapes the everlasting planet earth! Planet earth is the theological center of the universe. The land promise cannot be "spiritualized" and transferred to some mystical state of the Church. This promise, according to Jesus, even implies the physical resurrection of believers (Matt. 22:31-32).

2. Seed. God promised that Abraham would father a family ("seed") that would become very numerous and survive throughout all history

(Gen. 12:2; 13:15-17; 15:5,13-16,18; 17:1-8; 22:17). This family would include not only Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes but also the promised Seed of the Woman. Through Christ as Seed of the Woman, as the "circumciser" of human hearts, as one descended from Abraham (Matt. 1), believers from all nations become by adoption in Christ the children of Abraham. Abraham's seed would come about, beginning with Isaac, miraculously. The seed was never merely physical descent. The New Testament fulfillment, therefore, is not some disconnected "spiritualized" interpretation of the term "seed"; it flows directly from the miraculously-born physical seed of Abraham.

3. World-wide Blessing. Finally God promised exceeding blessing upon this family that would reach outward to all men (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). According to Paul the term "blessing" includes all that is meant by salvation in Christ (Gal. 3:14). The nations, therefore, are blessed "in Abraham" for it is through him that God reaches out to the world. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament the God of Israel is worshipped as the God of all nations (note, for example, the words in Pss. 47:9; 100:1; 126:2b).

### **The Founding Sacrifice of the Abrahamic Covenant**

Just as the new world covenant was founded with a sacrifice, so also the Abrahamic. A holy God and sinful men can meet only upon the ground of blood atonement. In Genesis 15:17 animals' lives had to be taken in order to consummate the agreement. Not only was there violent dismemberment of the animals, but there was apparently a malediction, a cursing, upon God if He did not perform the terms of this contract. The "smoking oven" and the "flaming torch" were used in the Ancient Near East for pronouncing curses on people.[10] Both the violent animal deaths and the curse surely point to the execution of the Son of God and the curse that He became that we might live.

### **The Covenant and the Kingdom**

By now you should be able to see that God's call to Abraham was a major shift in history. It established visible opposition to the growing paganism. From now on there would be war between Babylon and Jerusalem until the final triumph over evil. On one side there would be the Kingdom of Man ever seeking to thwart God's ban on one-world government under fallen leadership. There would be the ever-present pagan agenda of an autonomous destiny, free of God's interference and accountability to Him. Without a creation, without a fall, without a flood, and without a covenant, man thinks he at last can be free to make of himself whatever he wishes.

On the other side there would be the growing Kingdom of God program that preserves human history's "secrets" that paganism so desperately suppresses. Radically different at the most basic

presuppositional level, this agenda comes from above, predefined before all human thought. Faith and grace, not works, would be the new modus operandi dependent upon specific words from God in contractual form for all to see.

### **The Covenantal Revelation Of Election And Justification**

When God called Abraham, he rejected man's new pagan kingdom. He chose to do a new thing, something that would involve Abraham and his progeny all the way to the end of history. His new program would surely triumph over paganism while at the same time be "dependent" upon men's responses to His calling. Thus the Apostle Paul explains how Abraham's progeny contains an unbroken lineage of believers until the return of Christ by emphasizing the doctrine of election (Rom.9-11). Election disrupts the universalism of paganism by insisting that only some men, not all, will believe unto salvation.

A second doctrine deeply associated with Abraham is justification. At Babel paganism had insisted that man would justify himself by his own efforts (Gen. 11:4). In calling Abraham God countered that He, and He alone, would be the justifier. From this Abrahamic history Paul teaches that man becomes justified before God not by his own works, but by faith just as Abraham was (Rom. 4).

Both of these doctrines form the heart of the gospel "disruption" to the pagan agenda. To believe truly the gospel you must settle the issue of God's call to you and His requirement for your justification. Since these truths are so crucial in understanding salvation and sanctification, I will survey both of them in this section.

### **The Doctrine of Election**

Lesson 41

To understand something of this complex truth of election, you must integrate it with the rest of revealed truth we have studied--the creation, fall, flood, and covenant. This is always the approach you must use, whether with the heathen question, election, or anything else. Never try to learn one piece of revelation isolated from the rest, or you will eventually at some point compromise the presupposition of biblical faith. That is why this series is called a "framework".

1. Election Rests upon Creation. Abraham came out of the pagan heartland of Mesopotamia (Gen. 11:27-32; Josh 24:2; Acts 7:2). The two cities where he lived--Ur and Haran--were known centers of worship of the moon god Nannar/Sin. As I showed in Part II of this series, such paganism "buries" the memory of ex-nihilo creation along with the Creator-creature distinction. All reality is viewed as one continuous scale of being. History appears to be run for a time by, say, a moon god until another god supplants him. Behind these wars of the gods lies the ultimate mystery of the tablets of destiny or fate or chance.

To respond to God's call to leave the domain of the moon god, Abraham had to have believed that God was Creator over all and therefore that His message of election was secure from any interference. It was God's sovereign plan, not some tables of destiny, that would control the history of Abraham and his progeny.

Like Abraham we have to leave our pagan notions behind when we face the doctrine of election. It must be understood against the backdrop of creation: that there is a Personal Sovereign behind origins and history; and that there are two levels of being--Creator and creature--not one. The Creator's (Q)uality of sovereignty cannot be identical to the human creature's (q)uality of choice.[11] Our choice is only a finite replica of God's sovereignty so we ought not to visualize God's control over us like, say, some deterministic chemical cause-effect reaction. Such sub-biblical imaginations always erase personal responsibility because, like Nimrod, they cannot conceive controlling real people without some form of coercion.

Nor should we visualize God's control over us like some accurate prediction of what probably will come to pass. In electing Abraham and his seed God was not predicting the course of history because He knew some set of laws independent of Himself or because He foreknew how men would choose. Men predict with only relative accuracy (Matt. 16:2-3); God decrees perfectly what comes to pass (Isa. 41:17-29). It is He Who determines the amount of revelational "pressure" to believe on each person so the faith that is "foreseen" itself is of Him (note Matt. 11:21).

Election, therefore, must be seen as an act of the Creator Who is incomprehensible (although knowable), not a bigger version of human choice or natural law. His purpose stands "not of (human) works but of Him that calls" (Rom. 9:11).

2. Election Rests upon the Fall. Election must also be visualized against the backdrop of the fall. What made Abraham's election necessary? Was it not the rebellion of early civilization? In Romans 9, Paul argues that some of Abraham's seed, his son Ishmael and grandson Esau, were rejected from covenantal blessings. Their disbelief and departure were not a failure of the Abrahamic Covenant; it was a playing out of the elective character of that Covenant. God chooses whom he wills (9:14-24).

Critics insist that such electing work of God is "arbitrary" and "unfair", a sort of cosmic roulette. This criticism occurs, however, because of pagan principles imported into the discussion. They visualize God after the manner of finite, fallen man who does what is right in his own eyes free of any higher, controlling norm or standard. Absence of such a higher, controlling norm is no problem for the Creator because

His holy, loving nature is the norm.

To explain election Paul uses the "potter" illustration borrowed from Isaiah and Jeremiah (cf. Rom. 9:21-24; Isa. 29:16; Jer. 18:2-10). The potter, after the original pot had become marred, decided to transform it into another vessel (Jer. 18:4). God, after Israel had rebelled against Him, turned it into captivity. In like fashion, after man fell, God leaves some men "marred" as "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" (Rom. 9:22); others He call or elects to a transformation into "vessels of mercy" (9:23-24).

There is a certain "asymmetry" here in how God works (note in 9:22-24 the shift in voice of the verbs). He is sovereign over all men, but His sovereignty is exercised differently. One group is "left" in rebellion and are responsible for their sad state; the other is called and God is responsible for their salvation. In Genesis 11 God leaves the rebellious postdiluvian civilization in their rebellion and in Genesis 12 calls Abraham out from it (cf. Deut. 4:19-20). God is sovereign over evil in a different way than He is over good. How thankful we can be that He graciously called us out of the world along with Abraham!

3. Election Reveals New Thoughts From God's Mind. When God called Abraham and began His special plan of salvation through Israel, it was a surprise. It would not have been predicted by any man no matter how much he knew of Genesis 1-11. Election "disrupts" the normal chain of cause-effect that mankind gets used to seeing. Until the moment of the actual call, election rests solely in God's omniscience, hidden from human view.

The epistle to the Hebrews describes God's working as causing historical events like the call of Abraham from beyond history. History does not flow by itself (from "things which do appear"-Heb. 11:3). The pagan mind of flesh wants ever so desperately to know all things so as to avoid having to trust God. Historians ever seek to explain history solely in terms of economics, geography, politics, or whatever. Scientific historians--biological evolutionists, geological uniformitarians, and astrophysical cosmologists--search desperately for a "holy grail", a final theory to explain everything to man's finite understanding. All such effort is to no avail because of the way God has made history and man (Ecc. 3:11b).

One important effect of understanding election as a surprise is that it accords genuine significance to history. Before creation the universe was in God's mind, but it did not exist in itself (i.e., there was one, not two, levels of existence). God did not merely dream the universe; He created

it! Similarly, God does not merely dream the elect; He calls them into historical existence through the gospel.

Sometimes you will meet hyper-Calvinists who speak of "unsaved elect". They will tell you if they knew who these unsaved elect were, they wouldn't bother witnessing to the non-elect. This thinking fails to recognize the biblical insistence upon two levels of existence; it thoroughly confuses the existence of the elect in God's mind with the existence of the elect in history. Thankfully few such hyper-Calvinists take matters to the logical conclusion: why do anything in history, including eating, if everything already exists in God's mind? Why did God bother to create the universe if merely dreaming it would have been enough?

A second effect of seeing election as a revelatory surprise is that it separates our mind from any pagan notion of its own sufficiency, of the fleshly tendency to "lean upon our own understanding"(Prov. 3:5). Unlike Babel where mankind tried to plan for a global civilization independent from its Creator, God's election program with Abraham required him to look to God for the promises in utter dependence upon Him. His "name" and meaning, as well as ours, cannot come from a pagan agenda based solely upon finite human thought. It must come from God's mind, appearing to us as an ever expanding "surprise".

4. Election Is God's Basic Eternal Promise To You and Me. In Abraham's case all three of the promises--land, seed, and worldwide blessing--were still future when God called. A very important implication of election is that every other promise God makes to his elect is contained already in His election promise. If the final state of the elect is promised, then every need leading to that final state must also be promised. Jesus used this reasoning when He deduced resurrection from the Abrahamic Covenant (Matt. 22:29-32).

Election, then, is basic to all else in the Christian life. Contrary to Arminian claims, we must begin our new life in Christ knowing of our election, that our names are written in the book of life (Luke 10:20; cf. I Thess. 1:4; II Pet. 1:10; II John 1). Without this assurance we can never truly claim any of God's promises because we can never be sure that they are addressed to us! Knowing that God has called us and works in us to will and do of His good pleasure must precede our faith walk as I will show in the last section of this chapter (cf. Phil. 2:12-13).

## **The Doctrine of Justification**

Lesson 42

The second great doctrine revealed in Abraham's call is the doctrine of justification by faith made so famous in the Protestant Reformation. In

Genesis 15:6, just prior to God's revelation of the Abrahamic Covenant, a circumstantial notice occurs: "He believed in the LORD; and He reckoned (imputed) it to him as righteousness." For God to enter into covenant with Abraham or any man concerning salvation, the man must legally (forensically) be righteous or holy. Although the founding sacrifice showed that blood atonement is involved, this notice shows that faith, too, is involved.

Like election, justification must be understood in relation to other revealed truths; it can't be learned in isolation. Whereas election disrupted the pagan agenda by asserting God's sovereignty over against imagined "chance", justification opposes paganism by asserting God's holiness over against human ethical judgments. To explain this doctrine I make four points.

1. Justification Rests upon Creation and the Fall. From creation we learned of the divine institution of responsible labor.[12] During Creation Week God crafted the universe day by day. After each day's work, He paused and evaluated it ("He saw it was good"). In a similar way, humans are to produce tangible and intangible goods and services which invite evaluation or pricing. Evaluation comes about by other persons who impute or credit value to one's words and works and forms the heart of economics.

However, the Bible insists that human pricing is only approximate and relative depending upon the one doing the evaluation. God alone knows the intrinsic worth of one's words and works so that He alone can "price" our lives absolutely. Thus the ordinary economic activity of pricing goods and services is a finite analogy of God's judgment of our lives. The Bible, therefore, uses the economic term, "imputation" or "crediting", when it speaks of God's judgments of man's worth.

A severe complication in this evaluation process occurred with the fall. Man the sinner can no longer produce righteousness in thought, word, or deed. The first divine institution of responsible labor within minutes of the fall went about making garments of fig leaves in an attempt to cover up the results of disobedience (Gen. 3:7). After the fall the ground was cursed so it would resist normal production with useless thorns and thistles and would require extra energy to cultivate (Gen. 3:18-19; cf. Prov. 24:30-33).

The Bible uses the imagery of thorns and thistles to illustrate the value of fallen man's total production (Heb. 6:7-8). "Useless" and "damnable" is God's evaluation. Nevertheless, fallen mankind calls evil good and good evil so human "imputing" or "crediting" is not only inaccurate but grossly perverted. It comes as a shock to paganism, therefore, when

human works—even what appear to be the best "good works"—are rejected by God. He puts a "price tag" on all works of the flesh as "worthless" in His eyes. All mankind is under sin (Rom. 1-3).

2. Justification Must Be the First Step in Redemption. From the creation and fall, therefore, come two major problems for mankind that must be solved before any redemptive program can even get off the ground. First, we have a "negative price tag" because of our sin. We not only are worthless ethically, but worse than worthless in that we cause problems for God. Our sins and transgression cost Him something to fix. Forgiveness costs. Moreover, even when we are forgiven, our "price" only changes from a minus number to zero. It still is not a positive number.

The probation in Eden is over. We can't return to innocence. History goes on. We can't plead with God to try the probationary period again. Therefore to regain the access to His Presence which was lost in Eden, we have to somehow get where Adam should have been with positive obedience. Our price tag must go from zero to a positive number due to actual historic obedience.

To re-enter God's Presence we must be judged by Him to have positively obeyed as well as having our transgressions put away. From the economic analogy of pricing we move to the legal analogy of a verdict. In Deuteronomy 25:1 the judge was to "justify the righteous and condemn the wicked". Only with such a verdict is our righteousness legally or forensically established. Justification, therefore, is required prior to entering into any redemptive program with God.

For Abraham to have been placed into a redemptive covenant with God, he had to have been justified at the beginning. Paul develops the point in Genesis 15 that Abraham was declared righteous before he entered the covenant and was circumcised (Rom. 4:10-11). Note that Abraham was not just forgiven; he was credited with positive righteousness.

This need for justification "up front" completely baffles convinced pagans. Denying the creation and fall, they don't see man's problem in moral terms. Man is instead seen as somewhere on the scale of being and a passive victim to ever-present evil in the world. Salvation is pictured as climbing a pyramid, an evolutionary ascent up the scale of being to become like God. Mankind's problem must be, it is thought, that he lacks power, information, wealth, or security. That a moral "re-pricing" is required is wholly beyond their understanding.

3. Justification Requires the Righteousness of Christ. Where can mankind obtain a historic record of obedience to God's will after the fall? On one hand, the fleshly mind is not subject to the will of God and can't produce the necessary righteous obedience. On the other hand, until such a record is produced we can't pass the entry requirement into God's Presence to have Him surgically alter us from our fallen condition ("circumcision of the heart").

How did Abraham obtain righteousness? Genesis 15:6 says God credited him with righteousness through his faith. Faith in what? . . . what God had promised him--land, seed, and an eventual destiny of blessing to the world! Abraham trusted God's Word that God would provide him a seed and a place. The promised progeny would miraculously be provided from Isaac to Christ. In principle he believed in Christ although he knew far less than we who live later in the history of revelation.

The wonder of justification is that Jesus Christ's life of perfect obedience is credited to every believer! Just as His death on the Cross removed our sins, His life on earth gives us the righteousness we need to enter the Presence of God. Both of man's problems are solved through Christ: our negative price is brought out of the minus numbers, through zero, and into positive territory!

Sometimes you will hear justification explained as "just-as-if-I'd-never-sinned". That is not true. True justification recognizes the existence of positive righteousness as well as forgiveness. In 1563 Reformation thinker properly identified justification in the great Heidelberg Catechism:

*"God, without any merit of mine, of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ rendered for me . [Emphasis supplied][13]*

Note that this statement emphasizes that justification is all by grace. That is the same point Paul makes in Romans 4 where he insists that unless justification occurs by our faith in an "outside" righteousness supplied to us from Christ, salvation could never be by grace. All human works are thus rejected.

4. Justification Cannot Be Confused With Regeneration or Sanctification. The idea that justification is due to a righteousness from "outside" of man, rather than from "inside" him, has not always been welcomed within the Church. Such imputation of Christ's obedience to the sinner seems to be a "legal fiction" that ascribes to man something he really does not have. For a sinner to be credited with perfection he has not shown in his personal life is seen by many as a threat to godly living.

Many times in Church history, therefore, teachers have tried to base justification upon the condition of the sinner's heart. While acknowledging Christ as the source of it all, these teachers claim that His righteousness is actually transfused into the sinner's heart first as a basis for subsequent justification. The work of regeneration and/or sanctification then becomes the precursor of the verdict of justification.

When Protestants like Luther and Calvin taught justification by faith alone without any such "precursor" righteousness in the heart, Roman Catholicism fought back. The Council of Trent (1545-63) declared in opposition to Protestantism:

*"If they were not born again in Christ, they would never be justified, since in that new birth there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace whereby they are made just. . . justification is not only the bare remission of sins, but also sanctification and renewal of the inner man. . . . The ban is placed on any who teach that man is justified through imputation of the righteousness of Christ. . . exclusive of the grace and love which is infused into the heart through the Holy Spirit." [14]*

In other words, "infused grace" received into the heart--regeneration and sanctification--is supposed to precede and be the cause of justification. When God justifies, according to Rome, He is looking at actual righteousness in the regenerated heart, rather than the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Within Protestantism similar "heart-centered" justification teachings arose. One form is "perfectionism", *viz.*, the belief that the heart must be perfect before justification can occur. During Methodist 19th century revivals associates of Charles Finney taught "nothing short of present entire conformity to the divine law is accepted of God." [15] Another form is "conditional justification" where in a certain degree of holiness (usually left up to the imagination of the individual) is necessary to keep justification after it has been granted. Thus Arminian theologian Robert Shank teaches:

*"There is nothing about Paul's affirmation (Rom. 8:29-30) which establishes that. . . all who experience calling and justification are necessarily elect and will inevitably persevere." [16]*

According to Shank, justification is good only as long as one is in Christ. Failure to maintain holiness leads to rejection in this view because justification in the first place is grounded upon the spiritual condition of the heart.

Another form of Protestant "heart-centered" justification, although milder than the previous forms, occurs in certain "deeper life" and Pentecostal groups. Such groups downplay justification in favor of

internal sanctification experiences. Preoccupation with trying to find a heart-centered, satisfying experience often causes the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work to eclipse Christ's righteousness in justification.

All forms of "heart-centered" justification—whether Romanist or Protestant--contradict the emphasis in God's call to Abraham. The primary concern in Genesis 12-50 is not some capacity inside Abraham or his seed but the plan in God's mind in heaven. Not subjective experiences of the heart, but objective promises of God's Word, form the focal point of the narrative. Abraham looked solely to God Who "callesth those things which are not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). Everything was only a promise; nothing had yet appeared--whether seed, land, or blessing. Even Abraham's justification was promissory. God credited what imperfect faith Abraham had for the perfect righteousness he did not have (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4). Otherwise, there would have been no basis for an everlasting covenant of redemption made with him!

Only later in history do we learn of the source of the righteousness of God, an actual, non-fictional, historically perfect obedience of the Second Adam. Justification is a verdict reached in heaven between the Father and the Son, not a work in the heart. The heart, even in regeneration, is not perfect. If the incomplete work of Christ in the heart were to be substituted for the completed historic work of Christ made available from heaven, we could never be certain of acceptance before God! We could not be parties to any sort of saving covenant!

## BIBLICAL FAITH

Lesson 43

Those who rebel against God inevitably seek to glorify themselves, to hide the consequences of their rebellion and justify their pride to themselves and others. Thus Adam and Eve started the first "cover up" with fig leaves. Nimrod's kingdom of man sought to redefine their existence with glorious architecture and tyrannical civil government. Paul reminds us that unbelievers bury truths of God and His standards in their hearts (Rom. 1:18-32). These efforts constitute an agenda of self-justifying works.

In sharp contrast, God's call to Abraham revealed His agenda of sovereign grace to be received solely by faith. Both election and justification destroy the pagan "works agenda". Election speaks of actualizing a plan of God from "outside" history, beyond whatever plans man might work up. Justification speaks of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, something unattainable by fallen man. Man's response to God's call, therefore, can only be one of faith free from "add-on" works.

By "faith" I do not mean the generic term, "belief", as it is used in everyday speech ("I believe the answer is. . ."; "I believe he means what he says", . . .). Faith, like election and justification, must be understood inside the biblical world view. The following four points should help you think about biblical faith.

1. Faith Depends Upon God's Gracious Initiative. Biblical faith isn't the same as everyday belief, say, that the sun will rise tomorrow. Everyday belief is exercised by all men, believer and unbeliever alike.[17] Biblical faith cannot be exercised by spiritually dead, fallen mankind. After Adam's fall, Adam hid from God. Before his call Abraham's family were not seeking to leave the Mesopotamian heartland of paganism (Josh. 24:2).

Pagan unbelieving man knows God and His standards (Rom. 1:19-20,32), and precisely because he does he spends inordinate energies burying these truths to try to avoid condemnation. Even when arguing for "moral" positions for others, he secretly avoids submitting to them in his heart (Rom. 2:1-5). His unbelief is demonically reinforced (II Cor. 4:4).

God, therefore, must initiate reconciliation. He calls to Adam who is hiding (Gen. 3:9). He calls to Abram in Ur (Acts 7:2). He calls to men everywhere--though in varying degrees (Matt. 11:20-24). In this Church Age, through the New Testament gospel, He commands every nation to repent and believe (Acts 17:30). He maintains His Church through all opposition and the biblical text in many languages. The principle is stated clearly by Paul: "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). This is biblical, not generic, faith.

2. Faith Depends Upon God's Illumination and Inclination of the Human Heart. When God calls, just what does He do? Since we are spiritually dead, our hearts darkened, and our minds filled with vanity, He must illuminate and incline our hearts (Rom. 5:5; II Cor.4:6). Through carefully-tailored circumstances and conversations with others (written and/or oral) He gives us our own individual "wake-up call".

What does He say? What is the content of saving faith? Herein lies great debate! The first Protestant reformers, Calvin and Luther, insisted through the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that saving faith was a trust in God's promise of full acceptance. Fortified with the doctrine of election that guaranteed that justification was irrevocable, saving faith was taught as synonymous with assurance. Calvin wrote:

*"It is a firm and sure knowledge of divine favor toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit."*[18]

Regarding self-examination commanded in Scripture, Calvin wrote:

*"When we so examine ourselves, however, it is not to see whether our holiness, our works, or the fruit of the Spirit in our lives warrant assurance of salvation. Rather, it is to determine that such assurance rests on the proper foundation of God's mercy in Christ." [19]*

Both Romanism and later Protestantism reacted against this teaching. Wouldn't such immediate assurance lead to loose living? By denying the possibility of personal assurance of salvation, Rome kept her members under the discipline of the Church. Later Protestants, especially "Calvinists" like the Puritans, tried to defend against Roman objections by insisting that one could not really be sure he had saving faith until at the end of his life he was still persevering in faith. Puritans produced long books on the "morphology of conversion", morbid treatises containing numerous tests to determine whether one had truly believed.

In a strange way, then, later Protestantism came back to denial of the possibility of present assurance just as Roman Catholicism had insisted all along! Saving faith was no longer seen as assurance. Through fear of antinomianism, a great truth was compromised. As a result, the biblical motive for Christian living was lost: gratitude for God's grace toward me. Instead the motive for Christian living became trying to gain assurance by producing enough fruit to "have faith in my faith." The original Protestant doctrine of faith was preserved only in small pockets of the Church here and there, most notably in Lutheran and various Brethren groups. Today it is still under attack as "easy believism".

Is faith in God's elective and justifying call really "easy believism"? Does His illumination and inclination work in my heart give me license to sin? Is this gospel message the cause of false professions? Not if it is understood properly within the biblical framework! The object of belief, biblically, is my offended Creator and His gracious invitation to "take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). If I trust that message, then I'm buying into a wholly different presupposition, a completely different heart disposition, and radical repentance. The problem today is that the message doesn't come across clearly to an increasingly paganized American public. The words "God", "sin", "believe" are perverted in meaning. Thus saving faith will come about only if we take extra care in living and speaking the gospel message so that it is very clear to a society that is being rapidly paganized. Compromising the assurance of saving faith by adding "extras" only further blocks the clear call of God for men to believe biblically.

3. Faith Depends Upon A Cleansed Conscience. What function does God's illumination and inclination message perform in the heart? Jesus insisted that faith was impossible without a disposition toward seeking God (John 5:44). No belief would occur as long as a man persisted trying

to cover his sinful rebellion (John 3:20). God's message, therefore, must cause repentance at the deepest level, man's basic choice of life's direction.

Obviously, we are dealing here with a miraculous disruption of an unbelieving heart! The inner conscience which has been violated, defiled, and seared must be cleansed (Heb. 10:22). God gave Adam and Eve new clothes to replace their fig-leaf "cover up"; Abraham had to have a clean conscience so he could believe God was really for him. The truths of general revelation buried in my subconscious must be linked with the new truths of the gospel so that it all "fits" me personally. Only by such cleansing can I believe unto salvation. No psychotherapy can ever reach this deeply!

4. Faith Can Only Indirectly Be Observed. Although the genuine believer has receive assurance internally, the presence of saving faith can be seen externally only through his words and deeds. This point is made in the epistle of James where Abraham is discussed. Interested in showing faith to outside observers, James says Abraham was justified by works when he offered Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22 (Jas. 2:17-23).

Critics of the Bible love this passage, thinking here they can cite a contradiction between how Paul speaks of justification by faith without works and how James speaks of justification by works since each author is talking about Abraham. They often fail to note the obvious fact that Paul uses Genesis 15 at the beginning of Abraham's belief whereas James uses Genesis 22 much later in Abraham's life. In Genesis 15 Abraham was justified before God (cf. Rom. 4:2,17); in Genesis 22 Abraham was justified before man (cf. Jas. 2:18 "show me").

Biblical faith as the presupposition of submission to God's total authority (Rom. 1:5) will inevitably motivate behavior. Unfortunately, in the history of Christianity there have been those who have arbitrarily selected some specific "fruit" as the infallible sign of saving faith. The Church of Christ, for example, holds that water baptism under that church's authority is the indicator of saving faith. Without it, saving faith cannot exist. Saving faith will show fruit in different areas in different people.

In Abraham's life, for example, he demonstrated trust in the land promise by leaving Ur and wandering throughout Palestine without ever actually owning any of it (Heb. 11:8-10). Even when Sarah died He had to buy a burial plot (Gen. 23). His trust in the seed promise was shown by having sexual relations with his wife for 25 years in spite of their infertility (Rom. 4:13-21). When he finally did have a son and God asked

him to sacrifice him, he inferred resuscitation based upon this promise (Gen. 22:5; Heb. 11:17-19).

Yet his faith wasn't perfect. He particularly failed to believe the seed promise at least twice along with his wife (Gen. 16:1-16; 17:17; 18:12-15). Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit in the New Testament claims that Abraham was "fully persuaded" (Rom. 4:21) and that Sarah "judged him faithful who promised" (Heb. 11:11). Saving faith is not necessarily constant or consistent. Moreover, saving faith can become so weak that fruit is practically invisible as seen in the lives of Abraham's great grandsons (Gen. 38-49).

## END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

1. See Part I of this series.
2. B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1965), p. 199.
3. Don Richardson, Eternity in Their Hearts (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984 rev. ed.), p. 33.
4. For Jews to be located outside the Promised Land was "to serve other gods" (I Sam. 26:19; cf. II Kings 5:15-18; Ps. 137).
5. George W. Peters, A Biblical Theology of Missions (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), pp. 90,94.
6. Ibid., pp. 129f.
7. See Part II, Chapter 6.
8. W. F. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1968), p. 108. The second, erroneously numbered footnote [8] refers to Part II, Chapter 6.
9. See discussion of northern boundary of the promised land in Walter C. Kaiser, J., The Uses of the Old Testament in the New (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 161f.
10. See discussion in E. A. Speiser, Introduction, Translation, and Notes (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1964), p. 113f.
11. See Part II, Chapter 2.
12. See Part II, Chapter 3.
13. Answer to Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism ("How Art Thou Righteous Before God?"). Philip Schaff, Creeds of Christendom (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House paperback edition, 1977), Vol 3., p 326f.
14. As cited in Reinhold Seeberg, Textbook of the History of Doctrine, trans. Charles E. Hay (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book

House, 1964), Vol. 2, p. 436.

15. John Morgan, Holiness Acceptable (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship reprint, 1957), p. 51.

16. Robert Shank, Life in the Son (Springfield, MO: Westcott Pub. Co., 1961), p. 365.

17. See Part I for discussion on "belief" of unbelievers.

18. See any edition of John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 3, Chap. 2, Sec. 7.

19. See comments in Charles M. Bell, Calvin and Scottish Theology (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985), p.30.

## CHAPTER 3: THE EXODUS: THE DISRUPTIVE TRUTH OF ISREAL'S SEPARATION FROM EGYPT

Lesson 45

The pagan agenda of the Tower of Babel had insisted upon a definite design for pagan society: man would save himself by ascending the Scale of Being until he became like God. The underlying presupposition, of course, was that man already was his own absolute authority, possessing the knowledge of good and evil along with all other gods and goddesses (Gen. 2:9; 3:6). With the new tool of civil authority placed in his hands, man could now compel everyone to fit into this scheme like the bricks fit into the Tower of Babel.

Not all the bricks, however, were set because God disrupted the would-be Kingdom of Man with linguistic confusion. The dream of a one-world pagan society would never be realized. Five centuries later, God formally rejected the paganized Noahic civilization with His call to Abraham. He upset fallen humanity's modus operandi of autonomy by revealing election, justification, and faith. God, not man, had the plan. God, not man, defined righteousness and insisted upon absolute conformity to it. The new modus operandi was humble submission to the gracious invitation of man's offended Creator by faith.

To understand the next step in God's historic redemptive plan, we need to get background on the Exodus event. In this chapter, I will discuss the immediate problem of Abraham's family, the structure of Egyptian society, the meaning of the Exodus event, and the expanded revelation of God's judgment/salvation.

### BACKGROUND OF THE EXODUS

#### Abraham's Family Problem

The call of Abraham appeared after a while to flounder. The patriarch's family showed more and more signs of what we moderns call "dysfunctionality":

(1) Whereas Abraham valued family unity (Gen. 13:7-12), later generations promoted discord. Joseph was nearly killed by his brothers (Gen. 37); Onan refused to help his sister-in-law (Gen. 38:8-10); and Judah deceitfully withheld his son from Tamar, his daughter-in-law (Gen. 38:11-15).

(2) Abraham knew he must separate from Canaanite culture; thus he sought a bride for Isaac from non-Canaanite society (Gen. 24). In direct contrast Judah saw nothing wrong in having sex with a Canaanite sacred prostitute which he thought the disguised Tamar was, referring to her as a kedeshah (Gen. 38:15,21).

(3) Abraham built altars and publicly worshipped Yahweh

(Gen. 12:8; 13:18; 21:33), but by Judah's generation no mention whatever is made of such a testimony.

It is no great surprise, then, to see God withdraw Himself from direct revelation to this rebellious family. Whereas Abraham enjoyed many theophanies, in the fourth generation Joseph as a young man is guided solely by a silent providence. Nevertheless, God also had bound Himself to the Abrahamic Covenant so He could not let this family self-destruct.

To keep this family from being absorbed into pagan society, God sent them into an Egyptian "ghetto" where they would be discriminated against (Gen. 43:32) and abused as slaves (Gen. 15:13). Unable to assimilate in Egyptian society, the first Jewish family in history would be forced to maintain its unique identity. In this hostile womb, the family would grow into a full nation ready to be born. Clearly Israel would be a work of God, not of men!

## The Structure of Egyptian Society

Lesson 46

Egypt was chosen by God as the womb for "out of Egypt" would God "call His son" (Hos. 11:1)[1]. Why? From its founding by Ham's son Mizraim until the Exodus a thousand years later, Egypt functioned like a "Gentile Millennium" featuring the most artistic and highest level of paganism in the world. As the most prominent remnant of the Hamitic Tower of Babel scheme, Egypt is referred to throughout Scripture by Satan symbols: "Leviathan", "Rahab", and the "Dragon" (Pss. 74:12-14; 87:4; 89:10; Isa. 30:7; 51:9-10; Ezk. 29:3; 32:2). Nonetheless, Egypt is never treated in the Bible as fit for total destruction as Canaan and Babylon are, apparently because she never so completely rejected God's revelation as those nations.

Egypt placed great stress on the changeless and static elements of life as opposed to Mesopotamia. The University of Chicago Egyptologist, Dr. Henri Frankfort wrote:

*The Egyptian belief [was] that the universe is changeless and that all apparent opposites must, therefore, hold each other in equilibrium. Such a belief has definite consequences in the field of moral philosophy. It puts a premium on whatever exists with a semblance of permanence. It excludes ideals of progress, utopias of any kind, revolutions, and any other radical changes in existing conditions. . . . In this way the belief in a static universe enhances, for instance, the significance of established authority."*[2]

The individual was so submerged in the state and the state in nature that apart from the Exodus there was a total absence of popular uprisings and revolutionary movements in Egyptian history. This scheme of things

centering on the Pharaoh shows through Egyptian art like the four examples in Figure 3.1.

Drawing "A" is a design found on an ivory comb of the First Dynasty (pre-Abrahamic). Even at this early period the classical Egyptian art symbols appeared. The god Horus, whose symbol was the falcon, is represented on the comb in three ways. At the top he is the son in the boat sailing across the sky. In the middle he is the outstretched wings that depict the sky. At the bottom he is represented by Pharaoh as he stands on a box containing a serpent and the name of King Djet. The two vertical symbols are scepters denoting "welfare". The sign ( ) refers to life. The interpretation of the art on this comb, then, is that the nature of the god Horus, manifested in the sun and in the sky, is also manifested among men in the person of Pharaoh. Because Horus is in Pharaoh, life and welfare come from Pharaoh.[3]

Drawing "B" in Figure 3.1 shows a temple column also from early Egypt. Again there are two vertical welfare scepters, but in this example they are capped above by the sky symbol and below by the earth symbol. Between them is written the name of King Sahure. The implication is that Pharaoh acts within the harmony of nature and was himself a vital part of it, a sort of mediator between heaven and earth.

Drawing "C" shows how closely the sun and serpent appear in Egyptian art. Apparently to the Egyptian mind the sun and snake shared certain characteristics: both move without normal means of propulsion.[4] The sun illuminated the physical world; and if pieces of primitive revelation were remembered in distorted form (cf. Gen. 3:1ff), the snake "illuminated" the spiritual world, giving "knowledge of good and evil".[5] Pharaoh was known as the "son of Re" ("Re" being the sun god), and on his headgear he often wore the serpent.

In drawing "D" the deity of Pharaoh is clearly proclaimed by the Egyptian artist who drew Ramses II the same size as the gods Horus (left) and Khum (right) with whom he keeps company (rather than with mortal man). This type of picture prompted Frankfort to write:

*"[Pharaoh] was the fountainhead of all authority, all power, and all wealth. The famous saying of Louis XIV, 'l'etat c'est moi, was levity and presumption when it was uttered, but could have been offered by Pharaoh as a statement of fact in which his subjects concurred. It would have summed up adequately [Egyptian] political philosophy."*[6]

The structure of Egyptian society, therefore, had in a peculiar fashion perverted the Noahic Covenant and the divine institution of civil authority. The universe and man and government should be united--but in dependence upon the Word of God. They do not belong to the same

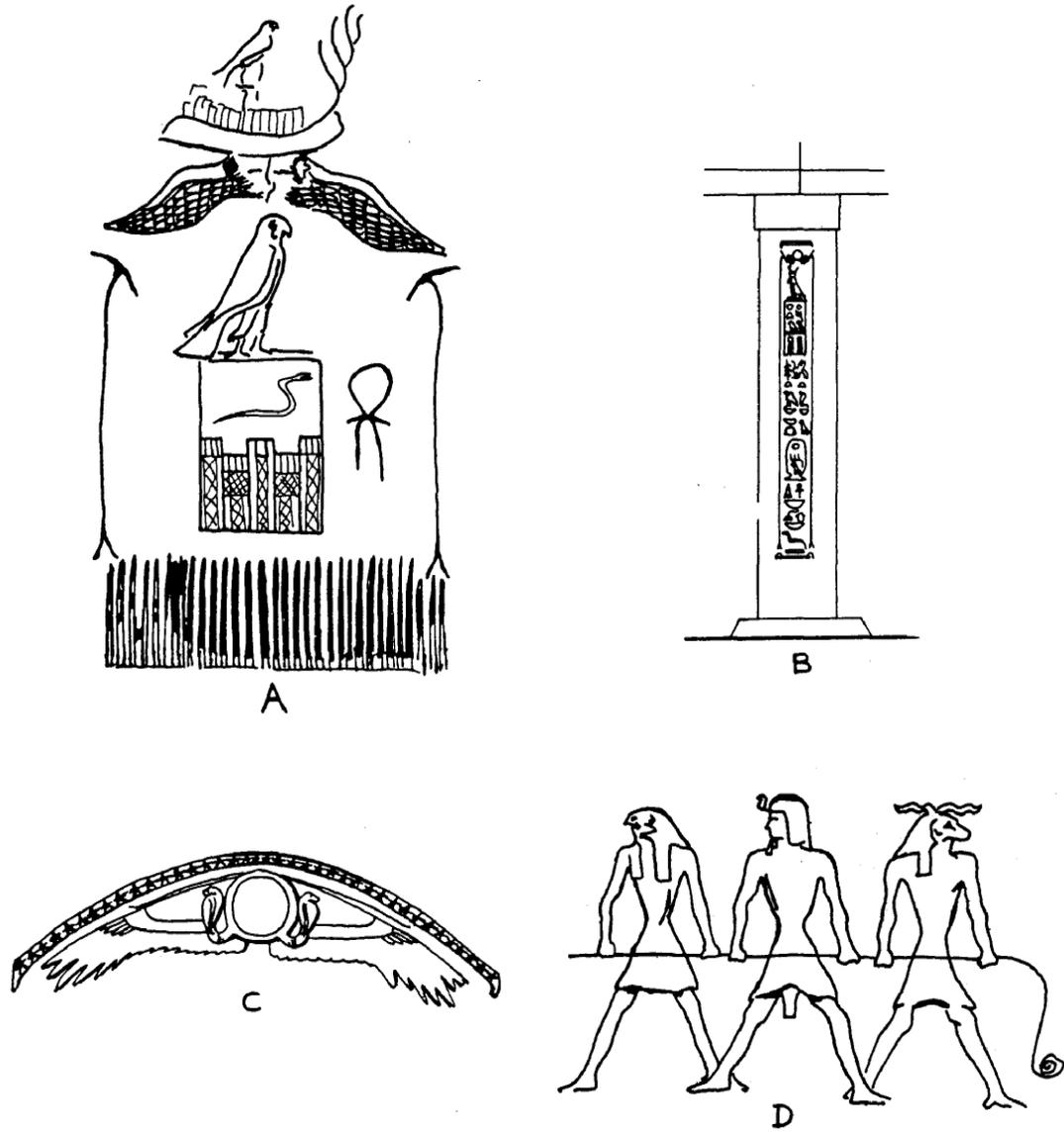


Figure 3.1 Four samples of art picturing Egyptian religious beliefs. Taken from Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods, Figs. 17, 19, 20, and 14. See text for discussion.

i  
I authority, moreover, is a restraint upon sin and not the means to salvation.

## THE EXODUS CATASTROPHE AND ITS MEANING

Israel, like Abraham's elect son, Isaac, was born miraculously. No nation ever had an origin like Israel. With surgical precision God separated His elect nation from its historic womb in a mighty demonstration of His power and wisdom. In the historic progression of events since creation, the Exodus expanded upon the judgment/salvation theme of the previous global flood catastrophe. The Exodus event, in fact, is to the Old Testament what the birth and death of Jesus Christ is to the New Testament. It provides one of the great pictures of what God means when He speaks of redemption.

### The Catastrophic Disruption of the Exodus

To a reader not under the influence of modern theories of historical reconstruction, the Scriptural account leaves little doubt that the Exodus event was a catastrophic disruption in ancient Near Eastern history. A series of gradually escalating ecological crises struck the most advanced civilization then existing. All Egypt was affected--the people, the cattle, and the fields; and its agricultural economy was devastated (Exod. 7:14-10:29).

Great numbers of the general population were killed (Exod. 11-12), and economy looted of its gold and silver (11:2). Egypt's formidable army was completely destroyed (14-15) and Pharaoh himself along with his military staff killed (14:8,10,17-18,27-28; cf. Ps. 136:15). Egypt virtually disappeared from history according to Scripture with no mention of Egypt as a contemporary power from Moses until the time of Solomon five centuries later (cf. Deut. 11:4). News of this catastrophe spread terror throughout neighboring countries (Jos. 2:9-11)

Unfortunately what appears so clear to a naive reader of the Exodus story "can't be true" according to modern scholarly consensus. Having established a chronology of ancient history upon the "assured" results of a series of inferences from alleged astronomical observations and evolutionary theory, modern historical reconstruction of this period insists that Egypt was in her zenith of political power in the so-called New Kingdom period. The New Kingdom candidates for "Pharaoh of the Exodus" did not die, nor was there any disruption in Egyptian control of neighboring Palestine. No evidence can be found, it is claimed, of the ecological disturbances recorded in the Scripture. Similar conflict continues with the later Conquest (see next chapter).

Even the best evangelical scholars accept wholesale this background chronology as an assured fact.[7] They strain mightily to fit the Exodus event into the New Kingdom era, somehow explaining away why no

mention is made of Egypt as a contemporary power between Moses and Solomon, why the Pharaoh really did not die, why no evidence of Egypt's economic destruction appears at this time in Egyptian history, and why Israel fought numerous nations for control of Palestine but never once encountered Egyptian armies.

Pagan scholars, of course, forthrightly mock the Scriptural narrative as mostly mythological with a few possible historical reports thrown in. The fancy footwork, however, of godly scholars reminds us of the debates over creation, fall, and flood in Genesis. In Part II of this series I explained the false reasoning and pagan presuppositions involved in trying to reconstruct natural history. Very similar logic applies here. Again there are the Capitulation, Accommodationist, and Counter-attack strategies involved. I give a more detailed analysis of the chronological problems of ancient history in Appendix B.

If, like the creationists in the creation controversy, we dare to rethink the so-called assured results of historical research, possible solutions to this dilemma appear. If Egyptian history is re-interpreted according to Scriptural data, then the Exodus event coincided with the end of what is called the Middle Kingdom period, not with the middle of the New Kingdom period. Precisely during the collapse of the so-called Middle Kingdom, a papyri records events remarkably similar to those of Exodus 7-12:

<i><u>Papyrus Ref.</u></i>	<i><u>Text</u></i>	<i><u>Exod. Ref.</u></i>
2:5-6	"Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere"	7:21
2:10	"The river is blood. . .Men shrink from tasting it"	7:20,24
2:10	"Gates, columns, and walls are consumed by fire"	9:23-24
2:13	"He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere"	12:30
3:14	"It is groaning that is throughout the land, mingled with lamentations"	12:30
4:14	"Trees are destroyed"	9:25
5:5	"All animals, their hearts weep."	9:3
6:3	"Grain has perished on every side."	10:15
7:1	"The fire has mounted up on high."	13:21
9:3	"Each man fetches for himself those that are branded with his name."	9:19,21
9:11	"The land is not light."	10:22

**Fig. 3.2 Comparison of the Lamentation of Ipuwer (Gardiner's translation given in Velikovsky, *Ages In Chaos*, with Exodus.**

As I explain in Appendix B, radically re-interpreting Egyptian history not only resolves the Exodus problem, it resolves and illuminates Joseph's role in Egyptian history, the Conquest era, and later interaction between Egypt and Israel in the period of the kings. It resolves the report by the Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk II, Chap 9, Para 1) that Jewish slaves built pyramids. Since the standard chronology insists that pyramids were no longer built when the Jews were in Egypt, this report is seen as a figment of Josephus' imagination.

Notice that to do this re-interpretation, we have had to challenge completely modern reconstruction of Ancient Near Eastern history just as earlier we "offended" the modern historical sciences. This is just more evidence of what I mentioned in Part I of this series that the world suffers from global deception and lies in profound darkness. The Exodus event was a public judgment that revealed God's holiness and omnipotence to the world, not a minor hiccup barely noticeable in Egyptian history!

### The Reluctant Israelites

Lesson 47

There has always been the tendency to regard Israel as more righteous than Egypt. The Bible, however, denies that Israel had any superior righteousness of her own. Ezekiel records that the Israelites were thoroughly integrated into Egyptian idolatry and even rebelled against God's call for separation (Ezk. 20:6-10). Joshua, too, mentioned this Hebrew apostasy in Egypt (Josh. 24:14; cf. Lev. 17:7). When Moses first preached, Israel was no more responsive than Egypt (Exod. 6:9,12). Later, Moses told Israel clearly: "Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you" (Deut. 9:24).

The Israelites had to be persuaded by the miraculous series of events to trust the God of Moses their leader. Although they cried to Him over their servitude to the Egyptian taskmasters (Exod. 3:7), they had a strange sense of security in Egypt that was threatened by the Exodus disruption (Num. 11:5; 14:22; 20:3-5). Thus the Exodus event involved two mighty works: a terrible judgment upon Egypt and salvation of a reluctant people.

### The Meaning of the Exodus

Lesson 48

What, then, is the big picture of the Exodus? Egypt was one of the most advanced versions of the pagan Kingdom of Man. It offered rebellious man a "home" of his own making in God's creation. Man appeared to have freedom to live in perfect security. Had not Joseph years before provided food relief against nature's worst famine? The state in the person of Pharaoh had become a savior and redeemer to bring man upward along the scale of being. Egypt offered unbelieving mankind an

apparently secure cocoon of order in an otherwise chaotic, threatening world.

In reality the apparent freedom pagan man enjoys is slavery—slavery to his counterfeit of the Kingdom of God. As Rushdoony observes:

*Slaves, true slaves, don't want to be rescued from freedom; their greatest fear is liberty. . . . Even as a timid and fearful child dreads the dark, so does the slave mind fear liberty: it is full of the terrors of the unknown. As a result, the slave mind clings to statist or state slavery, cradle-to-grave welfare care, as a fearful child clings to his mother. The advantage of slavery is precisely this, security in the master or in the state.[8]*

The Kingdom of God, in stark contrast, collides with this pagan modus operandi. As God demonstrated in Abraham's day, the basis of His redeeming interference is given in election and justification. Plans of family life require economic support; and economic support, as well as all other requirements, comes from God's sovereign, incomprehensible, partially-revealed plan. God electively initiates; man can only respond.

Thus God brought a series of plagues against Pharaoh, increasing the pressure with each one. At first his magicians were able to counterfeit the miracles with their demonic powers, but finally they could not (Exod. 8:18). The crescendo of plagues eventually revealed a physical and miraculous separation between the Israelites as the Lord's people and the Egyptians as Pharaoh's people (8:21-23). God's election was becoming clearer.

The crisis centered on the pagan worldview and its conception of society. Egyptian paganism insisted that Pharaoh was the saving mediator between the gods and man. It was a completely worked-out scheme in which society could flourish as long as Pharaoh preserved order. Against this view Moses came as God and Aaron as his prophet (7:1). Moses spoke of the Creator God separate from and over all creatures Who had His own scheme of how mankind should live. The conflict was set: either Pharaoh had to submit to God's Word through Moses and give up his role and the entire pagan scheme that went with it; or Pharaoh could resist and hold on to the pagan agenda.

We all know what happened. He "hardened his heart" (Exod. 5:15ff; 8:15,19,32; 9:34-35; 10:27-29), yet even this action was not ultimately of Pharaoh. The electing God is said to have hardened his heart (Exod. 4:21; 9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17). As we learned in the last chapter, when God elects, He intervenes in a situation already evil. Pharaoh as a fallen creature was already in rebellion before the hardening process began. What God did was to present him repeatedly with further revelation which only served to strengthen his rebellion. The judgment

was ultimately caused by God but immediately caused by Pharaoh. The separating work required by election began.

The intrusion of the Kingdom of God into the fallen world in the exodus demonstrated a modus operandi of election. It overwhelmed all opposition and separated Israel from Egypt. Instead of the orderly society of Egyptian paganism based upon man's autonomous organizing powers, God created Israel based upon His incomprehensible plan only pieces of which are revealed to man. God made it clear that whatever future followed the exodus event, the event itself followed logically and directly from His covenant with Abraham (Exod. 2:24; 3:15-17; 4:5; 6:2-5; 13:5; 32:13; 33:1; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:29; 14:23; 32:11). It was planned, alright, but not by man!

Rather than enslavement for security sake, God provided real liberty with a security that depended exclusively upon a relationship with Him. By shattering the pagan plan for society, God relieved mankind of unappreciated danger:

*For a man with all the limitations of man to claim to be as God is to indulge in a dangerous fantasy; for a state, with all the limitations of man compounded, but the power of the sword added to it, to claim to be as God is desperately dangerous and suicidal as well.[9]*

The other part of God's modus operandi is the justification shown in Abraham's day. Pagan society morally is grounded upon a demand to assuage the deep guilt of the sinful heart.

*The politics of the anti-Christian will thus inescapably be the politics of guilt. In the politics of guilt, man is perpetually drained in his social energy and cultural activity by his overriding sense of guilt and his masochistic activity. He will progressively demand of the state a redemptive role. What he cannot do personally, i.e., to save himself, he demands that the state do for him, so that the state, as man enlarged, becomes the human savior of man.[10]*

Paganism, in other words, designs a social order that functions as a corporate version of the fig leaves used by Adam and his wife to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:7). It has numerous good works and human welfare movements. Most importantly, it takes unto itself the job of defining right and wrong so that man's autonomous ideas are the moral norm. Divine institutions, for example, become mere arbitrary conventions to be modified as society dictates. Everything is subservient to the perceived needs of man.

For the holy God to have fellowship with His own special nation, that nation must somehow be "justified". It must be compatible with His

holiness and righteousness. It must be a society where His Presence is welcomed and not seen as a threat to flee from. During the exodus event Israel's acceptance with God is dramatically shown in the new revelation of God's most intimate name--Yahweh (which is translated in English texts as "Jehovah" or "LORD").

When God spoke with Moses, He said that by His name Yahweh He was not known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 6:3). The old liberal critics (and ill-informed present ones who are often found teaching high school and college religions courses) understood that, in spite of the Genesis text, the name was never used in pre-Mosaic times. Recently, however, OT critical scholarship has tended to agree with the historic, orthodox interpretation that the exact meaning of "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" was not appreciated until the Exodus. Dr. Payne comments:

*"As to the meaning of Yahweh, etymological speculation is rather fruitless. It is the Biblical definition found in Exodus 3:14 and in the surrounding context that must be determinative. These verses indicate that the root of "Yahweh" is the verb "to be", used in its simple, rather than its causative stem: "God spoke in the first person and said to Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM' (Exod. 3:14; cf. Hos. 1:9). Then, when someone would speak about God in the third person, the form became, 'He is,' or, in the Hebrew, in the archaic spelling, 'Yahweh.'"[11]*

This revelation of "I AM" occurred as Moses watched the bush that burned but was not consumed (Exod. 3:). Apparently the bush represented Israel under the fires of persecution in Egypt. God spoke from the midst of the bush, thereby identifying Himself in the midst of Israel in her affliction. He is present in all of His holiness in a nation of sinners. He is there, not because of their human accomplishments, but because of His election of them in Abraham (3:6,15-16). For Him to be in their midst, however, they must share a national "justification", credited with His righteousness. Moses must take off his shoes; it is holy ground.

Payne continues:

*God's immediately preceding promise to Moses had been, 'Certainly I will be with thee' (v. 12). The best translation for Exodus 3:14 seems, therefore, to be this: 'I am present is what I am.' This description is, in fact, the fundamental inheritance promise of the testament, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' 'Yahweh' ('faithful presence') is God's testamental nature or name (Exod. 6:2.4; Deut 7:9; Isa. 26:4).[12]*

*[It is noteworthy that Jesus used this "I AM" name as a sort of code-word to reveal His deity (cf. John 8:58; 18:5-6). Observe how He announces His presence in the Church in the same language and imagery used here in Exodus (Matt. 28:20; John 14:23; Rev. 1:12-2:1).]*

The new social order of Israel, therefore, is designed not around some Continuity of Being scheme to promote human good and order but around the Presence of the Holy God. It is a society not looking to be redeemed (future tense) but one which has been redeemed (past tense). Man, in this first visible form of the Kingdom of God since the fall, is not the planner, the doer, or the definer of right and wrong. Instead, he is the receiver of God's plan, the receiver of God's gracious redemption to bring him into relationship with Him, and the responder to God's holy presence.

The meaning of the Exodus comes from the disruptive separation of God's elect people out from the old pagan status quo--the highest level fallen society could ever achieve. Noahic civilization had achieved a grandeur in Egypt that anticipated the best of the arts, technology, and science of modern civilization. All such effort, while noble and good and revelatory of man's dominion nature under God, is spiritually perverted and limited. Civilization cannot undo the fall. It cannot restore man to God. It cannot ultimately satisfy man in the depths of his heart. It cannot serve as a substitute for the Creator God.

God's people must be separated from the world. We march to a different drummer--a new modus operandi of election and justification that compels us to walk by faith, not by sight. We can't understand the whole of our Creator's plan for us, nor can we work up the necessary righteousness to enter into His presence. Since we were created as social beings, we must have our own society patterned after God's will. God's presence cannot be limited to a subjective condition of the individual heart. Ultimately we must enjoy His presence publicly and corporately on earth, our created homeland, in a holy Kingdom, a new civilization that replaces completely fallen civilization.

Paganism, of course, tries to have its "exodus's"—attempts at starting new and better societies. However because paganism casts aside the truths of creation and fall, it has no hope of separating good from evil. Therefore pagan counterparts to the exodus event--revolutions, ethnic cleansings, etc.--always wind up as disasters. On its own faith, existence of human and natural evil is "normal" and irremovable. One evil simply replaces another.

Separation of good from evil can come only from the Creator Who established spiritual and moral cause-effect in the first place: "in the day that you eat from [the tree of good and evil] you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). The first great example of how He intervenes in human history we saw when we looked at the global flood of Noah's day.[13] I noted then

that such divine interventions require two inseparable acts--judgment and salvation. These themes are repeated in the Exodus.

## THE EXPANDED REVELATION OF JUDGEMENT/SALVATION

Lesson 49

Whereas the great flood revealed judgment and salvation, the Exodus showed more details of these works of God. In the progress of revelation, the Exodus sets forth principles of blood atonement that are crucial to interpret properly the work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. In the following paragraphs I review the five parts of judgment/salvation using the Exodus material.

1. Grace Before Judgment. Before the final judgment upon Egypt, God gave Pharaoh many opportunities to repent. Although at first Pharaoh's magicians could counterfeit God's miracles, eventually they failed and told him that the miracles of Moses "were the finger of God" (Exod. 8:19). Later God mercifully allowed Egyptians who "feared the word of the LORD" to shelter themselves against losses in the plagues (9:20-21).

Just as Noah preached to his generation for over a century before the final hour, Moses again and again warned Egypt of coming doom. Grace, however, is only the temporary extension of God's love, not an eternal extension. Grace is as "abnormal" as evil is. God's permission of evil is limited. Eventually, the limit is reached. When that day comes, the day of grace is over. No further opportunity to repent and believe is left (II Pet. 3:9; cf. Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27; Rev. 22:11). In that day God's justice will be acknowledged (Rev. 16:5), and the "problem" of evil will go away because evil will go away.

The exodus event finally was finished. The Egyptian economy lay in ruins. Pharaoh and his leaders were dead. The army lay drowned in the Red Sea. Grace to them had ended.

2. Perfect Discrimination. When God judges and saves, He perfectly discriminates between the two groups of people. There are no accidents or victims of the statistics of chance. Judgment/salvation proceeds from the God Who has the archetypical (Q)ualities of what we call among men, conscience and knowledge, *i.e.*, perfect holiness and omniscience. His righteous standards correlate with His complete knowledge regarding every creature judged or saved.

During the exodus event, God's perfect discriminatory power was demonstrated by the way the plagues were limited to Egyptians and did

not affect the Israelites. Note the careful design of the plague of insects (Exod. 8:21-22), of the pestilence (9:4,6), of the hail (9:26), of darkness (10:22-23), and of the death of the firstborn (11:5-7). The principle of divine discrimination is stated boldly in Exodus 11:7: "the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

3. Appropriation by Faith. As I explained in the case of the global flood judgment,

*"if and only if there is the Creator-creature distinction so that He is 'outside'. . . ; if and only if the creature originated evil in a fall that has spread everywhere. . . ; if and only if God's intervention involved His divine attributes at every point. . . then faith is the only means a creature has of appropriating His saving work."*[14]

Faith was exercised throughout the exodus event in response to God's electing and justifying work toward Israel and Moses her leader. Moses had to believe God would deliver the nation safely in spite of Pharaoh's resistance and the Israelite reluctance. The people had to believe that blood on their doors would deliver their firstborn from death (Exod. 12:21-23). At the Red Sea each person had to rest in faith: in the face of Pharaoh's advancing chariot force, with no weapons in his hand, his wife and children by his side, and the Red Sea at his back, he had to "stand still and see the salvation of the LORD" (Exod. 14:13; cf. vss. 14-31).

The deliverance had to be wholly the work of God in order for God to be glorified in history. The exodus event was not to be a human, armed rebellion or a brilliantly negotiated maneuver; it was to be clearly supernatural. Salvation always must be by faith.

4. Man and Nature Involved. Biblical salvation involves the physical environment around man as well as the psychological environment within him. So it was in the great flood; so it was in the exodus event. The Exodus narrative reports on the judgments affecting all surface water of Egyptian lakes, the Nile, and the Red Sea (7:19-25; 14:21-29); animal life (8:2-10:20); meteorological and extraterrestrial elements (9:18-34; 10:13,19,21-23; 14:21); and, of course, death itself (12:29-30).

You must keep this aspect of salvation in mind to be reminded that God's work is objectively true and independent of man's opinions. Evil permeates nature as well as man so to eradicate it, God's saving work must deal with both nature and man together.

5. Only One Way of Salvation. The offensive element of biblical salvation is that it is unique. There is only one way to be saved whether or not this feature seems "fair" to the pagan mind. Paganism insists that there be a variety of ways of salvation rather than only one way. Such

thinking never notices that it is as dogmatic about the proposition of multiplicity as the Bible is about the proposition of unicity. Both the Bible and paganism each make their own presuppositional assertions.

The Exodus expands the revelation about the one way of salvation beyond that seen in the global flood. The only way of avoiding the death of one's firstborn was to sacrifice a lamb and apply its blood to the top and both sides of one's door (Exod. 12:21-23). The introduction of blood so prominently into the judgment/salvation theme demands the further study given below under the general heading, atonement.

5. a. Atonement per Se. Atonement is related to the general curse, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23; cf. Gen. 2:17). Since death is the destruction of life, only that which first lives can die. Biblically, "life" refers to possession of "soul" (Hebrew = nephesh), not just organic reproduction. In the biblical worldview animals and man are said to have life; plants do not. A creationist biologist after studying this issue suggested that nephesh is a property only of vertebrates:

***'''The life (nephesh=soul') of all flesh is the blood of it' (Lev. 17:11,14; Deut. 12:23; Gen. 9:4). In the biblical and everyday sense, invertebrates do not have blood (Hebrew=dam).''[15]***

Only vertebrates have a developed central nervous system and so seem capable of having an indwelling spirit like man (Gen. 7:22; Matt. 8:28-34). Death, therefore, comes upon both animals and man, not plants, due to sin.

The idea of atonement involves halting this death-curse after sin has occurred. Atonement, in order to be effective, must involve substituting another life--not under the death curse--for that of the sinner and transferring the sinner's guilt to the credit (imputation) of the sinless substitute. Thus completely useless is the pagan notion of atoning for one's own sin by one's own good works or punishment. The sinner has no life to offer in his own behalf!

Why does blood play such a prominent role in salvation? Here is yet another instance where if you do not start and end with biblical thought, you wind up in a lot of religious mumbo-jumbo. Blood atonement is directly related to a literal creation and fall (soul = spirit + body). Blood, according to the Bible, is a necessary agent of life (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11). Although blood remains in the body after life departs and so is not a sufficient agent of life, in present mortal flesh it is a necessary agent. The future immortal resurrection body, though possessing material flesh and bones, will have no blood (Luke 24:39; I Cor. 15:50). In the present

period of history before man's body obtains immortality, however, blood is a key feature of both the human and animal body. In contexts where atonement is prominent "blood" can substitute for "life" pars pro toto. Terms like "shed blood" refer to physical death, and usually a particular sort of physical death--a violent death.

One the night of the Exodus Passover the blood of the sacrificed lambs was applied to the doors, testifying to the principle that substitutionary life had already been taken for those homes. Of course the lambs used were from the fallen creation and strictly could not substitute for sinful man (Heb. 9:12). In the economy of God's workings, however, He authorized this procedure to teach mankind His ways in preparation for His Son to come. Three major salvation terms arise from atonement and to these we now turn.

5. b. Redemption. In speaking of salvation whenever sin's destructive work is foremost, substitutionary atonement is described by the term redemption. The basic idea of redemption can be seen in the OT law. In it if one had lost his inheritance through debt or had sold himself into slavery, he and his property could be redeemed whenever one of near kin, called a redeemer kinsman, came forward with the funds to redeem him (Lev. 25:25-27,47-54; cf. Ruth 4:1-12). This is an economic picture; the sinner has become of negative value and suffers restriction of freedom.

The common everyday experience of suffering due to indebtedness, therefore, is by divine design a picture of the larger issue of being cursed due to indebtedness to God. The notion of freedom, biblically, is intimately tied into this term redemption. The Exodus redemption (Exod. 6:6; 15:13) with the historic freedom for the death judgment and, ultimately, from Pharaoh's rule is a partial picture of the work of Christ. The shed blood of Christ is the price of man's redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12-15; I Pet. 1:18-20). The term shed blood refers to Christ's whole life given in substitution for man's life (Mark 10:45; cf. Rom. 5:8-11).[16]

5. c. Propitiation. Whenever the issue of God's nature, particularly His (Q)uality of holiness--righteousness and justice--is foremost, substitutionary atonement is described by the term propitiation. The basic idea of propitiation can be seen in the Passover portion of the Exodus: God's wrath and judgment were turned away; God was satisfied. This is an ethical picture; the sinner has violated God's standards and suffers rejection.

The common everyday experience of suffering due to rejection by someone or of "not measuring up", therefore, is by divine design a picture

of the larger issue of being considered unacceptable by God. The notion of acceptance, biblically, is intimately tied into this term propitiation. Liberal theology tries desperately to attain acceptability with God by relaxing His holy standards revealed in Scripture. Forgiveness to them is a forsaking of absolute just standards as hopelessly "archaic", a sort of divine indifference to wrongdoing. Said another way, they try to force God to accept sinners on man's terms rather than on His terms.

The Bible insists that the issue of man's acceptance is subordinate to the issue of God's holiness. First, God's holiness is upheld; then man is accepted. This is authentic acceptance because it recognizes God's character for what it is. Christ's atoning work propitiates God's offended holiness (Rom. 3:25-26; Heb. 2:17).

5. d. Reconciliation. Whenever the conflict between God and man is in view, the work of atonement is described by the term reconciliation. The basic idea of reconciliation is cessation of antagonism and hostilities. It can be seen in how Paul describes Christ's atonement as a "peace initiative" from God (Rom. 5:10) while we were still in a state of war against Him.

Because of sin man is a total enemy of God; his autonomous attitude totally rebels against God's authority. Man's sins are treasonous acts against his Creator. Reconciliation emphasizes the active, willful rebellion of man against God rather than his passive state as merely rejected. It answers to the everyday experience of personal conflict whether individual or national. It also reveals that God, not man, initiates the reconciliation.

The Exodus advanced man's knowledge of God. It was the first historic revelation that the Kingdom of God would come through a catastrophic disruption of the Kingdom of Man on earth. Like the global flood previously, it showed that evil would one day be separated from good and put away. The Exodus thus begins the story of God's "pioneer" kingdom on earth.

As the Scriptures proclaim:

*"Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods?  
"Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises  
doing wonders?" (Exod. 15:11)  
"Know therefore this day, and lay it to thy heart,  
that Jehovah, he is God in heaven above, and  
upon earth beneath; there is none else." (Deut. 4:39)*

### END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

1. The fulfillment of Hosea 11:1 is obviously Jesus (Matt. 2:15), but his life tended to parallel the experience of Israel.
2. Henri Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion (Torchback ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1961 [1948]), p. 64.
3. One must keep in mind that these designs were probably pictograms corresponding to our political cartoons in imagery. See analysis of Figure 3 in Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), Book I, pp. 3-212.
4. The ancient Phoenician writer, Sunchuniathon, explained that the serpent was esteemed "to be the most spiritual of the reptiles. . . , moving by its spirit, without either hands or feet. . ." cited in Alexander Hislop, The Two Babylons (2<sup>nd</sup> American edition; Neptune, NJ: Leozeaux Brothers, 1959), p. 227.
5. To see this idea persisting today one need only read about the famous four visions of Jeane Dixon. In the first she gazed into the eyes of a snake and saw in them "the all-knowing wisdom of the ages." In her fourth vision she saw the future man of peace as a descendant of a pharaoh (Akhnaton). Ruth Montgomery, A Gift of Prophecy (Bantam ed., New York: Bantam Books, 1966 [1965]), pp. 173-183.
6. ANE, p. 31.
7. See for example, Eugene H. Merrill, Kingdom of Priests (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 26, n12.
8. Rousas J. Rushdoony, The Politics of Guilt and Pity (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1970), pp. 28, 29f.
9. Ibid., p. 63.
10. Ibid., p. 9.
11. J. Barton Payne, Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), p. 147f.
12. Ibid., p. 148.
13. See discussion in Part II of this series.
14. See discussion in Part II of this series, chapter on Flood.

15. Arthur J. Jones, "How Many Animals in the Ark?", Creation Research Society Quarterly, X, (Sept. 1973), 103.
16. See Part V of this series on the Death of Christ.

## CHAPTER 4: MT. SINAI: THE DISRUPTIVE TRUTH OF GOD'S ABSOLUTE, COMPREHENSIVE RULE OF LAW

Lesson 50

Previous chapters discussed the progressive intervention of God's plan into the paganized Noahic civilization. First, there was the call of Abraham through which we observe God's election and justification working in a way totally opposed to pagan's autonomy and self-justification. Then we observed on a greater scale God's political and physical judgment upon Egypt and deliverance of Israel. Man's proper response to these divine works had to be faith. He could neither totally comprehend God's plan nor work up enough good works to merit relationship with God.

The next key event in this biblical framework is the giving of the law to Israel at Mt. Sinai. Once Yahweh had called his nation to Himself out from Egypt, He began a new relationship with Israel. As King over Israel what were His expectations for his subjects? How did He define His reign over His kingdom? Here we arrive face to face with the matter of ethics, law, and our relationship to God.

In this chapter I will review some of the details of the Mt. Sinai event and then move on to discuss its meaning for us in such matters as proper and improper concepts of law as well as the notion of "lordship". Finally, I will explain the vital truths of revelation, inspiration, and canon which distinguish biblical faith from its counterfeits today.

### THE MT. SINAI EVENT

Political relationships in the ancient world were conceived as analogies of family relationships. Perhaps this custom arose because the family relationships (Divine Institution #3 given in Gen. 2) preceded civil authority (Divine Institution #4 given in Gen.9). The father-son relation was more deeply experienced than the "add-on" structure of a nation's civil structure. Treaties, therefore, between nations were thought of as agreements between the stronger and weaker nation in terms of father-son relationships or lord-servant relationships readily found in society at that time.

The Relationship Revealed at Mt. Sinai. God called Israel His son (Exod. 4:22-23; cf. Hos. 11:1). To make the relationship between Himself and Israel very clear to Pharaoh, Yahweh announced that if Pharaoh did not let His son go, He would kill Pharaoh's literal son (4:23). Dr. Walter Kaiser explains this usage of "son" for Israel:

*"The whole community was pointedly designated by a singular noun, thereby allowing for the many to be represented in the One and the One to stand for the many in the same way the term Seed had already functioned and the parallel term Firstborn would come to function in both the OT and NT.*

*Eventually, 'My Son' was connected with the coming scion of the house of David (2 Sam 7:14). . . .This designation, 'My Son,' became a technical term and an appellation that could be applied either collectively to the nation as the object of God's love and election or specifically to that final representative person who was to come in Christ.' [1]*

Israel's relationship, then, to Yahweh was as a son to a father. That meant several things: Israel did not become God's son by keeping the law which came after the exodus event; Israel was the object of God's protecting love that would last forever; and Israel would be trained as any literal son would be disciplined by his father. This relationship explains the format of God's law at Mt. Sinai.

## The Format of God's Law

Lesson 51

The Law given at Mt. Sinai through Moses was not like our usual idea of law--an impersonal code of mechanical rules such as the code of Hammurabi or more modern legislation. While the Law shared with such pagan codes a "casuistic" format, e.g., "if one does this. . .then the punishment is this. . ." (Exodus 22:1-15; Deut. 17:2-7), the Law also contained much written as personal address by God to the nation. It was filled with personal exhortation and general precept. This personal element in the Mt. Sinai revelation should warn us not to think of it in the usual terms of modern law. We shall return to this observation later.

Just as previous biblical covenants had a specific format (the New World Covenant of Noah's day and the Abrahamic Covenant), the Law given at Mt. Sinai constituted another covenant and had a similar format. I will go through the four traditional parts of a biblical covenant but also note how certain new features appear with this covenant.

1. The Parties to the Sinai Covenant. You can quickly compare this covenant with the previous ones by observing Figure 4.1. Each contract God makes is successively with a smaller component of mankind. First, He makes one with all mankind and air-breathing animals in Noah's day. Then He makes a contract with Abraham's seed (left undefined), a subset of all humanity. Now at Mt. Sinai He makes a contract with the sons of Jacob separated out of Egypt, leaving out other Abrahamic sons (Ishmael and Esau).

2. The Signing of the Sinai Covenant. Just as God signed his previous contracts with men by the rainbow and the oath of malediction,

He also signed the Sinai Covenant but in a more subtle fashion. Within the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17, observe the middle section where Yahweh refers to Himself as the Creator (20:10-11). His "signature" or unique marker of His character is said to be His finished creation work which is commemorated by the Sabbath. As Dr. Meredith Kline writes when he compares the Sinai covenant with ancient pagan international treaties:

*"It is tempting to see in the sabbath sign presented in the midst of the ten words the equivalent of the [ancient lord-king's] dynastic seal found in the midst of the. . .international treaty documents.[2]*

Again we observe the contrast between the Creator-creature distinction in the Bible and the Continuity of Being idea in paganism. Yahweh identifies Himself as the Creator Who entered into His rest when creation was finished. Man could have enjoyed this rest with Him, but the Fall occurred and the rest was broken. God's plan is to bring His elect and justified ones eventually back into this rest (cf. Heb. 4:4). His work at Sinai is one step toward that goal.

Part	New World	Abrahamic	Sinai
PARTIES	All mankind All animals	Abraham's seed	12 tribes
SIGN	Rainbow	Oath of Malediction	Sabbath
TERMS	no global flood again	seed, land, and world-wide blessing	blessings/ cursings
FOUNDING SACRIFICE	Gen.8:20-22	Gen. 15:9-11	Exod. 24:4-8

FIGURE 4.1 Comparison of Three Biblical Covenants

3. The Founding Sacrifice of the Sinai Covenant. A holy God and sinful man can establish a contract only if there is redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation through blood atonement as we learned in the last chapter. This covenant is another example of this truth. In Exodus 34 Moses and the elders of Israel prepare a sacrifice to accompany the public reading of the new contract Yahweh made with His nation.

4. The Terms of the Sinai Covenant. Unlike previous covenants, the Sinai covenant stresses the mutual obligation between God and man, a

quid pro quo. It defines the quality of the father-son relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Whereas the New World and Abrahamic covenants stressed the sovereign promises of God, the Sinai covenant stresses the righteous expectations of God for His people and what would happen if they did not live up to those expectations.

When ancient Near Eastern research was in its infancy, scholars pointed to parallels between the Sinai Covenant and ancient law-codes like that of Hammurabi. The problem with this analogy was that the Sinai Covenant contained features not found in these codes such as the personal address of God to the people and general precepts that are mentioned above.

In the last several decades new discoveries have uncovered another ancient Near Eastern parallel to the Sinai Covenant: the suzerainty-vassal treaty. Suzerainty-vassal treaties were documents that established international political relationships between great kings (suzerains) and weak kings (vassals). These treaties stimulate us to observe the Old Testament text more carefully. Here are parallel features found between the Sinai Covenant (SC) and suzerainty-vassal treaties (SVT):

1. Preamble. SVT first section identified the great king; SC identifies Yahweh (Exod. 20:1-2; Deut. 1:1-5).

2. Historical Prologue. SVT cited past benefits given to the vassal king by the great king which obligates the vassal to serve in gratitude the suzerain. SC rehearses Yahweh's exodus-salvation work (Exod. 20:2-6; Deut. 1:6-4:49).

3. Stipulations. SVT spelled out detailed obligations of the vassal to the suzerain. SC details Yahweh's commands to Israel (Exod. 20:3-17; Deut. 5:1-26:49).

4. Provision for Deposit of the Treaty Document(s). In a SVT two copies of the treaty were made, one for each party's temple where it would be safeguarded and periodically reviewed. The SC recounts two tablets, a deposit of both in the Tabernacle (shared by Yahweh and Israel), and a periodic public reading (Exod. 25:16,21; Deut. 10:2; 31:9-13, 24-26).

5. Invocation of Witnesses to the Treaty. A SVT invoked the gods of the world to act as witnesses to the vassal's obedience or disobedience to the suzerain. In the SC a Song of Moses is composed that calls parts of the created universe to be witnesses of Israel's prophesied failure (Deut. 31:16-32:47). Later prophets in the OT appear to act as prosecuting attorneys, calling these witnesses to support the accusations against Israel

(cf. Isa. 1:2).[3]

6. A Cursing and Blessings Formula. A SVT invoked cursings or blessings upon the vassal depending upon his disobedience or loyalty to the suzerain. The SC contains a remarkably similar cursing and blessings formula (Lev. 26:3-33; Deut. 28).

The Mt. Sinai "legislation", therefore, is not in the format of what we would think of as a legal code; it is more of a treaty that defines the relationship between Yahweh and His "Son". It reveals the expected behavior of a father and son during the growing up period.

### THE MEANING OF MT. SINAI

If the meaning of the exodus event was a model of how God separates good from evil in human civilization, the truly successful counterpart to human revolutions, then the meaning of the Mt. Sinai event is also momentous. Mt. Sinai reveals the true nature of values, ethics, and law. It also shows the nature of "lordship" because biblically you can't have one without the other.

### Values, Ethics, and Law

[Lesson 52](#)

No society can exist without a moral authority, a binding code of behavior, or a set of common values. The problem here is what happens if an entire society's moral authority is immoral such as a cannibalistic tribe, Nazi Germany, or the future kingdom of the Antichrist? Obviously, we are not interested in any code or common value set. If society were its own moral authority, then no room would exist for a reformer. By definition, he or she would be immoral because they rebel against the traditional values. Flagrant criminal actions could be justified by appeal to society's code.

A clear instance of this problem occurred in 1945 at the end of World War II. Nazi authorities defended their atrocities by appeal to Third Reich official policies and orders. At the Nazi war criminal trial at Nuremburg, the American jurist, Supreme Court judge Robert Jackson, put the matter well: "These men should be tried on this basis, on a higher law, a higher law which rises above the provincial and the transient." [4] To counter the Nazi legal defense, the world community had to use an appeal to "a higher law" that stood over the lower law of Nazi policy. In other words, to successfully prosecute Nazi authorities, the world had to acknowledge that laws of any society are "provincial" and "transient".

1. The Biblical View. Let's look at this matter, first from the biblical viewpoint and then from the pagan perspective. On the biblical basis, man was created as a "theomorph", a creature made in God's image.[5] An analogy exists between God's absolute (Q)uality of holiness and man's

derivative (q)uality of conscience. Man has a spiritual part which is like God in that it cannot be sensed empirically by taste, sight, sound, touch, or smell. Nevertheless, this inward conscience tells man that God is Creator of all things and that He defines true values and righteousness for man (Rom. 1:20,32).

After the fall this conscience alerts man that he comes short of God's values and moral laws. Man deep down in his heart knows he is not right with his Creator. Everything he accomplishes in life, therefore, is contaminated by death, decay, and despair. Only when God calls to him in grace can he turn back to face his Maker without fear and shame. Only when God performs His miraculous heart surgery that the Bible calls "spiritual circumcision" can he produce righteous, lawful, and truly ethical life.

On the biblical basis, then, ethics, values, and law come from above "the provincial and transient". Man is only an image of God; he isn't God Himself and has no resources to generate ethics and law or authority to impose them. Human legislation can only seek to incarnate some of God's ethics into civilization; it can only "pass them on" from above; it cannot invent them. Interestingly, Israel as constituted by Yahweh at Mt. Sinai had no legislative arm, only an executive and judicial one. Surely this omission shows us something about the importance of ethics, values, and law: they can only come from God, not finite, fallen man. In short, on the biblical basis God has the right to tell us what we ought to believe, to think, to say, and to do; and we in turn, knowing what He has done for us, graciously accept and submit.

2. The Pagan View. The pagan mind of flesh began when Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, when he tried to become his own moral authority. Yet once the pagan mind has suppressed consciousness of its derivative, created nature and the inherent authority of God, it is left in complete vanity when it tries to build values, ethics, and law. Man just cannot build absolute values on the basis of his limited experience and reason. Even in innocence Adam needed God's Word to interpret his environment properly and know which trees to eat and which not to. How much more after he fell! Moreover, the fallen flesh continuously rebels against righteousness and lacks power to submit properly to God's laws (Rom. 7:15).

Paganism, therefore, runs in one of two directions. One way is to deny "traditional" values and redefine good and evil and to call evil good, publicly approving unethical behaviors (Rom. 1:32). This tactic appears to relieve the pressure of the conscience and is the licentious option. Typically, it is the choice of those who despise reason and tend toward

depression. The result, however, is nearly always chaos and social breakdown.

This failure leads to a second pagan attempt in the opposite direction. Since paganism has no ultimate security, it cannot long tolerate chaos. To attain security for itself, it reverts to imposing law upon surrounding society to keep some semblance of order. Hypocritically, however, in its heart of hearts, the pagan mind doesn't bow down to the law it imposes on others (Rom. 2:1-16). This tactic offers another attempt to relieve the pressure of conscience and is the legalistic approach. Typically, it is the choice of those who elevate reason and tend toward optimism. The result, however, is usually embarrassing failure and declining hope.

Paganism can't escape this see-saw dialectic between legalism and licentiousness, between power and so-called freedom. It tries to seek, as Aristotle did centuries ago, a middle-of-the-road "Golden Mean" and negotiated truce between tyranny and chaos. Never can paganism answer the question, to whom are all men ultimately obligated, without mentioning the Name it is trying desperately to avoid.

A vast difference, therefore, exists between the pagan and biblical approaches to values, ethics, and law. Here is why if you compare Exodus 21-23 and Deuteronomy with ancient law codes such as Hammurabi's, you will discover the startling difference between the personal exhortation in the Bible and the total lack thereof in pagan law codes. On the pagan basis there is no personal authority--no object to whom all men are obligated--above society to command submission. Law-making becomes a political exercise to reconcile varying beliefs and self-proclaimed "rights".[6]

On the biblical basis God as infinite-personal Creator is that much needed personal authority. So all-permeating is His character in the law given at Mt. Sinai that it is nearly impossible to separate private ethics of the heart from public codes of social behavior (observe Exodus 22:21-23:19). Values, ethics, and law are completely interwoven in the Bible as God reveals Himself.

### **The Nature of "Lordship"**

Lesson 53

We come now to the corollary of the biblical view of values, ethics, and law. Since these are linked to the Creator as the infinite-personal authority, they reveal His lordship over the creature. Ethics and law, biblically, are not arbitrary principles arising from society; they are manifestations of a created conscience that is designed to reflect its Creator.

Here is why the Sinaitic Covenant has a structure more like that of a treaty between a Suzerain (Great King) and a Vassal (Lesser King) than

that of a mere societal law code. Here is why Jesus had to straighten out the Pharisaic perversion of the Law. By New Testament times Pharisees had depersonalized the Law into a mere social code. What mattered in their view, was whether a murderer got caught (Matt. 5:21), whether the right divorce procedure was used (5:31), or whether religious practices impressed others (6:2).

Pharisees did what the legal community has done in modern society: they reduced law to arbitrary rules and regulations; they bureaucratized it. Note their response to Jesus' disciples' "snacking" on grain on the sabbath in Mark 2:23-28. They had tried to express the Sinaitic Covenant law of the sabbath in terms of arbitrary rules and regulations independently of personal submission to Yahweh's lordship. The irony of this and other incidents in the Gospels is that these "lawyers" were trying to tell the Lawmaker how to interpret His own Law!

Relationship that involves Lordship and proper use of values/ethics/law cannot be separated. God told Israel when He gave the Law "circumcise your heart. . .for Yahweh your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords" (Deut. 10:16-17). In the analogy between surgical intervention on the organ of physical life and spiritual intervention on the organ of spiritual life, we learn that the Law can be properly obeyed only when major repentance occurs in the heart. Thus Paul insisted that the work of the law was intended by God to be primarily internal, deep, and personal (Rom. 2:14-15, 28-29).

The one whose heart has been thus changed expresses a lordship relationship by the inner actions of his conscience and reason (Rom. 2:14-15). It is not perfection, but a concern over one's own submission to the Lord more than concern over other peoples' submission. Luther put the matter well when he wrote in his commentary on Romans: "While the righteous make it a point to accuse themselves in thought, word, and deed; the unrighteous make it a point always to accuse and judge others." [7] A lordship relation comes out of a heart concern for honor that comes from God, not from a concern for honor that comes from society (cf. John 5:44).

Much controversy arises today in evangelical circles over the "free grace" versus "lordship salvation" debate. The advocates of "free grace" correctly argue that the gospel invitation is to receive the justifying work of Christ and that unsaved flesh cannot bring to the table vain promises of good behavior. On the other hand, "lordship salvation" advocates correctly insist that the gospel invitation is not a casual freebie that doesn't alter the autonomous sinner's heart. The two events we have studied--the Exodus and Mt. Sinai--can help us put this matter in perspective.

Mt. Sinai stresses the lordship relationship of saved people to the Lord Who saved them, but notice that it occurred after the Exodus--after salvation, not before it or during it. The message of Moses to Israel in Egypt was not centered upon ethics and law; it was centered upon deliverance from oppression. Then after Yahweh saved Israel, He appealed for obedience and submission on the basis of the grace He had shown them (Exod. 20:2). Here is the key to the relationship of lordship to salvation: willing entry into a lordship relationship depends upon gratitude for what the Savior has first accomplished. Lordship follows salvation.

However, the salvation invitation is to trust God as Creator over all. Israel had to trust that Yahweh was greater than all the gods of Egypt, than all of Pharaoh's army, than death itself. Lordship is implicit in the salvation invitation. It may only dimly be perceived, but it permeates the whole atmosphere and context of salvation. Lordship is the presupposition of biblical faith--that He is the ultimate source of all life, all authority, and all truth. Note how Paul stressed the Creatorhood of God in addressing pagan audiences in Acts 14 and 17.

If one who claims to be saved, therefore, conceives of salvation as an "add-on" to his or her independent lifestyle and as in no way coming from his or her Creator and Judge, then this person has not understood the gospel or has not truly responded to the illumination of the heart. Such a person has not believed! Every Israelite who put blood on his door and walked out of the Egyptian version of the Kingdom of Man had to have been illuminated to the power of the God of his fathers. Otherwise, his or her behavior would not have been faith; it would have been a mere bowing to peer pressure.

The Mt. Sinai event, therefore, has powerful meaning for us today. It shows us the true nature of values, ethics, and law. These essential qualities can achieve an absolute status over mere social opinion (the "transient and provincial") only if they derive from the infinite personal Creator as Lord. Lordship and law are inseparable. It also shows that obedience to specific areas of the will of God can only follow salvation because the motive for obedience in the Bible is gratitude.

### **THE TRUTHS OF REVELATION, INSPIRATION, AND CANONICITY**

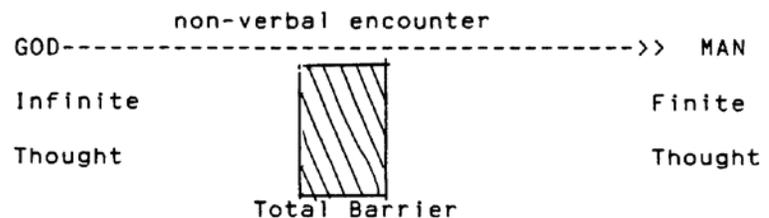
The Sinaitic Covenant shows clearly three great truths of biblical faith: revelation, inspiration, and canonicity. Faith depends upon hearing God's Word. As the Bible, God's Word in turn depends upon all three of these truths. Without them, therefore, there can be no biblical faith.

## The Doctrine of Revelation

If God really makes Himself known to man, how does He do it? This question has been the battleground of theology for the last three centuries. Skeptics insist, based upon their paganized worldview, that ultimately "God" is a mere label for impersonal fate or chance.[8] There is no one there so there can be no speech or word from God.

Even those theologians, writers, and clergymen who do believe in a biblical-like God do not believe that language can be used to convey truths about Him. Their problem arises from modern discoveries about language that we learned in Part II of this framework series. Human language is afflicted with limitations that show up in semantic and logical paradoxes, problems with mathematical infinity, and multiple geometries each of which is logically consist but which contradicts all the others. Philosophers and poets in this century have sought to "get beyond" language in ways very similar to anti-rational mysticisms of ancient pagan religions.[9]

The picture these influential individuals have of revelation looks like this:



For example, one liberal theologian put the matter in these words:

*"There is no such thing as revealed truth. There are truths of revelation, that is to say, propositions which express the results of correct thinking concerning revelation: but they are not themselves directly revealed."*[10]

Of course, he neglects to inform his readers how one can tell he is doing "correct thinking" without some verbal criteria! And he obviously denies the historicity of the Mt. Sinai event where it is very clear that God directly revealed Himself.

You as a Bible-believing Christian must understand your own faith well enough not to be deceived by modernist thought and be able to contrast true biblical truth with it. Let's look at some characteristics of biblical revelation using the Mt. Sinai event.

1. Revelation is Verbal. Inter-personal communication that conveys information requires both words and works. At Mt. Sinai Israel heard

God speaking in Hebrew (Deut. 4:36; 5:22) just as Paul centuries later heard God in the Aramaic language (Acts 26:14). The Bible insists upon the verbal nature of God's revelation such that if you had a tape recorder, you could have tape-recorded His voice. The language was public; not a private "impression".

Such a claim shouldn't surprise you if you took to heart the creation event and its truths. There we learned that the Creator-creature distinction means there are two levels of reality, not one as in the pagan dogma of the Continuity of Being. Therefore language exists on two planes also: the lower human plane with its severe limitations; and the higher Creator plane as an absolute "meta-language" or "hyper-language".[11] All things were created by this hyper-language (John 1:1-3) when God spoke the universe into existence (Gen. 1; Ps 33:6,9). Since the hyper-language is the background environment for human language, there is no problem for verbally-expressed thoughts God wishes to convey to pass from His mind into man's mind.

The Law of Moses forcibly reminds us that God spoke specific sentences of ten commandments plus hundreds of others to amplify and illustrate them. Moreover, as Law His Word contains rules of evidence and tests of truth all dependent completely upon verbal revelation (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:15-22).

2. Revelation is Personal. You've already observed that the Law was filled with personal exhortation concerning matters of the heart. I pointed out that true value, ethics, and law must have personal accountability behind them, and the only sufficient personal accountability is to God over all society.

This personal nature to the Law arose because of the "father-son" relationship God had with Israel. The Law was based upon it. To obey the Law, therefore, was to "love" the Lord (cf. Deut. 6:5). This meaning to the word "love" sounds strange to our 20th century ears. In ancient treaties, however, it had this same meaning--obedience. Note the language in the Amarna Letters where a lesser king, Rib-Addu, says to Pharaoh: "to love Pharaoh is to serve him and to remain faithful to the status of vassal."[12] Notice this exact meaning of "love" in the teaching of Jesus in John 14:21.

A major consequence of God's Word being so personal is that there can be no neutrality in our response to it. We cannot stand aside and be "objective" because to doubt it is to doubt the Author. The Bible calls this "hardening our heart" (Ps.95:8-11 cf. Hebrews).

3. Revelation is Historical. Besides being verbal and personal, revelation is also historical. It enters into human history only in certain generations such as Moses', Elijah's, and Jesus' generations. God then commands that it be remembered from generation to generation afterward (e.g., Exod. 12:14-28; Josh. 4; I Cor. 11:25-26).

Only history at large contains true life in its entirety. Specialized knowledge--such as theology, philosophy, and science--is an abstraction from historical experience. Mysticism in its own way is separated from historical experience. Those who distrust history are escapists who eventually must distrust their own memories and rely completely upon their very limited present and local experience.

Lesson 54

4. Revelation is Comprehensive. Whenever God speaks, He can speak authoritatively on any subject. In the Sinaitic Covenant blessings and cursing sections, this aspect is especially evident. As the One Who made the New World Covenant in Noah's day, God controls climate (Lev. 26:4,19; Deut.28:12,23-24) and the biosphere (Lev.26:4-6,20,22,26; Deut.28:4-6,8,11,28-40). He controls the physiological processes of the human body (Exod. 15:26; Lev.26:16; Deut.28:4,11,21-22,27-29,35,59) and social processes--both military (Lev.26:7-8,25,32-39; Deut.28:7,25-26,49-68) and economic (Deut.28:12,43-44). The reign of King Yahweh over Israel covered areas wholly outside the control of the most powerful human king.

A very good area of the Law to study with comprehensiveness in mind is the set of rules regarding health and social welfare. Not only moral law but dietary and sanitary law was given to Israel. The nation was held responsible for physical impurity as well as spiritual impurity (e.g., Lev. 12). God thereby impressed upon Israel that both physical and spiritual evil were due, ultimately, to rebellion against Him. Immediate healing from some effects of the fall could be expected since atonement had first been made in the Exodus for Israel's liberation, one which was intended to be a liberation from sin and all of its effects. Although occasional miracles were known, the usual means of healing was by God's honoring one's submission to His will and His rules governing nature (e.g., II Kings 20:1-7).

Professor Albright notes:

*"Thanks to the dietary and hygienic regulations of Mosaic law. . . subsequent history has been marked by a tremendous advantage in this respect held by Jews over all other comparable ethnic and religious groups." [13]*

Had Europe, for example, in the Middle Ages read the Old Testament hygienic codes (washing of hands in running water and ultraviolet sterilization) there would have been far less disease and death.

In the area of social justice the Mosaic law treated all men alike; there were no favored classes. Manslaughter, for example, was handled in Israel by the cities of refuge which were for all men (Exod. 21:13-14; cf. Num.35:6-34; Deut.19:1-10). In contrast the Code of Hammurabi dealt with manslaughter by class privilege:

***"If [the victim] had died because of his blow, he shall swear [that it was not deliberate injury], and if it was a member of the aristocracy, he shall pay one-half mina of silver. If it was a member of the commonality, he shall pay one-third mina of silver (207-208).[14]***

Judicial punishment in the Mosaic law was limited to fines, restitution, corporal punishment, and capital punishment (cutting off of the hand only in Deut. 25:11-12). In pagan law codes, however, there was permanent servitude, substitute execution and/or rape of loved ones, bodily mutilation, and torture.

Sabbath rest applied to man, woman, slave, and even to animals (Deut.5:14). Debts were limited to a six-year payback schedule to conform to the sabbath year (Deut.15:1-2), could not be collateralized by items essential for living (Exod.22:26-27), and could not carry an interest rate if for charitable purposes (Exod.22:25). Albright summarizes:

***"[Mosaic legislation] is the most humanitarian of all known bodies of law before recent times. The laws about slavery, which envisage the liberation of Hebrew slaves after seven years, are a good example. But there are also laws protecting the poor: interest (always high in the ancient East) was prohibited, and again there was a moratorium on payments after a term of years. . . .Even strangers, who normally had very little protection in antiquity. . .are exceptionally well cared for by Mosaic law. Not only do we find numerous special provisions for the humane treatment of human beings, but even the well-being of animals receives attention. . .(Deut. 25:4).[14]***

In order to direct life in the Kingdom of God which lies within this created universe, God had to speak about details in every area of life: His revelation was comprehensive.

5. Revelation is Prophetic. Finally, true revelation is prophetic. Prophecy speaks of that which lies beyond man's mental limitations in space and time or, in biblical terms, that which lies "in heaven" and "across the sea" (Deut. 30:12-13; Prov. 30:4; cf. John 3:11-13). Prophecy also speaks of that which lies beyond man's willingness to admit as truth; it pierces to the depths of his heart (Heb. 4:12; cf. II Sam. 12).

Since true revelation is prophetic, throughout the Bible God spoke through individuals of His own choice called prophets. Without God's revelation these prophets were as other men; with God's revelation, however, they were supreme over priest, king, and wise man (as I will

point out in Chapter 6). Even the false teacher Balaam, when given God's revelation, had to speak the truth (Num. 22-24; cf. II Pet. 2:15; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14).

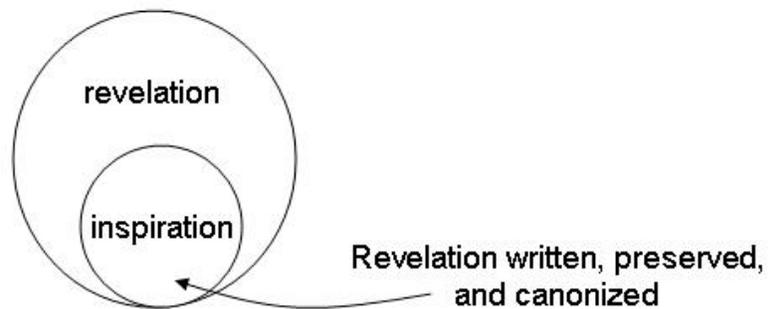
For over fourteen centuries there was a line of prophets in Israel with complete doctrinal continuity from Moses to Christ due to the special work of the "Spirit of Christ" (I Pet. 1:11; cf. Deut. 18:15-22). You ought to observe the uniqueness of this feature in the nation Israel. Jewish historian Yehezkel Kaufmann writes:

*"What makes the history of Israelite prophecy sui generis is the succession of apostles of God that come to the people through the ages. Such a line of apostle-prophets is unknown in paganism. . . . [The pagan prophet] incorporated a unique, self-contained divine power; there his "mission" ended with him.[15]*

With the renewed appreciation for the treaty-like nature of the Sinaitic Covenant, we can put the Old Testament prophets into perspective. Rather than being the radical "social reformers" that liberal theologians idealized over the past century of study, these prophets really were reactionaries against the paganization of Israel. They went back to the ancient Mosaic law instead of forward to a "more evolved" view of society. As I point out in Part IV of this series, the prophets acted as the Lord's "prosecuting attorneys" against Israel's transgressions, indicting the nation on the basis of the Law.

### The Doctrine of Inspiration

Closely related to one's view of revelation is one's view of the Bible or the doctrine of inspiration. The word "inspiration" comes from II Tim. 3:16 where all of Scripture is described as "God-breathed" (Greek - theopneustos). The relationship between inspiration and revelation can be pictured like this:



Much revelation has been lost in history (cf. John 20:30-31; 21:24-25), but the Bible is a preserved, sufficient part of God's revelation and has, therefore, the same characteristics as revelation (viz., it is verbal, personal, historic, comprehensive, and prophetic).

If you think about it, if real revelation is historical and doesn't occur in every generation or even in most generations, then a written version would appear necessary to preserve it from generation to generation. A covenant, we learned, establishes a measuring stick to monitor the behavior of all parties to it. Thus the Bible must be inerrant to fulfill this function. God's faithfulness even in the little details of history must be recorded. A witness that lies or errs is not acceptable.

### **Inerrant Inspiration**

Inerrant inspiration, therefore, has generally been assumed throughout church history in spite of modern claims to the contrary. Within Roman Catholicism Augustine said, "I believe most firmly that no one of those authors has erred in any respect in writing." (Epistles, LXXXII.i.3) Within Lutheranism Luther wrote, "The Scriptures have never erred." (Works, 2nd ed., XV, 1481) Within the Reformed tradition Calvin noted "the certain and unerring rule" of Scripture. (Psalms, V, 11) Within Methodism Wesley insisted, "If there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth." (Journal, Wed., July 24, 1776).

Even modern liberals like F. C. Grant freely admit that in the New Testament "it is everywhere taken for granted that Scripture. . .is inerrant." [16] Obviously, then, inerrancy of the Bible is not a recent fundamentalist invention. Be aware, however, that since the 1970s some evangelicals have joined the liberal camp over against fundamentalism in allowing "some" errors in the Bible. For example, Baptist theologian Dewey Beagle wrote: "Rejection of the doctrine of inerrancy involves primarily a mental readjustment. Nothing basic is lost." [17](!!)

Why has there been such opposition to the doctrine of inerrancy? Apparent discrepancies in the text have long been observed throughout Church history and have been dealt with time and time again. The modern anti-inerrancy movement is caused by the progressive paganization of the intellectual world, not the discovery of new evidence. Evolution has triumphed over creation in every area from archeology to language studies. From the pagan perspective inerrancy is irrational. For professed Christians, however, to waver on this matter only points to their failure to erect a truly biblical worldview in their minds under the Lordship of Christ.

The Mt. Sinai event underscores inerrancy by its provision for preservation of the treaty-like documents and the warnings against tampering with the text (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; cf. Rev. 22:18-19). A definition of inerrant inspiration of the Bible is that God so superintended the writing of the Bible using the writers' own vocabulary and

experiences that His revelation was given to man inerrantly in the original writings (Matt. 22:43; Mk. 12:36; Acts 4:25-26; Rom. 3:2; I Cor. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2; 4:7; II Pet. 1:20-21).[18]

### **The Doctrine of Canonicity**

After understanding the doctrines of revelation and inspiration, one may well ask, "How does one discern which books are inspired and therefore revelatory?" Thus arises the matter of canonicity. If revelation is historical and not continuous, then it must be preserved for future generations in a readily identifiable and accessible form. Books which are merely "inspiring" in the everyday sense of the term must be distinguished from books which are inerrant revelation. Two issues arise: what is the source of canonicity and what are the boundaries of the canon?

Did the canon arise because the Church (or Israel) made the Scripture into something it would not otherwise have been? In the Roman Catholic/Protestant controversy this issue takes the form of which is prior in authority--the Church or the Bible? Rome insists that the Church is prior and therefore traditionally has never been as concerned as Bible-believing Protestants have been over the early chapters of Genesis and the evolution controversy. As the custodian of revelation the Church, according to Rome, defines the "proper" interpretation of the Bible. Protestants, of course, believe the Church must submit to the Bible, or it is not lawful.

Liberal theology has another variation on this matter. According to this compromised version of Christian theology, the individual pieces of the Bible were produced solely by human speculation. Later evolving community opinion made certain books canonical so that canonicity is an acquired characteristic, not an intrinsic one. (The idea of a slowly evolving Bible is utterly without evidence archeologically and, in fact, is directly refuted by the treaty-like nature of the Sinaitic Covenant. Treaties were produced whole for a particular occasion; they didn't grow by accretion.) In this liberal view, like that of Rome, the Bible cannot have ultimate authority.

Reflection on the Mt. Sinai event resolves this issue. Did the Law make Israel, or did Israel make the Law? The correct answer is that God made both. God first brought Israel into existence from Abraham to the Exodus; then He gave the Law by speaking it to Israel. Chronologically, Israel preceded the Law just as the Church preceded the New Testament. Nevertheless, once Yahweh spoke His Law at Sinai, Israel forever afterward was under the Law. Authoritatively, therefore, the Law outranks Israel. That the Bible outranks the Church is seen clearly in passages like Gal. 1:8 and Rev. 22:18-19. In I John 1:3 we have

fellowship with God only through the apostles' teachings which are the New Testament.

Another dispute concerning the canon concerns the boundaries of it. What ancient books ought to be included in the Bible and which ones excluded? Again Roman Catholicism and Protestantism differ. Rome insists upon including a set of extra books called the Apocrypha; the Protestants exclude them.

Canonical books are those written by bona fide prophets during eras when historical revelation was occurring. In such eras prophets recorded part of the revelation for future generations (e.g., I Chron. 29:29; II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 32:32; 33:19). The prophets acted as custodians of Scripture--updating archaic terms and passages (e.g., notices in Jud. 18:30b; I Sam 9:9; 18:18b), re-editing their own works (e.g., Jer. 36), compiling previous works into collections (e.g., Prov. 25:1), and issuing new authoritative translations (e.g., Neh. 8; esp. 8:8). When the era of historic revelation closed and the prophets ceased, the writings were fixed in some way not clear to modern students into a "closed" canon which was zealously preserved thereafter.

The Sinaitic Covenant stipulated that subsequent prophetic teaching (and hence the canonical books) must be theologically consistent (Deut. 13:1-5) and empirically valid (18:20-22). Non-canonical books, such as the Apocrypha and the more recent Book of Mormon, not only fail to meet these tests, but they also were not authored by prophets or their close associates during an era of active revelation.

The Mt. Sinai event, therefore, revealed God's disruptive intrusion of His Law into world history over against every attempt by man to invent values, ethics, and law on his own. Not only did His Kingdom now have physical existence, but it had political life. Moses summed up the matter well:

*This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, that hath a god no nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is. . . ? What great nation. . . hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:6-8).*

#### END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

1. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., The Uses of the Old Testament in the New (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 49.

2. Meredith G. Kline, The Treaty of the Great King (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1963). p. 18.
3. I develop this point in Part IV of this series.
4. Cited in The Warren-Flew Debate (Jonesboro AR: National Christian Press, 1977), p. 17.
5. See discussion in Part II of this series on the creation of man.
6. Since paganism denies the existence of a Personal-Infinite Creator, it cannot locate an absolute personal source of ethics.
7. Martin Luther, Commentary on Romans, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishing Co. reprint, 1976), p. 52.
8. Note comments in end notes 5,6.
9. See the works by Francis Schaeffer such as The God Who Is There.
10. William Temple, Nature, Man and God (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. 317.
11. See discussion on creation of man in Part II of this series.
12. Cited in W. L. Moran, "The ANE Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXV (1963), 81. Rib-Addu, incidentally, if Velikovsky's radical reconstruction of history is correct, is none other than the infidel of Samaria, King Ahab (see Appendix A).
13. William F. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1968), pp 180ff.
14. Ibid., p. 181.
15. Yehezkel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, trans. And abridged by Moshe Greenberg (paperback ed., New York: Schocken Books, 1972 {1960}), p. 212.
16. F. C. Grant, Introduction to New Testament Thought (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1950), p. 75.

## CHAPTER 5: CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT: THE DISRUPTIVE TRUTH OF ISRAEL'S HOLY WAR

Lesson 55

After the exodus event and Mt. Sinai, Israel began the long struggle in her special “father-son” relationship with God. Having been chosen out of the pagan world and having been given the only true combination of values, ethics, and law for a nation, Israel stood as a “stranger” among the other nations of mankind. This new manifestation of the Kingdom of God as the lordship of Yahweh was especially disruptive to the rapidly paganizing Noahic civilization.

For the next four centuries from Sinai to the prophet Samuel Israel would be literally at war with her neighbors. Critics of biblical religion gleefully cite this period with its genocides and atrocities as proof of the dangers of our faith. Religious fanaticism! Bigotry! How could a God of love condone, even command, such bloody conflict? Why was there such total intolerance of “other religions”?

From Exodus to the end of the book of Judges you will read of dozens of battles between Israel and surrounding pagan society. Some battles Israel wins; some she loses. When Israel tries to settle down to a peaceful coexistence her neighbors, absorbing their religious beliefs, God Himself stirs up new battles and continues the war. Why can there be no peace between the Kingdom of God and the pagan Kingdom of Man?

I urge you to pay close attention to the events of this period. Saints down through the ages have always looked upon this period of history as illustrative of our struggle to grow spiritually in a hostile world. These portions of Scripture reveal principles of sanctification. In analyzing them you will discover why there is such fierce wrath, such a strange holy war, between Israel and the gentiles. Moreover, you will discover that you need to follow in Israel's footsteps as you deal with the world spirit around you and in your very own flesh. Holy war! Far from being shunned, these passages of the Bible need to be read and reread again, over and over throughout your Christian life.

### SEVEN BATTLES; SEVEN LESSONS

Although many important historic events occurred throughout the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges, I will mention here only seven of them. Each was chosen to show you a vital principle. These principles then form the backdrop for the Christian doctrine of sanctification.

Covenant-Breaking at Sinai and the Need for a New Heart and a Faithful Intercessor. Even while God was revealing the stipulations of the Sinaitic Covenant to Moses on the mount, His nation of vassals below was in wholesale rebellion against Him, even making idols to worship (Exod. 32-34; Deut. 9-10). We must spend time to understand what happened at the foot of Mt. Sinai and why the Holy Spirit caused it to be remembered in Israel's history.

Do you remember the nature of the Law? Do you recall that Israel's law was not just a public law-code but a private personal address to the heart by the Lord? Ultimately the law described what a proper relationship with the Lord would look like in a national culture. Servanthood to the Lord began not with one's neighbor but with one's own inner being. Inner, private obedience would eventually manifest itself in national life as outer, public obedience. But the converse would also hold true. Inner disobedience could not remain private for long. Eventually it would manifest its evil in public disruption, apostasy, and lawlessness.

What happened at the foot of Sinai, therefore, was an open display of the hearts of the people. They were not ready for what Moses was about to bring down to them. They were impatient with God's sovereign timing (Exod. 32:1). They dwelt upon the fleshly presupposition that man can know good and evil by himself, that man can define his existence and create the final interpretation of all things. Like liberal theologians today, they believed that the exodus event was solely the work of Moses the man (32:1) and that they could create their own theology to explain life (32:1, 4). They did not give thanks.

God therefore revealed that to follow Him as Lord they must have a "circumcised heart" (Deut. 10:16). The inner organ of spiritual life must be surgically modified as the outer organ of physical life is surgically modified in circumcision. Yahweh's demands upon His servants, unlike the demands of manmade public law codes, were too great spiritually for fallen flesh. Enthusiastic obedience to Him simply would not come "naturally".

Until the new heart was realized in experience, what kept the unfaithful servants still inside God's Kingdom? The response of Moses to the Mt. Sinai defection answers the question. Yahweh, being righteous and just, responded to Israel's idolatry with great anger (Exod. 32:7-10; Deut. 9:12-14). Since the nation had broken covenant, He proposed to annihilate her and begin anew. With the covenant broken, there remained to Moses no basis of appeal in the Word except the prior Abrahamic Covenant which expressed God's election plan. Upon this prior groundwork, therefore, Moses faithfully and effectively interceded on behalf of Israel (Exod. 32:11-13; Deut. 9:26-29). Thus, preservation of unfaithful servants during the time of their sanctification inside the Kingdom of the holy God requires a faithful intercessor who will petition on the basis of God's gracious election.

## Declaration of Holy War and the Final Judgment

[Lesson 56](#)

Probably the best known controversial area of the Bible was the command given by Yahweh to Israel to exterminate certain enemies of God Himself (Exod. 23:20-33; 34:11-17; Num. 33:50-56). In the original Hebrew this declaration of "holy war" was called *herem*, a dedication of enemy objects to God for total annihilation. Yahweh's command for holy war corresponded to demands in the ancient suzerainty-vassal treaties for the vassal to render military aid to the suzerain. Vassals were required to fight their suzerain's wars as part of their loyal service to him.

Of all the Bible's stories, the conquest most strikes scorn and terror into the pagan heart. The common response is given in a piece of literature I once received from the Arab political group, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO): "Under the leadership of Joshua, the Hebrews invaded the state of Canaan. Crimes of the most heinous nature were perpetrated against the inhabitants, as readers of the Old Testament know." [1] The evangelical Old Testament scholar, Dr. Meredith Kline, expands upon this response:

*"If Israel's conquest of Canaan were to be adjudicated before an assembly of nations acting according to the provisions of common grace, that conquest would have to be condemned as an unprovoked aggression and, moreover, an aggression carried out in barbarous violation of the requirement to show all possible mercy even in the proper execution of justice."* [2]

Biblical holy war is waged against the damned--those who have rebelled to the maximum of the grace which God chooses to extend. The iniquity of Canaan, by the time of the exodus event, had become "full" (cf. Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-27; Deut. 9:5; 18:9-14). The ethical principles of holy war, therefore, are not the same ethics for life in the world under common grace. As Kline notes:

*"The unbeliever is the believer's neighbor today; but the reprobate is not the neighbor of the redeemed hereafter for the reason that God will set a great gulf between them. God, whose immutable nature it is to hate evil, withdrawing all favor from the reprobate, will himself hate them as sin's finished products. And if the redeemed in glory are to fulfill their duty of patterning their ways after God's, they will have to change their attitude toward the unbeliever from one of neighborly love to one of perfect hatred, which is a holy, not a malicious passion. . . . It will only be with the frank acknowledgement that the ordinary ethical requirements were suspended and the ethical principles of the last judgment intruded that the divine promises and commands to Israel concerning Canaan and the Canaanites come into their own."* [3]

We must keep in mind, in thinking through this matter, that since the fall God has been under no obligation whatsoever to preserve and sustain human existence. During the conquest period, Israel was directed to annihilate certain defined groups of pagan culture who had reached the absolute limit of rebellion against God. God for a limited time suspended the ethics of common grace to reveal the ethics of final judgment. Interestingly, holy war was carefully distinguished from ordinary warfare which permitted gracious overtures of peace (the rules of engagement in Deut. 20:16-18 which apply to the Canaanites are distinguished from the rules of engagement in 20:10-15 which apply to non-Canaanite populations). How all this applies to the Christian life, I will discuss in the following section on sanctification.

Lesson 57

### **The Kadesh-Barnea Fiasco and Necessity for Holy War**

The third event of the conquest happened as Israel approached Kadesh-barnea on the southern border of the Promised Land (see Figure 5.1 and Num. 13-14; I Cor. 10:1-13; Heb. 3:7-19). The people were supposed to secure the land, waging holy war in obedience to God's Word and trusting that He would

give the victory as He had promised. Instead, the people succumbed to fleshly unbelief by interpreting their trial out of context from God's plan for them (Num. 13:31). Discouragement, fear, and depression soon followed. Yahweh became so angry at their rebellion against His Word that He forever marked off that generation as the wilderness generation who would never enter the land. For thirty-eight years Israel had to wander in the wilderness until a new generation grew up which could take the land properly by faith (see Num. 14:23; Heb. 3:10-11, 18-19).

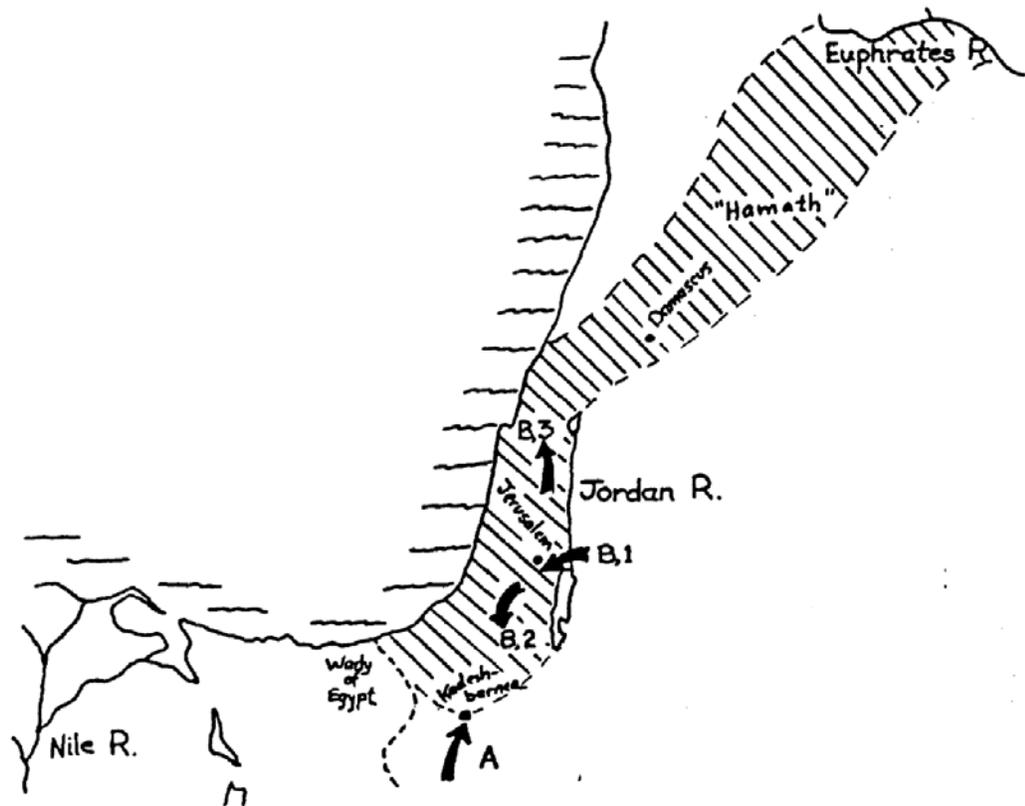


Figure 5.1 Map showing the area of the Promised Land (hatched) according to Gen. 15:18; Num. 34:2-12; Deut.1:7. The earlier attempted invasion was from the south (A). Later Joshua waged a three-pronged campaign from the east (B1, B2, and B3).

The principle here is that in a fallen world God's final blessings can come only when evil has been eliminated. Hence the Lord's Prayer asks that "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The Kingdom program of God requires holy war by its servants in order for them to secure the promised Kingdom blessings. The war in some form always follows spiritual advances in the believer's life. This is the story of the New Testament epistle to the Hebrews as well as of nearly every other epistle.

## Victory at Jericho and the “Works” of Faith

Lesson 58

As a fourth event during the conquest period, I have selected Israel’s stunning victory at Jericho. It occurred after the forty years of wilderness wanderings and after Moses died (Josh. 2-6). Israel’s new commanding general, Joshua (his name means “deliverer” like the name Jesus), decided upon a three-campaign strategy (see Figure 5.1). His first major objective had to be the central fortress-city of Jericho which acted like a gate to the land on the eastern side. On the eve of the attack Yahweh appeared in person to Joshua and gave him one of the most peculiar set of tactics an army has ever used (Josh. 5:13-6:5). Yahweh led the attack in the presence of the Ark. [4] The army shouted by faith that Yahweh had already given them the city (note the past tense of the verb—6:16), whereupon the city was demolished (6:20-21). Archeological evidence for this event exists, although the chronological debate tends to obscure its effect (see Appendix B).

The victory at Jericho provides an unusually clear insight into the relationship of our faith and the works it does. Faith, as I showed in Chapter 2 when discussing the call of Abraham, depends upon God’s gracious initiative and requires His illumination and inclination of the heart. Nevertheless, it does not replace the created order already existing. The human mind still thinks, the mouth still speaks, and the body still acts. What is different is that the thinking, the speaking, and the acting are done while looking to Him to do what He has promised. Faith humbly accepts the two-level view of reality and shuns the autonomous temptation to act as god. Plans take into account His Word and remain “open” to His amendments; they are not made as though they depend upon man’s alleged independent powers to define meaning (“to know good and evil”).

Note the logic in the conversation between Yahweh and Joshua in 5:13-14. Joshua starts off in classical military fashion, challenging the Stranger’s allegiance. Is it to him as commander of the Israelites or to the Canaanite enemies? The Stranger replies that He is not “under” either Joshua’s or the Canaanites’ authority; He Himself is the ultimate authority to which both Joshua and the Canaanites are to submit. Joshua immediately recognizes and submits (5:15). After that grand act of submission, faith shows itself in the altered order of battle.

In faith the army of Israel employs tactics that fit the Lord’s plan but which do not at all appear sufficient to destroy Jericho. The tactics were *necessary* but not *sufficient*. Thomas Scott comments:

*“When the Lord effects His purposes by such means and instruments as we deem adequate, our views are apt to terminate upon them, and to overlook Him “who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” To obviate this propensity, the Lord sometimes deviates from the common tract and works by methods or instruments which in themselves appear not at all suited to produce the intended effect; nay, sometimes have no real connection with it (Num. 20:6-9; Ezek. 37:1-10; John 9:4-7).”[5]*

In other words, the plan comes down from the Creator above Who has the (Q)ualities of Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Sovereignty. Man the creature has only the finite replica of those qualities—knowledge, energy, and choice—and trusts in Him while on the creature level the plan looks so incomplete, so insufficient!

Very simply, however, the “works” of faith are the thoughts, words, and deeds of a man who self-consciously acknowledges their insufficiency and who does them out of obedience to the One he trusts. Like Joshua’s amended order of battle, they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

### **The Defeat at Ai and the Danger of Pseudo-obedience**

Immediately after Israel enjoyed victory at Jericho, the nation was defeated at Ai (Josh 7). The defeat occurred, not because Yahweh was defeated, but because Israel had sinned in only partially obeying orders. Although the Hebrews obeyed the order to wage holy war, one of them, Achan, disobeyed Yahweh’s direct command to give all the remains of war to Him (6:17-7:1). The terms of the suzerain’s blessing upon his vassals were now violated. The vassals were taking matters into their own hands, wanting to determine outcomes themselves. Instead of victory, panic and rout met the armies of Israel (7:5). Only after Israel had dealt drastically with the sin of Achan (7:6-26), did Yahweh give them victory at Ai (8:1-29). As in each of the preceding four events, here, too, a truth concerning the spiritual struggle emerges.

As the “son” of God Israel was to have a father-son historical experience with Him. The Sinaitic Covenant which spelled out that relationship clearly showed that the relationship was to start and end in the depths of the human heart. Hebrew hearts were to be circumcised. Private inner obedience to God was to precede and form the basis of public outer obedience. At Ai, however, Achan tried to imitate the public outward obedience without the private inner obedience of the heart.

Notice how his sin infected the entire nation, including Joshua. Elsewhere in the book of Joshua there is a clear-cut pattern of: (1) “Yahweh said” (3:7-8; 4:15-16; 5:13-6:5; 8:1-2); (2) “Joshua did” (3:9-13; 4:4-7, 17-18; 6:6-11; 8:3-8); and (3) “the people did” (3:14-17; 4:8-14, 19-20; 6:12-27; 8:9-29). This pattern is missing in 7:1-5. Clearly, the Holy Spirit is warning us through the Ai event that it matters more to God that we obey Him from the heart than that we mind the externals. Without private obedience, public appearances are mere pseudo-obedience. God will not honor “faking” it with superficial and phony social righteousness while our hearts rebel against Him.

### **The Longest Day at Aijalon and Divine Compensation**

The sixth event I have selected for study is the famous day when the sun stood still while Israel battled in the valley of Aijalon (see the arrow marked “B-2” in Fig. 5.1). Joshua’s three-campaign strategy had entered its second phase. The central area had been secured, and it was time to move southward.

Circumstances were exactly right to facilitate launching a southern campaign. Tricked into a league with the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:1-27), Joshua now faced a Canaanite coalition of southern kings who were alarmed over the Gibeonite “treachery” in defecting over to the Hebrew side (10:1-5). Since Joshua was determined to keep Israel’s word to Gibeon, he marched the army westward and southward all night. With minimum food and no sleep the Hebrew army was highly vulnerable to enemy counter-attack. Its only hope lay in annihilating the enemy before it could regroup in the hills near the valley of Aijalon.

Since Joshua and his army faced a grace situation brought on by their obedience to Yahweh, Yahweh demonstrated His faithfulness to His servants: He suddenly unleashed His own special weapons involving nature forces. Giant stones rained down with accuracy far exceeding most artillery and missiles of today so that “they were more who died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with a sword” (10:11). Not one Hebrew soldier is reported to have been killed by the stones; yet hundreds of enemy soldiers only a few feet away were struck down! Moreover, God kept light over the area long enough to enable Israel to pursue the scattering, fleeing remnants of the enemy force. With the sun, earth, and moon locked in relative zero motion, truly “there was no day like that before it or after it” (10:14).

The various “explanations” of the sun’s and the moon’s standing still which attribute the phenomenon to group psychology or optical illusion are unconvincing in light of the notice in 10:14. As always, the pagan mind seeks to reinterpret everything so it fits into some version of the Continuity of Being whereby God (if He exists) and man are both only actors inside the mysterious universe that is bigger than all of them. The physical universe, paganism holds, couldn’t possibly be controlled by the Word of God because to admit that would be to admit the Creator-creature distinction. In recent years some startling suggestions have been made about what Joshua 10 implies about the universe.[6]

The spiritual truth to learn from the long day at Aijalon is that God always compensates for the weakness of those who obey Him. As long as we are faithful to do what is asked, God will stop the universe, if necessary, to come to our aid! Just as God has numerous means to frustrate the disobedient, so He has numerous means to bless the obedient. Joshua was deceived, but he kept his word. . .and God kept His! Holy War is ultimately His concern, not ours, so it may be accompanied by total surprises from our viewpoint.

### **The Sentence of Doom at Bochim and the Postponed Kingdom**

Joshua’s three-campaign strategy secured a strong foothold on the Promised Land, but much unconquered territory remained (see Figure 5.2). The conquest under Joshua dominated potentially all the land because the backbone of enemy resistance had been broken (Josh. 11:15, 23; 21:43-45). Only small enclaves remained; but since these enclaves remained, ultimate, literal fulfillment of the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant had not yet occurred (Judges 1; Heb. 4:8). The national, united army dissolved into its tribal components as each

tribe claimed its own part of the land (Josh. 14:1-22:34). Thus the land was never totally conquered.

The centuries following Joshua's death saw a decline in Israel's obedience to Yahweh and a subsequent decline in her victory over the inhabitants of the land. Again and again during this period there was a cyclic pattern of apostasy (Jud. 2:11-13), chastening defeat (Jud. 2:14-15), and merciful restoration by local leaders called "judges" (Jud. 2:16-19). Finally, Yahweh uttered a sentence of doom at Bochim (Jud. 2:1-5, 20-23). The spiritual decline of the nation led Yahweh to forsake His original promise to drive out the inhabitants of the Promised Land. Later prophecies would inform Israel about her coming Messiah who would end the struggle and fulfill the promises. As of this event, the Kingdom of God coming through Israel has been postponed.

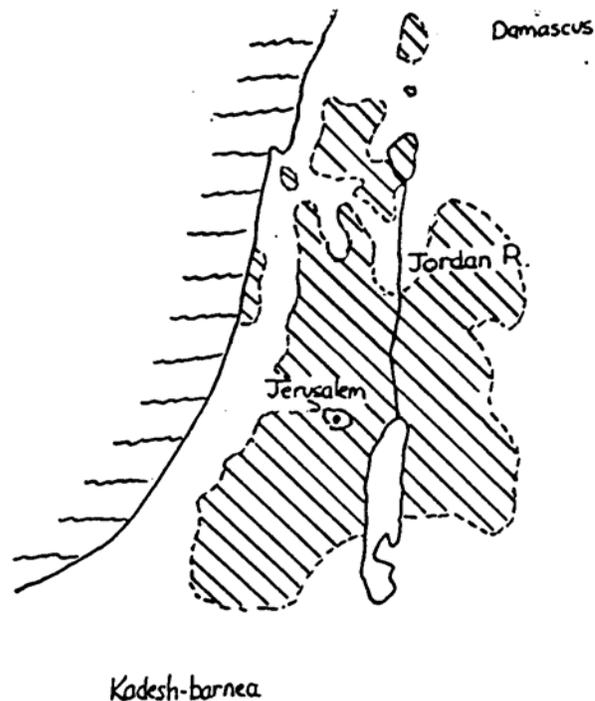


Figure 5.2 Map showing the actual area (hatched) of Promised Land conquered by Joshua and later efforts in the Judges period (Josh. 13; Jud. 1). Comparison with Figure 5.1 shows how much land remained unconquered when the sentence of doom was pronounced in Judges 2 at Bochim.

The failure of Israel in this seventh "battle" example reveals a major historical truth about the advance of the Kingdom of God against the Kingdom of Man. A nation of fallen people, in spite of many of them being circumcised in heart and being in a special covenant relationship with the Creator, cannot

accomplish the task of eliminating evil in the world. Let's review the previous six examples.

BATTLE	LESSON
Covenant-Breaking at Sinai	Need for a new heart Need for an intercessor
Declaration of Holy War	Preview of Final Judgment
Fiasco at Kadesh-Barnea	Necessity for Holy War
Victory at Jericho	"Works" of Faith
Defeat at Ai	Pseudo-Obedience
Longest Day at Aijalon	Divine Compensation
Sentence of Doom at Bochim	Postponed Kingdom

From these and the other events of the period of the conquest and settlement, we learn what life is like on the leading edge of the Kingdom of God as it intrudes into the paganized Noahic civilization. Taken as an isolated series of events, set within an unbelieving framework, this holy war does *appear* in utter moral conflict with ethics taught elsewhere in Scripture. The PLO propaganda seems right: "an unprovoked aggression carried out in barbarous violation of . . . mercy."

The Bible-believing Christian, however, knows that each part of the Bible must be taken within the framework of the whole. Remember my discussion of creation and the early chapters of Genesis? Objections to that part of the Bible that were built upon autonomous pride had to be unmasked. Similarly, objections to the conquest and settlement have to be exposed also. Such objections assume that *the ethical norms of common grace (borrowed, by the way, from the Bible first of all) imply everlasting tolerance of evil*. Yet if evil is everlasting—a favorite axiom of paganism—then there is no hope whatsoever.

The conquest and settlement with its stubborn opposition to any peaceful coexistence is simply the revelation of what salvation looks like in a fallen world when it is worked out to its final conclusion. If God is going to fulfill His promise of preparing an eternal home for the saved, those who reject Him have to be removed. God chose a small-scale version of His ultimate elimination of evil from the earth in the conquest events. He revealed that the war is His, not Israel's. Two mutually opposed ultimate principles cannot coexist. Either Satan and his followers win everlasting freedom for themselves from the Creator, or the Creator asserts His Omnipotent, Sovereign, and Holy nature against them.

The scary part of holy war is this: all rebellion against God is finally doomed to complete judgment. In the end, God's Kingdom will triumph ("His

will be done on earth as it is in heaven”). What is the believer’s role in history while the struggle goes on? The answer is found in the truth of sanctification.

## THE TRUTH OF SANCTIFICATION

Lesson 59

Sanctification is the doctrine of how the saved become holy in God’s sight, how evil is removed from us without destroying us and how we become fully righteous in His sight. Many foolish ideas about sanctification abound in Christian circles. Because the foundation of justification by faith alone is widely ignored, ignorance compounds to bizarre heights. Spiritual progress is too often viewed in psychological terms as though the matter was merely a human social-adjustment problem. Endless books present their author’s “secret” to the Christian life, usually built out of his own personal experience. Thus we now see everything from “the Devil made me do it” (blame shifting to the demonic) to “do anything you want as long as you show love” (the “gay Christian movement”).

Regardless of how saintly we think we are, we cannot construct the truth of sanctification out of our personal experience as the starting point. Sanctification—removal of evil and replacement by holiness—isn’t ultimately a merely personal issue. It is a cosmic issue involving the whole created universe. It involves nothing less than Satan’s and through him, Adam’s, challenge to God’s very authority. It concerns the greatest of all questions—the problem of evil.

Therefore in this section I will utilize the backdrop of the conquest and settlement history to show various aspects of sanctification. Instead of starting with our own specialized and limited personal experience, we will learn of sanctification from the larger perspective of biblical history which we can only indirectly experience. Sanctification entails warfare, and warfare is an art that cannot be learned effectively from the direct, immediate experience of the soldier. It can be mastered only indirectly from studying many experiences of war throughout history. One of the greatest living military strategists, B.H. Liddell Hart, wrote:

***“Even in the most active career, especially a soldier’s career, the scope and possibilities of direct experience are extremely limited. . . . Direct experience is too limited to form an adequate foundation either for theory or for application. At the best it produces an atmosphere that is of value in drying and hardening the structure of thought. The greater value of indirect experience lies in its greater variety and extent. [7]***

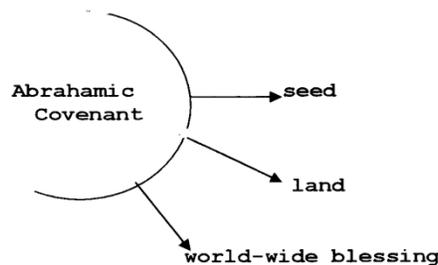
To Hart’s words we may add that for the Christian needing lessons in a warfare involving unseen powers of evil and a strategic plan only comprehended by God Himself, how much more should we pursue the study of His Word in this matter! Let’s look at some, not all, aspects of sanctification.

## Phases of Sanctification

Traditionally, sanctification has been divided into three phases—positional (past), experiential (present), and ultimate (future)—corresponding to the three phases of salvation. Let’s use what we have learned from the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants to understand these phases of sanctification.

With the Abrahamic Covenant God began His separatist, exclusivist, missionary, counterculture in history. Revelation after 2000 BC was channeled through Abraham and his progeny instead of the former revelation to all cultures everywhere. We studied in Chapter 2 how this change gave rise to the so-called “heathen problem” (what about those who are supposed never to have heard?). God rejected human civilization as it became progressively paganized in the centuries after Noah. Resulting from His covenant-writing with Abraham was clear revelation of election, justification, and faith. God publicly bound Himself to three specific promises: (1) survival and miraculous growth of Abraham’s progeny, (2) eternal title to specific real estate on planet Earth for this progeny, and (3) divine blessing upon all nations of mankind through this progeny.

Israel’s “positional” sanctification, or her standing in God’s plan, can be pictured as an open circle, detailing the three great promises:



This covenant defined meaning and purpose in history (election). Israel would forever be at cultural odds with its environment. The covenant showed that in spite of fallenness somehow God considered it meeting His righteous standards in order to be party to a covenant with Him (justification). Israel could never hope to generate righteousness apart from God’s way. And what is so often missed in interpreting Israel’s existence, is that its proper response to God’s calling was a faith created in its heart by God’s Spirit. This position cannot be changed unless God ceases to exist!

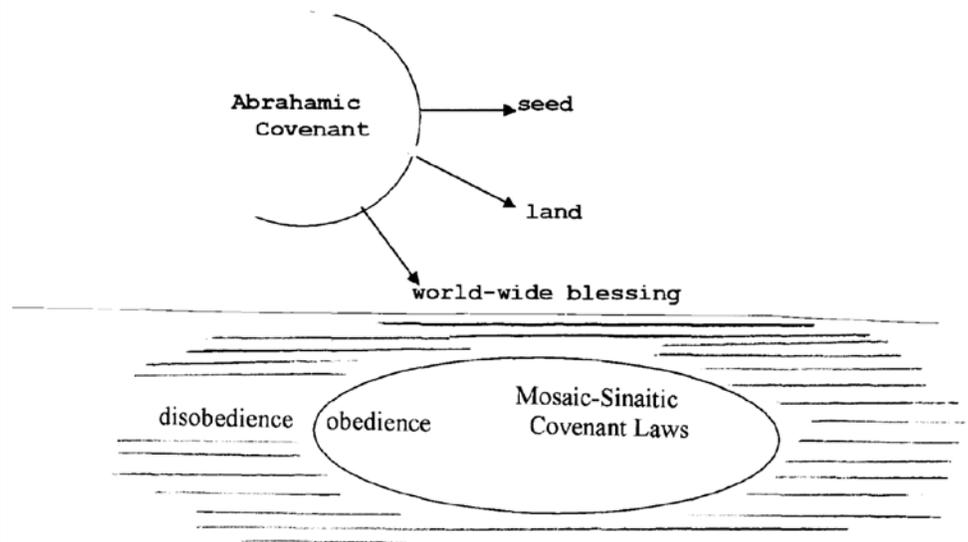
The Sinaitic Covenant, rather than specifying what Israel could expect of God, revealed what God expected of Israel. If the Abrahamic Covenant was written in the indicative mood, the Sinaitic Covenant was written in the imperative mood. One stated positional truth; the other stated commanded behavior. The difference between the two covenants compares to the difference between two ancient Near-Eastern legal documents: the royal grant and the suzerainty-vassal treaty. Dr. Moshe Weinfeld explains:

*“While the ‘treaty’ constitutes an obligation of the vassal to his master, the suzerain, the ‘grant’ constitutes an obligation of the master to his*

*servant. In the 'grant' the curse is directed towards the one who will violate the rights of the king's vassal, while in the treaty the curse is directed towards the vassal who will violate the rights of his king. In other words the 'grant' serves mainly to protect the rights of the servant, while the 'treaty' comes to protect the rights of the master. [8]*

In the Abrahamic Covenant, comparing to Weinfeld's 'royal grant', God cursed Abraham's enemies (Gen. 12:3); in the Sinaitic Covenant, corresponding to Weinfeld's 'suzerainty-vassal treaty', God cursed Israel (Lev. 26; Deut. 28:15-48).

Israel's experiential sanctification, then, can be pictured as circle of obligations owed to God because of her calling in Abraham. Consider the Abrahamic open circle like the Sun shining into darkness below. The Sinaitic Covenant would then be the circle of light in the darkness below:



At any given moment in history Israel might or might not live in the light of her obligations. If she rebelled and left the light to try and dwell in darkness, God would discipline her in the darkness.

The two phases of sanctification, then, can be distinguished. The third phase, ultimate sanctification, was to occur when Israel in experience would fulfill its position entirely, or when Israel would forever dwell in the light of her eternal calling. Until that future time (of the New Covenant to be discussed in Part IV of this series) Israel would always be "in" the eternal position in God's plan but not always in the circle of light. Her experiential sanctification would remain incomplete. The sentence of doom at Bochim revealed this conflict: the

land promise would never be attained by Israel apart from certain future developments involving the New Covenant and the coming Messiah.

An analogous situation occurs with the New Testament believer as a member of the Church. There are provisions flowing out of the Abrahamic Covenant through the New Covenant in Christ that define our positional sanctification (details will be given in Part VI of this series). These provisions reveal what we can expect of God. Nothing can change that position for all eternity. It undergirds and gives meaning to everyday experiences in our Christian lives.

Likewise, there are the commands of the New Testament that define what God expects of us. Although the Church position differs from that of Israel, the principles of present, experiential sanctification remain the same. [9] At any given moment we might or might not live in the circle of light laid down by the New Testament. If we rebel, He will discipline us as our Shepherd and Father.

The life of faith depends upon us putting these two phases of sanctification in proper perspective. We are to obey what God asks of us in the lower circle of light while we trust Him to provide what He promises in the open circle above. Serious problems arise whenever we try to do what He has already done, or whenever we passively assume He will do what He wants us to do. The focus of the rest of my discussion is how these two phases relate in the remaining aspects of sanctification.

### **Aim of Sanctification**

It should be clear from the Mt. Sinai revelation and the subsequent conquest experiences that the main aim which Yahweh had for His vassal nation was the development of loyalty to His commands, loyalty in every area of life (Deut. 6:5). At this point, if you have paid attention to the framework from creation onward, you should suspect that this aim of increasing loyalty is not directed inherently at against sin although it obviously entails the separation of good and evil.

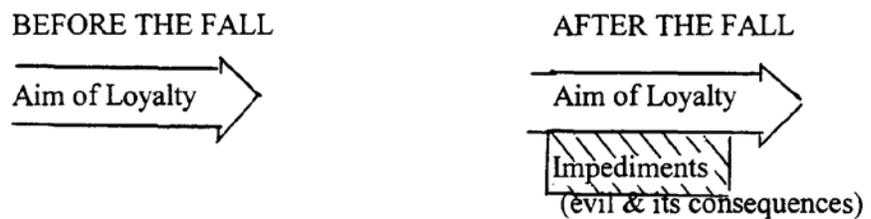
Before the fall man was required to learn obedience to God. Obedience was the crux of the test given to Adam and Eve. Man was created to reign over creation for God (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15; Psa. 8). Being a responsible creature made in God's image, man could not acquire obedience by instinct: he had to learn it by experience. This principle is clear from the biblical statement that even Christ, the God-man, in His sinless humanity had to learn obedience (Heb. 5:8). Learning obedience by historical experience, then, does not inherently involve sin.

After the fall, of course, sin does become inseparable from sanctification, but from the beginning it was not so. Before the fall, to cite a simple example, Adam was required to till the ground to produce fruit for God. After the fall he was to continue the same work except that great impediments were introduced. Thorns and thistles, non-productive plants, would diminish his production and cause him to expend more energy to produce the same amount of fruit. God's demand for him to subdue the ground still was applicable, but after the fall it

became impossible to fulfill the command without great struggle. The fall thus introduced impediments to sanctification; yet it never changed the aim of sanctification, loyalty to God.

What is amazing is that through Christ as a genuine member of the human race good and evil are finally separated by the original command given to Adam: to subdue to earth in obedience to God. Christ accomplished this command perfectly, doing the groundwork for the ultimate separation of good and evil as well as becoming the model of perfect loyalty and righteousness.

The effect of the fall upon development of loyalty to God can be pictured as follows:



You already learned a similar truth when you learned about the positive and negative aspects of justification in Chapter 3. Remember that justification was not just “forgiveness”? Forgiveness alone would result in our “price” in God’s eyes changing from minus to zero but not becoming positive. Justification, you will recall, added righteousness to make our “price” positive. To regain access to God we can’t return to the probationary period of Eden; we have to attain the positive obedience that Adam should have gained originally. Sanctification is like justification in this regard. It is not merely doing away with evil in our experience; it also includes gaining loyalty or positive experiential obedience. The higher Abrahamic Covenant with its justification controls the lower Sinaitic Covenant with its sanctification.

One can see clearly the wisdom of God’s lessons to Israel at Ai and Aijalon. At Ai Israel fought against evil, yet in such a way that the primary aim of sanctification was not being fulfilled. God, therefore, frustrated such pseudo-obedience in order to focus attention, not upon the command to fight evil, but upon obedience to the basic spirit of His commands. At Aijalon God rewarded obedience by a spectacular display of His power to focus attention again upon the issue of loyalty. The record of historical revelation is filled with God’s rewards and punishments used to train men to develop loyal attitudes. Every experience and every technique which are taught in the name of sanctification must, then, be evaluated by whether one’s loyalty to God is furthered or hindered. Merely fighting evil or having great spiritual experiences is not the aim of sanctification.

## Means of Sanctification

[Lesson 60](#)

The third aspect of sanctification concerns the means used to produce loyalty to God. We know that the modus operandi of the Kingdom of God is faith (see Chapter 3) so sanctification must require faith. Faith is a response by the sinner

to God's gracious offers. The question arises, then, what are the comparative roles of law and grace as means of sanctification? Sometimes it is said that in the age of Israel, men were sanctified by law, and in the Church age men are sanctified by grace. [10] Actually, both law and grace, *when they are properly related to faith*, are involved in sanctification. These are two means of sanctification.

1. Law. Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), biblical faith always requires verbal revelation. We saw the necessity of revelation in Chapter 4 through the Mt. Sinai event. Biblical faith develops only as it trusts that the Creator-Savior will behave according to His contractual terms. These terms occur in many different covenants. We have seen three so far: the New World Covenant in Noah's day, the Abrahamic Covenant, and the Sinaitic Covenant.

The word "law" can refer generally to all revelation in all the covenants taken together, it can refer to the first five books of the Bible, or it can refer to the Sinaitic Covenant in particular. It is when "law" refers to the Sinaitic Covenant in certain New Testament passages, that it is contrasted with "grace" (Rom. 6:14; 7:1-6; Gal. 5:18). That is a special usage that I will discuss in Part VI of this series. For now, I mean by "law" revelation in general, including both indicative statements and imperative commands. In the New Testament there are hundreds of commands directed toward believers which form the "law of Christ".

Elimination of all law in this general sense is antinomianism pure and simple. Antinomianism supports licentiousness in all its forms. It can manifest itself in a false mysticism and religious emotionalism where "something more" than God's own inerrant Word is insisted upon. One such writer boldly stated: "We are not to say. . . that the Word is sufficient." [11] in spite of Paul's clear statement that the Scriptures are sufficient (II Tim. 3:16-17). Elimination of law creates a false interpretation of grace where grace is seen as an eternal "laxity" in the holiness of God. It also manifests itself intellectually in the various forms of irrationalism--undisciplined speculation and existential depression. Antinomianism underlies the frantic search for happiness seen in drug-, sex-, and musically-induced ecstasy. Antinomianism is a synonym for the pagan lust for "total freedom".

We, therefore, grow spiritually by being confronted with the Word of God in our heart: it teaches proper content for our thinking; it convinces us of its truthfulness; it rebukes areas of one's life which need changing; and it instructs us in new godly patterns of life (II Tim. 3:16). God the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures to the heart (I John 2:27), and the Father administers discipline to enforce the lessons (Heb. 12:6-13). The Word of God as "law" is the means of instilling God's authority or lordship over us. During the conquest and settlement, you have seen how Joshua, for example, was expected to meditate on the particular Sinaitic Covenant terms (Josh. 1:7-8). Every seven years Yahweh's vassals had to appear before His palace (Tabernacle) to hear the Old Testament Law read in order that they might fear their God (Deut. 31:10-13). Parents were to teach their children the law in the home (Deut. 6:6-9). And

when the Law was not followed the God's blessings were withdrawn (Bochim). Law is one of the two means of sanctification.

2. Grace. To even speak to sinful creatures, God must exercise grace. We saw in the last chapter at Mt. Sinai God as the great king recited His previous gracious deliverance of Israel (Exod. 20:2). The act of law-giving was gracious. Man through the law became more aware of his sin (Rom. 3:19-20; 7:7-14; I Tim. 1:9). The experience at Mt. Sinai quickly taught man the necessity of a new heart which could only be created by a God of grace. It also taught him the necessity of a priestly intercessor if he was to remain saved during his sanctification. This gracious assurance of God's attention toward us is needed by faith.

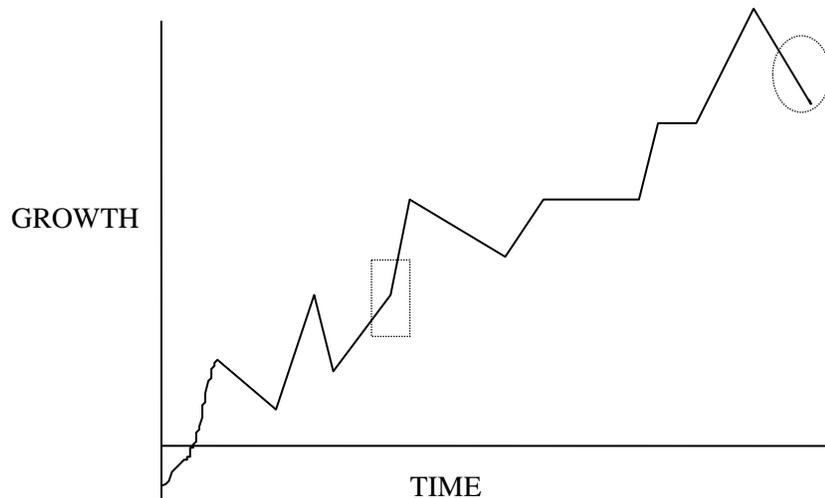
Israel's position before God was previously established through the groundwork in the Abrahamic Covenant (positional sanctification). That gracious covenant preceded the details of the Sinaitic legal terminology. That sovereign gracious covenant established the meaning of Israel's existence. It guaranteed the survival of Israel against a paganized civilization wholly aligned against this chosen nation. In like manner, God's grace toward us in Christ established the meaning of everything that happens in our lives. It pursues us even when we fail Him just as it pursued Israel when the nation disobeyed. God's imperative commands to us "float" on a sea of gracious provisions as Paul taught in Romans 6-8. Without these provisions constantly buoying us up in the face of our impotence to obey God with our flesh, our faith and our sanctification would cease. The daily ups and downs are contained inside the gracious elect plan of God that lays out our existence from eternity to eternity.

Elimination of grace is the opposite pagan tendency—that of legalism. To assert that God's grace is no longer needed for us to meet His righteousness is to assert that His righteousness is within man's reach. Elimination of grace creates a false interpretation of law where law is seen as a legitimate product of the finite human intellect—defining good and evil like a god. Man now becomes the center of all works, all order, and all attention. The battle is on to attain security--knocking down Jericho's walls and stopping the sun as it were--independently of the Creator. Legalism destroys dependency upon God by destroying all gratitude for what He needs to do for us. Gone, then, is the primary motivation in living a faithful life before God.. It manifests itself in "self-help" techniques and the frantic search for "self esteem". Intellectually, it shows up in the various forms of rationalism—in the philosophical and socio-political spheres—that seek to build a utopian civilization through man's efforts alone.

Sanctification, because of its crucial reliance on faith, requires law and grace together. Law in the Word of God establishes the authoritative framework for faith and suppresses licentiousness; it is the tool of direction whereby we interpret every experience. Grace toward us initiates every advance in personal holiness, sustains our every failure, and suppresses legalism; it is the fountain of all true motivation. Neither can be eliminated without destroying the other.

## Dimensions of Sanctification

A fourth aspect of sanctification requires our attention. We must distinguish between the two dimensions of life in which sanctification occurs: the existentially present moment and the long-term progress due to the sum of many past moments. Failure to distinguish these two dimensions confuses our daily perspective on our relationship to the Lord. Let's look at Figure 5.3.



*Figure 5.3. Graph of spiritual growth or sanctification versus time.*

This picture of spiritual growth is obviously full of ups and downs just as physical life itself. In the area covered by the rectangle there is spiritual advance. In the area covered by the oval there is spiritual decline. Generally, either there is spiritual advance or decline at any given point. Nevertheless, overall there is a general upward trend of sanctification.

One dimension to Figure 5.3 is the slope of the line at any given point in time. We call this dimension the existentially present moment. It is the moment when you and I chose to trust and obey or to be faithless and go our own way. There is an “either-or” character here. The Bible has nomenclatures which refer to this “either-or” dimension of sanctification: walking in the light (I John 1:7), walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), abiding in Christ (John 15:1-7), filling by the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), the word of Christ dwelling richly (Col. 3:16), etc. Either we consciously obey the known will of God for the present moment as we understand it in our hearts, or we slip back into the bondage of the flesh.

The other dimension to Figure 5.3 is the long-term growth. This dimension is not “either-or” but a matter of degrees. In Figure 5.3 long-term growth is the sum of all the positive contributions minus the sum of all the negative contributions. Growth takes varying lengths of time, depending upon how fast we learn the lesson of loyalty to God in each area as He makes it an issue. God reveals His law-ethic pedagogically; He trains His covenant people as a father

trains his son, giving first the immediate objectives, then later higher objectives. Growth could also, therefore, be pictured as an expanding circle of light that I mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Such a circle expands with an ever-increasing radius, taking in more and more area. At first with a small radius the circle encompasses only the most basic of obligations to God and shows only rudimentary “subduing” of the earth. It might be an area of the brain where prior to regeneration there was the most basic of rebellion toward what was known of God. Now there is a spirit of obedience and a developing habit of righteousness. Then, as growth continues, more of the body is brought under righteous control—the area of dominion expands. Also as growth continues, awareness of more and more of God’s Word challenges us to ever more difficult tasks as godliness builds (Heb. 5:14) and replaces formerly godless habits (Rom. 8:13). Such long-term growth, however, is a result of the moment-by-moment obedience; it cannot happen overnight.

By remembering these two dimensions, you can distinguish between moment-by-moment abiding in the lower circle and the increasing size of that circle. It is a perspective that nourishes a healthy patience with spiritual growth without neglecting the present moment’s obligations.

## Enemies of Sanctification

Lesson 61

The fifth and final aspect of sanctification to be discussed here concerns the impediments or enemies of sanctification mentioned above. These impediments, it will be recalled, have come about due to the fall. Originally, sanctification could have proceeded without resistance, but after the fall sanctification is continually opposed by “the world, the flesh, and the devil.” Since I will discuss these more fully in later parts of this series, I will mention here only the purpose these opponents serve and the basic response we should have toward them.

All things have a purpose because God is sovereign. His sovereignty shapes the open circle of His redemptive program through Abraham. That means that even the enemies of sanctification wind up furthering His plan for us! As Joseph put it these enemies mean evil, but God means it for good (Gen. 50:20). Just what good purpose these enemies serve can be seen in several incidents that occurred during the conquest and settlement.

The declaration of holy war taught the principle that holy war provided a preview of final judgment. Since holy war was merciless and since it is a picture of sanctification in a fallen world, sanctification must proceed with the same mercilessness against its enemies. Bible passages, therefore, that speak of holy war—e.g., the imprecatory psalms (Pss. 35:1-8; 58:6-11; 83:9-18; 109:6-20; 137:7-9)—are vital exhortations to a mental attitude necessary for the struggle against the enemies of sanctification. These passages, as well as traditional hymns like “Onward Christian Soldiers”, are often attacked today as not showing the “real spirit” of Christianity. When not overtly attacked, they

are a source of embarrassment to many Christians. Even C. S. Lewis shows a very uncustomary fumbling discussion of the imprecatory psalms. [12]

Such problems arise because a previous problem wasn't handled correctly in the minds of these critics. They have never embraced holy war itself in the original conquest narratives. They have not seen the necessary place of holy war in the Christian framework. As I discussed above, holy war is the revelation of the final end of evil. Without it, evil remains. Thus holy war finishes history.

Therefore, there is no room for “conscientious objectors” in this kind of war. To seek to avoid holy war against the enemies of sanctification is to perpetuate evil! The Kadesh-barnea fiasco underscored God's demand that we engage the enemy. Van Til put the matter well:

***“We must oppose with all our hearts and with all our minds the ethical program that those who deny Christ have made for themselves. That ethical program is, at bottom, the flat denial of our ethical program. If they succeed with theirs we cannot succeed with ours. . . . Compromise that we engage in, as we say, in order to win others for the kingdom, is strictly forbidden by Christ. We should throw out the life line, but we may not allow ourselves to drown along with those whom we wish to save. . . . An analogy from the nature of war may serve to illustrate this point. As long as someone carries the flag of our opponents, we must seek to shoot him. Yet we would like nothing better than to have our opponents come to our side by a recognition of our flag. But this can never be accomplished unless they swear off allegiance to their former flag.”[14]***

The purpose of the enemies of sanctification, whoever and whatever they may be, is to teach us the holy insistence of God in disrupting this present, abnormal, evil world with His Kingdom of righteousness, and the prerequisite of eliminating evil prior to eternal peace on earth.

And what of our response to these enemies, once we understand their larger purpose? What was Israel's response supposed to have been to its enemies during the conquest and settlement? They were to operate by faith in Yahweh's promised program through Abraham that the land was to be theirs regardless of the size, numbers, and ferocity of their opponents. Yet the Israelites were not to heedlessly attack these enemies in their own strength and without submission to Yahweh in their hearts. In like manner, we are to submit to the Lord and fight only because it is His battle, not ours. We are to do so persistently until the battle is over, trusting that His plan cannot fail.

Such a response is driven by a quiet, inner, powerful attitude toward God's will in our lives. Failure to attain such an attitude results in giving up amidst spiritual struggle. Years ago a prominent Christian counselor wrote:

***“In counseling, week after week, I continually encounter one outstanding failure among Christians: a lack of what the Bible calls ‘endurance’; they give up. . . . The work of the Holy Spirit is not mystical. . . . The Holy Spirit Himself has plainly told us how He works. He says in the***

***Scriptures that He ordinarily works through the Scriptures. . . .He did not give us the Book, only to say that we could lay it aside and forget it in the process of becoming godly. Godliness does not come by osmosis. . . .It is by willing, prayerful and persistent obedience to the requirements of the Scriptures that godly patterns are developed and come to be a part of us.”[15]***

Note that this God-centered attitude flows out of our occupation with the things He has revealed in the “upper circle” that undergird what He commands us in the “lower circle” just as it was in Israel’s history. Such an attitude contains within it a profound strategy. The strategy of response to the enemies of sanctification is not primarily to defeat the enemies, but to carry out the program of our Father. The strategy, therefore, is an indirect one: not directly attacking the enemy,

→ world, flesh, devil

but pursuing the will of God and loyalty to Him that results in victory over the enemy.

→ loyalty to God’s Word

world, flesh, devil

Interestingly, indirect strategy against one’s enemies is the key to all the wars men have ever fought according to Liddell Hart. This student of military strategy, after surveying every major conflict for the past 2500 years, concluded:

***“Effective results in war have rarely been attained unless the approach has had such indirectness as to ensure the opponent’s unwillingness to meet it. The indirectness has usually been physical, and always psychological. In strategy, the longest way round is often the shortest way home.”[16]***

Think of what you observed during the conquest narratives in Joshua and Judges. The Canaanites were already defeated, not by the greatness of Israel’s army but by the power of Yahweh through the Exodus (Josh. 2:9-11). The strange military operations around Jericho and the miraculous cessation of solar and lunar motion during the Aijalon campaign were all indirect stratagems that hinged upon the inner heart loyalty to God rather than a direct confrontation with the enemy. This indirectness ensured “the opponent’s unwillingness to meet it.”

Thus the process of believers becoming what God in eternity past destined them to become involves the truths of sanctification. Real historical obedience to His commands by faith in His overall plan is the essence of spiritual growth.

## END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5

1. Ismail Shammout, *Palestine: Illustrated Political History*, trans. Abdul-Qadan Deher (Palestine Liberation Organization, 1972), p.6.
2. Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), p. 159f.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
4. The close identity of Yahweh and the Ark can be seen in passages like Numbers 10:35-36.
5. Quoted in Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), p. 151.
6. The problem of the longest day is not easily solved within the framework of modern historical science. It may turn out, in fact, that this event provides shocking evidence that the old geocentric view of the universe might be true after all since both the sun and the moon together ceased their motion. This phenomenon is far easier to visualize in a geocentric frame of reference than in a heliocentric one. Additionally, the long day appears to correlate to tales of a long night in the Western hemisphere, a point that led Immanuel Velikovski to remark years ago how remarkable that so-called myths vary longitudinally! See his book, *Worlds In Collision* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1950).
7. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (2nd ed.; New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967 [1954]), p 23f.
8. Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the OT and in the ANE," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 90 (1970), p. 194.
9. See my discussion of dispensationalism in Part VI of this series.
10. This position is often associated with dispensationalism due to imprecision in terminology and unwillingness of critics to listen carefully. See the discussion in Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (rev. ed.; Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995 [1966]), pp. 105-121.
11. Cited in Walter J. Chantry, *Signs of the Apostles* (Carlisle, PA: privately published, 1973), p.31.
12. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1958), pp. 20-33.
- 13.
14. Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theistic Ethics* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1971). pp. 118-119.
15. Jay Adams, "Godliness through Discipline," (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1973).

16. Liddell Hart, p. 25.

## CHAPTER 6: RISE AND REIGN OF DAVID: THE DISRUPTIVE TRUTH OF MESSIANIC LEADERSHIP

Lesson 64

So far in this section of the framework series we have studied the rise of God's counter-culture nation, Israel. As the original post-flood Noahic civilization became ever more paganized, God disrupted the decline of human society. In a miraculous interference in the great kingdom of Egypt, God wrenched His people loose and started Israel on its path as a new nation. From Mt. Sinai God revealed His absolute law code as the international model of righteousness over against all pagan lawmaking activity. In the last chapter we surveyed the start of four centuries of warfare between Israel and her pagan neighbors. As a counter-culture Israel was a never ending disruption to pagan civilization.

Nevertheless, as a fallen people, Israel was constantly in danger of succumbing to the same evil that lay at the root of paganism. Throughout the conquest and settlement the tribes of Jacob failed to attain true national unity. The prophetic analysis of the period concluded that "in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). The people never came to a thorough perception of Yahweh as their true King and failed in their sanctification toward loyalty to Him--as we observed in the last chapter. When God responded with the sentence of doom at Bochim, the coming Kingdom of God was postponed. Something further needed to be done in order to resume the ultimate goal of removing evil from history.

This ancient society had it all: political freedom from surrounding totalitarian regimes, miraculous economic sustenance from God, a model law code, and an educational system thoroughly imbued with biblical wisdom. The failure of this amply blessed society under a theocracy demonstrated anew the sin of mankind. The idea, therefore, that future progress in human civilization rests upon a free, educated, prosperous society is a deceptive myth.[1] The democratic ideal arose not from the Bible but from atomistic philosophy in pagan Greece. Democracy, so popular today, inherently denies the fall of man.

The Judges period ends in chaos. The flesh of man always reacts to chaos and disintegration with a cry for order, even totalitarian order. Anything to be rid of chaos. Thus it was in Nimrod's day (Gen. 10). Man attempted to build security against getting lost in the mysteries of the vast new world with a one-world government at Babel. God, however, interfered. He fractured the human race linguistically so it

would be forced to “fill the earth” under the new world covenant (see Chapter 1).

This time around the cry for a flesh-based totalitarian order again would be resisted. This chapter traces the new controversy within Israel through the book of I Samuel to the rise and reign of King David. As in previous chapters I will contrast the work of the Spirit in Israel to the surrounding pagan world. You should carefully observe the difference. Out of this study you will gain new insights into the sanctification process God is working in our lives. Far more is at stake in this portion of Scripture than just a heroic story of a giant and a boy.

## BACKGROUND FOR KINGSHIP

### “Kings Like All The Other Nations Have”

In the days of Samuel the prophet, Jewish leadership insisted that a monarchy be formed to unify the nation and restore justice and order (I Sam. 8:5). Their role model was that of the surrounding pagan kingships. They showed little evidence of understanding the stipulations about a monarchy already embedded in the Mosaic Law (Deut. 17:14-20).

Speaking of the ancient Near Eastern versions of kingship, Prof. Frankfort writes:

*The ancient Near East considered kingship the very basis of civilization. Only savages could live without a king. Security, peace, justice could not prevail without a king to champion them. If ever a political institution functioned with the assent of the governed, it was the monarchy which built the pyramids with forced labor and drained the Assyrian peasantry by ceaseless wars. . . . Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration.[2]*

A vivid example of pagan kingship was given in Chapter 3 in connection with the exodus from Egypt. It was precisely this structure from which God separated Israel that they now voluntarily sought for themselves.

### King Priests--Genuine and Apostate

To understand what God accomplished through eventually raising up David as His messianic king, you must remember the function of the first kings after the flood. In the first two chapters of this publication we studied the old universal order of civilization designed by Noah and his sons. Through their dramatic physical and intellectual power, Noah and his sons in a few short centuries explored, mapped, settled, and left their

architectural wonders throughout the continents of the new post flood world. They spread the Word of God as it then existed, the Noahic Bible (Gen. 1-9 plus other parts since lost—note one surviving piece in Jude 14-15) leaving traces of their Semitic-like language all over the earth.

In a way not understood these early kings of civilization also acted as priests. They led their people in worship, apparently focusing on various aspects of God's complexity revealed in creation through the sun, moon, storm, and animals. As Noahic civilization deteriorated more and more through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, they perverted not only their kingship authority but also adopted apostate religious practices. The apostate spirit clearly manifested itself at Babel where it was bluntly stated: man, not God, would define all meaning (Gen. 11:4). Polytheistic temples and cults arose in nation after nation often utilizing the architecture of the "sacred mountain" or pillar, testifying to man's claim to a continuity of being with the powers of heaven. God's complexity was broken apart, metaphors in creation were given divine glory (lunar cult, sun deity, etc.).[3]

By Abraham's day, one of these king-priests who had remained faithful to God as El Elyon at Jerusalem authenticated Abraham's call and the beginning of a new era (Gen. 14:17-20). The continuity between Noahic civilization and the separatist nation Israel was revealed through this approval from a surviving, genuine, Noahic king-priest. Israel, as God's missionary nation to the world, would one day bring into existence the ultimate King-Priest to fulfill the destiny of Noahic civilization.

### **Law over King**

We are getting ahead of ourselves. A lot must happen between Israel's birth and the blessing to all the world. After the birth of Israel, the Sinaitic Covenant split the traditional king-priest into two separate offices. The priesthood was confined to the tribe of Levi; the kingship was to remain in another tribe: Judah (note Gen. 49:10).

Israelite kingship was to submit to the authority of the Law (Deut. 17:14-20). God's Law, not a human king, was the ultimate authority. The Creator-creature two-level view of reality had to be respected. Kingship was not supposed to be some midpoint between man and God on a continuous scale of being. As Frankfort has written:

*"The Hebrew king normally functioned in the profane sphere, not in the sacred sphere. He was the arbiter in disputes and the leader in war. He was emphatically not the leader in the cult. . . .He did not, as a rule, sacrifice; that was the task of the priests. He did not interpret the divine*

*will; that, again, was the task of the priests. . . .Moreover, the divine intentions were sometimes made known in a more dramatic way when the prophets . . . cried, “Thus saith the Lord.” These prophets were often in open conflict with the king precisely because the secular character of the king entitled them to censor him. . . . The transcendentalism of Hebrew religion prevented kingship from assuming the profound significance which it possessed in Egypt and Mesopotamia. . . .”[4]*

You must read the stories of I Samuel with this background in mind. The people wanted monarchy, but God had to restrain it and prevent the rise of an imitation form of pagan kingship. In the books of Samuel and Kings God demonstrates over and over the truth of “law over king.” Interestingly, this period of history was later used by Bible-believers in seventeenth and eighteenth century England as an argument against their contemporary “divine right of kings”.<sup>[5]</sup> The Samuel-Kings history proves that monarchy, in and of itself, conceived as man’s fleshly attempt to set order over chaos, is no more successful at truly solving mankind’s dilemma than the earlier “free” theocracy. Neither democracy nor autocracy can ultimately succeed.

## THE RISE OF KINGSHIP AND THE HOUSE OF BENJAMIN

Lesson 65

God’s ways are not our ways. He repeatedly humbles us by doing the unpredictable. His sovereign plan is so ingenious that, like an incredibly brilliant chess master, he uses our moves against Him to defeat us and bring about the plan he had in mind all along! Let’s watch Him “play” with Israel in this matter of kingship.

### God’s Response through Samuel

Although Jews before Samuel functioned as prophets (e.g., Gen. 20:7; Exod. 7:1), Samuel appears to be the first of the prominent biblical prophets (cf. I Sam. 3:19-21). These prophets were agents of God calling Israel to loyalty to the covenants. They anointed kings, and they pronounced judgment upon them. It likely was Samuel, Nathan, and others who compiled the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings to show God’s working through the monarchy. The prophet precedes the king. Even the New Testament begins not with Jesus, the eventual messianic king, but with John the prophet who anoints Him. This is the hallmark of the Bible over against pagan kingships who knew no such limitation on their authority.

Chapter eight of I Samuel is one of the most insightful political documents of all time. It exposes the abuses of totalitarian civil authority—an authority lacking all restraint from any transcendent law.

The core issue of the passage occurs in I Samuel 8:4-9. First, the people have rejected Yahweh, Who, under the Sinaitic Covenant, functioned as the real King (8:7). Second, God instructs Samuel to go along with the public demand (“listen to the voice of the people”, 8:7,9). Third, Samuel is to warn the people what they will get when they have a king like those of all the other nations (8:9).

The following scripture (I Sam. 9-15) traces the outworking of the “demanded monarchy” in the selection of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin. Chapters 9 and 10 narrate the selection and anointing of Saul as king. Saul had admirable outward qualities: handsome and impressive stature (9:2). How Samuel indicated God’s choice with oil reveals what the term “messianic” means (10:1). Messianic leadership is leadership chosen by God through His Spirit symbolized with the oil poured on Saul’s head. The presence of the Spirit in Saul would shortly be obvious (10:6-13). God not only chose and anointed a Benjamite, which conflicted with the messianic promise of Genesis 49:10 that restricted the messianic choice to the tribe of Judah, but He was willing to make Saul’s dynasty an everlasting one (13:13)! Clearly, this House of Benjamin was a conditional kingship, dependent upon its behavior toward God’s law.

### Saul’s Response toward God

Lesson 66

Very soon Saul had an opportunity to prove his royal leadership when Israel was attacked by the Ammonites (I Sam. 11). The Spirit came upon Saul (11:6). As Professor Merrill notes:

*“In the greatest show of military strength since Joshua’s day, three hundred thousand Israelites and thirty thousand men of Judah gathered at Bezek. . . . The next day they attacked the Ammonite besiegers and completely routed them. This put to silence once and for all those who had ridiculed Saul’s regal claims.”[6]*

In spite of the Spirit’s presence with Saul, shown by his prophesying and victory in battle, the monarch demanded by the people was precarious. In a major address with supernatural confirmation, Samuel warned in language reminiscent of the Sinaitic Covenant that Saul’s kingship was a conditional one and that the nation’s real security lay in obeying God (I Sam. 12). Remarkably, the people who heard the Word through Samuel agreed that demanding monarchy was a sin (12:19). Samuel counseled them to trust God’s election of the nation (a truth based upon the superior Abrahamic Covenant) and walk by faith (12:22-24).

Although impressive on the outside, Saul had profound inner flaws that would be his undoing. He placed his own career ahead of the need of

the people for food for battle (14:24), and his own son, the Crown Prince (Jonathan), recognized his father's foolishness (14:29). He caused his army to violate both the Noahic and Sinaitic Covenants (14:32) and eventually almost got himself in a position of having to execute Jonathan (14:44). Later when Samuel passed on Yahweh's order to wage holy war against Amalek, Saul violated the law concerning holy war (Deut. 20:16-18 cf. 15:9). He even appeared to have planned a ceremony of sacrifice (note 15:15,21-22) which would have been a forbidden intrusion into the priesthood of another tribe, the Levites. The outworking of the tension between law and king becomes clearer as we proceed through I Samuel.

In the end, Yahweh rejected Saul's conditional dynasty, and His prophet Samuel would have nothing to do with him for the rest of his life (15:35). Is this narrative from I Samuel 8 to 15 an argument against an Israelite monarchy? Was Samuel against monarchy? The law clearly allowed a monarchy (see Deut. 17:14-20), but did the law require a monarchy? It seems from the text in Deuteronomy that the monarchy was an accommodation of God to the people. He was their true King, but as a nation they would want human national leadership. Such leadership was not in itself evil, but it had to be operated under God's law. The evil with the House of Benjamin was the spirit of dissatisfaction and impatience with God's leadership methods. An evil prayer was answered with tragic results.

Just as the people had fallen into sin even while the law was still being given at Mt. Sinai (Chapter 4), so here the king fell into sin at the very beginning of the monarchy. Neither people nor king could live up to the righteous demands of Yahweh's law: "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Both law and grace are required to succeed under the lordship of Yahweh. When grace is despised, man becomes the creator and determiner of his own righteousness; he recognizes truth only in what he invents himself. He becomes a legalist and a rationalist. Lost is the sense of gratitude toward the Lord for what He has done and must continue to do for man to be saved. Yahweh's answer to Israel's arrogance was to let their monarchy be exposed for what it was—a vain work of the flesh trying to overcome the chaos caused by the previous sin of the judges period.

## GOD'S INTERVENTION AND THE HOUSE OF JUDAH

As God's replacement for Saul, David epitomizes sovereign grace at work. In spite of Israel's premature demand for kingship, God chose to work with the institution and turn it toward His ultimate purposes: to fulfill the king-priest model given in Noah's day with the revelation of His own Son to the world.

David was a product from beginning to end of the grace of God. I present his life in three parts.

Lesson 67

## The Anointing and Confirmation

Even while Samuel was yet grieving over the failure of Saul, Yahweh led Samuel to anoint David as only a youth (I Sam. 16; cf. II Sam. 7:8; Ps.78:70). Again the messianic emblem of oil (Spirit) occurs. This time, however, the anointed was from the right tribe in lineage of promise from the Abrahamic Covenant. The scripture also notes that the anointed has been selected on the basis of what God sees in his heart, not on the basis of his immediate impression on the public eye (I Sam. 16:7).

Mere prophetic anointing was not enough to effect throne accession. The youth would have to prove himself to the nation. David's long struggle to accede to his throne is recounted in I Samuel 16 to II Samuel 4. I want you to observe how sharply this story contrasts to the customary politics in the ancient pagan world. Pay attention to these contrasts; they reveal how God's Spirit works over against normal fallen flesh.

The call of God on David had to stand the acid test of experience. Before David finally attained national recognition, he had survived seven direct attempts upon his life by Saul (I Sam. 18:10-11, 25-27; 19:1-7, 9-10, 11-17, 18-24); evaded Saul's "search-and-destroy" missions three times (I Sam. 23:13-29; 24:1-22; 26:1-15); defeated the Philistines twice (I Sam. 17:20-54; 23:1-5); obliterated the last remnants of the Amalekite coalition (I Sam. 27:7-12; 30:8-20); won in a long struggle of attrition with Saul's family to obtain the allegiance of the other Hebrew tribes besides that of his own tribe Judah (II Sam. 2:12-4:12;); and escaped from two bad decisions of aligning himself with the Philistines (I Sam. 21:10-15; 27:1-29:11). Gradually, both Israel's leaders and populace recognized the choice of Yahweh in David (Jonathan the Crown Prince in I Sam. 20:11-17; Saul in I Sam. 24:20-22; the tribe of Judah in II Sam. 2:4; and all Israel in II Sam. 5:1-3).

Three areas of skill are prominent. First, was his warrior skill. The famous Goliath story in I Samuel 17 must be understood in the same historical context that occurs in Homer's *Iliad*, Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, and Vergil's *Aeneid*. Just as in these later stories, David and Goliath are called "men of the middle" (17:4,8-9) or champion warriors whose duel in the middle of the battle line determines the outcome of the battle.

The second skill was his musical ability. Throughout his time of trial he managed to write great hymns of lament and praise to Yahweh (e.g., Pss. 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63, 142). So powerful were his

compositions that they have become the spiritual food of the saints for over 30 centuries after him!

His third skill was his wisdom rooted in biblical faith. He spared his arch foe, Saul, twice (I Sam. 24:1-22; 26:5-25), trusting that Yahweh would fulfill His Word by arranging Saul's death through "accidental" or "natural" means (I Sam. 26:10). He made a very unusual oath to protect the house of Saul, his rival dynastic family, from total extinction (I Sam. 20:15-16; 24:21-22) and later enforced those oaths during his administration (II Sam. 4:9-12; 9:1-13; 21:7).

In contrast to David's story of accession is the story of the famous Assyrian king who lived a few centuries later, Esarhaddon. No biblical revealing prophet came to him in his youth. Instead, his father, the Assyrian king Sennacherib, chose him as his successor.[7] Later an oracle "confirmed" to Esarhaddon his father's choice, but he still faced the problem of convincing the rest of the royal family and the nation. Rather than relying upon God's grace, Esarhaddon gained his throne by his own works seen inside an idolatrous view of the world. He himself recounted the matter:

*"I became mad as a lion, my soul was aflame and I [called up the gods by] clapping my hands, with regard to my [intention of] assuming the kingship, my paternal legacy. I prayed to Asshur, Sin, Shamash, Bel, Nebo and Mergel, to Ishtar of Nineveh, the Ishtar of Arbela, and they agreed to give an [oracle] answer. . . I did not even wait for the next day. . . but I spread my wings like the [swift] flying storm (bird) to overwhelm my enemies."*[8]

The Assyrian king did see the world in light of the Creator-creature distinction. He had no sovereign Word from the Creator concerning his destiny so he diversified and hedged his faith in a group of created god and goddess images. Such a group, of course, lacked the sovereign power of the God of Israel so that ultimately all depended upon him. He had to create his own security by eliminating his opponents in the "uncontrolled" political arena. None could be left for the gods to remove as David left Saul in the hands of the Lord. Esarhaddon made no oaths guaranteeing merciful survival of his foes' families as David did for the House of Saul.

*"In the month of Addar, a favorable month, on the eighth day, the day of the Nebo festival, I . . . sat down happily on the throne of my father. The Southwind, the breeze [directed by] Ea, blew [at this moment], this wind, the blowing of which portends well for exercising kingship, came just in time for me. . . The culpable military which had schemed to secure the sovereignty of Assyria for my brothers, I considered guilty as a collective*

*group and meted out a grievous punishment to them; I [even] exterminated their male descendants.”[9]*

After comparing this pagan story to David’s anointing and confirmation, you cannot help but see the contrast between the works of the flesh and the gracious work of the sovereign Lord. David’s ascent to office can thus be described as a political work of grace by the Intervening God of history. David as a man of faith placed his entire unhedged faith in Yahweh alone. Such messianic leadership models Spirit-directed leadership in sharp contrast to the traditional fleshly leadership of paganism.

### **Yahweh Grants David a Covenant**

David arrived on his throne as the man through whom God would reveal His sovereign plan for Kingdom leadership. Just as the election of Israel was rooted in the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant, so the election of Israel’s king would now be rooted in an unconditional covenant. Both nation and king could not rest securely in their human merit under the conditional Sinaitic Covenant (I Sam. 12); if they were ever to attain the historical manifestation of God’s Kingdom, God would have to do the work. Before God grants a new covenant, however, David honors God by establishing His meeting place with the nation.

The Old Testament narratives insist that it was David who finally brought the Ark of Yahweh to Jerusalem and made it his capital (II Sam. 6; I Chron. 15-16). As Dr. Merrill points out, in so doing David acted as a priest and king who emulated the ancient Noahic king-priest model shown in Melchizedek (who also reigned at Jerusalem--cf. Ps. 110).[10] The royal and priestly functions so carefully separated under the Sinaitic Covenant between Levi and Judah are coming closer together. Features in David’s life now begin to point ahead in history to the coming Messiah (“Anointed One”) Who not only will be Israel’s king but also civilization’s universal king! The Spirit-given leadership model emphasizes the requirement to lead the people in worship as well as in civic duties.

After telling of King David’s civic and religious accomplishments for Yahweh’s nation, the OT text introduces Yahweh’s accomplishment for David (II Sam. 7; Ps. 89). To understand better Yahweh’s gift, I will follow my comparison method. Let’s compare what Yahweh did for David with what the pagan deities “did” for their favorite kings. It was customary in the nations around Israel for a king, after he had won an important campaign, to build a temple to the deity that supposedly helped

him win the campaign. Thus, for example, after Pharaoh Thutmose III had subdued lands to the south and northeast of Egypt, he built a temple for his Egyptian god, Amon-Re. In the famous victory hymn of Thutmose III we read the words of Amon-Re as given through Egyptian diviners:

*“Welcome to me, as thou exultest at the sight of my beauty, my son and my avenger, [Thutmose III], living forever! . . . Thou treadest all foreign countries, thy glad heart. There is none who can thrust himself into the vicinity of thy majesty, while I am thy guide. . . . My serpent-diadem which is upon thy head, she consumes them. . . . [11]*

Then, after mentioning his help of Thutmose in the campaigns, Amon-Re turned to the matter of temple-building:

*“Thou hast erected my dwelling place as the work of eternity, made longer and wider than that which had been before. . . . Thy monuments are greater than [those of] any king who has been. I commanded thee to make them, and I am satisfied with them.” [12]*

Finally, Amon-Re promised to Thutmose III: “I have established thee upon the throne by Horus for millions of years, that thou mightest lead the living for eternity.” [13]

Now, compare some of these details—the military victories, the temple-building, the million-year dynasty—with the details of II Samuel 7:4-16. Yahweh claims to be the source of David’s victorious accession to the throne with its military victories along the way (7:8-9). He directed that a temple be built for Himself (7:13), and He promised that the Davidic Dynasty (“house”) would be an eternal dynasty. The significant comparisons between the Hebrew and Egyptian stories, however, are not the parallel features but the contrasting ones. Instead of commanding David to build Him a temple immediately, Yahweh first insisted upon building a “temple” (Hebrew **bayith** = “house” and “temple”) for David (7:5-7, 11-16)! Moreover, rather than a temple of cedar such as man could build, Yahweh would build a temple of people from the seed of David!

Yahweh’s covenant with David was unconditional like the Abrahamic Covenant. [14] Let us use the four-part covenant structure to study it. The parties to the covenant were Yahweh and David plus certain of his descendants. The sign of the covenant was the enduring line of David’s descendants who would qualify for Israel’s throne. The Davidic Dynasty would survive through great historical catastrophes for ten centuries, a major theme of Kings and Chronicles (note II Kings 25:27-30), until the Everlasting One, the greater Son of David, would

come. The Eighteenth Dynasty of Thutmose III disappeared less than 150 years after his reign!

The legal terms of the Davidic Covenant can be summarized in three promises, each having a particular application to the royal family of Israel and a universal application to the royal family of the Greater Son. First, the king would enjoy a “father-son” relationship with God (II Sam. 7:14; cf. Ps. 2:7). The king would be “adopted” into God’s family. Later those “in Christ” would be called “sons of God” (John 1:12). Second, if the seed of David should sin, they would be chastened but never rejected—the dynasty would survive because it was unconditionally elected (II Sam. 7:14-15; Ps. 89:30-35). Those, too, who are elect in David’s Son, though disciplined, are never lost (Rom. 8:29-30; I Cor. 5:5; Heb. 12:5-11). Third, David’s dynasty would always be centered at the cultic city of Jerusalem in the kingdom of Israel (II Sam. 7:16). Similarly, those in Christ are destined to be centered at the Throne of God as priests and kings forever (Rev. 5:10). Obviously, these legal terms enlarge upon the “seed” promise of the prior Abrahamic Covenant.

The founding sacrifice seems to be missing with this covenant, unless it is implied in the promise that God would never permit David’s “soul” to see corruption (Ps. 16:10; cf. Acts 2:22-36). The promise of resurrection of David’s seed implies the death of David’s seed and, hence, a founding sacrifice might be indirectly implied by the promises to David. Yahweh’s promise, then, after David’s accession to the throne, actually fulfilled what had been the cry of so many pagan, viz., an eternal dynasty. Again, the unique work of the God of the Bible is clear.

## David’s Royal Record

Lesson 68

David might have been a model of Spirit-led leadership that pointed to his Greater Son, but he was fallen and imperfect. In one of the most famous and well-written royal records in the world, the Author of Scripture tells us the story of the outworking of an act of adultery on the king and his kingdom (II Sam. 11-20). The affair began at the height of David’s political career. Spiritually, David was at a low ebb during the Ammonite-Syrian campaigns (II Sam. 10; 12:26-31). Instead of assuming his customary direct command, David chose to delegate it to his field general, Joab (II Sam. 11:1). David’s pattern of living had become abnormal. Whereas before he had been an early riser (Pss. 5:3; 59:16; 143:8), at this point he arose from his bed “at even tide” (II Sam. 11:2). After seeing Bathsheba, who unwisely exposed herself within view of the palace, David had sexual intercourse with her; and then, to cover up one sin, he committed another—murder of Uriah, her husband and one of David’s key army officers (II Sam. 11:4-27; cf. 23:39).[15]

At this point another event unique to Israel occurred. Only in Israel could a “commoner” censure the king, but Nathan the commoner-prophet did announce condemnation upon David (II Sam. 12:1-14). Since the king in Yahweh’s kingdom was not above God’s Law, he too, had to submit to the Law as every other Hebrew. Moreover, like all other men, the king was a fallen creature with an obvious inclination to sin. Although David confessed his sin and was forgiven (II Sam. 12:13; Pss. 51 and possibly 32, 38), the rest of his reign would be marred from the “fallout” of his sinful act. Sins of sex and violence would plague his family (II Sam. 12:10-12). Since Uriah had lost one loved one, David would lose four loved ones—all sons (II Sam. 12:6; cf. 12:19; 13:28-29; 18:14-15; I Kings 2:24-25). Political instability and rebellion would weaken his reign (II Sam. 15-20).

Nowhere else in the ancient world could the king be so censured—especially for a moral wrong—as David was, and certainly nowhere else in the world would it be so publicly condemned as in the royal record of II Samuel. Outside of Israel and her Law there was no developed sense of sin. Frankfort notes concerning Egypt:

*“The Egyptian viewed his misdeeds not as sins, but as aberrations. . . .It is especially significant that the Egyptians never showed any trace of feeling unworthy of divine mercy. For he who errs is not a sinner but a fool, and his conversion to a better way of life does not require repentance but a better understanding. . . .The theme of God’s wrath is practically unknown in Egyptian literature; for the Egyptian, in his aberrations, is not a sinner whom God rejects but an ignorant man who is disciplined and corrected.”[16]*

Similarly, the ancient Mesopotamians lacked the concept of sin:

*“While they knew themselves to be subject to the decrees of the gods, they had no reason to believe that these decrees were necessarily just. Hence their penitential psalms about in confessions of guilt but ignore the sense of sin; they are vibrant with despair but not with contrition—with regret but not with repentance.”[17]*

It is the same old story. Paganism, as we saw in the second section of this series, views the fallen universe as “normal”. Good and evil are correlative of each other. In the Continuity of Being mankind and the gods alike are corrupt; there is no fall and no future separation of good and evil. This view plays out in the lack of a sense of sin. The royal record of David’s reign, therefore, is a “disruption” to the usual royal histories. The Creator-creature distinction with a real fall, a real Law, and a real future judgment/salvation opposes the pagan leadership ideal.

Although David's sin and its aftermath dominate the structure of II Samuel, there is a deeper theme of David's election. God's evaluation of David was that he "went fully after Yahweh" (I Kings 11:6; cf. 14:8; 15:3). The royal record ends with material emphasizing Yahweh's pleasure in David and his loyalty to Yahweh. David's thanksgiving psalm (II Sam. 22 = Ps. 22) prominently underscored his continuing faith in Yahweh's grace. Events which clearly showed his loyalty to Yahweh are recounted in II Samuel 21 and 24. Of crucial importance is the extensive material in the book of Chronicles which demonstrates David's great interest in establishing the nation's worship center or cultus (I Chron. 23-29). In fact, Chronicles even omits the Bathsheba account entirely. David may not have been the greatest administrator (cf. II Sam. 15:3) or the most consistent politician (cf. II Sam. 9:7; 16:4; 19:29), but he did place Yahweh first in the overall priorities of his administration.

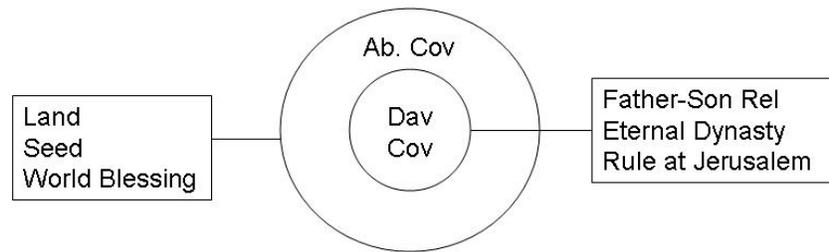
### **DAVID'S LIFE: A MODEL OF SANCTIFICATION**

In the previous chapter we looked at the truth of sanctification under five aspects (phases, aim, means, dimensions, enemies) using historical revelation of the conquest and settlement period. Here I again will treat sanctification under the same five aspects but will use the historical revelation of David's life instead of the earlier life of the twelve tribes. The messianic leadership model will sharpen our grasp of what God is doing in our individual lives.

#### **Phases of David's Sanctification**

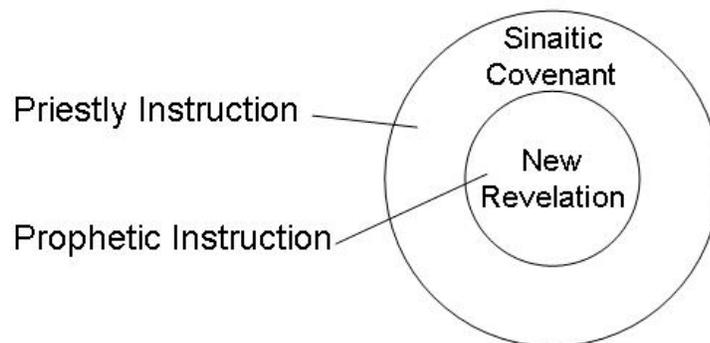
Previously, we learned that the anchor of Israel's sanctification lay in God's sovereign plan announced in the Abrahamic Covenant. This past covenant defined the meaning of all of Israel's history and revealed what Israel could expect of God. To this covenantal information, God added more revelation through the Davidic Covenant: David's dynasty would be the center of Israel's relationship with Yahweh, the dynasty might be disciplined but never rejected, and it would always be centered at Jerusalem.

The details of David's life, therefore, had to be interpreted in light of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. David could not "make a name for himself" as was the fleshly crusade since Babel; the details of his life made sense only in light of this "top circle" of positional sanctification:



Thus the Holy Spirit tells us the narrative of David through three books—Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles—carefully selecting enough material to paint a picture of God's work in his life using the structure of the Davidic Covenant.

David's experiential sanctification, like Israel's, was linked to his obedience or disobedience to the known will of God. In his case, the known will of God included not only the Sinaitic Covenant but also the additional information given him through the prophets Samuel and Nathan. The royal record tells us about his sanctification journey through time—his adventure in the bottom circle:



For the Christian in the Church Age he or she has an elect destiny in God's plan just as David did. Through our union with Christ, David's Greater Son, we share the destiny of one day becoming a king-priest with him (cf. Rev. 5:10), the ultimate fulfillment of mankind to reign under God (cf. Gen. 1:26-28). The day-to-day details in our lives have a meaning within the context of this destiny just as David's long struggle to attain the throne was an outworking of his election to one day become king of Israel. The details of our lives are not disjointed; each detail fits with all the others in a sequence that reveals a master plan. Moreover, just as the Holy Spirit selected only a few of David's experiences to record as revelation to us, so He allows us to see only pieces of His master plan for us. The unbeliever, by contrast, has no such key to explain the details of his life. Not only does he not know "where it all

leads", but he has no true assurance that his life is leading in any purposeful direction.

On a day-to-day basis the Christian as a finite creature, of course, cannot know the overall master plan, but he or she can trust God's faithfulness to execute such a plan. David is the model. He knew not how God would remove Saul and replace him with David, but he trusted anyway. David went about obeying the known will of God in the details of life, leaving the "big picture" up to God. The two aspects of sanctification, positional and experiential, worked together in David harmoniously. Their synergy ~ stimulated much of David's soul reflection and worship in the psalms. May we also reflect and worship in the details of our lives as we wonder at God's plan for each of us!

### **Aim of David's Sanctification**

David's life also illustrates the second principle of sanctification: the aim of loyalty to God rather than demolishing evil or acquiring exotic experiences. Thus in the early period of his life when he awaited the throne, David learned to trust that God would work out His promise on His time-scale, not David's. All of David's enemies would not be eliminated automatically. The Bathsheba scandal was a severe lesson like that of Ai earlier: loyalty to God takes priority over all else — victory in battle or a successful reign. To pagans like Thutmose III or Esarhaddon this "higher loyalty" above self-success would have seemed "impractical" and ill-fitting to kingship.

During the aftermath of the scandal, David was quite willing to accept the will of God even if that meant stepping down as king over Israel (II Sam. 15:25-26). The closing years of David's life gave witness that deep in his heart a certain amount of loyalty had been developed. The royal record, then, featured loyalty to God at the core of messianic leadership. We Christians are to model this "impractical" (to the pagan world-system) life-style.

### **Law and Grace in David's Life**

Previously we noted that both law and grace were the means of daily sanctification. Law in its largest sense, the entire Word of God so far revealed, is the only way we come to know God's mind so that our faith has content. It is the only way we are confronted by His holiness beyond what feeble impression is still left of it in our injured conscience. Law prevents the misinterpretation of grace as some sort of eternal laxity on God's part.

For David the Word of God consisted of the Sinaitic Covenant and various prophetic messages. Unlike Pharaoh who was a law unto himself, or the Mesopotamian kings who adopted humanly-originated ethics, David was continually drawn to God's law either voluntarily (Ps. 19:7-14) or involuntarily (II Sam. 12). Although David fell far short of perfection, he was in no sense an antinomian.

Nor was David a legalist. He treasured God's grace. The hub of David's life did not lie within himself; it lay outside of himself with Yahweh and His gracious heavenly reign. The arduous years of waiting upon God for his throne taught him the necessity of grace and the futility of trying to accomplish God's will out of his own resources. Unlike Thutmose III or Esarhaddon, David did not attempt to invent a kingdom out of his own plan nor to secure his dynasty by some human scheme.

### **The Enemies of Sanctification in David's Life**

David's warrior skills against the enemies of Yahweh serve as a model for us. Historically and politically, the enemies of Israel and of David were the primarily the Philistines. Instead of considering them his personal enemies as Saul did (e.g., I Sam. 14:24), David fought against them as enemies of Yahweh (e.g., I Sam. 17:26, 45-47). Because of his loyalty to Yahweh he considered Yahweh's enemies as his enemies. David's struggle as king was always to be loyal to Yahweh before he fought the enemy. He followed the indirect strategy I mentioned in the previous chapter.

### **David's Special Example of Confession of Sin**

[Lesson 69](#)

In the previous chapter I also mentioned the two dimensions of sanctification: the existential present moment and the long-term progress due to the sum of many moments. The existential moment is the place where you and I chose to trust and obey or to be faithless and go our own way. It is "either-or". Either we consciously obey the know/jwill of God for the present moment as we understand it in our hearts, or we slip back into the bondage of the flesh.

A very basic question facing every believer is how to return into a state of obedience after having sinned. Is a special feeling needed? Must I pursue some spiritual exercise? The answer is that we are restored into acceptability with God by our confession and His response to it, a theme made clear in David's life during the Bathsheba scandal (II Sam. 12:1-14; Ps. 51). Observe the three stages in this restoration process.

First, there is conviction of sin. Conviction, like the term covenant, is

used so much in biblically-based conversation that we get sloppy in our understanding of it. In previous parts of this series I stressed again and again that the biblical term covenant means essentially the same thing as our modern term contract. In a similar way, the biblical term conviction means essentially the same thing as our modern term convinced.

No genuine confession can occur without a "convincing" of specific sin. Whatever a believer does, he must do by faith. He cannot merely "go through the motions" of confession in order to feel better, unconvinced that there is a genuine ethical problem in his relationship to God. In biblical parlance the human spirit through knowledge and conscience must be convinced that it has done wrong to the Creator and Redeemer. It must be called back to the basic presupposition of submission to the absolute authority of the Lord.

Convincing of sin isn't the same as modern psychological "insights" gained through various therapeutic approaches. Convincing of sin centers on the our specific offense to God's righteousness. David became convinced that at the core, he had sinned against God, not man or society at large (Ps. 51: 4). Sin against God, of course, frequently has enormous social effects, but in the end society doesn't produce the standard of righteousness that is sinned against. God does.

Moreover, the process of conviction is a revelation to our heart of who we are and Who God is. It is a point along the long-term growth curve we looked at in the last chapter. God's gracious initiative has to work upon us to reveal these things. In the flesh, we are like Adam: we flee to the bushes to hide from God, we cloke ourselves in self-righteous fig leaves, and we seek to shift the blame back onto Him. We pretend that we have not sinned and/or that we are not slaves to the sin principle (I John 1:10). To get around this flesh, the Spirit has to use various "indirect approaches" like Nathan did with David (II Sam. 12:1-7a).

Second, there is confession, but only if prior convincing occurs since genuine confession must be by faith; it involves a jumping back to biblical authority away from following the flesh—repentance. Being remorseful in the sense of feeling sorry for ourselves or the consequences we see coming is not repentance (II Cor. 7:8-10; Heb. 12:16-17). We must go back to the the very starting point of the gospel: we are sinners before our Creator and He is calling to us to trust His pardon through Christ's atonement. When David confessed, he set aside all excuses and blameshifting. David also confessed the existence of his flesh (Ps. 51:5-6; cf. I John 1:8). The individual sin must be interpreted against the backdrop of the depraved flesh so that we truly see our state before God and cast ourselves anew upon His gracious atonement-based cleansing.

Not until David could we see the distinction between believing unto salvation and confessing our sin. There is no question of David losing his salvation due to his personal sin. The David Covenant eternally secured his position before God as His "son" and the active work of the Holy Spirit in his life. This same covenant, however, also promised discipline upon any sins as an action within the family of God (II Sam. 7:14-15). Confession, therefore, involves a family discipline from God as our Father, not a "re-entry" into the Kingdom of God from outside it.

The third step in the restoration process is God's response. Sanctification must be seen in light of the larger question of God's doing away with evil in history. Personal restoration is not just a tiny, isolated speck in historical time; it is a step forward in God's plan to eventually cast away evil. Evil must go. Thus while God forgives our personal sin from eternal judgment (see II Sam. 12:14), He often ordains specific consequences in our lives from that point onward (see II Sam. 12:10-12,14). In His grace He provides us a way to walk through such consequences, but He allows us to reap what we have sown in order to teach mankind His holiness and the veracity of His commandments.

When we walk through the "fallout" of our sins, we are strongly tempted by the evil one to think God is still angry with us, that we have to make some sort of atonement to Him. Often this can become a major challenge to believe the Word of God. David, when faced with the Father's discipline in his life —the death of his sons and the political turmoil in the nation, met these trials with a strong faith. He had to believe that the sin was forgiven, never to be atoned for. He had to believe that his dynasty would survive through it all.

When God responds to our confession, we must spiritually sense that the blood of Christ cleanses us regardless of our emotional reaction (Ps. 51:7; I John 1:9). From this sense of forgiveness, that we shall survive to eternally dwell in His Presence, we obtain hope to endure whatever consequences that will follow. Biblical restoration leaves us looking forward to being part of God's ultimate victory in history, not looking back at our sin.

The pioneer of biblical counselling, Dr. Jay Adams has written some insightful words on this matter of restoration:

*"Many counselees come only in order to obtain relief from the consequences of sinful life patterns; they do not think of the holy God*

*whom they have offended by violating His will. They must be brought to conviction of sin, not merely to recognition of their misery. True relief, like true happiness, is always a by-product; it never may be found by seeking it directly. ... A hundred and one. . . protests are heard daily by Christian counsellors. Boiled down, they all say one thing: 'Please excuse me from my responsibility to life like a Christian, on the grounds that my problem is unique. ...*

*If a headhunting Auca Indian can change so radically that he abandons his primitive pagan life style and is able to tour the United States giving testimony to his new-found faith, then an American housewife, who may have experienced less love and security in her childhood than she might have wished, also may become a responsible Christian woman. She is not doomed inevitably to live the life of a [verbal] headhunter because of what her parents did to her! . . . [18]*

The rise and reign of David reveals what messianic leadership in the Kingdom of God looks like. This man's life disrupts the leadership ideal projected by paganized civilization by showing us godly kingship. It shows us how God ultimately answers mankind's cry for human leadership with a form that truly fulfills the "king-priest" model of civilization's founders: a leader who leads his people in worship as well as in all the details of life.

## END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

1. The deception at work in this myth hides behind the meaning of the words "free", "educated", and "prosperous". Obviously, the city of the redeemed in the eternal state to come could be described by these words but their meaning would be controlled by biblical, not pagan thought.
2. Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p.3
3. God has a plurality of names in the Old Testament and is described by a plurality of natural metaphors. Paganism, by imposing its Continuity of Being dogma upon these distinctions, conjured up individual personages or "deified metaphors".
4. Frankfort, KAG, pp. 341-343.
5. For a clear example see the famous seventeenth century "tract" against the divine right of English kings written by Samuel Rutherford, Lex Rex: the Law and the Prince (Ann Arbor, MI.: University Microfilms, [1644]). Rutherford uses precisely these Old Testament passages.
6. Eugene H. Merrill, Kingdom of Priests (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 200-201.

7. Sennacherib was the king who tried to destroy Judah in the days of Isaiah and Hezekiah, but who was resoundingly repelled by Yahweh's intervention (II Kings 18:7-19:37; Isa. 36-37).
8. See Leo Oppenheim's translation of the "Prism of Esarhaddon" in The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Text and Pictures, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 289.
9. Ibid.
10. See his discussion where he concludes that Psalm 110 applied to David as well as to the Coming Messiah, Merrill, pp. 210-211, 263-266.
11. John Wilson's translation of "The Hymn of Victory of Thutmose III" in Pritchard, pp. 374-375.
12. Ibid., p. 375.
13. Ibid.
14. See discussion in Chapters 3 and 5.
15. Bathsheba may not have been wholly without blame here. She probably was washing herself (cf. II Sam. 11:4; Lev. 15:19-28; 18:19; 20:18; Ezk. 18:5-6). Obviously, this is not the kind of bathing which ought to be done in full public view!
16. Henri Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion (New York: Harper Torchbook ed., 1961), pp. 73, 77.
17. Frankfort, KAG, p. 278.
18. Jay E. Adams, The Christian Counselor's Manual (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1973), p. 96.