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THE PILGRIM GOSPEL: THE OLD TESTAMENT AS A THEOLOGY OF JOURNEY

By Dr. David Pederson¹

As the pastor of a congregation of expatriates, I can attest to the spiritual value of the journey. People on the journey are exiled willingly, or unwillingly, from the familiar things that make up home. Their journey oscillates between home and homelessness. Home is a goal; yet it is spiritually dangerous because those militantly satisfied with homeland are prime candidates for spiritual blindness. I admit that the contingency of my own ministry world is an active lens through which I see this coherence of journey in scripture. However, my “homelessness” is not unlike a few of the biblical writers. Further, involuntary and voluntary homelessness is increasing in our world as the poor become displaced and the rich adopt a lifestyle of journey.

The following study traces some of the themes of the journey through parts of the Old Testament: (1) God initiates journeys according to His sovereign plan; (2) excessive attachment to an earthly home leads to spiritual blindness; (3) true rest is future; and (4) people most open to the gospel are on the move physically or emotionally. The central issue revolves around the normality of homelessness in biblical faith. The tension between our rest and our journey is a continuing and necessary element because humans need help taking their eyes off the physical to see the eternal. Just as the earth's rotation draws us from the security of sunlight into the angst and awe of the speckled cosmos, so our oscillation between rest and journey is designed to make us lift up our eyes.

THE PERFECT JOURNEY (GENESIS 1:1-2:3)

The opening verses of scripture present a picture of perfect rest. There is no indication that this journey of divine design needs to take place outside the emotional security and physical protection of the garden walk with God (Gen 3:8). Similarly, the New Jerusalem is

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described with immense proportions; but there exists no darkness, separation, fear, or emotional pain in the celestial traveling, for God is immediately present (Rev 21:1-4, 15-27). The “angst” of the journey that includes discovery and loss, acceptance and suspicion, and adventure and identity crisis is unknown in the four chapters composing the golden cover of the story of God’s dealings with his creation. In paradise there is only joy in the journey. The middle 1185 chapters of the Bible are where the agony of the journey takes place.

Genesis 1:1-2:3 may be seen as a brief account of history from creation to consummation.² Four textual factors make this contribution: (1) the indefinite articles for days one through five point to the unique character of days six and seven;³ (2) the absence of evening or morning for day seven is unique; (3) the recurring *todl ət* (*generations*) phrase (2:4) generally enters into and expands the history which concluded the preceding passage;⁴ and (4) the surprising statement that God’s work was completed on the seventh rather than the sixth day.⁵

The story beginning in Genesis 2:4 explains the path that the *sixth day* takes to make it to the final (seventh) day that knows neither evening nor morning (Rev 21:1, 22-26). The seventh creation day is a future hope with present obligations. It is also a day of completion. Utopian rest is not possible until the seventh day arrives.

The journey anticipates the seventh creation day.⁶ Biblical writers saw the final Sabbath as a future event.⁷ John opens his gospel

²For an examination of Genesis 1:1-2:4a as an introduction, see John Sailhammer, “Exegetical Notes: Genesis 1:1 - 2:4a” *Trinity Journal* 5 (1984): 73 – 82; and Stordalen, Terje, “Genesis 2:4: Restudying A Locus Classicus,” *Z fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 104, no. 2 (1992): 163-76.

³See David A. Sterchi, “Does Genesis 1 Provide a Chronological Sequence?” *JETS* 39 (1996): 529-36.

⁴This literary device ratchets back into the preceding time period with further explanation and detail. Except for the clan listings and the Babel excursus, the “generation” passage always includes the death or completion of action of the key figure(s) of the preceding section. Uses of *todl ət* in other books after Genesis do not serve the same function. See Ex 6:16,19; Num 1:20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42; 3:1; 15:38; 18:23; 35:29; Ruth 4:18; 1Ch 1:29; 5:7; 7:2, 4, 9; 8:28; 9:9, 34; 26:31.

⁵See Victor Hurowitz, “When Did God Finish Creation?” *Bible Review* 3, no. 4 (1987): 12-14.

⁶Following are five “reasons” for the Sabbath:

Because God rested: Ex 20:8,10-11; 31:14-16

Remembering that you were delivered from slavery: Deut 5:12, 14-15; 16:12

Restoration is needed: 2 Chron 23:4, 8; 36:21

Disobedience will cause expulsion: Neh 9:14; 10:31; 13:15, 21-22; Jer 17:21, 24, 27

Future hope for true Sabbath rest: Isa 1:13; 56:2, 6; 58:13; 66:23

with the creation/Sabbath theme. In healing the paralytic, Jesus corrects the anthropomorphic misconception that God had rested on the Sabbath:⁸ “But He answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working’” (John 5:17). For John, the true Sabbath is still future. The writer of Hebrews advanced the ever-present “today” of repentance (day six). At first glance, it appears that our entering a “works-less rest” is directly related to the idea that God has finished his work and rested.⁹

For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as *God did from His*. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through [following] the same example of disobedience (Heb 4:10-11; see also Col 2:17).

To understand the future element of the Sabbath in Hebrews, we must look at the introduction of the concept of God's rest in 4:3. The *kaitoi* clause is translated (NASB, NIV) with a mild disjunctive, *yet, although*. However, *kaitoi* is best translated as strong objection or objection question:

“. . . they shall not enter My rest,” but (*kaitoi*) were [all] His works finished since the foundation of the world? For He has thus said somewhere concerning the Sabbath, “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; and again in the passage above, “They shall never enter my rest.”

No reason given: Ex 16:23, 25, 29; 23:12; 35:2-3; Lev 16:31; 23:3, 11, 15, 32; 24:8; 25:2, 4, 6; Num 15:32; 28:9-10; 2 Kgs 4:23; 11:5, 7, 9; 16:18 1 Chron 9:32; Ps 92:1; Lam 2:6; Eze 46:1, 4, 12; Am 8:5.

⁷For current literature on multidimensional meaning of scripture from an evangelical perspective, see W. Edward Glenny, “The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations,” *JETS* 38 (1995): 481-500.

⁸Exodus 16:11 places the manna provision as a divine work akin to the great work of deliverance or judgment by the power Yahweh in Exodus (6:7; 7:5,17; 10:2). See also Ezekiel (6:7, 10, 13-14; 7:4, 27; 37:6, 13, 28; 38:23; 39:6, 22, 28). God did not rest on the Sabbath during the manna provision because God was performing his mighty works. Paul Trudinger shows how the creation week was on the mind of John in the beginning of his gospel in “The Seven Days of the New Creation in St. John’s Gospel: Some Further Reflections,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1972): 154-58. See also “‘On the Third Day There Was a Wedding at Cana’: Reflections on St John 2:1-12,” *Downside Review* 104, no. 354 (1986): 41-43.

⁹See Stanley L. Jaki, “The Sabbath-Rest of the Maker of All,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 50, no. 1 (1995): 37-49.

Therefore, Hebrews is establishing the fact that the believer still has work to do in the race of faith. This Sabbath work is the most significant of all. It is the work of purification and renewal. Hebrews begins and ends with the consummation of creation (1:12 and 13:14). Christ does not suffer many times as in the works of the law. Rather, He suffers once at the end of day six (Heb 9:26). He then appears a second time (Heb 9:28). This Day (seven) will dawn with the final act of creation where the created things are rolled away and the unshakable eternity remains (Hebrews 12:27).

Later writers take the seventh day as a future certainty. The Epistle of Barnabas interpreted the seven days of creation in a chiliatic manner.¹⁰

Therefore, children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, everything shall come to an end. And he rested on the seventh day. This He meaneth; when His Son shall come, and shall abolish the time of the Lawless one, and shall judge the ungodly . . . then shall He truly rest on the seventh day (15:4).

Augustine saw a future seventh day:

Lord God, grant us peace . . . the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, the peace without an evening. All this most beautiful array of things, all so very good, will pass away when all their courses are finished—for in them there is both morning and evening. But the seventh day is without an ending, and it has no setting, for thou hast sanctified it with an everlasting duration. After all thy works of creation, which were very good, thou didst rest on the seventh day, although thou hadst created them all in unbroken rest—and this so that the voice of thy Book might speak to us with the prior assurance that after our

¹⁰Other early writers who held to chiliatic days are listed in Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1994). Some of Ross' citations are Philo, *Do Opificio Mundi* (Harvard, 1949, 1, 13); Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* (Schopp, Christian Heritage, 1948, 277-78); Irenaeus, *Adv. Heeresis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981, 5, 551-52); and Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes, Book VII, Chapter XIV*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* VII, 211. For further study on the science and Scripture issue, see Seung-Hun Yang, "Radiocarbon Dating and American Evangelical Christians," *J of the American Scientific Affiliation* 45, no. 4 (1993): 229-40.

works . . . we may find our rest in thee in the Sabbath of life eternal (Confessions 13:35f).

The opening chapter of the Bible covers the history of creation, culminating in eternal rest. We live in the sixth day, on a journey toward the seventh. This opening chapter introduces the tension as we eagerly await the finishing of God's work on the seventh day. As we acknowledge the tension between day six and day seven, we see that God still has work to do.¹¹

THE PRESERVATION OF THE JOURNEY (GENESIS 2:4-11:32)

Our children's Bible describes the post-fall banishment from Eden as "A Very Sad Day." Aside from the sorrow, the thrust into exile was the way for humankind to return to the tree of life.¹² God's death-promise was immediately enacted in the moment of man's rebellion (2:17; 3:3). Though the creation-kissed garden still burst with life, death was evident in Adam's separation from self through shame, the separation from community through accusation, and separation from God through hiding (3:8-13). It would take a work of grace to rescue Adam from this hell on earth.¹³ This grace is evident in the gospel call throughout human history, "Adam, where are you?" (3:9).

Having been rescued and banished from paradise before the taste of the tree of life sealed an eternal doom, Adam was given over to pain in occupation and procreation (3:24; 3:15-19). "Prone to wander"

¹¹I have not developed the implications of this view as it relates to evolutionist and creationist views of science. Young earth views are critiqued in Davis A. Young, "Some Practical Geological Problems in the Application of the Mature Creation Doctrine," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35, no. 3 (1973): 268-80; James Barr, "Why the World was Created in 4004 B.C.: Archbishop Ussher and Biblical Chronology," *Bulletin John Rylands Library* 67, no. 2 (1985): 575-608. Moderating views are found in Bruce Waltke, "The First Seven Days," *Christianity Today* 32, no. 11 (1988): 42-46; Jack P. Lewis, "The Days of Creation: An Historical Survey of Interpretation," *J of the Evangelical Theological Society* (32, no. 4 (1989): 433-55; and Donald J. Wiseman, "Creation Time —What Does Genesis Say?" *Science and Christian Belief* 3, no. 1 (1991): 25-34. Mike L. Anderson traces the sociological implications of holding a young-earth view in "The Effect of Evolutionary Teaching on Students' Views of God as Creator," *J of Theology for Southern Africa* 87 (1994): 69-73.

¹²Paul Watson explores this theme in "The Tree of Life," *Restoration Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1980): 232-38.

¹³See Samuel Laeuchi, "The Expulsion of Adam and Eve: Introduction to the Hermeneutic of Play," *Religious Traditions* 14 (1991): 1-57.

was not only the curse, but the path back to the road of salvation. The “cursed” journey introduced pain (childbirth, cultivation) and dissonance (marriage, nature). Through pain, the seed of Eve eventually crushed the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). Through toil, Adam provided the means of temporal salvation (ark, warfare, gospel preaching). Enoch pleased God by walking with Him, reminiscent of the garden travels of his forefather, Adam. But the walk of faith ceased to be a stroll in the cool of the evening. The walk of faith became a strenuous and uncertain journey by land and sea. Sometimes it was punctuated by great human endeavors to create a utopian settlement. However, God always frustrated these efforts to recreate the garden without God.

The Journey as Rescue and Judgment		
Event (Text)	Rescue	Judgment
Garden Exit (3:21-24)	from eternal death because the tree of life would have made separation from God eternal	over sin of rebellion which necessitated a loss of privileges that had been conditionally granted
Cain’s Wanderings (4:10-16)	from the avenger of Abel	over the sin of fratricide
Noah’s Watery Journey (6-9)	from the wickedness of humankind	over creation because of wickedness
Babel’s scattering (11:1-9)	from utopia without God	over trying to create utopia without God

The perversion of the perfect walk began with Eve’s deception and Adam’s rebellion. Three additional episodes further destroy mankind to the point that, without divine intervention, mankind seems doomed to self-delusion in the effort to recreate the garden. The key for each episode is the entrance of the Lord into the story as both judge and rescuer. In each episode, a journey is the result of the rescue/judgment. In Genesis 2:17, the Lord God warns Adam against sin but later rescues Adam and Eve from the garden (3:24). In Genesis 4:6, the Lord interrogates Cain before his unrighteous action and later (4:15) protects him throughout his wanderings. In Genesis 6:5, the Lord visits the

corrupt earth but decides to preserve Noah and his offspring through the watery journey. In the Babel episode, the Lord visits the works and decides to scatter people all over the world (Gen 11:1-10). Genesis 11 precedes the call of the Patriarch. Echoing the Genesis 3:24 garden expulsion, humankind is once again rescued from the creation of a paradise in which “nothing they purpose to do will be impossible” (11:6).¹⁴ This story accomplishes two polar objectives: (1) God scatters people by creating a host of tribal pilgrimages as the one common language is lost. Later writers would depict the reversal of Babel at Pentecost and the pilgrimage of the nations as they return to Jerusalem (Acts 2:5-12; Isa 66:21; Rom 15:23-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4);¹⁵ and (2) God selects one particular family to be his vehicle for the blessing of every scattered family.¹⁶ Salvation will not come through the avoidance of the journey. Neither will it come through the building of utopia. Whether one wanders as Adam, Cain, Enoch, Noah, or one of Babel’s multitude, the journey is God’s design. Salvation will begin with one who is the archetypal wanderer, the patriarch Abraham.

Key words are introduced in Genesis 3-11. The first word is from the root *j l v** (to send). Genesis 3:24 introduces the verb in the Piel (to send out, free).¹⁷ While most translations see this as a neutral term (send out) or negative term (expelled) qualified by *vrG** (to drive out), there is no reason why each term cannot stand alone with its technical meaning. Genesis 3:23-24 reads:

So the Lord God **let him go** (*Whj @v/yw*) from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he had been taken. And He **drove out** (*vrbyw-*) the man, and in front of the garden of Eden he posted the great winged creatures

¹⁴See Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Bluff* (Translated by Geoffrey Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). Ellul completes his trilogy (*The Technological Society*, 1954, and *The Technological System*, 1977) with the theme of fascination (323) and fixation (384). He says that our world must awake to the danger of the technological muses that lure us away from people and elements which last.

¹⁵For an examination which sees Paul as somewhat overzealous in his expectations of the end times, see R. D. Aus, “Paul’s Travel Plans to Spain and the ‘Full Number of the Gentiles’ of Romans 11:25,” *Novum Testamentum* 21 (1979): 232-62.

¹⁶Carroll Stuhlmueller, “Part I: The Foundations for Mission in the Old Testament,” In Donald Senior, C.P. and Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 11.

¹⁷Translations mostly agree with Brown Driver Briggs “send forth” as the correct translation. “Sent forth” is found in the YLT, TEV, RSV, NRS, NKJ, DBY, ASV, NAS, KJS, LXX; “Banished/expelled” is found in the NJB, TLB, NIV.

A parallel passage occurs in Exodus 11:1, using the same words:

Now the LORD had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will **let you go** (<#k#a#j L#v#y#) from here, and when he does, he will **drive you out** (vr#y#) completely” (NIV).

This dual aspect of being freed and driven out at the same time was revisited occasionally in the desert grumbling of the Hebrews.¹⁸ Home seemed better than the journey, but it was spiritual suicide to return.

Emancipation from injustice (sinful structures) is not the sole priority of the God who liberates. It is emancipation from sin itself. Walter Brueggemann points out that the well-watered land of Goshen was the choicest land in Egypt. However, possessing such a land eventually led to slavery. The Land was both a blessing and a curse.¹⁹ God drove out Adam and Eve because of their sin. He also freed them from the spiritual oppression that accompanies paradise without God.²⁰

FROM PATRIARCHS TO EXILES

In the patriarchal period, God met people who were already on a journey away from country and kindred (12:1). Abraham received his second call in Haran after he had already departed with Terah from Ur (Gen 11:31; 12:4; cf. Acts 7:2-4). Jacob’s first vision of blessing took place at Bethel as he was journeying from Beersheba to Paddan-Aram, having left mother, father, and brother (Gen 28:10-16). Jacob wrestled with God twenty years later on his journey from Haran back to Schechem, having sent his family over the ford of the Jabbok (32:22-

¹⁸Robert C. Linthicum presents a biblical theology of the urban church in *City of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991). In it he argues that the exile was also a mission for the Israelites. “Were the Hebrews ‘exiled’ or ‘sent’ to Babylon? The Hebrew word actually contains both meanings . . . You Israelites are in Babylon because God wants you there. The repressive policies of the Babylonians were the tool God used to get you there! You are sent by God into the city — that is his *design*.” (147-48).

¹⁹Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (1973: 9-10) shows how settlement leads to slavery when someone dwells rather than sojourns in the land.

²⁰As Celia exclaims to Rosalind in *As You Like It*, “. . . let’s away and get our jewels and our wealth together . . . now go we in content to liberty, and not to banishment” (Shakespeare: I.3).

32).²¹ Joseph is the transitional figure who does not see the theophany or vision of God, but “the Lord was with Joseph” while he sojourned in Egypt, away from father and brothers (Gen 39:2,3,21,23). Each journey includes a reaffirmation of the divine call. This awareness of election was both a motivation and a hindrance for the spiritual development of Abraham’s ancestors. Eventually, they settled as God’s chosen people in the land that was theirs as long as they remembered that the sojourn is a perpetual obligation which is more binding than the relationship with the land itself.

The land, source of life, has within it seductive power. It invites Israel to enter life apart from covenant, to reduce covenant place with all its demands and possibilities to serene space apart from history, without contingency, without demand, without mystery.²²

The patriarchs are the archetypal believers because they lived in the land without the land living in them. They sojourned.

The wilderness journey in Exodus shows the conditional nature of the journey from slavery to rest (1 Cor 10:5). Whereas the inheritance of the land was an unconditional declaration to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Ex 32:11-14), the depth of conquest was up to those who chose to be obedient to God (Num 14:30). Moses failed to gain entrance into the promised land (Deut 4:21-24). Many of the wanderers died in the wilderness. The conquest was by no means universal when the task of the Lord was declared complete by Joshua:

So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass (Josh 21:43-45).

²¹For Jacob’s part in the promise/fulfillment theme, Bernard Och, “Jacob at Bethel and Peniel: The Polarity of Divine Encounter,” *Judaism* 42, no. 2 (1993): 164-76.

²²Brueggemann, 53.

H. J. Koorevaar shows the preceding chiasmus (third section, 13:8-21:42) as centered on the erection of the Tent of Meeting at Shilo, signifying the completion of the wanderings and the fulfillment of Leviticus 26:11-12:²³ “Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Lev 26:11-12). God’s people are at rest, not because their work is finished, but because God has firmly established them and is dwelling among them, fulfilling his promises. Because of their weak obedience, the Israelites never attained the full extent of the boundaries laid down in Numbers 34:1-12 (Josh 13:2-6; 14:12; 17:12-18; 18:2; 23:5,7,12). God’s promise of rest was unconditional in depth, but conditional in breadth.²⁴ When the people were obedient, rest resulted in the land (10:40-42; 11:23; 12:7-24; 23:1,4).

Walter Brueggemann presents the monarchy as adopting land management apart from the law of God. Most monarchs brought wealth to themselves through the consolidating of power. Such land management leads ultimately to expulsion from the land. As in Genesis 11, the localizing of power resulted in the scattering of the people. The priests tended to channel power to the land-managing kings. The prophets aligned themselves with the patriarchs. This conflict is seen at its peak in the episode of Elijah against the Jezebel Baalites. The call to sojourn was upon the people. The choice was ever before them (1 Kings 18:21)

²³Koorevaar sees God’s initiatives for the possession of Canaan as providing the four main divisions of the book (1:1-9; 5:13-6:5; 13:1-7; 20:1-6). These four divisions respectively feature the Hebrew verbs *rbū** (cross), *j qī** (take) *qlī** (divide), and *dbū** (serve). Each section (after introduction and conclusion) can be divided into multiples of three (3, 6, 9, 3) with the center of the largest section focusing on the Meeting Tent in Shilo and the command to divide the land. Koorevaar concludes that Joshua is “a book with complete artistic perfection,” being structured into 28 portions total: the fullness of the number seven (1+2+3+4+5+6+7=28). Koorevaar then offers didactic implications which lead one to serve YAHWEH because He has fulfilled all His promises and because the Tent of Meeting is in Shilo. H. J. Koorevaar presented the lecture, “The Book of Joshua: Its Structure and Didactic Implications,” at the Doctor of Theology Colloquium of 17-26 June, 1991, in Lleuven, Belgium at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Belgian Bible Institute. His lecture was based on *De opbouw van het boek Joshua*, Centrum vor Bijbelse Vorming België, 1990.

²⁴Woudstra says that the incomplete nature of the promise uncovers the already/not yet tension in the book of Joshua which “views the conquest of Canaan as both complete and incomplete” (314). Woudstra says that the fulfillment of the promises at this stage is a sign of grace. The call to obedience is a call to possess the land in its entirety. Marten Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua: (NICOT)*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

Ezekiel is the ideal prophet of the journey because he embodies both the office of prophet and priest. He loves the land, yet stresses the non-ownership of it. Ezekiel's preaching of restoration after the exile was not based on a right to own God's promise, but the preservation of the character of God as a God who watches over his people:

“When the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God . . . *I am not doing [this] for your sake . . .*” (Eze 36:17, 27, 32, *italics mine*).

The promise of God's return to the land has both a geographical and a non-geographical fulfillment. The geographical fulfillment was necessary for the vindication of God's name among the nations. The non-geographical fulfillment placed the true temple in the heart-relationship of the people with their God (43:7).²⁵ As long as there is a homeland, the Jewish people have a sense of their identity. Without such a homeland, they would become a laughingstock.²⁶

The second settlement was distinct from the first. The glory of the Lord did not fill the house upon dedication (Ezra 6:13-18). The exiles were unable to anoint a king according to David's line (2 Samuel 7). The new patriarchs saw no miraculous signs except safe travel for the small bands who returned home (Ezra 8:23) or rebuilt the walls (Neh 2:8). The fire-throwing God who delivers with a mighty hand (Ex 32:11; De 4:34; 1Ki 8:42; Eze 20:33-34) disappears altogether and is replaced with a God who answers prayers with a “good and gracious hand” (Ezra 7:9; 8:18; Neh 2:8). The river of people returning to Jerusalem is just a trickle (Ezra 8:1-15). The painful reality of the obliterated northern Kingdom (721 BC) is still lamented with hopes for restoration (Hos 11:8-9; Jer 31:18; Eze 37:19; Zech 10:7).

Rather than serving as a sign that true rest was only possible in the promised land, the restoration of Jerusalem was a sign that God indeed keeps promises. The partial return brought about the longing for a full return to the homeland. The solution to the cycle of

²⁵For a view that sees Ezekiel providing justification for the new land-lessness, see Robert R. Wilson, “Prophecy In Crisis: The Call Of Ezekiel,” *Interpretation* 38, no. 2 (1984): 117-30.

²⁶Hassell C. Bullock sees Ezekiel as one foreshadowing Christ as prophet and priest. See “Ezekiel, Bridge Between the Testaments,” *JETS* 25, no. 1 (1982): 23-31.

promise/rebellion was the establishment of the diaspora community which retained both the elements of home and homelessness. “Jerusalem for some was a present possession to be jealously guarded. For others it was a passionate hope, urgently awaited and surely promised.”²⁷ Brueggemann sees this tension between grieving hope for the true homeland and resistant grasping of a present home embodied in the contemporary Jewish settings of the Wailing Wall and Masada.²⁸ Those who fight for home live with fear. Those who give up hoping for home lose all significance.

THE NEW PATRIARCHS

The synagogue maintained spiritual and national identity apart from the land of Palestine.²⁹ The church was even less tied to the land. As Calvin commented,

The church is compared to tents because it has no solid structure in the world. It always appears unsettled and wandering, and is moved here and there in various migrations, as necessity requires Someone will object that the structure built by the ministers of the Word is too solid to be compared to a tent. But I answer: The likeness to a tent refers to the external appearance of the church rather than to its spiritual or essential (if I may use the word) existence. The true structure of the church is the Kingdom of God, and this is neither frail nor like a tent in any way. But in the meantime, the external church is moved here and there because it has no firm habitation in which it can abide.³⁰

Some New Testament books feature the journey as a central theme. The book of Hebrews pictures Jesus as better than Moses and all the angels

²⁷Brueggemann, 166. Brueggemann stressed the value of tension in “Tradition Engaged with Crisis,” *Theology and Life* 9, no. 2 (1966): 118-30. These tensions inherent to the Old Testament were more fully developed in *The Land*.

²⁸Ibid., 168-69.

²⁹Following Emil Schurer, both Lester Grabbe and S. Safrai concluded that synagogues came into existence in the late second Temple period. F. F. Bruce sees a fluid development of the synagogue in the diaspora period paralleling a *proseuchai*. Grabbe notes that the absence of Maccabean references prior to the first century necessitates Palestinian synagogue foundations no earlier than the first century BC (Grabbe 1988: 410).

³⁰Calvin’s Commentaries IX, 1 The Church.

who accompanied the Israelites in their exodus. The book of 1 Peter is written to those who are scattered. The book of Acts is the only place where believers are called “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Günther Ebel surmises that *h& o&ol'* was a “term of missionary language, similar to the absolute use of [logo]” . . . for the early Christian preaching (Acts 4:4; 11:19).³¹ The Way referred not only to the teaching of the Christians (Acts 16:17, “way of salvation”; Acts 18:25, “Way of the Lord”) but also to the Christian community itself.³² Bruce says that Christians used the term to “denote their own movement.”³³ This adoption of a term of journey is not exclusive to Christians.³⁴ Hebrews follow *halakhah* (literally “going”). Adherents to Islam follow *as-sabil* (Arabic for “the way”). Chinese travel the *tao*.³⁵ The term, *h& o&ol'*, was familiar to readers of the LXX referring variously to patriarchal journeys, miraculous exits, and godly conduct.³⁶ The significance of this self-distinction lies in the possible range of alternate terms which might have been used to describe the Christian community in Acts such as “the Christians” (11:26), “the believers” (5:14; 16:1), or “the disciples” (Acts 15:10).

The New Testament church supplants certain themes prominent in the Old Testament: (1) the eschatological promise takes the place of the land;³⁷ (2) the heart takes the place of the Temple; and (3) the Christian house fellowship takes the place of the synagogue (as ones “called out”).³⁸

³¹Ebel (941-42) cites E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1971), 320, n. 1. Haenchen says that the Way was a self-designation, whereas the opponents of Christianity called them a *haireisis*. Ebel and Stott (1990 305, n. 42) both say that the origin of the use of the Way in Acts is not known.

³²Ebel, 942.

³³Bruce 1954, 194.

³⁴Bruce (1954: 194, n. 13), Stott (1990: 305, n. 42), Marshall (1980: 169, n. 1) all refer to the extensive use of the imagery of the “way” or “path” by other religious groups. References include Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, and Islam. The Qumran community also included imagery of the way.

³⁵Bruce 1954: 194, n.13.

³⁶In the LXX, *h& o&ol'* is used in both the literal and figurative sense, mostly translating *Er#* Seventeen equivalents are also used.

³⁷Christopher J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). In Ephesians 2:11-3:6 Wright uses “in Christ” where the OT would have used “in the land.”

³⁸In commenting on Stephen's last sermon (Acts 7:37), F. F. Bruce says that “As Moses was with the old *ekkl hsi&*, Christ is with the new, and it is still a pilgrim *ekkl hsi&*, ‘the church in the wilderness’” (Bruce 1954, 194). “It might well be argued that there was a synagogue wherever an appreciable number of Jews were living, even in towns or villages where the majority of the population was non-Jewish” (Safrai 1976: 910).

The theology of journey gives a framework for ministering to people on the margins. It also sheds light on Paul's ministry to the Jewish diaspora and God-fearing communities. The group that endured beyond the destruction of the second Temple was diaspora Judaism. Paul found his greatest supporters and enemies in this diverse and often well-developed diaspora community. Those communities who unilaterally rejected the apostles repeated the land-managing fallacy in the midst of the imperial Roman world.

As a pastor and missiologist, I see the theology of the journey as a welcome background for New Testament studies and preaching in today's mobile world. The future day of rest invites us to build here with the eternal kingdom in mind. The elusiveness of utopia rescues us from the fallacy of complete restoration on this side of our eternal home. The pilgrim gospel, presented here as a theological motif, places us on the road of the new exodus. The goal of the spiritual journey is true rest without death or despair—as Enoch *journeyed* with God and was no more because God took him (Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5).