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A Cosmic Conflict in Covenantal Literature

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by

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A Cosmic Conflict in Covenantal Literature

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: This dissertation examines the cosmic conflict that God declared in Genesis 3:15 in the Garden of Eden and that will not come to fruition until the final judgment articulated in Revelation 20. This raging spiritual warfare can be seen through the lens of the covenants God made with Israel and the administration of God's purposes through His people. Through God's sovereign hand over Israel, His providence and grace can be seen throughout the whole of Holy Scriptures. The unfolding spiritual conflict to prevent the "seed of the woman" can be clandestinely observed in the outworking of God's relationship with His creation thus revealing His design, purpose, and His plan for humanity, all climaxing with the birth, death, and resurrection of the "seed of the woman," the New Covenant, and God's way for humanity's salvation. From a contemporary perspective, Ephesians 6:10-18 articulates that God's people are set free through the Blood of Christ Jesus, however, one must live with the oneness which is in Christ Jesus by putting on the armor of God.

Key Words: Cosmic Conflict, Spiritual Warfare, Covenants, God's Administration, Seed of the Woman, Relationship, New Covenant, Armor of God.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AKK Akkadian
 ANE Ancient Near East
 BAGDA Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, by W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
 KJV King James Version
 LXX Septuagint
 MT Masoretic Text
 NASB New American Standard Bible
 NIV New International Version
 NT New Testament
 OT Old Testament

HEBREW BIBLE

Gen	Genesis	2 Chron	2 Chronicles	Dan	Daniel
Exod	Exodus	Ezra	Ezra	Hos	Hosea
Lev	Leviticus	Neh	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel
Num	Numbers	Esth	Esther	Amos	Amos
Deut	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Obad	Obadiah
Josh	Joshua	Ps	Psalms	Jon	Jonah
Judg	Judges	Prov	Proverbs	Mic	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Eccles	Ecclesiastes	Nah	Nahum
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Song	Song of Songs	Hab	Habakkuk
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Isa	Isaiah	Zeph	Zephaniah
1 Kings	1 Kings	Jer	Jeremiah	Hag	Haggai
2 Kings	2 Kings	Lam	Lamentations	Zach	Zechariah
1 Chron	1 Chronicles	Ezek	Ezekiel	Mal	Malachi

GREEK TESTAMENT

Matt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mark	Mark	Phil	Philippians	James	James
Luke	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
John	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 John	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 John	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Philem	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION. A COSMIC CONFLICT IN COVENANTAL LITERATURE

This dissertation establishes two assertions. God's divine knowledge, sovereignty, faithfulness, and covenantal relationship with Israel are realized through the "Seed of the Woman," Christ Jesus the Messiah. This truth results in an invisible, decisive cosmic conflict with Satan, which can be observed within the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) as a backdrop throughout Scripture. God's covenants display His masterplan of redemption, which in-turn sets the stage for a concentrated cosmic conflict with humanity. This conflict is evident as one traces the covenantal literature from Genesis 3:15 through Revelation 20. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to provide an in-depth examination of the observance of a cosmic war within God's covenants with Israel. A cosmic conflict exists in the unseen realm and with impactful and material consequences on earth. Behind earthly powers and calamitous events lies a satanic power working within the limits of God's eternal plan. Its effects are overtly demonstrated on earth and displayed through the foundational redemptive revelation of the "seed of the woman."

All the heavens and the earth are witnesses to God's greatness, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. His attributes of wisdom, mercy and grace are apparent in His dealings with humanity and His creation. Psalm 19 sings, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God, and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." However, in all of God's beautiful creation, it is marred and groans "as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom 8:18).¹ Paul says the earth was subjected to contamination by the entrance of sin from Adam and Eve, which then birthed misery, sorrow, and corruption among His creation (Rom 8:19).

1. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *New American Standard Bible: Hebrew-Greek Keyword Study Bible Commentary: Bringing the Original Text to Life* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008).

The origin of this cosmic war and its stained condition can be traced back to when Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15). The name “Satan” does not specifically appear in this excerpt and is mentioned in Job 2:1 as “the satan” i.e., the accuser of Job before God who acts on God’s orders, and he does not appear to be an independent force of evil in this instance. However, the name “Satan” is later synonymous to the concept of the principal adversary of God. The Hebrew word ‘שָׂטָן’ (*satan*) means to oppose, obstruct, or accuse. Satan, also known as the Adversary, is the source of the conflict and author of sin as described in Isaiah.² In this passage, the prophet describes the moment of Lucifer’s fall:

How you have fallen from Heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart; I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. Nevertheless, you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit (Isa 14:12-15).

The certainty of Satan’s conflict originates at a time very distant from humanity’s history. He was considered the blameless morning star as a created being until iniquity was found in his heart. Ezekiel says, “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you” (Ezek 28:15), which references the pre-Fall condition of Genesis 1-2 before the stain of sin. One truth is for sure, God is sovereign over all, and Satan is a rebellious creature being defeated by the blood of Jesus, who can only war against God within the confines of God’s eternal plan. Likewise, Scripture reveals that God continually uses Satan for His own purposes, as seen in Job 1-2. Moreover, as Scripture describes in Revelation, Satan’s destiny will result in his eventual destruction.

2. John D. Barry, ed., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). <https://ref.ly/logosres/lbd?art=satan>.

In this cosmic war, humanity is witness to and, in many cases, partakes in Satan's schemes to challenge the interests of God's Kingdom (Eph 6:11). Manifestations of Satan's futile attempt to prevent the fulfillment of God's Word, the "seed of the woman," can be studied throughout the Bible. A few of the most notorious demonically inspired events include Genesis 4:8 (also 1 John 3:12) when Satan provoked Cain to kill his brother Abel, and in the corruption of humanity with the Nephilim in Genesis 6:1-8. These actions done by the "sons of God" and the depth of humanity's wickedness upon the earth, resulted in God's decision to eradicate all the living except for Noah and his family (Genesis 6:5). Another example includes Revelation 12:7-9 and Jude 9, as one can gain a glimpse into the spiritual world to observe this decisive combat and enmity with angelic beings.

God's covenantal relationship with Israel is undoubtedly foundational to the story of the Bible and this statement is reinforced by Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum when they assert that the covenants move "history forward according to God's design and final plan for humanity and all creation, and unless we put together the covenants correctly, we will not discern accurately the whole counsel of God"³ (Acts 20:27). Likewise, T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker state the covenants are theological themes in the OT and NT and considered "foundational for the revelation that unfolds in the rest of the Bible."⁴ Dr. H. Wayne House makes a good point with "It is also important to understand the meaning and nature of each covenant. Some unilateral and others bilateral. Some are conditional and some unconditional.

3. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishing, 2018), 31.

4. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, The IVP Bible Dictionary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 139.

The nature of each covenant is important to know.”⁵ The covenants within the scope of this writing include the biblical timelines during the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant periods. The covenant and dispensational structure and revelation of God’s message throughout these timelines expose the ever-present cosmic warfare within its framework. Furthermore, the covenants’ progression, resulting in the New Covenant’s apex in Jesus, encourages one to look behind the curtain for the undertone of a cosmic warfare.

With this in mind, in Genesis 3:15 and culminating through Revelation 20, one can read that a cosmic conflict intensively and strategically rages on as a backdrop to God’s redemptive plans. It is therefore clear that Satan works within people to accomplish his goals, as one begins to understand the material implications of this invisible holy war when individual events throughout the Bible expose an organized pattern of strategies and tactics. In renouncing his allegiance to God, Lucifer, the “Lightbearer,” became an “Adversary” of God and an antagonist of God’s people. Erich Sauer makes a profound statement:

From that time on, a mighty breach runs through the cosmos, and an organized opposing kingdom of evil confronts the universal kingdom of God (Matt 12:26). As a ruler, Satan has in turn princes and authorities under himself (Dan 10:13, 20; Eph 6:12), and the opposition between him and the kingdom of God is henceforth the theme and the essential subject of the universal super-history outlined in Holy Scripture.⁶

This statement made by Sauer undoubtedly highlights Isaiah 14:12-15 as well as identifies a chain of command within his evil army.

A methodical approach will be taken to reveal, as a backdrop, a cosmic conflict in biblical literature, and the study explores how this conflict relates to the covenants in the Bible.

⁵ H. Wayne House, *Dissertation Feedback: Covenants*, August 20, 2023.

⁶ Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption: A Survey of Historical Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), 33.

This approach outlines the suppositions, provides primary and secondary scholarly resources to deliver a balanced approach to such claims, and then articulates the substantive evidence to support the thesis statement based on the findings. Critical judgment, independence of thought, and exegetical soundness are exercised. Additionally, this chapter provides a broad overview of Chapters 2-8.

The Grand Conflict in the Adamic Covenant

A covenant is a central theological motif throughout the Bible and binds the divine and human together. As O. Palmer Robertson explains, “A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.”⁷ The *Lexham Bible Dictionary* describes a covenant, ‘בְּרִית’ (*berit*; διαθήκη, *diathēkē*), as a sacred kingship bond between two parties ratified by swearing an oath.⁸ In the case of the Adamic Covenant, some scholars dispute that the Adamic Covenant occurred because there is no explicit reference to a covenant with Adam or Eve and that the word “covenant” did not show up until the Flood story with Noah. However, Arthur W. Pink, a Reformed advocate of Covenant Theology, which is a view held by only a few contemporary scholars, disputes this claim and uses Hosea 6:7 as a reference point of consideration. Scholastic Reformed, also known since the seventeenth century as Federal Theology, considered that the whole of God’s dealings with humanity was housed within a covenantal framework. Dispensationalists would disagree with this statement and contend that God’s will for mankind, including the Israelites, was administered in specific ways at specific times “based on a covenant upon which a particular

7. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 4.

8. Scott Hahn, “Covenant,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), [https://ref.ly/logosres/lbd?hw=Covenant&off=10&ctx=COVENANT+\(~%D7%91%D6%BC%D6%B0%D7%A8%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%AA%2c+berith%3b+%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%B8%CE%AE%CE%BA%CE%B7%2c+diat](https://ref.ly/logosres/lbd?hw=Covenant&off=10&ctx=COVENANT+(~%D7%91%D6%BC%D6%B0%D7%A8%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%AA%2c+berith%3b+%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%B8%CE%AE%CE%BA%CE%B7%2c+diat).

dispensation is founded.”⁹ Dr. Gerald Knoblet, scholar and professor at Liberty University, argues that, “Dispensations describe God’s economy in administering His rule to the whole human race, and He at times used the Jewish people to minister to the Gentiles. At times, he ruled over the Jewish people with an economy to help the world.”¹⁰ The depth of God’s sovereignty, fatherly love, and guidance is demonstrated in this statement.

From Pink’s perspective, the everlasting Covenant was an agreement between Father God and His Son before the foundation, and the Adamic Covenant places Adam as the federal head and representative of humanity. Pink further emphasizes that “Until the federal headship of Adam and God’s covenant with him in that office be actually perceived, we are without the key to God’s dealings with the human race, we are unable to discern man’s relation to the divine law, and we appreciate not the fundamental principles upon which the atonement of Christ proceeded.”¹¹

The scholastic Reformed theologians assert that the covenants include “an eternal, pre-creation covenant of redemption/peace between Father and Son, a probationary covenant of works with Adam prior to the Fall (covenant of works), and a post-lapsarian, all-encompassing covenant of grace.”¹² From this view, these covenants span from the Noahic covenant through the New Covenant. Paul R. Williamson asserts that the covenant of works contrasting with grace

9. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God: A Messianic Bible Study* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 4.

10. Gerald Knoblet, Dissertation communications on “dispensations” within the annotated version, dated June 23, 2023.

11. Arthur W. Pink, *Divine Covenants: Pathways to the Past* (Chalmette, LA: Parables Publishing, 2016), 26.

12. Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 52.

leaves one to believe “grace was not operative in the covenant of works. As a matter of fact, the totality of God’s relationship with man is a matter of grace.”¹³ However, Williamson considers the concept and notes that J. Wellhausen embraced the concept and referred to the “priestly material” in *The Book of the Four Covenants*, which included the “Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic” within the Pentateuch.¹⁴ Both schools of thought have merit and thus warrant the inclusion of the Adamic Covenant within this study.

This raging invisible war between good and evil and its significance certainly has more weighty consequences than a reality series one sees on T.V., yet many do not acknowledge its existence or are skeptical as to its impact on their eternal destiny. However, the certainty of evil has existed since the beginning of humanity in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15). Adam and Eve’s rebellion introduces sin into the world; at this point, God introduces His eternal plan of redemption. Consequently, the conflict between Satan and humanity is pursued in this curse.

More importantly, “Elements of curse and blessing are found in each address, thus serving structurally to bind inseparably the covenant of creation with the covenant of redemption.”¹⁵ God’s divine covenants and dispensations make known His ultimate plan for establishing unity and relationship with humanity. The Dispensation of the Law ended with the death and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus, thus ushering in the New Covenant or the Dispensation of Grace for those scholars adhering to the dispensational perspective.

In Genesis 3:15, God first addresses the serpent, the Adversary, by cursing it more than all the other animals with a command to crawl—an act of humiliation—followed by a cosmic

13. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 53.

14. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 54.

15. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 93.

war and drama that unfold as the elements of the earth, animals, and man are subjected to the effects of sin and its consequences. It is in this same passage that God introduces His redemption plan and sets up an opposition between humanity and Satan.

As Robertson emphasizes, “The divine initiative in this establishment of animosity must be underscored. God himself shall perpetuate a continuing warfare. In Genesis 3:15, the word “enmity” extends to future generations, ultimately resulting in the “seed of the woman,” Jesus as Savior of humanity, who would eventually crush the head of the serpent. The keyword ‘אִי־בָהּ’ (*’ê-bā(h)*, enmity) means hostility, hatred, animosity, or is used to signify acrimony, as between the woman and the serpent (Gen 3:15).¹⁶ Malice or hatred towards the woman and the serpent illustrates the onset of this cosmic conflict in Genesis 3:15. This cosmic conflict is articulated well by Paul when he states, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12).

One must recognize the cosmic warfare as a backdrop when God’s perfect creation is contaminated with sin at the onset of a single act of disobedience of Adam and Eve, forcing the world into utter destruction and humanity having a more significant role than one can imagine. Nevertheless, in God’s perfect ways, He provides a redemptive plan, a remedy in the “seed of the woman,” and an eternal promise that anticipates a final victory over Satan and Death.

Interestingly, Genesis 3:15, known as the Protoevangelium, is the first announcement of God’s plan, called the gospel. At this moment, the cosmic conflict plays itself out through the

16. James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, Logos Research Systems, Inc. 2001, s.v. “Enmity,” [https://ref.ly/logosres/dblhebr?ref=HebrewStrong.342&off=4&ctx=368+~%D7%90%D6%B5%D7%99%D7%91%D6%B8%D7%94+\(%CA%BE%C3%AA%C2%B7%E1%B8%87%C4%81\(h\)\)%3a+n.fem.%3b+%E2%89%A1+Str+342](https://ref.ly/logosres/dblhebr?ref=HebrewStrong.342&off=4&ctx=368+~%D7%90%D6%B5%D7%99%D7%91%D6%B8%D7%94+(%CA%BE%C3%AA%C2%B7%E1%B8%87%C4%81(h))%3a+n.fem.%3b+%E2%89%A1+Str+342).

passages of God’s covenants and within the limits of His dispensations. As the first martyr for God, Abel is the first of many attempts by Satan to destroy the “seed of the woman” who will one day redeem His people. In 1 John 3:12, Cain belongs to the evil one, or the serpent’s seed, whereas Abel belongs to the “seed of the woman.” In subsequent chapters, the “seed of the woman” will be fleshed out to identify the characteristics and properties of each identified seed in Genesis 3:15 as the covenant of commencement.

Warfare and Preservation within the Noahic Covenant

God’s covenants with the ancient Israelites were paramount to their history, faith, and identity as a people, and the introduction of the Noahic Covenant from God is found in the preservation of Noah and his family in Genesis 6-9. The Noahic Covenant, also known as God’s universal covenant with humanity, is manifested when God states to Noah, “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you” (Gen 6:18). In Hebrew, the word “covenant” is *berit*, a noun, common, singular, construct, which means a treaty, an agreement between two parties, a compact, or a contractual arrangement between God and a person(s).¹⁷ Other passages that assist in fleshing out the depth of its meaning include Genesis 14:13, 21:27, 21:32, and 31:44, as examples. This is its first occurrence in the Bible, fulfilling His covenant in Genesis 9:8-17.

The story of the Flood is a classic example of this cosmic conflict in action, which is articulated in Genesis 6, the corruption of humanity by the “sons of God.” However, the term “sons of God” appears to be a controversial point amongst scholars and laymen alike. Some scholars assert that the term simply means a group of warriors with an appetite for violence,

¹⁷ Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham English Bible, Genesis 6:18*, 2022, <https://ref.ly/logosres/leb?ref=BibleLEB2.Ge6.18>.

while others contend a more literal perspective, which identifies the “sons of God” as fallen angels, divine, not human. However, the term “sons of God” varies based on its context within the biblical text. Additionally, there are multiple views on the meaning of the term itself. A more in-depth study is pursued in Chapter 3, regarding who the “sons of God” were within the context of Genesis 6:1-4 and the historical impact they had on the Israelites.

The OT’s usage of the “sons of God” first appears in the story of the Flood, with the corruption of mankind, “that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose” (Gen 6:2). There are multiple views on who are the “sons of God.” The earliest Jewish interpretation of them as angelic beings is found in the Septuagint, which states “Now the giants were upon the earth in those days; and after that when the sons of God were wont to go in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them, those were the giants of old, the men of renown” (Gen 6:5, LXX). Similar references are found in other Apocrypha literature such as Jubilees, Enoch and interestingly, many early church fathers make mention of these striking occurrences (cf., 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6).¹⁸

Another view is derived from the early 4th-century AD rabbinic expositors, early church fathers, and many Reformers, who embraced the perspective that the term refers to the later generations of Seth who committed apostasy and intermingled themselves with the excommunicated race of Cain. While using, in part, Genesis 4:26 as its justification, Michael Heiser suggests this perspective imposes a divisive lineage perspective on the text, which assumes Seth’s lineage was called the “sons of God,” and assumes the women are the daughters of Cain rather than the daughters of men.¹⁹

18. F. F. Bruce, ed., *Zondervan Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2008), 25.

¹⁹ Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, 95.

Heiser also makes a helpful point, “There is no command in the text regarding marriages or any prohibition against marrying certain persons. Further, there are no ‘Jews or Gentiles’ at this time.”²⁰ Other common perspectives include the “sons of God” within Genesis 6:2 to represent the sons of Cain or that the “sons of God” were unknown kings or divinized rulers.²¹ Those scholars who hold to each perspective will be discussed in chapter two.

The biblical story of the Flood can also be seen in the Ancient Near East (ANE) comparative studies, such as in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* XI in the Akkadian language, and with copies existing from Ashur, Nimrud, and Babylon.²² The story originates within the 13th-12th century BC languages and speaks of the great Flood with remarkable parallels to the biblical version. Examples include the Mesopotamian Flood stories, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Babylonian story of Atrahasis, which parallels the biblical version in Genesis 7-8. “There are more than 300 known accounts of a great flood, and they come from every continent except Antarctica,”²³ which gives further credence to the authenticity of the narrative. Some of these flood accounts may have resulted from cultural diffusion from the ANE and later Greece and Rome; however, some cannot be accounted for in this manner.²⁴ In subsequent chapters of this dissertation, these stories are evaluated to highlight the cosmic conflict within the Flood account that destroyed the earth.

20. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 95.

21. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 95.

22. Christopher B. Hays, *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East* (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2014), 75.

23. Brian B. Schmidt and Jack M. Sasson, *Flood Narratives of Ancient Western Asia*. Vol. 4. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1995), 2337.

24. Schmidt and Sasson, *Flood Narratives of Ancient Western Asia*, 2337.

The significance of God's covenants and how He administers His plan for Israel in the OT and NT is one of life and death. As a covenant theologian, Robertson states "A covenant is a bond in blood, or a bond of life and death, sovereignly administered."²⁵ Interestingly, there are no other phenomena of divine covenants between a god and his people outside of Israel.²⁶ A similar statement made by David Noel Freedman noted that "there are no convincing parallels in the pagan world to the covenants of God with man" as found in the Bible.²⁷ It points to the conclusion that one must understand that the covenants and dispensations of the Bible display the whole divine plan of the revelation of God. It also demands that God's administration of humanity, including Israel, be understood in the light of the rest of the Bible.

Covenant Promise in the Patriarchal Covenant

In the unconditional Abrahamic covenant mentioned in Genesis 15:6-21, God promised to grant the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants, and it was through the seed of his future son Isaac that this promise would come to fruition. However, Satan exercised multiple attempts to thwart God's promises to Abram. For example, in Genesis 12:11-16, Sarah was "taken into Pharaoh's house" to be his wife; in Genesis 16, one can observe Sarah's denial of God's promise, which resulted in offering her maidservant as a substitute for God's promise; and in Genesis 18:15, Sarah's denial through a lack of trust in God to deliver on His promises. The assertion is that behind the denials lies a cosmic campaign to prevent or contaminate "the seed of the woman." Other areas of focus that demand attention include the unprecedented famine during

25. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 4.

26. Ronald E. Clements, *Abraham, and David; Genesis 15 and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition* (Naperville, IL: SCM Press, 1967), 83.

27. David Noel Freedman, *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: Ancient Israelite History and Religion* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 169.

the time of Jacob and his family. Undoubtedly, this famine would have destroyed the peoples of the land, including the lineage of the “seed of the woman,” but God’s divine foreknowledge anticipated the event and provided for it, based on the dream God gave to Joseph in Genesis 37:1-11, 45:5, and 50:20.

As another example, the book of Job remains a classic illustration of this raging cosmic warfare. Many of the events and details of the story or lack thereof within the book of Job place the book during the patriarchal age or the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,²⁸ or in Francis I Andersen’s assertion, during the time between Moses and Ezra.²⁹ In this narrative, one can observe God’s sovereignty over Satan’s power and man’s circumstances. God undoubtedly is in control. In the book of Job, there are examples of this conflict within its poetic passages, and one can witness the enemy’s forces against both Job and God. In reading the direct conflict with God in Job 1-2, Satan asserts that no man serves God without selfish motives. Satan attempts to prove to the angelic host present with him that God’s ways would not be enough to satisfy the inner man should his possessions be taken away (Job 1:1-12).

Strategically, Job is chosen by God to be the subject of focus in the next battleground in this cosmic conflict. God’s sufficiency and eternal love sustain Job’s uncompromising faithfulness, unlike what Satan offers humanity. It is interesting that when God mentions Job, Satan replies, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?” (Job 1:9-10). This response speaks of a hedge

²⁸ Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed. *Hebrew – Greek Key Word Study Bible: Bringing the Original Text to Life: The Book of Job Commentary* (NASB), 669.

²⁹ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 66.

about the believer and that Satan apparently had been attacking Job on all fronts but with no success. This statement also speaks of God's sustaining grace.

This passage provides the reader an insight into the truth that the protective love of God overshadows those who put their trust in Him. Moreover, one only looks to Romans 8:28 as support for this promise. In this passage, God promises that He works in all circumstances of a Christian's life to accomplish His good purpose, as was in Job's case. It is the same sufficiency and spiritual life-sustaining love that Job experiences that also draws sinners into a relationship with God. Although Satan's reach and wickedness are ever-present, God intervenes as the Psalmist declares, "The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Ps 18:2). Further exploration of these events reveals a concerted plan as a backdrop to thwart God's plan of redemption, and it is in this same study, one will begin to understand the depths Satan will go to change his condemned destiny.

Conflict and Chaos amid the Mosaic Covenant of Law

The areas of study within the Mosaic Covenant are substantive for an in-depth study of spiritual warfare, as "each one reveals some new and fundamental aspect of truth, and in considering them in their Scriptural order, we may clearly perceive the progress of revelation which they respectively indicated. They set forth the great design of God accomplished by the redeemer of His people."³⁰ It is in this vein of thought that God's "everlasting covenant"³¹ (Gen 3:15), according to His "determinate counsel and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23), is God's eternal

30. Pink, *Divine Covenants*, 5.

31. Pink, *Divine Covenants*, 5.

plan created before the beginning of time. Further, the covenants within the Pentateuch, such as the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic, represent chosen servants for a specific time and have an intimate linkage and shared relationship purposed for mercy and divine grace. In this linkage, one can observe a cosmic conflict as the backdrop woven into the fabric of God's relationship with Israel. God's national covenant with Israel at Sinai, the patriarchal covenants, the Mosaic covenants, and eventually the Davidic covenant all remain dominant in an ongoing cosmic conflict with a people chosen by God.

Interestingly, Josephus speaks of Pharaoh's "sacred scribes," who informed the Pharaoh of a boy, "who, if he were reared, would bring the Egyptian dominion low, and would raise the Israelites; that he would excel all men in virtue, and obtain a glory that would be remembered through all ages."³² The Targum of Jonathan identifies these scribes as Jannes and Jambres, well-versed in foretelling future events, and who were opposers of God and Moses (2 Tim 3:8-9). Consequently, the Pharaoh ordered the Egyptian midwives to kill all the male newborn children, which is articulated in Exodus 1:16, "And he said when you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death but if it is a daughter, then she shall live." These and other examples describing this cosmic warfare in biblical literature are explored to expose its depth and eternal implications for humanity.

One only needs to read the book of Joshua to learn about the conquests and cataclysms to recognize spiritual warfare raging within the invisible realm. The giants of the lands include the pre-monarchic age prior to the Israelites' arrival to the land and the giants of the early monarchic

32. William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: The Antiquities of the Jews: From the Death of Isaac to the Exodus Out of Egypt: Book 2—Chapter 9.2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 1987), 66-67.

age. David and Goliath and the Philistines' battles are examples of these cosmic, political, and historical cataclysms, which underscore divine warfare in an attempt to thwart the longstanding promise to Abraham and his progeny to inherit the land.

Warfare within the Davidic Covenant of Eternal Royalty

God's covenant relationship with Israel continues to advance within the Davidic Covenant, which is as House contends is the "second prong of the three prong Abrahamic Covenant (land, royal descendants, and blessings to Jew and Gentile, from which comes the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31)."³³ Likewise, within this covenant, God's plan of humanity's future salvation is highlighted. Still, Satan's cosmic conflict as an obstacle to God's promises with Israel is also pursued. During the reign of King David, his efforts were directed toward conquering the Philistines and the other surrounding enemies of God and Israel. Within his reign, one can also observe the supernatural calamities that plague David's dynasty as well as the volatile and destructive circumstances of his descendants. In spite of these divine obstacles, God promises David that he will have a descendant who will sit on the eternal throne of God and provides a supernatural assurance to protect the lineage of Jesus from the Adversary in the most profound ways.

One can see this overshadowing of grace towards the Israelites. As Barnhouse states, "There was a barrier of cloud between the children of Israel and the armies of Pharoah. That which was light to the people of God was darkness to the enemy. That which is a defense to us is an obstacle to Satan."³⁴ There is also an appreciation for the statement made by Brian R. Doak

³³ H. Wayne House, *Dissertation Feedback: Warfare Within the Davidic Covenant of Eternal Royalty*, August 20, 2023.

³⁴ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War: The Panorama of the Continuing Conflict Between Good and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 144.

regarding the cosmic conflict from different vantage points with the highlighted annihilation of the Nephilim by David. Doak asserts:

There is something quite telling in the progression of the destruction of giants as it appears in its three most critical moments in the biblical narrative; the first destruction, via flood, is enacted by YHWH alone; the second, at the conquest, is accomplished by humans (Kaleb, Joshua), accompanied by miracles, parting rivers, and angelic visitations; and the final annihilation through David.³⁵

In these instances, one can see the driving forces that encourage one to stroll behind the proverbial curtain to observe the cosmic conflict in full force.

From a different perspective, Esther, an Israelite who became queen of the Persian Empire, offers the reader an example of an overt attempt by Satan to annihilate the entire Israelite nation. However, the sovereignty and providence of God are active in Esther's life, thus thwarting the diabolical plans of Satan to destroy the "seed of the woman." In Isaiah 14, Israel's taunt, Isaiah speaks of the fall of the king of Babylon in language that implies a judgment on the king as well as Satan, the evil power behind the king. Another example of God's sovereignty over the cosmic conflict with Satan can be found in Ezekiel 28:11-17. There are several instances in which God addresses Satan indirectly, and in this passage, an assertion is made that the power behind the earthly ruler of Tyre is Satan.

A model example of this cosmic conflict is reflected in Daniel 10:10-21 when Daniel prays to understand God's vision for him. The truth is realized when Gabriel comes to him and provides his answers but not until he engages in warfare with the "prince of the kingdom of Persia." God heard Daniel's prayers and sent Gabriel to answer Daniel immediately; however,

³⁵. Brian R. Doak, *The Last Of The Rephaim: Conquest and Cataclysm in the Heroic Ages of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 228.

the prince of Persia held up Gabriel for twenty-one days until Michael, one of the chief princes and protector and prince of Israel (Dan 10:21), came to help Gabriel.

Daniel 10 makes it abundantly clear that there is a cosmic conflict between the angels and demons, the engagement of this spiritual warfare impacts the earthly activities, and there is evidence that certain angels are given particular geographical and governmental assignments. Interestingly, Daniel 10:20 vividly speaks of Gabriel having to return to the spiritual battle to fight against the prince of Persia and then later to fight the prince of Greece.

The Persian wars would involve the decisions and relationships regarding the Israelites during the time of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah and through the reconstruction of Jerusalem as a fortified city. Then, Daniel 11 provides further depth of the angelic conflicts that would continue for the Israelites for many years in the future. Nonetheless, it is evident that God's grace, sovereignty, and omnipotence are ever-present in His relationship with Israel. In the noted narratives, studies are pursued within ANE and Jewish literature, as these resources provide depth, clarity, and a paralleled perspective on the existence of a tug of war between good and evil and for the souls of humanity.

The Cosmic Conflict in God's Redemptive New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34, and repeated in Hebrews 8:8-12, is one of the most foundational passages from a new covenant perspective. This new covenant contrasts the old covenant made at Mount Sinai with the Israelites (Exod 19-24; 2 Cor 3:14). Although the Lord was faithful in all His ways, the people continually broke the promises made to the Lord. Therefore, where the Law was written on tablets of stone at Mount Sinai, the Lord will write His Law on the hearts of His people, resulting in a fundamental change from the inside out. Galatians 3:9-22 speaks of the new covenant for Israel and in this covenant, Gentiles would be blessed. The New Covenant

brings forth in part, the Abrahamic Covenant, with the fulfillment of the blessings to the Gentiles and the Jews and replaces the Law of Moses. The new covenant can only be inaugurated through the shedding of Jesus's blood, the Son of God (Matt 26:28; Heb 9:15). It is the works of the Lord and not by human effort that God's people will know the Lord. In this redemptive New Covenant, Romans 8:9-13 teaches that those who believe in Jesus are no longer in "the realm of the flesh" but rather "in the realm of the Spirit (Rom 8:8-9). Paul articulates this by stating, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you" (Rom 8:11). This promise makes a way for eternal life to both Jew and Gentile.

The NT also offers many examples to describe this cosmic conflict, and one must ask whether Satan is only doing the job assigned to him by God, as alluded to in Job 1-2. This perspective may alter one's understanding of God's relationship with Satan. Alternatively, one must ask the question: is Satan the great opponent of God in an eternal cosmic war within Israel's covenantal literature as described in the Gospels, the Letters, and most vividly in the book of Revelation? Absolutely, in Revelation specifically, God's promises to Israel reach their apex of apocalyptic proportions, with the faithful saved while the opposers being cast into eternal judgment. In this cosmic drama, the human soul is in the balance.

Revelation is apocalyptic literature in the form of a circular letter within New Testament literature. This book reflects the culmination of the cosmic battles within the Bible while reminding the reader that the cosmic war has already been won through the blood of Jesus. The book is the uncovering of the glory of Jesus as Victor and is considered "both preterist and futurist in orientation,"³⁶ according to Grant. From his perspective, the "Antichrist and his forces

36. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 1.

are depicted as the final Roman Empire, but there is a twofold message in this: the current empire will be judged by God, and the final empire will be defeated and destroyed.”³⁷ The Apostle John is the author of Revelation and his message is to “provide prophetic witness to these churches of the message God is sending to them through him” (Rev 1:1-2).³⁸

In this New Covenant setting, the conclusion to this cosmic conflict places the war only within the boundaries of God’s redemptive plan through Jesus and His judgment on a world in rebellion against Him. A deeper study in subsequent chapters will flesh out the cosmic battle to end all battles with the centrality of Jesus as Victor.

The Gospels provide several examples of this spiritual battle in full force in the birth of Jesus and the Slaughter of the Innocents (Jer 31:15; Matt 2:16-23, 3:13; Luke 2:39), the temptation of Jesus (Ezek 3:14; Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1; Acts 8:39), unnatural winds and waves (Matt 8:23-27), Jesus casting out demons (Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-4; Luke 8:26-33), Jesus’s teaching on the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:15-31), the act of Judas Iscariot (Matt 26:14-16), and Jesus going to the Cross for humanity (Ps 22:18; Matt 27:32-37; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24).

Although not all-exhaustive, each narrative provides the reader with a glimpse into the unseen realm of the cosmic conflict raging in the divine space, and one need only look to Mark 5:36; Romans 8:6, 12:2, 1 Corinthians 2:16, and 1 Peter 1:13 to understand that the battles do not take place in the temporal but rather the spiritual realm, with 2 Peter and Jude as classic examples. A deeper study in the subsequent chapters will be completed to explore the cosmic

37 Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 1.

38. Osborne, *Revelation*, 2.

conflict with prominence given to God’s new covenantal promise of Christ Jesus, the “seed of the woman.”

Though Satan believed he had gained a victory with Jesus’ death on the Cross, it was in that exact moment that Satan was defeated. All that was given to Satan at the Fall of man in Genesis 3, Jesus redeemed on the Cross (Rom 5:1-21). On the Cross, Jesus became humanity’s living sacrifice for the penalty of sin, He provided a propitiation for humanity’s sin, He provided reconciliation back into fellowship with God, and He provided redemption from the bondage of sin and Satan.³⁹

God’s relationship with Israel offers the reader a view of God’s enduring love for a chosen people; however, as a backdrop to this love story, one can also see evidence of an unseen war raging on in opposition to this love. With the centrality of Jesus, the Messiah, as the “seed of the woman” discussed in Genesis 3:15, it is He who crushes the head of Satan, removes Satan’s rule forever over humanity, and, in His act of love, Jesus provides armor for the Christian believer until He comes again.

Cosmic Warfare: A Contemporary Perspective in Ephesians 6:10-18

Ephesians 6:10-18 speaks of putting on the armor of God, and a contemporary study is pursued in light of the comprehensive study of the cosmic conflict in covenantal literature. Although Ephesians 6:10-18 remains foundational to the believer encircled in spiritual warfare, the story began in Genesis 3:15 with God’s sovereignty and complete authority over its beginning and end. Specifically, Ephesians 6:10-18 identifies these dark forces with having a chain of command, much like a military unit engaged in a war.

39. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 580.

Fortunately, this same passage speaks of the armor a believer must wear to wage war “against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:12). With this passage in mind, this contemporary review highlights the cosmic warfare in terms of the grand and final cosmic conflict to come. Although these overt and covert war scenes are played out within Israel’s temporal history, God’s enduring promises will come to fruition in the “fulfillment of the land promise in the future millennial or consummated age.”⁴⁰

40. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 824.

CHAPTER 2: THE GRAND CONFLICT IN THE ADAMIC COVENANT

God's covenants and dispensations are fundamental to the biblical setting, story, and relationship with the Israelites. The word "covenant" does not appear until Genesis 9:9, "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you." In covenant theology (covenant of works or covenant of grace), the Adamic Covenant is indirectly observed in Genesis 2-3, in part by asserting that "the first declaration of the covenant of redemption contains in seed form every basic principle which manifests itself subsequently. God reveals in the most balanced fashion the various elements constituting his commitment to redeem his fallen creation."⁴¹ Robertson uses Jeremiah 33:20-21, 25-26 as reference points. In essence, Covenant theology views the Bible through the grid of the covenant.

From another perspective, Williamson contends that "the vast majority of contemporary Old Testament scholars totally dismiss any idea of an Adamic covenant, primarily on the grounds that there is no explicit reference to a covenant with Adam or Eve. The word "covenant" does not occur at all in Genesis until the Noah story."⁴² The passage Williamson refers to is Genesis 6:18, which states "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you."

However, Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell disagree, suggesting the first covenant can be observed in Genesis 2-3 since all the elements of a covenant are present. Treier and Elwell postulate:

God entered into covenant that he might bestow on Adam and Eve further blessing. Called variously the Edenic covenant, the covenant of nature, the covenant of life, or preferably the covenant of works, this pact consisted of (1) a promise of eternal life on the condition of perfect obedience throughout a probationary period; (2) the threat of

41. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 93.

42. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 55.

death upon disobedience; and (3) the sacrament of the tree of life, or, additionally, the sacraments of paradise and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Although “covenant” is not mentioned in the first chapters of Genesis, all the elements are present even though the promise of eternal life is there by implication only.⁴³

Adam’s proper relationship with God required him to be fully obedient to God’s commands, which is articulated in Genesis 2:16-17, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” Specifically, Genesis 2:15-16 declares God’s promises to Adam and Genesis 2:17 articulates God’s conditions and consequences for disobedience. The covenant signs are the trees of life and of knowledge and supporting passages include Leviticus 18:5 and Romans 5:12-20.

From a dispensational perspective, God’s redemptive plan for humanity and Israel is administered in various ways during a given period in history. The various dispensations involve a trial for humanity, a failure, then a judgment followed by the next dispensation. As Robert Saucy posits, “This pervasive mediatorial kingdom program, ultimately fulfilled through the reign of Christ, is the theme of Scripture and the unifying principle of all aspects of God’s work in history.”⁴⁴ In terms of the various covenants, the purpose is the unifying principles of biblical history or a comprehensive message of salvation of the Bible within history. The focal point is the cosmic conflict between Satan and his followers and the Kingdom of God, and the “earth appears in Scripture as a rebelling province in the universal kingdom of God.”⁴⁵ Consequently, God’s purpose is to “bring an end to the rebellion and its sinful effects, not only in human history

43. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academic, 2017), 215.

44. Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 28.

45. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 28.

but in all creation. This fundamental purpose is expressed in the petition that Christ taught his disciples to pray,”⁴⁶ “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

In contrast, the classic covenant theology view, also known as Federal Theology, has two covenants: a covenant of works and a covenant of grace.⁴⁷ Federal Theology began with Johannes Cocceius in his work *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* (Summa of the Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God).⁴⁸ Cocceius was a Dutch theologian also known as the father of Federal Theology (1603-1669), who brought prominence to the term. Passages used to support its relevance amongst scholars are found in 1 Corinthians 15:22 and Romans 5:15-21, which recapitulate humanity’s history in two Adams. The Adam created by God in Genesis 2:7 “was the federal head under the covenant of works; the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the federal head of all believers under the covenant of grace. Thus, as Adam’s sin was legally and effectively our sin, so Christ’s obedience is legally and effectively believers’ righteousness.”⁴⁹

The covenant of works represents the relationship with God before the Fall. The covenant of grace represents a path of redemption after the Fall,⁵⁰ and it is in the Garden of Eden where God declares this cosmic war until Satan’s final judgment is fulfilled in Revelation 20. This declaration of the covenant of grace contains, in seed form, the redemption of humanity, God’s

46. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 28.

47. John H. Walton, *Covenant: God’s Purpose God’s Plan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 48.

48. Justo L. Gonzalez, gen. ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Theologians* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), <https://ref.ly/logosres/wstmnrtdthlgn?hw=Cocceius%2c+Johannes>.

49. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 311-312.

50. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 311-312.

fallen creation. In the covenant of redemption or grace, Genesis 3:14-19 records God's handling of this cosmic rebellion with God first speaking to Satan (Gen 3:14-15), then God speaks to Eve (Gen 3:16), then to Adam as the representative of humanity (Gen 3:17).

In the serpent's stance of humiliation before God, the serpent—Satan's mouthpiece—would crawl from that point, which would force one to ponder the anatomy of the serpent prior to the Fall if the text is to be taken literally. However, Scripture provides many examples where Satan and or his demons entered into animals or man to do his works, yet God prevails. This assumption comes from God's statement, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen 3:15).

From this passage, it is apparent that the future Redeemer, the seed of the woman, would receive a bite in his ankle based on a reductive interpretation, at the Cross as a strike in Satan's attack. In contrast, in this cosmic battle, Satan would be given a mortal strike, resulting in his utter destruction, as prophesied in Revelation 20. This cosmic drama places a perpetual conflict between humanity and Satan, as "these verses guarantee that God Himself shall impose a continuing opposition between mankind and Satan."⁵¹ As a sobering reality, Satan will continue to do his evil deeds through mankind until his demise in Revelation 20.

Psalms 110:6 also speaks of the judgment of evil: "He will judge among the nations, he will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief head over a broad country" (Ps 110:6, NASB). The word "chief" or *rô'sh* in Hebrew, is a "noun, common, singular, absolute"⁵² with a

51. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 96.

52. Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham English Bible: Psalms Chapter 110:6*: <https://ref.ly/logosres/leb?ref=BibleLEB2.Ps110.6> "Chief."

meaning of “a leader or head, a person who is in charge.”⁵³ In the context of Psalm 110:6, the word “chief” would indicate leadership or representative of “men.” The Psalmist speaks of the same scene as is recorded in Revelation 19:15-21, “beast and the kings of the earth and their armies” will be seized and thrown in the fire forever. This scene reflects the battle of Armageddon, where Satan will be bound for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-5) and his armies will be destroyed during the second coming of Christ. To further clarify, this concept is certainly a contested one, based on one’s eschatological perspectives. If the Bible is to be taken literally, which is the best approach, one must adhere to an actual event to occur when Christ and His people reign for a literal thousand years. Grant R. Osborne articulates it well with “As Christ is the “priest-king,” so the victorious saints will share in his royal as well as his priestly status. These last two describe the activity of the saints during the millennium as well as the new heavens and new earth, they will worship God as priests and reign with him as royalty.”⁵⁴ Specifically, Scripture then reveals that Satan will be released to “deceive the nations,” to war against God’s people, and to be “thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev 20:7-10). One fact to emphasize is that these two opposing forces are not equal, as God is sovereign and victorious.

The critical word that must be examined in Genesis 3:15 is the word “enmity” and it only appears in the Bible four other times: Numbers 35:21, 35:22, and Ezekiel 25:15, 35:5. However, the related verb in participial form reflects the ongoing struggle between God and Satan’s

53. Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham English Bible: Psalms Chapter 110:6*: <https://ref.ly/logosres/leb?ref=BibleLEB2.Ps110.6> “Chief.”

54 Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 709-710.

people. These passages include Genesis 22:17, 49:8; Exodus 15:6, 23:22; Numbers 24:10; and Deuteronomy 6:19, as examples.⁵⁵

The Adamic Covenant

The promise of a Redeemer in Genesis 3:15 (cf., Isa 53), also known as Proto-Evangelium, is the first mention of the gospel and is birthed as a perpetual promise or, as some scholars articulate, the commencement of the Adamic Covenant. God perpetuates this cosmic war by imposing a continuing opposition between humanity and Satan, as articulated in Genesis 3:15. With success in deceiving the woman, Satan must have assumed he would have all future generations under his bondage and control, but this would not be the case. As God states in Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed,” this declaration emphasizes that the woman would in fact be in conflict with Satan. Although the woman (Eve) exercised a level of control on the man’s (Adam) choice to eat the forbidden fruit, God later declared that the man would rule over the woman (Gen 3:17).⁵⁶ God makes another crushing declaration to Satan that perpetuates this cosmic war by declaring that a future seed of the woman would destroy him. Henry M. Morris, founder of the Institute of Creation Research summarizes this declaration,

Not only would victory not be as easy as he thought, but ultimately, he would be completely defeated and destroyed. There will come One who will not be of the man’s seed, and who therefore will not be under your dominion. He will be uniquely the seed of the woman, miraculously conceived and virgin-born. Though you will succeed in grievously injuring Him, He will completely crush you and all your evil ambitions.⁵⁷

55. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 96.

56. Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1976), 120.

57. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 120.

As the head and sole representative for humanity, Adam and Eve's disobedience resulted in the contamination and alienation of themselves and their descendants throughout the ages. Arthur W. Pink makes a thought-provoking statement that places the Adamic Covenant as fundamental to God's handling of humanity when he asserts, "Until the federal headship of Adam and God's covenant with him in that office be actually perceived, we are without the key to God's dealings with the human race, we are unable to discern man's relation to the divine law, and we appreciate not the fundamental principles upon which the atonement of Christ proceeded."⁵⁸ Pink sees both Adam and Jesus as federal heads, and the passage that gives credence to his perspective is in Paul's writings, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). Death comes through Adam, while life comes through Jesus.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, all those who believe in Him will have everlasting life. Jesus as the "last Adam" represents the new race, the resurrection that will only affect believers in Him (Rom 5:12-21). Romans 5:12-21 speaks clearly of the acts of two men, opposite outcomes with Adam's disobedience bringing death to all, while Jesus's obedience brings life to those who receive Him. For clarity, both are representatives of humanity; Adam represents all while Christ Jesus represents all who receive God's gift. The punitive evils that came upon the human race in consequence of Adam's sin have contaminating effects. One only need look at the ever-present calamities, natural and manufactured disasters, human pain and suffering, poverty, decay, lack of morality, the perversion of God's gifts and promises, and death in all aspects of human life, to see that it is a world separated from its Creator.

58. Pink, *Divine Covenants*, 26.

The Cosmic Conflict Realized

The Adamic Covenant speaks of a loving relationship between the Creator and His creation. Adam and Eve's rebellion introduces sin into the world, and at this point, God introduces His eternal plan of redemption. Consequently, the conflict between Satan and humanity is pursued in this curse. From a covenant theology perspective, Robertson emphasizes his stance by asserting that the "Elements of curse and blessing are found in each address, thus serving structurally to bind inseparably the covenant of creation with the covenant of redemption."⁵⁹ God addresses the serpent first by cursing it more than all the other animals with a command to crawl, an act of humiliation. Under Leviticus laws, animals crawling in the dust were considered unclean (Lev 11:42). Other references to this posture in the dust include Genesis 18:27; Job 30:19, 42:6; Psalm 72:9; Isaiah 49:23, 65:25; and Micah 7:17. In these passages, a cosmic war and drama unfold as the elements of the earth, animals, and man are subjected to the effects of sin and its contaminating effects.

When God introduces His redemption plan in Genesis 3:15, He also sets up the battle plan and its rules and boundaries by which Satan is bound. As Robertson articulates, "The divine initiative in this establishment of animosity must be underscored. God himself shall perpetuate continuing warfare."⁶⁰ This statement clarifies that the prolongation of the cosmic war will bring to fruition the seed of the woman who defeats Satan at the Cross. In Genesis 3:15, the word "enmity" extends to future generations, ultimately resulting in the "seed of the woman," Jesus, as the Savior of humanity. This seed eventually crushes the head of Satan, the Adversary. In God's sovereignty and omnipotence, He ordains in Genesis 3:15 that the "seed of the woman" will be

59. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 93.

60. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 93.

manifested in the death and resurrection of Jesus, becoming victor and conqueror for humanity. It is on the cross that death is defeated and humanity's sin is paid in full. Barnhouse accentuates Jesus' divinity by stating "The vindication of the divine righteousness and holiness far transcends any human interests in the great conflict."⁶¹

One must recognize the cosmic warfare as a backdrop when God's perfect creation is contaminated with sin at the onset of a single act of disobedience of Adam and Eve, forcing the world into utter destruction and humanity having a more significant role than one can imagine. Nevertheless, in God's perfect ways, He provides an eternal plan, a remedy in the "seed of the woman." Moreover, this promise anticipates what will come in Revelation 12, 19, and 20, which is the final victory over Satan and Death. The cosmic conflict plays itself out through the passages of God's plans. Abel, the first martyr for God, is the first of many attempts of Satan to destroy the "seed of the woman" who will one day redeem His people. In 1 John 3:12, it is clear that Cain belongs to the evil one or the serpent's seed, whereas Abel belongs to the "seed of the woman."

Satan, the Adversary

The Hebrew word 'שָׂטָן' (*satan*) means to "oppose, obstruct, tempter, or to accuse; the word σατάν (*satan*) means "adversary."⁶² In the OT and NT, Satan refers to a title or a name, "the Satan," and the Septuagint renders the term 'שָׂטָן' as "diabolos," to cast a stone, thus to accuse. Satan, the devil, stands opposed to God and humanity. According to Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman's research, they indicate that some scholars suggest that Satan, does not play a

61. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 213.

62. Logos Bible Software, *Factbook*, "Satan," <https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%23Satan>.

significant role in the OT;⁶³ however, this assertion does not address the abundant number of catastrophic events that plagued the Israelites, specifically the calamitous events that beset the genealogy of the “seed of the woman” in an attempt to thwart God’s redemptive plan. Paul is clear that this cosmic war is not against flesh and blood but against Satan’s schemes and evil hierarchy, a battle that has been raging since Genesis 3:15. Also, one can read examples of this cosmic war being waged within every book of the Bible, Genesis 6:1-4 and Job 1-2 being classic examples of this reality.

Revelation 12 offers a few familiar names of the adversary who wages war with God; “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rev 12:9). Satan is the origin of evil, wickedness, and this world’s prince. This depiction orients one to a more accurate understanding of how and why there are so many problems in the world. Ezekiel 28 suggests that although God speaks to an earthly king in 28:1-10, the tone and setting change in 28:11-17 is as if He is speaking to the evil one behind the king, “Blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you” (Ezek 28:15). This passage reflects Satan’s condition before and after his Fall.

This same comparative language can be found in Isaiah 14 when the author speaks of the king of Babylon. The tone of the oracle again changes as if speaking to the evil one behind the king. With similar language, the one “who wanted to be “most high,” (Isa 14:14) will be cast away from God and the council to earth, and even under the earth.”⁶⁴ Another view suggests

63. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman II, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: An Encyclopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures of Speech and Literary Patterns of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 1998), 759.

64. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 91.

Isaiah 14:12 is only referring to the Babylonian king's downfall as a parallel to the goddess Ishtar.⁶⁵ Further, Isaiah 14:12-13 is only suggesting the "king of Babylon" is declaring he can govern independently of God.

It is an assertion that Ezekiel 28 specifically points to the "anointed cherub" because of the passage, "You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you" (Ezek 18:14-15). Scripture does not state that Adam was an "anointed cherub." However, before the Fall, Lucifer was God's created "anointed cherub." Therefore, the revolt against God includes Lucifer and many angelic beings who will follow him to Sheol; "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit (Isa 14:12-15; Rev 20:10). The word "hell" in Hebrew is *še'ól*, meaning the "final place of punishment of the ungodly," "eternal punishment," and "death."⁶⁶

The word "grave" (*qebûrāh*) has multiple meanings, which include a "burial site," "sepulcher," "a place of grief" (2 Sam 3:32; Ps 88:11-12), an "association to uncleanness" (Num 19:16-19, 2 Chron 34:5). "Isaiah prophesied against his self-righteous countrymen as living among graves and eating the flesh of swine" (Isa 65:4; Matt 23:27, 28). Further, in Ezekiel 37:12-13, he "prophesied God would revive the Israelites from their graves, that is, from their exile and defilement among idolatrous nations."⁶⁷

65. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, eds., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Publishing, 2020), 505.

66. J. D. Watson, *A Hebrew Word for the Day: Key Words from the Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2010), 138.

67. Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete WordStudy Dictionary: Old Testament: For a Deeper Understanding of the Word* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 976.

However, “Hades” is a place of eternal torment, which is articulated in Luke 16:28; “eternal fire” in Matthew 24:41; “outer darkness, in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” in Matthew 8:12; “and from which there is “no rest day and night” in Revelation 14:11. Duvall and Hays support this assertion: “The fate of the wicked is to burn in an unquenchable fire (Isa 66:24; Mark 9:48). The unrighteous are destined to burn and die eternally as punishment on the day of judgment. The lake of fire is also the fate of the beast and the false prophet (Rev 19:20), as well as death and Hades and the unrighteous dead (Rev 20:14-15).”⁶⁸

Satan’s Plans and the Fall of Man

Satan carries out his terror through the intermediacy of others, which is the serpent in Genesis 3:15 and Peter in Matthew 16:22-23, as examples. One only need to read the history of humanity to detect a satanic power prowling behind every worldly power, which seeks to control and declare a cosmic war against God and His kingdom. Throughout the ages, Satan attempts to thwart God’s plans; but in God’s sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence, Satan can only do his bidding within the boundaries of God’s eternal will. This truth provides much peace since Satan, a created being, was and continues to be subject to the Creator’s plan.

Genesis 3:15 is one of the most famous and foundational Scriptures within the Bible that speaks of the onset of this cosmic war. Hamilton suggests conservative scholars support the assertion that this passage has strong messianic overtones, whereas the critical camp of scholars claim too much has been read into the passage and postulates that “At best, according to this school, the story is an etiological myth that explains why there is hostility between humanity and

68. Duvall and Hays, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, 505.

the serpent world.”⁶⁹ Before the Fall of man, there was evil in the universe, and this reality is apparent in the story of the Fall itself. The wickedness of Satan to tempt man to sin has material ramifications that contaminate the world and humanity at its core. Adam and Eve were to be in communion with God, and Adam was to have dominion over all the earth (Gen 1:28). Adam’s placement on the earth can be understood by Psalms 8:5 (e.g., Heb 2:6-8): “Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty.” Adam was a new creature from God that would have naturally infuriated Satan, based on his attributes we can observe in today’s world. To receive Adam’s allegiance and to attack God and His love for Adam and Eve would have certainly been the strategic goal of Satan.

However, in Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden, Adam and his seed became subject to Satan himself. Consequently, through Adam, Satan was given authority over the earth. Walter A. Elwell makes mention of this scene, “The Fall of man and the subsequent program of redemption must be understood in the context of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan, in which the ultimate triumph of God is assured.”⁷⁰ This statement speaks of Satan’s deception to force Adam and Eve’s independence from God while leading them to question God’s goodness, truth, and authority. In essence, this was a frontal attack on God himself from Satan.

Together with Satan, Adam and Eve opposed God in their act of disobedience, unfaithfulness, infidelity, and fundamental apostasy, which resulted in their full contamination

69. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 197.

70. Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 766. (Note: Logos Bible Software credits Walter A. Elwell as the author).

and separation. Elwell focuses on this contamination of man's soul by his actions of betrayal.⁷¹

Elwell continues,

Satan attacked Adam precisely at the concentration point of man's covenant loyalty. Undivided obedience to God gave way to whole-souled rebellion and complete revolt: the authority of God was repudiated; the goodness of God was doubted; the wisdom of God was disputed, and the truth of God was contradicted. A whole new complex of affections and emotions took possession of the heart and mind of man.⁷²

Death is the result as warned; "but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Gen 3:3). Consequently, Adam and Eve and the earth wholly experienced the result of sin.

Because communion with God is severed, sin, contamination, and degeneration are pursued, and death reigns at every point of life through Adam and his descendants. Moreover, this fractured relationship with God meant all humanity would inherit the same citation Adam received for his sin and liability to death. On the surface, it would appear Satan had gained ground in his campaign to thwart God's plans. However, in Genesis 3:15, God's saving purpose for man is pronounced, as the "seed of the woman" would accomplish the redemption of the fallen man with the divine inbreathing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.⁷³

Ancient Near East Literature of the Creation and Fall

Versions of the Noahic deluge have been discovered in several cultures within the ancient Near East and with the "earliest written sources coming from the late third millennium BC in

71. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 766.

72. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 766.

73. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 80.

Sumer, in which the texts are inscribed on clay tablets.”⁷⁴ The Sumerian flood story speaks of how the gods created the Sumerian people and then made the decision to “destroy the seed of mankind” to “put an end to human kingship.”⁷⁵ Interestingly, the Egyptian creation account portrays humanity as having a higher ability, whereas the Mesopotamian accounts considered humanity’s achievement brief.⁷⁶ Further, in the Egyptian creation traditions, their primary deities were considered creators with the oldest creation accounts coming from the cities of Heliopolis and Hermopolis through the emergence of the gods Thoth and the sun-god Re-Atum, respectively.⁷⁷ In the Egyptian flood account, the god Atum decides to destroy the surface of the earth returning it to water “as it was at the beginning of time. The cause of the flood will be the inundation of the Nile River alone.”⁷⁸

In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, it tells of the god Ea warning Utnapishtim of a pending flood, thus encouraging him to build a boat to be saved. Although the story has similarities to the event of the biblical storm itself, the story diverges abruptly with “Enlil then has mercy on Utnapishtim and his wife, and they are made immortal, that is, “like unto us gods.”⁷⁹ As a striking contrast to the ancient Near Eastern accounts, the Genesis narrative exclusively illustrates God’s interest in restoration and renewed fellowship with humanity, whereas the Egyptian version is void of

74. John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013), 47.

75. Currid, *Against the Gods*, 49.

76. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, https://ref.ly/logosres/lbd?art=fall.ancient_near_east_literature.

77 Christopher B. Hays, *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 64-65.

78. Currid, *Against the Gods*, 56.

79. Currid, *Against the Gods*, 52-53.

compassion and grace and only “rescues the gods from the flood.”⁸⁰ There is no doubt that there are many similarities amongst the accounts, however, there are also foundational differences as Currid emphasizes “The differences that exist are not merely details of the text; they are at the deeper level of worldview, theology, and belief.”⁸¹

Regarding the Hebrew Bible and comparative ancient Near East (ANE) literature, there are no parallels with Genesis 1. Gerhard F. Hasel, professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology emphasizes that the Genesis account does not have a parallel within the ANE and thus uniquely comprehensive in its details as in “How” and “when” and by “whom” and “in what manner” the world was made.”⁸² He goes on to highlight the fact that “There are bits and pieces which have been compared from various cosmogonic myths and speculations, but the biblical creation account as a unit stands unique in the ancient world in its comprehensiveness and cohesiveness.”⁸³

From a perspective during the Second Temple Jewish period, 1 Enoch reflects upon the story of the tree of wisdom. First Enoch appears to be influential, because 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 5-7 reference 1 Enoch to illustrate the point of the fallen angels, which will be discussed in the next chapter. In this text, it articulates the accounting of Adam and Eve’s act of disobedience by eating from the tree: “This is the tree of wisdom, of which your father of old and your mother of old, who were your progenitors, have eaten, and they learned wisdom and their eyes were

80. Currid, *Against the Gods*, 57.

81. Currid, *Against the Gods*, 57.

82 Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Days of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal Days or Figurative Periods / Epochs of Time?* Origins 21 (1):5-38 (1994), 10: <https://www.Idolphin.org/haseldays.html>.

83 Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Days of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal Days or Figurative Periods / Epochs of Time?*, 10.

opened, and they knew that they were naked and they were driven out of the garden” (1 Enoch 32:3-6).⁸⁴

In the Apocrypha, the book of Jubilees speaks of a similar accounting of the Fall of Adam and Eve but does not provide the depth in which the cosmic war is portrayed in the biblical text. Instead, the text states, “And God cursed the serpent, and was wroth with it forever” (Job 3:23).⁸⁵ This verse does, however, provide the timeline in which God is wroth with the serpent.

New Testament References of the Fall and Cosmic War

The NT provides contrasting examples of Adam and the second Adam, or Jesus, and one of the more known passages can be found in 1 Corinthians: “For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor 15:21-22). In this passage, it is abundantly clear that Adam brought death to his descendants, whereas Jesus, the “seed of the woman,” provides a future resurrection for all who believe in Him. Other references include Rom. 3:10-12 and 5:12-21. Both Adam (death) and Jesus (life) are critical figures in God’s redemptive plan whose acts have decisive implications for those they represent.

Cain Kills Abel

In Genesis 3:15, God informs Satan that his destruction would occur “through the seed of the woman.” In understanding this truth, Satan would naturally take every opportunity to guard

84. Joseph B. Lumpkin, *The Books of Enoch: The Angels, The Watchers, and the Nephilim* (Blountsville, AL: Fifth Estate Publishers, 2011), 56.

85. R. H. Charles, trans., *The Apocrypha: Includes the Books of Enoch, Jasher, and Jubilees*. Vol. 1. *The Researchers Library of Ancient Texts* (Crane, MO: Defender Press, 2011), 282.

against its fulfillment by destroying the lineage of the redemptive promise. In the story of Cain and Abel, Abel offers God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, which angers Cain. God attempts to teach Cain that if his heart and character were right, he would do well. God lets Cain know that “sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you” (Gen 4:7). In this case, God describes sin as a predatory animal seeking to pounce on its prey, a description of Satan’s character. Interestingly, this metaphor has roots from an Akkadian participle “*rabāsu*,” which is to crouch, lie in wait.”⁸⁶ The root “*rabāsu*,” in “Akkadian texts is also applied to certain malevolent deities. In Gen 4:7, the Hebrew word *rōbēs* is often considered a loan of Akk *rabāsu*: sin is crouching at Cain’s door like a demon.”⁸⁷

Disregarding God’s warning and in his anger, Cain kills his brother and then lies to God as to Abel’s whereabouts, saying, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9). Like Satan, Cain acts out in hostility towards God, which multiplies his sins against God. First John 3:12 makes it clear that Cain was wicked in his heart; “Not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.” The Greek word “slay or slew” (σφάζω, *sphazō*), is a “verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular,” meaning to “slaughter, slay, kill, murder, killing of a person by violence.”⁸⁸ Similarly, the Hebrew word to “kill” (*yāhārgē*), is a verb, Qal, yiqtol (imperfect), third person, masculine, singular,” meaning to “put to death intentionally or

86 Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999): <https://ref.ly/logosres/ddd?hw=Rabis%CC%A3u>.

87 Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, <https://ref.ly/logosres/ddd?hw=Rabis%CC%A3u>.

88. Frederick William Danker, ed., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed., s.v. “σφάζω,” (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 979.

knowingly.”⁸⁹ The instrument used to kill Abel is not explicitly specified but emphasizes the wickedness of murder and its lessons. John focuses on the killing of Abel as an act inspired by Satan, “the evil one who seduced his parents now seduces Cain, a powerful negative moral example, a historical account not to emulate.”⁹⁰

Because of Satan’s primal hatred for God, man, and specifically, the “seed of the woman,” it is an assertion that Cain was cited by Satan to destroy Abel, whom God favored because of his righteous heart and acceptable offering. God told Cain, “But you must master it,” speaking of the temptation of sin. The temptation of sin itself is not wrong, as one need only read Matthew 4:1-11, where Jesus Himself was tempted by Satan. Jesus consistently responded with Scripture and mastered it; as a result of His obedience, Satan left Him. Conversely, Cain chose to follow sin.

In this intense cosmic conflict, it continues to be evident that Satan turns his attention and hatred to those whom God has chosen for eternal purposes and those who walk with God. As in the case of Cain and Abel, Abel was dead and Cain was lost in sin, but in God’s grace, Adam and Eve had other children, namely Seth, so the cosmic war continues.

Summary

The Adamic Covenant rests in having faith in the promised Messiah. Although the word “covenant” does not appear until Genesis 9:9, God establishes His redemptive plan in Genesis 3:15 after the Fall of Adam and Eve. Isaiah 7:14 explicitly highlights the birth of a child who would be born of a virgin and would be called “Immanuel.” The word ‘Immanuel’ or

⁸⁹ Logos Bible Study Software, *The Lexham English Bible: Genesis Chapter 4: “Kill:”*
<https://ref.ly/logosres/leb?ref=BibleLEB2.Ge4.14>.

⁹⁰ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1067.

‘עִמָּנוּאֵל, *immanu'el*’ means “God with us.” Matthew 1:23 reiterates this truth, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which, translated, means “God with us” (e.g., Isa 8:10).

Specifically, some scholars adhere to an Edenic Covenant or a Covenant of Works, which God made directly with Adam in the Garden of Eden. Hosea 6:7 speaks of this covenant “But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously against Me.” As a conditional covenant, Adam was to obey God’s commandment, which was not to eat from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” This agreement set forth God’s promises of life and blessings for obedience and consequences of death for disobedience (Gen 2:15-17). However, upon Adam’s disobedience, God provided the Adamic Covenant, an unconditional covenant with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:14-24), which provides the first mention of God’s plan for humanity’s redemption through the “seed of the woman.” In this covenant, God makes it abundantly clear that although Satan would wound the “seed of the woman,” the “seed of the woman” would in turn be triumphant in that same moment.

For those scholars who hold to the Covenant Theology school of thought, this theology has two covenants: a Covenant of Works which covers the timeframe before the Fall (Gen 1:28-3:6), and the Covenant of Grace, which covers God’s redemption plan after the Fall (Gen 3:7; Rev 20). H. Wayne House offers further insight stating that although this perspective is waning in support, in recent years a concept called the “Covenant of Redemption” has the attention of biblical scholars. This covenant is an agreement between the Father and the Son.⁹¹

From another perspective, the Dispensation of Conscience is the second of seven dispensations, which is God’s administration of Israel over a specified period of time. The

⁹¹ H. Wayne House, *Dissertation Feedback: Covenant of Redemption: Accessed on August 28, 2023*, 40.

cosmic conflict begins in Genesis 3:15 when sin is introduced into the world, but God's redemption plan is put into action in the same verse, where cosmic warfare is realized.

Satan, the Adversary, is present throughout the OT and NT, and Scripture identifies him as the god of this age. As an "accuser," he wages war against humanity which can be seen in Job 1-2, in Matt. 4:1-11 when he overtly tempts Jesus to hand over His allegiance to him, or in the story of Cain and Abel, as discussed in this chapter. In an attempt to thwart God's plans, he pounces on Cain, inciting him to kill his brother Abel, who is favored by God. Although Satan's plans were in vain, he continues in his wickedness and deceit to destroy humanity to prevent the "seed of the woman" from being born.

CHAPTER 3: WARFARE AND PRESERVATION WITHIN THE NOAHIC COVENANT

This chapter gives considerable attention to the Flood and its consequences because of its breadth, depth, and biblical ramifications. Likewise, the Tower of Babel and its implications is explored to flesh out its consequences for humanity. As a focus of this chapter, the Noahic Covenant is foundational to the biblical story and sets the stage for the conflict that will have lasting effects on humanity. As Heiser articulates, “The divine transgressions of Genesis 3 and 6 are part of the theological prelude that frames the rest of the Bible.”¹ With this in mind, one will learn that God’s actions toward the “seed of the woman” and the “seed of the serpent” will be handled very differently.

As an introduction, the Tower of Babel is another example of humanity’s mission to supplant God through pride and pursuit for independence and self-sufficiency. Although this story is told in only nine verses, its ramifications are reflective of the story of the Fall of Man—humanity’s never-ending desire to be separated from God. The Tower of Babel represents the “dream of civilization”² and a form of idolatry for a civilization with one focus and language. This sinister act of idolatry attempts to transfer reverence and dependence from the Creator, the only true God, to the unified worship of one’s work, efforts, and aspirations, wholly apart from God. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman, III observe, “We sense the moral judgment against idolatry, pride, self-reliance, the urge of material power, and the human illusion

1. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 110.

2. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: An Encyclopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures of Speech, and Literary Patterns of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 66.

of infinite achievement. It is a picture of misguided human aspirations ending in confusion, in literary terms, an episode of epic proportions that follows the downward arc of tragedy.”³

The Noahic Covenant

The Noahic Covenant provides a glimpse of God’s perspective between the “seed of the woman” and the “seed of the serpent.” God handled the “seed of the woman” by bestowing grace upon Noah and his family, whereas the “seed of the serpent,” those who Satan works through, received total annihilation in the Flood. The covenant established with Noah is articulated in Genesis 6:17-22, 8:20-22, 9:1-7, and 9:8-17. Interestingly, this covenant accentuates the close interrelationship of its redemptive characteristics with its Creation attributes from Genesis 1:28.

Further, foundational redemptive relationships between Genesis 3 with the Fall of man, Genesis 7 with the Flood, and the promise of a son in Genesis 15, is articulated in Romans 4:1-25. The correlation between these chapters highlights God’s blessings to come and a justification by faith as foundational in God’s redemptive plan. J. Dwight Pentecost places significance on this correlation by stating, “Immediately after the Fall of man, God revealed His purpose to provide salvation for those who put their faith in Him. This program was gradually unfolded by God to man and the promise made to Abraham represents a movement forward in this revelation.”⁴

In Genesis 6:17-22, God mentions the term “covenant” explicitly for the first time when He declares, “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you” (Gen 6:18). God’s act of grace similar

3. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 67.

4. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 70.

to the account of Noah can also be seen in Genesis 18:24-32 in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Moreover, God's act of grace and divine patience in these passages appears to connect the opening account of Creation (Gen 1:28) to the re-creation of all living things to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 8:17). Genesis 8:20-22 reveals preservation characteristics of the covenant with Noah and those designated to remain alive. However, in an eschatological message from God hidden in plain sight, Genesis 8:22 pronounces that the earth will eventually go away and a new earth will follow (e.g., Ps 102:26; Heb 1:11, 12).

Second Peter describes the passing of the earth with striking detail: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet 3:10, 13). In this passage, which is reminiscent of the Flood, God vividly lets the reader know that His patience toward sin will be judged in His perfect timing. Robert H. Gundry, scholar and professor at Westmont College, suggests the passage "But the day of the Lord" occurs "often in the OT with respect to the Lord's bringing judgment and or salvation on various occasions."⁵ Throughout Israel's history, the Israelites would continually experience captivity and oppression from the surrounding pagan nations because of their incessant disobedience to God's ways and His precepts. However, Israel would repent, God would forgive their sins, and the Israelites would receive relief for a time. In reference to "But the day of the Lord" in 2 Peter 3:10, Gundry places emphasis on the destruction of the "ungodly men" when Jesus comes back as outlined in 2 Peter 3:7 "But the

5. Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation: Volume Two, Romans–Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), 965.

present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” To provide further simplicity of this passage, the certainty of Jesus’ return in His glory was taught by the apostles, as exemplified in 2 Peter 3:5-10. Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black emphasize this point with “Peter insisted that God had always interrupted history with demonstrations of His power, and He would do it again at Christ’s return.”⁶

After the Flood, God blesses Noah to be “fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1, KJV). Although Noah was given grace for a new beginning, he would not be able to experience the harmony in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. The next verse articulates God’s judgment on sin and places a mandate of conflict over man’s governing of the earth with specific language that is descriptive of this conflict: “fear” and “terror” on “every beast of the earth” (Gen 9:2). This re-establishment of human authority speaks of oppression and conflict between humanity and its world, thus making it painfully apparent that the cosmic struggle is ever-present as humanity is forced to contend with the consequences of disobedience and alignment with Satan. Erich Sauer points out that the Jewish tradition binds the Noahic Covenant as fundamental to commandments binding for all men, the “prohibition of blasphemy, idolatry, manslaughter, theft, incest, disobedience to authority, and the eating of blood.”⁷ Using Amos 9:11-12 as revelatory insight to the prophetic writings, Acts 15 articulates that the Council in Jerusalem would address these essentials (Acts 15:28-29). From this vantage point, the covenant between God and Noah focuses on a relationship between humanity and their God, “provides the biblical-

6. Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing, 2003), 546.

7. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 72.

theological framework within which all subsequent divine-human covenants operate,”⁸ and is “foundational for salvation history and a holistic biblical theology of covenant.”⁹ Precisely, it is in the Noahic covenant that all future human history and its salvation will eventually come to fruition. W. Edward Glenny, professor at Northwestern College, summarizes what God accomplishes later in the New Covenant, Jesus is Messiah and Lord, and “is the center of God’s plan for the ages and the fulfillment of God’s promises, and by the authority given to Him as the exalted Lord and Christ, it is now possible for Gentiles, as Gentiles, to be the people of God and to come directly to God through Him.”¹⁰

According to Williamson, some scholars note considerable distinction between the covenant language mentioned in Genesis 6:18 (pre-Flood) and 9:8-17 (post-Flood), and states that a scrutiny of the passage “confirms that the mention of the covenant at Genesis 6:18 is proleptical” or anticipatory, and lacks the essential elements of a promissory oath.¹¹ In essence, Genesis 6:18 is God’s prophecy to Genesis 9:8-17. However, in a closer view of the passage, the mention of a covenant is a promise from God that Noah, his family, and two of all living creatures would live, providing that Noah did everything according to God’s commandment. This assertion is supported by Treier and Elwell, “But when one party was greatly superior to the other, in enacting the *bērît* the ruler would simply announce the governmental decree to impose, while the people expressed their readiness to conform to what was ordained. Doubtless even in

8. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2018), 208.

9. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 60.

10. W. Edward Glenny, *The Septuagint and Apostolic Hermeneutics: Amos 9 in Acts 15*: Bulletin for Biblical Research / 22, no. 1 (2012): 1 – 25.

11. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 59.

this type of covenant the ruler was implicitly committed to ruling in the people's best interests and to contrive for their protection."¹² Robertson takes a holistic approach to the passages and asserts that "the covenant with Noah binds together God's purposes in creation with his purposes in redemption. Noah, his seed, and all creation benefit from this gracious relationship."¹³ Both passages speak of God's grace and the preservation of mankind through His declaration in Genesis 3:15.

Specifically, Genesis 9:8-17 speaks of the universal promise God establishes with humanity, an everlasting rainbow in the clouds signaling God's promise not to repeat the Flood: "I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease" (Gen 8:22). In this passage, "for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth" reflects God's purpose in the divine selection and preservation of Noah and his family and foundational to the salvific story.

Foundationally, the Noahic Covenant is a universal promise of God's grace and preservation and this promise is realized in the rainbow as a covenant sign between the Creator and His creation and a symbol of humanity's eternal deliverance. Supporting passages can be found in Genesis 9:12-17, Leviticus 16:14, Ezekiel 1:28, and Revelation 4:3. Fast forwarding to contemporary times, it is unfortunate that the prince of this world and his "seed" have endeavored to corrupt the original meaning of the covenantal sign in celebration of perversion and independence from God and His word. In this cosmic battle, Satan's tactical plan provides

12. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017), 214.

13. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 111.

perversion a platform by which natural marriage, gender, and the family unit God established in Genesis 2:21-25 are all rejected and abhorred by the world.

The Contamination of Mankind and the Flood

Genesis 6:1-4 appears to be an interesting yet challenging passage for exegetes. The passage reads:

Now it came about when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

In Jewish tradition, the "sons of God" were fallen angels who left their assigned place and had sexual relations with human women. Second Peter also speaks of this incident: "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into Hell and committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment" (2 Pet 2:4; e.g., Jude 6). Other references include Dead Sea Scrolls CD 2.16-18, 4Q180 fl. 7-8; 1 Enoch 6-7, 16:2, 69:5, 106:13-15; Job 4:22, 5:1, 7:21, 2 Baruch 56:10-15; Testament of Rueben 5:6; and Philo, *That God Is Unchangeable* 1.¹⁴ In Genesis 6, sin matures rapidly with the author initially describing the growth of humanity with women being born throughout the land and the "sons of God" taking wives for themselves indiscriminately. This verse is grammatically similar to Genesis 3:6, when Eve saw that the fruit was good and ate it at the encouragement of Satan. These incidents provide a glimpse into Satan's plan to contaminate and destroy God's creation.

14. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 702.

Specifically, Genesis 6:4 speaks of the “Nephilim” and many scholars disagree about who and what they were and what impact they had on humanity before and after the Flood.

There are also scholars who consider the “Nephilim” as being myths as John H. Walton and J.

Harvey Walton suggest:

The antediluvian heritage of Shem, the ancestor of Abram, is recounted with pride, that is the purpose of Genesis 5 by virtue of its genre, but that pride is tempered by the reminder of the chaos of the age in Genesis 6:1-8. True human prosperity within the cosmic order is found within the covenant, not in the glory of ancient kings, either by virtue of an ancient bloodline or the divine heritage of the “heroes of old” and “men of renown.” The point for our purposes is that nothing in the account indicates that the sons of God and the Nephilim were the cause of the disorder (though we might infer that they weren’t helping), and therefore we have no bases to infer that they are rebels or sinners or fallen beings of any kind. Their presence is a feature of the antediluvian period; it is not included in the text in order to explain the agencies behind the activities that motivated God’s decision to bring the flood.¹⁵

In contrast, one would have to gloss over the unusual details of the biblical text (Gen 6:1-8), which are undoubtedly conditions beyond the normal human sin and proliferation of those on the earth at this point in time. The predictable details in the genealogy of Adam in Genesis 5 makes this point clear. After the Flood, the appearance of other Nephilim (Num 13:33) confirms a reoccurrence by the same means as before the flood, hence the reasons for the emphasis on the words “and also afterward” in Genesis 6:4. Under Joshua’s command and with the new generation of Israelites, God instructs Joshua to completely annihilate certain areas, lands occupied by the giant clans (Deut 2:11, 20; Amos 2:9-10). Specifically, Joshua 10:28-43 provides at least five instances where the occupants of those towns were “utterly destroyed” as God commanded. It is apparent that God was eliminating the occupying giant clans attempting to frustrate His plans. Heiser clarifies this point: “For an Israelite, all this meant that the native

15. John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Biblical Text in Its Cultural and Literary Context* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 185-186.

population of Canaan had a supernaturally sinister point of origin. This wouldn't be just a battle for land. It was a battle between Yahweh and the other gods, gods who had raised up competing human bloodlines that were opposed to Yahweh's plan and people."¹⁶

Genesis 6 has deep Mesopotamian roots “since it precisely matches the description of the Mesopotamian hero Gilgamesh. Critical work on the cuneiform tablets of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* revealed that Gilgamesh was considered a giant who retained knowledge; from before the Flood.”¹⁷ A Mesopotamian flood story known as the *Erra Epic* also speaks of a banishment of sinister divine beings to the Apsu, a part of the underworld, for their evil doings. The word “Nephilim” ‘נְפִילִים,’ from ‘נָפַל’ (*naphal*, “to fall”) means “fallen ones.”¹⁸ Greek interpreters have identified the “Nephilim as semi-divine giants that came about from the sexual union of the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘daughters of men.’”¹⁹ They were known as the giants who “were on the earth in those days” (Gen 6:4). In other words, these Nephilim or hybrids appeared on the earth when divine beings cohabited with women, who were the “mighty men or warriors of great fame, and were the offspring” of these relations.²⁰

The Nephilim are the same race of giants, or hybrids, who instilled fear and doubt into the Israelite spies who surveyed the land of Canaan. A central passage that clarifies this statement reads “There also we saw the sons of Anak who were part of the Nephilim, and we

16. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2015), 197.

17. Andrew George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 237-54.

18. Logos Bible Software, *Factbook*, “Nephilim,” <https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%23Nephilim>.

19. Logos Bible Software, *Factbook*, “Nephilim,” <https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%23Nephilim>.

20. Baker and Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, 743.

became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Num 13:33). Other supporting passages include Deuteronomy 2:10, 11, 9:2; Joshua 15:14; Ezekiel 32:21, 27; 2 Peter 2:4; and Jude 6-8.²¹ These references provide confidence that the Nephilim were upon the earth before the Flood (Gen 6:4) and after by the same means exercised.

Another famous example of the descendants of the Nephilim and their placement in Israel’s history comes from the story of David and Goliath. The biblical text states that Goliath was a giant in the Philistine army with a height of “six cubits and a span” (1 Sam 17:4). Although there are various opinions as to Goliath’s height, the *Logos Bible Study Factbook* suggests on average, one “cubit” is approximately 20.5 inches or two “spans.” Using this measurement, Goliath was approximately eleven feet tall, an average height of the race of giants.²²

Joshua 11:22 reveals that he and his army failed to eliminate all of the Anakim thus the reasons why David and his army had to later kill Goliath’s brothers and the other giants at war with David, which is articulated in 1 Chronicles 20. The remaining “descendants of the giants” were eventually defeated in 2 Samuel 21:15-22 as the biblical text indicates. The names of these giants who were defeated were Goliath the Gittite (2 Sam 19), Ishbi-benob (2 Sam 21:16), Saph (2 Sam 21:18), and the unnamed giant, as biblical text states, “These four were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants” (2 Sam 21:22).

In a review of the Septuagint, the text provides more details, “Now the giants were upon the earth in those days; and after that when the sons of God were wont to go in to the daughters

21. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 105.

22. Logos Bible Study, *Factbook: Cubit*, <https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%24cubit>.

of men, they bore children to them, those were the giants of old, the men of renown” (Gen 6:4, Septuagint).²³ This passage in the Septuagint provides pronouncement to the unnatural difference between the “sons of God,” men, and the Nephilim, the “mighty men,” or giants who were great warriors and conquerors. Key passages relating to these Nephilim and their unnatural characteristics include Genesis 6:1-4; Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:10-11, 3:11; 2 Peter 2:4; and Jude 6-8. Although the interpretation varies, “The view that the Nephilim are also identified with the *gibborim*, with the latter viewed as the children of the divine-human marriages, is well-supported.”²⁴

The next verse then describes the extent of the corruption upon the earth and thus the reasons for the upcoming Flood: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). The placement of this verse provides credence to the supposition that the unnatural union resulted in “only evil continually” consequences upon the earth. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays provide a supporting summary of Genesis 6:1-5, stating that “Both early Jewish interpretation (1 Enoch 6-36) and early Christian interpretation (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6) appear to have understood this passage as referring to angels cohabiting with human women. The story is an example of the type of horrible sin that led to the judgment of the coming flood.”²⁵ Van der Toorn, Becking, and Horst reveal another possible consequence of such actions, namely that

23. Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2021), 7.

24. Routledge, “The Nephilim: A Tall Story?,” 23.

25. Duvall and Hays, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, 88.

“The human race could now be immune from mortality.”²⁶ Independence from God is undoubtedly illuminated in this statement.

Given the circumstances with the Nephilim on earth, one must assume Noah and his sons must have been horrified by this growing contamination of humanity. Nowhere in the Bible does it state that Noah was sinless but that he “found favor” because of his faith and obedience in the Lord, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). James A. Swanson’s *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* defines the words “found favor” as ‘חָן’ (*hēn*), meaning “grace, kindness, kindheartedness, compassion, i.e., acts of kindness displaying one’s pleasure with an object, which benefits the object of pleasure.”²⁷ Noah’s faith and obedience in the Lord had undoubtedly gained a favorable response from the Lord and for the reader, this act of grace provides a glimpse of God’s goodness and faithfulness to His future promises.

Divine Contamination: Pre-Diluvian and Post-Diluvian

Regarding the pre-diluvian and post-diluvian conditions, biblical text articulates the appearance of the Nephilim before the Flood (Gen 6:4) but does not explicitly address their reappearance after the Flood (Num 13:33; Deut 1:28, 9:2; Josh 11:21). However, many scholars speculate about how they reappeared after the Flood. Using canonical and non-canonical texts, scholars offer commonly known scenarios. According to Robin L. Routledge, these possible scenarios include (1) a second incursion by fallen angels who defected with Satan, or (2) the “Nephilim strain persisted in the family of Ham (probably through Ham’s wife) and was passed

26. K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst, “Nimrod Before and After the Bible,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 1 (1990): 129.

27. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*, s.v. “favor,” #2834. <https://ref.ly/logosres/dblhebr?ref=HebrewStrong.2580>.

to his son Canaan, and thence to the former inhabitants of the Promised Land.”²⁸ However, biblical text does not support the assumption that Noah’s family may have been genetically corrupt. Genesis 8:17 states “Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” In this passage, God is instructing Noah and his family to be “fruitful and multiply on the earth” and it seems nonsensical to provide this instruction with the knowledge Noah’s family was contaminated with the DNA of the “sons of God.” Based on the directives within this passage, it is reasonable to assume Noah and his family were fully human and given grace by God to replenish the earth according to His precepts articulated in Genesis 9:4-7.

Nonetheless, the descendants of the Nephilim appeared in the land of Canaan, specifically the troubled areas of the Transjordan, Bashan, Ashtaroth, Edrei, Gaza, Gath, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and the Valleys of Hinnom and of the Rephaim, all ready to overcome and defeat the Israelites upon their arrival to the Promised Land. Israel had many enemies and amongst those most prominent were the Philistines, one of the tribes of the Sea Peoples who were migrants of the “lands adjacent to the Aegean Sea, the Balkans, and the southern coast of the Black Sea” (Amos 9:7; Jer 47:4) and “who later settled in the southern coast of Canaan.”²⁹ It is an assertion that it was during this period that the Philistines became allies to the giants to fight Israel, as exemplified in the encounter between David and Goliath.

28. Robin L. Routledge, “The Nephilim: A Tall Story? Who Were the Nephilim and How Did They Survive the Flood?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 66, no. 1 (2015): 19-40, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLAn3804037&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

29. Thomas Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas: A Complete Guide to the Expansive Geography of Biblical History* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 1998), 76-77.

In a closer examination of the biblical text in Genesis 6:4, the answer as to the reappearance of the Nephilim seems to be within the text itself. The biblical text plainly tells the reader that the Nephilim were on the earth during this historical point in time “and also afterward.” The mention of the Nephilim did not occur prior to its reference in Genesis 6:4, which would indicate the first appearance of the Nephilim happened “in those days and also afterward.” The biblical text then articulates “when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them.” The word “when” is only after the statement “in those days and also afterward,” leading one to conclude that the hybrids plagued humanity on the earth leading up to the Flood and then afterwards with a re-incursion. Although the passage “And also afterward,” does not expressly disclose a second incursion of the Nephilim after the Flood, the passage advances this assumption. As author Patrick Heron claims, “So these two irruptions of fallen spirit beings with women occurred both before the Flood and then again sometime later.”³⁰

Tim Chaffey, a scholar and author, suggests that there are six possible explanations as to how the Nephilim (i.e., the “giants”), reappeared in the land of Canaan.³¹ The six proposals include (1) Noah’s flood was not global, (2) Noah or his family were descendants of the Nephilim, (3) one of the Nephilim somehow survived the flood, holding onto Noah’s ark, (4) the reference to the Nephilim in Numbers is a later gloss, (5) the spies use hyperbole in their report to Moses, and (6) the “sons of God” fathered more Nephilim after the flood.³²

However, in a closer review of Chaffey’s suggestions, the first proposal is not consistent with the biblical text that states that only eight people survived the flood and that it was a global

30. Patrick Heron, *The Nephilim and the Pyramid of the Apocalypse* (New York, NY: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2004). <https://ref.ly/logosres/9780806535289?art=r8&off=5093>.

31. Tim Chaffey, *Fallen: The Sons of God and The Nephilim* (Richmond, KY: Risen Books, 2019), 244.

32. Chaffey, *Fallen*, 245.

event (Gen 7:17-24), and the second proposal does not take into account God's description of Noah as being "righteous." Brian R. Doak offers a rebuttal and suggests "they could be thought to have belonged to Noah's family who escaped on the ark or because they survived the flood in a manner left unnarrated in the biblical text."³³ He theorizes that with Genesis 7:21-23 in mind, the genes of the Nephilim may have been put on the ark via Noah and his family; "This dilemma could lead to the view that Noah himself was of giant stock. If indeed giants were thought of as discrete 'races' in antiquity, then it is reasonable to deduce that the genes of the race of giants survived via Noah and his family on the ark."³⁴ This suggestion is nonsensical as stated, based on biblical text.

The third proposal suggesting that a hybrid held on to the ark is inconsistent with Scripture and nonsensical (Gen 7:23), and the fourth proposal does not consider the confirmation of the Nephilim in Numbers 13:33 and other encounters discussed in several of the books in the OT. Regarding the fifth proposal, although the spies may have provided an exaggerated report, the presence, height, strength, and wickedness of the Nephilim is confirmed in several other stated biblical and non-biblical references. Lastly, it is an assertion that the last proposal is the most likely explanation, as Chaffey agrees, "This answer is found right in the text itself, and it is consistent with the relevant details in Scripture. This means that the sons of God fathered more children after the flood."³⁵

33. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "The 'Angels' and 'Giants' of Genesis 6:1-4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation: Reflections on the Posture of Early Apocalyptic Traditions," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7, no. 3 (2000): 354-77.

34. Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim*, 70.

35. Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim*, 249.

Brian Godawa also suggests a second incursion maintaining that it is a “part of a diabolical supernatural plan of the ‘sons of God’ who were fallen from God’s divine council of the heavenly host.”³⁶ Although this claim will remain a contested subject for scholars and laypeople alike, Brian R. Doak concisely makes the connection and emphasizes that the “giant races were the product of an illicit divine-human union and that later interpreters, even within the period of the composition of the biblical texts themselves (Num 13:33), were quick to associate the Genesis 6:1-4 scene with the origin of giants.”³⁷

Another characteristic of the Nephilim that requires an examination focuses on who the Nephilim were in Genesis 6:1-4, according to Routledge, there are various schools of thought regarding the Nephilim, specifically who they were and their place in history during the pre-post Flood. These options include (1) sons of Cain, (2) sons of Seth, (3) unknown kings, (4) a social group of human warriors with legendary powers, or (5) fallen angels or divine beings who had sexual relations with human women.³⁸ From a modern interpretation, Sven Fockner takes a different stance and asserts that the “sons of God” were believers and the “daughters of men” were unbelievers, as he states “‘Sons of God’ is a term which here describes human, loyal followers of God. By conceding to their desires for beautiful bodies, the male believers married women outside of their group.”³⁹

36. Brian Godawa, *When Giants Were Upon The Earth: The Watchers, the Nephilim, and the Biblical Cosmic War of the Seed* (Fort Worth: Warrior Poet Publishing, 2021), 63.

37. Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim*, 53.

38. D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible: Follow God’s Redemptive Plan as It Unfolds Throughout Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 34.

39. Sven Fockner, “Reopening the Discussion: Another Contextual Look at the Sons of God.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 4 (2008): 455, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089208092140>.

An alternative solution comes from Henry M. Morris, who postulates that the Nephilim were fully human “but that all were possessed and controlled by evil spirits that indwelled the bodies of men and women.”⁴⁰ A scholar in agreement with Morris includes Bruce K. Waltke, “The “sons of God” are best understood as demon-possessed kings. The perverted psyches of these tyrants allowed this entrance of the demonic. The Nephilim (i.e., “fallen ones”) who also existed at the time of Moses (Num 13:33) were probably their offspring, also called “heroes.” They filled the earth with violence.”⁴¹ However, this perspective does not address the unnatural characteristics such as height, strength, and wickedness of the offspring. In contrast, H. C. Leupold adamantly asserts that the “sons of God” were Sethites and the “daughters of men” “refers indiscriminately to all the ‘daughters of mankind,’ which were unfortunately lumped together by the sons of God without regard to their classification, whether Sethite or Cainite.”⁴²

In a study of the several points of view regarding the reappearance of the Nephilim, who they were, and their impact on ancient Israel’s history, the assumptions are widely diverse. Although Routledge maintains there are five main positions, H. Wayne House, a scholar, author, and professor at Liberty University, states there are three primary positions most scholars hold to which includes (1) fallen angels, (2) ungodly Sethites, and (3) despotic chieftains.⁴³ Those scholars who hold to the position that fallen angels “came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them” (Gen 6:4), contend that the fallen angels had relations with human

40. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 169.

41. Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 285.

42. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Chillicothe, OH: DeWard Publishing, 2010), 1:157.

43. H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 76.

women, producing the hybrid giant race called the Nephilim. These “sons of God” referenced in Genesis 6:2 are the same fallen angels also referenced in 2 Peter 2:4-5 and again in Jude 6-7. Other supporting references referring to “sons of God” as angels are found in Job 1:6-7, 38:7; Psalms 29:1, 89:7; and the Septuagint in Job 1.⁴⁴

Bernard J. Bamberger contends that Justin Martyr, a Palestinian 2nd-century apologist who wrote the *Apology for the Christians*, addresses the issue of evil and summarizes his stance by stating that demons “are the offspring of angels, to whom God had committed the care of mankind, but who transgressed by succumbing to love of women.”⁴⁵ Further study within the works of Justin Martyr reveals a further understanding of his perspective of the word “demons,”

But the truth shall be told, for the wicked demons from ancient times appeared and defiled women, corrupted boys, and presented such terrifying sights to men that those who were not guided by reason in judging these diabolical acts were panic-stricken. Seized with fear and unaware that these were evil demons, they called them gods and greeted each by the name which each demon had bestowed upon himself.⁴⁶

Athenagoras, a father of the early church and an ante-Nicene Christian apologist, combines two thoughts regarding the subject; first, that “Satan, the ruler of matter, encompass the ruin of the angels by the daughters of man.” Secondly, that the “fallen angels are not imprisoned, but roam the earth; their self-defilement prevents them from rising again to heaven.”⁴⁷ Specifically, Athenagoras makes a distinction “between these fallen angels and the

44. John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 98.

45. Bernard J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels: Soldiers of Satan's Realm* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Jewish Publication Society, 1952), 74.

46. Thomas B. Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr, The First Apology: Chapter 5* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948). <https://ref.ly/logosres/frstplgyscndplg?ref=JustinMartyr.1+Apol.+5>.

47. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, 74.

demons, stating the latter are the souls of the giants.”⁴⁸ Another proponent of this view comes from Commodianus, AD 240, an ancient Christian interpreter, as he “believed Genesis 6 to be referring to the comingling of angels and women which produced a hybrid race of giants.”⁴⁹

Church father Tertullian also defended the authenticity of the Book of Enoch and its assertion that the Nephilim are a result of gross sexual relations between fallen angels and mortal women. An excerpt from the Tertullian Collection states:

For even Satan the chief of this evil race, doth it, as though from a special consciousness of the soul, name in the same word of execration. Moreover, Plato denied not that there be angels also. Even the Magi are at hand to bear witness of both names. But how from certain angels corrupted of their own will a more corrupt race of daemons proceeded, condemned by God together with the authors of their race, and with that prince of whom we have spoken, is made know in order in the Holy Scriptures. Their work is the overthrow of man.⁵⁰

Other sources worth mentioning include the Targum of Jonathan, Josephus, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, all of which speak of similar “fallen angel” viewpoints. From a contemporary perspective, House has identified those scholars and authors who hold to the early church’s position of the fallen angels’ theory, which include “Albright, Gaebelein, Kelly, Unger, Waltke, Delitzsch, Bullinger, Larkin, Pember, Wuest, Gray, Torrey, Meyer, Mayor, Plummer, Alford, Ryrie, and Smith.”⁵¹ Further, the Ante-Nicene Fathers adhering to the “Fallen Angel” view include, Justin Martyr (AD 103-165), Irenaeus (AD 130-202), Athenagoras (AD 133-190), Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215), Tertullian (AD 145-220), Pseudo-Clementine (AD 230),

48. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, 75.

49. Douglas Hamp, *Corrupting the Image: Angels, Aliens, and the Antichrist Revealed* (Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing, 2011), 119.

50. Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian, *Tertullian Collection: The Book of Apology Against the Heathen*, trans. Dr. Holmes (Coppell, TX: Aeterna Press, 2016), 111-112.

51. House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, 76.

Commodianus (AD 250), and Lactantius (AD 240-320).⁵² Chaffey reiterates the already emphasized with “The extant writing of church leaders in the church’s first two centuries unanimously endorsed the Fallen Angel view. This belief carried into the third and fourth centuries, but the traditional view would be challenged in the third century before all but disappearing in the fifth.”⁵³ However, arguments against the “Fallen Angel” view assert that angels should not assumed in the text since it just states “sons of God” and not “angels of God.” Scholars of this view assert that Matthew 22:30 clarifies their position, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” House corrects this assumption and articulates “When you compare Jude and 2 Peter, it seems that “sons of God” and angels are the same group. The difference is that these angels are under judgment right now unlike the remainder, which waits to judgment of God at the end of the world before the new heavens and new earth.”

Julius Africanus (AD 160-240), takes the position that the “the descendants of Seth were called sons of God because of their righteousness, while the wicked posterity of Cain were called the seed of man.”⁵⁴ This view assumes the Sethites married unholy Cainite women, thus corrupting the holy line of Seth. The term “Cainite women” most likely comes from a “Gnostic sect of the second century called Cainites or Caianites.” This antinomian sect was known to venerate Cain as described below:

They regarded all characters held up to reprobation in the Old Testament as worthy of veneration, as having suffered at the hands of the cruel God of the Jews; hence Cain, as the first man cursed by Hysteraa, the Demiurg, claimed their special admiration. This sect

52. Chaffey, *Fallen*, 150.

53. Chaffey, *Fallen*, 150.

54. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, 78.

of Antinomians never found many adherents, and Hippolytus at the beginning of the third century dismisses them with the bare mention of their name.⁵⁵

Other supporters of this position within the third and fourth centuries are found in the Syrian authority Ephraem, St. Caesarius of Arles (AD 470-543), John Cassian (AD 360-435), Origen (AD 185-254) and St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430).⁵⁶ The Sethite view later became the “standard interpretation of Catholic and later of Protestant exegetes down to the modern period.”⁵⁷ With Augustine’s backing, this view was mainstream up until the past century.⁵⁸

Supporters of this view include John Calvin, a 16th century French theologian, along with contemporary scholars such as “Hengstenberg, Keil, Lange, Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, Henry, Scofield, Lincoln, Murray, Baxter, Scroggie, and Leupold.”⁵⁹ Specifically, Calvin held onto the Sethite view by stating that “It was, therefore, base ingratitude in the posterity of Seth, to mingle themselves with the children of Cain, and with other profane races; because they voluntarily deprived themselves of the inestimable grace of God.”⁶⁰ L. Diestel, a German Protestant

55. Charles G. Herbermann, Edward A. Pace, Conde B. Pallen, Shahan, and John J. Wynne, *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, (New York, New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1913): <https://ref.ly/logosres/cathency?art=a.03143.1&off=378>.

56. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, 80.

57. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, 80.

58. Chaffey, *Fallen*, 160.

59. House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, 76.

60. John Calvin, *Commentary on The First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1979), 237.

theologian, also held to this view, asserting that the “pious men from the line of Seth” were the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2.⁶¹

A modern supporter of this view is Wayne Grudem, who suggests that “The larger purpose of the narrative seems to be to trace the parallel development of the godly (ultimately messianic) line of Seth and the ungodly descendants of the rest of mankind. Therefore, the “sons of god” in Genesis 6:2 are men who are righteous in their imitation of the character of their heavenly Father, and the “daughters of men” are the ungodly wives whom they marry.⁶² However, this view does not take into account the specific details of the Nephilim and their impact on earth before and after the Flood and this view reads into Holy Scriptures what is not stated.⁶³ Further, all sons and daughters of Seth and Cain were the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, and not directly from God, as were the angels, Adam, and Eve.

Another view that some scholars hold assumes that the “sons of God” refers to dynastic rulers or chieftains who practiced polygamy and mixed marriages within the classes of peoples of that period. Proponents of this perspective use Exodus 21:6; 22:8, 9, 28; Psalms 82:1; and 2 Samuel 7:14, as evidence to support their position that kings or rulers were often referred to as gods.⁶⁴ Those scholars who hold onto this position include Kaiser, Birney Cornfeld, Kober, and, most notably, Meredith G. Kline, a scholar and professor of Old Testament, who points to the

61. Ludwig Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der Christliche Kirche*, (Jena: Maukes Verlag, 1869), 499.

62. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 414.

63. House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, 76.

64. House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, 76.

relationship between Genesis 4 and 6 for his proof of concept.⁶⁵ Kline makes the following point:

That Genesis 6 is once more concerned with the theme of human kingship gone awry is independently demonstrable. Our argument will not be circular, therefore, if we already make use of the royal identity of the “sons of the gods” as we proceed to describe the thematic unity of Genesis 4 and 6, even though this thematic continuity is in turn being appealed to as constituting a powerful confirmation of our interpretation of “the sons of the god” as kings.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, this position does not provide evidence to the fact that Scripture does not refer to kings as “sons of God” and having “the lack of evidence that such a system was established in the line of Cain”⁶⁷ is very evident.

The interpretation of Nephilim from the Septuagint refers to the term “gigas” or “giant.”⁶⁸ Heiser makes the point that “the translation “fallen ones” is based on a characterization of the behavior of the giants rather than the meaning of the term itself.”⁶⁹ The biblical text refers to these giants as the offspring of the “sons of God” rather than the sons of Adam, sons of Cain, or sons of Seth. The “sons of God” appear to be a direct creation of God. In contrast, the rest of humanity are sons of Adam. Moreover, no mention in the text would lead one to conclude that the Nephilim in Genesis 6 were fully human and merely possessed by evil spirits. Job 1:6 further clarifies this point to the effect that “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them” (Job 1:6). This passage

65. House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, 76.

66. Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 185.

67. House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, 76.

68. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 105.

69. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 106.

references divine beings presenting themselves to the Lord and not human beings. This clarification also eliminates the options of the Nephilim as sons of Cain or Seth, unknown kings, or human warriors with legendary powers.

Again, understanding this specific point should greatly clarify the origin of the “sons of God” as being divine rather than human. Jude 1:6 illuminates the point that the fallen angels who were cast down with Satan (Rev 12:3-4, 9) are those who are the “sons of God:” “And angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6).

Stuckenbruck indicates there were three categories distinguished in the Masoretic tradition regarding Genesis 6:1-4: (a) the “sons of God” who consorted with the “daughters of humanity;” (b) their offspring were “the mighty men who were of old, men of renown;” and (c) the Nephilim “who were on the earth in those days.”⁷⁰ The biblical text’s literal intentions come from the Jewish scribes who adopted an Aramaic noun: *naphiyla*, which means “giant,” and when one pluralizes it for Hebrew, the word is “*nephiylim*.”⁷¹ Numbers 13:33 is a supporting passage that describes the enormous stature of the Nephilim and the fear associated with these giants. Moreover, the *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* defines the word “Nephilim” “as people of the pre-Flood generation, the offspring of daughters of men and divine beings (Gen 6:1-4). Their generation and their conduct seem to have provoked the Flood as punishment”⁷² (Gen 6:5-8:22).

70. Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1-4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation,” 354-77.

71. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 106.

72. Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Nephilim” (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 748.

The *Lexham Bible Dictionary* defines the term as “either giants or semi-divine beings who appear during the pre-flood era (Gen 6:4) and prior to the conquest period (Num 13:33).”⁷³ This statement hints of generations being corrupted by Satan’s army of fallen angels or “sons of God” in order to genetically contaminate the human race. However, Satan’s systematic campaign will be one of many futile attempts to prevent God’s plans from coming to fruition through the “seed of the woman.” As 2 Peter 2:4 describes, this specific attempt resulted in certain fallen angels being confined to the “pits of darkness.” Barnhouse makes a striking statement: “The entire human family, except for Noah and his household, were corrupted by this irruption of demon forces into the earth.”⁷⁴ It is apparent that God destroyed the human race’s corrupted condition in the Flood to preserve the lineage of the “seed of the woman.”

Biblical References: The “Giants” or “Nephilim”

The offspring of the “sons of God” is revealed in the Bible within many different clans, with the most prominent mention in Genesis 6:1-4; the Nephilim or giants, the “mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” Similar terminology would later be used for Nimrod, Ham’s future descendent: “Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth” (Gen 10:8). Godawa links other biblical mentions of the Nephilim’s descendants or “giants” as the “sons of Anak (Anaqim),” (Num 13:22, 13:28-33; Deut 1:28, 2:10-11, 21, 9:2; Josh 11:21, 14:12, 14:23), Zuzim (Gen 14:5), Perizzites (Gen 15:20, Josh 17:15), Emim (Deut 2:10-11), Rephaim (Gen 14:5; Deut 2:10-11, 20, 3:11; Josh 12:4; 2 Sam 5:18; Isa 17:5; 1 Chron 1:10-16), Zamzummim (Deut 2:20), Philistines (2 Sam 21:18-22), Horites/Horim (Deut 2:21-22), Avvim

73. Logos Bible Software, *Factbook*, “Nephilim.”

74. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 105.

(Deut 2:23), Amorites (Amos 2:9), certain Gibborim (2 Samuel 23), and the Caphtorim (Deut 2:23).⁷⁵

Based on the description and prominence of these giant clans, it is clear these clans can be traced back to the Nephilim of Genesis 6:1-4 through a re-incursion, as Numbers 13:33 indicates. For the purposes of emphasizing the links, Amos speaks of the Amorites, “Though his height was like the height of cedars and he was strong as the oaks” (Amos 2:9), which is similar to that of the Nephilim of Genesis 6:1-4. Further, Numbers 13:22 and 28-33 speak of the descendants of Anak and the Amorites living in the land of Canaan, also with attributes similar to that of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4.

Additionally, there were several locations where giants lived amongst the people. For example, the valleys of Hinnom (יא בֶּן הַזֵּם = גֵּיהֵנוֹם) and Rephaim (Josh 15:8) were areas where human sacrifices were performed in the worship of Moloch (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron 28:3, 33:6; Jer 7:31). Interestingly, the Hebrew “Ge-Hinnom” “became the Greek word, ‘Gehenna, which is the word for ‘hell’ (Matt 5:29-30).”⁷⁶ Although Joshua 15:8 outlines the territory for the “tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families,” the passage also undoubtedly outlines the areas of hybrid wickedness and human contamination that would need to be rooted out of the lands.

More notable cities include Gath (Josh 11:21-23; 1 Sam 17:4), Gob (2 Sam 21:18), Hebron, Seir, Debir, Anab, Gaza, and Ashdod (Gen 14:6; Deut 2:21-22; Josh 11:21-22), Bashan (Deut 3:10-11), Ashteroth-Karnaim, Ham, and Shaveh-Kiriathaim. For example, Gath was one of the Philistine cities on the coastal plain in southern Palestine (Josh 13:3) and was one of the

75. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 105.

76. Zodiates, *New American Standard Bible*, 311.

remaining homes of the Anakim (giants), among them Goliath (Josh 11:22; 2 Sam 21:22).⁷⁷

Genesis 14:5-6 clarifies these locations as having giants: “And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness.”

The most notorious giants include the famous story of David and Goliath and his brother Lahmi (1 Samuel 17), Saph (2 Sam 21:17-18; 1 Chron 20:4), the giants in battle as depicted in 2 Sam 21:20-22, the sons of Anak, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai (Num 13:22; Josh 15:14), Arba, the greatest one among the Anakim (Josh 14:15), and Ishbi-benob (2 Sam 21:16). Specifically, Ishbi-benob was a Philistine giant who planned to assassinate God’s servant David, however, he was struck down in the battle with the help of Abishai, son of Zeruiah. Likewise, Og the king of Bashan and a remnant of the Rephaim, was struck down by Moses and his army. A non-biblical inscription referencing Og, the king of Bashan, is also found in the Jewish Talmud. The Bible also mentions an unnamed warrior giant in 1 Chronicles 20:6-8, and an Egyptian giant in the battles with David and his men. These references emphasize that the presence of giants in the OT was formidable but no match for those under God’s protection.

The Hebrew word “Rephaim” (רִפְּאִים, *repha'im*) is a “noun, proper, masculine, plural, absolute word pertaining to the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine,”⁷⁸ variably denotes “giants” (1 Chr 20:4 ESV), “shades” (i.e., spirits of the dead; Isa 26:14 ESV), or simply “the dead” (Job

77. Achtemeier, *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Gath,” 363.

78. Logos Bible Software, *Lexham Bible Dictionary: Deuteronomy 3:13*, <https://ref.ly/logosres/leb?ref=BibleLEB2.Dt3.13&off=188>, v.s. “Rephaim.”

26:5 ESV).⁷⁹ Knoblet adds depth to the origin of the word and suggests that the word “Rephaim” can end with an “aleph” (Deut 2:11; Josh 12:4; 1 Chron 11:15, 14:9, 20:4, 6, 8) or with a “he” (2 Sam 21:16, 18, 20, 22), indicating “that Chronicles represents later Hebrew, while 2 Samuel represents earlier Hebrew.”⁸⁰ Piotr Bienkowski and Alan Millard suggest the word represents “supernatural beings connected with death.”⁸¹ Deuteronomy 2:10-11 speaks of these giants as clans or groups and Moses links the Rephaim giants to the Anakim due to their distinctive characteristics. “The Emin lived there formerly, a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim. Like the Anakim, they are also regarded as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim.”

Non-Canonical References to the Nephilim

There are non-canonical texts dating from the Second Temple period that contain material that addresses the “watchers” or “fallen angels” and their giant offspring, and considered demons in Jewish literature. For example, Loren T. Stuckenbruck asserts, “It has been recognized that a number of early Jewish traditions regarded these beings as essentially evil, representative of forces that are inimical to God’s original purpose for creation.”⁸² First Enoch and the Book of Jubilees were considered canonical by the Ethiopic church, and based on the number of reproductions found in Qumran, these sources were considered authoritative

79. Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*: <https://ref.ly/logosres/lbd?hw=Rephaim>, s.v. “Rephaim.”

80. Gerald Knoblet, *The Cosmic Conflict in Covenantal Literature*: Dissertation annotations dated July 11, 2023, p. 55.

81. Piotr Bienkowski and Alan Millard, *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 241.

82 Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1-4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation,” 354.

amongst the community.⁸³ Other non-canonical resources containing references to the giants include the:

Book of the Watchers and Animal Apocalypse in 1 Enoch and the Book of the Giants, Ben Sira, the Book of Jubilees (approximately 150 B.C.), and Damascus Document. Others include Wisdom of Solomon, 3 Maccabees, and 3 Baruch. Additionally, there were several fragmentary texts from previously unknown works (e.g., 4QSongs of the Sage [4Q510-11]; 4QAgnes of Creation [4Q180-181]; 4QExhortation Based on the Floor [4Q370], and 11QApocryphal Psalms (11Q11) col. 5).⁸⁴

In the early church, 1 Enoch influenced Christian thought outside the NT. The 1 Enoch translator writes:

[First] Enoch played a significant role in the early Church; it was used by the authors of the Epistle of Barnabas, the Apocalypse of Peter, and a number of apologetic works. Many Church Fathers, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria, either know 1 Enoch or were inspired by it. Among those who were familiar with 1 Enoch, Tertullian had an exceptionally high regard for it.⁸⁵

Others of great stature during this period recognized its value, which influenced the thought of the early church. Interestingly, 2 Peter and Jude allude to the non-canonical 1 Enoch as a source the ancient audiences would have known during this tumultuous time. Specifically, Jude 6 states “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”

First Enoch 1-36 speaks of the offspring, the “giants” of that time. Similar to Genesis 6:4, the Book of the Watchers refers to the oath made by the Watchers to procreate (1 Enoch 6), which crossed boundaries between human and divine, whose offspring were the giants. First Enoch points out that the Watchers also share forbidden knowledge that leads to violence and

83. Routledge, “The Nephilim,” 19-40.

84. Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1-4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation,” 355.

85. James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments. Vol. 1.* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.), 8.

corruption and threatens the existence of human beings (1 Enoch 7:4-6, 9:10). Regarding the souls of the “giants” after death, 1 Enoch articulates:

And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men, and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called. And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble: they take no food, but nevertheless hunger and thirst, and cause offences. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of men and against the women, because they have proceeded from them.⁸⁶

Likewise, Routledge suggests that the giants, whose ruin was also the result of an internal conflict (1 Enoch 9:9-10, 12), consequently appear after the Flood as disembodied evil spirits (1 Enoch 15:8-12).⁸⁷ There is so much more to be said about 1 Enoch and its impact. Although the book is not in the canon, “This does not invalidate its claims to accuracy or reliable spiritual information.”⁸⁸

The book of Jubilees is a Jewish text from the 2nd century BC and is considered a “conservative writing that celebrates the supremacy of the Law and the Sabbath, directs polemics against a lunar calendar, and extols Jewish exclusiveness.”⁸⁹ Jubilees is a commentary in the form of a revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai and covers the period between Genesis 1-Exodus 16. Jubilees is also included in the “*Decretum Gelasianum*,” a sixth-century Latin manuscript that includes the OT and NT books accepted by the church, sixty-two apocryphal works, and

86. Charles D. Litt, trans. *The Researchers Library of Ancient Texts*. Vol. 1. *The Apocrypha Includes Enoch, Jasher, and Jubilees: The Book of Enoch* (Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing, 2011), 7-8.

87. Routledge, “The Nephilim,” 34.

88. Routledge, “The Nephilim,” 34.

89. Achtemeier, *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Jubilees,” 898.

thirty-five heretical authors.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the book of Jubilees appears to have been authoritative for the Qumran community and likely penned by a Jewish author based on the Dead Sea Scroll fragments. Jubilees uses 1 Enoch as authoritative, and the following excerpt is based on a vision with the angels. The text explains the transgressions of the “Watchers:” “And he testified to the Watchers, who had sinned with the daughters of men; for these had begun to unite themselves, so as to be defiled, with the daughters of men, and Enoch testified against them all” (Jub 4:22).⁹¹ This passage is similar to 1 Enoch and loosely describes Genesis 6:1-4 and the consequences of such actions against the Watchers.

Mesopotamian Background

The story of the Flood has many parallels within ANE cultures, such as the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Babylonian story of Atrahasis.⁹² According to Brian Godawa, the “epic is relevant for the primeval history of Genesis because it sets the stage for a lost and rebellious Mesopotamian world in which God chooses his lineage to bring about the promised Seed.”⁹³ Godawa clarifies this statement by claiming that “The Gilgamesh epic was a national story that embodied the worldview and spirit of Babylonia, which would be the ultimate enemy of God’s chosen seedline.”⁹⁴ The Flood was God’s judgment upon the earth for its sin and wickedness. Because of the contamination and corruption in a world, God painstakingly (Gen

90. Logos Bible Software: *Factbook*, “Book of Jubilees,” https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%25BookOfJubilees_Writing.

91. Charles, *The Apocrypha*, 284.

92. Hays, *Hidden Riches*, 87.

93. Godawa, *When Giants Were Upon the Earth*, 158.

94. Godawa, *When Giants Were Upon the Earth*, 158.

6:6) decided to punish and destroy the earth with water. In His righteousness, “God determines to wipe out evil and bring new life out of the chaos wrought by human sin.”⁹⁵ However, Ryken concludes, “As in Noah’s day, so in Jesus’s day and ours; the disastrous consequences of sin can utterly destroy, but God’s saving power will provide refuge,” and He indeed did with preserving the “seed of the woman” through this cosmic war.⁹⁶

Ancient Israel shared a familiar cultural environment with its contemporaries, providing context for interpreting biblical texts. Although not all-inclusive, understanding the surroundings within the ANE cultures provides a foundation for its language, perspectives, and thoughts about life. For example, Abraham’s background was from the Mesopotamian Sumerian worldview, where a “divine council of gods functioned in part as a court of law that ruled over the affairs of men.”⁹⁷ He would have known the practices of the people with the worshipping of their foreign gods, which were in essence a worship of demons.

The Creation and Flood stories from the Babylonians, such as the *Enuma Elish* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, respectively, are Akkadian myths of the Babylonians. In the case of *Enuma Elish*, the story depicts a divine council of gods with a supreme god called Marduk. This pagan version reflects the Israelite version of the divine council.⁹⁸ The importance of these comparisons brings literary and theological features into focus for contrast and scrutiny of the Creation and Flood events. For example, the biblical flood story in Genesis 6-9 focuses on God’s relationship

95. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 293.

96. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 21.

97. Godawa, *When Giants Were Upon The Earth*, 59.

98. Michael S. Heiser, *The Divine Council In Late Canonical And Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2004), 8.

with humanity, a theme not found in any Mesopotamian accounts. As Christopher B. Hays suggests, “This tells us something distinctive about the religious milieu of each text.”⁹⁹

Tower of Babel

The word “Babel” (בָּבֶל, *bavel*) derives from Genesis 11:9: “Therefore its name was called Babel because the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.” Although the story of the Tower of Babel is only nine verses, it speaks profoundly of humanity’s pridefulness, defiance towards God, idolatry, and the spiritual separating or moving away from God and His ways. The passage articulates this movement, “And they said, Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:4).

In defiance of God’s command to populate the earth, the people instead rebelled against God’s command and settled in Shinar instead. Shinar represents the land of Mesopotamia, a territory first called “Sumer, then Sumer and Akkad, and then Babylonia or Babylon.”¹⁰⁰ Genesis 10, known as the Table of Nations, outlines the “records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood” (Gen 10:1). Genesis then narrates the migration of Noah’s descendants after the Flood. Interestingly, the first reference to Nimrod as the first Gibbor can be found in Genesis 10:6-9 and again in 1 Chronicles 1:10. Nimrod was the son of Cush, who was the son of Ham, who was the youngest son of Noah. Noah cursed Ham for his gross disrespect for him, as described in Genesis 9:22-27, and Ham’s

99. Hays, *Hidden Riches*, 5.

100. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 351.

genealogy reveals an insight into the generational sins of Ham's future descendants, notably the Canaanites.

The origin and development of the word "Babel" suggests two characteristics of the Tower of Babel story, which include the Akkadian word "*Bab-ili*," meaning "gate to God;" in contrast, the Hebrew word '*balal*' means to "stir up, to confound."¹⁰¹ Settling in the east symbolizes a Cain-like movement away from God, and the Babel builders with Nimrod as their leader would suggest a deliberate choice and aptitude to defy the Lord's command and build a city to secure a lasting name for themselves in idolatry and pride. Robert R. Gonzales Jr. supports this assertion, "They will construct their own Holy Mountain, their own Eden, and thereby autonomously attempt to reenter the sphere from which man had been earlier banished (Genesis 3:22-24) through their Gate of God."¹⁰² Moreover, as Meredith Kline further explains: "In their proud unbelief spurned God's promised restoration of the true focus and fullness as an act of saving mercy and grace, purposing in an incipient spirit of antichrist to become themselves the creators of a cosmic focus, so they conspired to erect the mythic sacred mountain of the divine assembly and thus re-create the central axis between earth and heaven."¹⁰³

The word for "Tower" (*migdāl*) suggests a fortified tower, "a tall narrow defensive building, or watch tower"¹⁰⁴ (Judg 8:9, 17, 9:46-52; Ps 48:12-13; Ezek 26:9). The word *migdāl* is a symbol of strength and pride (Isa 2:15, 30:25, 33:18), is abhorred by God (Isa 25:2-3), and

101. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 67.

102. Robert R. Gonzales, Jr., *Where Sin Abounds: The Spread of Sin and the Curse in Genesis with Special Focus on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 2009), 88.

103. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 273.

104. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*, <https://ref.ly/logosres/dblhebr?hw=%D7%9E%D6%B4%D7%92%D6%B0%D7%93%D6%BC%D6%B8%D7%9C>.

certainly creates an impression that the builders were tyrants or dictators.¹⁰⁵ In Genesis 11:5, the irony is in plain view because, in v. 4, the builders aspired to build a tower that “will reach into heaven,” which would be considered amongst the gods. Ironically, God had to “come down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built” (Gen 11:5). Gonzales makes a humorous statement that reflects the foolishness of such an attempt: “The necessary descent of God and the humanness of the enterprise, ‘that men were building,’ shows the escapade for what it was, a tiny tower, conceived by a puny plan and attempted by pint-sized people.”¹⁰⁶ This statement puts a clear perspective on human endeavors outside God’s plan and highlights the sin of pride and pretentious secular humanism.

Nimrod, the Mesopotamian King

Nimrod was the son of Cush, a “mighty one on the earth,” and the founder of major Mesopotamian cities, a name synonymous with the Tower of Babel. The name Nimrod can be interpreted as “to rebel; we shall rebel,” and Jewish tradition considers Nimrod to be a “paradigm of god-offending hybris.”¹⁰⁷ The authors’ usage of the word “ὑβρις” (*hybris*), describes characteristics or behaviors reflecting a “disaster or a turbulent state resulting in injuries and destruction, especially that shames or dishonors a person.”¹⁰⁸ The linkage of Nimrod to the Babylonian god Marduk is a creative hypothesis from Assyrian myths depicting a warrior of

105. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 353.

106. Gonzales, *Where Sin Abounds*, 89.

107. Bob Becking, Pieter W. Van der Horst, and Karel der Toorn, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, s.v. “Nimrod” (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), <https://ref.ly/logosres/ddd?hw=Nimrod>.

108. Logos Bible Software, *Factbook: “ὑβρις or Hybris.”*
<https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=lemma.lbs.el.%E1%BD%95%CE%B2%CF%81%CE%B9%CF%82>.

postdiluvian, primeval times.¹⁰⁹ Another scholar, J. Grivel, as cited in *Nemrod et les ecritures cuneiforms*, relies on traditional Jewish literature suggesting that “Nimrod is to be identified with Marduk (biblical Merodach or Bel). Unwittingly, he thus revived an ancient haggadic speculation in which Nimrod is identified with Belus.”¹¹⁰ Likewise, Ninurta, a Sumerian divine warrior from ancient literature, is likened to that of Nimrod with his skills in hunting, fighting as a mighty warrior, and being the “first on earth to be a hero.”¹¹¹

The identification of Nimrod with Ninurta can be “corroborated by an analysis of the toponyms mentioned in Genesis 10:8-12.”¹¹² During the Middle Assyrian period (14th to 12th century BC), the spread of the Ninurta cult resulted in the city of Kalhu as the main center for this deity worship.¹¹³ Consequently, “originating from the south, the god came to be a typical Assyrian deity, which is why the prophet Micah could use “the land of Nimrod” as a synonym for the “land of Assyria” (Mic 5:5-6).”¹¹⁴ This analysis suggests a parallel between Nimrod and Ninurta, which is supported by van der Toorn and van der Horst, the “evaluation of the available evidence strongly suggests that the biblical Nimrod was modeled after the Mesopotamian god Ninurta.”¹¹⁵

109. Becking, Van der Horst, and der Toorn, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, <https://ref.ly/logosres/ddd?hw=Nimrod>.

110. Van der Toorn and van der Horst, *Nimrod Before and After the Bible*, 8, cites J. Grivel, in *Nemrod et les ecritures cuneiformes*, *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 3 (1874) 136-44. On page 136, Grivel refers to the appendix of an article entitled “Le plus ancien Dictionnaire,” *Revue de la Suisse catholique* (August 1871).

111. Van der Toorn and van der Horst, *Nimrod Before and After the Bible*, 12.

112. van der Toorn and van der Horst, *Nimrod Before and After the Bible*, 13.

113. Van der Toorn and van der Horst, *Nimrod Before and After the Bible*, 13.

114. van der Toorn and van der Horst, *Nimrod Before and After the Bible*, 14.

115. van der Toorn and van der Horst, *Nimrod Before and After the Bible*, 15.

Routledge suggests that Ham’s descendants may have been a “giant, including Canaan, and so would explain the reference to the Nephilim in Numbers 13:33, and also the description of Nimrod as a giant,”¹¹⁶ a description similar to that of the Nephilim in 6:4. Consequently, Nimrod would then be a descendent from the “sons of God.” Moreover, as the last of the Rephaim (Deut 3:11), Og may have been the “son or grandson of Ham’s wife and one of the watchers, Shamhazai.”¹¹⁷ However, in a review of the genealogical record in Genesis 10-11, King Og is introduced in Numbers 21:33 and again in Deuteronomy 3:1-11 as the king of Bashan and a remnant of the Rephaim giants.

Nimrod is known for the Tower of Babel as well as for the building account concerning the Assyrian cities such as Nineveh, Erech, Accad, Calneh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen (Gen 10:11-12). Nimrod’s effort to advance man’s kingdom over God’s became synonymous with the “tyrannical antediluvian” (Gen 6:4), “well earning the ignominious epithet that became a proverbial saying in Israel, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD’ (10:9). So, the spirit of Cain lives on. The ‘seed of the Serpent’ strikes again, and thus continues the spread of sin.”¹¹⁸

Tower of Babel: Its Implications for Humanity

The story of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel speaks of a people who “used the same language and the same words” (Gen 11:1). Because of their wickedness, Genesis 11:8 outlines the dispersal of the people of Babel throughout the world, which becomes symbolic for human opposition to God. As a result, God disinherited those nations as his people, as Romans 1:18-25

116. Routledge, *The Nephilim*, 38.

117. Routledge, *The Nephilim*, 38.

118. Gonzales, *Where Sin Abounds*, 91.

articulates. God would later enter into a covenantal relationship with a people He would call His own, a nation that did not exist at the time of Genesis 11:1-9.

In contrast to God's handling of those nations in the Tower of Babel, Deuteronomy speaks of God's affection and ownership of Israel, His chosen people, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance" (Deut 32:8-9). In a review of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint, the text reads, "When the Most High gave the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations' according to the number of the angels of God. And his people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, Israel was the line of his inheritance" (Deut 32:8-9, Septuagint). This passage serves as a portrayal of God's favor towards Israel and His care for them from the time of the "desert land" (vv. 10-12) to the procurement of the fruits of the land (vv. 13-14).

Israel was certainly not in existence yet, thus giving creditability to the term "angels" or "sons of God," and undoubtedly a reminiscence to Genesis 6:1-4. From this passage, one can perceive that God handed those people over to their own devices, to lesser gods, or to the demonic. God does not wholly forsake the Babel people, as Abram, later called Abraham, would be called out of Mesopotamia from "the land of Ur," who would later be the conduit for God's blessings throughout the world. In the next chapter, a more in-depth examination is offered into the covenantal relationship with Abraham and his descendants and how the cosmic war against the "seed of the woman" is realized within the covenant.

Summary

The Noahic Covenant is incredibly impactful for the progression of God's plan due to its breadth, depth, and biblical ramifications. Before the Flood, Scripture highlights God's judgment towards sin, and after the Flood, Scripture reveals the depths of His grace towards humanity. In God's grace and love, He then establishes the rainbow as a universal promise to humanity never to repeat the Flood.

Genesis 6:1-4 is a difficult passage for some exegetes but provides a wealth of evidence for those seeking answers to the pre-post Flood "Nephilim," or "giants," as Scripture describes. In Jewish tradition, the "sons of God" were fallen angels who left their assignment, as articulated in 2 Peter 2:4. These fallen angels had relations with "daughters of men," resulting in the Nephilim, or hybrids. The corruption of humanity in Genesis 6:1-4 reflects the supernatural transgression that takes place before the Flood and "afterward" as Genesis 6:4 articulates. This verse clearly speaks of transgressions that took place before the Flood and afterward.

The story of the Flood has many parallels within ANE literature, with some having strikingly similar attributes. Another famous biblical story with ANE parallels is the Tower of Babel, which highlights humanity's pride, defiance, idolatry, and separation from God. This story also tells of human endeavors outside God's plan and the outcomes of such defiance. However, in God's grace, a man named Abram, who would later be called a man of God, is taken from the same place God had forsaken, and made into the father of many nations.

CHAPTER 4: COVENANT PROMISE IN PATRIARCHAL TIMES

As a movement forward in God’s plan for humanity, the Abrahamic Covenant speaks of new beginnings, contrary to the past Adamic and Noahic covenants and Babel’s judgment resulting from an earth-shattering illustration of humanity’s prideful desire for independence from God. With the dispersal of the nations at Babylon, God calls Abram, later called Abraham, out of the nations under judgment. It is through Abraham that the Promise of salvation will come to fruition for those who believe (Luke 1:72, 73; Rom 11:24, 15:27; Gal 3:14; Eph 3:6, 2:11-19; Heb 11:16; Rev 21:10). N. T. Wright states it succinctly when he emphasizes, “Abraham emerges within the structure of Genesis as the answer to the plight of all humankind. The line of disaster and the curse from Adam, through Cain, through the Flood to Babel, begins to be reversed when God calls Abraham and says, “And in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3).¹¹⁹

The word ‘covenant’ recurs in the OT 287 times and generally means a “treaty, agreement, or an alliance”¹²⁰ amongst “human and/or divine.”¹²¹ The term ‘ēdût’ primarily means bearing witness or providing evidence or proof in a juridical context, and an example would be the postdiluvian rainbow in the Noahic Covenant, for instance. This term is used forty-six times in the OT,¹²² “in relation to the ark, tablets, and tabernacle.”¹²³ Interestingly, the word

119. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*. Vol. 1. *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 262.

120. Jamie A. Grant and Alistair I. Wilson, *The God of Covenant: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* (Leicester, England: Apollos: An Imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 22.

121. Grant and Wilson, *The God of Covenant*, 22.

122. Grant and Wilson, *The God of Covenant*, 22.

123. Grant and Wilson, *The God of Covenant*, 22.

‘covenant’ is accompanied by the word “kārat, cut,”¹²⁴ as a covenant was followed by sacrifice.¹²⁵ God’s covenant with Abraham will have eternal ramifications as it will be a “faith with significance for the whole history of salvation, a faith for the future, more to be compared to a progressing line.”¹²⁶

The Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is one of the most significant covenants in the OT, with a promise to “Abraham and his descendants and a confirmation of His promises to the people of Israel at Sinai, Moab, and Shechem.”¹²⁷ From a dispensational perspective, the dispensation of promise (Gen 12:1; Exod 18:27) is realized. The Abrahamic covenant places focus on the source of blessing or curses to all the nations (Gen 12:2-3, 22:17-18), Abraham’s seed (Gen 12:2, 15:4-5), and a promise of land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen 12:7, 13:14-17, 15:18-21).¹²⁸ A prominent consensus of Bannon Ellis and Mark Ward in the *Lexham Survey of Theology* is that “if the Noahic Covenant is the stable foundation on which all of the other covenants are built, the Abrahamic Covenant is the cornerstone from which the rest of the building is framed. It reveals God’s intention to restore the original creation blessing. It reveals that this will be done through the nation Israel and that it will be done for the benefit and

124. Grant and Wilson, *The God of Covenant*, 22.

125. Grant and Wilson, *The God of Covenant*, 22.

126. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 89.

127. Grant and Wilson, *The God of Covenant*, 25.

128. Logos Bible Software, *Factbook*, “The Abrahamic Covenant,” <https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=Isto.AbrahamicCovenant>.

blessing of all nations.”¹²⁹ The Noahic Covenant as the “stable foundation” speaks of God’s unmerited grace to never destroy humanity by a flood, while in the Abrahamic Covenant, God reveals His plan for humanity’s salvation.

Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, a messianic Jewish scholar and missionary, asserts that the Abrahamic Covenant is the fourth of seven dispensations known as the Dispensation of Promise (concept of promise in relationship to Abraham) and the Patriarchal Rule (applying His governance by means of His Patriarchs).¹³⁰ The seven dispensations include (1) Innocence: Adam (Gen 1:28) to the Fall (Gen 3:6), and (2) Conscience: Fall (Gen 3:9) to the Flood (Gen 8:14). Additionally, the other dispensations include (3) Human Government: Flood (Gen 8:15) to the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:19); (4) Promise: Abram (Gen 12:1) to the Mosaic Law (Exod 18:27); (5) Mosaic Law: Sinai (Exod 19:1) to Calvary (Acts 1:26); (6) Grace: Shavuot (Acts 2:1) to the Tribulation (Rev 19:21); and (7) Kingdom Reign: 1,000 Years (Rev 20:1-10).¹³¹

Indeed, the Abrahamic Covenant highlights the importance of the election of God’s people. The ‘Dispensation of Promise’ can be found in Romans 4:1-25, Galatians 3:15-19, and Hebrews 6:13-15 and 11:9. As an example, the writer of Hebrews notes, “By faith, he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise” (Heb 11:9). In this context, the special promises made to Abraham speaks of the Promised Land, which is also found in Acts 7:6, 17; Romans 4:16, 20; and Hebrews 6:12, 6:15, and 7:6. Concerning the Promise to Isaac, supporting passages include Romans 9:9 and Galatians 4:23, and of a spiritual Seed and future Savior, select passages include

129. Logos Bible Software, *Factbook*, “The Abrahamic Covenant,” <https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=lsto.AbrahamicCovenant>.

130. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 11.

131. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 4.

Acts 13:23, 32, 26:6; Romans 9:8; Galatians 4:28; and 2 Timothy 1:1. Acts 2:33 specifically speaks of this Promise of the Holy Spirit, “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear” (e.g., Gal 3:14).

David J. A. Clines asserts that there are three essential elements in the Abrahamic Promise: “(1) posterity, (2) divine-human relationship, and (3) land.”¹³² Willem Van Gemeren identifies four elements to the Promise: “(1) a Seed, (2) a land, (3) a blessing to the patriarchs, and (4) a blessing to the nations.”¹³³ John P. Davis agrees with Cline’s assertion and uses Genesis 12:1-3, 12:7, 13:14-17, 15:1-21, 17:1-22, and 22:15-18 as his foundational passages.¹³⁴

The word “promise” (ἐπαγγελίαν, *epangelian*) is a noun, genitive, singular, feminine word that has a meaning as a “declaration to do something with an implication of obligation to carry out what is stated.”¹³⁵ The NT uses the noun “promise” 51 times, and the verb “promise” 11 times. The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* indicates that “promise” in these references “can denote either the form or the content of those words. They could refer to the words themselves as promissory notes on which to base one’s confidence for the future, or they could refer to the things themselves which were promised.”¹³⁶ In Hebrews 10:23, the writer “urges his

132. David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1978), 31.

133. Willem A. van Gemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 104.

134. John P. Davis, *Who Are the Heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2022), 8.

135. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, s.v. “ἐπαγγελία,” 355.

136. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Promise” (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1332.

audience to hold fast to the confession of hope based on the fact that the one who promised, God, is faithful.”¹³⁷ God applies His governance and His faithfulness to Abraham and his descendants.

Isaac is the second of three Israelite patriarchs and is born to Abraham as the fulfillment of God’s Promise of an heir and a covenant with eternal consequences (Gen 17:15-21, 18:10-15, 26:2-5, 26:24). As Davis comments:

The Abrahamic Covenant is God’s answer to the failures of Genesis 1:11. In those chapters, the “seed” of mankind became corrupted through the Fall, and the “land” was cursed with a consequent loss of man’s dominion over it, and the “divine-human relationship” was ruptured. The Abrahamic Covenant in its fulfillment restores the Promise of seed, land, and the divine-human relationship.”¹³⁸

It is abundantly evident that in God’s grace, the preservation of the “seed of the woman” is realized in these promises.

Dispensation of Promise

The Abrahamic Covenant is foundational to God’s covenantal program on many levels, specifically on the doctrines of soteriology.¹³⁹ God entered into two types of literal covenants with Abraham and Israel, a covenant people, which include conditional and unconditional agreements. The conditional covenant requires Israel to fulfill its covenant obligations before God’s promise can be granted, whereas the unconditional covenant is fulfilled by God alone. Additionally, all of Israel’s covenants are “called eternal except the Mosaic covenant, which is declared to be temporal, i.e., it was to continue only until the coming of the Promised Seed.”¹⁴⁰

137. William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, s.v. “Promise” (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 541.

138. Davis, *Who are the Heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?* 15.

139. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 70.

140. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 69.

Pentecost posits that the following covenants are considered “literal” and “eternal:” (1) Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:7, 17:13, 17:19; 1 Chron 16:17; Ps 105:10); (2) the Palestinian Covenant (Ezek 16:60); (3) the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 23:5; Isa 55:3; Ezek 37:25); and (4) the New Covenant (Isa 24:5, 61:8; Jer 32:40, 50:5; Heb 13:20).¹⁴¹

God invites Abraham to leave the land of Ur and “go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you” (Gen 12:1, NIV). So then, having absolutely nothing when he left his family and way of life, God promises Abraham unconditional, physical, and spiritual promises of land, seed, and blessings to him and his descendants. The call of Abraham to Israel’s appearance at Mt. Sinai was approximately 430 years, and it was during this time that Abraham’s descendants would experience failure (Gen 12:10, 46:6), judgment (Exod 1:8-14), and God’s grace through Moses (Exod 3:6-10).

The Abrahamic Covenant represents these progressive steps, which are paramount for salvation and the doctrines of eschatology. Pentecost articulates a critical point of the Dispensation of Promise with “the eternal aspects of this covenant, which guarantee Israel a permanent national existence, perpetual title to the land of promise, and the certainty of material and spiritual blessing through Christ, and guarantee Gentile nations a share in these blessings, determine the whole eschatological program of the word of God.”¹⁴² It is clear that the Abrahamic Covenant or Dispensation of Promise is foundational to the proceeding promises made with Israel and has a significant impact on biblical eschatology.¹⁴³ The Dispensation of

141. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 69.

142. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 71.

143. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 71.

Promise ends with the entrance of the Mosaic Law (Exod 19; 1 Acts 1:26), which is provided to the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Gen 12; Exod 18).

Dispensational View of Abraham

Charles C. Ryrie defines the term “dispensation” as “a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God (Eph 1:10, 3:9).”¹⁴⁴ However, Knoblet explains that there is a material difference between the term “period of time” and a “dispensation.” He emphasizes that “A dispensation is not actually a “period of time” but an economy by which God administers his rule on the earth.”¹⁴⁵ This statement is supported by several scholars, including Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, who state, “The word dispensation refers to an arrangement or administration. It translates the Greek *oikonomia*, which properly means, ‘household management’ but also ‘administration’ or ‘stewardship.’”¹⁴⁶

Alternatively, the term ‘Covenant or Federal Theology’ states there are only three covenants: (1) works; (2) grace; and (3) redemption. Based on Ryrie’s research, he suggests that the term ‘Covenant Theology’ was not the “expressed doctrine of the early church” and “not referenced until the Westminster Confession in 1647.”¹⁴⁷ Conversely, Covenant theologians assert that “God established a covenantal relationship with humanity that includes gracious promises and man’s obligations” and stresses that “God’s sovereignty in salvation is manifested in covenantal relations.”¹⁴⁸ From this school of thought, the “Covenant of Redemption” is

144. Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1965), 179.

145. Gerald Knoblet, *Dissertation Communications: Dispensational View of Abraham*, July 21, 2023.

146. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 248.

147. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 179.

148. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 215-16.

between the Father and the Son concerning salvation, the “Covenant of Works” is between God and Adam with an agreement consisting of “(1) a promise of eternal life on the condition of perfect obedience throughout a probationary period; (2) the threat of death upon disobedience; and (3) the sacrament of the tree of life, or, additionally, the sacraments of paradise and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”¹⁴⁹ Further, the “Covenant of Grace” is between God and humanity, a promise that offers eternal life for all who believe in Christ Jesus (John 6:37).¹⁵⁰

In contrast, dispensationalists assert this approach to biblical hermeneutics applies a deductive rather than inductive study of Scripture. Ryrie asserts that “The hermeneutical straitjacket that covenant theology forces on the Scriptures results in reading the New Testament back into the Old and in an artificial typological interpretation.”¹⁵¹ Further, Ryrie indicates that the interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant is a question of its fulfillment. In the Abrahamic Covenant, the promises of land, seed, and blessing encompass the essential details of the Covenant for Israel. Pentecost clarifies this statement by stating, “The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant made with Israel, and therefore cannot be either abrogated or fulfilled by people other than the nation Israel; it is seen that Israel has promises regarding land and a seed, which determine the future program of God.”¹⁵²

With this understanding, the literal meaning can be defined as “the seed of Abraham, of necessity, is the term applied to the physical descendants of Abraham.”¹⁵³ There are two schools

149. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 215-16.

150. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 215-16.

151. Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 225.

152. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 84.

153. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 85.

of thought that are contrasting in understanding the critical features of the Abrahamic Covenant: “land,” “seed,” and “blessing.” The personal promises of the Covenant to Abraham include, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:2-3, 13:2, 13:14-15, 13:18, 15:7, 17:1-27, 21:22, 24:34-35). These promises in 12:2 apply to Abraham and his physical descendants, whereas those in 12:3 were considered universal promises.¹⁵⁴

In the passage “And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3), Ryrie asserts that Paul clarifies in Galatians 3:16 that Jesus fulfilled this particular portion of the promise for “all the families on earth,” includes all the new believers in Christ Jesus.¹⁵⁵ In essence, the church does not replace Israel and aspects of the unconditional promises made to Israel are both fulfilled and unfulfilled (ex: land promise) and should not be applied to the church. The premillennialists believe that the seed of Abraham is the physical descendants of Isaac and Jacob (Israel), and the church (NT believers) are two distinct groups. Further, the literal interpretation of OT Scriptures places Jesus on David’s throne for a literal thousand-year reign on earth, which has not occurred yet but will in the future. Premillennialism recognizes the literal study of God’s Covenant and end-times prophecy within the Abrahamic Covenant and applies prudent hermeneutics according to those who hold to this theology.

154. Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 526.

155. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 527.

In contrast, Amillennialists claim that “all the provisions of the Covenant have been fulfilled, including the land promise. This is done either by spiritualizing the land promise so that the church fulfills it or by seeing it fulfilled in Israel’s history.”¹⁵⁶ From a dispensationalist perspective, the amillennial point of view asserts that (1) “God never made any promises to the physical seed of Abraham as a race; (2) the Abrahamic promises are given only to the spiritual seed of Abraham or the continuing covenanted community; (3) Jews today have no claim on the promise to Abraham because they are not the spiritual seed and cannot prove that they are the physical seed.”¹⁵⁷ Applying these assumptions leads one to adopt the view that the Promised Land includes the “entire earth and the recipients of the promise to include all the redeemed.”¹⁵⁸

Amillennialism is a theory suggested by Augustine (354-430) and asserts that Christ’s one thousand year reign articulated in Revelation 20:4 “should be interpreted symbolically rather than literally.”¹⁵⁹ Amillennialists proclaim that the “Bible does not predict a distinct future period of Christ’s rule on earth before the last judgment.”¹⁶⁰ However, there will be “continuous development of good and evil until Christ’s second coming, when the dead will be raised and judgement conducted.”¹⁶¹ Amillennialists have confidence that “God’s kingdom is now present in the world as the victorious Christ rules his church through Word and Spirit. The future, glorious, and perfect kingdom refers to the new earth and life in heaven. Thus Revelation 20

156. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 529.

157. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 87.

158. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 87.

159. Logos, Bible Software, *Factbook: “Amillennialism,”*
<https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%25amillennialism>.

160. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 545-546.

161. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 546.

describes souls of dead believers reigning with Christ.”¹⁶² In brief, modern Amillennialism recognizes the “Old Covenant Age,” the “first coming of Christ,” the Millennium or Gospel Age,” and the “Second coming of Christ.”¹⁶³ Alan Cairns summarizes his perspective with “Amillennialists tend to idealize not only the events detailed in the book of Revelation but most other end-time prophecies, so that their prophetic content lies more in their elucidation of spiritual principles than in any reference to time.”¹⁶⁴

However, Ryrie posits that in this supposition, the Amillennialist “denies any fulfillment on the present earth during a future Millennium,”¹⁶⁵ and the view of the “seed” would include the believers of all the ages, which takes on a figurative approach to Scripture.¹⁶⁶ It is apparent that the premillennial and amillennial perspectives have contrasting views that impact the understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant, specifically from an eschatological perspective. In a review of these different perspectives, taking a conservative approach is a wise choice for one to adopt, which is to study from a literal perspective for prudence in hermeneutics rather than to symbolize, spiritualize or to allegorically interpret a passage that invites one’s own interpretation and leads to a misinterpretation of Scripture. Ryrie rightly clarifies the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism: “The distinction is between Israel and the church. This grows out of the dispensationalist’s consistent employment of normal or plain or historical-grammatical

162. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 545-546.

163. Logos, Bible Software, *Factbook: “Amillennialism,”*
<https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%25amillennialism>.

164. Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2002), s.v. “Amillennialism.” <https://ref.ly/logosres/dictheotems?hw=Amillennialism>.

165. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 530.

166. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 530.

interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealing with mankind as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well.”¹⁶⁷

Covenantal Implications

In the genealogical line of Shem, the Abrahamic promises are “God-built and descend from the holy heaven to man as the supernatural gift of God’s grace”¹⁶⁸ rather than the accursed “man-built” Tower of Babel, as an example. Abraham must remain faithful to fulfill what the Covenant calls him to do in order to avoid covenant jeopardy, and an example of this obedience can be realized in Abraham leaving his home and eventually going to the land in which God directed him.

Abram (Abraham) was born of Terah, a descendant of Noah’s son Shem (Gen 11:27). He spent his early years in the land of Ur of the Chaldees, a Sumerian city. The land of Ur means “fire oven” and was a significant center for the idolatrous Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations in present-day Iraq.¹⁶⁹ Terah and his family settled in Harran until Terah’s death, and then God called Abram out of Harran to the land of Canaan, where God invited Abram into a covenant with Him. However, the Covenant with Abraham was contingent upon his obedience to the directive.

Abraham’s obedience is foundational to his relationship with God, and failure to fulfill his part of the agreement would result in a condition of jeopardy. The word jeopardy, ‘*abar*’ or ‘עֲבָרָה’ is used nine times concerning the Covenant and expresses a transgression or violation of

167. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 48.

168. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 294.

169 Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Ur,” 1640.

the terms of the Covenant.¹⁷⁰ An example of this type of infraction can be seen in Joshua: “If you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the LORD’s anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you” (Josh 23:16). It is in this Covenant that the Israelites would receive blessings or curses for their compliance.

Walton provides a supporting example: “Forsaking Yahweh and worshiping idols can render the covenant ineffectual” (Deut 31:16, 31:20; e.g., Jer 11:10).¹⁷¹ However, as Scripture reveals, God faithfully brings His unconditional promises to fruition despite human failure. As support to this assertion, John H. Sailhamer indicates that when the “promise of a numerous seed,” “blessing to all families of the earth,” or the “gift of the land” is placed in jeopardy by the biblical characters, God remains faithful and enters the story and safeguards the promises.¹⁷² Sailhamer further clarifies the truth that “only God can bring about His Promises. Human failure cannot stand in the way of God’s Promise.”¹⁷³

The Table of Nations

The “Table of Nations” consists of the lineage of three families, which include the families of Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Shem’s descendants primarily occupied the northern region of Syria, specifically the upper part of the Euphrates River and Mesopotamia. Ham’s descendants were located in North Africa, Canaan, and Syria’s coastal regions, while

170. Walton, *Covenant*, 94.

171. Walton, *Covenant*, 95.

172. John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 141.

173. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 141.

Japheth's descendants inhabited the Aegean and Asia Minor.¹⁷⁴ At the time of the "Tower of Babel," these nations were known for their "idolatry, pride, self-reliance, the urge for material power, and the human illusion of infinite achievement;"¹⁷⁵ therefore, they were scattered and left to worship lesser gods or the demonic as a consequence of their sin (Rom 1:18-32).

Cosmic Conflict within the Abrahamic Covenant

In His grace and love, calling Abram out of these exiled nations to make a covenant with him would eventually bring about the cosmic conflict in order to prevent the "seed of the woman." The covenant language in this calling says, "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing, and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:2-3). However, in these promises, one can again observe the cosmic conflict as a backdrop when Abraham is enticed to offer Lot (father of the Ammonites and Moabites, who were later enemies of Israel) the Promised Land that God gave to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 13:9).

Lot chose to go east and would ironically receive the fate of Moab (Gen 19:37) and Ammon (Gen 19:38). These circumstances are undoubtedly impactful because it is these same clans who were ongoing obstacles to the fulfillment of the Promise as manifested in Numbers 21:21-25, 24:17; Deuteronomy 23:3-6; and Ezra 9:1.¹⁷⁶ Sarah is another example of one who was incited by the Adversary and chose to follow the way of the evil one by endeavoring to

174. Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Table of Nations," 1552-53.

175. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 67.

176. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 143.

circumvent God's promised "Seed" with her own Egyptian maid Hagar. Again, the consequences would forever be impactful and the behaviors are reflective of the Fall incident in Genesis 3.

Sailhamer explains that Sarah "thus shows her plan, like Eve's scheme to be like God, to be an attempt to circumvent God's plan of blessing in favor of gaining a blessing on her own."¹⁷⁷

Sarah's actions reflect the actions of Satan in the Garden of Eden, demonstrating the same disobedience and self-reliance to circumvent God.¹⁷⁸

On a larger scale, God tells Abraham that his descendants will be oppressed for four hundred years. "And God said to Abram, know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (Gen 15:13). Interestingly, Genesis 15:16 states, "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." In these verses, God gives Abraham a glimpse of future events involving his descendants before they possess the promised land. Moreover, God reveals to Abraham that the enemies of his descendants, the Amorites, and the other giant clans, will, in part, be their obstacles.

The Amorite culture was Mesopotamian, and as Heiser emphasizes "the word for Amorite comes from a Sumerian word (MAR.TU) which vaguely referred to the area and population west of Sumer and Babylon."¹⁷⁹ The Amorites and their Babylonian heritage also link back to the Nephilim of Genesis 6:1-4, which takes on a more "sinister tone in the context of the Babylonian polemic that precedes this point in Israel's story."¹⁸⁰ Essentially, Satan has

177. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 154.

178. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 154.

179. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 196.

180. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 196.

approximately four hundred years to contaminate the gene pool and to prepare for battle for the Promised Land, a calculated and premeditated rebellion against God. Moreover, when Abraham is chosen as the father of God's people, antisemitism is borne against the people through whom God will demonstrate His righteous government's triumphs.

Satan's Hatred Towards Israel

Donald Grey Barnhouse highlights that Satan's hatred for Abraham's descendants, including the "seed of the woman," would one day be divinely addressed.¹⁸¹ Satan's hatred toward Israel as a people, a nation, and to which the "seed of the woman" would be born, can be observed in many forms and dates back to the Abrahamic Covenant. Reading Genesis, one may easily detect the cosmic conflict between the "seed of the woman" (Gen 3:15) and Israel as a chosen people (Gen 12). Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum states succinctly, "Satan has a special antagonism against Israel since this is the nation through which God works out His program of redemption."¹⁸²

Moving forward into the future history of the Israelites includes many well-known OT examples that highlight Satan's attempt to prevent the "seed of the woman" or to provoke genocide against the Jews: Exodus 2:15, Esther 3:13, and 1 Chronicles 21:1. Other examples include the multitude of battles and exiles perpetrated in Antiquity against the Israelites, specifically the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. Some scholars would consider Herod's Massacre of the Innocents, as articulated in Matthew 2:2:1-18, as an act of antisemitism. Alternatively, other scholars consider the event in Matthew 2:1-18 to be an act motivated by

181. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 106.

182. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 781.

Herod to protect his reign and not in reaction against a specific people. Should the latter be the case, many Jewish children were nevertheless collateral damage in Herod's atrocities.

To further emphasize the perpetuation of this cosmic conflict and Satan's hatred against the Jewish people and of the "seed of the woman," it would be appropriate to take a swift departure from the OT and explore the NT to highlight a few relevant examples of this overt hatred toward Israel that extends from the time of Abraham through the NT. When Satan failed to prevent the coming of the "Seed of the woman" announced by God in Genesis 3:15, he approached Jesus directly in the wilderness to get Him to bow down to his authority; "And he said to Him, 'All these things will I give You if You fall down and worship me'" (Matt 4:1-11; e.g., Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1-13). When Satan failed at this endeavor, he incited the Israelite leadership to kill Him, which was eventually allowed by God. Using the Jewish headship as his instrument, Satan crucified Jesus on the cross. It was at that moment, God's declaration from Gen. 3:15 was realized. In God's sovereignty, Satan and the chains of death would be defeated through the resurrection of Jesus, and eternal life and salvation would come to all who believe in Him. Chapter 7 of this dissertation further articulates the provisions of the New Covenant.

From a different perspective, Fruchtenbaum asserts that "Satan often used people to try to thwart the work of Messiah; he used people to try to keep Yeshua from His messianic goal of dying on the cross. He used Herod in Matthew 2:16, Peter in Matthew 16:23, and the multitude in John 8:44 and 59."¹⁸³ Other highlighted works of Satan in the NT can be found in Luke 22:31, when Satan incited Peter to deny Jesus three times and Judas's betrayal of Jesus in John 13:2, 27. It is evident through Scripture that Judas was satanically possessed, as John 17:12 notes: "While

183. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Satanology: The Doctrine of Satan* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 27.

I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12). The word “perdition” (ἀπώλεια, *apōleia*) is a noun, genitive, singular, feminine word with a meaning of “destruction, ruin, loss (physical, spiritual, or eternal), and damnable.”¹⁸⁴ From this understanding of the word, Satan entered Judas which assured Jesus’s betrayal. These few examples provide confidence that Israel, its lands, and its people will continue to be persecuted until the Messiah’s second coming.

Other Mentions of the Hybrid Clans

During the time of Abraham, Genesis 14 speaks of a war amongst the kings, with Chedorlaomer leading the battle. The battle is against the “Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim,” “Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar)” (Gen 14:2). Victor P. Hamilton indicates that extensive research reveals that Chedorlaomer was the king of Elam dating back to 1625-1610 BC and was famous for his military expeditions, as well as considered as a “crusading monarch.”¹⁸⁵ In this battle, Genesis 14:5-7 speaks of Chedorlaomer’s conquests before the military campaign against Sodom and Gomorrah. The passage states:

And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shavehkiriathaim, and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar. (Gen 14:5-7)

184. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains*, s.v. “Perdition: Strong’s #684,” <https://ref.ly/logosres/dblgreek?hw=%E1%BC%80%CF%80%CF%8E%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%B1>.

185. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 399.

In this scene, Chedorlaomer and his regiment make a concerted effort to destroy the giant clans throughout Canaan. This scene undeniably looks back to Genesis 6:1-4 and 10:8-12 as references. These clans of giants include the “Rephaim (Deut 2:10-11, 20, 3:11), Zuzim (Deut 2:20), Emim (Deut 2:10-11), Horites/Horim (Deut 2:21-22), Amalekites (Num 13:28-29), and Amorites (Amos 2:9-10).”¹⁸⁶ It would later be Abraham’s descendants who would be required to eradicate these giants. Interestingly, Heiser drives home the point that “For an Israelite, all this meant that the native population of Canaan had a supernaturally sinister point of origin. This would not be just a battle for land. It was a battle between Yahweh and the other gods, gods who had raised competing human bloodlines that were opposed to Yahweh’s plan and people.”¹⁸⁷ The genocide perpetrated by Abraham’s descendants under Joshua and later David against the native nations in Canaan, as instructed in Deuteronomy 20:16-18, was a justified and calculated spiritual warfare campaign against Satan and his “seed.” A ‘take no prisoners policy’ was necessary to eliminate the giant clans and their families.

Job and the Heavenly Cosmic Conflict

Book of Job is a biblical recounting of a heavenly cosmic conflict within the Abrahamic Covenant timeline, which exposes the supernatural presence of good and evil and its impact on humanity. Although the exact date of the book is unknown, many scholars believe Job lived at the time of Abraham, in the Patriarchal Age, because the Law of Moses or the nation of Israel is not mentioned.¹⁸⁸ As wisdom literature, the poetic story paints a picture of the Adversary

186. Godawa, *When Giants Were Upon The Earth*, 190.

187. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 197.

188. Zodhiates, *New American Standard Bible*, 669.

challenging God about Job’s integrity as well as God’s goodness. As Heiser states, “We know the rest of the story, God gives Satan enough latitude to prove himself wrong, albeit at Job’s expense.”¹⁸⁹

However, in the story of Job, Satan is the force behind all the misfortunes placed upon Job. Although Satan is mentioned a few times in the story (Job 1:7, 2:2), his impact and presence can be observed indirectly and directly throughout the story. What is most evident in this cosmic conflict is that in a futile attempt, Satan uses whatever means necessary to discredit God’s character and thwart His plans. Barnhouse provides depth to Satan’s sinister approach on the cosmic battlefield. Barnhouse posits, “Job’s boils are of importance because Satan raised them in the midst of a direct conflict with the Lord of all the universe. They were the result of Satan’s attempt to prove to the watching angelic host that God was unable to satisfy a human soul with spiritual things when the material things were taken away.”¹⁹⁰

Some scholars speculate that Satan’s role was that of a “prosecuting attorney in the heavenly council,” where human failures are brought before the heavenly assembly.¹⁹¹ Interestingly, ordained assemblies of the gods are known from Mesopotamian mythology, which had a bearing on the OT’s worldview and the election of Marduk as supreme ruler of the gods in place of Tiamat in the Enuma Elish, is an example for instance.¹⁹² However, Knoblet emphasizes the point that this concept is “more of a pagan concept of the gods deliberating, i.e.,

189. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 57.

190. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 140.

191. John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 72.

192. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999): <https://ref.ly/logosres/ddd?hw=Tiamat>.

the Greek gods.”¹⁹³ In this scene, Satan appears to act more like an agitator and trespasser than having a supporting role within the heavenly council. Satan’s assertion suggested that all good deeds produced by man derive from selfish motives, which questions Job’s faithfulness to God. God rejected Satan’s reasoning and released Job into the hands of Satan to test Job. As a result, Job’s faith is tested with the consequent loss of everything Job had, including his health. Job remains faithful to God. The disasters Job experienced began not only by God’s permission but by God’s direction.¹⁹⁴ Interestingly, this story illustrates a vivid example of faithfulness in the midst of suffering, and that “Without free will, imagers cannot truly represent God.”¹⁹⁵

The story of Job is theologically rich in its meaning and message. For example, some scholars assert that Satan is the Adversary opposing God whereas others assert Satan acts as a prosecutor pressing a case with Job on trial. John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton argue that God is on trial in this story, not Job. They contend that:

What is actually on trial is an idea called the ‘retribution principle,’ which is ubiquitous in the ancient Near East (and today as well) and states that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer, each in proportion to the degree of their righteousness and wickedness. More specifically, what is on trial is God’s policy of running the world in accordance with the retribution principle, as evidenced by his blessing of the righteous Job. The *śātān* argues that the practice of blessing the righteous actually inhibits the development of true righteousness, which should “serve God for nothing” (Job 1:9).¹⁹⁶

From this perspective, Satan argues that the concept of blessing the righteous prevents true righteousness, which in turn would give credence to his statement, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied: “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and

193. Gerald Knoblet, *Dissertation Communications: Job and The Heavenly Cosmic Conflict*, July 21, 2023.

194. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 142.

195. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 58.

196. John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Biblical Text in Its Cultural and Literary Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 215.

everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now, stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face” (Job 1:9-11). Job’s story brings into question the nature of righteousness and by what means it is achieved, thus noting “the blessing of the righteous inhibits righteousness”¹⁹⁷ rather than pondering the inquiry of Job’s guilt or innocence. In the end, “God’s response to Job’s charge is that His world governance is not based on justice but wisdom.”¹⁹⁸

Although it is apparent that Job’s sufferings were visited upon him with God’s permission, the story speaks piercingly of the protective love of God that covers all who put their trust in Him alone (Rom 8:28). As a result, Satan succumbs to his error and God remains sovereign over the universe (Job 1:38-41:34). Job’s wealth is measured by the number of children, livestock, metals, and servants (Job 13:1-3). At the end of the story, God doubles his wealth with all his new children receiving an inheritance, as mentioned in Job 42:15. Interestingly, the daughters’ beauty and names listed in the passage indicate these insertions are significant to Job’s restoration (Job 42:14-15). Typically, a daughter that procures an inheritance must wed within her own tribe (Num 36:1-12), which is not mentioned for his daughters in Job 42:15.

David J. A. Clines comments, “Though the narrator has just now reminded us that the harm Job suffered was indeed Yahweh’s responsibility, Yahweh does not acknowledge in so many words that a wrong was done to Job. But his doubling of Job’s possessions says it all.”¹⁹⁹

197. Walton and Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology*, 216.

198. Walton and Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology*, 216.

199. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 67.

Cline proposes that the fact that the daughters were named and received an inheritance suggests “that part of the rehabilitation of Job is a recovery from his former patriarchal mindset, with the consequent empowerment of the women in his family.”²⁰⁰ Additionally, Job’s life span was doubled, and with Job living 140 years after his trials would indicate he had another opportunity at life, a blessing not given to another.

Cline makes a thought-provoking comment: “Whether he recognizes in this excess of wealth an implicit admission on Yahweh’s part that he has wronged Job, and that what was taken from him was indeed a theft (a convicted thief is supposed to restore twice what he has stolen), is of course unknowable.”²⁰¹ It is apparent, this conflict is not only between the forces of good and evil but also between a philological hermeneutic and a doctrinarian theological one. It is an assertion that God restores Job as an act of generosity and grace and His actions towards Job were to strengthen his trust in God’s sovereignty over His creation and His plans for humanity. John E. Hartley, a scholar and professor of Old Testament at Azusa Pacific Seminary, emphasizes this with “Job’s story proves that a righteous person could experience the worst affliction possible and continue to trust in God, it lays the foundation for believing that Jesus truly was a righteous person even though he died a most shameful death, reserved for the hardened criminals.”²⁰²

D. A. Carson takes a different approach, suggesting suffering is not God’s final word; the Lord “may for various reasons withdraw his favor, but his love endures forever. The epilogue is the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament anticipation of a new heaven and a new

200. David J. A. Clines, *Job 38-42, Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 1239.

201. David J. A. Clines, *Job 38-42, Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 1242.

202. John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), vii.

earth. God is just, and will be seen to be just.”²⁰³ Throughout the story, Job never denies God’s sovereignty nor His justice, which is a lesson to be learned. From a cosmic conflict perspective, Carson summarizes, “The wager with Satan is in certain ways congruent with other biblical themes. God’s concern for the salvation of men and women is part of a larger, cosmic struggle between God and Satan, in which the outcome is certain while the struggle is horrible.”²⁰⁴

Summary

The Abrahamic Covenant is of paramount importance in the history of Israel as well as in the study of eschatology. The covenant theologian summarizes the covenants with the Covenant of Redemption (Titus 1:2; Heb 13:20), the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace. Additionally, Pentecost posits that there are five significant covenants, with four considered unconditional (“I Will...” Gen 12:1-3; Deut 30:1-10; 2 Sam 7:10-16; Jer 31:31-40) and one covenant considered conditional (“If Ye Will...” Exod 19:5; Deut 28:1-68).²⁰⁵

From a dispensational perspective, there are seven dispensations, each as a “distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose” and eight covenants that “govern God’s relationship with mankind.”²⁰⁶ Each is a “separate period of time in which God dispenses His will in a specific and unique way, based on a covenant upon which a particular dispensation is founded.”²⁰⁷ An example may be found in Genesis 17:1-14 when God demands the

203. D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 155.

204. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?*, 156.

205. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 67.

206. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 5.

207. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 5.

circumcision of Abraham and his descendants. However, this action is only a “sign of the covenant, and therefore of a loyalty that is to be expected.”²⁰⁸

Abraham, a descendant of Noah’s son Shem (Gen 11:27), was called out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees, where God invited him into a covenant with Him. The critical points in the Abraham narratives include (1) giving the Promise (Gen 12), (2) making the Covenant (Gen 15), confirming the Covenant (Gen 17), and Abraham’s obedience and confirmation of the promises by oath (Gen 22).²⁰⁹ Promises to Abraham emphasize becoming a great nation, blessings or curses for the nations based on their relations with Abraham, and a promise of a great name, which will set the stage for the future of Abraham’s descendants.²¹⁰

The blessings in the Abrahamic Covenant were both physical and spiritual for Abraham, his descendants Israel, and then to the Gentiles through the spiritual blessing of the Messiah, who was Jesus. The three aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant include the Land, the Seed, and the Blessing, which is the foundation for the Dispensation of Promise. The eventual fulfillment of the Covenant will come to fruition during the Kingdom Age, and an example of this would be the final settlement of all of the Promised Land.

One can observe the cosmic conflict within the Abrahamic Covenant, each having an impactful outcome based on Abraham’s obedience or lack thereof. Abraham’s scenic route to the Promised Land includes his stay in Haran until his father’s death and a diversion to Egypt, where Abraham constructs the sister-wife ruse. Robert R. Gonzales Jr. makes an interesting statement that supports Abraham’s struggles that attempt to jeopardize God’s plans: “Abram’s behavior is

208. Achtemeier, *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Covenant,” 208.

209. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 266.

210. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 266.

more reminiscent of the man who put off following Christ in order to remain home and “bury [his] father” (Matt 8:21; Luke 9:59).²¹¹ Likewise, an impactful example with enormous consequences is when Sarah chooses to follow the way of the evil one by attempting to circumvent God’s promised “seed” by offering her own Egyptian maid Hagar as a substitute. As a backdrop to these examples, one can observe a concerted effort from the Adversary to corrupt the lineage of the “promised seed of the woman.”

The book of Job presents a different angle of how Satan tries to attack God, His policies and ways, and his attempt to discredit those who trust in Him. Although Satan loses the argument at the end of the story, Job endures incited attacks from his wife and friends. In Job, it is apparent Satan’s character is one of a deceiver and persecutor, and his traits encompass deception and accusation as he continually wages war against God and His plans for the future “seed of the woman.” Satan’s attributes of accusation and deception can be observed through Job’s wife and his friends, and the disasters and illnesses placed upon Job are that of a persecutor and tormentor.

Steven Grabiner speaks of Satan’s motivation from the perspective of Revelation to the effect that “Satan’s fury against the woman spreads to the remainder of her children. The narrative also hints at Satan’s primordial background. The war he initiated began in heaven.”²¹² The cosmic war will continue to rage and will be most overtly observed in the Mosaic Covenant, which is addressed in the following Chapter 5.

211. Gonzales, *Where Sin Abounds*, 110.

212. Steven Grabiner, *Revelation’s Hymns: Commentary on the Cosmic Conflict* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 40.

CHAPTER 5: CONFLICT AND CHAOS AMID THE MOSAIC COVENANT OF LAW

A progression of God's plan for His people can be observed in the Mosaic Covenant of Law, its attributes, and its purposes following the Exodus from Egypt. Additionally, an exploration into the unseen spiritual battle of the God of Israel against the gods of Egypt is conducted. This study offers a glimpse into the calculated efforts of Satan to thwart God's plans concerning the Israelites and the "seed of the woman." In this epic campaign, God's judgments upon Satan's mouthpiece, Pharaoh, are made visible to the Egyptians and the Israelites, along with their lasting implications. More importantly, these judgments showcase God's superiority, His power, and His Holiness in silencing His adversaries. The theme of the Mosaic Covenant tells of the deliverance of God's people from oppression and brings to fruition the fulfillment of the Promise of Genesis 15:13-14. The birth of Israel as a nation set it apart from its neighbors and gave it the Law and worship ritual through God's revelation. Psalm 147:19-20 articulates this separateness and future vocation for the people of Israel. In essence, "Israel is the covenant people of God set apart for the purpose of spreading the message of salvation among the peoples of the world."¹

The Exodus

The cosmic war is evident in God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from the gods of Egypt. As a servant of the Lord, Moses was uniquely prepared as the instrument for the deliverance of God's chosen people from this oppression. He was divinely qualified to fulfill the Abrahamic promises, having had an Egyptian education and training in all matters, and was proficient as a mediator in conveying God's laws. Under divine directives from God and through

1. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 113.

a succession of Egyptian judgments, the Israelites left Egypt with “articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing” (Exod 12:35). Pink provides an interesting analysis of the Exodus from Egypt and its judgments:

Those judgments were designed not only to afford a practical confutation of the idolatry of the Egyptians and a retribution for their cruel oppression of God’s people, but more particularly an open vindication of the supremacy of Jehovah in the sight of the surrounding nations, and at the same time to influence the hearts of the people themselves so as to induce a heartfelt acknowledgment of God, and a prompt and cheerful obedience to Him.²

The Israelites witnessed a divine separation between them and the Egyptians, the divine judgment of plagues visited upon the Egyptians for their oppression of the Israelites, and the salvatory God-directed departure from Egypt. Each miraculous event, individually and collectively, should have had an impactful and long-lasting effect on the Israelites, but as the book of Exodus plainly illustrates, their faith, gratefulness, and obedience were short-lived.³ This certainly confirms the saying “God took the Israelites out of Egypt only to find they had kept Egypt inside of them.”⁴ The Israelites had become acclimated to the Egyptian gods and their ways and did not put their trust in the King of Creation.

The Law of Moses

The Mosaic Covenant governed God’s relationship with Israel and was established after the departure from Egypt. The Law of Moses is the dispensation (Exod 19:1; Acts 1:26) that outlines the outworking of God’s purposes with Israel and demonstrates His stewardship. The Law of Moses contains 613 specific commandments and covers the period from Exodus through

2. Pink, *Divine Covenants*, 199.

3. Pink, *Divine Covenants*, 199.

4. Philip Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read: Why the Old Testament Matters*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 77.

Acts 1:26, when the Dispensation of Grace came to fruition (Acts 2:1; Rev 19:21). Covenant theologians consider this timeframe to be during the time of the covenant of Grace. On Mount Sinai, God wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets for the Israelites (Exod 20), and at God's directive, Moses wrote down the other 603 (Exod 19-24).

Williamson emphasizes that “the giving of the law was not intended to set aside the Promise (Gal 3:17); rather, it was the means by which the goal of the Promise would be advanced in and through Abraham's national descendants (Gen 12:2; cf. Gen 18:18-19).”⁵ The beginning of the book of Exodus articulates the initial fulfillment of the Promise to the biological descendants of Abraham (cf., Gen 15:5), who grew into a great people, ultimately becoming a military threat to the new regime after Joseph's generation died (Exod 1:1-12, 1:20, 5:5).

God's Promise to make Abraham a great nation (Gen 12:2) is realized in the Exodus event, and the Mosaic Covenant articulates the covenantal relationship between God and this nation called Israel. Williamson asserts that “the primary concern of the Sinaitic covenant was on how the promised divine-human relationship between Yahweh and the ‘great nation’ descended from Abraham (Gen 17:7-8) should be expressed and maintained.”⁶

Purposes and Significance of the Mosaic Covenant

God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt resulted from promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12:1-3, 15:1-6, 22:18, 26:4, 27:29, 28:14). The Law of Moses concerns the willingness of the Israelites to remain loyal to the Lord in order to possess as well as enjoy the blessings of the Promise. Jeffrey J. Niehaus approaches the Mosaic covenant from a “special

5. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 94.

6. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 96.

grace domain,”⁷ and states “after the institution of the Mosaic covenant, the presentation of covenantal life under that legal arrangement, the Sinai-Moab arrangement, occupies most of the rest of the Bible until the birth and ministry of Christ, which culminate in the cutting of the new covenant on the cross, a cutting validated by the resurrection (cf., Acts 17:31).”⁸

The account of the conditional covenant between God and Israel extends from Exodus 20:1 to Deuteronomy 28:68, which provide blessings and curses depending on the people’s obedience. As a course of protocol throughout this period, Moses, a lawgiver to Israel, regularly received the precepts from God and delivered them to the Israelites, thus the purpose of the term “Law of Moses.” Most importantly, the “Law of Moses” was not given to Israel (Ps 147:19-20) as a means of salvation (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16, 3:11, 21). The fifth dispensation, the Law of Moses (Sinai to Calvary) “was given to a people already redeemed from Egypt, and not in order to redeem them.”⁹

Reasons for the Law of Moses

Notably, the Law of Moses has “at least nine reasons,” realized in the OT and NT, as suggested by Fruchtenbaum.¹⁰ Fruchtenbaum broadly categorizes these reasons as “(1) to reveal the holiness of God, (2) to provide the rule of conduct for Old Testament saints, (3) to reveal sin, (4) the sin-nature uses the Law as a base of operation (Rom 4:15; 5:20; 7:7-13; 1 Cor 15:56), and

7. Jeffery J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: The Special Covenants, Old Testament*. Vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 175.

8. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, 175.

9. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 545.

10. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 545.

(5) to lead us to faith.”¹¹ It is evident that the covenant God made with the Israelites through the Law of Moses called for obedience (Exod 19:5) and to set Israel apart as a special people amongst the nations, “and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel” (Exod 19:6).

Sailhamer posits:

The Mosaic Covenant was intended as a fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:24). But later in Exodus (chapter 32), it became clear that Israel could not obey this Covenant, even while they were at Mount Sinai. Thus, Israel broke this Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:29-32:6; Judges 2:10-13), and any hope for the future would have to rest in the establishment of a new covenant (Deut 30; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36).¹²

Regarding the first purpose of the Law, it was to “reveal the holiness of God and to reveal the standard of righteousness which God demanded for a proper relationship with Him” (Lev 19:1-2, 37, 11:44; 1 Pet 1:15-16).¹³ Romans 7:12 drives home the point that the Law was good according to God’s standards, “So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” The acceptance of the Law of Moses by the Israelites is called a “mark of their faith (NIV “trust”) in God and Moses” (Exod 19:9).¹⁴

The second purpose of the Law was to provide the precepts for the rule of conduct for the nation Israel. Understanding that no man is justified by his works of the Law (Rom 3:28), the Law provided standards for the believer’s spiritual life: “May Thy compassion come to me that I may live, for Thy law is my delight” (Ps 119:77). Another example can be found in Psalm 119:97-99, which provides depth to the importance of the Law, “O how I love Thy law! It is my

11. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 545.

12. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative*, 282.

13. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 545.

14. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative*, 282.

meditation all the day. Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation” (Ps 119:97-99). It is evident in these passages that God’s word, wherein both commands and promises for the Israelites, were for their protection, well-being, and for prudent living.¹⁵

The third purpose was to provide occasions for individual and corporate worship, as seen in the Laws of religious festivals articulated in Leviticus 23. These religious festivals include (1) Passover (deliverance from Egypt/Christ Jesus died); (2) Unleavened Bread (to clean out leaven or sin/Christ Jesus was buried); (3) First Fruits (entering into intimacy and relationship with God/Christ Jesus was resurrected); (4) Shavuot (Pentecost: memorial for the Torah/synonymous with receiving the Holy Spirit of God); (5) Rosh HaShanah (Feast of Trumpets: an examination of oneself and preparation for the Lord’s coming/Christ Jesus returns); (6) Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement, Jesus judges at the Great White Throne); and (7) Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles: a reminder the world is a wilderness/the OT and NT believers will tabernacle with Christ Jesus forever).¹⁶ These festivals represent God’s plan for Jesus, the One Who was, Who is, and Who will come again in the future. Interestingly, Klein emphasizes that “God’s festivals are consistent with the pattern of the menorah lights and the progression of the covenants,” marking essential milestones for the OT believer.¹⁷

The fourth purpose of the Law was to maintain a distinctiveness from the surrounding nations, to be a people consecrated to God (Lev 11:44-45; Deut 7:6; 14:1-2). This precept

15. Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Classic Reflections on the Wisdom of the Psalms: Volume 3*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2014), 366.

16. John Klein, Adam Spears and Michael Christopher, *Lost in Translation: Rediscovering the Hebrew Roots of Our Faith*. Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2016), 158-69.

17. Klein, Spears, and Christopher, *Lost in Translation*, 158-169.

required the Israelites to distinguish themselves in various ways, including customs or habits involving worship, eating, sexuality, clothing, and grooming, as a few examples.¹⁸ The fifth purpose of the Law was to serve as a “middle wall of partition to keep Gentiles, as Gentiles, from enjoying the Jewish spiritual blessings of the unconditional covenants.”¹⁹ The four unconditional covenants were Jewish covenants of the Promise “to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:12), whereas the conditional Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, contained the Law of Moses or the Law of commandments and ordinances. Moreover, “Because of this purpose, Gentiles were both alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the Promise.”²⁰

The sixth purpose of the Law was to reveal sin. As Robertson contends, the Law provides a sobering awareness of the “distinction between God’s dealings with man in innocence and with man in sin.”²¹ Some scholars suggest that the Law was considered foundational in defining the relation of Israel to God during the time between the Abrahamic Covenant and the coming of Jesus.²² Specifically, this purpose clarifies that no one is righteous and can escape the stronghold of sin by one’s own efforts, and Paul’s indictment of the Gentiles (Rom 1:18-32) and the Jews (Rom 2:1-3:8) emphasizes this point. Furthermore, Romans 3:19-20 emphasizes that the Law provides the knowledge of sin, that trespasses might be made clear (Rom 5:20), and that all fall

18. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 546.

19. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 546.

20. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 546.

21. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 174.

22. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 174.

short of the righteousness of God (Rom 7:7). If just one Law is broken, all of the laws are broken.

The seventh purpose of the Law articulates that the sin-nature uses the Law as a base of operation.”²³ Romans 4:15 clarifies this point: “For the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation” (Rom 4:15). Romans 7:7-13 and 1 Corinthians 15:56 further emphasize the point that one knows that they have sinned when they have the Law as a baseline, indicating that there was a transgression of a specific precept. Fruchtenbaum writes: “Men were sinners before the Law was given, but they were not transgressors of the Law until the Law was given.”²⁴ These truths clarify that humanity cannot follow God’s Law and, therefore, humanity cannot find salvation through it. Looking back to Genesis 3:15 and the Fall, the ramifications of handing over the keys to Satan are transparent in this purpose. As Paul addresses the conflict between the two natures, “For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin” (Rom 7:14), he portrays his frustration with the sinful human condition, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24).

The eighth purpose of the Law clarifies that humanity can do nothing to please God, and Romans 7:14-24 outlines this struggle in man’s eternal failure to achieve the Law. Although Romans 7:25 makes one agonizingly aware of the human struggle of sin, the shout of victory comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus that sin and death are defeated. Finally, the Law clarifies that it is impossible to fulfill righteousness by one’s own strength, but rather the Holy Spirit fulfills it in the believer by His power. Paul emphasizes this point by claiming “For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the Law of sin and of death. For

23. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 547.

24. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 547.

what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3-4). Warren W. Wiersbe similarly states that “In our new position before God, as dead to the Law, we are not expected to obey God in our own strength; rather, He has given us His Holy Spirit who enables us to fulfill the demands of God’s holiness.”²⁵

Lastly, the ninth purpose of the Law is to lead one to faith in Jesus. The deliverance from bondage is illuminated in Romans 8:1-4 and Galatians 3:24-26. Paul says, “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:24-26). The Law tutored the Israelites until the death and resurrection of Jesus, and through His sacrifice, the complete revelation of the gospel came to both Jew and Gentile.

To summarize, the Law of Moses reaches its pinnacle in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and as Erich Sauer states, “Thus does Christ fulfill and surpass all which the Law includes. The Law was a hedge, bridle, rule, barrier, and mirror, but the cross of Christ is its seal, eternally valid (Dan 9:24).”²⁶ Regardless of the customs, practices, or instruments used within the Israelite community, its application points to the risen Christ as Lord and Savior, which should have been transparent to the ancient Israelite teachers of Scripture. With the Mosaic Law as their compass and way of life under God’s protection, the cosmic geographical lines were drawn to separate God’s people from the pagan nations surrounding them. Nevertheless, the blessings or curses of

25. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publishing, 1992), 387.

26. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 140.

the covenant between God and the Israelites depended on the Israelites' faithfulness and complete obedience to the Law.

Jeopardy of Non-Compliance with the Law

The term 'jeopardy' means having a condition of or being in a state of "danger, peril, threat, exposure, liability, vulnerability, or uncertainty."²⁷ In the context of God's relationship with Israel, the covenant was conditional, based on the Israelites' obedience to the laws set forth. In contrast to the surrounding disinherited nations, God's will for the Israelites was to be theologically and ethically separate from them. In the Mosaic Covenant, the Israelites' adherence and willingness to obey God's Law and revelation were paramount to their mission and stability as a nation. The Mosaic Law reveals God's character against the backdrop of sin and its consequences and provided the way to God's eternal peace and revelation. It is through His sovereignty "God's self-revelation would be accomplished through Israel, one way or another,"²⁸ whether through Israel's faithful obedience to Him or the discipline of Israel's unfaithfulness.²⁹ Sauer makes the point plainly, "For Israel's affairs are more changeable than with any other people of the earth; now in the land, now out of it; sometimes in misery, sometimes in happiness, conditioned through sin and repentance, judgment and grace."³⁰

An example of this jeopardy can be observed during the Exodus when Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites to Moses. In this case, "Yahweh's supernatural acts (the plagues and the

27. Frank Abate, *The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus: American Edition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1996), 804.

28. Walton, *Covenant*, 100.

29. Walton, *Covenant*, 100.

30. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 26.

parting of the sea) reveal his power, provide redemption from slavery while bringing resolution to the jeopardy.”³¹ Exodus 32 provides another illustration. While God was providing the Law on Mount Sinai, the Israelites were at the bottom of the mountain worshiping the golden calf they made for themselves; consequently, Moses had to intervene to resolve and restore their relationship with God (Exod 32). Shortly thereafter, the Israelites would again suffer the consequences for their disobedience for their grumbling, preventing those who were “twenty years old and upward” to enter the Promised Land (Num 14:20-38). In this case, the Israelites remained in the wilderness for forty years until the last accountable Israelite died. Although Israel’s threat of failure was a frequent occurrence, God’s grace and patience continually provided opportunities for obedience to the Law and blessings for their compliance.

Pre-Mosaic Cosmic Conflict

Before the Mosaic Law, the Bible describes the first example of a focused effort of genocide against God’s people to eradicate the “seed of the woman” (Exod 1:15-22). In the realm of spiritual warfare, this atrocity sets the stage for what will become standard practice for Satan. Interestingly, it is in these conditions that the promised deliverance comes to fruition. Genesis 15:13-14 clarifies this Promise with “[a]nd God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, but afterward, they will come out with many possessions’” (Gen 15:13-14). In this passage, one can observe the cosmic conflict amid God’s grace and protection over the Israelites as they travel toward the Promised Land.

³¹. Walton, *Covenant*, 100.

The Cosmic Conflict and the Exodus Event

The Exodus event in Egypt is a classic example of a cosmic contest between God and the Egyptian gods. As a mouthpiece for Satan, Pharaoh mockingly responds to Moses, “But Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go’” (Exod 5:2). Consequently through a series of plagues, the Egyptians and their “elohim who had been given their authority by Yahweh and who were supposed to govern Egypt on His behalf” were judged by God.³² God’s final judgment is clarified thus, “For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments, I am the Lord” (Exod 12:12).

In this passage, God judges’ man, beast, and the Egyptian gods with more power and authority beyond what the gods of Egypt could produce during the challenge. This passage hints that the demonic have powers but certainly no match to those of Israel’s God. Heiser makes a parallel that illuminates the presence of the cosmic conflict in action:

Pharaoh was the son of Re. Likewise, Israel was explicitly called the son of Yahweh in the confrontation with Pharaoh (Exod 4:23; cf., Hos 11:1). Yahweh and his son would defeat the high god of Egypt and his son. God against god, son against son, imager against imager. In that context, the plagues are spiritual warfare. Yahweh will undo the cosmic order, throwing the land into chaos.³³

With this emphasis in mind, one looks to the last plague to see the climax of the cosmic conflict that silences the gods of Egypt and makes victorious the God of Israel with songs of praise, as recorded in Exodus 15.

32. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 150.

33. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 150.

Scholars suggest that the ten plagues were explicitly an attack on Egypt's gods. In each plague, the Egyptian gods were powerless against God and His judgments. As John H. Walton suggests, "The Egyptian gods were unable to protect them and that areas supposedly under the jurisdiction of their gods were used to attack them."³⁴ Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman III support Walton in asserting that the calamities served as observable "attacks in a cosmic contest, a judgment on all the gods of Egypt" (Exod 12:12; Num 3:4).³⁵

The intensifying contest between "the God of the patriarchs and the inferior gods of the Egyptian magicians also indicted the ability of Pharaoh, as the earthly representative of his god, to maintain the cosmic order in his appointed realm."³⁶ The order and justice referred to as "*ma'at*" was "the meaning of creation, the form in which the creator god intended it,"³⁷ and the Pharaoh as the representative of such gods failed in protecting his land against this chaos and injustice. Consequently, "His failure to uphold the spiritual health of his country, by his own admission (Exod 9:27), inevitably resulted in plagues. Witnesses to these events concluded that the LORD is greater than all other gods"³⁸ (Exod 18:11). God's judgments were not countered or counterfeited by the Egyptian gods (Exod 7:11, 7:22, 8:7, 8:18-19, 9:11), and the timing and severity of God's judgments reinforce His sovereignty and justice.

34. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 82.

35. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 648.

36. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 648.

37. John H. Walton, gen. ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 190.

38. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 648.

For example, turning the water to blood in Exodus 7:14-24 attacked the god Hapi, who was the representation of the inundation of the Nile, and the Sumerian land goddess Inanna.³⁹ Other examples include the frog plague that attacked the goddess Heqet, the Egyptian goddess who supposedly assisted with childbirth, and the livestock plague that attacked the goddess of love, Hathor, who took the form of a cow. Additionally, the plague of darkness specifically targeted the sun god, Amon-Re, the supposed divine father of Pharaoh, and the last plague targeted the Pharaoh himself through the death of his firstborn son.⁴⁰ This targeted plague was a “blow to Pharaoh’s person, kingship and divinity.”⁴¹

Red Sea Parallels in Ancient Literature

An example of this cosmic conflict can also be seen at the Red Sea crossing, where Pharaoh and his army are finally defeated. Isaiah 51:9-10 speaks of the sea monster Rahab, the “Pharaoh, who is likened to a sea serpent, with wondrous signs in Egypt.”⁴² Likewise, the Red Sea crossing mentioned in Psalm 74 speaks of this sea monster as being Leviathan, “It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters, it was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert” (Ps 74:13-14). The Red Sea crossing is “paralleled to both the *těhôm* (NIV ‘great deep;’ see also Ps 77:16, where it is parallel to *mayîm*, ‘waters’) and the monster *Rahab*.”⁴³

39. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 82.

40. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 82.

41. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 84.

42. Nosson Scherman, *The Milstein Edition: The Prophets: Isaiah* (Rahway, NJ: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2020), 391.

43. Walton and Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology*, 102.

Based on these referenced passages, Psalm 74 appears to be a backdrop to one of the epic tales of ancient Ugarit, and Heiser suggests that the “epic tale describes how Baal battles against Yamm, a deity symbolized as a chaotic, violent force, often depicted as a dragon-like sea monster,”⁴⁴ with the climax of the tale depicting Baal as having power over the forces of nature. However, in Psalms 74:12-17, it is indisputably evident that God displays His superiority, power, and authority over all of nature’s forces, including all other gods in the Red Sea crossing.

It is God alone who is the King of the unseen realm, and “now the same God once again was described as subduing the forces of chaos to deliver his portion, Israel, for whom he had prepared a place of habitation, the Promised Land.”⁴⁵ As a parallel to this epic story, Satan, the sea monster, is conquered by the God of Israel.

The Disinherited Nations and the Giants

Looking back at the Tower of Babel, the seventy nations were disbursed “abroad over the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:9) and were assigned “sons of God” (Deut 32:8-9). Consequently, the nations were disinherited to worship other gods. The Promised Land was granted to the Israelites back in the Abrahamic Covenant and was considered God’s holy ground, while the lands outside of Israel were allocated to the deities of the other nations. Subsequently, Satan had approximately four hundred years to contaminate the Promised Land with the giants who had built strongholds to secure their dwellings (Deut 32:8-9, 4:19-20; 2 Kings 5:15-19). In other words, the clans of giants who originated from these seventy nations would later multiply and become a formidable obstacle for the Israelites as they migrated toward the Promised Land.

44. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 153.

45. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 154.

Deuteronomy 4 states, “And beware, lest you lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people His own possession as today” (Deut 4:19-20). This passage clarifies that God was the God of Israel and Deuteronomy 32:8-9 pronounces Israel as being distinguished from the other nations, and the land of Canaan is the land God allotted to His people. In contrast, the other nations would worship a lesser god or demonic deities. Heiser emphasizes this point by stating that “Those disinherited would be in spiritual bondage to the corrupt sons of God. It is as though God was saying, ‘If you do not want to obey me, I am not interested in being your God; I will match you up with some other god’” (Ps 82).⁴⁶

The Nephilim and Moses

It is apparent that Moses wrote Genesis 6:1-4 between the Exodus of the Israelites and his death forty years later, which would confirm he was fully aware that the Nephilim were in the land of Canaan as Numbers 13:33 later articulates. Further, back in Numbers 13:22, there is another mention of the gigantic occupants of the land: “When they had gone up into the Negev, they came to Hebron where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak were (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)”

Regarding the giants that controlled the lands at the time of Moses, Scripture mentions the clans of the Anakim “(Num 13:22, 28-32; Deut 2:9-15; Josh 11:19-22, 14:12-15, 15:12-14, 21:11-12; Judg 1:20), and of the Rephaim (Gen 14:5-7, 15:18-21; Deut 2:19-23, 3:8-13; Josh

46. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 114.

13:12, 17:14-18).⁴⁷ Other clans mentioned include the Emim and the Zuzim, Canaanites, Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites lived in the land. In Numbers 13, Moses sent leaders from each tribe to study the land of Canaan and to report back their findings. It is during this reconnaissance mission that it was discovered the descendants of Anak lived there according to the spies. The land was, as promised, flowing “with milk and honey,” and the spies brought back a cluster of grapes to the camp as evidence of their success. However, all but two leaders brought back a bad report stating, “Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there” (Num 13:28). This passage speaks of the giant inhabitants of the lands, and thus articulating the warfare conditions the Israelites would experience on their journeys and conquests. In this scene, Satan provoked the people to fear, and they grumbled against God, Moses, and Aaron (Num 14:2-3; Exod 16:2-3; cf., Exod 15:14-15). T. Carson and F. F. Bruce summarized the Israelites’ hearts: “At the time of the golden calf, they turned to Egypt in their hearts (cf., Acts 7:39), but now they actually want to go back there. This was their crowning rebellion.”⁴⁸

The Canaan Giants

In the aftermath of the incident in Numbers 13-14, the Lord “pronounces a prolonged death sentence on the complaining generation,”⁴⁹ and for those who provided a bad report, a plague would strike them down (Num 14:37). There would be many more incidents and judgments with the Israelites, which points to the certainty that Satan incessantly provoked the

47. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 114.

48. T. Carson and F. F. Bruce, gen. ed., *Zondervan Bible Commentary: Numbers*, 158.

49. T. Carson and F. F. Bruce, gen. ed., *Zondervan Bible Commentary: Numbers*, 156.

Israelites to fear with a goal of threatening the deliverance of God’s promises to Abraham’s descendants. Examples of Israel’s other sins and judgments can be found in Numbers 11:1-3, 11:4-35, 12-14, 16:1-40, 16:41-50, 20:1-12, 21:4-9, and 25:1-9, each exhibiting evidence of a raging and continuous unseen war provoking the Israelite camp to disobedience.

Interestingly, in the book of Joshua, the Israelites would finally face the descendants of the Nephilim, and the disinherited nations from the Tower of Babel, each individually and collectively reflecting the Israelite supernatural worldview that would later invoke disobedience and infidelity amongst the Israelites. Heiser suggests that this cosmic conflict involves two significant issues, “Israel will encounter two deadly forces: the descendants of the Nephilim and the people of nations under the dominion of hostile gods. The two are, at times, conflated in the narrative. Both must be defeated, but one, in particular, must be annihilated.”⁵⁰

The wars led by Joshua began at Jericho, a strategically-located fortified city, which had Anakim dwelling in its lands. Remarkably, the Anakim are the same clan of giants the Israelites feared forty years earlier. One can detect in the Jericho incident the spiritual battle that followed in the unseen realm. Those peoples dedicated to “*châram*” or “*năhărēm*,” meaning wholly “devoted to destruction,” to “destroy,” and “to doom,”⁵¹ were destroyed according to God’s commandment. This verb is most commonly associated with the destruction of the Canaanites, many of whom were giants, when the Israelites entered the Promised Land. Per God’s commandment, the bloodlines of the giant clans—the descendants of the Nephilim—must be eradicated or destroyed wherever found.

50. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 192.

51. Logos Bible Software, *Lexham English Bible: Deuteronomy 7:2: Strong’s #2763 “châram” or “năhărēm.”* <https://ref.ly/logosres/leb?ref=BibleLEB2.Dt7.2>

For example, Deuteronomy 7:2 states, “And when the Lord your God shall deliver them before you, and you shall defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them” (e.g., Josh 11:20). Joshua 10 articulates the conquests of the southern Palestine area. On specific locations, the cities were “devoted to destruction,” which would indicate giants were in the lands (Num 13:28-29). Joshua 10 articulates this commandment, “Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded” (Josh 10:40). This total annihilation removed the possibility of a gene, religion, or practice contamination within the Israelite population, a people wholly dedicated to the Lord. In case of a breach such as Achan, the appropriate action was taken by the Israelites: “And all Israel stoned them with stones, and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones” (Josh 7:25).

After Joshua’s death, Judges speaks of Israel’s loyalty to God failing, resulting in their repeated sins, idolatry, foreign domination, and intermarriage with pagans as a few examples. Judges 17:6 reflects the times, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.” During some of these darkest moments in Israel’s history, God’s people would be provoked by the adversary of Israel, Satan, and yield to his ways and wickedness. It is the same presence of evil that God warned the Israelites about in their earlier years.

Judges covers about 350 years of Israelite history, which includes “seven apostasies, seven bondages, and seven deliverances. The book begins with compromise and ends with anarchy.”⁵² Additionally, during the period of Judges, the Israelites would later fail to eliminate

52. Zohiastes, *New American Standard Bible*, 327.

the inhabitants of the Promised Land according to God's directive, thus resulting in the continuance of Israelite oppression by area enemies and the co-mingling of customs and practices contrary to the Law of Moses (Judg 17-21). As is apparent throughout the books of Joshua and Judges, Satan's cosmic campaign reflects his hatred of God's people by continually attempting to contaminate bloodlines and thwart God's plans, as articulated in Genesis 3:15.

According to some scholars, the last of the descendants of the Nephilim from Genesis 6:4 would again take center stage in the dispensation of the Mosaic Law under the Davidic Covenant. The most famous encounter with the giants during this period is in 1 Samuel 17:4-7, with the iconic battle between David and Goliath. Other examples include 2 Samuel 21:15-22, 23:8-39, and 1 Chronicles 11:11-47, 20:4-8. These passages and other references are related to the main texts of interest and are explored in Chapter 6.

Summary

The Mosaic Covenant extends narratively from Mount Sinai (Exod 19:1) to Calvary (Acts 1:26). Israel is in a covenantal relationship with God through Abraham. Following the Exodus from Egypt, the Law of Moses is administered to the people as the will of God and governance of His relationship with Israel. The Dispensation of the Law contained 613 commandments, each requiring complete obedience. Breaking one of these commandments meant breaking them all (James 2:10).

In the Tower of Babel incident, God dispersed the seventy nations and allocated "sons of God," to each of them. However, Israel was a people God dedicated to Himself, and the Mosaic Covenant outlined the terms of the relationship and the outworking of God's purpose between the Israelites. Obedience to the Lord meant enjoying the blessings of the Promised Land outlined in the Abrahamic Covenant. Conversely, non-compliance would result in curses. The Law of

Moses has “at least nine reasons,” with broad categories reflecting the Law’s core purposes: (1) to reveal the holiness of God, (2) to provide the rule of conduct for OT saints, (3) to reveal sin, (4) a sin-nature needs a base of operations, and (5) to lead one to faith.⁵³ Fundamentally, the Law of Moses reaches its pinnacle in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Through Abraham’s lineage, the “seed of the woman” is realized in Jesus, and through His death and resurrection, death is conquered and Satan is defeated. This story line naturally reflects back to Genesis 3:15, when God places judgment on Satan.

The presence of jeopardy is realized throughout Israel’s history, but God’s faithfulness and grace repeatedly provide a path of safety for the remnant. Throughout the OT, God sent many prophets to the Israelites to turn them away from idolatry and return to obey God’s Law, and He raised up leaders in an effort to make them follow righteous paths. Later in the OT, for example, Ezekiel’s ministry to the Jewish exiles in Babylon was during the same timeframe as Jeremiah’s ministry to the Jews in Palestine; each ministry revealed the sins and judgments that had put Israel in its current situation. In God’s grace, these continual and impactful messages for the Israelites assure them of God’s future blessing for obedience to His Covenant. Unfortunately, non-compliance to the Law of Moses during this OT period remained incessant.

In the book of Exodus, several plagues come upon Pharaoh and his people for their refusal to comply with Moses’s request to release the Israelites. One can readily observe Satan’s failed attempt at dominance over God when Aaron’s rod becomes a serpent:

So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the Lord had commanded, and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff, and they turned into serpents. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. (Exod 7:10-12)

53. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 545-47.

This example illuminates the presence of the unseen realm and its cosmic consequences between good and evil. More importantly, Aaron's staff swallowing up the magicians' staff demonstrates God's superiority and power over Satan. The demonic goddess Wadjet of Egypt is represented by the serpent, and when Aaron's staff swallowed the magicians' serpents, "the symbolism would clearly imply an Israelite triumph over Egypt"⁵⁴ and thus would have concluded that "the power of their rods had been absorbed into the rod of Moses."⁵⁵ Remarkably, at the end of the ten plagues (which, as previously argued, corresponded with challenging the domains of specific Egyptian gods), God would again show His superior power by commanding the sea to swallow up Pharaoh's army, this time in another failed attempt by Satan to dominate God's people (Exod 14:26-31).

Despite the many setbacks resulting from the Israelites' disobedience, they would eventually cross over to the Promised Land forty years later and annihilate many of the hybrid giant clans through a series of conquests by God's hand. Although several giant clans are destroyed under Joshua's leadership, the giants reappear again during the time of the Davidic Covenant, thus requiring David to finish the task God gave to his ancestors.

54. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 82.

55. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 82.

CHAPTER 6: WARFARE WITHIN THE DAVIDIC COVENANT OF ETERNAL ROYALTY

After Moses's death, Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land through a series of conquests to rid the lands of their inhabitants and to divide the Promised Land according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Although Joshua would lead the Israelites to a renewal of commitment to the Lord in Joshua 24:24-25, Judges speaks of a tumultuous period for the Israelites. Gentry and Wellum describe this dark period in which: "(1) the people break the Covenant and sin against Yahweh; (2) Yahweh disciplines them by allowing foreign nations to oppress and harass Israel; (3) the people are called to repentance and cry out for help; and (4) Yahweh raises up a hero or deliverer, called a judge, who rescues the people from their enemies and rules them for a time."⁵⁶ Additionally, under the leadership of Joshua, some giants were not annihilated as God commanded, which later became an obstacle and a detriment to the Israelites (1 Sam 17:1-11; 2 Sam 21:15-22; 1 Chr 20:4-8). Remarkably, the book of Joshua remains a blueprint for military tactics and a guide on spiritual warfare, both of which become critical in the conquests of the Davidic period.

This chapter explores the importance of the Davidic Covenant, its provisions, attributes, and eschatological consequences. Additionally, an examination of the spiritual landscape of Israel during this period reveals a cosmic conflict between Israel and the surrounding idolatrous nations, as well as the continuous threat of the clans of giants still inhabiting the Promised Land. Finally, Satan's scheme to destroy David and his genealogy is exposed. However, God protects David and provides a path to kingship. God's royal Covenant with David confirms the Seed

56. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 444.

Promise. Scholars contend that the Davidic Covenant has continuity with the Abrahamic Covenant and thus is “simply an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant” (Gen 22).⁵⁷

Eternal, Unconditional, Forever, and Permanent

The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional promise from God: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:13). This eternal throne and kingdom would remain unconditional, regardless of the multitude of infidelities and fiascos that plagued David and his successors. In the Davidic Covenant, the term “forever” culminates through the Davidic line in the person of Messiah Jesus, the eternal Lord and Savior. The terms forever, eternal, unconditional, and permanent are similarly defined. For example, ‘ôlām’ or ‘forever’ is a “noun, common, singular, absolute” word that means “everlasting,” “eternity,” and “unlimited duration of time.”⁵⁸ Likewise, the word “eternal” means “everlasting, enduring forever, philosophically and theologically, the claim to be eternal can only be made for God.”⁵⁹ Consequently, an unconditional covenant of God can be defined as “a covenant God makes with persons that will be fulfilled solely on the basis of God’s promises and not because of any requirements fulfilled by humans.”⁶⁰ Therefore, God’s covenant with David is eternal and unconditional and “adds a critical new dimension, a royal, human representative who stands between Yahweh and his people.”⁶¹

57. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 120.

58. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*, s.v., “עולם (‘ô·lām, Forever).”

59. Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), s.v. “Eternal,” 107.

60. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. S.v. “Unconditional Covenant of God,” 330.

61. Sandra L. Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 190.

David the Bethlehemite and King

David was born of Jessie the Bethlehemite and he belonged to the tribe of Judah. He was the youngest of eight sons, tended to the sheep as a young man, and later became King Saul's player of the lyre and armor-bearer (1 Sam 16:11, 17-23). As a great-grandson of the biblical Ruth and Boaz, David is known for his victory over the giant Goliath, his military service to King Saul, and his many victories over Israel's enemies (1 Sam 17-18). As a result, this success causes King Saul to feel threatened, and thus the relationship between Saul and David deteriorates. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess describe Saul's state of mind as a "victim of a morbid jealousy; Saul foundered into insanity."⁶²

David is forced to become an outlaw and wanderer with Saul pursuing him with an army 3,000 strong, whereas David is the captain of 400 discontented warriors (1 Sam 22:2). It is during this period that David spares Saul's life multiple times and eventually flees to the land of the Philistines. With King Achish's acceptance, David settles in the land of Ziklag until the death of Saul and his sons in the battle of Gilboa (1 Sam 27:6). David is later anointed king over Judah, while Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, is made king over Israel.

David was one of the most distinguished kings of biblical Israel and reigned in Hebron for seven years and then in Jerusalem over all of Israel for thirty-three years (2 Sam 5-8; 1 Chr 3:4, 29:27; 1 Kings 2:11) David died at the age of seventy-one with the latter part of his reign marred with "divine retribution for his misdeeds."⁶³ David's sins had terrible consequences that impacted his family and the people of Israel; however, David remained a man after God's heart

62. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess, *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 199.

63. Arnold and Hess, *Ancient Israel's History*, 200.

and Israel's rightful king. David's sins, their consequences, and his outward kindness to his enemies are highlighted throughout David's reign. David A. Dorsey illuminates this point by stating that "The person after God's heart does not seek vengeance against personal enemies but entrusts that responsibility to an all-knowing and just God."⁶⁴ This statement reflects David's life and the depth of his love for God.

The Davidic Covenant

The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant with eternal promises, thus intensifying the cosmic conflict to prevent the "seed of the woman" through the line of David. Pentecost articulates the crux of the Davidic Covenant: "The seed promise contained in the Abrahamic Covenant is now made the center of the Davidic promise. The seed promises, in general, and the seed line of David, with his kingdom, house, and throne, are amplified."⁶⁵ In essence, the Davidic Covenant furthers God's intentions and purposes articulated in the prior covenants. With this revelation, evidence shows that Satan primarily focuses his efforts on David and his family, manifesting atrocities within his lineage to prevent the coming of the "seed of the woman."

God's covenant with David is articulated in 2 Samuel 7:1-17 and a summary of the promises includes (1) an eternal seed, (2) an eternal kingdom, and (3) an eternal throne. The climax of the covenant promises David an everlasting dynasty which is also articulated in 1 Chronicles 17:1-15. The central promise of God's covenant is in Exodus 6:7, Revelation 21:13, and in Genesis 17:7, which states, "And I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and

64. David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 136.

65. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 100.

your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” This passage points to future generations of Abraham’s descendants who will be a beneficiary of God’s everlasting Covenant.

At the heart of this covenant is the “Immanuel principle,” which is clarified in 2 Samuel: “And I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth” (2 Sam 7:9).⁶⁶ Isaiah 7:14 places great significance on the personal name “Immanuel,” which means “God with us,” a prophecy fulfilled in the birth of Jesus (Matt 1:22-23).⁶⁷ This promise clarifies that the perpetuity of God’s Kingdom will come to fruition through Jesus, a descendant of the house of David. “Jesus’ birth showed all humanity that God is faithful to fulfill His promises in ways far beyond human expectations, for Jesus was not just a sign of God with us. Jesus was God become flesh, God incarnate, God with us in Person.”⁶⁸

The provisions of the Davidic Covenant are found in 2 Samuel 7:12-16, which include promises related to David and promises related to Solomon. The Promise, or “seed of the woman,” would come from David’s royal family. David and Bathsheba had two sons. Joseph was a descendant of the chief royal line of Solomon, and Mary was a descendant of the non-reigning collateral line of Nathan. Joseph was the legal parent of Jesus, whereas Mary was the biological parent, which is more significant.⁶⁹

66. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 232.

67. Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Immanuel,” 810.

68. Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Immanuel,” 810.

69. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 158.

Although there is a dispute among scholars as to the conditionality of the Davidic Covenant, there are four primary features made in the Davidic Covenant that make the covenant both unconditional and eternal. These features include: (1) the House of David will never lack one with the right to rule from his throne, (2) the Davidic Covenant can never be revoked, (3) an eternal throne is guaranteed, and (4) an eternal kingdom is promised.⁷⁰ God promises David that he will have a son who will succeed him (2 Sam 7:12) and that his house, throne, and kingdom will be established forever (2 Sam 7:16).

God also promises that Solomon will be the one to build the temple (2 Sam 7:13), the throne of Solomon's kingdom will be established forever (2 Sam 7:13), and that Solomon will be chastened but not deposed (2 Sam 7:14-15).⁷¹ The promise details conclude that Solomon's throne would be established forever, not his seed. The lineage of Jesus would come from David through Nathan as an unconditional covenant. Ryrie posits that God "staunchly affirms His fidelity and the perpetuity of the covenant to David in spite of succeeding rascals who would appear in his lineage."⁷² Although Solomon is initially referenced in the biblical text, "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13), the reference focuses on the future in the eternal Kingship of Jesus, the Son of David (Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:25-35), and the one who reigns at God's right hand (Ps 2:7).

Additionally, Acts 13:33 speaks of this eternal promise of salvation through Jesus, "That God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son; Today I have begotten Thee" (Acts 13:33). In this passage,

70. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 318.

71. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 532.

72. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 319.

Paul makes it clear that Psalms 2:7 justifies Jesus's claim as Messiah and Son of God and again emphasizes His eternal Kingship as described in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

Additionally, many royal psalms reiterate the kingship of Jesus. Examples can be found in Psalms 2, 18, 20-21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 132, and 144. Expressly, Palms 89:3-4 and 89:19-37 confirm the covenant's eternal standing. Likewise, there are other OT references to the promises of the Davidic Covenant, which are found in Jeremiah 23:5-6, 30:8-9, 33:14-17, 33:20-21; Ezekiel 37:24-25; Daniel 7:13-14; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 8:11; and Zechariah 14:4, 9. Although this is not an exhaustive list of biblical texts, the message remains consistent: the "seed of the woman" comes from an irrevocable royal dynasty.

David's prayer (2 Sam 7:18-29) that follows God's covenant with him (2 Sam 7:8-17) confirms God's promises to build his royal covenant. This heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving reflects an intimate relationship with the Lord, and David displays genuine gratitude that God is establishing an eternal royal kingdom for him. In this prayer of thanksgiving, David also clarifies that the Lord alone is God. Ironically, while David had it in his mind to build God a house, God declares that He would build David's eternal royal house: "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam 7:16).

Williamson highlights the establishment of a royal Davidic Covenant and with it is a "divine guarantee of an eternal Davidic line that constitutes the essence of the royal Covenant."⁷³

From a NT perspective, Luke reflects upon 2 Sam. 7:8-16: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32-33). This passage confirms the eternal Davidic Covenant and its kingdom promises. Ryrrie

73. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 128.

emphasizes that a foundational argument of the Davidic Covenant is the “basis for believing in a Messianic Kingdom.”⁷⁴ This statement brings forth the promised “seed of the woman.”

Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant Connections

The Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants are intimately related, as the guarantees from God reflect each other. For example, both Abraham and David are promised a “great name,” as the first instance indicates for Abraham in Genesis: “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing” (Gen 12:2). In 2 Samuel 7:9, similar language is used for David, “And I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth” (2 Sam 7:9). Other similarities include a victory over their enemies (Gen 22:17; 2 Sam 7:11), a special relationship with God (Gen 17:7-8; 2 Sam 7:24), preservation of their seed (Gen 21:12; 2 Sam 7:12-16), a directive to maintain obedience (Gen 18:19; 2 Sam 7:14), and promises of universal blessings, which would elevate Israel to the status of an international kingdom (Gen 22:18; Ps 72:17).⁷⁵

The promises made in the Davidic Covenant intensify in clarity and focus from the promises made to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant. In Genesis 17, God states to Abraham, “And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you” (Gen 17:6-7). Royal kings would come from Abraham’s seed, and it is through David’s royal lineage that the eternal “seed of the woman” mentioned in Gen. 3:15 will

74. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 532.

75. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 144.

be realized. With this focus and clarity as to which royal lineage the “seed of the woman” would come from, it is no wonder David and his descendants would come under extraordinary and incessant attacks by Satan.

‘Covenant of Grant’ versus ‘Covenant of Vassal’

Scholars suggest that the Davidic Covenant is similar to the “dynastic promise and the so-called covenant of Grant,” which are related to suzerain-vassal relationships.⁷⁶ In a “grant covenant,” a superior party binds oneself to blessings for loyal service of an inferior subject. This grant provides “royal lands or offices in perpetuity” for such actions in return.⁷⁷ For example, this grant covenant is found in Genesis 22:15-18 with Abraham and Isaac and again in Psalms 89:3-37 with David and Solomon. These similarities include: (1) an unconditional right to rule over a particular city-state; (2) a father-son relationship creates a legal basis for an enduring dynasty; (3) protection is promised so long as loyalty is maintained; (4) a guarantee of protection of the vassal’s people; and (5) if the vassal is disloyal, he is disciplined and replaced by a loyal heir.⁷⁸

Scott W. Hahn concurs with those who claim that the Davidic Covenant has distinctive features of a grant-type covenant, by using comparative ANE examples known from the Hittite and Mesopotamian kingdoms.⁷⁹ In contrast, scholars such as G. Knoppers, D. N. Freedman, and

76. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 121.

77. Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Covenant Types: Kinship, Treaty, Grant,” https://ref.ly/logosres/lbd?art=covenant.covenant_and_family.3a_relations.2c_obligations.2c_consecrations&off=543.

78. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 121.

79. Bill T. Arnold and Hugh Godfrey Maturin, Williamson, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 209.

D. A. Miano disagree with Hahn's assessment since "the accounts of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants in the Bible do not follow the form of the ancient land grant documents."⁸⁰ They contend that the Davidic Covenant has features of a vassal treaty that includes a greater degree of conditionality within the covenant. In a vassal treaty, the inferior party swears the covenant oath, in which case the "superior party imposes a unilaterally sworn Covenant oath upon the inferior, frequently with a ritual of self-malediction," and the biblical examples cited are from Genesis 17, Deuteronomy 27:11-26, and Joshua 8:30-35. There are no examples listed from 2 Samuel.⁸¹ Based on the features of a grant-type covenant and the corresponding passages (Ps 89:3; 89:20-23; 2 Sam 7:9, 11-12, 16; Ps 89:4; 2 Sam 22:21-26), the Davidic Covenant better aligns with a grant-type covenant rather than a covenant of vassel.

Eschatological Consequences of the Davidic Covenant

The "seed of the woman" would come from the non-reigning line of Nathan, son of King David. In the Davidic Covenant, the kingdom would be everlasting. Isaiah explains, "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David" (Isa 55:3). This promise is available to all those who put their faith in the "seed of the woman." The everlasting kingdom comes through Jesus, the Son of God, and the promise of Gen 3:15 (Ezek 37:25; Rev 22:16).

The Davidic Covenant revealed the royal family line of the "seed of the woman" (Isa 11:1), but the place was still a mystery until Micah's prophecy about 725 BC, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for

80. Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 178.

81. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 178.

Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity” (Mic 5:2; e.g., Jer 23:5-6; Mal 3:1). Daniel’s prophecy (Dan 9:24-27) hints at the time of the Lord’s arrival, according to Sauer.⁸² Sauer’s justification for Daniel 9:24-27 as the time of the Lord’s arrival is based on the term “anointed one.” He asserts it is not Cyrus or the high priest Onias, as some ancient and contemporary expositors suggest. Sauer emphasizes, “This took place in the prophecy of the ‘seventy-year-weeks,’ or, more exactly, the sixty-nine-year-weeks before the advent of the seventieth. With this, the prophecy reached its culminating point and at the same time its conclusion” (Dan 9:25-26).⁸³

Whether one spiritualizes the Davidic Covenant promises or takes them literally, such as Pentecost, Ryrie, and Fruchtenbaum, it is evident from an eschatological perspective that God’s oath to David is to be an everlasting royal dynasty by which Jesus reigns forever in truth and righteousness. The Davidic Covenant provides the “conceptual framework of Jewish messianism, as expressed in both the Old Testament and Jewish writings that precede the New Testament.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, the major and minor prophets provide the richest “expression of the growth of messianism, which arose out of the Davidic Covenant’s concepts of the kingdom, king, rest from enemies, and royal sonship.”⁸⁵

The eschatological implications of the Davidic Covenant have far-reaching consequences to a literal fulfillment of promises for the nation Israel. Those with the dispensational or

82. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 159.

83. Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, 159.

84. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint, *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 1-10.

85. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 134-44.

premillennial viewpoint support Pentecost's claim of a literal kingdom.⁸⁶ Those with postmillennial or amillennial viewpoints deny that any such literal kingdom will exist in the future.

The Davidic Covenant is linked to the angel Gabriel visiting Mary in Luke 1:26-38 and is critical to NT theology. Isaiah states, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good" (Isa 7:14-15). This verse articulates that the virginal birth is foundational to Christian doctrine in that the "seed of the woman" would not come from a union of Mary and Adam's seed but rather from God Himself. The name "Immanuel" or "God with us" emphasizes Jesus's divinity.

Jesus's birth is foretold to Mary in Luke 1:26-38. Mary is called to participate in God's redemptive plan of salvation prophesied in the Abrahamic Covenant and with clarity and focus revealed in the Davidic Covenant. Specific references to the connections between Luke and Isaiah and the significance of the virginal birth are clarified, "The references to the 'house of David' in their immediate contexts (Luke 1:27; Isa 7:13) together with the unique references to *parthenos* [virgin], further highlight the significance of this Isaianic parallel as compared to other annunciation-type scenes in the Old Testament."⁸⁷ For clarification, the virginal birth is the doctrine that although Christ Jesus had a biological mother, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and thus not contaminated with Adam's seed. Strong emphases on the Davidic Covenant are understood between Luke and Isaiah, and their significance to the person and the divinity of

86. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 321.

87. Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 259.

Jesus. In essence, the divine sonship of the eternal Davidic king is affirmed in Jesus, and God's redemptive plan of salvation comes to fruition through His birth, death, and resurrection.

Pentecost provides five claims for Israel's literal future events involving the Davidic Covenant and Israel, which include: (1) Israel must be preserved as a nation; (2) Israel must have a national existence and be brought back into the land of her inheritance; (3) the Son of David, Jesus, must return to the earth to reign over David's covenanted kingdom; (4) a "literal earthly kingdom must be constituted over which the returned Messiah reigns;" and (5) Messiah Jesus must reign in perpetuity since the "throne," "house," and "kingdom" were promised in the Davidic Covenant.⁸⁸ Fruchtenbaum further elaborates on this understanding by stating that "The character of this Covenant is both unconditional and irrevocable since it is simply a more detailed extension of certain features of the Abrahamic Covenant" promised to Israel.⁸⁹

From a different perspective, Gentry and Wellum assert that promises fulfilled during David's lifetime include: "(1) a great name, (2) a firm place for Israel as the people of God, and (3) rest for David from his enemies."⁹⁰ Those promises to be filled after David's death include: (1) an eternal house, (2) a kingdom, and (3) a throne. Gentry and Wellum emphasize that the eternal house is fulfilled in Jesus as the eternal King.⁹¹ A few supporting passages include Acts 2:29-36 and Hebrews 12:22-24.

88. Pentecost, *Things To Come*, 114-15.

89. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 326.

90. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 479.

91. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 479-480.

The Cosmic Conflict within the Davidic Covenant

Since the nation's beginnings, Satan has worked against Israel as an accuser (Zech 3:1-2; 1 Chr 21:1), and the cosmic conflict within the Davidic Covenant is a continual reminder of Satan's hatred for Israel and his determination to prevent the "seed of the woman." Throughout the period of the Davidic Covenant, Satan provoked the Israelites incessantly to follow pagan gods, provoked disobedience to the Law of Moses, and consistently incited the kings of Israel to violate their covenant with the Lord. The covenantal privileges granted to the Israelites required obedience and faithfulness, and in the cases where the Israelites breached their relationship with God, they would forfeit blessings and bring curses on themselves, which was frequent. Paramount to this special covenantal relationship (Amos 3:2) was a promise of fidelity, with warnings against spiritual adultery (Jer 3)—a warfare tactic that Satan often used against the Israelites. As John C. Peckham succinctly contends, in the cosmic conflict the:

surrounding nations under demonic rule (Deut 32:8, 17) repeatedly attempted to seduce God's people into worship of their "gods" (Num 25:1-3), which would separate them from the special Covenant relationship and protection of Yahweh. While God was attempting to reclaim the world through Israel, the demons were attempting to pry Israel away from God, leaving God without an inheritance and allotment from which He could advance His plan to reclaim and redeem the world.⁹²

Gratefully, God's sovereignty, omniscience, and love for humanity would bring His plan to fruition.

Jeopardy in the Davidic Covenant

As a review, Judges 2:3 outlines the consequences of disobedience of the Israelites who failed to follow God's directive (Deut 7:1-6) and drive out all the Canaanites and pockets of

92. John C. Peckham, *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 102.

remaining giants in the Promised Land, “Therefore I also said, “I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (Judg 2:3). Disobedience of idolatry, foreign control, intermarriage with pagans, as examples, would have a lasting adverse impact on the Israelites.

Likewise, in the case of David and his descendants, it becomes apparent that David and his family’s debacles would undoubtedly allow kingship privileges to be derailed. The incident of adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah, cursed his bloodline with abuse of power, continual conflict, and incessant disobedience to the Lord.⁹³ Areas of jeopardy existed within David’s bloodline; however, God never removed the Covenant promise to have a rightful heir (2 Sam 7:12-17).

King Saul and Giants in the Land

In 1 Samuel 16:12, the text states that Samuel anointed David, and “the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.” Consequently, Satan focuses his hatred on David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) and looks for opportunities to kill David. Because of Saul’s continual disobedience to the Lord and self-serving and destructive pride, he would become the vessel Satan uses in concerted attempts to eliminate God’s anointed one. Although David succeeds in evading the many attempts made on his life, he would have to live with his enemies, the Philistines, in order to have relief from Saul until his death, as described in 1 Samuel 31.

One of the famous stories of David is his vanquishing the giant, Goliath, in a challenge for physical and spiritual dominance over the Israelites. In this scene, the God of Israel is battling

93. Walton, *Covenant*, 101.

the Philistines' gods. Goliath's patron deity was Dagon, and other gods were Baal-Zebub and the goddess Ashtoreth, whereas David worshipped the One true God, the God of Israel.⁹⁴ Therefore, the cause for David's victory over the giant, a representative of the forces of chaos, was not his dexterous use of the sling but rather a decisive blow from the God of Israel that defeated the gods of the Philistines.⁹⁵ Yahweh, the God of Israel, would again show His superiority, power, and sovereignty, which is emphasized in 1 Samuel: "and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD's and He will give you into our hands" (1 Sam 17:47).

Bathsheba and Uriah

Shortly after God's covenant with David in 2 Sam. 7:8-17, David yielded to Satan's temptation of adultery with Bathsheba. Then he abused the power and authority God had given to him by having Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, killed on the battlefield. Consequently, David is indicted by God and misfortunes would soon fall upon David's household, starting with the loss of David and Bathsheba's child. Shortly after that, the incestuous incident between Amnon and Tamar transpired, as well as Absalom's prohibited relations and his conspiracy to kill David to take over the throne. Satan must have thought David's sins would nullify the covenant God made with David, but this would not be the case. God's unconditional covenant would forever be preserved despite Israel's subsequent periods of disobedience, apostasy, civil wars, and divine judgments.

94. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 306.

95. Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim*, 108.

The Other Giants in the Promised Land

First and Second Chronicles are the last two books of the Hebrew Bible and assumed to be in the setting of the postexilic community of Judah. Specifically, 1 Chronicles is a recapitulation of prior events with a focus on the monarchical period of David, Solomon, and the kings of the southern kingdom. The book focuses on the “kings of the earth derived from Judah, but also the eternal king himself who had no beginning and will never end.”⁹⁶ First Chronicles speaks of covenant hope and tells the story through the lens of the Davidic Covenant promise while connecting the prior covenants to the future embodiment of truth and righteousness in the person of Jesus, the Messiah. This book also speaks of the challenges the Israelites face as a nation as well as a people entrenched in physical and spiritual battles.

Specifically, 1 Chronicles 20:4-8 articulates similarities of the battle in 2 Samuel 21:15-22 with Sibbecai the Hushathite killing the giant Saph (2 Sam 21:18), and Elhanan, later killing Goliath the Gittite (2 Sam 21:19) and Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite (1 Chr 20:5). Scripture also mentions that Jonathan, the son of Shimea, killed the man with “six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot” (1 Chr 20:6-7). These giants represented Satan’s forces of chaos within the Promised Land and were a constant “thorn” in Israel’s side during David’s reign. The connection between the Nephilim giants of Genesis 6:1-4 into the time of King David is undoubtedly present. These passages include Genesis 6:1-4, 6:11-13, 14; Numbers 13:32-33; Deuteronomy 2:10-11, 2:20-21; Joshua 11:21-22; and 2 Samuel 21:22. Doak supports this assertion by stating “This narrative theological thread of giants from the Nephilim of Noah’s day

96. Thomas C. Oden, gen. ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament V: 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 245.

to the Rephaim of David's time conspires to imply a deliberate summary of climactic conflict between the titan Seed of the Serpent in Canaan and the Seed of Abraham from Eve."⁹⁷

Based on the past tactics of Satan, Doak makes an observation that warrants reflection:

The giants appear at points of significant cosmic and political change: at the end of the antediluvian world and the beginning of a new covenant culminating with Noah's descendant, Abram; at the end of the occupation of the land by the Canaanites and the beginning of Israel's possession; and at the end of a leaderless or inadequately led nation in its infancy, on the brink of acquiring its ideal king.⁹⁸

Although these are the last mentions of giants, Satan's deliberate attempts to thwart God's plans within the Promised Land, he would continue to employ other strategies to disqualify, contaminate or exterminate the future eternal King, as promised in the Davidic Covenant.

Numbering of the Israelites

First Chronicles 21:1 state, "Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel" (e.g., 2 Sam 24:1), so David demands Joab to count the fighting men of Israel. Although Joab pleads with David to reconsider, David denies his request. Joab went throughout the land and counted all the fighting men except for the tribes of Levi and Benjamin "for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab" (1 Chr 21:6). The census took "nine months and twenty days" to complete, and "God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel" (1 Chr 21:7). Because of David's sin, the angel of the Lord killed seventy thousand people before the Lord intervened.

97. Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim*, 250.

98. Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim*, 114.

The word סָפַר (*sā·p̄hār*), is a “verb, Qal, imperative, second person, masculine, plural” that means to “make a written record of quantities of objects or persons.”⁹⁹ According to Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, the Latin term “*census*” meaning “assessing” or “taxing” was used to register Roman citizens, property, and wealth for taxation purposes.¹⁰⁰ The OT term was an “idiom for taking a head count and is restricted to the divine commissioning of the task.”¹⁰¹ Israel and other ancient societies viewed census taking as “taboo” because “it implies that martial strength, rather than religious merit and divine providence, is primarily responsible for victory in battle.”¹⁰²

David, yielding to Satan’s prompting to take a census, demonstrated his reliance on the number of fighting warriors available for his service rather than trusting God’s sovereignty and providence over Israel. As an opinion of scholar Matthew Henry, he suggests David’s mistake revealed David’s pride, and Satan knew it would undoubtedly bring offense to God, and His wrath would severely be upon the nation for David’s disobedience.¹⁰³ As a personal assessment, this passage is certainly a lesson on pride, its lethal consequences on oneself, and its devastating ripple effects on the lives of others.

99. Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham English Bible: Census: סָפַר (sā·p̄ār)*, [https://ref.ly/logosres/dblhebr?ref=HebrewStrong.5608&off=5&ctx=6218+~%D7%A1%D6%B8%D7%A4%D6%B7%D7%A8+\(%C4%81%C2%B7p%CC%84%C7%8Er\)%3a+v.%3b+%E2%89%A1+Str+5608%3b+TW](https://ref.ly/logosres/dblhebr?ref=HebrewStrong.5608&off=5&ctx=6218+~%D7%A1%D6%B8%D7%A4%D6%B7%D7%A8+(%C4%81%C2%B7p%CC%84%C7%8Er)%3a+v.%3b+%E2%89%A1+Str+5608%3b+TW).

100. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 153.

101. Arnold and Williamson, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, 153.

102. Michael Fishbane, Adele Berlin, and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible Commentary: Tanakh Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1751.

103. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Joshua to Esther* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 688.

Attempted Extermination of the Royal Seed

In a study of Scripture, it is apparent that Satan continually attempts to destroy the descendants of David, for Satan knew it would be David's royal line that the "seed of the woman" would be born. The passage states, "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam 7:16). Upon this acknowledgment, Satan singled out the royal house of David in order to prevent the "seed of the woman." For example, when Jehoram succeeded Jehoshaphat as ruler, he killed all his brothers with the sword; however, "the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David because of the Covenant which He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and his sons forever" (2 Chr 21:7). In 2 Chronicles 22, Jehu executes judgment and kills the princes of Judah, the sons of Ahaziah's brothers, and Ahaziah himself. When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, realizes her son is dead, she destroys the royal descendants of the house of Judah, but one son named Joash was hidden "in the house of God six years while Athaliah reigned over the land" (2 Chr 22:12).

Joash was later murdered in 2 Chronicles 25:25 and the king of Egypt killed Josiah, the reigning king, in 2 Chronicles 35. Other notable kings that met their untimely death include Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. In summary, a prominent reoccurrence of the Israelites throughout their unstable relationship with God was a prompting of Satan for the people to follow the false gods and adopt the detestable practices of the surrounding nations. Further, Satan took advantage of every opportunity to kill David's descendants.

Barnhouse addresses this issue from a different angle, namely that "Satan led the people to follow false gods, thus bringing the curse and the dispersion which enabled Satan to work on

the remnants in isolated and alien circumstances.”¹⁰⁴ Since Israel’s infancy, Satan has introduced false gods and worship to corrupt Israel to its core. It is “idolatrous practices like the worship of Moloch with its horrible sacrifices, the high places, the sacred tree worship, the corresponding moral corruptions which followed and hundreds of other evils led the chosen people away from God. It was all the serpent’s work.”¹⁰⁵ This statement by Gaebelein depicts the depth of Israel’s apostasy and highlights the nation’s many defeats and exiles.

Attempted Annihilation of the Israel Nation

The book of Esther is written from a perspective looking back on the postexilic period during the reign of (Ahasuerus) the king of Persia (486-465 BC). Interestingly, the book is “written in Hebrew similar to that of 1 and 2 Chronicles, which are also dated to the period of 539-323 BC.”¹⁰⁶ Although this book was not within the time of king David, it is reflective of a time after the Davidic Covenant and before the New Covenant. More importantly, this book speaks of God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises for those within and outside the borders of the promised land. Carson emphasizes “This stage in progressive revelation anticipates the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), when the whole world would be within the gospel’s embrace. The story presents a great deliverance from the threat of destruction in yet another episode of the ancient war between Israel and its many enemies, such as the Amalekites, the first nation that

104. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 106.

105. Arno Clemens Gaebelein, *The Conflict of the Ages: The Mystery of Lawlessness* (Glasgow, Scotland: Pickering & Inglis, 1936), 39.

106. D. A. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Commentary: Follow God’s Redemptive Plan As It Unfolds Throughout Scripture*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 790.

tried to destroy Israel in its infancy (Exod 17:8-16; Deut 25:17-19).”¹⁰⁷ The book is one of the five Megilloth and is associated with one of the Hebrew festivals called “Purim,” or national deliverance. The Megilloth is a plural form for scroll and includes five OT books which include Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther.¹⁰⁸ Although Esther is the only book not found at Qumran, its theological message speaks of God’s sovereignty and providence over all things. Additionally, although the book of Esther does not explicitly mention God, it nevertheless provides a profound example of God’s presence, power, and providence over His people.

God’s grace, purposes, and protection are evident throughout the Biblical text as D. A. Carson clarifies: “God fulfills his redemptive promises not only through great miracles but also through divine providence working through ordinary events. Even the actions of people who do not worship him are woven into patterns and purposes determined by the sovereign Lord alone.”¹⁰⁹ The finger of God’s providential timing is transparent throughout the story, and the Jews’ faith, hope, and dependence upon God during the most challenging of times are also realized. Esther 4:14 highlights these attributes and criticality of the situation for the Jewish people, “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esth 4:14). The book presents Esther as a

107. D. A. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Commentary: Follow God’s Redemptive Plan As It Unfolds Throughout Scripture*, 792.

108. Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v. “Megilloth” (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), Logos Bible software, <https://ref.ly/logosres/bkrenbib?hw=Megilloth>.

109. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 798.

woman with great human fear, as she could have been killed similarly to the fate of her parents in the great Persian massacre.¹¹⁰

The book of Esther tells the story of a Jewish woman who became the Persian Empire's queen during Ahasuerus's reign (Xerxes I). Through God's providence and sovereignty, the Israel nation was saved from total annihilation by the Persian Empire. As the story goes, Queen Vashti refused to attend the King's banquet (Esth 1:12) and thus was removed from her position as queen (Esth 1:19). With God's favor and providence over the Israelites, Esther became Vashti's successor as queen (Esth 2:17). Haman, the prime minister of Ahasuerus, was a descendant of the Agagites, with Agag being the king of the same Amalekites that Samuel killed at Gilgal (1 Sam 15:32-33). Haman plotted against the Israelites, as he "sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus" (Esth 3:6).

When Mordecai learned of the plot, he communicated the news to Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, to inform Esther of this pending atrocity. Through a series of events, Esther's plea reaches the king and the plot for Haman to kill all the Israelites is thwarted. Consequently, Haman and his ten sons are executed instead, and the Israelites are granted the right to defend themselves. This story is the most prominent example of Satan's attempt to annihilate a nation from which the "seed of the woman" was to come. With Haman as Satan's human vessel, it reflects the character of the evil one to appoint the day when the nation would be destroyed. In God's providence and sovereignty this atrocity was averted and the Israelites were saved.

110. Gerald F. Knoblet, *Dissertation Discussion: Esther*, dated September 11, 2023.

Summary

The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant with eternal promises. God's covenant with David is articulated in 2 Samuel 7:1-17, and the promises include four features that culminate with the birth of Jesus, who will sit on the eternal throne forever. The Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants are intimately related, but the Davidic Covenant intensifies in clarity and focus as to the details of the promises. For example, it would be from David's royal lineage that the "seed of the woman" would be born and Isaiah 9:1, 6-7 speaks of this child from the lineage of David who will sit on David's throne forever. Fundamentally, the Davidic Covenant bridges the relationship between the OT and NT.

Since Israel's infancy, Satan has declared war against Israel to exterminate its people. Specifically, one can observe Satan's intense hatred toward David's lineage with his many attempts to thwart God's plans. As a result, the threat of failure for the Israelites within the Davidic Covenant remains imminent. Within this cosmic conflict, the faithfulness of the Israelites would be littered with adultery, disobedience, broken promises, and continued attempts to strategically kill David and his descendants. Satan's battle plan would also include inciting David and his descendants to commit such great sins that God would consider his options useless. Proving unsuccessful, the Adversary would later set a date to annihilate the whole nation of Israel, as the book of Esther articulates. In spite of the many physical and spiritual battles that Israel endures, the "seed of the woman" would soon be born and become the world's Savior, with Luke 1:26-38 and Isaiah 7:14, as critical passages linked to the Davidic Covenant. Chapter 7 explores the New Covenant with the birth, death, and resurrection of the eternal, royal King Jesus, the "seed of the woman" realized by God's sovereignty, grace, providence, and omniscience.

CHAPTER 7: THE COSMIC CONFLICT IN GOD’S REDEMPTIVE NEW COVENANT

Jeremiah 31:31-34 is considered one of the “deepest insights in the whole OT”¹¹¹ and is celebrated as a significant passage that points to the Christian understanding of the New Covenant.¹¹² Williamson asserts that the new covenant is “arguably the climactic covenant that all other divine-human covenants anticipate and foreshadow.”¹¹³ Robertson agrees with Williamson and considers the new covenant as the “Covenant of Consummation,” which “supersedes God’s previous covenantal administrations,” and which “consists of a single person.”¹¹⁴ However, dispensationalists describe the new covenant as the “Dispensation of Grace,” and stats that this dispensation is the sixth of seven dispensations within the outworking of God’s purpose for the nation of Israel.¹¹⁵ As for a timeline, this dispensation covers the period of the church Age, including the seven years of tribulation.

G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson take the position that, “As the piling up of words compounded with “*syn* (with),” shows, the mystery is the equal footing that Gentiles and Jews now have together in the people of God.”¹¹⁶ They further emphasize that “Now that the eschatological age has begun, Jews and Gentiles do not merely worship together; they are united

111. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 147.

112. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 147.

113. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 146.

114. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 272.

115. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 5-17.

116. Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 819.

with each other, occupying the same level of privilege before God.”¹¹⁷ This statement places Jesus as the “climactic eschatological revelation of God’s covenant love and faithfulness.”¹¹⁸

Paul reveals that the Gentiles can receive the blessings outlined in the Abrahamic Covenant through the New Covenant with Israel, “Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you’” (Gal 3:8). This passage is the climactic announcement of the gospel of God’s grace. The New Covenant offers the spiritual blessing promised to Israel in the Abrahamic Covenant to the Gentiles for the first time in biblical history. Through this blessing, those who accept the gift of righteousness through faith will share in God’s grace promised to Israel. Specifically, Romans 5:15-21 provides this clarification of the gift of salvation offered to all through Jesus, Messiah of Israel.

The Prophet Jeremiah and Other Old Testament Texts

The grace of God and His loyalty to the Covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and David are understood in the OT. Evidence of this statement can be found in the prophet Micah: “Thou wilt give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, which Thou didst swear to our forefathers from the days of old” (Mic 7:20). Other references include Genesis 24:27, 32:10; Exodus 34:6, 7; Deuteronomy 7:8, 12; 2 Samuel 7:14-15; Psalms 89:33-35; Isaiah 55:3; and Jeremiah 31:3.

Specifically, the New Covenant for Israel is found in Jeremiah 31:31-40, and Hebrews 8:8-13 and 10:16-17, which illuminate that the New Covenant “is put over against that Mosaic

117. Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 819.

118. Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 423.

Covenant which Jehovah declares that Israel “brake” (Jer 31:32) and in which they “continued not” (Heb 8:9).¹¹⁹ The Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants were both unconditional, and the promises within partially came to fruition in the New Covenant. However, within these Covenants, the physical promises belong to Israel, whereas the spiritual blessings were extended to the Gentiles. Ryrie emphasizes Israel’s distinction by stating “The term Israel continues to be used for the natural (not spiritual) descendants of Abraham after the Church was instituted, and it is not equated with the Church.”¹²⁰

Dispensationalism and Covenant Theologians agree that Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant; however, the point of contention lies in whether the New Covenant is being fulfilled now or will be fulfilled after the Second Coming of Christ Jesus. Chafer suggests there are two separate new covenants, one for the church and one for Israel. Ryrie’s stance is that the distinction between Israel and the church in the NT is clear. “The use of the words *Israel* and *church* shows plainly that in the New Testament national Israel continues with her own promises and the church is never equated with a so-called ‘new Israel’ but is carefully and continually distinguished as a separate work of God in this age.”¹²¹

Walvoord bases his perspective on Romans 11:25-26 as his source. However, Covenant Theologians use Hebrews 8:1-13 and Jeremiah 31:31-34 as their basis to declare that the New Covenant is fulfilled in the church. Walvoord insists that this perspective reads into Scripture what is not there.¹²² Although God made the New Covenant with Israel, He allows the church to

119. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Dispensationalism* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1936), 85-86.

120. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 138.

121. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 140.

122. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959), 215-18.

receive its spiritual blessings on an individual basis. Israel will receive its blessings as a corporate body in the Millennial Kingdom.¹²³

From a supporting perspective, there is a connection between the institution of the Lord's Supper in the Gospels, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The New Covenant between God and Israel is revealed in Isaiah 11:2; 32:15, 42:9, 44:3, 48:6, 55:3, 11, 59:21, 61:8-9, 62:2, 65:17; Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60, 34:25-31, 36:26-27, 37:26-28, 40-48; and Palms 33:3, 40:3. The passages from Psalms speak of "a new song" in response to God's "new act of deliverance or renewed understanding of his character and purposes."¹²⁴ The NT also provides new covenant language clarifying the promises with Israel and Judah and illuminates God's grace with those who put their faith in Jesus (Rom 11:11, 11:13-24, 12, 15, 17, 25-27, 30-31; Rev 21).

Specifically, Jeremiah 30-33 is called the Book of Consolation, which outlines God's promise of restoration and the return of God's people, contrary to the typical oracles communicated to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 31:31-32 articulates that a new covenant, not one as was made with Israel at Mount Sinai (Heb 8:6-8, 13), will come to fruition. Furthermore, the announcement of this unconditional New Covenant clarifies Israel's salvation and restoration for the "house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31), which hints that the divided kingdoms will be reunited as a unified people of God in the last days.

The New Covenant that God speaks of in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is a covenant that should not be confused with God's grace extended to those who believe in Jesus, also known as the church. This New Covenant with Israel is unconditional and solely based on God's elective grace:

123. Jerry Knoblet, Instruction and guidance were provided in the annotated version of Chapter 7 Draft, March 3, 2023.

124. Tremper Longman, III, and Mark L. Strauss, *The Baker Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, s.v. "New" (*hādāš*) (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2023), 545.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the House of Israel after those days, declares the LORD. I will put My law within them, and on their heart, I will write it; I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother, say, Know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Jer 31:33-34).

Barnhouse posits that God’s sovereign grace will be extended to Israel on a corporate level “after those days ... God will manifest His sovereign electing grace on a national scale on behalf of Israel, even as He showed His sovereign elective grace on a personal scale to those who believed in Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord.”¹²⁵

Throughout the OT and NT, Scripture reveals Israel’s special relationship with God despite their continual disobedience. Israel is set aside as a distinct people unto itself and Jeremiah 31:33 specifically expounds upon this promise. Israel receives this New Covenant promise because it is through it that the Messiah is born. Israel stands as a witness to the One and only true God, and it is through Israel that the Holy Spirit-inspired Scriptures were written.¹²⁶ For believers in Jesus, much comfort is realized with the statement, “What is true of us believers on an individual scale will be true of Israel on a national scale. Both they and we can only plead the grace of God.”¹²⁷

Gentry and Wellum take a different approach than Barnhouse, stating that some scholars confuse the kingdom of God and the New Covenant. They posit, “There is an already but not yet to the kingdom of God, but when the apostles speak of the new covenant, it is always already and in no part not yet. Hebrews 8 cites all of Jeremiah 31 and affirms that it is here in its fullness,

125. Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans: Chapters 5:12-16:27, Expositions of Bible Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 153.

126. Barnhouse, *Romans*, 155.

127. Barnhouse, *Romans*, 155.

now!”¹²⁸ Gentry and Wellum note the atoning work of Christ Jesus cleanses from all sin, and although there is “an already, not yet to the kingdom, believers in Jesus Christ currently experience full forgiveness of sins.”¹²⁹ However, the purpose of Hebrews 8 is to articulate the superiority of the New Covenant and that Jesus has a more excellent or better ministry, as God’s Law is written on the human heart and mind (Jer 31:31; 2 Cor 3). Pentecost provides a dispensational perspective on the New Covenant and its provisions. He asserts that Israel will not realize its blessings until the second advent of Jesus.

Pentecost distinguishes “between the institution of the covenant and the realization of the benefits of it,”¹³⁰ and he uses examples such as the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants; all were instituted at a point in time with the benefits following thereafter. He stresses that the physical blessings promised to Israel, such as the restoration of the land, material blessings, and rest from oppression, belong to Israel alone; these indicate a future covenant fulfillment. Pentecost’s stance concludes that “the tribulation, second advent, and millennial age are yet future, the fulfillment of this promise must be yet future, and therefore the church cannot be fulfilling this covenant.”¹³¹

In concert with Pentecost, Lewis Sperry Chafer identifies seven features of the unconditional covenants God made with Israel. The seven features he states help with misunderstandings within scholastic camps include: (1) a Nation forever; (2) a Land forever; (3) a King forever; (4) a Throne forever; (5) a Kingdom forever; (6) a New Covenant; and (7)

128. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 559.

129. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 560.

130. Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, 128.

131. Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, 128.

Abiding Blessings.¹³² These seven features suggest Israel's relationship with God will be "one of unbroken fellowship such as was accorded Adam in Eden before the Fall."¹³³ God promised a New Covenant with the house of Israel and Judah (Jer 31-31, 33:14); however, the New Covenant is not restricted to Israel, as evidenced in 1 Corinthians 11:25, 2 Corinthians 3:3, and Hebrews 9:15-28. Knoblet asserts that "The work on the Cross made it possible for God to offer the New Covenant to Israel and bless the Church."¹³⁴ This statement illuminates the distinction between Israel and the church and God's grace extended to both.

The book of Isaiah focuses on Israel and Judah, its call to repentance, and God's salvation through the Messiah, speaking prophetically of the New Covenant that is to be sealed with God's blood. Isaiah 40-66 speak of consolation and hope as God's promise of future blessings through His Messiah is prophesied. Isaiah 52:13-15 and 53:1-12 speak of a suffering Servant who would be sacrificed to cleanse the nations. Although not all-inclusive, other supporting OT biblical references include Isaiah 42:1-3, 57:15, 46:10, 49:1-6, 50:4-11; Psalms 22:6, 22:30; and Daniel 9:26.

Specifically, Isaiah 53:1-12 speaks of a Messiah, a man of humility, strength, suffering, and mercy, and a sinless man who would suffer for the sins of all humanity. God gives Isaiah a look into the future of the Messiah, God's chosen Lamb, who would be pierced for all of humanity's transgressions resulting in forgiveness for all those who put their faith and trust in Him. Likewise, Isaiah 42:1-4 provides language that brings forth the Servant's mission. The promised Messiah, spoken of through Isaiah, becomes the unblemished Lamb (Isa 53:7), an

132. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 Vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 4:315-26.

133. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:315-26.

134. Jerry Knoblet provided academic instruction on the "Work of the Cross" for Israel and the Church.

offering for the sins of humanity (John 1:29; Rev 5:6-14), and is the promised New Covenant and the giver of life, which is realized for Israel (Isa 55:3, 59:21, 61:8).

The book of Ezekiel also references the New Covenant language regarding Israel's restoration promises (Ezek 16:60-63). God speaks of Israel's future reformation and restoration (Isa 59:21; Jer 31:31-34) through a new covenant that fulfills elements of the Abrahamic Covenant (Isa 55:3; Jer 32:40). It is in this New Covenant that God's forgiveness covers the shame and humiliation of sin (Ezek 16:60). God's gracious "everlasting covenant" will purify His people of their sins for His name's sake (Ezek 36:22-38; Deut 21:8). Ezekiel 33-36 articulates the coming of new leadership, a "new David, the Messiah" (Ezek 34:23; Jer 23:1-8).¹³⁵

As Stephen G. Dempster posits, "In a remarkable allegorical passage, a Davidic descendant is compared to a tender shoot (*yoneqet*) plucked from a tall tree, taken to Mount Zion and planted there to grow into a huge tree, bearing fruit and providing shade for all the birds of the forest (Ezek 17:22-24).¹³⁶ God then speaks of the restoration of Israel through the imagery of a valley of dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14). In this vision, the graphic images illustrate a slain army in an open graveyard, which suggests Israel's spiritual and physical condition, dead in humiliation and sin. However, God prophesies hope, life, and restoration into Israel's hopelessness and death using imagery of dry bones being reassembled and given the breath of life.

This vision takes one back to Genesis 2, when God created Adam: "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man

135. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 583.

136. Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion, and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 170-71.

became a living being” (Gen 2:7). In Ezekiel’s vision, God will breathe life into Israel again, as He did with Adam, giving His people eternal peace. This imagery hints at the resurrected life through Messiah, the future Hope for Israel promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. Other passages, such as Daniel 9:1-27 and 12:2-3, hint at the coming Messiah. Ezekiel 37:24-28 speaks of the “Davidic Covenant (the promise of eternal kingship), the Sinaitic Covenant (expectations of holy living), and the Abrahamic Covenant (the promise of land), all will be fulfilled in the Covenant of Peace (Ezek 37:26).¹³⁷

Specifically, Ezekiel 11:19-20 provides the language of the New Covenant, which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:4, “the entire complex of repentance, faith, and conversion of the new Covenant written on the heart.”¹³⁸ “And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God” (Ezek 11:19-20).

Israel and the New Covenant

The character of the New Covenant is a literal and unconditional Covenant. Pentecost posits that the complete fulfillment of the Covenant is made with future Israel. Elements of this New Covenant must follow the return of Christ Jesus, “the physical seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and with them alone” (Jer 31:31-40, 32:37-40, 50:4-5; Isa 59:20-21, 61:8-9; Ezek 16:60-63, 34:25-26, 37:21-28).¹³⁹ There is an assertion that Israel will realize the complete

137. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Commentary*, 1470.

138. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 585.

139. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 119.

fulfillment of the Covenant in the millennial age and refers to Ezekiel 34:25 and Isaiah 11:6-9 as biblical references.¹⁴⁰ He clarifies his point by asserting that the New Covenant, which was “future in the time of the prophets, and was future in the New Testament, can only be realized following the second advent of Christ in the millennial age.”¹⁴¹

However, as Gentry and Wellum indicate, covenant theologians often view the land to be “more typologically”¹⁴² and some of these scholars, such as Michael Horton, contend that the promises made to Israel were conditional, forfeited by Israel, and spiritually fulfilled in the church.¹⁴³ Gentry and Wellum support Horton’s assertion by positing that dispensationalists “have not consistently put together God’s plan from creation to new creation as progressively unveiled through the covenants, which is now fulfilled in Christ and the church.”¹⁴⁴ Gentry and Wellum further argue that because a believing Jew and Gentile jointly receive all the promises provided in the New Testament to “form the one new humanity and that all members equally receive all God’s promises,”¹⁴⁵ the future will not include a national Israel, using Romans 9-11, and specifically Romans 11:1-32 as supporting evidence.¹⁴⁶

However, this assertion does not take into consideration the literal interpretation of the text. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God speaks of an unconditional New Covenant, a replacement of the

140. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 119.

141. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 121.

142. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 663.

143. Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2006), 23-110.

144. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 693.

145. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 762-763.

146. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 765.

Mosaic Covenant (Jer 31:32), and made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Other supporting passages can be found in Isaiah 55:3, 59:21 61:8-9; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60, 34:25-31, 37:26-28; and Romans 11:26-27.¹⁴⁷ The New Covenant reveals the Jewish blessing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, specifically the blessing of salvation extended to the Gentiles.¹⁴⁸ God's unconditional covenants made with Israel secure both physical and spiritual blessings for Israel. From a dispensationalist perspective, the church's role and responsibilities are in the partaking of Israel's spiritual blessings, "The very fact that Gentiles have been made partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings has put them into debt to the Jews. According to Romans 15:25-27, the way they pay their indebtedness to Jewish believers is to minister to them in material things."¹⁴⁹ The New Covenant is within the Dispensation of Grace and the spiritual blessings are for both Jew and Gentile through Christ Jesus, Lord and Savior.

The New Covenant Inaugurated through the Messiah Christ Jesus

The Last Supper was one of Jesus' last teachings before His crucifixion and represents the "consummation of the kingdom of God,"¹⁵⁰ the present and what is to come in the New Covenant. It is Jesus' suffering which "sets into motion a new period of salvation history; after Jesus' suffering and death, God will provide a new banquet, the consummation of his people's

147. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 35.

148. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 35.

149. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 40.

150. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem: The Last Days* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 207.

hope for his ultimate act of redemption.”¹⁵¹ During the Last Supper in Luke 22:37, Jesus taught His disciples that He fulfilled in part Isaiah 52:13-53:12 by stating, “For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘and He was numbered with transgressors; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment’” (Luke 22:37). Matthew 26:26-29 states,

And while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said “Take, eat; this is My body.” And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I say to you; I will not drink of this fruit of the Vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” (Matt 26:26-29)

In this passage, the broken bread represents Jesus’s body, soon to be crucified, and the wine symbolizes His blood that is shed for the transgressors and the forgiveness of sins. In other words, Jesus’s last Passover meal represents a future new covenant in His atonement for sins and His redemption for those who have faith in Him (Matt 26:27-28; Mark 14:23-24; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8-13, 9:15, 10:16-17, 12:24). Likewise, in the washing of the disciples’ feet, Jesus again hints of a new covenant, a “symbolic significance of purification accomplished by His death.”¹⁵²

Schnabel summarizes Matthew 26:26-29: “Jesus redefines the Jewish Passover meal as a drama portraying his atoning death on the Cross. This drama then interprets his crucifixion in precisely those terms: a new exodus that brings about forgiveness and reconciliation on the basis of the sacrifice of himself as a ‘Passover lamb.’”¹⁵³ In Exodus 24:8, Moses took the blood of the animal and offered it over the Israelites and thus God’s covenant with Israel was sealed with a

151. Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem*, 207.

152. Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem*, 208.

153. Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem*, 540-41.

“young bull’s” blood. God’s New Covenant would be sealed with the innocent blood of His Son, Jesus, as prophesied in Jeremiah.¹⁵⁴

Concerning the church and the New Covenant, spiritual blessings will be freely given to those who believe and trust in Jesus. In other words, the church can partake in these spiritual blessings through the Mediator of the Covenant. Dispensationalist J. N. Darby claimed “the gospel is not a covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God. It proclaims the great salvation. We enjoy indeed all the essential privileges of the New Covenant, its foundation being laid on God’s part in the blood of Christ, but we do so in Spirit, not according to the letter.”¹⁵⁵

However, Robertson takes an interesting position, namely that the “Old covenant nation of Israel typologically anticipated the new covenant reality of the chosen people of God assembled as a nation consecrated to God.”¹⁵⁶ Robertson goes on to assert that those who are in Christ are “constituting the people of God in the present circumstances” and “must be recognized as the “Israel of God.” As a unified people, the participants of the new covenant today are “Israel.”¹⁵⁷ According to this view, the Jew and Gentile alike will enjoy all of God’s promises and with no distinction between the blessings in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

154. Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem*, 213.

155. J. N. Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*. Vol. V. (London, England: G. Morrish Publishing, 1942), 286.

156. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 289.

157. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 289.

Progressive Covenantalism and the New Covenant

The term Progressive Covenantalism addresses the “nature and interrelationship of the biblical covenants.”¹⁵⁸ This concept attempts to resolve the disputes between the dispensational and covenant theologies and seeks to “underscore the unfolding nature of God’s revelation over time, and while Covenantalism emphasizes that God’s plan unfolds through the covenants and that all of the covenants find their fulfillment, *telos*, and terminus in Christ. We strongly argue for the unity of God’s plan-promise culminating in the new covenant.”¹⁵⁹

Rather than the covenants of works and grace, this model suggests God’s plan is revealed through the biblical covenants, each one contributing to God’s unified plan from creation and with full fulfillment in Christ, and uses Hebrews 1:1-3 and Ephesians 1:9-10 as biblical references. Additionally, this model does not categorize the covenants as unconditional or conditional as do the dispensationalists and maintains a contrasting perspective regarding Israel and the church.

Progressive Covenantalist Brent E. Parker argues that the biblical covenants climax in Christ Jesus “with entailments for the eschatological people of God, the Church.”¹⁶⁰ He asserts Jesus is the “True Israel,” the “True Servant,” the “Obedient Son in the wilderness,” the “True Vine,” and the “Church as the new restored Israel in Jesus.”¹⁶¹ Parker goes on to emphasize that the “New Testament presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel and all the Old Testament covenant mediators, for he ushers in the promises to Israel (restoration and return from exile, the

158. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course Between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 1.

159. Wellum and Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism*, 2.

160. Wellum and Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism*, 44.

161. Wellum and Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism*, 57-67.

land, etc.), embodies their identity, role, and vocation. All the institutions (the sacrificial system, tabernacle, temple, Sabbath, feasts, the law), identity markers (e.g., circumcision), office (prophet, Priest, king), and key events (e.g., the Exodus) of Israel find their culmination in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.”¹⁶² Patrick Fairbairn agrees with Parker that Israel and their covenants, lands, and religious institutions from the OT are brought to fruition in the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ Jesus.¹⁶³

Fairbairn suggests the New Covenant fulfills “all that the nation of Israel anticipated and hoped for.”¹⁶⁴ In the New Covenant, the church includes Jew and Gentile believers in complete unity by faith in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior; thus, through Christ Jesus, the church inherits the promises of Israel.¹⁶⁵ Likewise, Parker asserts that “these new covenant promises, like the typological aspects of national Israel, are channeled through Christ to God’s end-time people, Jew and Gentile alike. Thus, the church does not replace or absorb Israel; rather, Israel was a type of Jesus and, derivatively, of a new and regenerate covenant community.”¹⁶⁶ Chuck Missler disagrees with Parker and Fairbairn, stating that the church is not described in what he terms the “70th Week of Daniel” in Daniel Chapter 9, a prophecy regarding Israel, which is an indicator that the church and Israel are distinct from each other. Missler reiterates that five promises in the OT are considered everlasting with Israel: (1) a National Entity (Jer 31:36); (2) a Land in perpetuity (Gen 13:15); (3) a Throne (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:36); (4) a King (Jer 33:21); and (5) a

162. Wellum and Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism*, 44.

163. Patrick Fairbairn, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), 255.

164. Fairbairn, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, 255.

165. Wellum and Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism*, 47.

166. Wellum and Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism*, 68.

Kingdom (2 Sam 7:14).¹⁶⁷ Missler further states, “Four-fifths of the Scripture is dedicated to Israel, while less than one-fifth is focused on the church. They are separate entities with different promises and destinies. Every divine purpose, every covenant, every promise and provision of Israel is earthly. Every promise to the Church is a heavenly reality.”¹⁶⁸

Missler’s “70th Week of Daniel” addresses Israel’s destiny, yet the mystery of the church is not mentioned in this chapter. Scripture also provides a distinction between the Jew, Gentile, and the church, as evidenced in 1 Corinthians 10:32, which states “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God.” The separation articulated within this passage makes clear God’s administration of Israel will be distinct. Jesus declares a blindness over Israel in Luke 19:41-42, which starts the interval between the 69th and 70th week, and Romans 11:25-26 that articulates the end of the interval with the statement “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,” referencing the church.

Missler rightly clarifies what “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,” means the church. He emphasizes “There will only be a certain number of believers in the church, and God knows that number. When that last person believes, making the church complete, the Father will say to the Son, ‘Go get them.’ When they are brought in, that’s the end of the interval, and God will once again continue his program for Israel. So, the fullness of the Gentiles is synonymous with the church period, and then the Great Tribulation follows.”¹⁶⁹

Daniel 9:27 brings forth the 70th week with “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain

167. Chuck Missler, *Israel and the Church: The Prodigal Heirs* (Coeur d’Alene, ID: Koinonia House Inc., 2016), 71.

168. Missler, *Israel and the Church*, 71.

169. Chuck Missler, *Daniel’s 70 Weeks* (Coeur d’Alene, ID: Koinonia House, 2015), 60.

offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” The 70th week brings forth an enforcement of a covenant with Israel, and it is during this period that the Great Tribulation is realized. Israel’s participation is paramount to this eschatological period. Jesus’ references Daniel 9:27 in Matthew 24:15, and according to Missler, this scene will be a repeat of what “Antiochus Epiphanes did two centuries earlier, but He was speaking about what would be done in the future by the prince that shall come.”¹⁷⁰

Christ’s Humanity, Divinity, and Priesthood in the New Covenant

Regarding Jesus’s humanity, He is described in Scriptures as being fully human while being fully God. From Jesus’s incarnation and throughout His ministry, He continually healed, served, and taught ordinary people and is marked with having a profound connection to humanity. Born into poverty, Philippians 2:6-8 speaks of his humble beginnings, “Who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8). Scripture makes it clear that Jesus shares in the conditions and hardships of the common people of Israel (Heb 4:15), not associated with the religious and political powers of the times.

Jesus’s humanity can also be seen through His human emotions, as exhibited throughout Scripture.

Examples of Christ Jesus’s emotions can be observed in Matthew 4:2, 21:18 (hunger), is angered by stubborn hearts (Mark 3:5), feels deep compassion for the harassed and helpless crowd (Matt 9:36, 14:14; Heb 4:15), is moved to tears at Lazarus’s death (John

170. Missler, *Daniel’s 70 Weeks*, 63.

11:35; Heb 5:7), and becomes indignant when children are rebuked (Mark 10:14), is joyful in the Spirit (Luke 10:21, 15:11, 16:24, 17:13), loves his friends and disciples (John 11:3, 20:2), marvels at the faith of the centurion (Matt 8:10), sighs deeply when tested by the Pharisees (Mark 8:12), and, weary from his journey, thirsts for water (John 4:6, 19:28).¹⁷¹

Additionally, the Gospels record Jesus's emotions of His pending suffering and crucifixion for humanity's sin. The imagery of His distressed state is captured in Luke 12:50, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished." Other passages that capture the depth and breadth of Jesus's sufferings include Matthew 26:37-38; Mark 8:31, 15:34; Hebrews 2:9-10, 2:18, 5:8; and 1 Peter 2:21. Further, Jesus's humanity is observed in His increased wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52), is the good shepherd (John 10:14), the Bridegroom (Matt 9:15), a refugee and scorned One (Matt 2:13-15, 8:20), a friend of sinners (Matt 26:17-30), and identifies Himself with Israel.¹⁷² Foundationally, Jesus is called the "seed of the woman" in Genesis 3:15, who would crush the head of the serpent at the Cross, the "seed of David" in Romans 1:3, and categorically called a man. First Timothy 2:5-6 states, "For there is one God, and one Mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time."

The deity of the Messiah is revealed in pictures and riddles within the OT (1 Chr 17:13). An example from the NT (referring to the OT, Ps 110:1) comes from Matthew when Jesus provides a riddle to the Pharisees, saying "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He? They said to Him, The son of David. He said to them, then how does David in the Spirit call Him Lord, saying, The LORD said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put thine enemies beneath thy feet? If David then calls Him Lord, how is He his son?" (Matt 22:42-45). This riddle depicts

171. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 438.

172. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 438-50.

David “as if stepping down from his throne, lays his crown at the feet of Him Who, sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, is the real, true David.”¹⁷³ In this riddle, Jesus highlights His divinity and placement with the Father.

Other OT references that show the divinity of the Messiah pictorially include Isaiah 11:1 (“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jess, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit”); Micah 5:2; Jeremiah 23:5, 6; and Malachi 3:1 as examples. One of the most known passages comes from Isaiah 9:6-7:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

In the NT, the Gospel of John focuses on the deity of Jesus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). These passages provide foundational certainties that identify Jesus as fully God (John 1:18, 20:28; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1, and 1 John 5:20). Likewise, John finishes his writing of the Gospel by saying, “Many other signs, therefore, Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

As God manifested in the flesh, 1 Timothy 3:16 provides testimony to Jesus’s deity as well as Isaiah 9:6, which clarifies, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor,

173. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 438-50.

Mighty God, eternal father, Prince of Peace.” Other clarifying passages that provide depth to Jesus’s deity include Numbers 14:20-22; Psalms 45:6, 95:6-9, 102:25-26; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Joel 2:32; John 12:40; Romans 9:5, 10:13; Ephesians 5:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; and Jude 4.¹⁷⁴

Divine attributes ascribed to Christ Jesus are that He is the Christ, Messiah, King, Teacher, Healer, a Divine Warrior, Liberator of Slaves, the Bread of Life, Living Waters, the true Vine, the Alpha and Omega, and the Eternal One (Mic 5:2; Rev 1:8, 11:13). Further, He is unchangeable (Heb 13:8), He is infinite (John 8:58), He has life in Himself (John 5:26), He is Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and Truth (Mark 1:24, 7:37; Luke 1:35; John 10:32, 14:6, 21:17; Acts 3:14; 1 Cor 1:24, 30).¹⁷⁵ The NT bears witness to Jesus’s deity and works, which includes the creation of Heaven and Earth, the many miracles performed throughout the Gospels, and salvation in all its parts such as preservation, redemption, election, effectual calling, sanctification, sending the Spirit, power to bestow eternal life, the resurrection of the body, and judgment.¹⁷⁶

Jesus’s identity as the Divine Son is confirmed at Jesus’s baptism by God Himself, “And behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). The image of Jesus is articulated well in the statement, “The Savior’s death on a Roman cross is God’s paradoxical means of salvation (Luke 9:24), his taking upon himself the woes of Israel and of the world. But this rejected and crucified Savior is raised and exalted to

174. Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, s.v. “Deity of Christ” (Greenville, SC: Providence House, 2002), 129.

175. Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, s.v. “Attributes of God,” 130.

176. Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, s.v. “Attributes of God,” 130.

God's right hand and proclaimed by the apostles as the Leader and Savior who gives "repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).¹⁷⁷

The office of the High Priest is defined in Hebrews 5:1, "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Hebrews clarifies that the ritual of Israel's tabernacle (vv. 1-10) foreshadows Jesus's sacrifice and its significance. With this definition in mind, Jesus is the High Priest "in the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:6), "the guarantor of a better covenant" (Heb 7:22).

Jesus is the "permanent Priest" or the "indestructible life" that "saves completely those who come to God through Him because He always lives to intercede for them" (Heb 7:24). The attributes of Jesus as the eternal High Priest includes His Holiness; He is "blameless," "pure," "set apart from sinners," "exalted above the heavens," "He sacrificed Himself for their sins once and for all," and "perfect in all ways" (Heb 7:26-28). Therefore, Jesus is the Heavenly High Priest of a new order and is seated at the right hand of God and provides full access to Father God through Him. Jesus, as the Mediator or Guarantor, ushers in the New Covenant, bringing its promises to fruition.

Eschatology and the New Covenant

Pentecost contends that Israel awaits the fulfillment of the promises of the New Covenant. From this perspective, Israel must be "restored to the land of Palestine, which they will possess as their own. This also entails the preservation of the nation. Israel must experience a national conversion, be regenerated, receive the forgiveness of sins and the implantation of a

177. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 441.

new heart.”¹⁷⁸ These promises come to fruition upon the return of the Messiah, the One who “shed His blood as the foundation of this covenant and must personally come back to the earth to effect the salvation, restoration, and blessing of the nation Israel.”¹⁷⁹

Other views that are contrasting to Pentecost’s in the realm of eschatology involve the nature of the church, the relationship between Israel and the church, and the physical versus the spiritual blessings assigned to each. Williamson contends that through Abraham’s Covenant, the divine blessings have been “extended to all the families of the earth.”¹⁸⁰ Supporting comments come from W. J. Dumbrell, “This is a supposition of unfettered mutual fellowship between God and men, the creation of a community in which not only is there no need for instruction but no breach of fellowship occurs, no divisions within the new community are expected.”¹⁸¹ A few other prominent scholars that oppose Pentecost’s views include Beale, Gentry, Wellum, and Thompson. Specifically, Thompson references Acts 1:6-8 as to when Israel will receive its full restoration and the church receives the Holy Spirit.¹⁸²

As an essential for the Christian, the New Covenant for the believers is ratified through the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the One whom Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets spoke of in the OT. The church awaits its eschatological hope in the return of the Messiah to bring restoration of all things foretold by the prophets (Acts 3:21). For the church, the

178. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 128.

179. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 128.

180. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 208.

181. W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), 181-183.

182. Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan: NSBT 27* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 105.

key components of the future hope, the gospel of Jesus, is in the virginal birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah. Jesus will come again to fulfill His plans of redemption for those who put their trust and faith in Him. Eternal life with God or eternal separation from God lies in the individual's decision. Jerry Wall states it another way, namely, that "Those who love Jesus and keep His commandments are those to whom the incarnate Son of God comes and with whom the Father and the Son make their abode" (John 14:21-23).¹⁸³

As the Messiah, Jesus is also the Son of Man, who represents his people (John 1:17, 1:41, 1:51, 3:14, 9:22, 11:27, 12:32-34, 17:3, 20:31).¹⁸⁴ He is also the Lamb of God who, through His death and resurrection, accomplishes salvation for His people. Crowe clarifies his point by stating, "Jesus is not only the Lamb of God but also the Good Shepherd Who lays down his life on behalf of His sheep (John 10:11). He is the source of life (John 1:4, 5:26), and those who abide in Christ, feeding on him by faith, have life (John 6:29, 6:35, 6:51, 6:58, 15:1-11)."¹⁸⁵ Christ Jesus is the source of eternal salvation for those who remain in Him. Christ Jesus, as the Victor and Warrior of this cosmic conflict, can be described as "Jesus' death on the cross is the victory of God not merely over Israel's covenant rebellion but over the cosmic powers of sin, Satan, and death."¹⁸⁶

Peckham makes a piercing assessment of Satan as a defeated adversary but not yet destroyed, "The false accuser and slanderer, who was given limited jurisdiction to bring

183. Jerry L. Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 61.

184. Brandon D. Crowe, *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 119.

185. Crowe, *The Last Adam*, 119.

186. Crowe, *The Last Adam*, 119.

accusations in the heavenly court, is ultimately thrown down (Rev 12:9; Luke 10:18), first via the cross event, by which he is legally defeated in the heavenly court and then eschatologically when his usurping kingdom and limited dominion are finally removed altogether” (Rev 20:2-3, 10; Matt 25:41).¹⁸⁷ This humbling statement about the acceptance of the gospel drives home the point, “As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us.”¹⁸⁸ This point clarifies an individual’s accountability for their decisions in life and for their eternal residence, choosing an eternal life with God or an eternal separation from God. One must choose. Foundationally, the New Covenant provides this hope for humanity and brings to fruition promises of salvation for both the Jew and Gentile.

Cosmic Conflict within the New Covenant

The cosmic conflict within the New Covenant can be observed from the birth of Jesus through His death on the Cross and into contemporary times. The NT speaks of Satan’s continual attacks on the nation of Israel and the early church. Beyond the Scriptures, Satan’s continual hatred for God’s people is evident.

Several examples of this cosmic conflict realized are discussed in the present research. Jesus of Nazareth was born of the Virgin Mary to oppose this cosmic war. At the onset, Satan gains evil recruits to wage war against the Messiah. In Matthew 1:18-25, Joseph fears taking Mary as his wife because “she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit” (Matt 1:18). In this scene, Joseph is faced with a decision to divorce Mary quietly or have her stoned, which was

187. Peckham, *Theodicy of Love*, 121.

188. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Two Volumes—LCC 20: Book One*, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Publishing, 1960), 133.

common practice for indiscretions and indeed a preferred choice for Satan. However, God intervened and offered Joseph a third option, to marry her despite the social stigma both would carry because of their obedience.

Not long after Jesus was born, God told Joseph in a dream to depart and go to Egypt, “Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him” (Matt 2:13). Herod had ordered the death of all “male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi” (Matt 2:16). Although the fulfilled Promise of God was safe in Egypt until Herod’s death, more attempts would be made on Jesus’ life. As Wiersbe emphasizes, “Just as Satan had tried to keep Christ from being born, now he tried to destroy Him after He was born” (Matt 2:13-18; Rev 12:1-4).¹⁸⁹

In Matthew 4:1:11 and Luke 4:1-13, Jesus is tested with Satan’s desires of the flesh in the wilderness; however, a testing divinely planned by God in preparation for His mission. Each temptation is rebutted by Scripture and parallels Israel’s experience of testing in the desert. These three temptations attack the relationship with His Father: (1) He must be ready to accept privation in fulfilling His God-given task without pulling rank (Matt 4:2-4); (2) to trust His Father’s care without the need to test it by forcing God’s hand (Matt 4:5-7); and (3) to reject the short cut to the fulfillment of his mission which would be achieved at the cost of compromising His loyalty to His Father (Matt 4:8-10).¹⁹⁰

189. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, 18.

190. D. A. Carson et. Al, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, Logos Bible Software (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), <https://ref.ly/logosres/nbc?ref=Bible.Mt4.1-11>.

Another example of this cosmic conflict is realized in Luke 4:29-30 with Jesus's message that the Scriptures were fulfilled in Him to "proclaim the favorable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:19) and God's grace would be shown to the Gentiles, which was offensive to the Rabbis. As Luke 4:28-29 concludes, "And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff" (Luke 4:28-29). Although Satan incited the Rabbis to kill Jesus, it was a futile attempt as He passed through the crowd and went His way.

A storm in Mark 4:35-41 and again in Luke 8:22-25 speaks of raging winds on the sea, unlike anything the disciples had experienced. The disciples were skilled fishermen and knew the waters; however, it is apparent that their threat was real and an unnatural one, based on their experience. In their fear, they woke up Jesus, who calmed the winds. The storms did not move Jesus; He exercised His authority and power over His Creation. Moreover, as Scripture reveals, Jesus was hated by many and with a focus on killing Him (Matt 9:3, 12:24, 13:54-57, 27:63; Mark 2:7, 3:22; Luke 5:21, 7:34, 23:2; John 7:20, 8:13, 10:20, 18:30). However, Jesus was not harmed until His time had come to glorify His Father.

The most astonishing act within the life and ministry of Jesus is when He experiences excruciating suffering and death at the hands of the leadership of both the Gentiles and Jews. Barnhouse emphasizes that "this is not a mere conjecture for it is bluntly stated that earth government is in the hands of Satan."¹⁹¹ It is Satan who is behind the curtain of darkness, but it is God's wisdom and sovereignty that Satan's attempted victory was short-lived when Jesus rose from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, Paul states:

191. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 219.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

As stated by the prophets of old, a sacrifice and payment for humanity's sin come to fruition for Jews and Gentiles.

In this cosmic conflict, Jesus brought forth a supreme demonstration of God's ways and the vindication of His divine righteousness and holiness. An interesting passage in 1 Peter 3 speaks about Jesus proclaiming His victory to the apostate angels in the abyss. This passage reads:

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water (1 Pet 3:18-20).

This passage is reminiscent of Genesis 6:1-4, in the days of Noah, and also 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 5-7, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet 2:4-5).

Scripture records that Jesus, the risen Messiah and Lord, proclaimed to the apostate angels in prison. Although there are multiple interpretations, one interpretation suggests that these apostate angels are the same ones who "came into the daughters of men, and they bore children to them" (Gen 6:4), producing the Nephilim hybrids (1 Pet 3:19; 1 Enoch 6-15). As Heiser asserts, "Specifically, 1 Enoch 6:15 describes how the sons of God (called 'Watchers' in that ancient book) who committed the offense of Genesis 6:1-4 were imprisoned under the earth

for what they had done. The imprisonment is behind the reference to the ‘spirits in prison’ in 1 Peter 3:19, a view ‘embraced in the early church.’”¹⁹² As the atonement for humanity’s sin, Jesus defeated Satan and provided a way of salvation for all who believe in Him. From a cosmic warfare perspective, it is easier to “understand the spoiling of the principalities and powers when we have comprehended the great fact that in the triumph of the cross, the Lord Jesus made a public example of them. The cross was the revelation of the truth of God’s ways and the falsity of Satan’s ways.”¹⁹³

Summary

The New Covenant is the Covenant of Consummation according to Williamson and the final covenant, in which God governs His relationship with Israel. This chapter highlights the covenantal grace extended to Jews and Gentiles alike with the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Messiah Jesus. He is Victor over death, God’s atonement for sin, and Lord and Savior for those who place their faith and trust in Him. Primarily, the books of Genesis, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the Psalms speak of the promise of God that brings restoration and fellowship and will turn hearts towards Him with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The passages in Jeremiah 31:31 and 31:33 provide depth of this new covenant. Jesus came to fulfill the preceding covenants, specifically the Mosaic covenant (Matt 5:17) and to establish a New Covenant as the Mediator and basis of the promise, “And in the same way, He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My Blood” (Luke 22:20). The Mosaic Covenant has been replaced by a “better

192. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 337.

193. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 219.

covenant” (Heb 7:22) and the New Covenant is established on “better promises” (Heb 8:6). The New Covenant allows the Gentiles to share in the spiritual blessings of grace as Romans 6 clarifies, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!” (Rom 6:14-15). The promises of the New Covenant are “contrasted with the old Mosaic Covenant and promises several blessings that the old covenant could not provide: regeneration or new birth (Rom 8:9-11; Eph 2:8-9) the full forgiveness of sins, an intimate knowledge of God, and the assurance that this New Covenant is unbreakable” (Heb 9:15).¹⁹⁴

Christ’s humanity, divinity, and priesthood are integrated and illuminated in Scripture as a powerful means of comprehending the ministry and Person of Christ Jesus. Although Jesus is fully human, He is also fully God. His humanity is highlighted in His continual healing, serving, and teaching of the common people. At the same time, His divinity is made known with His death, resurrection, and victory over Satan, sin, and death. Regarding Jesus’s Priesthood, Hebrews 7:11-28 emphasizes His role as the eternal High Priest, as He makes intercession for humanity and can save. He also understands our human condition: “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

The cosmic conflict within the New Covenant is exemplified by the many attempts on Jesus’s life and the countless atrocities against the nation of Israel and believers in Jesus as Lord and Savior throughout biblical history, and into contemporary times. Although these cosmic conflicts are exemplified as evidence, one thing is certain: Satan only has the power that God

194. Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Covenant,” 358.

allows him to have, which places the focus correctly on what Jesus did on the cross for all of humanity.

**CHAPTER 8: COSMIC WARFARE
A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE IN EPHESIANS 6:10-18**

The covenants discussed in the previous chapters are fundamental to God’s relationship, message, and story with the nation of Israel. God’s plan as spoken of in Genesis 3:15 is brought to fruition through the New Covenant, which is the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This New Covenant ushers in spiritual blessings of salvation for those who put their trust and faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, Jew or Gentile alike. From a grace perspective, “Obedience to the New Covenant means to accept the gifts of righteousness, which God offers to all men through Yeshua the Messiah” (Rom 5:15-18).¹⁹⁵

As a backdrop throughout the covenants God made with Israel, it is an assertion that the Adversary has pursued a cosmic war with God’s people since Genesis 3:15. The battle can be observed explicitly and implicitly throughout the Bible, and although Satan has been defeated, he is not yet destroyed. The NT has several instances of this spiritual combat. As an example, Luke 11:14-26 reflects the “existence of a malevolent kingdom of Satan and his minions as part of the order of this age. The Christ event represents the long-awaited end of it.”¹⁹⁶ Gulaker goes on to posit that “The tables are about to be turned, and the downtrodden will conquer their enemy (Matt 17:20), but for now, a period of transition is at hand that must be overcome.”¹⁹⁷ Consequently, God’s people must stand strong in the spiritual battle with the prince of this world. In Ephesians 6:10-18, God effectively lays out the battle plan for the believer, which is to “Put on the Armor of God” to successfully withstand the wiles of the devil.

195. Fruchtenbaum, *The Dispensations of God*, 15.

196. Cato Gulaker, *Satan, The Heavenly Adversary of Man: A Narrative Analysis of the Function of Satan in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 11.

197. Gulaker, *Satan*, 12.

Ephesians 6:10-18 illuminates the cosmic conflict that began in Genesis 3:15 and highlights Paul's encouragement to the believer to put on God's armor and stand firm in Him. As articulated in the New Covenant, it is not by human endeavors but through the works of Jesus alone that humanity finds eternal peace and saving grace from Satan's eternal abode. Although the engagement of the cosmic conflict begins with the disobedience of Adam, as described in Genesis 3:15, and will not end until Revelation 20:1-10, Ephesians 6:10-18 provides the pathway and armor to the saving power that is revealed in Jesus's salvation work.

Contrary to contemporary perspectives, Satan continues to rage in a cosmic conflict against God and His people and for the souls of humanity. Jesus taught on the existence and schemes of Satan (Matt 4:10; Mark 3:26; Luke 13:16; John 12:31); however, many Christians do not believe in this cosmic conflict. As a created being (Ezek 28:11-15), Satan is the first sinner (Ezek 28:15; 1 John 3:8), the deceiver, an accuser of the church and Israel (Zech 3:1-2; Rev 12:10), and thus continually seeks those whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8-9). Ephesians 6:10-18 teaches the believer how to stand firm against these inevitable attacks.

This chapter provides a broad overview of the background of Ephesians and its purpose. Additionally, an examination through the lens of the cosmic conflict in Daniel 10 and Deuteronomy 32 are conducted to provide explanatory depth to the spiritual and physical influence and meaning of this cosmic warfare, and how it impacts the believer. Primarily, the focus is placed on Ephesians 6:10-18 from a contemporary perspective to "stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11). S. M. Baugh explains that Ephesians is divided into two areas of focus: one area includes "an indicative opening that concentrates on an exposition of various

aspects of the Christian faith,”¹⁹⁸ (Eph 1-3) and the other, “a closing imperative section with exhortations to live a Christian lifestyle based on those truths (Eph 4-6).”¹⁹⁹ Specifically, Ephesians 6:10-18 may be interpreted for some as a “call to personal piety for the development of an ethical character.”²⁰⁰ However, Donna R. Reinhard suggests that the believer’s piety “is for the sake of the universal Church, not just for themselves.”²⁰¹ In other words, Ephesians 6:10-18 serves as a “call to put on Christ for the sake of the unity and maturity of the church.”²⁰²

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians addresses the doctrine of who the believer is in Jesus and the believer’s responsibility and duty in response to His message. Paul balances doctrine and duty with a theme focusing on the body of Jesus and peace and unity in Him. Ephesians 6:10-18 focuses explicitly on putting on the armor of God “to stand firm against the schemes of the Devil” (Eph 6:11). Some scholars suggest Ephesians 6:10-18 ought to be understood as a “summary of the letter and to interpret the attributes as virtues to be acquired, not as attributes of Christ to be worked out in the lives of believers.”²⁰³ Nonetheless, it is clear the book of Ephesians “emphasizes that God’s purpose for the human race is its unity in Christ exhibited in the corporate life of the church.”²⁰⁴

198. S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 38.

199. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 38.

200. Donna R. Reinhard, “Ephesians 6:10-18: A Call to Personal Piety or Another Way of Describing Union with Christ?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 3 (2005): 521-32.

201. Reinhard, “Ephesians 6:10-18,” 521.

202. Reinhard, “Ephesians 6:10-18,” 522.

203. Reinhard, “Ephesians 6:10-18,” 523.

204. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 817.

Hoehner emphasizes within the section of Ephesians 6:10-18 that there are “no obvious hints of links with the whole book nor is there any sort of recapitulation or an emotional call to action based on those facts, normally included in a *peroratio*.”²⁰⁵ The *peroratio* was typically used by the ancients in speeches before the battle or to inspire or show enthusiasm for a course of action to embrace. Hoehner clarifies that these exhortations are “primarily directed to individual believers but the corporate body is also in view.”²⁰⁶ F. F. Bruce maintains that there are two parts of Ephesians: “(1) an extended benediction and prayer constituting the framework for a celebration of God’s accomplishment in Christ of his eternal purpose, and (2) a lengthy paraenesis (Eph 4:1-6:20) of a kind which must have been current in the Gentile churches.”²⁰⁷ Reinhard summarizes their perspective for Ephesians 6:10-18 “to be the summary of only the imperative section ... and exhorts believers to respond to God’s grace by acquiring these virtues in their own lives.”²⁰⁸

Interestingly, John Chrysostom, a preacher in the times of the early church, focuses his teaching regarding putting on the armor of God from a corporate perspective.²⁰⁹ He speaks of the pericope to have thematic connections to the whole of Ephesians. Reinhard agrees with this approach and lists multiple topics that can be found in both sections, “(1) the unity of believers in Christ (Eph 1:10, 2:14-22, 3:4-6, 13, 4:4-6, 13); (2) the source of opposition to Christian unity

205. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 817.

206. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 818.

207. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians: NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1984), 241.

208. Reinhard, “Ephesians 6:10-18,” 522.

209. Philip Schaff, ed, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*: Logos Bible Software: <https://ref.ly/logosres/npnfrc13?ref=Bible.Eph6.14-17&off=16888> (New York, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1889). Cf. also Reinhard, “Ephesians 6:10-18,” 522.

(Eph 1:21, 2:2, 3:10, 6:12); (3) God's power exercised on behalf of believers (Eph 1:19, 2:6, 3:7) and the need of this power in the life of Christians (Eph 3:16, 18-19, 6:10), and (4) the mystery which is now revealed (Eph 1:8, 3:3-6, 6:9)."²¹⁰ Although there is no consensus amongst scholars as to whether or not Ephesians 6:10-18 is a recapitulation or an inspiring ending to the whole book of Ephesians, it is clear that Paul uses his instruction to strengthen the believers in spiritual warfare against evil powers.²¹¹

Understanding the tactical plans of Satan and his control over the earth is prudent and, in part, a way to prepare for his attacks. Satan has authority over "all the kingdoms of the world" (Luke 4:5-7), he is the "prince of this world" (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11), and he is the "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). The world knows neither God (1 Cor 1:21) nor Jesus (1 Cor 2:8) and is at enmity with God. Scripture clarifies this point in James 4:4 "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). These worldly desires include the "lust of the flesh," the "lust of the eyes," and the "boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16). It is in these desires that a web of deceit is weaved. Consequently, the believer must put on the armor of God, remain steadfast, and persist in the Word of God to defend against its counterfeit schemes.

Background of Ephesians

Ephesus was the capital of proconsular Asia, second only to Rome, and was approximately a mile inland from the Aegean Sea.²¹² Ephesus was consecrated to Artemis

210. Reinhard, "Ephesians 6:10-18," 524.

211. Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 103-109.

212. Chuck Missler, *The Book of Ephesians: Commentary Handbook* (Coeur d'Alene, ID: Koinonia House, 2009), 4.

(Diana), was a hotspot for idolatry, and the Temple itself is one of the world's seven wonders. Ancient Ephesus was one of the "largest and most important cities of the Roman Empire"²¹³ and a major commercial port for shipments to Greece and Rome.²¹⁴ Ephesians is considered one of the prison epistles authored by Paul the Apostle while he was imprisoned in Rome from AD 60-62.²¹⁵ Of the letters Paul wrote, it is assumed that the Corinthian, Colossae, Philemon, Philippian, and possibly Galatian correspondences were written from Ephesus.²¹⁶ Other scholars, such as Chuck Missler, state that there were four prison letters which were to: (1) "Ephesus (Tychicus was the bearer of this epistle), (2) Colossae (Epaphras from Colossae carried the epistle to the Colossians in Col 4:12), (3) Philippians (Epaphroditus from Philippi carried the epistle in Phil 4:18), and (4) Philemon (Onesimus the fugitive Colossian slave carried the epistle to Philemon, his master)."²¹⁷

During Paul's second missionary trip in AD 51 he visits Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21) and leaves Aquila and Priscilla there with a promise to return. In AD 54-57 Paul returns and stays in Ephesus for three years. Many of Paul's works were composed from Ephesus during this time; as Jerome Murphy O'Connor explains, "the Corinthian correspondence and the visits of Paul and his emissaries to Corinth during that period were undertaken from Ephesus."²¹⁸ In AD 58 Paul

213. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 318.

214. Barry J. Beitzel, *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts Through Revelation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 537.

215. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 30-31.

216. Evans and Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 320.

217. Missler, *The Book of Ephesians*, 6.

218. Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *St. Paul's Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 201-2, 235-43.

travels to Syria and visits Miletus, approximately thirty miles south of Ephesus, to meet with the church elders, as written in Acts 20:18-35. This visit would be his last to the area, and as 1 Timothy 1:3 indicates, Paul urges Timothy to stay at Ephesus, a place that remained a hub for the Christian church.

The population was estimated to be about two hundred thousand people, making Ephesus one of the largest cities in the Roman empire,²¹⁹ and was sufficiently supplied with water through the aqueducts, which were collected in cisterns and distributed throughout the city.²²⁰ According to Beitzel, several public buildings in Ephesus were used as civic settings for council meetings, business negotiations, and academic debates.²²¹ Furthermore, the grand theater of Ephesus is known for its grandeur, accommodating up to twenty-five thousand people for activities such as games, athletic and artistic competitions, and music events.²²² This theater appears to be the same as in Acts 19:21-41, which was used as a gathering place for the peoples' dispute against Paul and his disciples.

Purpose and Attributes of Ephesians

The epistle to the Ephesians focuses on the doctrine and duty of the believer in Jesus. Some scholars separate Ephesians into two sections: Doctrine: Chapters 1-3, and Duty: Chapters 4-6. However, Klyne Snodgrass rejects this separation. He states, "Although the second half of the letter focuses on ethics, Ephesians should not be halved into theological and ethical parts.

219. O'Connor, *St. Paul's Ephesus*, 131-32.

220. Beitzel, *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts Through Revelation*, 540-41.

221. Beitzel, *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts Through Revelation*, 540-41.

222. Beitzel, *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts Through Revelation*, 546.

The second half is also theological, and the first half is also ethical.”²²³ Paul emphasizes statements of Christian truth and unity and outlines how to “be strong in the Lord, and the strength of His might” (Eph 6:10) by putting on the whole armor of God in the Christian walk. Jesus conquered death and made an atonement for sin; a Christian must walk in and live out the Word within His cosmic rule. Ephesians emphasizes reconciliation between Jew and Gentile. Specifically, “Ephesians draws out the implications for how this reconciled humanity, the church comprising Jews and Gentiles, must understand its identity and function within God’s grand vision of cosmic peace and unity in Christ.”²²⁴

The relationship to Colossians is similar in that both letters address Jesus as Head of the church (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18); both address responsibilities of the church (Eph 5:22-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1) and both are outlined focusing on doctrine and practical application.²²⁵ However, there are differences in that Colossians emphasizes Christ’s role in the creation and reconciliation of the cosmos and humanity to God. Carson also points out that “Ephesians draws out the implications for how this reconciled humanity, the church comprising Jews and Gentiles, must understand its identity and function within God’s grand vision of cosmic peace and unity in Christ.”²²⁶ Ephesians also underscores the blessings shared in the unity of Christ Jesus.

Missler suggests that the book of Joshua parallels Ephesians in that Israel “entered into the possession of their promised inheritance, and the believers are called upon to enter by faith

223. Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 30.

224. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Commentary*, 2113.

225. Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*. 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003), 438.

226. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Commentary*, 2113.

now into the possession of their promised inheritance.”²²⁷ The predominant themes in Ephesians are unity, the cosmic Jesus, the church, and the Trinity. Paul emphasizes the unity of the church, which can be seen in 1:1 as Paul addresses the “saints,” those who are “faithful,” and those who are “in Christ Jesus.” Through Jesus, those who put their faith in Him were set apart to be God’s people of the New Covenant.

Those in Jesus are purchased with His Blood and redeemed from spiritual death, a reconciliation to God and each other. Ephesians 2:1-10 emphasizes Jesus’s finished work on the cross as the vertical reconciliation to God, forming the horizontal reconciliation between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:11-22, 3:1-13).²²⁸ In this reconciliation, Ephesians 3:10-11 clarifies the church’s duty and function, proclaiming God’s cosmic plan, “in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:10-11).

Chapters 4-6 encourage the church to walk in the faith “in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (4:1). This demands of the church to be an imitator of God and to stand in unity against the enemy as Paul later emphasizes, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). In the calling of the church within Jesus’s cosmic reconciliation, Paul fleshes out God’s cosmic plan that unites all things in Jesus. Paul calls all of God’s chosen people to live in oneness in Jesus as He brings all of history to completion (Eph 1:10). Ephesians 1:20-23 provides further depth as to

227. Missler, *The Book of Ephesians: Commentary Handbook*, 8.

228. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Commentary*, 2114.

Jesus's kingship, His place at the right hand of God, and having "authority and power and dominion" over all things.

Jesus is clarified in 1 Thessalonians 2:19 as the only hope and joy, and the One who will come again in power and glory (Matt 24:3, 24:27; Acts 1:11) to crush His enemies (2 Thess 2:8), and to gather His redeemed (Matt 24:31, 37, 39; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1; Jas 5:7, 8). The word "*parousia*" (παρουσία) is a noun, dative, singular, feminine word that is translated as "coming," "presence," or "arrival," and denotes a "visit of a Ruler" or the "coming of Yahweh as world king."²²⁹ The central feature of this meaning clarifies the physical return of Jesus to crush His enemies and to gather His redeemed.

The church is a dominant focus in Ephesians, as Paul refers to the church as a "Body" (Paul 5:23), a "Temple" (Paul 2:20-22), a "Commonwealth" (Paul 2:11-22), a "Household" (Paul 1:17, 2:18, 3:14, 4:6, 5:20, 6:23), and a "Bride" (Paul 5:23-32). The church is the body of Jesus, a temple with Jesus as the cornerstone, a commonwealth that embodies the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile, a household unit in which God is the Father, and as the bride of Jesus whom He sanctifies for Himself.²³⁰

Additionally, Ephesians includes suggestive language that points to the Trinity, evidenced in Ephesians 2:18. Although the Trinity is not plainly stated in Scripture, Ephesians uses expressive language that illuminates the collective works of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17, 2:18, 3:14-17, 5:18-20). Using Paul as a witness, Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering affirm that "It is clear that for Paul (and here I am including all the

229. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "Parousia" (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964), Logos Bible Software, <https://ref.ly/logosres/tdnt?ref=GreekStrong.3918&off=930>.

230. Carson, *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Commentary*, 2115.

Pauline letters) the Christian life can be understood only in terms of the Father, Son, and Spirit.”²³¹ Emery and Levering argue that throughout Paul’s letters, he “accents the work of just one person (Father, Son, or Spirit), and other times he includes all three.”²³² Another example is seen in the doxology of 2 Corinthians, which states “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14).

Ephesians 4 also contains trinitarian language and “constitutes the central mystery of Christian faith and should illumine the entirety of the Christian life.”²³³ Ephesians 4:3-6 reveals that the Trinity is the mystery of salvation that grounds Christian unity, “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” Emery and Levering emphasize that the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and the Father constitute the unity of God. “To embody unity in the life of the church is precisely to display the unity of the Spirit, Jesus the Lord, and God the Father.”²³⁴

Interestingly, the book of Ephesians can be called a sequel to Colossians that was written within the same timeframe, and sent by the same messenger, Tychicus (Eph 6:21, 22). F. F. Bruce suggests that Ephesians expounds on the “cosmic role of the church, the body of Christ, as Colossians expounds the cosmic role of Christ, who is head of his body, the church, and at the same time head of every principality and power”²³⁵ (Col 1:18, 2:10). Ephesians focuses on the

231. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of The Trinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 445.

232. Emery and Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of The Trinity*, 445.

233. Emery and Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of The Trinity*, 1.

234. Emery and Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of The Trinity*, 51.

235. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 241.

church while Colossians focuses on Christ; both are foundational texts and point the way to holiness and prudent Christian living.

According to Bruce, some scholars suggest that Paul wrote Ephesians for the purposes of providing Gentile churches “instruction on the meaning of their baptism.”²³⁶ Those in agreement with this perspective include N. A. Dahl and J. C. Kirby; Kirby expounds on this assertion by stating that “Ephesians has close connections with Jewish liturgical forms and also with Jewish and Christian traditions of Pentecost.”²³⁷ He claims that believers are to remember the importance of their baptism, “as at their baptism they had ‘put off the old man’ and ‘put on the new man,’ so they must continue to put off the one and put on the other.”²³⁸ Dahl postulates that Paul is reminding the churches of the “privileges and responsibilities of their baptism” which is celebrated at the “annual ceremony on the Feast of Pentecost, at which the covenant was renewed.”²³⁹ However, Kirby rejects this assertion by stating that the “letter of this nature would have been detailed in its instruction on worship and conduct, and that there is no proof in Acts that there ever was such a ceremony in the church at Jerusalem.”²⁴⁰ From Bruce’s perspective, the book of Ephesians is a logical sequel to Colossians, which “expounds the cosmic role of the church, the body of Christ, as Colossians expounds the cosmic role of Christ, who is head of his

236. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 243.

237. John C. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost: An Inquiry into the Structure and Purpose of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London, UK: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1968), 149.

238. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost*, 145, 159.

239. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost*, 143.

240. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost*, 143.

body, the church, and at the same time “head of every principality and power”” (Col 1:18; 2:10).²⁴¹

There is, however, an agreement amongst scholars that a concerted focus is placed on both Jewish and Gentile Christians to be obedient to the way of life becoming of their calling in Christ. F. F. Bruce succinctly articulates its purpose with “There is at least firm internal evidence that the letter was written to encourage Gentile Christians to appreciate the dignity of their calling, with its implication not only for their heavenly origin and destiny but also for their present conduct on earth, as those who were heirs of God, sealed with his Spirit.”²⁴²

Ephesians 6:10-18: Armor of God

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul outlines the believer’s action plan against Satan and his schemes. Barnhouse simplifies the human reality in this cosmic conflict by stressing that “from the human point of view, the conflict is seen on the level of our own experiences here in this life. The posing parties are the forces of evil and the body of Christ, the believers.”²⁴³ In this warzone, God’s armor is the only course of action and the battle can only be won by God’s strength, His might, His power, and His armor. Ephesians 6:10-18 states:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And

241. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 241.

242. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 245.

243. Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 233.

take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, with all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

This passage appeals to the reader to conduct oneself as worthy of her calling. Paul uses wartime language that demands intensive watching, praying, and application of the believer. He “pictures this appropriate Christian living in terms of a battle against cosmic spiritual powers in which believers must put on the armor which God supplies in order to withstand and prevail.”²⁴⁴ The believer is on enemy ground, engaged in a spiritual war with the prince of this world. The armor represents Jesus, and each piece of the whole armor represents an attribute of Him. Although Jesus defeated Satan at the cross (Col 2:15), Christians are called to put Him on in all circumstances and to “stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

Baugh provides an analogy between Joshua and Paul that contrasts the method of battle strategies used to conquer the enemy. “Joshua was under orders to launch a theocratic invasion from the captain of the Lord’s host with a drawn sword (Josh 5:13-15); Paul was under orders from the Prince of peace (Isa 9:6; Eph 2:14-17) and his only offensive weapon for conquest of the world was the glad tidings of peace (Eph 2:15) made effective through prayer in the Spirit (Eph 2:18-20).”²⁴⁵ Although both orders are contrasting in physical action, both require faith and obedience in the Lord for campaign success. Likewise, the believer’s order is to “put on the armor of God” and “pray at all times in the Spirit” (6:11), which requires the same kind of faith and obedience in the Lord.

244. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books Publishing, 1990), Eph 6:10-20, Logos Bible Software, <https://ref.ly/logosres/wbc42?ref=Bible.Eph6.10-20&off=5593>.

245. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 527.

Ephesians 6:10-18 are the spiritual battle commands to the cosmic warfare that is observed throughout the OT and NT. In Paul's letters, "it is plain that he believed evil powers to be at work on the cosmic level (Rom 8:38-39; Eph 6:10-18), in human society (1 Cor 2:6-8) and in individuals (Rom 6:17-18, 7:14-20; Eph 2:1-2)."²⁴⁶ Consequently, Apostle Paul, in his concluding set of orders, instructs the church to "put on this armor so that they might be able to fight against the schemes of the devil. Their battle is not a physical battle but a spiritual one, and they are to prepare themselves respectively."²⁴⁷ Consequently, the church must be able to arm itself against the "heavenly troops,"²⁴⁸ a scene that vividly portrays a believer in a battlefield with enemies on all sides.

Victor L. Budha reflects the reality of spiritual warfare from a "boots on the ground" perspective, "Referring to the parallels with African context, the letter to Ephesians, and specifically in its Chapter 6, is relevant to believers in Africa. While the issues of demonic attacks, witchcraft and any other practices calling to spiritual warfare are real, the theological context of Ephesians highlights the assurance of victory of Christ."²⁴⁹

246. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), s.v. "Exorcism," 211.

247. Stanley E. Porter, *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought, and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 404.

248. Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, s.v. "Enemy, Enmity, Hatred," 236.

249. Victor L. Budha, "Intercultural Criticism of Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10-20)." *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 3 (2022): 5.

Ephesians 6:10

John W. Stott suggests that tactical knowledge and a healthy respect for the adversary are essential requirements before engaging in battle.²⁵⁰ Likewise, the consequences are typically deadly when one underestimates or is ignorant of the enemy's strategies. Ephesians 6:10 ("Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might") clarifies that strength and power come from the Lord and success is futile when relying on one's own way. Paul prays for the believers to be "filled up to all the fulness of God," as through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit equips the believer for the battle. Paul provides depth to this surrender: "I urge you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:1-2).

I. Howard Marshall simplifies the point that it is God's armor alone that prevails; the believer is "engaged in a struggle with the opposing powers, and for this task, nothing less than God's power is adequate."²⁵¹ Through the darkness and wickedness of the world, the light of God calls the believer to remain strong, persevere, and to be an overcomer through Him. In Ephesians 6:10, Paul prepares the believer for the spiritual battle during "this present evil age" (Gal 1:4). Arnold employs an interesting perspective, which places Ephesians 10-18 in the "context of an expectation of the end-time."²⁵² Through Paul's usage of military terminology,

250. John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979), 263.

251. I. Howard Marshall, *A Concise New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 152.

252. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 114.

Arnold suggests Ephesians 6:10-18 “has far-reaching implications for the understanding of the eschatology of the epistle.”²⁵³ From this perspective, Paul is encouraging the believer to be awake and know that the “day of the Lord” is fast approaching. Romans 13:11-12 is similar to Ephesians 6:10-18 in that an urgency is inherent within the passage, “And this do, knowing the time, that is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom 13:11-12). With a sense of urgency, God calls the believer to put away the darkness of the world and put on the armor of God, which is Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 6:11

Ephesians 6:11 states, “Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” This passage is referenced in Isaiah 11:4-5, 59:16-17; Romans 13:12-14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 6:13; and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. This passage speaks of Satan as the principal enemy; thus, the believer must put on the protective armor by putting on Christ. “What other ‘whole armor of God’ can one conceive to be meant, which one who will resist ‘the wiles of the devil’ must put on, than the virtue which is Christ?”²⁵⁴

Baugh equates a believer’s warfare to a “wrestling match” (6:12) and emphasizes that “Christians are not engaged in a theocratic conquest of the world for geopolitical dominance but in a spiritual fight for its existence (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).”²⁵⁵ Likewise, Paul is referring to

253. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 114.

254. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 529.

255. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 542.

putting on the whole armor in terms of “putting on the new self” (4:24), “be imitators of God, as beloved children” (5:1), and putting on the Messiah Himself, battling the evil one with His strength and might. Essentially, putting on the armor requires the believer to embrace one’s identity in Jesus, live consistently in His identity, and use His spiritual resources in battle.

Putting on the armor of God is a change in lifestyle, focus, priority, and a cultivation of one’s identity in Christ. Arnold mentions that there has been a dispute “over whether the armor is God’s own armor that he himself wears as the Divine Warrior (possessive genitive) or whether he is to be seen as the one who furnishes the armor (genitive of source).”²⁵⁶ He clarifies that God provides the “power and strength believers need to stand against the enemy” and uses Psalms 68:18 as his resource.²⁵⁷

Ephesians 6:12

Ephesians 6:12 states, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Paul explains that the cosmic warfare is spiritual, not carnal, and Satan and his army are behind the wickedness that permeates the world.

Second Corinthians 10:4 provides further depth to this statement, namely that: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.” Paul speaks of Satan’s army, which appears to be ranks of fallen angels and demons.²⁵⁸ Satan is the prince of his army, which consists of wicked spirits (Luke 11:18), ranked

256. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

257. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

258. Missler, *The Book of Ephesians*, 99.

similarly to that of a military unit, with the higher-ranking principalities ruling world powers and nations, and the lower-ranking demons responsible for individual instances of combat, manifested in disease, disabilities, and insanity by possession (Mark 1:34, 3:22, 5:1-20). The word “rulers” or “ἄρχή” (*arkhé, árchai*) is a “noun, accusative, feminine,” which has a meaning of “prince, primacy, in rank in power, or dominion.”²⁵⁹

The word “*archon*” can refer to the devil as articulated in Matthew 12:23-24: “And all the multitudes were amazed, and began to say, this man cannot be the Son of David, can he?” But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, this man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons” (e.g., John 12:31; Eph 2:2). The word “authority” or “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*) is also a noun, accusative, feminine,” which has a meaning of “power, ability, dominion, jurisdiction, privilege, prerogative, or ruler.”²⁶⁰ The word “*exousia*” is used by Christ Jesus in Mark 2:10-11 “But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralytic, I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.” However, the word can also refer to Satan: “And the devil said to Him, I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish” (Luke 4:6).

Similarly, the word “world rulers or forces” or “κοσμοκράτωρ” (*kosmokrátor, kosmokrátoreς*) is a “noun, accusative, masculine” word that has a meaning of “rulers of the heavenly spheres, then as the rulers of the universe who also ordain the destinies of men.”²⁶¹ According to Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, principalities and powers referred to in

259. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “Rulers” (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing 1964), Logos Bible Software, <https://ref.ly/logosres/tdnt?ref=GreekStrongs.746>.

260. Longman and Strauss, *The Baker Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, s.v. “Authorities,” 76.

261. Kittel and Friedrich, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “Forces,” Logos Bible Software.

Ephesians 6:12 are “cosmic intelligence, occasionally angelic but usually demonic ... and is it is not possible based on New Testament evidence to rank these spirit powers or attribute distinctive meanings to each.”²⁶²

Kittel and Friedrich agree with Walter and Elwell in avoiding placing a hierarchy to the words “ruler, powers, world forces, principalities, and spiritual forces,” as they posit:

There are interposed between the ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι not only the πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις but also the κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους τούτου. In this list, we do not have different groups but more or less synonymous designations of the forces of the devil with which believers have to contend. These forces are called rulers of the world in order to bring out the terrifying power of their influence and comprehensiveness of their plans and thus to emphasize the seriousness of the situation.²⁶³

William Gurnall wrote *The Christian in Complete Armour* (1699), which takes a different approach on the subject of rankings of the demonic in Ephesians 6:12. Gurnall suggests that all are spirits and all are wicked; thus, this commonality can be assumed as such:

First, then, the devil or whole pack of them are here described by their government in this world, “principalities.” Second, by their strength and puissance, called “powers.” Third, in their kingdom or proper territories, “rulers of the darkness of this world.” Fourth, by their nature in its substance and degeneracy, “spiritual wickednesses.” Fifth, by the ground of the war, “heavenly places, or about heavenly things.”²⁶⁴

This perspective focuses on the depth and breadth of the cosmic conflict and to the extent of its condition.

Early Christian views on demonology reveal a distinction with the evil spirit “demon” and trace these spirits back to Genesis 6:1-4. Justin Martyr suggests Genesis 6:2 produced the

262. Treier and Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary Theology*, s.v. “Principalities and Powers,” 698.

263. Kittel and Friedrich, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “Ruler, Powers, World Forces, Principalities, and Spiritual Forces,” Logos Bible Software: <https://ref.ly/logosres/tdnt?art=let.a.230>.

264. William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* [1699] (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2020), 130.

hybrid Nephilim as described in Genesis 6:4, consequently subduing the human race to wickedness “continually.” Justin’s view on the origin of the demons comes from Jewish pseudo epigraphical literature, most likely during the intertestamental period.²⁶⁵ Ferguson states that other early authors such as Origen, a third-century scholar and philosopher from Alexandria, pointed to 1 Enoch as the source but contends “He was not sure of the meaning of Genesis 6:2 but referred to the interpretation of the story as an allegory about souls desiring corporal existence.”²⁶⁶ Ferguson contends that based on the writings of these early authors, the disembodied Nephilim of the Flood and the demons articulated in the NT are one and the same.²⁶⁷ As an example:

Justin explains that the angels transgressed and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons, and besides, they afterward subdued the human race to themselves, partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and the punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they were enslaved by lustful passions; and among men, they sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds, and all wickedness.²⁶⁸

This statement refers to the Genesis 6:1-4 event before the Flood, which may partly explain Genesis 6:5-6: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

265. Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 107.

266. Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, 107.

267. Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, 107.

268. Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, 107, Demonstrated in reference to Irenaeus, by D. R. Schultz, “The Origin of Sin in Irenaeus and Jewish Pseudepigraphical Literature,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 32, no. 3 (1978): 161-90.

Likewise, D. R. Schultz articulates that Irenaeus focuses on two aspects for the defilement of humanity: the (1) “unlawful unions of angels with offspring from the daughters of men,” and (2) producing of the “giants upon the earth which cause man’s sinfulness.”²⁶⁹ The book of Jubilees indicates that other authors in early Jewish Literature held same or similar views regarding the beginnings of the Nephilim or giants. This selection of literature states “And he testified to the Watchers, who had sinned with the daughters of men; for these had begun to unite themselves, so as to be defiled, with the daughters of men, and Enoch testified against them all.”²⁷⁰ The strength and persuasion of these passages undoubtedly highlights ancient Israel’s conviction as to the views of the time.

Ephesians 6:13

In Ephesians 6:13, the first instruction to the believer is to “take up the full armor of God” so that one can resist the schemes of Satan; the second instruction is to “stand firm.” The word “stand” or “στητε, stēte” is a “verb, aorist, active, infinitive,” which means “to endure, to face and withstand with courage.”²⁷¹ Paul emphasizes to the believer to stand firm against the pressures of the “evil day” using the armor of God. Baugh emphasizes, “Paul portrays the church as soldiers in a battle line holding forth against the enemy’s vicious onslaught in the evil day of war and threatened disaster (Ps 37:19, 41:1, 49:5; Jer 17:17-18).”²⁷² In this verse, Paul

269. Schultz, “The Origin of Sin in Irenaeus and Jewish Pseudepigraphical Literature,” 175.

270. R. H. Charles, trans. *The Apocrypha: Includes the Books of Enoch, Jasher, and Jubilees*. Vol. 1. *The Researchers Library of Ancient Texts* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2011), 284.

271. Kittel and Friedrich, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “Stand,” Logos Bible Software. <https://ref.ly/logosres/tdnt?art=let.s.61>.

272. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 547.

emphasizes that the enemy has been identified and the battle plan is the Lord's strength and armor.

Using a soldier's armor as a parallel, Paul presents six pieces of armor, each representing an attribute of Christ Jesus that the believer must have on at all times: (1) Truth: belt or to "gird one's loins;" (2) Righteousness: a breastplate; (3) Gospel of Peace: shoes or to "shod one's feet;" (4) Faith: shield; (5) Salvation: helmet; and (6) Word of God: sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:14-17). Using an analogy, Gurnall stresses the importance of having the whole armor of God on at all times: "In this armor, we are to stand and watch, and never relax our vigilance, for the saint's sleeping time is Satan's tempting time; every fly dares venture to creep on a sleeping lion."²⁷³ Moreover, Gundry articulates the importance of having a healthy distinction between spiritual and human and underscores the point made by Paul in Ephesians 6:12, which focuses on the "moral darkness brought on by the influence of these cosmic forces on human beings."²⁷⁴

Ephesians 6:14

The first two armor pieces are the Belt of Truth and the Breastplate of Righteousness. Ephesians 6:14 says, "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." The belt is typically used to tighten loose clothing worn in preparation for strenuous activity or labor, and the Roman soldiers used the strap to secure their weapons for battle (Job 38:3, 40:7; 1 Pet 1:13).²⁷⁵ Paul instructs the believer to strap on the belt of Truth only found in Jesus, as Truth is the belt for the believer (Eph 4:21). A supporting

273. Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, 67.

274. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 778.

275. Logos Bible Software, *The Lexham English Bible Commentary: Factbook*, <https://ref.ly/logos4/Factbook?ref=bk.%25belt>.

passage is found in Isaiah 11:5, when the prophet speaks of the Messianic Kingdom where His “righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist.” The Victor Jesus has won the battle and His truth has been revealed through the gospel. As Snodgrass posits, “to belt on truth means to be strengthened by God’s truth in the gospel and to resolve to live the truth.”²⁷⁶

The breastplate on a soldier’s armor protects the heart and vital organs in battle. The word “breastplate” is used allegorically in Ephesians 6:14 and Isaiah: “And He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head, and he put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle” (Isa 59:17). Jesus is the believer’s “Breastplate of Righteousness” and “no spiritual protection is greater than a righteous relationship with God.”²⁷⁷

For the believer, behaviors should reflect an intimate relationship with God; Romans 6:13 clarifies this precept: “And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (e.g., Isa 59:17; Rom 14:17; Jas 4:7). In this passage, Paul emphasizes the believer is to live out Jesus’s righteousness through one’s relationship with Him and then for others. From this perspective, the metal breastplate stands for righteousness, “which here means behavior consistent with the gospel’s truth and contrary to the bad behavior fostered by false doctrines.”²⁷⁸

276. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 342.

277. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 278.

278. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 779.

Ephesians 6:15

In Ephesians 6:15, the next piece of armor is the shoes. “And having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.” The shoes depict having readiness and preparation and a firm footing in the Gospel of Peace. Jesus is the believer’s good news of salvation and He is the believer’s peace in a world of chaos and wickedness. So likewise, the believer must continually be prepared to share the “Gospel of Peace” with others (Isa 52:7). Amid cosmic warfare, the believer must have a firm footing in Jesus as a defense when the enemy attacks. The Roman soldiers wore sandals that dug into the ground, which assisted the soldiers to counter an enemy’s attack.²⁷⁹ From this perspective, “Paul makes these sandals symbolize the gospel of peace, which prepares us to stand against the Devil’s doctrinal-behavioral onslaught by standing in that gospel.”²⁸⁰

Ephesians 6:16

The fourth piece of a warrior’s armor is the shield: “In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one” (Eph 6:16). The shield is the most comprehensive part of the armor because it protects the warrior in battle and for a believer, it guards against false doctrines. The “Shield of Faith” is the Lord Himself, who protects the believer from Satan’s fiery darts. “As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him” (Ps 18:30). Missler describes the typical Roman shield as “four feet by two and one-half feet, overlaid with linen and

279. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 779.

280. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 779.

leather, to absorb fiery arrows. The integrity of the shield was essential.”²⁸¹ The shield is also reflective of the imagery of Psalm 91.

Jesus is the shield, but the “shield is composed of the believer’s solid faith in the battle.”²⁸² Lynn H. Cohick supports this statement on the criticality of a believer’s faith in Jesus, stating, “Without the shield, the soldier stands defenseless against the enemy, and it is only a matter of time before a second or third blow fells him. To drop the shield is to lose the battle. Thus, Paul enjoins believers to stand fast and to keep hold of their shields.”²⁸³ The shield represents having faith in Jesus; thus, the believer is instructed to exercise the gift of faith God has given freely to prevent enemy weapons from their destructive effects (Eph 3:17).

Ephesians 6:17

The last two pieces of armor include the “Helmet of Salvation” and the “Sword of the Spirit,” both having eternal consequences. The passage reads, “And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). The helmet represents a believer’s deliverance and the hope of salvation in Jesus (Isa 59:17). Isaiah 61:10 elaborates the idea of God’s deliverance and protection for His people, “I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

281. Missler, *Ephesians*, 101.

282. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 552-53.

283. Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 421.

Believers are to put on the hope or helmet of salvation through Jesus (Rom 8:31-39; 1 Thess 5:8), as Paul emphasizes that God's power is available for those who put their trust and faith in Jesus for their struggles with demonic forces. Clinton E. Arnold postulates that "putting on 'Salvation' thus means to realize and appropriate one's new identity in Christ, which gives believers power for deliverance from the supernatural enemies on the basis of their union with the resurrected and exalted Lord."²⁸⁴ The believer's salvation gives confidence in one's safety against Satan's fiery darts.

The "Sword of the Spirit" is the Word of God, which is a reference to John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the word was God." In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus exemplifies the employment of the Word of God on three occasions, with the Word as the only offensive weapon Paul addresses to the believer (Eph 6:17). Thus, the saving power of the Word is the defense against the enemy of a Christian's spirit. In the NT, the word "sword" is used twenty-nine times, three times by Paul (Rom 8:35, 13:4; Eph 6:17) and is the "offensive empowerment by the Holy Spirit necessary in a spiritual battle (Eph 6:12)."²⁸⁵ Hoehner emphasizes that "although this is the only offensive weapon listed among the pieces of the armor, in the present context it is not used to make advances but rather to enable the believer to stand firm in the midst of satanic warfare."²⁸⁶

284. Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 460.

285. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 851.

286. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 853.

Ephesians 6:18

Believers are to stand firm against the enemy's schemes through prayer; "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). Continuous prayer to God is foundational for every believer and is paramount for spiritual warfare. Stott emphasizes this point, "Thus Scripture and prayer belong together as the two chief weapons which the Spirit puts into our hands."²⁸⁷ The believer's utterance to God in prayer is the "cry to God on the occasion of assault."²⁸⁸ It is essential to trust in God through prayer and petition, as He has fully equipped the believer to stand firm against the evil one. Prayer and petition are mentioned four times, which indicates that Paul places a strong emphasis, thoroughness, and intensity on prayer.²⁸⁹

Paul exhorts the believer to pray at "all times in the Spirit" and with "all perseverance and petition for all the saints." This statement urges the believer to pray consistently, stay alert, and never weaken from one's position because the enemy does not sleep. In 1 Peter 5:8, the fervency, consistency, and persistence of prayer are stressed since the believer's "adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Tony Merida ascribes practical meaning to Ephesians 6:18 by emphasizing that believers must persist in prayer to "overcome fatigue, discouragement, and hardship, and for boldness in our witness."²⁹⁰

Furthermore, the believer can only use the armor effectively when God is in control, and because

287. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 283.

288. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 857.

289. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 859.

290. Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 183.

of the Holy Spirit's sustaining role in prayer, Paul encourages the believer to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17; Jude 20).

Examples of Faith in Action: Daniel 10 and 2 Kings

The book of Daniel presents itself within the confines of prophetic literature and is considered autobiographical with a "foundation of both wisdom-style instruction and of predictions."²⁹¹ Regarding the ANE parallels of prophetic literature, Walton emphasizes that "The prophetic literature of the Old Testament has no parallels in any genres or literatures of the ancient Near East."²⁹² As examples of faith in action while engaged in a cosmic conflict, putting on the armor of God is exemplified through the prophets Daniel and Elisha. The cosmic conflict can be seen throughout the OT and NT, and Daniel 10 provides a unique glimpse of the cosmic battle behind what is visible to the eyes and the armor required to stand firm:

Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia" (Dan 10:12-13).

Daniel is alerted to a cosmic battle in this scene and it is clear that the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" is engaged in this cosmic battle with an angel of the Lord, most likely Gabriel, known as the messenger of God. Michael, one of God's chief princes (Dan 10:13, 12:1), came to help Gabriel in this cosmic battle. Daniel 10:20-21 speaks of multiple princes with which the angel of the Lord battles, the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece. It is apparent that these princes

291. John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), 222.

292. John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 231.

continually engage in cosmic combat, and the inference in Daniel 10:12-14 and 10:20 suggests that the heavenly struggle between the angels impacts the nations of the earth.

Another glimpse of the armor of God in action within the cosmic conflict can be seen in 2 Kings 6:8-17 when the Arameans plot to capture Elisha. In summary, the king of Aram was fighting against Israel, and Elisha warned the king of Israel not to come to a particular place, thus saving Israel from defeat on more than one occasion. Consequently, the angry king of Aram sent his army to capture Elisha in the town of Dothan. When they arrived and surrounded the city, Elisha's servant informed Elisha of the situation and he prayed to God to open the eyes of the servant.

2 Kings 6 illuminates this cosmic conflict: "Then Elisha prayed and said, O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17). This invisible battlefield, although unseen initially, appeared before the servant's eyes so that he may be witness to the heavenly hosts prepared for battle. Interestingly, Jesus mentions this scene, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt 18:10). Elisha is prepared for the battle because of his armor in the Lord.

Summary

Ephesians emphasizes God's love for humanity and the power and sovereignty of God are a focus in the letter. Ephesians glorifies God through prayer and worship. The relationship between Gentiles and Jews within the church has been reconciled with the death and resurrection

of Jesus, and “this cosmic entity is the object of Christ’s love (Eph 5:25, 29).²⁹³ The unity of the church is paramount to both Jew and Gentile in worshipping One God, which is implicitly trinitarian—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and salvation is through faith in Jesus, the only way and hope for humanity. Ephesians 2:8-9 clarifies that the gift of salvation through faith is of God’s grace; it is a “gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

The armor of God is the believer’s protection, and Paul uses analogies of a Roman soldier’s armor to display God’s divine attributes in battle, which is Jesus’s truth of the gospel. Norman R. Gulley explains the church’s mission on earth: “Extend the body of Christ by reaching out to a fallen world with the gospel. In fulfilling this mission, the church defends Christ’s side of the cosmic controversy before the unfallen universe by demonstrating the redemptive power of Calvary.”²⁹⁴

A cosmic conflict continues to rage against humanity; its eventual prize are human souls. Although defeated, Satan is not yet destroyed in the spiritual battle; therefore, believers are called to oppose him and stand firm putting on the armor of Jesus (Rom 13:14, Eph 6:10-18). Parts representing Jesus’s armor include: (1) the belt of truth; (2) the body armor of God’s righteousness; (3) shoes with the Gospel of Peace; (4) the shield of faith; (5) the helmet of salvation; (6) the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God; and (7) praying at all times (Eph 6:10-18) and thanking Him for all he has done (Phil 4:6). The cosmic warfare that began in Genesis 3:15 is still raging today. However, God’s armor is the only strategic and tactical plan that promises that one “may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11).

293. Marshall, *A Concise New Testament Theology*, 151.

294. Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: The Church and the Last Things* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016), 116.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

God's desire is to have a relationship with His creation, whom He made in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26), however, this relationship was severed by Adam and Eve's consequential act of disobedience (Gen 3:1-13). It is in this moment that God declared a cosmic war against the Serpent and set forth a course of action to redeem His creation. Throughout biblical history, God chose individuals and a nation called Israel to "enter into kinship bonds by covenant oath."²⁹⁵ Each covenant God made with Israel, was in part, a forward step in "the primacy of grace in God's providential plan for the redemption of His people."²⁹⁶ God progressively and expressly revealed His plan over time to bring His purposes to fruition, climaxing with the birth, death, and resurrection of the "seed of the woman," Messiah Jesus.

The Adamic Covenant birthed the first mention of the gospel, pointing to the Redeemer for His fallen creation, while the Noahic Covenant pushes forward God's redemptive plan by providing glimpses of new beginnings and introduces grace in a salvific relationship between God and His creation. In the Noahic Covenant, God restores divine order with a visible promise that He will "never again destroy every living thing, as I have done" (Gen 8:21). God once again directs Noah to fulfill the task given by God as was in the beginning (Gen 1:28). When God makes a covenant with Abraham, He again advances His master plan by articulating promises, both physical and spiritual, and having eternal consequences for both Jew and Gentile. It is in this covenant that blessings are extended to the Gentile nations.

295. Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises*, 48.

296. Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises*, xiii.

The Mosaic Covenant provides the Law thus spreading the message of a future salvation to all the nations. This covenant advances the Promise in and through Abraham's descendants and reveals that the Law was unattainable and thus would require one to hope for the establishment of a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34). God advances His plan with the Davidic Covenant and with an unconditional promise to David that "establishes the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13). Specifically, in this covenant and through the Davidic line, God reveals the lineage of the Messiah Who will reign as the eternal King and Savior. Further, the promise of a blessing made to all the nations in the Abrahamic Covenant becomes the cornerstone of the Davidic promise.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 provides the message of hope, a better covenant, one that writes God's Laws on the hearts of men. As the culmination to all of God's covenants with Israel, the New Covenant is revealed in the person of Messiah Jesus, as the living Promise brought forth from Genesis 3:15. Messiah alone brings salvation to all who put one's faith and trust in Him. The whole of the Bible and its administrations point to a lasting covenant ratified in the birth, death, and resurrection of Messiah Jesus. The New Covenant also signifies God's payment in full as an atonement for the sins of humanity, and will come again to fulfill the physical promises made with future Israel. Further, the New Covenant serves as a vindication of God's honor and glory as Barnhouse rightly states, "The vindication of the divine righteousness and holiness far transcends any human interests in the great conflict."²⁹⁷ Barnhouse further emphasizes that:

The redemptive work of Christ is applicable to us because God was using it to nullify the law that was against us; in so doing He revealed to the universe that Satan is in reality a mere boastful pretender; on the basis of the righteousness manifested by Christ in the manner in which He proceeded to the cross, our Lord was able to strip Satan of all his pretensions; and He gave to us, the believers, all the powers and offices which had once

297. Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War: The Panorama of the Continuing Conflict Between Good and Evil*, 213.

been given to Satan or which had been usurped by him. In doing these four things, God revealed the method of the operation of His holiness.²⁹⁸

Although the cosmic war has been won through Messiah Jesus, God strengthens His people while on earth by providing the armor of God as written in Ephesians 6:10-18. The Christian life is a battle ground but God has given His people tools to “stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). The armor of God consisting of His “Truth (Eph 6:14),” “Righteousness (Eph 6:14),” “Gospel of Peace (Eph 6:15),” “Faith (Eph 6:16),” “Salvation (Eph 6:17),” “Word of God (Eph 6:17),” and “Prayer (Eph 6:18),” encourages the believer to “be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might” (Eph 6:10). It is in God alone that the believer is able to persevere and overcome Satan’s tactics.

These tactics come in many forms and the believer through the Holy Spirit, will need to remain diligent in words and actions as to what can be accepted and followed as biblical truth. Acts 17:11 speaks of this prudence, “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.” An area of concern in contemporary times is the relationship between the Church and the biblical covenants God made with Israel. To reiterate the literal interpretation of the Bible, the New Covenant was made with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jer 31:31-34), as the Church was non-existent at this point in Scripture. However, those Gentiles who believed in God’s own Son, Messiah Jesus as Lord and Savior of the world, will partake in the spiritual blessings as outlined in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3). Additionally, to emphasize the timeline of things, the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant did not come to fruition until Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47).

298. Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War: The Panorama of the Continuing Conflict Between Good and Evil*, 214.

The cosmic conflict continues to infiltrate all areas of contemporary life and biblical interpretation and application are certainly not exempt from this war. Case in point, those in the dispensational camp understand the Church and Israel to be two distinct and separate groups with Israel having future unique privileges, benefits, and promises, as outlined in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, aspects which are yet to be fulfilled. However, covenant theologians and others suggest to spiritualize or allegorize aspects of God's promises made to Abraham, as an example, the Land promise, as outlined in Genesis 15 and Genesis 17. Prominently, the Islamic countries surrounding Israel also challenge the same Abrahamic Covenant and deny Israel's right to their Land. Interestingly, the current battles and blood shed over this land accentuates this point.

Further, many Christians today are being taught in the church buildings that the role of Israel now belongs to the Church and deny Israel and God's promises made to David; the promise that confirms his descendant will sit on a physical throne to rule from Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Romans 11:25-29 clarifies God's administration of Israel and its placement within God's master plan. Explicitly, the New Covenant is the promise of Israel's ultimate destiny as the people of God, as outlined in Jeremiah 31:31-34. So not to overlook the totality of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, the Israelites are not occupying the land, the land "from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen 15:18-21), they own it as an everlasting possession (Gen 17:7-8). Further, a descendant of David, Messiah Jesus, will physically sit on the Throne in Jerusalem, according to biblical Scriptures, (Genesis 15:18-21). Rejecting Israel's right to their existence and promoting a satanic movement towards global antisemitism is again Satan's ancient antichrist spirit that is prevalent in all areas within society today. Although this "Old Serpent" continues his ancient campaign to destroy the Israelites and

to prevent God's future promises with Israel, it will all be in vain. Steadfastly, God's promises to the "house of Israel and with the house of Judah" will come to fruition.

In sum, the cosmic conflict realized in Genesis 3:15 can be observed throughout the Old and New Testaments and the finality of God's judgments will be realized in Revelation 20, with the second coming of the Messiah Jesus and the judgment at the Throne of God. Although Satan attempted to contaminate the gene pool of humanity multiple times, used genocide against the Israelites as a common battle strategy, pulled the hearts of the Israelites away from God throughout Israel's history, and poisoned the surrounding nations against His people, God was faithful then as He is today. God and His sovereignty, His providence, and His omniscience, will again take center stage when He comes again in Revelation 20 to eternally destroy Satan and sin, and when He brings forth a new Heaven and Earth and the New Jerusalem.

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