**Israel**

The Old Testament is a big part of our Bibles.

It’s the first part of our Bibles. And it’s the biggest part. It’s something like 77 percent of our Bible. It’s not just half our Bibles, it’s three quarters.

It’s the biggest part of our Bible, and I think for some people, it’s also, the most confusing part of their Bible. They pick it up. They start to read. And a few minutes later, they put it down and say, “What is going on in the Old Testament?”

In fact, I once heard someone describe the attitude some people have toward the Old Testament as being a little like the attitude someone might have towards a crazy uncle. You know the relative that comes over? The crazy uncle. You love him because he’s your uncle.And sometimes he’s pretty normal and you have good conversations with him, but other times, he seems really strange and you don’t understand him. And that’s, probably, how some people feel about the Old Testament.

Ok. It’s there. And they know they are supposed to love it. It’s the Bible. And there are parts they like, like the Psalms and Proverbs, but there, are also, lots of parts they don’t understand, and, so they try to stay away from.

Which ends up being a problem. A real problem.

It’s a problem, if we don’t understand the Old Testament. At least, if we don’t understand the basic idea of the Old Testament. Because, the Old Testament ultimately was written to help us understand Jesus.

In John 5, Jesus is talking to a group of people who are rejecting Him. And He’s saying, it doesn’t make sense that you are rejecting me.

Why? Read John 5:39,40. What were these people doing? And why did that make rejecting Jesus so foolish?

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Later Jesus says, you know what, when you stand before God, it’s not going to be me that accuses you, it’s going to be Moses. Why? Because, Moses wrote of me. According to Jesus, Moses wrote to help us understand Jesus, which means that the Old Testament is not just the first part of our Bible, and it’s not just the biggest part of our Bible, the Old Testament is an important part of our Bible.

If we fail to understand the basic idea of the Old Testament we are going to fail to understand Jesus, which is why we are working so hard at trying to understand what the Old Testament is basically about. And we started, you remember, by saying, we need to see the Old Testament as a story, and we’ve been spending most of our time looking at two key words, which can help us understand what the story is about .

The first word is kingdom. And we picked this word because when Jesus talked about the Old Testament, this was one of his favorite things to talk about, and since, he’s the one who wrote it, I think we are safe in saying, the Old Testament is a story about the kingdom of God which is pictured for us first, where?

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When you open up your Bible, you find it opens with a picture of the kingdom of God. Before anything bad enters into the world, you get a small glimpse of the world as it should be. And it’s good. Very good. And specifically, we saw, that God’s good plan was to rule this world through a chosen human representative.

And yet, of course, we know after creating and designing this good world, and making a special place to meet with man, God gave him a test, putting him in the Garden of Eden, to watch over it, to protect it, and, basically asking him, will you trust me, that I know what’s best, and rule this world, on my behalf, relying on what I say is good?

And, of course, man said, no, actually I won’t. Instead of submitting to God’s authority, he aligned himself with Satan and the result was that, he brought a curse on the world.

And from that point on there were problems.Problems in our relationship with one another. Problems in our relationship with God. Problems in our relationship with pretty much, everything.

It’s like the picture of the Kingdom has now been shattered into a million little pieces. As, Adam in the Garden, listened and submitted to Satan’s advice, he was stripped of his ability to rule this world properly as God’s representative and to bring the world into submission the way God designed. And in a sense, He handed over his privileged position of authority, to Satan, who is now, exercising a kind of rule in this world, that he clearly shouldn’t. I think that’s why he’s called, the god of this world, in the New Testament.

Which caused us, you remember, to ask a question. And I think the Old Testament is wanting you to ask a question.

It’s going to be hard to understand all the stories we are going to read in the Old Testament, unless you are asking this question. And the question is whether or not, man’s rebellion at the beginning meant, God was finished with his plan to rule over the world through a chosen human representative, with His plan to establish His Kingdom on earth.

And the answer, we find very quickly, most definitely, is that He’s not. That’s part of why, we have such a long Bible. It’s because God’s not finished.

God will rule this world through a chosen human representative, and there are lots of places the Bible makes that clear, but one place is in the great promise, we find, almost right away in Genesis 3.

There’s a plan. Genesis 1 and 2. There’s a problem. Genesis 3. And there’s a promise. And that promise is found in what passage exactly?

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It’s important you know that, because that promise is foundational, which is why, we keep coming back to it. It’s key. God declares, essentially, that, one of Eve’s descendants is going to defeat Satan once and for all. And the picture He gives us is of a man crushing the head of the serpent, as the serpent is biting his heel, so the picture, is of a great, victory, through suffering, and.

I suppose because Satan tried to use man to overthrow God’s plan, the Bible begins with God’s promise to use man, to conquer Satan. But the question of course, is how?

It becomes obvious very quickly, that man is really, really broken, and in fact, is completely committed to pursuing the opposite of God’s kingdom plan. Man’s committed to an anti-kingdom agenda.

Turn to Genesis 6:5. What does God see about man’s heart in this verse?

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In just the first few chapters of the Bible, it gets so bad, that God starts all over again, with Noah, and yet, even after starting all over again with Noah, it’s not long until things get so bad again, that the whole world has gathered together, to build a city, dedicated to say one thing: “God, we don’t want you to be our king.”

And that of course is the Tower of Babel, where all of humanity gathers to say the same thing Adam did: “We want to be god and we want to define good and evil for ourselves.”

And looking at man’s rebellion there, you might wonder, whether, God’s going to continue to show mercy, and if He is going to show mercy, and establish His kingdom, the way we hope, you are definitely wondering how, he can do that, and one way the Old Testament answers, how God is going to establish His kingdom.

Is through a series of things, we call covenants. And this is key word number two.

The Old Testament is a story about this kingdom, and it tells the story of God establishing this kingdom through something we call covenants which basically is like a promise. But it’s more intense. I guess, you might imagine a contract, but even that word falls short. Technically you could say, it’s a formal agreement between two parties, but that sounds so impersonal, and this is anything but. A picture, you might have, is of marriage, a marriage is a covenant, it’s like a serious oath, and, in the Bible, it’s God making this serious oath, to do something for us. And as we read the Old Testament, there are five of these really important covenants, God makes.

These five covenants, are like pictures, of exactly, how God’s going to fix, what man’s broken. That’s how I want you to think of them, as pictures. Throughout the Bible, God gives a series of pictures in which he’s slowly but surely, helping us understand, better how He’s going to keep the promise, He made to defeat Satan, and make this whole world, into what He originally designed. As you you look back at Satan being defeated and man once again serving as God’s representative and ruling this world, and bringing it, into submission, and enjoying perfect fellowship with God, you are like, how’s that going to happen? And, one way God answers is slowly but surely, through these covenants where it’s almost like God’s pulling pictures out of His pocket, to show you how and with each picture making it more clear.

And the first picture was the commitment he made to:

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What did God promise them?

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In picture number one, which we call, the Noahic covenant God, assures, us, that He’s going to achieve the Promised victory, on the earth, as it exists right now which is a promise, we need, because man, is really, really wicked.

He’s so wicked that once God started everything over with Noah. Man did the same thing he did at the beginning, and yet, the good news is, that so does God. God responded to man’s rebellion in Genesis 11, pretty much the same way He responded to Adam’s in Genesis 3. By making another promise. By pulling out another picture, to make his great rescue plan, more clear.

And the next covenant commitment God makes is to an old man named Abraham.

Where is this covenant made first?

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What do we call this covenant?

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We know what’s going to happen because of Genesis 3. Satan is going to be defeated. And we picture a man stepping on the head of a serpent. And we know where it is going to happen because of Genesis 6. It’s going to happen on the earth. And picture, a rainbow in the sky. And, then we get a clearer picture how, because of Genesis 12.

The Abrahamic covenant, gives us, a clearer understanding of God’s strategy for saving people, and restoring all things.

He tells Abraham it’s going to involve him having children. And those children becoming a nation and them, being given land from which, they ultimately, will defeat their enemies. And it’s from the offspring of Abraham, that God says, He will accomplish His purpose, of bringing His blessing, to the entire world.

“In you.” Genesis 12, verse 3. God says.“All the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

And that’s so important, because, almost, the whole rest of the Old Testament, is going to be about those children, actually. We call those children, the nation of Israel. And I know that sometimes all this talk about the nation of Israel, seems so distant, and confusing, and boring, and yet the reason for the nation of Israel and the reason for this promise of land is bigger than the nation of Israel. It has to do with God’s plan for defeating Satan and reclaiming human dominion over the world.

That’s why Genesis 12 and the promise about Israel comes after Genesis 1-11, which is all about the world. It’s what makes Genesis 12 verse 2 and 3 so significant. God’s saying through Abraham’s offspring He is going to reverse the curse.

The blessing He’s talking about with Abraham goes all the way back to the beginning. We’re talking Garden of Eden type stuff. But better. The kingdom of God. We’re talking,

God ruling this earth, through a chosen human representative, and making this world, the whole thing, like a Garden of Eden, and so, obviously, as we start reading about Abraham’s offspring, Israel, knowing their purpose, we’ve got to be, wondering how exactly is God going to do that through them? How could they, possibly be used, to reverse the curse?

And at first, I guess, the answer seems pretty clear. If you fast-forward from Genesis, to Exodus, we come to the next big part of the story.

Creation. Fall. Gospel Promise. Commitment to the world. Promise to Abraham.

Now Exodus! where God rescues Abram’s descendants from slavery in Egypt.

And, the Exodus, is so dramatic, you know the story, I am sure, but you remember, what God said in Genesis 3:15 about this war between the offspring of Satan and the offspring of Eve?

And Israel in Egypt represents the offspring of Eve. Genesis has made that clear.

And the leader of Egypt, Pharaoh is acting like the offspring of Satan, and at the beginning of Exodus, he is waging absolute, war on, God’s people as he, literally, attempts to kill them off.

What does Exodus 1:7 say is happening to the people of Israel?

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How does Pharaoh respond in Exodus 1:16?

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Why is Pharaoh doing this?

For the same reason Cain killed Abel, I think. Satan, knows God’s plan, to defeat him through a descendant of Eve, and so what do you think Satan is going to inspire his followers to do? Attack, and try to murder, the descendants, of Eve, before they are able to fulfill God’s promise. And to a certain extent, at the beginning of Exodus, it looks like Satan’s winning.

In fact, there’s a really interesting link, if you go back to the story of the Tower of Babel.

If you are reading the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, the writer seems to give you this random piece of information about how they were building the Tower. He says in Genesis 11:3. “They said to one another, ‘Come let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.” And you are like, that’s interesting, I guess, they are using bricks and mortar, to build this anti-God monument. But why exactly, is he telling me that?

Well, you fast forward to Israel in Egypt.

In Exodus 1 and you see that it says Pharaoh set taskmasters over the Israelites to afflict them with heavy burdens. “They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad...So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves, and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field.”

And watch this.

The only two places those words, brick and mortar are used in the first five books of the Bible, are here and at the Tower of Babel, and so what’s happening is that things have gotten so bad in the world that the offspring of Eve are now being used by the offspring of Satan, to build, a kingdom that stands in opposition to God and His purposes, which means, it seems like Satan’s anti-kingdom plan is working.

But of course, we know now, it’s a set up by God, to glorify Himself, as He goes on to defeat Pharaoh, through judgment and, to save Israel, through the death of a lamb. And then take them through the wilderness, to meet with them at Mount Sinai, where He makes them a promise.

And this is Exodus 19:4-6. What does God say He has done for the Israelites and what does He say that He wants to do with the Israelites?

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And that’s the next picture. It’s the next big movement forward in God’s kingdom plan.

Because the covenant he’s talking about here is different than the one, he made earlier with Abram. It’s connected. But it’s a different covenant, he’s now making with these people where you see He tells them if they do something, then He’ll do something.

What will He do? He will make them into a kingdom of priests.

And basically, what God’s telling Israel, again, is that their purpose was bigger than just Israel.

Because what do priests do?

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The whole nation of Israel was going to be a priest and represent God to whom?

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So it’s like God made this promise to Abraham. Through your offspring, I am going to bless the world, and now that’s being set in motion, as he’s taking them out of Egypt and, creating them as a people, and promising, if they obey Him, they will become this blessing to the world, as He establishes them as a nation, and they represent Him to the world.

Are you following? You remember how God put Adam in the garden?

Now, God’s going to plant an entire nation, in the Promised Land, where, if they obeyed Him, they would experience blessing to the point that, the Promised Land, would become a Garden of Eden like place, actually, where He would have fellowship with them, and use them, to show the world what it’s like, to live with God as king.

Israel would image God.

You see how he says, “If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession.” In other words, they would experience a unique relationship with God, and be a holy nation. A nation that represents Him to the world and as a result, draw the nations to Him. And obviously, as we move on in our Bibles and read all these laws Israel was supposed to obey in order to accomplish this, there’s like 613 of them, and they seem so long and tedious sometimes, but these laws were gifts from God, to enable Israel to enjoy fellowship with Him and be the blessing to the world, God promised Abraham.

Listen to the way Moses puts it in Deuteronomy 4:5-8. Read these verses. What was supposed to happen as a result of Israel obeying God’s law?

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We’ve talked about the Noahic Covenant. And we’ve talked about the Abrahamic Covenant. Now this is the Mosaic Covenant. And, you might notice, the Mosaic Covenant is a little different than the Abrahamic and the Noahic.

While it is still gracious like the first two, it’s, also clearly not unconditional covenant, in the same way, the others were. The world can’t mess up the Noahic covenant. And the Abrahamic covenant is going to happen. Through the seed of Abraham the world is going to be blessed.

But the Mosaic covenant could be broken.

God’s got a plan to bless the world through Israel, this is what the Old Testament is telling us, they are going to be the means of His blessing the world, that’s going to happen and yet, we see God entering into a specific kind of agreement with them, about how, they as a nation can bring that blessing to the world, and that’s through them, being a model of His kingdom on earth, by obeying, certain requirements. Israel is being offered by God the opportunity to be His special servant and of having a unique opportunity to play a role in His kingdom plan. It’s kind of like God’s offering Israel, a chance, to almost experience life in the Garden again, only, now, in a sin-cursed world, it’s not quite, as simple as it was, to have God living with you, like in the Garden of Eden, because everything was perfect there. And they didn’t need a lot of rules or laws, because everything was the way it should be. But after the fall, it clearly wasn’t, which is why there is Leviticus and Deuteronomy, but that’s the goal.

God establishing the kingdom of Israel, and planning to dwell with them in the Promised Land, where if they obey laws, He will live them and they will represent Him to the nations.

And yet, you know, as you move on from Exodus through Leviticus to Numbers you find, that the very first generation of Israelites, the very ones that He rescued from slavery, to bring into the Promised Land, didn’t trust God enough, to go back into the Garden.

In Genesis, God chooses Israel. In Exodus, God rescues Israel. And in Leviticus, God makes a way to live with Israel. And in Numbers, Israel says no thanks.

If you think of Israel like a second Adam.

The first Adam got kicked out of the Garden. And with Israel, God’s choosing a second Adam. Only it’s a whole nation this time, and in the first five books of the Bible, God’s bringing them back to the edge of the Garden, only now it’s this land called Canaan, and he’s saying, if you obey me, I am going to make Canaan, like the Garden again.

In fact, you know, I keep saying that but let me show you. Listen to the way God puts it in Leviticus 26:3-12.

“If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from your land. You shall chase your enemies and they shall fall before you by the sword. Five of you shall chase a hundred and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you. You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new. I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.”

Which, sounds an awful lot like what? It sounds an awful lot like God cleaning up a place so it could function, like the Garden of Eden did. What’s happening with the land?

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And what are the trees doing?

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And, what’s going on with the harvest?

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And how are the people doing? What do people normally feel when their stomachs are full and they have no enemies?

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What’s happened to the wild animals?

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What does God say He will make them? Where does that language come from?

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And, out of all these promises, there’s still one more, that is even more important. What does God say He will do?

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And yet, you know what happened in Numbers? When God brought them out of Egypt, to the edge of the Promised Land, those people, weren’t even willing to enter. They were like, thanks but no thanks. We will stay out here. We prefer exile in the wilderness to the Garden. And so obviously, we are looking at Israel, and we have already got questions. If this is how salvation is going to happen, it’s not looking good. Even from the beginning!

After making the covenant with them at Sinai, they said, they wanted to be part of it, you remember? And yet, when Moses went up to get further instructions, they broke the covenant, almost right way. They made an idol. That’s like adultery on your wedding night. And yet God showed them grace, and renewed the covenant with them, and then, spent a whole year, giving them laws and instructions, so they were ready, to be this kind of nation, He wanted them to be.

And then, you know what happens? In Numbers 11?

It’s crazy, let me show you this. It helps if you get the big picture.

In Exodus 1-15, you see the creation of Israel.

And in Exodus 16-18, after they have been rescued, it is Israel in the wilderness, and you remember what they are doing there? If you read the story, they are grumbling, about not having water, not having meat, and the food God’s providing, wishing they could go back into Egypt.

But then in Exodus 19-31, God still, makes this covenant with Israel, and the people say, they’ll do it. But in Exodus 32, basically, right away, the people break it, making an idol for themselves to worship.

And yet, God graciously, gives them another chance, and takes a year, in Exodus 33 through Numbers 10, to give them instructions and trainings, so they can do what He’s asked.

And then in Numbers 11, they set out, on the road again, to start the journey into the Promised Land, and you know what they do, right away?

Here’s what they do. They do the exact same things they did in Exodus 16-18. Literally!

They grumble about food, water, and the manna God provided, and wish, that God hadn’t rescued them from Egypt, until finally God brings them to the brink of the Promised Land and wouldn’t believe He had the ability to enable them to enter, and yet, still, God is so gracious, because, in spite of their lack of faith, by the end of Deuteronomy, He’s raised up a new generation and, Moses renews the covenant with them, in the final chapters, after having, gone through the whole covenant with them, they say yes, and so, once again, we are hopeful. Finally again. We are hopeful.

It’s like we are back, standing before the Garden. And, maybe these people will be able to do what God’s calling them to do, and yet, as we move on, and read the the story in Joshua and Judges, we find, they are way too broken. In Joshua, God keeps His promise, and brings them into the land. The whole theme of Joshua is that God does exactly what He says He would, and yet, in the very next book, Judges, which begins, with the next generation of Israelites, we find, they are not faithful to do, what God’s called them to do.

God keeps His word. But they won’t keep theirs.

And the fact is, by the end of Judges these Israelites are doing the exact same kind of things, that the Canaanites, the people God brought them into the land to judge, were doing, before them.

The end of Judges, I don’t know if you have read it, but it’s kind of gross actually, with supposed spiritual leaders having concubines, and then, cutting them and it’s terrible, and the point is that Israel is terrible, and there’s a massive obstacle to them, being the ones to establish God’s kingdom on earth.

And so, you are scratching your head, as you are looking at these first few pictures. Kingdom of God. Broken.

Satan defeated through an offspring of Eve. A kingdom being established on earth through Abraham’s offspring who are supposed to be distinct.

But they are not distinct, at all. And you are like what is going to help them?

And this isn’t just a theoretical question. We really need to know this, as we are reading the Bible, because these people are supposed to play a pivotal role, in God’s great salvation plan, and yet, we are seeing, that in spite of God’s patience and constant deliverance, they eventually, become like everyone else. And you know what, they actually get to the point, as a nation, where they tell God, they don’t even want to be His kingdom anymore.

And this is now the next step after Judges. We’re in 1 Samuel. And in 1 Samuel 8 Israel comes and asks Samuel for a king so they can be like all the nations.

Those are their exact words. It’s so shocking, you should take a moment to look it up.

1 Kings 8:5

“Appoint for us a king to:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

That’s what they say. And obviously, Samuel is upset, and so, God comes to him, and says, Samuel it’s not you, they are rejecting, it’s me. 1 Samuel 8:7, “They have rejected me from being king over them.”

And as you are reading, you are like, what? I mean, what?

If you think back to the whole story, again of how God made this world so perfect and put Adam and Eve in this incredible garden. And, how, they, they got kicked out because they didn’t want to submit to God as king, and yet, now, you see, that, after God’s gone to all these lengths, to bring the children of Adam and Eve, back in, to a potential Garden of Eden, like place on earth, if they will just obey. And, He’s rescued them, and He’s trained them, and He’s entered into a special relationship with them, and He’s provided a means to dwell with them, and He’s totally, gotten them ready, so they could be a blessing to the rest of the world from there.

After just a little while of being there, they say, no. No! In fact, they say, you know what would make this better? It’s if we could have all this, without God. We want the kingdom. Just not the King. And yet once again, even as they are rebelling against God, God’s using that rebellion, to make the way He is going to fulfill His promise more clear.

He gives them picture number four. God’s promised He would defeat Satan through a descendant Eve.

And, He’s committed to doing it on this planet. And, He’s explained he would make Abraham’s descendants into a nation and give them land, where they would bring blessing to the world, and we see in the Mosaic covenant, they were supposed to do that by representing God in their unique behavior, and being a picture, of the kind of kingdom God wanted to establish on the entire earth.

And yet it’s clear in Judges, they are not going to be able to do that, without some serious outside help, and so, really this whole time, as Israel, is rebelling against God, they are showing one big thing, they need, for the kingdom of God to be established, is the right kind of king to rule over them, and, so after showing us t he opportunity God, gave Israel to serve Him, which they are rejecting, in 2 Samuel 7, God reaffirms his commitment to His original plan, as He reveals, that, the great promised, Satan crusher, who will reverse the curse, and enable Israel to bring blessing to the world, whom, we’ve all, been waiting for would be, king.

A descendant of Eve. A descendant of Abraham. An Israelite. Of the tribe of Judah.

And a king from the line of David.

If you look at 2 Samuel 7, the picture keeps getting more clear. We call this the Davidic covenant.

After giving Israel, the kind of king they wanted, in 1st Samuel, that’s where God started, they wanted a king like the nations, and God gave them a king like the nations, his name was Saul, and yet, God was also gracious, and went on to give them, the kind of king they needed.

If you read 1 and 2 Samuel. You’ll see He gave them a king after his own heart, whose name was David. And when David was given the opportunity to rule, one of the first thing he does, is make it clear, that, He wants to rule on God’s behalf, and so he goes and gets the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Samuel 6, which had basically been forgotten about, but represented the presence, the Kingship of God, and David, brought the Ark, back to Jerusalem, as a way of saying, I think, that he was only ruling as God’s representative.

In David’s mind, God was king and so God comes to David. In 2 Samuel 7, and makes him a promise.

That the kingdom plan was, still on. And that, He is going to raise up one of David’s descendants to defeat all His enemies and be a king who rules perfectly over His people forever. This is 2nd Samuel 7:12-16 where God says, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you.”

And that word, an offspring kind of keys us in. Like, bing, bing, bing. God’s about to say something big about the promise He made back in Genesis 3.

You remember, an offspring of Eve and how important that word was throughout the rest of Genesis. When we read offspring here, this is significant, because here God tells David there will be, “an offspring, a seed who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, who I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

And, I think, obviously, parts of that promise seem confusing to us, for one thing, because God is talking about two people at once.This is important. One person he’s talking about is Solomon. That’s why he can talk about sin and discipline, and yet, he’s also, looking past Solomon, and talking about another person, which is why he can talk about a king He would establish who would rule forever. And part of how we know he’s talking about another person is because God raised up prophets later, who would come back to this passage, and explain this prophecy, further.

In the Psalms and the Prophets, God fills in the details. This is a covenant that it is talked about a lot in Scripture, and one of the reasons it is talked about so much, is because, looking at Israel, by themselves, becomes pretty discouraging after a while.If they are supposed to the hope for reversing the curse, and defeating Satan, there doesn’t seem to be much hope at all, as they actually, only get worse and worse even with a king. Because, the first king David, after receiving this covenant, ends up going out and committing adultery, and murdering the woman’s husband, and ends his life, fairly pathetic, and as you keep reading the story, you find, there’s this really, brief period with his son, Solomon where you think maybe, it is going to happen, but then Solomon fails, and, the kingdom is split in two. And it gets so bad, with both groups, that, just like Adam was kicked out of the Garden, the whole nation eventually, gets kicked out, of the Promised Land.

And this is the book of Kings. To establish the kingdom of God, Israel needs a king from the line of David, and yet, almost all the kings that come from the line of David, are terrible kings. And instead of helping Israel become a blessing to the nations, lead Israel to becoming just like the rest of the nations, until God brings in another nation, to defeat them, and actually take them hostage, and literally bring most of Israel, out of the Promised Land, back, with them.

And you know what’s ironic? If you go all the way back, to Israel’s beginning, Abram was from where, originally? Ur of the Chaldeans, which is connected to, Babylon.

And so, reading the biblical story, you see God chooses Abram out of Babylon to be the means through which He would bring blessing to the world, and, we’ve said, he makes clear, he is going to do that through His descendants, whom He is going to make into a nation. And in the Mosaic Covenant we saw that He’s gave them a chance to serve as He brought them into the Promised Land which He described in Garden of Eden like language, and makes a way to walk among them, the way He did with Adam and Eve and promises them this great king. And yet, instead of becoming a light to the nations of what the kingdom of God looks like, representing God to the nations, they reject God as king, and they become like the rest of the nations.

If you listen to what God calls them in Isaiah 1.

What does God call Israel in Isaiah 1:10?

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What were those two cities like and what did God do to them?

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What do you think God is saying to Israel by calling them this?

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Israel has gotten so evil God is going to do with them the same thing He did with Adam. He’s going to kick them out of the Garden. And, you know where He brings them? He brings them all the way back, to where it started. Israel was taken in exile to Babylon, all the way back to the beginning.

Which, leaves us asking some questions, once again about this whole plan of God ruling over this world through a chosen human representative, of a kingdom, where God and His people dwell together, at peace with one another, because, we look at the problem and it’s not just back there in the Garden, with one guy, Adam. We take a whole nation, and on spite, of all the privileges God gives them, all the sacrifices, all the laws, all the priests, all the kings, all the revelation, you know what happens is that they end up, in the same position, Adam did. And we’ll begin to see the answer in the next lesson, but for now I hope you are seeing if you read the Old Testament properly, it’s telling you about something much bigger than how to have a nice life or something, it’s giving you a glimpse of God and His great salvation plan.

And one thing it does over and over and over and over is show you how much you need it. If you are looking at Adam and Noah and Israel, and thinking these guys, you are missing the point. They are like the best of us, with all the privileges, and yet they can’t accomplish their salvation, and neither can you. The Old Testament shows you how much you need God to provide a Savior and it prepares you to see and appreciate how great a Savior He’s provided in Jesus really is.

**DISCUSSION**

1. According to Genesis 12:3, what is the purpose of Israel?

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2. What’s the problem with Israel at the beginning of the book of Exodus? And how is that a problem for the whole world?

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3. What does God do to enable Israel to fulfill their purpose?

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4. In Exodus 19:4-6, we learn a little more about how Israel was supposed to bring this blessing to this world. What were they supposed to and what were they supposed to become?

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5. This is another covenant. What is this covenant called?

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6. God keeps His promises and brings Israel into the land. But does Israel keep their commitments? What has happened to Israel by the end of the book of Judges, and what does that tell you Israel needs?

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7. God makes a fourth commitment to Israel in 2 Samuel 7. What is that commitment? What is that commitment called?

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8. For one of David’s descendants to rule over Israel forever, what does he need to be?

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9. As you read the book of Kings, do any of David’s descendants seem able to help Israel overcome the problem of Judges?

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10. What happens to Israel by the end of the book of Kings and why is that such a problem for the rest of the world?

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**Old Testament Eschatology**

I wonder if you like puzzles? Me, I am not a big fan. Puzzles are difficult, but do you know what makes finishing a puzzle impossible? Not having the picture on the front of the box. The only way to put the specific pieces of the puzzle together is having the big picture on the front of the box.

The same is true with the Bible. We will only understand the individual texts of the Bible when we understand how they connect to the bigger story the Bible is telling.

For example, listen to the question the Pharisees ask Jesus in Luke 17:20:21. What do the Pharisees want Jesus to tell them?

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Now, I don’t know whether the question the Pharisees are asking Jesus is serious or not. Because, you see, Jesus *had* been preaching about the kingdom of God. All the time. And one of the things he had been saying, was that it was at hand. It had drawn near. That was a major part of Jesus’ message. And yet, the Pharisees were almost acting like they had never heard him say that, and, so, I guess, it could be that they are, almost, being sarcastic. Like, “where is this kingdom of God, that, you keep talking about?” But, whether they are sincere or not, you are not going to understand this specific question or Jesus’ answer in this particular passage unless you step back and understand, what the kingdom of God is, and why it’s significant.

You have to get the context and the context is the Old Testament. And this is so important because a lot of times what happens is we come to the Bible with our context, with our questions that we think are so interesting, and we try to force the Bible to answer our questions, but if we are going to be transformed by the Bible, we have to know, the Bible and its context so well, that it, tells us the questions, we are supposed to ask. And certainly one of the questions that was pressing on the minds of the people in Jesus’ day as they were reading the Old Testament had to do with the establishment of the kingdom of God. To understand the gospels, you have to understand, that one of the questions, the people Jesus was preaching to, were asking, was, when and how the kingdom of God, was going to be established.

This question was pressing on their minds for a couple reasons. One, because the kingdom of God is such a big part of what the Old Testament is about. As we went back and to tried to summarize the message of the Bible, we saw, clearly, that, one of the main things, the Bible is about is the kingdom of God.

How would you summarize God’s good plan according to Genesis 1 and 2?

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And so obviously, we should all be interested in seeing that happen, how is God going to establish the kingdom of God on earth, we should all be asking that question, but as we keep reading in our Bibles, we see it’s a question the Jewish people in Jesus’ day should have especially been interested in, because, the Old Testament tells us, not only that God had promised to establish this kingdom, which is awesome, but that He also promised, to bring that kingdom into existence, through the descendants of Abraham.

**There’s a promised Kingdom. That’s the what. And there’s a plan for establishing that kingdom through the offspring of Abraham. That’s the how.**

The Jewish people could literally open their Bible, and see, that God had made them some very particular promises in these things we call covenants. If the kingdom is the what, then the covenants describe the how, how is God going to establish this kingdom.

First, we saw He told Abraham about making his descendants into a great nation and giving them land and blessing them and that those who bless them would be blessed and that those who curse them would be cursed and that eventually they would defeat their enemies and that, maybe most importantly, through their nation, Israel, He would bring blessing to the entire world.

Where do we find that promise?

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Where is the next covenant found?

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Each covenant is a picture, and each picture expands our understanding of God’s strategy, and we call this covenant the Mosaic Covenant. God tells the nation of Israel that if they would just obey Him He would make them into a kingdom of priests. In other words, they would represent Him. As they obeyed, they would be His image in the world, and He would bless them in such a significant way, that the whole world would see, and be drawn to the kingdom of God.

But of course the problem is that they didn’t. Just like Adam, they rebelled. Instead of becoming different from the nations, they became like the nations and they even ending up saying to God, we want a king for the purpose of becoming like the nations.

If you picture Israel, as being almost like a second Adam being put back into the Garden, by God, after all this training. It’s not like God just put them in the Promised Land. He got them ready to succeed. And yet, if you picture them like a second Adam. This would be like God putting Adam in the garden, and the first thing he does is run back to the tree, and eat not just one fruit, but like every single one.

This is absolute rebellion. And so, we are wondering about God’s response. We have to be.

And the good news is, God didn’t give up on them, at that point, and instead reaffirms His commitment to the plan He started. And this is 2 Samuel 7 where God comes to David and says. “I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more.” Which is, God saying in spite of this rebellion, I am still committed to the promise, I made, to Abraham, all these, years later.

And then, He goes on and says, “Violent men shall afflict them no more as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel and I will give you rest from all your enemies”

And, you remember that word rest.

Where does the Bible first talk about rest?

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And I guess I am just trying to help you see why the Pharisees and others in Jesus’ day would have been so interested in the kingdom of God. It’s not just because the idea of the kingdom of God is awesome, it’s also because God had made these incredible promises to Abraham, to Moses and then to David. In spite of how bad Israel kept failing, God keeps coming back and reaffirming, His commitment. Israel is going to become the kingdom of God. And yet again by now, we are, all kind of wondering how that is going to be possible because. Israel’s proven themselves, so disobedient. And so God, takes this promise He made to Abraham and advances it.

In the Old Testament, it’s like, we start with the big idea. Genesis 1 and 2. God’s establishing this kingdom. And then, the problem. Genesis 3. Man’s rebellion. And of course, Genesis 3:15, the promise. Satan’s defeat. But, the question, is how?

And so throughout the rest Old Testament, God’s explaining how, He’s going to fix this, and the thing is, He doesn’t give the explanation all at once. It’s like he’s pulling out these pictures one by one, instead, and each picture, shows part of how God’s going to deliver us, and you kind of have to put those pictures together.

So, one, bang, God puts on the table. It’s going to happen on this planet. The Noahic Covenant. Then, two, it’s going to be through Israel, the Abrahamic covenant. Then, three, He’s going to establish them as a holy nation that serves as his representatives to the world, Mosaic. Now, four. He’s giving them a king. 2 Samuel 7, again. This is the Davidic covenant. “Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.” Which is huge, because this is a promised king who will rule over God’s people forever. And yet the problem, we saw, as we kept reading, the books of Samuel and Kings, is that the descendants who came from David weren’t godly leaders at all. You don’t want one of them to be the king forever. They themselves can’t even keep the Mosaic covenant, much less help Israel, do it.

You just take the very next king Solomon, who had every possible advantage, like the fact, God gave him supernatural wisdom, to be able to govern, and yet, by the end of his life, his heart had, strayed from God, and, after he died, things only got worse until it got so bad that these descendants of David eventually got the whole nation kicked out of the Promised Land.

And I guess, I am not sure I can tell you how significant that was in terms of the biblical story. I mean, kicked out of the Promised Land! If you are reading your Old Testament, that’s kind of earth-shattering really.

In Genesis, God makes this kingdom. And it’s perfect, and it’s beautiful. And you are like yeah, that’s how things should be. And yet, then man, rebels, and is kicked out of this kingdom. And you are like no! That’s not how things should be.

But, then God makes a promise. And it’s, yeah! Again. He’s going to defeat Satan. And you think, it might be through Noah, because he’s righteous, and his name means rest, and there’s a prophecy about him, and, God even starts the world over again, and you are like, maybe this is going to happen. But, then Noah does the same thing Adam did and the world heads the same direction it did before. And you are like, no! Are you kidding me?

But then God makes a promise to Abraham about establishing a kingdom through his descendants. And you are like. Ok. We are headed in the right direction, again. And the way God talks about it, it sounds like, He’s planning to put this nation in a place called Canaan, and, it’s, almost if He were taking this whole nation, back to the Garden of Eden. And if they obey the picture is of them, doing as a nation, what Adam was supposed to do, in the beginning, and so, you, have some hope, because you notice, God goes to a lot of effort to train them. And gives them all these laws, and, He gives them all these sacrifices. It’s like He doesn’t just put them in the Garden. He, prepares them before they go back into the Garden, so they can do what He’s calling them to do when they get there. And you are like, yes. It’s on. And especially, when you read Joshua and see God keep all His promises. And you are like, Yes. Yes. Yes!

Until, right after that, in Judges, the very next book, you see the nation of Israel doesn’t keep any of the promises they made God. Instead they totally reject Him. And end up as pagan as everyone else. Until they come, and say to God, they don’t want Him to be their king. And yet again, God’s patient. And says, I am going to send you a great king, from the line of David, and so, you think, maybe this is the solution, a godly king will do it, only to have Israel get so bad, after that, by, the end of the Old Testament story in, Kings, God sends them back, to the very place they started with Abraham.

You know how I keep saying the Old Testament tells a story? That whole story is basically told in Genesis through Kings. That’s where you find pretty much the main part of the story. And way back in, Genesis, we saw God calling Abraham out of Babylon to start this nation that is going to bring blessing to the world, and yet, the point is, when you fast forward to Kings, you see, God sending that very nation, all these years later, back to Babylon, because they are just like, everyone else.

And you are like, what’s going on? What’s going on! In fact, there’s this really sad scene in Ezekiel. When Israel was in the wilderness, God told them to make a tabernacle, a place where He would live with them, which is really amazing, and after they made the tabernacle, it says, the glory of God, came and filled it.

You remember the story in Exodus, right? Exodus 40:34,35:

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And that’s, just so huge, because that’s like Garden of Eden stuff. God living with you. And it gets better. Because the tabernacle was a tent and so it was temporary, which is why, later, when they got into the Promised Land, they turned that tent into a building they called the temple, and when they made the temple, you remember, what happened?

This is 1 Kings 8:10,11:

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That’s like heaven on earth. That’s their Garden of Eden moment. God living among them. And yet in Ezekiel, after all their sin and all their rebellion, some of them are taken to Babylon. This process of judgment has started. But it’s happening in stages. So, there’s a group that goes to Babylon and there’s still a group back in Jerusalem, and, even though they are being judged, they had some hope, and the reason they had hope was because they still had the temple back in Jerusalem, and so some of them, thought. ‘Yes. It looks bad. But still we can’t be defeated, ultimately. Because God lives with us.’

And yet, Ezekiel sees this vision in Ezekiel 10, and you know what it’s a vision of? It’s a vision basically of God packing up and leaving the temple. It’s like, God’s moving out.

Ezekiel 10:18,19:

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And he’s saying that he’s seeing the glory of the Lord leaving the temple. And so, we are wondering, now, as we are watching Israel taken back to where they started, Babylon, and as we are watching, God, sort of getting up, and moving out, of what we think of as his earthly home, the temple, we are wondering, does this mean that God’s finally finished with His plan?

It’s like we saw Adam and he failed. But we had hope, because there was Noah.

And then he failed. And yet, we had hope, because there was Israel. And yet, now we see Israel. This whole nation fails. And, we know, obviously, this is a problem for Israel.

But again, if we are reading our Bibles properly, we also know, it’s a major, problem for us.

Israel’s failure is a problem for us. Because, ever since man got kicked out of the Garden, we are standing there, looking for a way back in, how can we get this world back to the original, how can the kingdom of God going be established, like how do we get back in?

And, God’s said, He’s going to bring us back in through Israel somehow. And yet, now, after all these years, and all this reading, it’s like, Israel, as we finish the story, is on the outside, looking in, with the rest of us, as well. So, if God’s not finished with His plan, we need to know, how?

How is he going to establish the kingdom, He promised, with the way sin has so, obviously broken, absolutely, everything?

Which is why, in come the prophets. Isaiah through Malachi.

And, I hope you are seeing how the Old Testament works. That’s part of why we are working through all this.

There’s this story that you read in Genesis through Kings, and it’s basically one story, and it’s a really, sad story, and at the end of Kings, you are trying to process, what it all means, with Israel kicked out. Does it mean it’s over? And w did that happen? And what’s going to happen now?

Which is why we have these prophets.

They are not so much adding to the story, as they are explaining the story. And one of the big things they explain why Israel got kicked out. Because it’s confusing. With God making these promises, and now, Israel, being kicked out of the land. And we see, it’s not because God was making promises He couldn’t keep, that’s important, but it’s instead because Israel made promises they wouldn’t keep.

They entered into a covenant with God, and committed themselves, to a certain standard, and they would not, keep it. So if you read the prophets, you will see there are these prophets who came before Israel got kicked out, and there were prophets that came as Israel was getting kicked out, and then, there were prophets who came, after Israel got kicked out.

And, man, God was patient. Because, even before they got kicked out, He raised up all these prophets, who came and said, listen, we’re in trouble, because we are not keeping the covenant we made with God. And if we don’t change God’s going to keep His promise to punish us.

Because that was part of the deal we made back at Mount Sinai. Even Moses says this in Deuteronomy.

And so you have prophets, like, Isaiah for example, who come and say, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.” And this is Isaiah 1. It’s almost like God’s looking for someone to talk to because what He’s about to say is so shocking. “Children I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.” And, if you want to know how shocking this is? He goes on. “The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib.” Animals know who they belong to. “But Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”And how does God feel about this? “Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with inquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel. They are utterly estranged.” And now I love this part. “Why will you be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel?” Because, it’s almost like God’s saying, please, please, why won’t you just obey?

And I know sometimes we think of God in the Old Testament as so hard, but it’s the opposite, He’s so merciful, because we see, He goes to all these lengths to enter into this relationship, with Israel to, save the world, and, yet, in spite of all He’s done for them, they rebel, and yet even though Israel won’t listen, He’s still giving them so many warnings before He judges them, which makes it’s obvious, when He finally does judge them, that, it’s not because He hadn’t been faithful to the commitment He made them.

Instead, it’s because they weren’t faithful to the commitment they made him. So the first thing these prophets do is come and explain why Israel was being kicked out of the land. They were being judged and sent into the nations for their disobedience, to the Mosaic covenant, which is really sad, of course, but the thing is that’s not where the prophets end.

And, again, you know, why am I saying this to you? It’s because I want you to understand your Bible and the New Testament.

As we look at Israel, being taken captive, into Babylon, at the end of Kings, that’s a sad moment, because it means they failed to play their part in God’s rescue plan. And while the prophets come, and are like yes, this is sad, because it means, they wouldn’t listen to God, they almost immediately, after that are, like, but wait, don’t make the mistake, of starting to think, that this judgment, means God is done with His plan.

It’s still on. In fact, it’s going to be bigger, and better, and more glorious, than you ever could have thought it would. And this is kind of like everywhere in the prophets, actually.

For example, listen to Isaiah chapter 2:1-4. After Isaiah has said Israel is going to be judged, he goes on. “The word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”

Stop, who is this prophecy about?

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He says, “It shall come to pass in the latter days” Which means, when is this supposed to take place? Is this a present tense thing or future?

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Israel is going to be judged. But, what’s going to happen in the latter days? “The mountain of the house of the Lord.”

What’s that?

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“Shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills.”

Now, lifted above the hills. Is he saying, literally? Maybe. I’m not sure. But, certainly, at least, it means, this mountain will become the most significant place on the planet, at some point in the future. Because he writes, “...all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come.”

So, what’s going to happen in the latter days?

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And, why are they going to want to do that? Just listen to what they say. They “say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

So the whole world is going to want to go to Jerusalem, because?

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And why’s Jerusalem going to be so significant?

Because from this location, God’s going to judge the nations, and decide disputes and the result is going to be that they beat their swords into plowshares.

Why would you beat swords into plowshares?

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Which sounds like what? I mean, what does it sound like Isaiah’s describing? If you are connecting the dots. It sounds like he’s describing the fulfillment of what God said he was wanting to do through Israel, all the way back at the beginning with the Abrahamic covenant and then, more specifically in the Mosaic covenant. He’s going to make them a blessing to the nations.

You remember how they were to be a model of the kingdom of God, and the result, would be that, nations would come and want to learn more about God and have a right relationship with God, and even though Isaiah, knows Israel is going to be judged, he’s still convinced this is going to happen. And this is the hope of the prophets.

It’s not just this one passage in Isaiah, either. They are actually all over.

Here’s another, Isaiah chapter 11:1-5. Listen to this. “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”

And shall come forth, again means we are talking about the future. But a stump from Jesse. Who’s Jesse? He’s the father of David. And yet this is way after David, and, why is he even, talking about David anyway? It’s because of the promise God made David, and he’s saying, all these years later, the Davidic Covenant is still on. In the future a descendant of David’s going to come on the scene. And what’s going to happen when He does?

“And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.”

In other words, He’s going to be holy, the way that we need a king to be. And what’s He going to do?

“He shall not judge...”

He’s going to judge, but he’s not going to judge a certain way. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or “decide disputes by what his ears hear but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips, he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”

And I want you to notice that He’s going to have to judge, and there are still going to be poor, and, there are still going to be disputes, and there still is going to be sin to deal with. So, obviously, we are not quite in heaven yet. This is something happening on earth. And what Isaiah’s promising?

He’s promising that even though, we know, after Israel was sent into exile, they didn’t really have kings, Isaiah says, a king is still, going to rise, from the line of David, who is holy, and who is going to be everything we ever wanted a king to be. And he’s going to bring the whole world into submission. He’s going to rule and subdue the world, the way Adam should have.

And if you want proof, here it is. Isaiah 11:6-9. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the address den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my Holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Do you see what’s happening?

After the exile, it looked like it was over. And yet just when we are about to lose hope, the prophets come in and talk about the future. Like Isaiah who is assuming that, in spite of the judgment, the Davidic covenant is still on, and the Abrahamic covenant’s on, as the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, which is the definition of blessing.They see the entire world being brought back to Garden of Eden like conditions. Only better. They make it sound almost like heaven, but at the same time, it’s not quite heaven is it, because, verse 3 and 4, as we said, there still are disputes, and the poor, and nursing children.

What’s going on is that way back in the beginning, way back, God’s plan was to rule over this earth through a human representative, and to bring things into submission, and to make this world a place, that could be filled with his presence. And He said he would do it through Israel.And yet when Israel was given the opportunity to serve, they completely wasted it, and did not become the kind of holy kingdom the world desperately needed and were sent into exile.And, yet, being sent into exile, didn’t mean, God’s plan for them was over, because, prophets like Isaiah, are clearly saying, that, God was still going to accomplish what He said He would accomplish through them and, the prophets are filled with all these descriptions of what, it would be like when He did.

Isaiah 65:17-25 is another illustration. God says, “For behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered, or come into mind.”

Which makes you think, he’s talking about heaven, but it’s not quite heaven that he’s talking about yet, I don’t think, because, read the rest.

He writes, “But be glad and rejoice forever, in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few years or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.”

So he’s talking about a city, Jerusalem and a place, and it sounds amazing, no crying, and people living a really long time. I mean when someone dies, at a hundred, you are like that person must have been a really bad sinner, because everybody is just living so long.

And he goes on. “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat, for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.”

Which is awesome. And, you know, I love that last little line. The dust shall be the serpent’s food, because it refers back to what? The judgment in Genesis. It’s reminding us, there’s a time coming, when someone is going to reverse the curse, and yet even when the curse has been lifted, the judgment on the snake is still on.

God’s going to win.

And I guess, the point, is that the way Kings ends is really sad. With Israel being sent into exile, and yet, as Israel is there in exile, God raises up these prophets, to explain over and over and over and over, that Israel’s failure, wasn’t the end of the story of what God was going to do through them. And the hope was that though as someone has written, “Israel was being judged and sent to the nations for disobeying the covenant they made with God, in the future, God would gather Israel together again, and restore her to her land. And from there she would experience incredible material and spiritual blessings, under the leadership of the ultimate Son of David. And as a result, the nations, who will be judged for a time, will also, in the end, benefit from the reign of this great King and become the people of God alongside Israel, in an earthly kingdom, as God completes, the plan He started all the way back in the Garden” to bring this world into submission and to rule over this world through a chosen human representative.

If you read the prophets, it seems clear, they are saying, God’s not forgetting His promise. And yet here’s the next, final part, that’s absolutely key for understanding, what’s going on in the gospels, because, as the Old Testament ends, the people of Israel did come back from Babylon to the land.

You know that right? They are sent to Babylon, and then they are there for a period of time, but then they are allowed to come back. And I am saying this is really important. So don’t miss it. Because what happens is as the Israelites were sent into exile, they were really sad, and so, the prophets gave them hope, that, after this time of exile, God’s going to do something great, and better and, of course, most of them, were probably thinking it was going to happen.

When? I think, soon after they got back, into the land. So, when they are back, it’s like, “Ok, we’re back. And now let’s get this great kingdom thing, going again, that God promise.”

And yet, you know, when they got back into the land, after having been in Babylon, it didn’t really go like that at all, actually. There weren’t that many of them that even came back at first really, and they didn’t have the whole land, they used to have, and most of the time, even as they were living in their own country, they were being ruled over by other foreign countries, which is the opposite of what they were hoping, and was probably, pretty confusing for them. It would be like, having soldiers come and kicking you out of your house, and take it over, and force you to live somewhere, and then being allowed to come back to your house, only to find, there were other people living there, and they owned it, and forced you to pay them rent.

Which is why, in the days of Jesus, now we are getting to it, most of the Israelites, would have felt like they were still, living in the time of exile. Even though they were back in the land, technically, for four hundred years, they had come back from Babylon, along time ago, but they weren’t experiencing the full future kingdom that the prophets had promised they would. And that’s why this kingdom of God thing, was such a pressing question.

Because, it wasn’t just like, oh we don’t like foreigners living in our land. Instead, it was the fact, they understood, God was taking Israel somewhere bigger than just being occupied by Romans, He was planning to do with establish them, as a kingdom and use them, to bring His promised blessing to the entire world.

Which is why, you know, in the days of Jesus, what do we find godly Israelites doing? We find them hoping.

Look at Mary. Look at Zechariah. In the beginning of Luke. They were hoping and long that the Promised One would come. The Davidic King. And so there was this massive expectation that God would send the deliverer He promised and that deliverer would establish His kingdom.

And most of them, thought, he would do that, how? By overthrowing Rome. And Rome was the nation in control of Israel. And so they were looking for this great warrior, who would enable them to establish the kingdom, which is why, I think, why they were having such a hard time understanding Jesus.

On the one hand, He had all these signs of being, the great Davidic king.

I mean, did you ever wonder why the Bible makes such a big deal about Jesus’ genealogy, about him being from the house of David, it’s all connected back to this hope of the prophets, about the ruler God would send and, then, of course, in addition to that, Jesus was was also going around doing all these things, only the Messiah could do. Healing blind people. Casting out demons. Cleansing lepers.

And yet, what, was confusing, was at the same time, he wasn’t fighting anyone. Where is His army? It’s just him and this group of fishermen.

He looks like this Jewish carpenter, going around teaching, not some warrior, and so, I think that’s part of why the Pharisees come and ask Jesus where are the signs of the kingdom? It’s like they are making fun. “We read all these great things in the prophets about how this promised Davidic king is going to deliver us and establish God’s kingdom, and we hear you saying, the kingdom of God is at hand. But where is it exactly? Because all we see is, you are walking around, with this group of fishermen. Where is the kingdom?”

And part of why the New Testament is written is to help us understand why, it had to go this way. It’s not because Jesus mission failed. That’s not why Jesus didn’t overthrow Rome. In fact, over and over, you’ll Jesus says, that he has to die. It is necessary. It must happen. Why? So that the Scriptures could be fulfilled. And, what’s Jesus saying to these people who were hoping the kingdom of God would come who were hoping Israel would become a source of worldwide blessing, as the Davidic king defeats His enemies, and makes the world right again?

Jesus is saying you have to go back and look at all those prophecies about the kingdom and how God was going to establish the kingdom again. While the Pharisees were right, God is going to establish His kingdom, and it’s true He was going to send a rescuer to deliver them, they didn’t understand the full extent of what they needed to be delivered from. As they looked at the prophets, the promise, and their situation, they were thinking the real problem is Rome. As the Pharisees looked back at the former generations of Israelites, they were wondering why are in this situation, why weren’t they able to establish the kingdom? And their solution, was, that it must be because they didn’t keep the law well enough, so what we need to do, is try harder. That’s why the Pharisees existed. And, they thought, if we are really careful and try hard enough then God can just come and establish the kingdom through the Messiah by defeating their enemies. In other words, they thought the main reason, the kingdom that was promised in the Old Testament hadn’t been established yet was because of physical enemies like Rome. And while obviously, that was a problem, and the Old Testament does promise those enemies would eventually, be defeated, Jesus makes it clear, those physical enemies aren’t the only obstacles to God achieving the Kingdom plan because the real, problems are way worse.

What problems did Jesus have to deal with that were even bigger than the occupation of Rome?

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For one thing of course there’s Satan. God said in Genesis 3 that Satan was going to have be defeated. And obviously, how are we going to have peace on earth, unless Satan is dealt with? Then there’s also our sin and the consequences of our sin. And, that’s really the issue the Old Testament prophets were pointing out that people in Jesus’ day were continually missing.

For the kingdom of God to be established, the consequences of sin obviously had to be dealt, which is why before Jesus, would be established as the great conquering, ruling Davidic King, He would come and keep the law of God perfectly for those who couldn’t, He would die, as a final sacrifice, so that we could be cleansed and forgiven, and able to live with God, and He would rise again, to defeat death, so that He could rule forever, just the way God promised He would.

For the kingdom of God to be established, the problem in our own hearts, has to be corrected, as well. Which is why in the Old Testament, God makes a final promise, which we call the New Covenant, which we haven’t really gotten to talk about where God will perform an awesome work of the Spirit, to give spiritual life to those who were dead, and enable them to keep God’s commands and be a holy kingdom that truly does image Him.

It’s just so awesome, the Old Testament. I know it’s hard to understand sometimes. But keep your eye on the big picture and you’ll see the problem with us as humans is worse than we think it is. It’s not just our circumstances or our situation. It’s our hearts. No matter all the advantages God gives us, we won’t ever be able to get ourselves back into the Garden, we won’t ever be able to fix this world so that it becomes what God designed it to be. But God can. And He’s promised He will, by sending a Savior, who will not only defeat our physical enemies, but also triumph over Satan, provide lasting peace with God, and reverse the curse, just the way God said He would, all the way back at the beginning.

**DISCUSSION**

1. What were some reasons the Jewish people were so interested in knowing when the kingdom of God was going to come?

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2. Why is the exile of Israel such a big problem for them and really for the world?

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3. How did the Old Testament prophets give the Israelites hope about the exile?

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4. What were some of things about Jesus that made people think he was the great Davidic king the Old Testament promised? What were some of the things about Jesus that might have made them wonder if he was that promised One?

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5. Why did Jesus have to die to fulfill the work of Messiah?

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**Messiah**

When you talk with people about Jesus I wonder what you would most want them to know about Him? Now that assumes, of course, that you do talk with other people about Jesus.

If you are not talking with people about Jesus, you probably need to go back and make sure you have really seen Jesus, because He’s the kind of person, if you are seeing Him for who He is, that, you are going to be talking about.

There are certain people that are just so big and so important that you have to talk about them. And Jesus is definitely one of them.

What are some of the qualities about Jesus that amaze you most?

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The question, is not, so much, if, you are talking about Jesus, but, instead, as you are talking with other people about Jesus what is it that you most want those people, to know about Him? What do you think is the first thing they need to know?

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Look at John 20:31. What does John say is the reason he wrote his gospel?

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And so if you asked John why did you go to all this work to write this gospel, he would say, well, one reason is so that you would believe Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah. Matthew had a similar goal. That’s why he begins his gospel with this long list of names, linking Jesus to the Old Testament, specifically to David, which maybe seems boring to us, but serves a very big purpose, because he’s wanting us to see Jesus really is the Promised, Messiah.

He writes, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.” And you know, Mark is the same. “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

And it’s not just the gospel writers that felt this was important, we see the same, in the book of Acts, as we look at the way the early church witnessed.

How does Peter’s first great sermon end in Acts 2:36?

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And, then Acts 5:42, we find a summary statement of the way the leaders of the early church went about doing ministry. What does Luke say they were teaching and preaching every day?

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And it makes sense that they spent so much time on this, because this is a big part of what the whole Bible is about. As we open up our Bibles and start reading through the Old Testament, God’s giving us pictures of the Messiah and what He’ll be like and what He’ll do, so that we’ll be ready for Him when He comes. It’s like history before it happens, and then it happens, and in the New Testament, the writers are saying this is Him, this is the one we’ve all been talking about.

This was part of Paul’s witnessing strategy, actually. Luke tells us in Acts 17:3, “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

That’s basically a two point sermon. Paul said when you read the Old Testament you will see that the Messiah, whoever He was, must suffer and die and rise again and this stuff you have been hearing about this Jesus and what happened back in Judea, this Jesus is the fulfillment of that. He’s the Messiah we have been waiting on, which is a big part of what the gospel of Luke’s about as well.

It is not surprising that Luke who was such good friends with Paul went about writing this gospel to make pretty much the same point. He doesn’t want us to think that Jesus and what’s happening with Jesus is something new, out of the blue, but instead he wants to show us that it is a continuation and fulfillment of the great plan of God that’s revealed first in the Old Testament. In fact, this is a big part of his whole purpose, actually.

Luke begins his gospel by saying that he wants to help us be certain. But, certain about what? Fortunately that is not really a difficult question to answer, because if Luke begins the gospel by saying that he wants us to be certain, he ends the gospel by showing us some of the followers of Christ, disciples, who were struggling with being uncertain. It’s like he has an introduction, very straightforward, I want you to be certain, and then he has a conclusion, this is what I want you to be certain about, this is where I want you to end up after reading all this stuff I have told you about Jesus.

And maybe you know the story. It’s found in Luke 24. There are these men who are walking along the road to Emmaus and they are discouraged, when Jesus comes up alongside of them and they are kept by God from recognizing him and he asks them what they are discouraged about. And what were they are discouraged about is the fact that they had been studying their Bibles and were thinking Jesus was the Messiah that the Bible talked about, but now he was dead. They were confused about a how a dead Jesus could be the Messiah they were hoping for.

Now what’s so crazy about this story is the fact that Jesus for so long had been telling his disciples exactly what was going to happen, he was going to die, rise again and come back. And these disciples themselves say that there was someone who came and said that Jesus had in fact risen from the dead, which makes you think they should have been totally rejoicing at this point and not discouraged or uncertain, but what’s happening is that they had idea in their minds of what a Messiah was supposed to be and it was set in stone that even when Jesus told them how it was going to happen and even when it happened, they still couldn’t get it because it didn’t match up to what they thought a Messiah was supposed to be.

And I think that is a big part of the uncertainty Luke is meaning to address about Jesus.

There are these people who are followers of Christ. They are excited about some of what’s been going on, but then they are looking at what’s happening with Jesus, his death and then what’s happening with the Jews, how most of them are rejecting him, and they are looking at what’s happening with the church, how they are being persecuted, and they are looking at what they thought about the Old Testament, and they are like, did we get this whole right?

Is Jesus really the Messiah the Old Testament was talking about? It’s kind of like they are in the situation of John the Baptist when he was in prison about to be beheaded. You remember when he sent his disciples to Jesus, “um, this is a little different than exactly how I thought it was going to go down, are you the Messiah or are we supposed to be looking for someone else?” And what Luke wants us to know is that the problem isn’t with Jesus and how he was going about things, the problem is more with us and the fact that we aren’t paying enough attention to what the Old Testament says about the Messiah and what he would come and do.

Listen to how Jesus puts it to those disciples on the road to Emmaus. “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer and enter into His glory?” Even though they were there with Jesus the whole time, they missed him because they didn’t understand and didn’t believe what the Old Testament had to say about the Messiah.

The reason they missed him was not due to a problem in the Old Testament, but a problem in them. Jesus was like, this was plain, that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and enter His glory, and you are missing me, because you missed that.

And you know, I don’t want us to spend all this time in the Bible this year and end up the same place as the followers at least right here at this moment where Jesus calls them foolish. But I think it’s possible, not so much because we don’t believe what the Old Testament says about the Messiah, but because **we don’t know it.**

We don’t see the big connection between the Old Testament promises and Jesus.

Some of us are familiar with this term, Messiah, and if you haven’t heard it like that, at least I think all of you have heard of the term Christ, Jesus Christ. We call ourselves Christians. We are followers of the Messiah.

**But what does Messiah even mean really? And what is its significance? And what does the Old Testament have to say about what the Messiah would do and what the Messiah would be like?**

How would you define the word Messiah?

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We can start at the beginning, **with the meaning of Messiah.**

And we are going to do some Bible study together, you are going to have to work with me some, we are going to look at a number of passages of Scripture by the time we are done, because I want you to appreciate just how amazing this truth is that is fulfilled in Christ. I really think your understanding of Christ, the Lord Jesus, and Luke, what’s he’s telling us about him, will be limited if you don’t get what we are talking about. What does it mean that Jesus is the Messiah?

We can start really simple, with the word itself.

The term Messiah as a title, came from an everyday word that basically meant to anoint someone or something with oil. It could even be used for rubbing oil on something or smearing oil over something, there’s even a place where it is used for painting something.

That was sort of its common usage as a verb. But it became a title along the way.

And it became a title, I think because of the way they would often use oil. You are familiar with how in the Old Testament, when they wanted to set certain things or certain people apart for a specific use, and especially God’s use, they would anoint those objects or those people with oil.

For example, Aaron. Leviticus 8:10-12. “Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. (That means to set them apart for God.) And he sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times and anointed the altar and all its utensil and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them. And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him to consecrate him.”

Priests were anointed, and that’s the word there anointed, that becomes the basis for the title we use Messiah. It wasn’t just priests who were anointed though. It was also prophets and kings as well.

In 1 Kings 19:16 we read, “And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha son of Saphhat of Abelmeholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.”

So the Messiah is literally, the anointed one. And usually it refers to a person, someone acting as a go-between, a representative between God and man as either a prophet, priest or king. That’s the basic meaning of the word. These were all messiahs in the Old Testament, and it sounds funny to say it like that, because we are so used to thinking of Messiah with a capital M, the Messiah, but all these individuals were messiahs with little m’s, they were set apart and strengthened by God for a specific purpose, to be used by Him to serve His people in very specific ways.

That’s the basic meaning of the term Messiah, anointed one.

Now let’s talk, **about the work of the Messiah.** What is a messiah? What does a messiah do?

The reason it’s helpful to know about these other messiahs is because what they do is they help us understand the work of the One great Messiah.

God’s kind. He knows we need help if we are going to understand the work of the Messiah so he gives us little pictures throughout the Old Testament, to set us up for understanding the work of the One true Messiah with a capital M.

These messiahs point to the Messiah, to Jesus as Messiah as prophet, priest and king. And, that’s maybe, you could say a broad understanding of the work of the Messiah.

We are sinners and we need someone to represent us to God, we need a priest. We are ignorant and we need someone to teach us about God, we need a prophet. And we are rebels, we need someone to rule over us, we need a King. And part of what makes Jesus so exciting, is that as we read the Old Testament, we keep meeting these prophets, these priests, these kings, these messiahs who no matter how great they were could fulfill all three of these roles, and even as they fulfill the role given them, they are inadequate. It’s only Jesus who can do all this and do it all perfectly. It’s in Him that all the offices come together, that’s part of what Luke is wanting to show us. When we say Jesus is Messiah, we are saying He is the one who tells us about God, the one who makes the sacrifice so we can come to God, and the one who rules over us for God.

But you know I think maybe we can get a little more specific than that. The Messiah had those roles, but there’s something even more pointed in the Old Testament’s description of Him. He’s coming for a specific task and we can get a picture of that task that by turning to another illustration of a messiah in the Old Testament in Isaiah 45. It is one of the most helpful illustrations of the messiahs work though it comes from a bit of a surprising place actually, and that’s a pagan king.

In Isaiah 45, Isaiah speaks of Cyrus as being God’s anointed. Messiah with a little m. Which is a strange way to talk about a pagan king. But as we look at what God says about Cyrus’ work, we understand a little more about what it would have meant to be a messiah.

**The first thing was that he was chosen by God.**

That is how come he can be called a messiah in the first place. This wasn’t something that was Cyrus’ doing. We don’t even know if he actually knew about it or accepted it. But either way, God was picking him up to accomplish a purpose.

Verse 1 says, “Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped.” Which was the way it was all throughout the Old Testament when it came to being one of God’s anointed ones. You didn’t, as someone has said, “volunteer to be king. You didn’t volunteer to be a priest. You didn’t volunteer to be a prophet. And if you tried to take that role, without being specially set apart for it, you would face the consequences.”

When we talk about Messiah we are talking about a divinely chosen individual. That’s what the Jews in Jesus’ day were looking for, someone selected by God and endowed with special responsibilities and authority.

The second thing we can see about Cyrus was **that he was raised up and set apart to serve God in specific ways.**

In other words, a messiah had a God given job to do. For Cyrus, Isaiah tells us, it was “to subdue nations before him, and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him, that the gates may not be closed.”

And that’s why sometimes you will read in other places the Old Testament of someone being anointed to the Lord. God had something he was going to get done for His people and He chooses to get it done through a human representative or mediator. Even with Cyrus, his accomplishments were really God’s, because it was God who was working through him as his agent.

Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 44:28 that God “says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose.”

Which again is at the heart of what the New Testament is talking about when it talks about the Messiah, the Messiah is a mediator, someone who acts for God on behalf of men and with Jesus, the true Messiah on behalf of men to God.

Now with Cyrus, who as messiah had a purpose, what exactly was it according to Isaiah, and this again leads to understand something about messiahs.

The third thing we see about Cyrus as a messiah, **was that his job was to rescue Israel, to establish the people of God and to pave the way for the extension of God’s salvation to the end of the earth.**

Isaiah 45:4, “I will give you the treasures of the darkness and the hoards in secret places…For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen, I call you by name, I name you, though you do not know me.”

But not just for the sake of Israel. Isaiah 45:22, “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is no other. “

That’s the ultimate work of the Messiah. The Messiah is chosen, consecrated, and used by God to accomplish His salvation for His people Israel and for people in nations all over the earth.

And I bring up Cyrus, and those other little messiahs because when the New Testament talks about Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, all those ideas are behind it. God knows we need illustrations and so He uses these small people as an illustration of what Jesus would do.

They are little messiahs, Jesus is the one True Messiah. That’s the point.

As someone has written, “He was the comprehensive anointed one who is the ultimate king, the ultimate priest, and the ultimate prophet who is the pure and true and most elevate ruler, who is the one great priest, who provides the one great sacrifice for sin and that sacrifice He makes Himself, and He is the true and living prophet, being the very Word of God. It is critical to understand this because this literally is what is set up in the Old Testament to be fulfilled in the New Testament. That’s why the word Messiah in its Greek form, Christ, appears 500 times, because the message of the New Testament is the final, complete, comprehensive Messiah, looked forward in the Old Testament. Every anointed king, every anointed priest, every anointed prophet in the Old Testament was just a man, and a sinful man at that. They all served God, but not in the way the great Messiah could.”

Because you see when the Old Testament talks about the work of the messiah, it doesn’t only talk about these small messiahs, it doesn’t leave it at that, with human kings and prophets and priests, but it takes all these small messiahs and uses them to point us towards a greater hope and that is ONE GREAT MESSIAH, ONE GREAT DELIVERER who God would set apart, God would enable, God would use to rescue His people and establish His kingdom.

The Psalmist speaks of him in Psalm 2. Listen to this: “Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers of the earth have taken counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast their cords away from us.’ He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ‘As for me, I have set my King on Zion, on my holy hill. I will tell of the decree, the Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potters vessel.”

What does God say He’s going to do for His Son, the Messiah?

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And this is important because it helps us understand why while God’s people might have been frustrated with Roman domination, they were also very hopeful. They lived for the future, because they had this hope of this coming day when God will judge the wicked nations and exercise His rule over them through the one He has anointed, the Messiah. And that hope was massive, because really, in a sense, while not every text in the Old Testament is about this Christ, the Messiah, this is the dominating theme of pretty much every story it is telling, this coming Deliverer.

You see, there are all kinds of terms and descriptions the Old Testament prophets use to describe him, not just this title Messiah. Daniel talks about him in Daniel 7:13 as the Son of Man.

“I saw in the night visions, and behold with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting doming, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

What was God going to do for the Son of Man?

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Zechariah describes him as the branch, and Isaiah as the Servant of the Lord. He’s got numerous chapters talking about Him. And the big thing to understand is that regardless of what particular term is used to describe this person in the Old Testament, the idea of this deliverer, is a major thread that runs through the entire Old Testament. There’s this great promise of a man God would use as His representative to rescue His people and then there are all these other promises which explain and elaborate and reveal more and more who He will be and what He will do, which is why when Jesus came on the scene and said the kingdom of God is here, people started getting excited. They had been longing for this day for hundreds of years. From the very beginning, the Jewish people were hoping for a day when their God would reveal His sovereignty over all the earth, when He through His Messiah would destroy all other so called gods and bring all other peoples to His feet, which of course is part of why people were confused, when Jesus was crucified.

Because they must have been wondering, what exactly happened? If Jesus is God’s anointed, and if he is God’s representative as prophet, priest and king, and if his role is to bring in God’s salvation for His people and exercise His rule over the universe, how come he ended up with the Jews rejecting him and actually pursuing him all the way to the cross?

There’s a couple different answers to that, but the main one the New Testament offers up, is **because it was necessary to fulfill the Old Testament promise.** They say, if you are confused, you need to look more carefully at Jesus’ life and the characteristics of the coming Messiah as revealed in the Old Testament. And, maybe we can close with this, the third point. We have talked about the meaning of Messiah, and the basic work of a Messiah, **now the characteristics of the Messiah the Old Testament promised.** And this is where we could get really lost, because there’s just so much, but what I want to show you is how from the beginning of the Bible, God’s revealing more and more about exactly who the Messiah is going to be and how He’s going to accomplish His task.

It’s like the Old Testament is a pregnant lady. The Messiah is there in Genesis in embryonic form, like the first month of a woman’s pregnancy, and then as you move on through the Old Testament, her belly keeps getting bigger and bigger, until you finally move to the New Testament, and out pops Jesus. So, let’s look at the following passages together and identify what the Old Testament tells us about the Messiah.

Genesis 3:15:

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Isaiah 7:14:

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Genesis 12:1-3:

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Genesis 49:10:

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2 Samuel 7:12-13:

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This is important, because He was coming to be king. Though born of a human mother, this Messiah king will be also fully God. (Psalm 45:6; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6) Time and time again, Israel had been disappointed by human rulers and it was evident they needed someone who was more.

Though coming to be king and though the majestic God, this Messiah was to be born in a humble place called:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Micah 5:2)

Isaiah 40:3:

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Isaiah 9:1-2:

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Zechariah 9:9:

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Malachi 3:1:

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Isaiah 35:5-6:

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Isaiah 49:7:

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Isaiah 61:1-3:

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Psalm 118:22:

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Psalm 41:9; 55:12-13:

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Zechariah 11:13

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Micah 5:1:

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Isaiah 50:6:

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Psalm 22:7-8:

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His own people would reject him because he was not what they expected. His whole life would be characterized by suffering and not royalty and those who sought to kill him would view it as the punishment he deserved. When put to trial, he would not make a defense. (Isaiah 53) And that trial would lead to a crucifixion type death. (Psalm 22)

Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10:

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Psalm 34:20:

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Zechariah 13:7:

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Isaiah 53:9:

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But he will remain uncorrupted, (Psalm 16:10) because he will rise miraculously from the grave. After which He will ascend into heaven and sit at God’s right hand until His enemies are defeated. (Psalm 110:1) He will come again in judgment upon the nations. (Isaiah 63:1-6; Psalm 96:11-13; Jeremiah 23:5) He will reign in perfect, peace, justice, and righteousness as King over the entire earth. (Psalm 2:6-12; Psalm 72:11) God will cause Israel to look upon Him, to mourn and to repent. (Zechariah 12:10) He will unify and restore the nation of Israel. (Ezekiel 36:16-38) He will bring salvation to Israel and reign over her as king. (Micah 5:2) He will be given glory and everlasting authority over all the nations of the earth and His kingdom will be established forever. (Daniel 7:13-14)

Which gives us a start to understanding the Old Testament’s description of the Messiah, but I think it makes the point what happened with Jesus shouldn’t be that big of a surprise, because it’s exactly what God predicted would happen to the Messiah throughout the Old Testament.

These prophecies are so amazing, because they extend over a thousand years. They are in all different books of the Old Testament. They are there in the oldest writer Moses and they are there in the last prophet, Malachi. They are all over, they are varied, they talk about small details and big events, they are different, some talk about the Messiah as king and others as a man of sorrows, but when all these prophecies are examined and compared with the life of Jesus of Nazareth, we will see that they receive their fulfillment in him and not one is inconsistent with the way his life played out. If you will just look at these Old Testament descriptions of the work of the Messiah, of the person of the Messiah, you will see that Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the promises, perfectly. **And once you have met Jesus in the Old Testament like this, then you are ready to really see him in the New Testament.** And I don’t know about you, but it kind of makes my heart burn with excitement.

That’s what it did for those disciples who were walking with Jesus in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus.

Luke tells us “beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” And when he left, verse 32, their eyes were opened and “They said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures.” And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying ‘The Lord has risen indeed!”

What really fired these followers of Christ up, what turned them around from disappointed, defeated individuals to people who were going to put their life on the line for Christ and His cause, was when they saw the plan of God and how it came together in Christ.

The Old Testament and the New Testament are not disconnected books.“The purpose of the history of redemption in the Old Testament is to set out and explain the person and work of Christ in advance of His incarnation.”

God has a great plan, He’s been working on a long time, to fix what man’s messed up, and when we look at Jesus, we are not looking at God’s plan being sidetracked, no when we really understand the Old Testament, we are seeing God’s plan steadily advancing, right on schedule.

**DISCUSSION**

1. Is it possible to understand who Jesus is without understanding the Old Testament?

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2. What in particular did the New Testament writers want us to understand about who Jesus was?

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3. What does the word Messiah literally mean?

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4. Who was anointed in the Old Testament? What does that tell us about the role of the Messiah?

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4. What can we learn from Cyrus about what the Messiah was to do?

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5. What did Jewish people expect the one true great Messiah the Old Testament promised to do?

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6. Which of the prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament stood out to you?

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7. How would you describe the story of the Old Testament given what we’ve discussed so far?

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8. Watch the video below. Take notes. Be ready to discuss what you learned.

https://youtu.be/3dEh25pduQ8