

Reading the Bible Forwards and Backwards

Session 2: Law and Gospel

Table Discussion: Questions

1. Psalm 119:97 says, “Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day”
 - ▶ How can a Christian apply this Psalm without falling into legalism? What is your biggest obstacle to loving God’s Law?
2. Do Christians just arbitrarily choose which laws to ignore and to accept? How do you decide which laws to follow and which ones don’t apply?

Continuity/Discontinuity OT and NT

The problem with making a stark discontinuity between OT and NT:

- ▶ If we don't acknowledge some continuity, we run into serious problems
 - ▶ Does the gospel imply that the OT or the Law was bad?
 - ▶ Does the Bible provide two different gods or two different modes of salvation?
 - ▶ Does the discontinuity between OT and NT support Anti-semitism?
- ▶ Can the OT be relevant for the Christian?



Continuity/Discontinuity OT NT

The problem with *exaggerating the continuity*

- ▶ Jesus and early Christians had some problem with those who clung to the Law. What was it?
- ▶ Was the problem just legalism? Is legalism just a perversion of the good OT law?
- ▶ If legalism were the only problem, does that make Jesus just a reformer? In other words, if he got them to treat the Law biblically (not legalistically) like Elijah or Malachi would the problem be solved?
- ▶ Are we still under the obligation to perform the Law?
- ▶ Do the blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience apply today?

Origins of the Law: the Garden

A. God's original design for humanity

WCF 19.1 God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

- ▶ The **Moral Law** is not just a requirement, but a reflection of the moral nature of God. God is holy, just, and good. Man is created in God's image.
- ▶ One can see a form of all of the Ten Commandments in Genesis 1-2 prior to sin entering the world.

Covenant of Works: Obedience = Life or Disobedience = Death



Creation

Judgment

Origins of the Law

- ▶ After man's sin, all humanity is condemned and subject to death
- ▶ Romans 5:14 “death reigned from Adam...”



Origins of the Gospel

- ▶ Genesis 3:15 promise enters into the realm of hopelessness. God offers hope to Adam and his descendants with the promise of life by His gracious act.



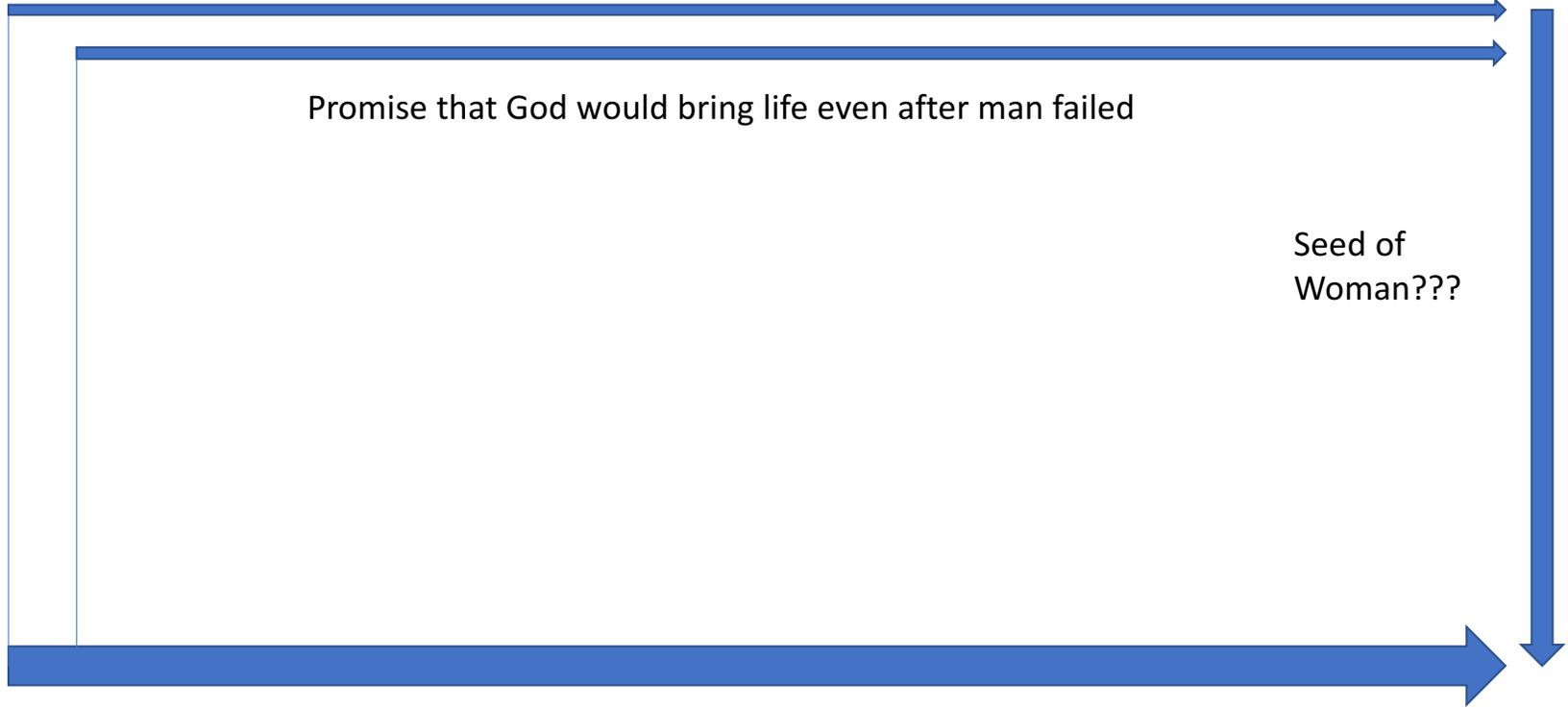
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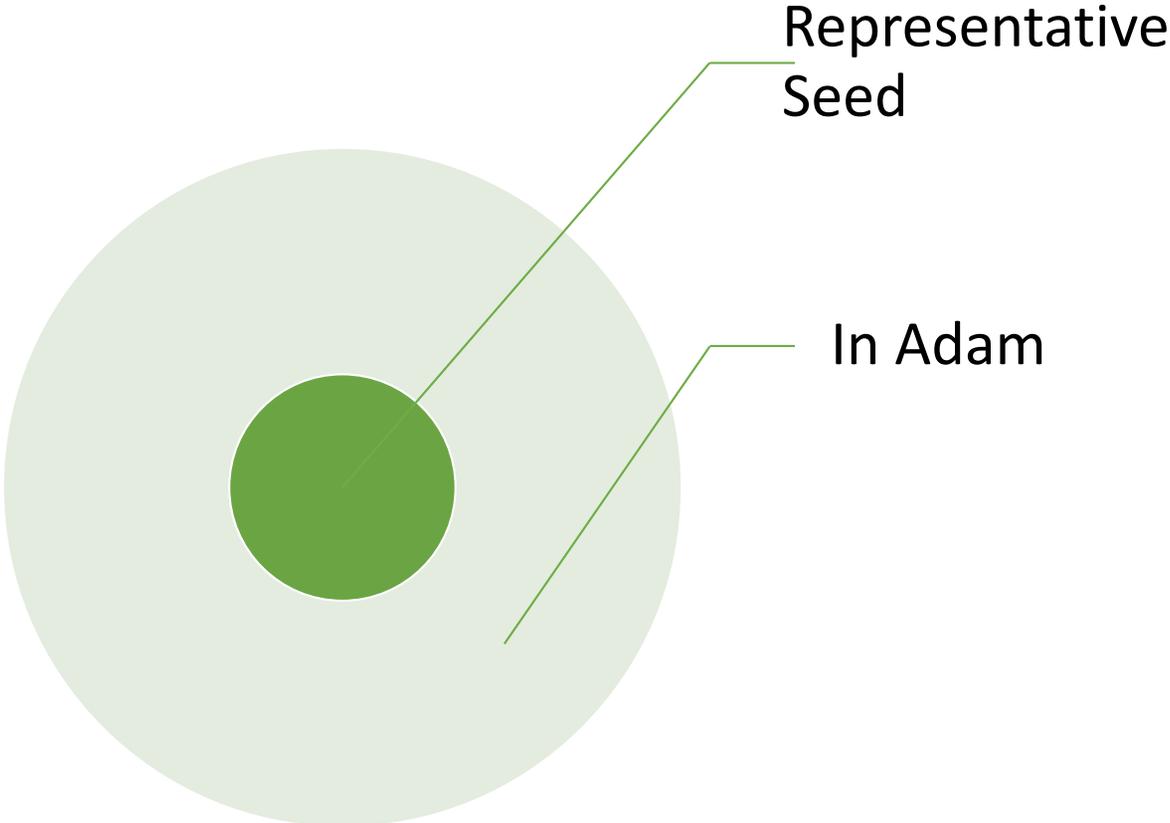
Promise that God would bring life even after man failed

Seed of
Woman???

Creation Fall Promise Gen. 3:15

Judgment





Origins of the Gospel continued

- ▶ Promise of grace is made to Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3

[1] Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. [2] And I will make of you a **great nation**, and I will **bless you** and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the **families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

- ▶ Genesis 15 God makes an oath that he will guarantee (upon threat of self-destruction)
- ▶ The picture of God’s redemption is getting clearer. But the question of how God will do this still lingers. Law seems out of the picture.

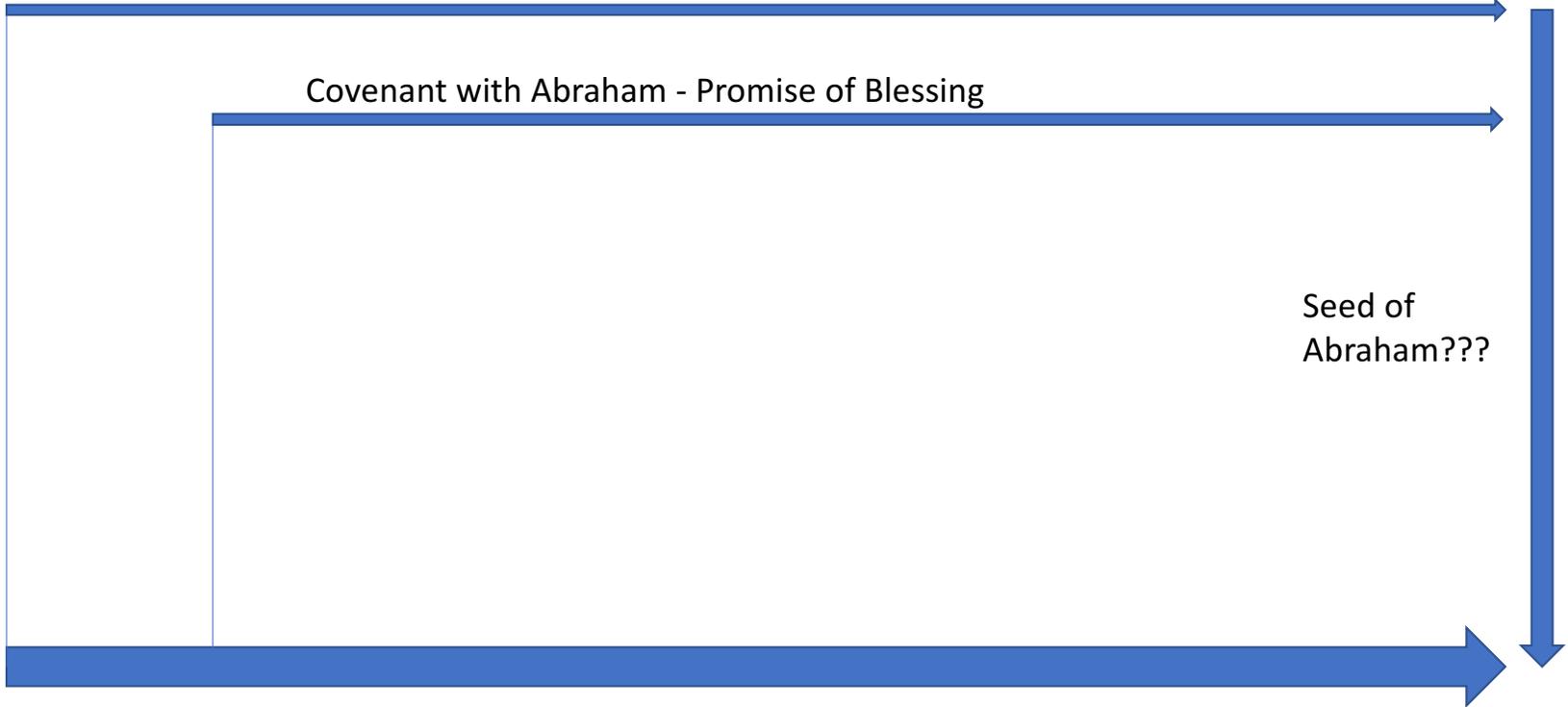
Covenant of Works to Adam and His Descendants

Covenant with Abraham - Promise of Blessing

Seed of
Abraham???

Creation/Fall

Judgment



The Law Returns? Nation of Israel

- ▶ God's people given the Law at Sinai through Moses

Blessings and Curses

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you this day” (Dt. 11:26-28).



The Law Returns? Nation of Israel

- ▶ People defined by ethnicity and land
- ▶ Three Types of Law: Jesus fulfills all three. WCF 19.3-4
 - ▶ Civil—Israel's government and civil laws
 - ▶ Ceremonial—Temple sacrifices and purity laws
 - ▶ Moral—Summarized in the 10 Commandments
- ▶ **Did this cancel out or replace the Gospel Promise?**

Did this cancel out or replace the Gospel Promise?

Galatians 3:16-18

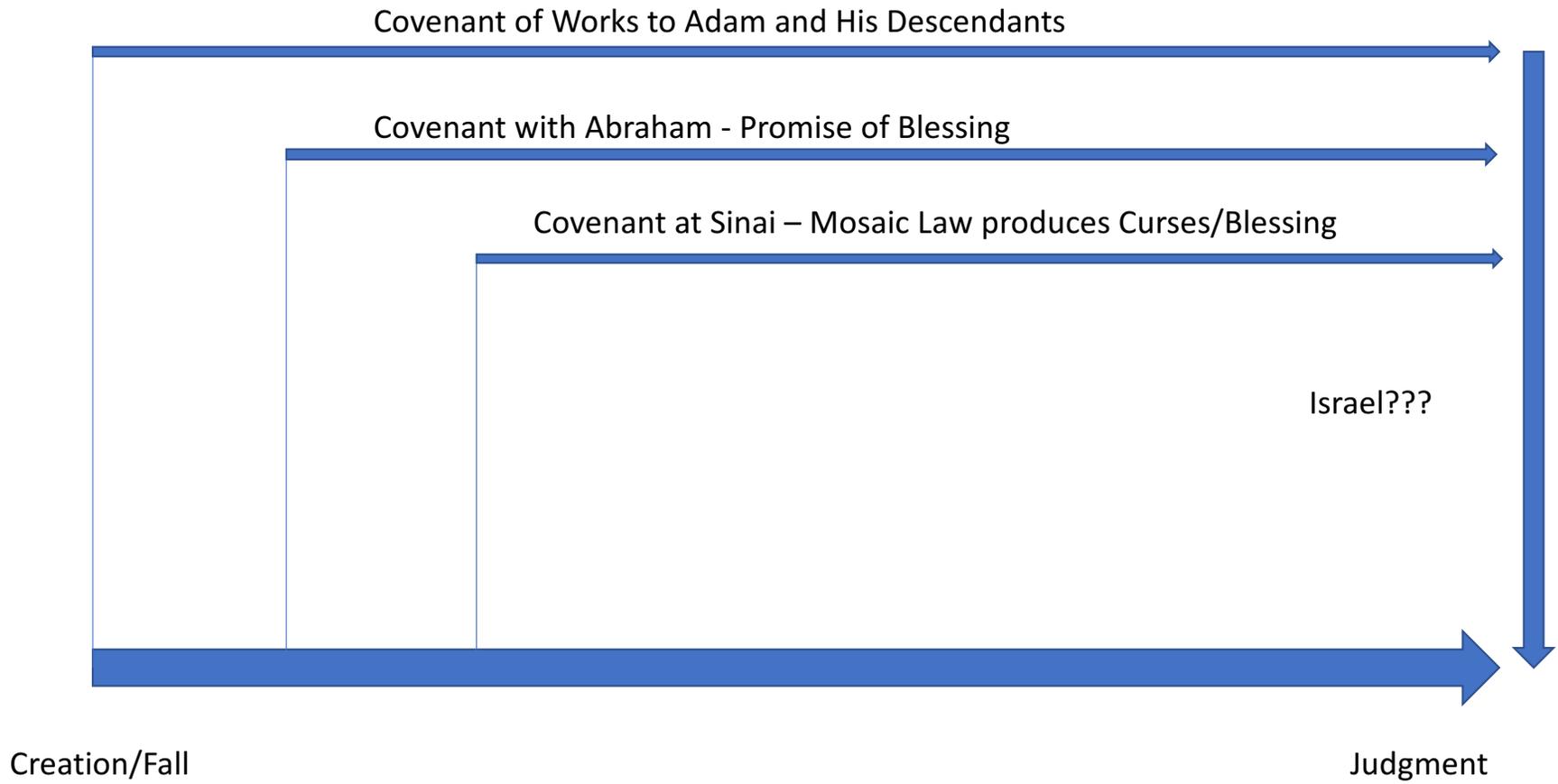
- ▶ [16] Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. [17] This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. [18] For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

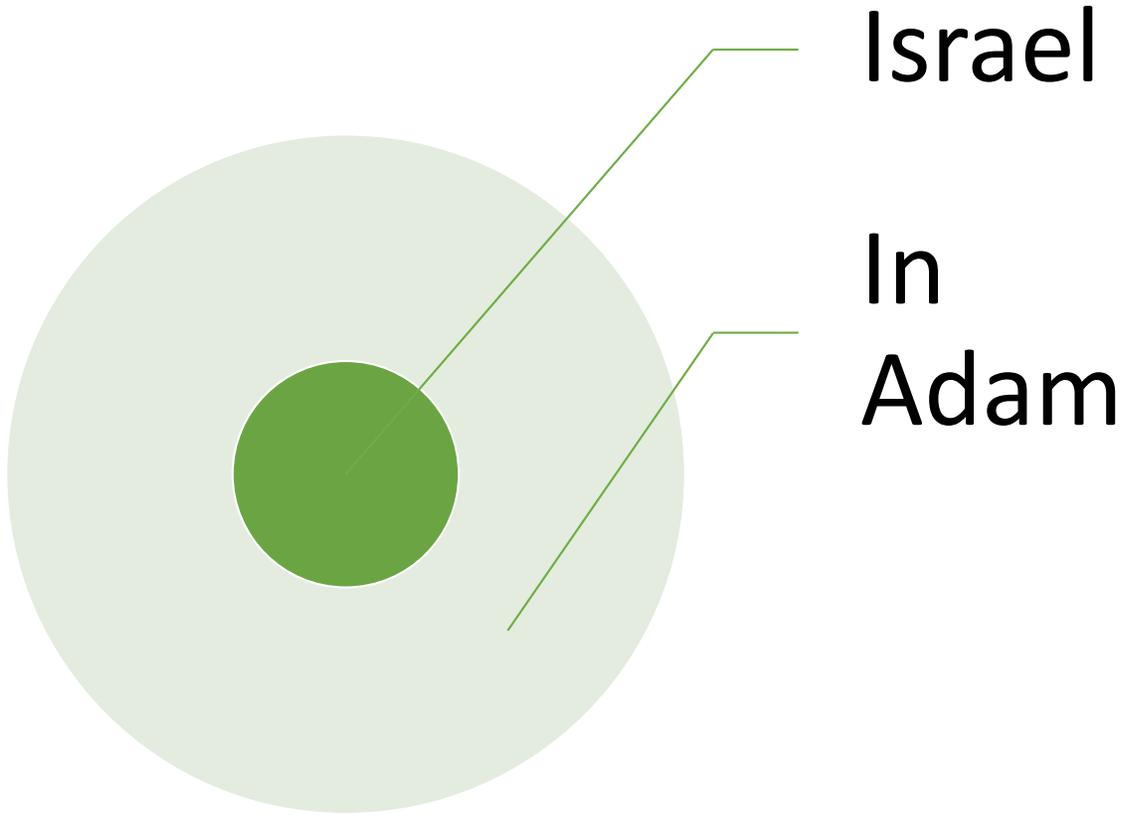


Two Levels of God's Relationship with Israel

- ▶ Typological Level:
 - ▶ Blessings/Curses on a physical/typological level
 - ▶ Recalls the covenant of works with Adam
- ▶ Gospel Promise Level:
 - ▶ Unconditional grace of redemption
 - ▶ Spiritual “how one gets to heaven” level
 - ▶ Israel saved by promise and system that prefigures Christ







Two Levels of God's Relationship with Israel

Habakkuk 2

- ▶ [1] I will take my stand at my watchpost
- ▶ and station myself on the tower,
- ▶ and look out to see what he will say to me,
- ▶ and what I will answer concerning my complaint.
- ▶ [2] And the LORD answered me...
- ▶ [3] For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
- ▶ it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
- ▶ If it seems slow, wait for it;
- ▶ it will surely come; it will not delay.
- ▶ [4] “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
- ▶ but the righteous shall live by his faith.



Why the Law?

► Restrained and Defined Israel

Galatians 3:21f

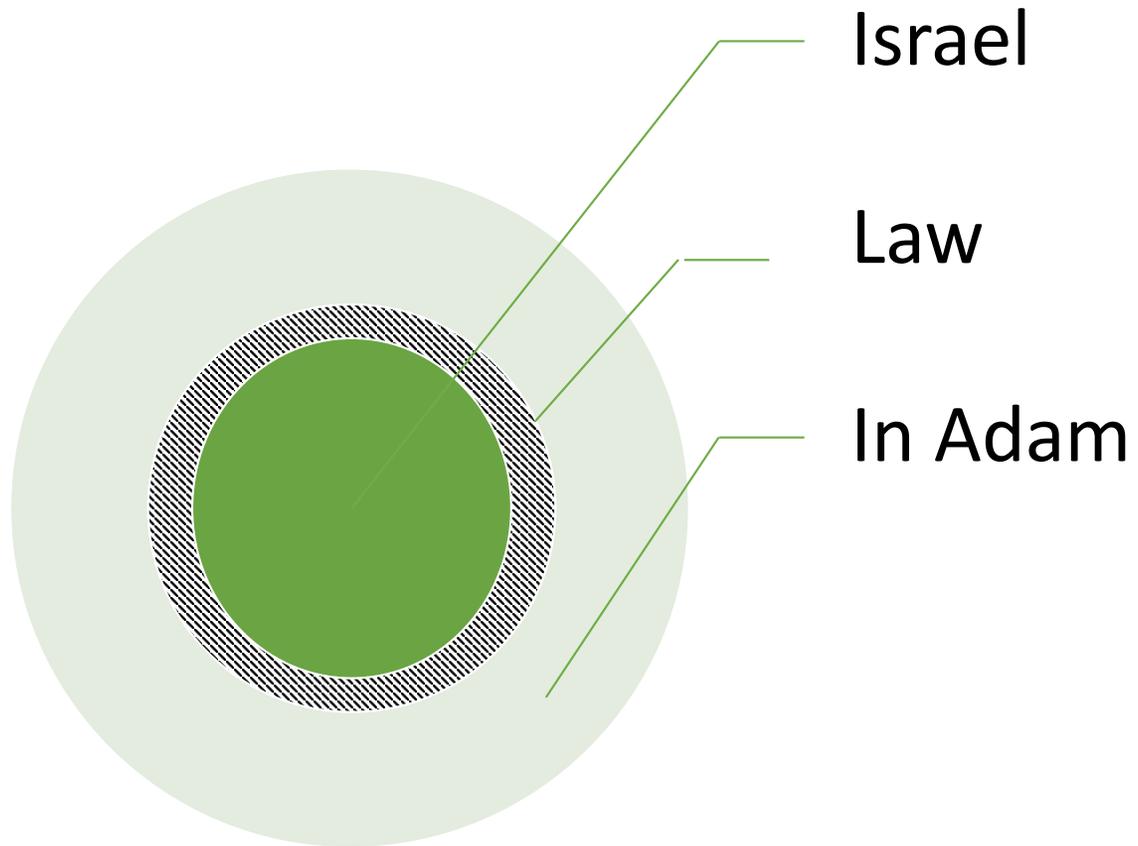
“Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”

Why the Law?

- ▶ Identified Israel as a representative of humanity
- ▶ Further zeroing in will come at Davidic Covenant 2 Samuel 7





Israel

Law

In Adam

Life Under the Mosaic Law

- ▶ Faithfulness to the Law was a good thing
 - ▶ Non-legalistic obeying the Law did happen!
 - ▶ Opposite of Law obedience was Idolatry and Sin
- ▶ Curses came with disobedience
 - ▶ God delivering punishment, not Assyrians, Babylonians, or Romans
 - ▶ Temporal curses came because of disobeying the Law
 - ▶ NT: many saw God using Rome to punish Israel and extend the Exile

Life Under the Mosaic Law

- ▶ Zeal for your own obedience and others is celebrated
- ▶ Phineas, Numbers 25
- ▶ Not bad to want Israel to repent from lawlessness
- ▶ Pre-conversion Paul the zealot
- ▶ Who did he persecute and why? Acts 9

[1] But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. [3] Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.

Did Christians teach that the Law is now Bad?

Paul's strong words about the Law

- ▶ “...by works of the law no one will be justified.” Galatians 2:16
- ▶ “For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin” Romans 3:20
- ▶ “For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.” Romans 4:15
- ▶ “For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse” Galatians 3:10
- ▶ “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” Philippians 3:9

Was the Law Bad?

- ▶ Romans 7:7f *“What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin...sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and righteous and good.”*

Was the Law Bad?

- ▶ Romans 8:3a...*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.*
- ▶ Important Equation

Law + “People in Adam” = Death

- ▶ It isn't bad, but it is bad for us.
 - ▶ If it is up to us to bring blessing through the Law, we are in deep trouble.

Was the Law Bad?

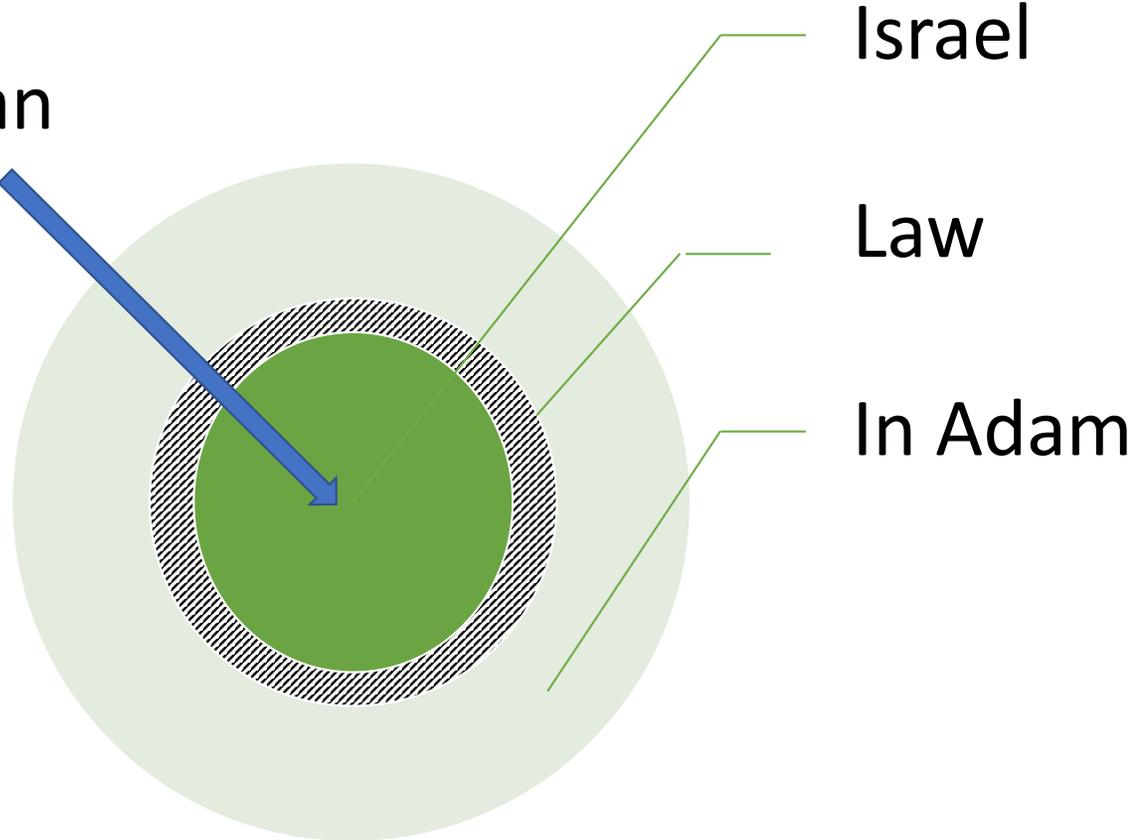
- ▶ Romans 8:3a...*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.*
- ▶ 8:3b...*by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us...*

Jesus came into humanity, into Israel, to redeem

► Galatians 3:4-7

[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. [6] And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

God/Man
Christ



Israel

Law

In Adam

Jesus came into humanity, into Israel, to redeem

- ▶ Romans 8:3a...*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.*
- ▶ 8:3b...*by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us...*
- ▶ 8:1 *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Covenant of Works to Adam and His Descendants

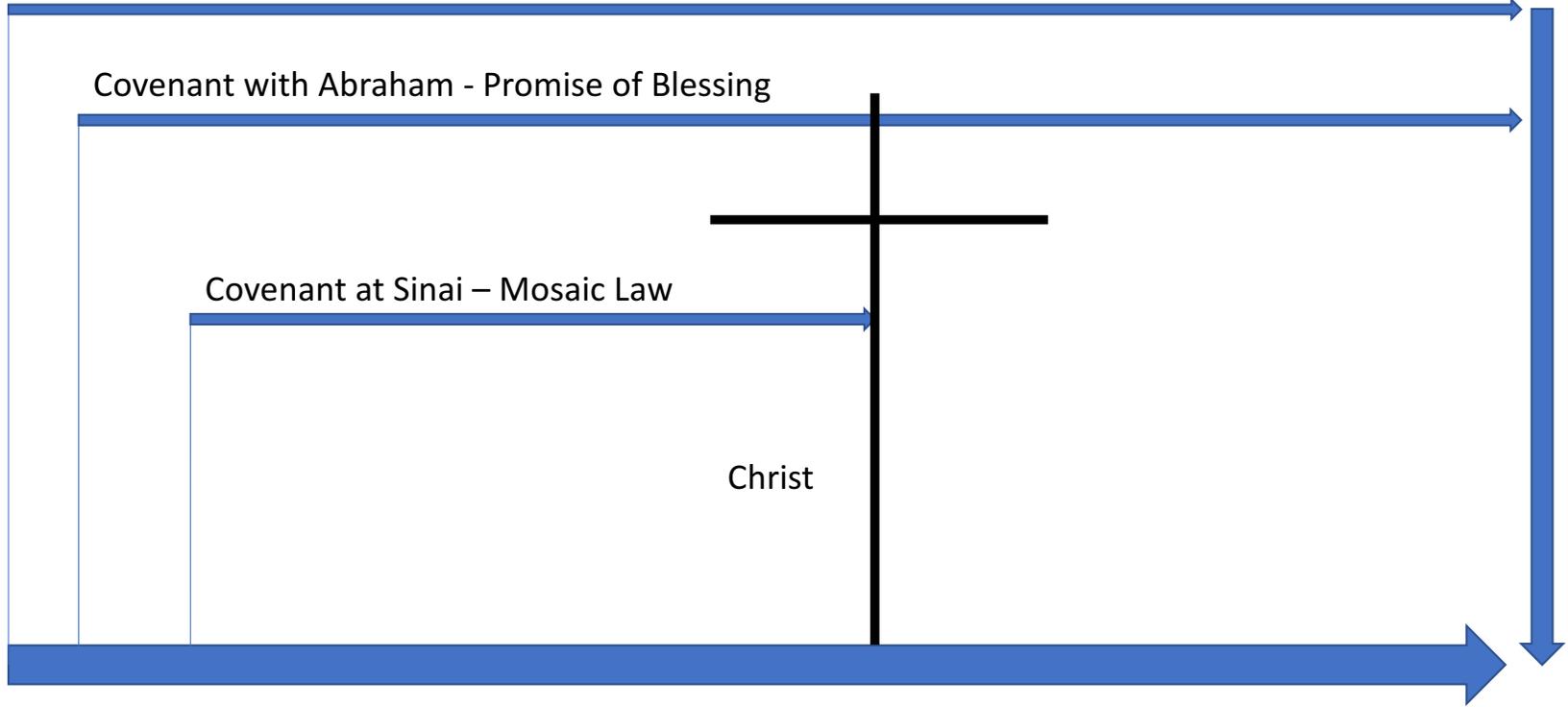
Covenant with Abraham - Promise of Blessing

Covenant at Sinai – Mosaic Law

Christ

Final Judgment

Creation/Fall



Jesus came into humanity, into Israel, to redeem

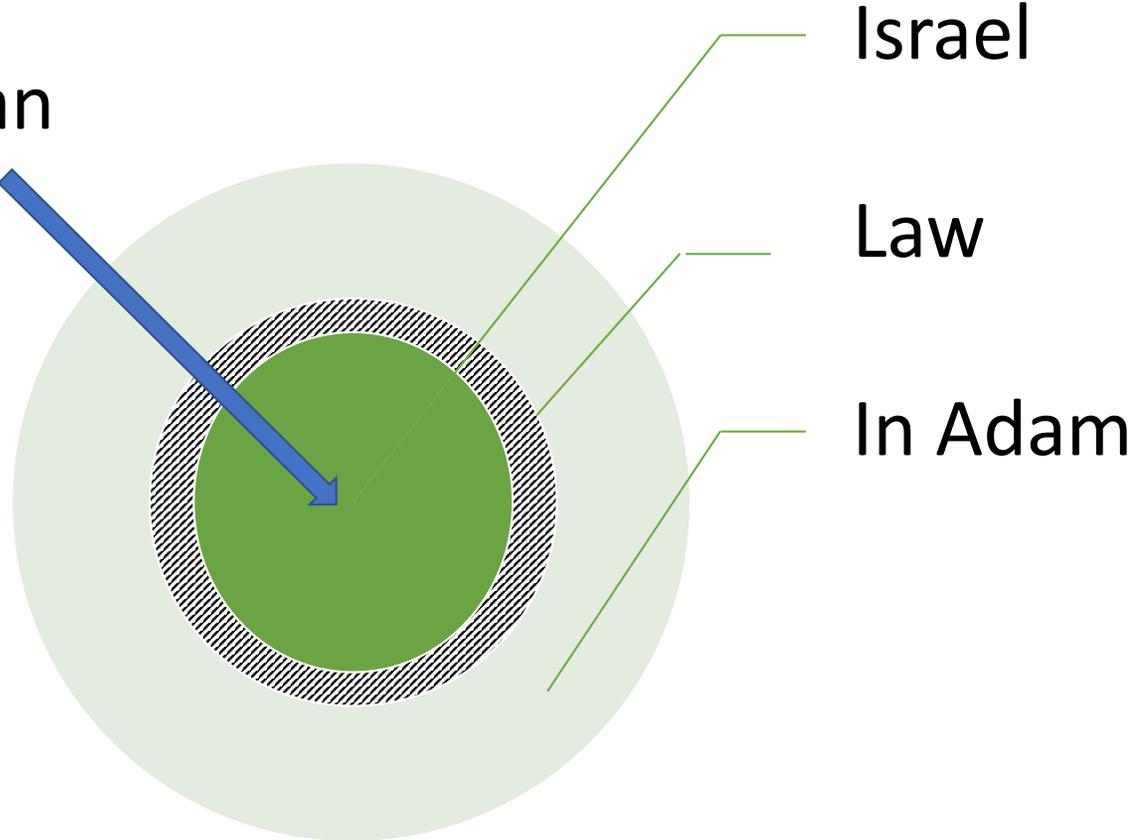
- ▶ What was the point of the Law?
- ▶ It defined a representative humanity: Israel
- ▶ God's intent was to further pass role to single representative: Messiah



Christ to fulfill not abolish the Law

- ▶ *[17] “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. [18] For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:17-18*
- ▶ *[4] For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Romans 10:4*

God/Man
Christ



Israel

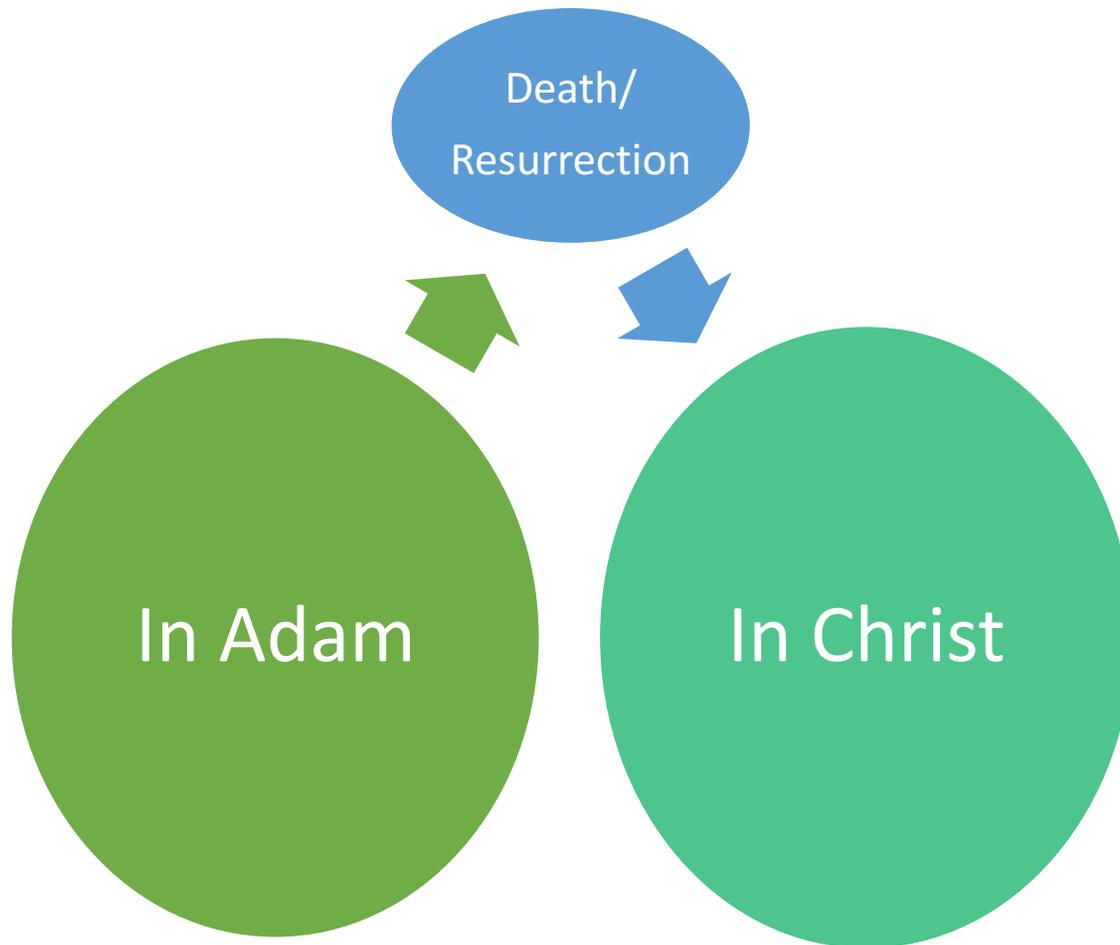
Law

In Adam

Christ comes into Adam to save us from Adam

► Romans 6:1-4

[1] What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.



Christ comes into Adam to save us from Adam

► Romans 7:4-6

[4] Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. [5] For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. [6] But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

What if you clung onto the Law?

- ▶ Misunderstood your Adam-ness

Sermon on the Mount: not intensification but clarification

Matthew 5:21

- ▶ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder...but I say, ‘anyone who is angry with his brother

Matthew 5:27

- ▶ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery...but I say, ‘everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent...

▶ Misunderstood significance of what Christ came to do



What if you clung onto the Law?

- ▶ What happens if we apply the Law to those still in Adam?
- ▶ How happens when the Church preaches Law to the world? In what ways do you see Christians preaching the Law to the world today?



The Law and the Christian

- ▶ Richard Gaffin: “*the antithesis between the law and the gospel ends the moment someone becomes a Christian.*”
- ▶ Three Uses of the Law: Moral Law remains and functions in the ways.
 - ▶ 1. A mirror reflecting the perfect righteousness of God. It exasperates us and shows us our need as sinners for a savior.
 - ▶ 2. To restrain evil: It doesn't change our hearts but it can inhibit lawlessness.
 - ▶ 3. Moral guide for believers: It tells us what we are being made into.



The Law and the Christian

- ▶ Many Christians feel confident in their understanding of grace in salvation but are confused about their role in sanctification.
- ▶ Do we do it all? Is it 50/50 cooperation with God? What about humanity's nature apart from God helps us answer this question?
 - ▶ *Richard Gaffin: "Briefly, apart from the gospel and outside of Christ the law is my enemy and condemns me. Why? Because God is my enemy and condemns me. But with the gospel and in Christ, united to him by faith, the law is no longer my enemy but my friend. Why? Because now God is no longer my enemy but my friend, and the law, his will, the law in its moral core, as reflective of his character and of concerns eternally inherent in his own person and so of what pleases him, is now my friendly guide for life in fellowship with God."*

The Law and the Christian

- ▶ No curse: WCF 20.1. *The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law;*
- ▶ Our motivation to obey the moral law has completely changed



The Law and the Christian

- ▶ Will this really work? Are you skeptical?
- ▶ “Duty compelled by love may sound like an undemanding religion until we recall that there is no more powerful force to motivate the human heart than love. Fear is not more powerful. Guilt is not more powerful. ‘There is nothing more powerful than love,’ writes the seventeenth-century English minister Samuel Bolton. ‘Things impossible to others are easy to them that love. Love knows no difficulties...Love is an affection that refuses to be put off by duties or difficulties which come between it and the person loved.’” Bryan Chapell

Q & A

- ▶ How should this change the way we read the OT?
- ▶ How does this change how we engage with our neighbor?
- ▶ How does this change how we see our relationship to the Law as a Christian?



How to read Israel under the Law?

- ▶ Not moral examples to follow or heroes
- ▶ God is the hero in his plan to redeem humanity
- ▶ Those who prove that humanity cannot obey the Law and deserve judgment.
- ▶ Those who hope in God's promise not based on their own efforts. Habakkuk 2
- ▶ Those who prefigure Christ in a negative way...their failure highlights Christ's amazing redemption

