

By His Stripes: Old Testament, Redemptive History, and the Death of the Messiah

Father, as we approach You in this moment, we recognize You the same today, yesterday, and forever. You are the eternal God who has established with Your people a love that You have had from before time. Your love has brought out a people whom You can rejoice in, a people who are saved by the blood of the Lamb, and a people who will spend eternity with You. As we reflect on these deep truths, we recognize that You have revealed Yourself throughout Scripture, Old and New Testament alike. We pray that You would reveal to us in some very small way in this lesson the connections between the Old and the New Testament in the whole of Your Scripture that testify to the eternal and unchanging God. Father, as we also approach You, we think of others who are grieving at this time. We pray that You would give comfort through Jesus Christ our Lord, who comforts us as well at all times. Use this lesson to Your glory, in Your wonderful name we pray. Amen.

Let us look at Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” I am sure you know the text; you probably do not even need to turn to it. That statement is so incredibly profound. It was profound back in the ancient Near Eastern context in the midst of the notion of multiple deities and deities that were at odds with one another. There was a deity that promoted chaos and one that promoted a resolution of chaos. Then there was this statement that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It was an organized plan; there was one true deity who created all that is around. This was a shocking statement in the ancient Near East. It would have also been shocking in the Greco-Roman world in the days of Paul and Jesus. It was a radical idea that there was a single true God who had created all that was around, heavens and earth, and that they were ordained by a divine plan that was good and true.

There were analogies and some philosophical systems, but they still represented multiple deities. The idea of the one God would have been a profound shock to many in the ancient world. It was already taught in Judaism, and Judaism had brought the banner of a true worship of the true one God throughout much of the Mediterranean world via the Diaspora. The notion was imbedded in the people, but the Christians came and proclaimed John 1, which begins with the very same phrase in Greek as was found in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. The phrase is *en arche*, “in the beginning,” and John proclaims, “In the beginning [*en arche*] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

This would have been a shock in the Greco-Roman world that not only was there a single true deity, but also that He became incarnate. Pagan religion proclaimed that gods walked around all the time, but the idea of one God walking around would have shocked even the Stoics who perhaps would have accepted a single deity overall. And it was a shock to Judaism. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Then we find out, later in the book of John, that the Word became flesh. Christianity was a shocking system to most in the ancient world, not in its particular aspects but in the combination aspect. Some would be happy to see a god walking around on this earth. But Christianity claimed one true God who had become all-incarnate in human flesh, died on the cross for our sins, and who was raised on our behalf. That would have been a great shock. Yet in the midst of this we see in the opening of John the connectedness between the New Testament and the Old Testament in the very mention of the two words *en arche*. John explicitly connects the beginning of his Gospel with the very opening words of Genesis.

In this lesson, we need to recognize and move beyond just seeing Christianity within its cultural framework. It would have been in continuity and, at times, strong discontinuity with the culture that was around it. We also need to see the way that the early Christians specifically aligned themselves with the teaching of the Old Testament. That is what we will talk about in this lesson.

I have explained this diagram about the author, audience, and cultural context several times, but let me explain it again. We have looked at the Greco-Roman and Jewish context, drawing explicitly on the Old Testament, Jesus, and His teachings. All of this is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We are off to the side in our own cultural context. My interest in this lesson is to move us from our discussion of cultural context, which is the backdrop in which the communication happened. It provided the words and phraseology, the issues that arose in the church, and the forms in which the discourse occurred. But the authors saw themselves specifically indebted to the Old Testament as their Scriptures and Jesus as the Incarnate Word. They draw explicitly on Him as they speak to their various respective audiences.

In these next few lessons we will start talking about the Old Testament and Jesus in terms of the many ways that the New Testament approaches the Old Testament. We will also talk about the degree to which the historical Jesus framed the whole of the early Christian community. Let us look at 2 Timothy 3:16, which is a very familiar passage. It says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped for every good work.” In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he explicitly refers to the height with which he views Scripture. This is certainly coherent with the Old Testament framework about its inspired status. The Old Testament also refers to its ability to correct, reprove, teach, and train, for example Psalm 119. Paul’s very way of formulating the nature of Scripture probably springs from Scripture itself, yet he refers to the “Scripture” as inspired. Obviously he means the Old Testament, but we cannot separate our New Testament from our Old Testament. It cannot be done because the Scriptures that they used were the Old Testament. That should be so obvious that it hardly bears mention except that we do not recognize the full ramifications of it. When we come across a passage in Romans and Paul quotes some Old Testament passage, we just blissfully trot on through. It is as if it is enough just to notice that Paul quoted the Old Testament. Instead we need to recognize that Paul uses the Old Testament as an inherent part of his argument, and we are immediately constrained to think like the early Christians would have thought. We need to go back to that text in its context and understand its import in the Old Testament itself.

We tried to do that with our discussion of Matthew early on. I talked about fulfillment and the phrase “out of Egypt I have called my son.” I showed you that it is not just a simple quote from the Old Testament. Often there is internal logic in the author. With this passage, the logic was that the passage in Hosea was about Israel. Matthew went into something much more profound than just checking off another Messianic attribute. He brought out the very nature of who the Messiah is and the way that He constitutes Israel as it should have been. That required much more out of the interpreter than simply reading it and moving on.

We need to approach the New Testament and understand the connectedness with the Old Testament that the author intentionally draws. Sometimes the connectedness is overt, such as in Matthew, but sometimes it is much more muted, such as in John 1. *En arche* is the Greek (in the beginning), yet the first-century reader who knew anything of his or her Septuagint could not help to have drawn that association. Sometimes the New Testament makes overt citations of the Old Testament, and sometimes it makes overt allusions to the Old Testament. We need to recognize both of those aspects. It is also important to recognize that not only did Paul view the Old Testament with such esteem, but our Lord did too. Matthew 5 is a passage we have read before, which says, “Do not think that I came to abolish the

Law and the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” Jesus saw His whole ministry framed in the fulfillment of the Old Testament and in the teaching of what was true righteousness. He framed that in light of the righteousness that was taught in the Old Testament. He connected the Old and the New Testament.

In this lesson, I want to go through and talk about the Old Testament story, some key themes that are in the Old Testament, and the various ways that the New Testament uses the Old Testament. The story should be very familiar to many of you, especially because in Reformed circles that are connected to the biblical theology movement we frequently speak of the Old Testament narrative. I want to remind you of some things that you might already know. For others of you, someone may not have bothered to put together the whole Old Testament for you. I want to give you a signal as to how this could be done. We have a class here at Covenant Seminary called Covenant Theology, and it does in two semesters what I am going to try to do in about 15 minutes. Clearly there is much more that can be said than what I am going to try to say. But it needs to be said nonetheless, because this is how the authors of the New Testament understood the story. It is also how God conveyed the story.

We start with creation itself. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This is the radical monotheism in an ancient Near Eastern context that was much more polytheistic or at best henotheistic. They believed in multiple gods; henotheism is where you believed that your tribal god is superior to the other gods that exist. This radical monotheism states that all that is created comes from God’s hand. Then there is the repeated notion that God sits there and creates everything, and it is good.

In a Roman context, and other contexts as well, there was still a vestige of Platonic thought where the material world was in some ways inferior to ideas that were out there. We talked about “chairness,” and this led, in some sectors, to a disparaging of the material world. The material world was even called something evil and less than what the true God would have created. This statement from Genesis is completely at odds with that belief. The creation of God is good. The structure of the creation in Genesis has been much discussed. One thing that clearly comes from it is that the supreme expression of creation of God is man and woman, who were created in the image of God.

If you look at the structure of the six creative days that line up before the creation of man and woman, they appear in two strings of three. On the first day He created the two expanses, and on the fourth day He created living creatures to live in the water and the air, which He created on the first day. Likewise, if you go through creation of the second day and compare the creatures that are created on the fifth day, it pairs up very nicely. The thing that breaks up that order is the final day, the sixth day, when He moves to the supreme creation. There were animals, but then He makes mankind to rule over the world that is around him, the world that He created on the previous five days. Mankind became the most important constituent part of God’s creation. It is important that mankind was created in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-28 says, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” He has listed everything in creation days four, five, and six. All life that has been created in those days is now ruled over by humankind, which is created in the image of God. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’” There is much theological discussion about this notion of the image of God being especially oriented in man. It is clear that part of the image of God is constituted in the very makeup of male and female. God intended the creation as we have it in Genesis.

Let us think of New Testament uses of this creation scene. John 1 says, “In the beginning was the Word.” John specifically harkens back to God’s creative act there, and he identifies the Word with the God Who created. Ultimately we would say the whole triune God created all that we have. Paul says that we are being recreated in the image of the Son, of Christ. Christ is the true image, not tainted by sin, and we are being conformed back into the image of the Son. Therefore we image the image, and we return to creation. You can see a connectedness to the creation.

There is the idea of being created male and female and the command to be fruitful and multiply. This becomes the very basis for Paul’s and others’ instruction about the nature of marriage. When Jesus opposes the rampant practice of divorce, it is because God created man and woman to be one flesh. You see an overt reference to Genesis and to God’s creative activity that is brought out. You can probably make many other connections there in terms of the way the New Testament picks up this part of the Old Testament story. Genesis 2 says, “It is for this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” There is a relatedness to our personal interactions that is specifically tied, through Jewish thought and especially in New Testament thought, back to creation itself.

In Romans 1:20 Paul says, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” He goes explicitly back to creation and says that there is no human who has any excuse. From creation itself God’s divine attributes have been revealed. “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.” We have heard those words in the creation account. Paul explicitly picks up on the language of Genesis, as did other authors in the Old Testament when they referred to idol worship. Verses 24-27 continue, “Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.” Paul gives an indictment of the practice of homosexuality, which was rampant in his day.

In Plato’s book that extols the virtues of love, he has Socrates, the character in this symposium, describe the height of that love as the love that a man has for a child whom he is engaged in sexual acts with. This was well pronounced in the Greek world, and it was increasingly adopted in the Roman world, although they were initially somewhat hesitant to adopt homosexual practices. It is in the midst of that that Paul gives this as one of his main examples of the sinful nature of the Gentile communities that were around him. In Romans 2 he indicts the Jewish people for their sin. The Gentiles broke with the created order. It is translated as “men also abandoned natural relations with women,” but in the Greek it literally says, “They abandoned nature.” Nature is God’s creation of man and woman that they should be one flesh. Creation itself indicts this rampant Greco-Roman practice. There are many other ways that he and other authors in the New Testament draw on creation.

The next part of the story is the fall of humankind. The fall of humankind consists of the woman being deceived by the serpent, the woman turning to the man, and the man eating also of the tree. There is no specific indication in the text that the man was deceived. Instead there seems to be the willful choice on

the part of Adam. The eyes of both are opened, they are naked, and God walks in the garden and sees them. In finding them He asks them a series of penetrating questions. Then in the midst of this is God's curse and yet His blessing. In Genesis 3:14 God says to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle and more than every beast of the field; and on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life." The serpent is cursed. God goes on to say, "There is enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel." To the woman He says, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam he says, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it,' cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; both thorns and thistles shall grow for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Then in the midst of that, even though the eating of the tree of life should have brought death, the Lord God makes garments of skin for Adam and Eve, and He clothes them. Though they are cast out of the garden, their death does not come immediately.

You know that whole narrative. It is important to recognize that there is a move from creation to the fall of humankind that is the natural order of reading Genesis. Paul and others go back to the Fall. Romans 5 says that in Adam all fell; all who are in Christ are saved. There is a specific connection back to creation and the Fall. In a more obscure yet important way, when Paul instructs about the nature of the roles of women and men and the leadership of the teaching of the church in 1 Timothy 2, he goes back to creation and the Fall. He grounds his instruction in creation and the Fall. You see he is presented with an issue in the church, and he ponders it in terms of the story of creation, the Fall, and the redemption of humankind.

There is also seen in this passage what is known as the Protoevangelium, which brings us into the notion of redemption. Even here in the midst of the curse is the promise that while the serpent will bruise humankind on the heel, humankind will crush the head of the serpent. We see this brought out in the book of Revelation. It indicates that there is a dragon who was born before all time. There is this enmity between the dragon and the offspring of the woman. Many have seen here a reference to the Protoevangelium. "Protoevangelium" means the first announcement of the Gospel of Good News. Even here there is a specific crushing of the serpent, Satan. He is the enemy of all, and his crushing is ultimately found in Jesus' conquest on the cross. The New Testament makes some use of that picture, but early Christianity at a later point makes more use of that picture. Even here in the garden we see the beginning of the redemptive aspect of the Old Testament story. The story is that the one God creates, humankind, falls, and in that very moment redemption and grace start. God's gracious activity initiates redemption there. Actually, grace is what caused God to create to begin with. In terms of beginning a series of interactions to produce the eternal redemption of humankind, it starts in the garden. Thus grace is present even from that moment on.

We see God's redemptive grace in Noah and the flood. We see how Noah is part of a humankind that is rebellious against God. Yet God chooses him because He finds in him something that He appreciates. He is somewhat pleased with Noah even though Noah is extremely sinful. For example, he gets drunk after the flood. But Noah is chosen by God along with his family to be saved from the flood, which is otherwise going to devastate all of humankind. The New Testament understands this, and Peter understands this especially as a picture of salvation. There are those who are chosen who will, in the midst of this great devastation, be brought out of that by God's grace. The other aspect that is drawn on this by New Testament authors is something that is very uncomfortable for people in our society to

imagine. Namely, the flood is indicative of the kind of devastation that will come from the throne of judgment in the last days. We see simultaneously in Noah and the flood the redemption of God and the judgment of God.

God makes a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. This initiates a series of covenantal acts. It says, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’” We have heard this phrase before in Genesis 1. This harkens back to creation itself. “The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands.” We have heard this rulership in creation itself. We see a connectedness back to creation and the original purpose of humankind. Verses 8-11 say, “Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ‘I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.’” Again we see here a graciousness of God to all of His creation and even to sinful humankind. There have been many generations since Noah that have deserved a flood. Yet God has abided by His word and has not destroyed wholesale all of humankind like this. God says, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” We see that God gives covenant signs that are given for us to remember. And we can also have confidence that God Himself will remember His covenant. Verse 15 says, “I will remember my covenant.”

Afterward there are several other covenant formulations that come out. In Genesis 12 God chooses Abraham, who was probably somewhat wealthy but otherwise fairly unknown. He brings him out, gives him land, and promises him a people. Genesis 12 says, “The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’” There is a universal blessing that comes from Abraham. We talked about this regarding Matthew 1. You can see how this blessing and covenant with Abraham is explicitly drawn out in Matthew. Even more so in Paul’s writings, Abraham becomes the central basis for God’s covenant act. Yet Israel does not just spring from Abraham, but others who were not circumcised in Israel but were circumcised for other reasons spring from Abraham too. We see this especially in the phrase “In Abraham all the nations are going to be blessed.” This very notion of Abraham and the redemption that comes through that promise is picked up as well in the New Testament.

Next we get to Moses and the Law in Exodus 19. Here we have God’s redemptive hand moving in a direction that is somewhat unpredictable. Verse 3 says, “Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine...”’” Here is God’s covenantal action to draw a particular people to gift them with a particular law and to give them particular covenant responsibilities in the midst of all of that. God’s covenant continues, yet it takes slightly different directions and turns than you would predict at the beginning. Yet every one from the other end of things makes perfect sense in terms of God’s plan. He chooses a particular people to represent Himself to the nations and gives them covenant responsibilities. That, too, is redemptive. It is important to recognize that the Law is given as a gracious act of God. It is given graciously in

establishing His covenant with His chosen people.

If we skip through much of the Old Testament, we find another famous covenantal scene between God and His representative, David. In 2 Samuel 7:12 and following, God says to David, the king, “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” The question that was on the mind of all Jewish people in the first century who thought about these things was “When is God’s kingdom that He promised to David going to be established forever?” Certainly He corrected Solomon in his iniquity, but the establishment of an eternal posterity and an everlasting kingdom is not to be found in Solomon. Where is it going to be found? Hence we have the expectation in the New Testament of the Messiah and His coming.

Finally we come to the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31. Verse 27 says, “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of men and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant.’” He is going to reverse the exile that is spoken of with regard to His people and the house of Israel. Then verse 31 and following say, “‘The time is coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ‘This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.’” There is continuity in terms of God’s covenantal dealing, but there is discontinuity in that this is unlike the covenant that was made with the house of Israel and Judah when He brought them out of Egypt.

The natural question in reading Jeremiah is “When would the new covenant come?” It will come when the Law is written on the hearts of God’s people. It is unclear what the nature of the continuity and the discontinuity will be with the Mosaic Law. It took the New Testament to show us that Jesus establishes a new covenant. He claims that in the breaking of the bread and in the drinking of the wine that you have His blood. Jesus Himself explicitly ties Himself to this new covenant legislation. In Hebrews the idea of the new covenant comes up again and again. I have tried to show that not only does God create and humankind falls, but God’s gracious hand of redemption takes a course that stretches throughout all of history. The New Testament picks up on all of those different aspects and sees those focused on Christ, who is the Messiah. He will crush the head of the serpent. He will lead His people gathered through the flood. He will be the one who is a blessing to all the nations. He will be the one who is able to undergo the kind of temptations that Israel went through, and He is able to conquer and obey fully the Law of God. He pronounces fully the kind of righteousness that it requires, and He fulfills all righteousness in His obedience to death on the cross. He is the Davidic Messiah, and He is the one who establishes the new covenant. We see that the redemptive hand of the Old Testament and its whole trajectory heads ultimately toward Christ. The New Testament authors understood the story to go in that direction.

In the Old Testament is this notion of the consummation of the story. It can properly be delineated under the categories of God’s judgment and His vindication. If you look at Joel, you can see the emphasis on “the day of the Lord.” In the New Testament it is called the day of the Lord or the day of Christ. This is

the eschatological day when He will come to judge His people. There is both judgment and vindication. The people who are truly in Christ will be vindicated and brought into their eternal blessing. Others will be eternally judged as will Satan, who is deceived from the beginning of creation. So Old Testament story is woven not only through the Old Testament, but also through the pages of the New Testament.

Let me give some examples of that. We looked in Matthew 1 at how Abraham, David, and the whole genealogy ties Jesus back to the story of Israel. This also happens overtly at several junctions in Acts. For instance, Acts 7 is the account of Stephen being charged with speaking against the temple and the Law. Acts 6:14 says, "We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us." Then the council stares at Stephen and waits for him to give a defense. When Stephen gives his defense, you expect him to say that that is not what he was saying. But instead Stephen says, "Hear me brethren and fathers. The glory of God appeared to our father Abraham." He starts with Abraham, and then he tells the whole story of Israel from Abraham on. It takes a whole chapter! I can remember times in my Christian faith when I looked at that and thought, "I know this story, thank you. You do not have to remind me of the whole thing. I have read the Old Testament again and again." The Jewish people who heard Stephen speak had also heard the story again and again. Stephen is reminding them of a story and a narrative, and he draws out certain specific things. At the end, verse 52 says, "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" He manages to tell not merely the story of the redemption of God's people, but also the way that they repeatedly rejected God's redemptive hand. That is how he recreates and retells the story.

Another place where the story is told in Acts is in chapter 17 when Paul chooses in the midst of a group of Gentiles to go back to creation itself as the basis for where he is going to afterward. Verses 24-25 say, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else." This is the notion of Genesis 1 and who God is. They might have been able to approximate this and understand it as somewhat analogous to Stoic teaching of the divine *logos*. But Paul draws on something that they had some points of context with, yet he speaks from the Old Testament creation standpoint. He continues, "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him." Paul then goes back to the creation activity of God and Adam. Even in the midst of speaking to Gentiles, they go back to the whole narrative of Old Testament: creation, fall, redemption, restoration in the form of consummation, judgment, and vindication. That is the Old Testament story.

One of the reasons I highlight all that is because very often in New Testament circles people see these little citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament. It is almost like they are ripped out of their context in the Old Testament and inserted into the New Testament. People view New Testament use of the Old Testament often in a framework of proof texts. They view it as just proving the point regardless of what the context says. It is as if that was the only influence that the Old Testament had. First, that is wrong because the New Testament authors are very aware of context when they quote a passage. Second, beneath the surface, whether it is overtly cited or not, the whole Old Testament story informs the way that New Testament authors think about redemption, sinfulness, and God's creative hand in all of it.

In the New Testament there are a number of references to how the Old Testament foresees, tells, and speaks of the Messiah and of the people whom the Messiah would create. It is in Galatians and throughout Acts. The death and resurrection of Christ is known as foreseen in the Old Testament. Now

that we have the New Testament, there are some verses that come to mind in the Old Testament about the resurrection of the Messiah. But in the first century, Jewish people who looked at the Old Testament did not see that the Messiah would die on a cross and be resurrected. Yet the New Testament speaks of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus as foretold and foreseen. There is a sense in which revelation of that nature is indeed found in the Old Testament. But it is found in ways that are surprisingly muted at times. Only after the next major revelatory act by God takes place can you go back to the Old Testament and see it clearly foretold. That is true of Jesus in the New Testament and His death and resurrection. It is also true of the opening up of the people of God to include Jew and Gentile alike. The Jewish people generally did not perceive this in the first century because they did not see it foretold. Yet from the vantage point of seeing what Jesus did and His directive to make disciples of all nations, it was then understood going back to the Old Testament. His command does not just go back to a chosen people, Israel, it goes back to a chosen person, Abraham, and all nations chosen in him. The logic is more complex than what we typically think of as prediction and fulfillment. You have to see it in terms of God's unveiling of His full purposes in a series of revelatory acts. These acts are understood in a muted way ahead of time in prophecy and fully understood after the fact.

Let us move on to Old Testament themes. In addition to the story of the Old Testament, there are also themes of the Old Testament that are particularly picked up on. These are not necessarily exclusive from one another, but you can see both story and theme. The overall narrative is understood, but there are also these different aspects. There is the theme of sin and failure. This is seen in Eden with Adam, and it is also after Eden with Cain and Abel and their interaction. This is the theme that includes the patriarchs and the kings. You cannot miss the fact that not only was King David beloved of God and given promises by God, but he was also a sinful wretch of a man because of things like Bathsheba. That is explicitly picked up in mentioning "the wife of Uriah the Hittite" in Matthew 1. The sinfulness of the patriarchs is recognized as well as the promises that are given to the patriarchs. The theme of sinfulness is also seen in the rebellion that happened repeatedly in Israel. We saw this when Stephen says, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not seek to kill?" There is a sense that God sent prophets, but Israel constantly tried to get away from them and not listen to them. Another context is when Moses goes up the mountain and receives the Ten Commandments. While he is up there a golden calf is made! The people could not even wait a few days for Moses to return. This shows the sinfulness of God's people in the midst of the very revelation of their redemption. Think also about the sons of Korah and the devastation that happens to them because of the rebellion in the desert. I mention some of these because they are specifically picked up in the New Testament. For instance, Hebrews warns us not to be like the sons of Korah. When we receive the message of redemption, we should not reject it as they did. The theme of sin and failure not only shows our human need, but it also provides a warning lest we commit the kind of rebellion that Israel committed in the midst of hearing the revelation of God.

The notion of covenant is repeated again and again throughout the Old Testament. The language of covenant is explicitly used in the New Testament, but there is also conceptuality of covenant. God interacts with people and has made a covenantal contract with them, and that influences the New Testament. Another theme is election and divine initiation. Abraham ended up in such a great relationship with God because God took the first act and came to Abram. Israel ended up in relationship with God because He had chosen Israel based on promises He had made to the patriarchs. In the midst of that election He kept His part of the bargain. Throughout the Old Testament God elects. It is His own willful act that brings people into a special relationship with Him. It is a relationship that they do not deserve. Thus when the language of election, choosing, and even predestination—which is overtly mentioned in the New Testament—is used, we should not be surprised. This is in keeping with the very nature of electing language in the Old Testament. It is a theme that is explicitly brought up in the New Testament as well.

There is also in the Old Testament a theme of sacrifice and a need for sins to be atoned by sacrifice. This is also brought up explicitly in the New Testament, for Jesus is our propitiatory sacrifice. He makes atonement for us. Paul also uses that phrase with regard to the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. The Day of Atonement is described in Hebrews as something that was conducted by a human agent with the blood of animals. It was not something that could enact an everlasting atonement. We need a high priest who would stand in our place and offer His own self up as a sacrifice. Sacrifice is a constituent aspect of how one relates to God. The concept of the Messiah is repeated over and over again in the Old Testament. It is theme of the promises of David in 2 Samuel 7 and in the psalms written by David. These are understood as Davidic psalms and thus apply to great David's greater Son, the Messiah.

The final theme I will mention is the apocalyptic imagery in Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel. This apocalyptic imagery is overtly used in the Revelation in terms of thematic use of the Old Testament.

Let us move to New Testament uses of the Old Testament. There is not only one way that the Old Testament is used in the New Testament. There are different ways that the New Testament authors involve the Old Testament in their thinking and in their citation and allusions. Many of these uses of the Old Testament are not just initiated by the New Testament authors. Many of these uses were already being employed in Judaism in their day. They pick up interpretive methodologies that would have resounded in their culture because Jewish people were already using them. In the first century it was common for Jewish people to retell their story. If you read through the book of Jubilees, it is a retelling of Genesis. If you read through the temple scroll found at Kumron, it is a retelling of the books of the Law and the laws that it contains. It was common for them to take the story and tell it again in ways after ways into their generation. There were even plays that were done by first-century Jews; a famous one is known as the *Exogoge*. It was a play that had to do with the exodus, and it had people acting different parts. The Old Testament story was retold. This was not new to the New Testament people, but in light of the full revelation of God in Jesus, they were able to go back to the Old Testament story and see how it should be told. Then they retold it.

There are characters from the Old Testament who are used explicitly as moral examples for New Testament authors. One only needs to think of the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11. Abraham and others become an example of faith to us. Therefore it is not wrong to go to the Old Testament and look at characters there as good examples. However, there is the recognition in the midst of the use of them as examples that they also fell. Part of the exemplary character of Old Testament figures is not just what they did right but what they did wrong as well.

I fear that in our Sunday school classes we too often refer to the Old Testament as just a series of stories that provide good moral models. There are two problems with that. One is that it does not do full justice to what Abraham was all about. He was about more than just living a good life. He was about God's covenantal dealings and the whole narrative of the Old Testament story. The other aspect of it is that these provide examples not just of success but also of failure. We need to present them realistically when we use them as examples.

Next time we will start with the notion of the different ways that the Mosaic Law is used in the New Testament.