

The Drama of Scripture

Redemption (Part 1 - Israel)

All of us have “lost” something at one time or another, right? When something is lost, that doesn’t mean it is worthless or not valuable; it just means that it is out of place and therefore not as useful as it should be. About 15 years ago I lost my wedding ring. It was out of place; it was completely useless to me. But believe me, that ring was valuable even though it was lost. I looked high and low like a maniac for several weeks. Then I went out and bought this ring. Then I found the one I had lost. *Sigh*

This clarifies what the Scriptures mean when they refer to humanity as “lost.” If someone is lost, that doesn’t mean that they not valuable; to the contrary, being made in the image of God lost people are infinitely valuable. Read Luke 15 and the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. A lost person is simply out of place, primarily spiritually, and therefore not as useful to God as s/he should be.

At the end of Genesis 3 Adam and Eve are lost; because of their rebellion, they are cast out of the Garden and therefore out of place. They should be dwelling in the Garden in safety in the presence of God. Instead, they went out into a very dangerous world; and their offspring multiplied hatred, violence, deceit, and rebellion. After the fall, humanity was profoundly lost - out of place and not useful to God.



Even though the rebellion of humanity grieved the heart of God, He didn’t abandon humanity and His creation. Instead, God set out to “seek and save those who are lost.” At great personal cost, God would address humanity’s sin, bringing humanity back into full fellowship with Himself, and would “redeem all things” (Colossians 1:20). Redemption would be just as comprehensive as the fall. This week and next we will consider the third act of the drama of Scripture: Redemption.

Some of us here today can sing “Amazing Grace” with great confidence: “I once was lost but now am found!” Others of us would probably say, “I’ve not experienced that yet. I am still out of place. I am still wallowing in sin and shame.” If that’s you, enter into the drama of Scripture and realize that God is still seeking and saving those who are lost. That’s what the story of redemption is all about.

Today I will try to summarize God’s plan on redemption as described in the Old Testament (no small task since this involves about 3/4 of the Bible). Next week we will discuss more fully how redemption was accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ.

You may remember that in Genesis 3 we found a rather cryptic statement that the descendant of the woman and the descendant of the serpent would have enmity/strife.

Eventually, however, the descendant of the woman would crush the serpent's head; in other words, even though Satan won the battle in the Garden, he would lose the war.

The plot of the Old Testament revolves around the identity of the person who will defeat Satan and restore God's reign over all creation. This plot can be explained using a variety of themes found in the OT, but today we'll consider only two. We will talk about two themes: **promise** and **covenant**.

The Promise (Genesis 12, 2 Samuel 7, Matthew 1:1)

God makes a series of promises about providing a Redeemer, a King, a Messiah who would restore what was lost through the fall.

In Genesis 12 God promises that this "Redeemer" would be a descendant of Abraham. A descendant of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) God commanded Abram to leave his country (basically Babylon which symbolized life without God) and his people for a land not yet designated.

1 Now the Lord said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;

God tells Abram to leave his country, relatives, and father's house. Where are they going? "To the land which [God] would show [him]." In other words, Abraham was called to follow God by faith (see Hebrews 11:8-12).

2 And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;

God promises to make Abraham into a great nation. This had to seem ludicrous to Abram at the time since they were a very small clan with no land. Later in Genesis God would tell Abraham to look up at the heavens and count the stars; God promised "so shall your descendants be" (i.e., too numerous to count; see Genesis 15:5).

God promised to "bless" Abraham. This blessing will be repeated at strategic points (e.g., Genesis 22:17-18, 24:35-36, 26:24, 35:9, etc.). This blessing will involve a multitude of descendants and a "promised land."

God also promised to "make [Abraham's] name great." Whereas those building the tower of Babel sought to make a name for themselves independent of God, Abraham's name/reputation would grow because of his close association with God.

God promises that Abraham "shall be a blessing." God explains this further in verse 3:

3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

How people treated Abraham was how God would treat those people. Throughout the Old Testament we see that when people were generous toward Abraham’s descendants, God was generous to them. When people were harsh toward Abraham’s descendants (whether the Egyptians, Edomites, or Assyrians), God was harsh toward them.

Expanding on the promise that Abraham would “be a blessing,” God declares that “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” This promise will be repeated and will become more specific as time goes by (see Genesis 22:18). A thousand years after Abraham, his descendants will be formed into a nation that was supposed to be “the light of the world.” Through the nation of Israel, all the nations of the earth were supposed to be able to see what a relationship with God looks like. In Isaiah 49:6 God would say that it’s “too small a thing” that the Messiah should come only for the tribes of Israel; the Messiah would also be a “light for the nations” so that God’s “salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” God has never given up on the mandate to fill the earth with His glory.

Beginning in verse 4 God describes the “land” that God would give Abraham and his descendants. Sometimes the land is designated as the “land of Canaan” (Genesis 12:5-9); other times the land is the entire region from the Euphrates River in the north and east to the River of Egypt to the south and west. Much like the Garden of Eden, the land would be the place where God would dwell with His people (Deut. 12:11 - “. . . the place in which the Lord your God shall choose for His name to dwell. . .”). As Goheen says, “God would now have an address!”

The promise to Abraham was repeated at strategic moments to his son Isaac (Genesis 26:1-5, 35:11-12) and to his grand son Jacob, who would later be named Israel (Genesis 28:13-15). Throughout Genesis the fulfillment of this promise was threatened by infertility, by hostile tribes and nations, by the disobedience and deceit (on the part of Abraham and others), and by famine.

The second book of the OT, Exodus, begins with the declaration that the descendants of Abraham “were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7). The promise to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation and as numerous as the stars in the sky was being fulfilled! But they were in slavery in Egypt, exiled from the Promised Land. Moses leads them out of slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea and through the desert. Joshua leads them in battle into the Promised Land (around 1500 b.c.).

In 2 Samuel 7 God promised that this descendant of the woman and of Abraham would also be a descendant of David.

A descendant of David. (2 Samuel 7)

The children of Israel were supposed to live in the Land with God as their King, but they eventually wanted to be like all the other nations; they demanded a human king to rule over them. Through the prophet Samuel God warned them against this desire, but He eventually accommodated them and agreed to give them a human king (around 1000 b.c.). The second king of Israel was King David, of the tribe of Judah. God made a promise to David that basically restated the promise of Abraham in terms appropriate for a kingdom.

In 2 Samuel 7 God makes this promise to David. Some of what is promised here refers to human kings, even those who are disobedient; but the core of this promise ultimately refers to Jesus, the One who would sit on the throne of David forever.

12 “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15 but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ”

Of course David’s son Solomon built a physical house of God (i.e., the temple) in Jerusalem. And all human kings were disciplined by God when they sinned. But the promise here is that a king from the “house of David” would have an eternal kingdom, one that is established forever. The plot of the rest of the Old Testament involves the status of the house of David. Would Davidic kings walk with God and remain in the Land securely? Or would they rebel against God and be cast out of the Land?

If you’ve read the rest of the OT you know that two generations after David ten of the twelve tribes formed a separate nation. By 586 b.c. the northern ten tribes had been assimilated into Assyria and the two southern tribes had been taken into exile in Babylon. Israel had neither king nor land. It seemed as if the promises of God had failed. But God brought a remnant back from exile and resettled them in the Land.

The New Testament opens up with the Jewish nation occupied by the Romans. And yet a faithful few still believed the promise made to Abraham and restated to David. They awaited the Messiah who would deliver them from their enemies and establish God’s kingdom on earth.

Jesus the Messiah. (Matthew 1:1, Luke 1:32-33, Acts 3:25-26)

The very first verse of the New Testament reveals the identity of the descendant of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed and the “son of David” who would rule forever.

1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

The New Testament very boldly declares that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and to David. In Luke 1, for example, the angel appeared to the virgin Mary, with this announcement:

32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Jesus is the King who will sit on the throne of David. In Acts 3 Peter speaks to the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem and teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham:

25 “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ 26 “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

We’ll talk more about Jesus next week. But for today I want us to see the narrowing that takes place in the Old Testament: A descendant of the woman (Genesis 3). . . a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 12). . . a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7). . . Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1). Jesus made this statement about Zacchaeus, a tax collector who turned from his sin and turned to Jesus in faith (Luke 19:9–10)

9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

If you are lost, please know that God set into motion this plan of redemption so that **you** can be found.

The Covenants

I will now take 5 minutes to summarize a very complex topic. There are numerous ways that scholars and theologians summarize the covenants. This chart summarizes the view put forth by Thomas McComiskey in his work *The Covenants of Promise*. A covenant defines a relationship between two parties. The covenants that explain the plot of the Bible define the relationship between God and His people. The covenants in the top line of the chart stress God’s unilateral commitment to provide a Redeemer, a King, a Messiah. A response of faith is invited by these covenants, but they primarily stress **God’s** commitment.

Covenants in the Drama of Scripture

Promise Covenant:	Made with Abraham ----> Restated to David ----> Fulfilled in Jesus (Genesis 15 & 17) (2 Samuel 7) (Luke 1:32-33, Acts 3:25)	
Administrative Covenants:	The Law (old covenant) (Exodus 19)	New Covenant in Jesus's blood (Jer. 31, Luke 22:20, Heb. 8-9)

The “Promise Covenant” was God’s way of formally committing Himself to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham. Remember that the promise to Abraham was recorded in Genesis 12. A number of years later, we read in Genesis 15 and 17 that God entered into a covenant with Abraham. In that covenant God restated His promise to Abraham to make Abraham a great nation, to multiply His descendants and give him the Land.

Approximately 1,000 years later God spoke with David and restated the promises He had made to Abraham. The focus is narrowing; the promised descendant will come through David (the tribe of Judah). In 2 Samuel 23:5 David refers to this promise as the “everlasting covenant” God made with him.

As we saw a few minutes ago, these promises made to Abraham and David were fulfilled in Jesus. Through Jesus all the families of the earth will be blessed; Jesus is the King who would reign forever; through Jesus all things will be made new (Colossians 1). The promise covenant was unilateral; God committed Himself to accomplishing redemption through Jesus.

In Romans 4 Paul pointed out that both Abraham and David were justified by faith. People have always experienced the blessings of the promise by faith, not works.

You may be wondering about the other great covenant that dominates the Old Testament - the Law or the “old covenant.” That’s what the second line in the chart addresses; the old and new covenants are called “administrative covenants” because they explain how God administered the promise covenant in different periods of history. The old and new covenants explained how those who believed the promise (i.e., justified by faith) were supposed to express their obedience.

The Law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai around 1500 b.c. The Law gave regulations on every area of life. The Law regulated what you ate, what you wore (only certain blends of fabric were permitted), and hundreds of other details of life. The Law also laid out an elaborate sacrificial system where by the blood of animals atoned for sin year after year. The Law described the temple and its various rooms and furniture. The inner court of the temple, the “holy of holies,” was the place where God dwelt among His people.

God gave the old covenant (the Law) to a specific people (children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) for a specific period of time. It was never meant to be a permanent expression of how the people of God would **always** express their obedience. In Jeremiah 31 God said that He would make a “new covenant” with the house of Israel/Judah. This covenant would accomplish what the old covenant did not; this covenant would provide a type of transformation that would make obedience possible (even inevitable). Why? Because in the new covenant God promises to write His Law on our hearts; God would dwell within people through His Holy Spirit.

The New Testament very boldly declares that this new covenant was ratified through Jesus’ crucifixion, through His blood. He was the once-for-all sacrifice that paid for our sins. All who believe in Jesus go from being lost to being found for all eternity. God

dwells within you through His Holy Spirit. God dwelt with Adam and Eve in the Garden; God dwelt with Israel in the temple in Jerusalem; God now dwells within those who believe in Jesus. Wherever you go - that's God's address on earth.

Lord's Table.

The Lord's Table provides an opportunity for us to remember and celebrate everything we've discussed this morning. The bread reminds us that Jesus' body was broken for us. The cup reminds us that the new covenant is "in His blood." Today we declare through the Lord's Table that Jesus still seeks and saves those who are lost.

If you are a believer in Jesus we invite you to join us in the Lord's table. If you are not yet a believer, but you now understand that God - at great cost to Himself - has pursued you through Jesus, you can simply turn to Him in faith. Express to Him that you are lost, that in your rebellion you've wandered far from Him and His ways. Turn back to Him in faith, believing that Jesus' sacrifice paid for your sin. Trust in Jesus today and join us in this remembrance celebration called the Lord's supper.