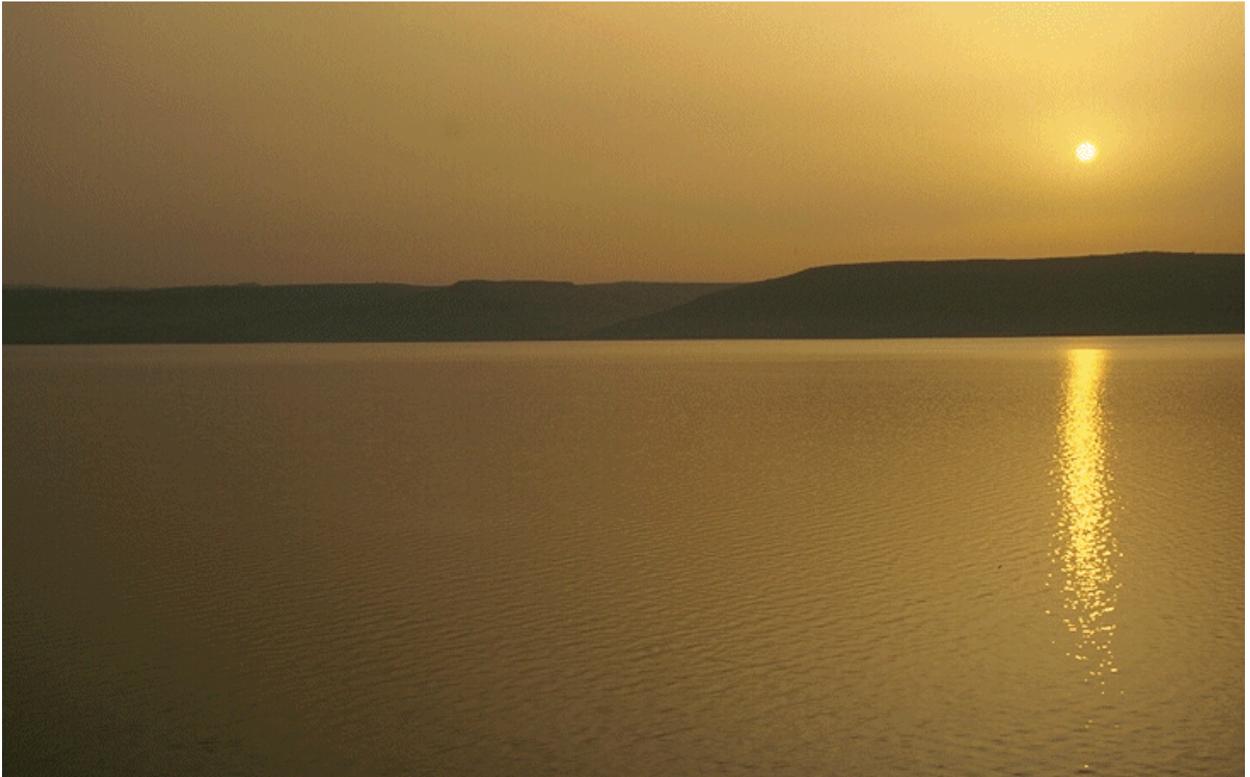


# A Glimpse Of



# Old Testament Theology

## INTRODUCTION

Even though some believe that there may be a growing interest within the family of God in the area of fundamental Bible study, I am still amazed at what appears to be a growing number who exhibits little interest in systematically studying God's Word. Out of the segment that is interested, though, all too many shy away from diving into the Old Testament. Perhaps some would change their minds if they only realized that God's plan in the Old Testament was the same as that in the New Testament i.e. that of revealing His plan of redemption. From the beginning of our Bible onward, God's Word quickly proves that God communicated His plan of redemption to man, and that He progressively revealed Himself to humanity from one era to another.

This study is a brief list of events drawn from ten major Old Testament periods, that deal with God revealing himself to man. These ten basic periods are The Primeval Period, The Patriarchal Period, The Mosaic Period, The Period of Consolation, The Davidic Period, The Disruption Period, and The Period of the Eighth Century Prophets, The Latter Prophetic Period, The Exile Period, and The Post Exile Period. Some of the same categories such as personality of God, names of God, providence of God, attributes of God, and others, will be briefly, and repeatedly, touched upon from section to section in order that the reader may see for himself that God has graciously and progressively revealed Himself to man throughout the Old Testament.

### I. THE PRIMEVAL PERIOD

The Primeval Period spanned from Adam to Abraham. Within the first few pages of Genesis, the reader quickly notices the disobedient actions of God's first couple on earth. Thus, we not only discover the origin for man's need of redemption but we see God mercifully and gracefully setting the stage in order to miraculously provide for man what he desperately needs and cannot attain.

#### **Personality of God**

God's revelation of Himself during this era was revealed through His personality by way of anthropomorphism (in the form of a man).<sup>1</sup> The Word records God as actually walking and talking with man (Gen. 2:6,19; 3:8) and as having feelings (Gen. 6:6; 8:21). God undoubtedly revealed Himself as a real person.

#### **Providence of God**

After God created Adam and Eve, not only did He establish a plan of provision and protection for them but also, at the same time He began progressively revealing, through His covenants, His providence. The theologian Wayne Gruden elaborates:

*"Though the term providence is not found in Scripture, it has been traditionally used to summarize God's ongoing relationship to his creation."*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Payne, Barton J. The Theology of the Older Testament. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506, 1962, p.120

<sup>2</sup> Gruden, Wayne. Systematic Theology. Zondervan Publishing House. 5300 Patterson Avenue S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506, p.315

### **The Edenic Covenant (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15-17)**

God gave Adam and Eve this covenant in the garden just prior to the fall. It contained seven main features: (1) to replenish the earth, (2) subdue the earth, (3) to have dominion over the animal creation, (4) a vegetarian diet, (5) till the garden, (6) abstain from eating from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil.", and, lastly, (7) consequences for disobedience would be death.

### **The Adamic Covenant (Gen. 3: 14...19)**

Immediately after the fall not only was a new dispensation<sup>3</sup> ushered in (that of Conscience) but God gave Adam and Eve a new covenant prior to their expulsion. Whereas the prior covenant was conditional, this covenant was without a condition. It consisted only of curses, consequences, and a promise. The curse was fourfold. It affected the serpent, the woman, the man, and the ground. From that day, forward the serpent was to crawl upon its belly and eat dust. Secondly, the state of womanhood upon the earth would never be the same. She would eventually experience pain through multiple conceptions, a sorrowful motherhood. In addition, her husband would now have headship over her. As to the man who would be making his living from the earth, God cursed the earth for his sake and he would be required to earn a living from it by the sweat of his face. Now God turned to the earth and declared that it was no longer free from evil things. Ever since then God's curse upon the entire earth would consist of "thorns" and "thistles."

### **Names of God**

"El" is the oldest name and English form of God and means "to be strong, power, and might."<sup>4</sup> Scripture often uses this word in connection with other descriptive titles of God. "Elohim" is the first name of God known to have been uttered in history. Dr. Payne notes:

*"The grammatical form of "Elohim" is that of an abstract plural of greatness or majesty, and not a true numeric plural... It signifies God as one who bears the fullness of divine life."*<sup>5</sup> This word is used about two thousand five hundred times throughout the Old Testament.

### **Shadows in Gen. 3:15**

In this proto-evangelic verse God revealed some holy characteristics of God the Father and of the one (God the Son) who was to come. First, we see God began to display Himself as the God of individual election.<sup>6</sup> God also reflected His humanity in Scripture when He revealed that deliverance for the human race would come out of that very "seed of the woman." Thirdly, the one

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<sup>3</sup> "...a dispensation is a period which is identified by its relationship to some particular purpose of God – a purpose to be accomplished in within that period." Chafer, Lewis, Sperry, Systematic Theology. Kregel Publications, P.O. Box 2607, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49501, 1976, vol.#1 p.40

<sup>4</sup> Lockyer, Herbert All the Doctrines of The Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506, 1964, p.25

<sup>5</sup> Payne, Op. Cit. p. 145

<sup>6</sup> This is God's sovereign (Psa.115:3) act of selecting and doing certain things with selected creation as He sees fit. As far as man is concerned – Israel (Matt.24:1-25:46) and the church (Eph.1:4; Rom.8:33). In this age of grace it includes all who are saved (Rom.10:13).

who was coming would do a kingly work. Finally, God showed Adam that He was to do a priestly work by way of the act of redemption.

God had told Adam and Eve, “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” (Gen 2:17) The very day that Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they did not die physically. Even though Adam went on to live a total of nine hundred and thirty years, they did experience a type of death that is far greater than that of physical. When God expelled Adam and Eve forever from the garden, the first couple lost there once innocence standing before God. Spiritual death had now entered the human race. From that day forward, not only would mankind need a place and an avenue to communicate with God but, all living things, in one way or another would experience the wages of sin be it physical, spiritual, or both. Yet, in addition to man’s sin and God’s curse, God gave a promise that one day He would personally redeem the world from the power of Satan and sin and completely restore it.

### **The Noahic Covenant (Gen. 8:20 - 9:17)**

At least to some degree, God's ceremonial actions, atonement, and sacrifices were somewhat established by the time of His installation of this covenant. This unconditional covenant between God and Noah not only ushered another new dispensation (that of human government) but it also revealed man's failure and magnified God's mercy and grace. In addition, this covenant set forth His promise not to curse the ground any more nor destroy all living things. Not only would the seasons never cease but also water would never again destroy the earth. Humankind was to be fruitful, multiply, have dominion over animal creation, allowed to eat meat, and he was granted permission for the establishment of capital punishment. God gave the rainbow as His signature of this covenant to all future generations.

## **II. THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD**

The Patriarchal Period extended from Abraham to the birth of Moses (B.C. 2166 – 1527). Scripturally, this era begins with Gen. 11:27 and runs to the end of the book.

### **Personality of God**

By turning to the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, the reader discovers a most interesting setting. When the three messengers arrived at Abraham’s camp in the plains of Mamre, not only did Abraham run to greet them but he addressed one of them by a proper name of God - “*Lord*” (“Adonay”) (Gen.18:3). In Gen. 18:21 one told Abraham that God decided to come down to see. Although all three are recorded as eating in Gen. 18:3, only two leave and go into Sodom. Shortly thereafter the Bible records, “*And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham; and Abraham returned unto his place.*” (Gen 18:33) The translation for word “*LORD*” is “*Jehovah*”. Not only had Abraham been in the presence of God but also, God had revealed Himself to Abraham as “*judge of all the earth*” (Gen. 18:25).

### **The Abrahamic Covenant**

Until the time of this covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) the human race had become one idolatrous gentile unit. Thus, we read of God’s intervention and stopping of the tower of Babel project (Gen. 11:1-9). This act of God provided a turning point in human history because men were forced to

separate and unite with others of the same language. It is here that we find the beginning of the world's languages.

During this era, God called Abraham in order to form a separated people and a nation for Himself – a nation with several fundamental God-given promises. (1) These called ones would be made into a great nation by natural and spiritual posterity - "I will bless thee ... Make thy name great," Abraham not only learned, as those before him, of God's providence and sovereignty, but through this new covenant God would teach Abraham, his lineage, and the world of His humanity and election. (2) God made Abraham's life a guideline for blessing from God. – "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: (Gen 12:3a). (3) God established Abraham as an instrument of blessing for the rest of the earth – "...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen 12:3b). (4) Soon, this same covenant would go to Abraham's son Isaac (Gen. 26:1-5). (5) Eventually, this same covenant would go to Isaac's son – Jacob and all his family (Gen~ 28:10-15). (6) Finally, the sign of this covenant relationship with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and entire nation of Israel would be that of physical circumcision.

Students of Scripture consider this covenant as the basis for God's entire covenant program. Thus, one cannot underestimate its value.

*"This covenant has an important bearing upon the doctrines of Soteriology (doctrine of salvation). Paul, in writing to the Galatians, shows that believers enter into the blessings promised to Abraham (Gal.3:14,29;4:22-31) . The argument of Paul in Romans is based upon this same covenant promise made with Abraham (Rom.4:1-25)...This program was gradually unfolded by God to man. The promise made to Abraham represents a progressive step in this direction.<sup>7</sup>... Further, this covenant has a most important bearing on the doctrine of Eschatology (the study of last things). The eternal aspect of this covenant, which guarantee Israel a permanent national existence, perpetual title to the land of promise, and the certainty of material and spiritual blessing through Christ, and guarantee Gentile nations a share in these blessings, determine the whole eschatological program of the Word of God. This covenant becomes the seed from which are brought forth the latter covenants made with Israel."<sup>8</sup>*

### **Persons of God**

During this era God introduced the activity of the filling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would often descend upon certain individuals at specific times for special acts of protection, guidance, instruction, etc. in order to carry out the will of God. Suddenly, when the Spirit's mission was completed, the Spirit departed from the individuals as quickly as it came. The first record of this marvelous act is in that of Joseph and his ability to interpret Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41:38).

### **Names of God**

During the patriarchal period, three additional names were revealed from God as valid reference to Himself. The first is "El Elyon." This name was first used in Gen.14:18 by Melchizedek and means "God most high." Secondly, in Gen. 17:1 ff we are told that God ( "El Shaddai" ) appeared to Abraham and promised him a son. Thus, here we see God revealing Himself as "God Almighty" – This name also describes God as "the Strength Giver, the Satisfier, and the All-sufficient One who enriches and makes fruitful". The third name is that of "Ha-

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<sup>7</sup> Pentecost, Dwight, J. Things to Come. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506, 1997, p.70

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.71

*adhonn*" (Gen.15:28). It means "the Lord, the Master." Those reconciled to God used this name in order that they might be able to distinguish between their human masters and the divine Lord.

### III THE MOSAIC PERIOD

This third period (B.C. 1527-1406) covers parts of the book of Genesis where third person explanatory data is found and the last four books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), and Psalms 90

#### **Personality of God**

From the time of Moses and onward God's qualitative distinction from man is clear (Ex. 19:12,13).<sup>9</sup> His living presence is obvious noticed by all in the movement of His glory (Ex. 33:20-23). At times God's presence also descended - "comes down in the sight of all" (Ex. 19:11). A little later Scripture strangely tells of His "face" and "back" (Ex. 33:23). God is also seen as becoming angry (Deut. 4:21), being jealous (Ex. 20:5), and He is declared a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24).

#### **Names of God**

In this Mosaic Period several new names of God were revealed - "Yahweh" and "Melekh," "Yahweh" was the most important single definition of God's name. In post-Old Testament Days the name of "Yahweh" ceased to be spoken aloud in the synagogue reading. Soon the scribes would replace this special name of God with that of "Adhonai." Tradition teaches that this act resulted from the high level of reverence scribes possessed for the name of "Yahweh". Some have said it reflects God's unchangeableness toward His people. However, according to Dr. Payne, the name means God's faithful presence and is God's testamental nature (Ex. 3:14; 6:2,4; Deut. 7:9).<sup>10</sup>

The other name ("Melekh") emphasized God's position as "king of Israel" (Ex. 15:18; Nu. 23:21).

#### **Personality of the Son**

Even though appearances of God the Son were earlier recorded in the form of a theophany (a manifestation of God by actual appearance) in the preceding era (Gen. 16:7; 18:1-3; 21:17; 22:11; 24:7-10; 31:11), it was during this time that evidence was to overwhelming to declare that this Angel was a mere representative from God (Ex. 3:2-6; 23:20-24). This individual, among other things, possessed the ability to forgive sins.

#### **Personality of the Spirit**

Moses was the first to learn from God the uniqueness of the Spirit's personality (Num. 11:10-17). It is here that we begin to understand that this part of the trinity is distinct from "Yahweh," i.e., He is the personal divine Spirit.

#### **Providence of God**

Even though the historical act of creation is the first thing God addressed in Scripture and, even though, verbal and guarded fragmented records were passed on to future generations, God's final recorded revelation of creation was assembled only during the Mosaic period under Moses'

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<sup>9</sup> Payne Op. Cit. p.121

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.148

supervision. It is through Moses' writings that we learn of God's eternally existent, prior to creation, and that He is therefore distinct from creation.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Mosaic Covenant** (Ex. 20-40:38)

Shortly after the Exodus, God granted this covenant to Israel from Mt. Sinai, through Moses, in the summer of B.C.1446. Essentially, the covenant covered moral (Ex. 20:1-26), civil (Ex. 21:1-24:18), and ceremonial (Ex. 25:1-40:38) laws. This binding agreement from God also enveloped four essential features. The first, being that of *monergism*,<sup>12</sup> was declared by God Himself (Ex. 19:4). Thus, the basis of this of this covenant was God's love and grace. The *promise* concerned the nation. They would soon learn that they should be the people of God (Ex.19:5).<sup>13</sup> The *eternity* of the truths revealed in the covenant, declare that it was to be a statute for ever (Ex. 28:43). Finally, it had as its *confirmatory sign* the Sabbath (Ex. 31:12-18). This covenant's distinguishing characteristic, from covenants thus far noted, is the fact that it embraced an entire nation rather than an individual or a family.

### **The Levitical Covenant**

Although we get a peak of something new on the horizon with God in Numbers 18:19, it was not until Numbers 25:12, 13 that God brought this to blossom through the establishment of the covenant of peace with the descendants of Aaron. The occasion arose out of a heroic action by Phinehas the grandson of Aaron (Nu. 25:8). The promise was specifically for a limited group of Levites (Nu. 25:13), but the broader importance was that of reflecting redemption. Through this group, God would stay His wrath from the nation (Nu. 25:11). In addition, through the teachings of these priests, Israel had the potential of turning away from iniquity (Gal. 2:5-6). This new covenant was to be an everlasting covenant (Nu. 25:13) and its atoning work foreshadowed Christ's work of divine propitiation (what God becomes for us) (Heb. 7:11-19).

### **The Palestinian Covenant** (Deut. 30:1-10)

Dr. Pentecost reminds us that the great importance of this covenant cannot be overstated.

*"...(1) in that it reaffirms to Israel, in no uncertain terms, their title deed to the land of promise. In spite of unfaithfulness and unbelief, as manifested so frequently in Israel's history from time of the promise to Abraham until that time, the covenant was not abrogated. The land was still theirs by promise. (2) Further, the introduction of a conditional covenant, under which Israel was living, could and did not set aside the original gracious promise concerning the purpose of God.... (3) This covenant is a confirmation and enlargement of the original Abrahamic covenant."*<sup>14</sup>

There are seven main features of this program.

*"(1) The nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deut.28:63-68; 30:1-3); (2) there will be a future repentance of Israel (Deut.28:63-68; 30:1-3); (3) their Messiah will return (Deut. 30:3-6); (4) Israel will be restored to the land (Deut.30:5); (5) Israel will be converted as a nation (Deut.30:4-8; cf.Rom.11:26-27); (6) Israel's enemies will be judged (Deut. 30:7); (7) the nation will then receive her full blessing (Deut. 30:9)."*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.133

<sup>12</sup> In theology this is the doctrine that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit alone and that the human will, having no inclination to holiness, is incapable of assisting.

<sup>13</sup> Payne, Op. Cit. p.101

<sup>14</sup> Pentecost Op. Cit. p.96

When looking at the initial passage in Deut. 30:1-10, one might think that this covenant is conditional but

*"It should be observed that the only conditional element here is the time element. The program is certain; the time when this program will be fulfilled depends upon the conversion of the nation".*<sup>16</sup>

Thus, prophetically, it will go into effect after the nation returns to Palestine and then repents. The covenant will usher in the "Millennial Dispensation" and will conclude with it.<sup>17</sup>

### **Attributes of God**

In the Mosaic period two other fundamental ethical qualities of God are picked up: "Yosher" and "s'dhaqa." "Yosher" (Ex. 15:26 "...that which is right") is that which stands up in conformity to God's standards. Conceivably such, "Yosher" might not necessarily be ethically right but simply what "pleased" God.<sup>18</sup> "S dhaqa" (Ex.9:27) indicates divine straightness i.e. since God's standard is absolute, the word denotes God's acting in accordance with His own will.

## **IV THE PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION**

This time in Israel's history was that of Israel's slow establishment within the land of Canaan. This era began with Joshua and concluded with Saul (B.C.1406-1010 ).

### **Providence of God**

Judges 2:6-3:6 reminds us that God punishes the people who sin. During each period of the Israel's Judges, the nation of Israel became victorious and acquired peace for a period but soon thereafter, the nation would start declining because of sin.

Israel's position in the land was, in itself, a testimony to God's divine providence. Dry summers and a lack of major rivers forced men to look to God for water (Deut. 8:7; 1Ki, 8:35).

Also, not only was the new nation surrounded by pagan tribes within the land of promise but Israel's newly established eastern boundary was vulnerable to attacks from nomadic people. Time again and again, God would use this dilemma to drive Israel to her knees before Him (Jud.6:6).

Israel's geographical divisions made it a separated land; therefore, invading armies usually marched by rather than thru her. Israel's position on major highways and trade routes, though, made it a center from which the Gospel would someday be carried to countless tribes and nations through the known world (Acts 8:4).

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<sup>15</sup> Chafer Op. Cit. vol.#3 pp.317-323

<sup>16</sup> Pentecost Op. Cit. p.98

<sup>17</sup> Larkin, Clarence Dispensational Truth. Rev. Clarence Larkin Est. 2802 N. Park Ave. Philadelphia, Pa. 19132, forty-second printing, p.151

<sup>18</sup> Payne, Op. Cit. p.155

## **Names of God**

In this particular period we pick up four additional descriptive names of God. In Joshua 3:10, "El Hai" is used in the singular number, without a definite article, and as a proper noun. The name is synonymous in meaning with "Yahweh" - "the only being present in your midst." "Elohim Q ahoshim" (Josh. 24:19) is an unusual plural of majesty that means "Holy God." It is possible, however, that these words may be a descriptive phrase of God's holiness and not a proper noun.<sup>19</sup> "Eloaha S ua oth" means "Lord God of Sabbath". This unique name of God first appeared, in connection with worship, at Shiloh, under Eli shortly before B.C. 1100 (1 Sam.1:3). "Ba al" is "owner or husband." This was an appropriate description of the relationship sustained by God to His covenant people. "Ba al" was often used in certain proper names. "Esh-baal" means, for example, means "man of the Master" (1 Chr.8:33). Later, because of Israel's association with Baalism, the prophets opposed its use altogether (Hos.2:16,17).<sup>20</sup>

## **V. THE DAVIDIC PERIOD**

This period consists of the four decades during the reign of King David (B.C 1010-970). Although there are others, the primary source of new historic revelation during this era was that of the Psalms. It is in *Psalms 19* that we find the first distinction between general revelation (vs. 1-6) and special revelation (vs. 7-11) being made.

### **Providence of God**

The Psalms also furnish us with some additional information about God – His care. In Psalm 65:9 David tells of God's care for the earth and, a little later on, of His wonderful care for mankind - "in thy book all my members were written" (Psa.139:16).

Secondly, we note God's providential care surfacing when He establishes His covenant with King David, probably in the year B.C. 995 (1 Sam. 7:4-17). God used the prophet Nathan to introduce this covenant to David in Jerusalem.

It contained four promises. First, there was to be a Davidic house with an everlasting posterity (1 Sam.7:13). There would also be a Davidic throne (also in v.13). David would be the first of the new Davidic kingdom. His Son would have an earthly sphere of rule (cp. Psa.72:1-20), and fourthly, this kingdom was to be an unending kingdom (v. 16). The sign of this covenant was that of a Son.<sup>21</sup> This covenant not only had contemporary application, but it also pointed forward with God's promise of salvation through the humanity, deity, and priestly work of the coming Messiah.

### **Attributes of God**

David's contemporaries felt that God was limited to the territories of Israel but in Psalm 139 David revealed that God was omnipresent (v. 7-12), omniscient (v. 1-6), and omnipotent (v. 13-19).

God also used David to reveal another aspect of His ethical sovereignty in the Psalms. Because of the aggressions of foreign powers against the nation of Israel, it is here that (in 9:8) we learn that God's righteous judgment includes all nations.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.149

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p.150

<sup>21</sup> Larkin, Op. Cit. p.151

David was also the first to reveal the activity of the Holy Spirit as indwelling and guiding the believers (Psa.143:10).

## VI. THE DISRUPTION PERIOD

This section of two centuries (B.C. 970-760) embraces the Hebrew decline under Solomon through part of the period of the divided kingdoms. Biblical sources for God's revelation during this era are Song of Solomon, Psalm 72, 45, 127, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Dr Payne goes as far as to include the Book of Job.<sup>22</sup>

During Solomon's reign, God used priests, prophets, and a specific wise man in special ways. It is this last personality, however, that God brought to prominence and historically used to communicate His revelation. Previously, God had used the priests to guide the repentant to the way of forgiveness and the prophets to rouse the sinners to repentance but now we have a new mode of communication from God – the wise man. God used the wise man to deliver wisdom before wrong was done. Wisdom ("Hokhma"), although it indicates skillfulness and ability in applied knowledge (Prov. 20:18; 24:3-6), is primarily concerned with that which lies within a man (Prov. 4:23). Furthermore, true wisdom emphasizes practical morality and describes the conduct that God Himself desires. The wise man (one utilizing God's wisdom) is a righteous man (Prov. 9:9, 10:31). The wisest man in all of Old Testament History, at least for most of his life, was the Great King Solomon (1Ki, 3:12, 4:29-34).<sup>23</sup>

### **Providence of God**

God used existing Scriptures, coupled with His revelations through Solomon, to help clarify His providential work within the world in three important respects. First, His work of directing the world is specifically associated with His wisdom. The counsel of God answers the animal's cry by providing them with food (Job 38:41; Psa. 104:21, 27, 28; 147:9), and His wisdom determines the length of a man's life (Job 14:5). Secondly, furthermore, God guides the various natural laws of the ocean (Job 38:10, 11), the weather (Job 28:26), circulation of wind and water (Eccl. 1:6, 7), and the migrations of animals (compare Job 39:26 with Jer.5:22; 33:20; Psa. 104:9; 148:6). Last, but not least, His providential care is noted when we focus upon His increasing involvement in politics i.e. His control of history (1Ki 10:30; 15:12; 13:15-19; 14: 26, 27). God not only installs and removes potentates (Prov. 8:16) but He foreordains and controls the battles. These divine interventions concerned both the nation of Israel and neighboring states. Additionally, although God had worked behind the scenes throughout earlier periods, the prophets were the first to draw detailed applications from God's direction of international politics. This is especially noted from the conflicts within Egypt (Isa.19:2), the appearance of the Assyrians (Isa.10:5), and the warring of the Medes against the Babylonians (Isa.13:17).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Payne, Op. Cit. p.54

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.153

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp.130-131

## **Attributes of God**

It is during this era that God began teaching about His transcendence [the ability to surpass and go beyond the limits] (1Ki, 8:27; 19:8,12).

Dr. Payne teaches:

*“It was also in this period that the sovereign wisdom of God was fully revealed and was related to His freedom as the Testator. He is wise in heart and mighty in strength...which doeth wonders without number (Job 9:4,10 cf. 42:2; Prov.15:3).”<sup>25</sup>*

## **VII. THE PERIOD OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY PROPHETS**

Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah are the prophets who served God during the seventy-year period between B.C. 760-690. God dramatically used these men to speak and write of His prophetic, historical, and redemptive messages. These unique mediators conveyed messages of special revelation. Building upon existing Scriptures, these brazen mouthpieces for God were quite aware that God's words would be effective (Isa.55:11) for punishment (Isa.9:8), for deliverance (Psa.107:20), and for predicting the future (Amos 5:27; Obad. 19; Isa.41:25, 26; 42:9-48:22). These empowered ambassadors appealed to their predictions as being the major proofs of their inspiration and revelations from God.<sup>26</sup>

## **Works of God**

God began using these prophets to establish His Old Testament doctrine of inspiration and preservation of His Word.

Many times the Spirit would use different means of conveying His messages to these unique men. Often God would communicate utilizing visions (Amos 7:7; 8:1) while at other times He simply spoke audibly (Isa. 21:10). Regardless of God's method, the results were always the same – the receiving prophets quickly became deeply convicted that what they had received was indeed God's message and that the new message must be quickly proclaimed to all, obeyed by all, and then it needed to be taught to others.

Once again, these prophets were the first to draw application from God's vantage point of international politics (Isa. 19:2; 10:5; 13:17; 45:1, 2). In addition, during this era, God's revelation declared that He has the capability, and the prerogative, of utilizing Gentile nations in directing and disciplining His people if necessary.

## **The Messiah**

Although glimpses of a coming Messiah abounded prior to this period, history was now ripe for God to begin revealing this beautiful Old Testament doctrine. Both Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5:2 associated deity with the Messiah's birth, which was to occur at Bethlehem. Isaiah predicted that this child would someday do the work of a king bearing authority upon the throne of David (Isa. 9:7; 61; 2-3). God used both Hosea (6:1, 2) and Isaiah to reveal that the Messiah would not only conduct a priestly work of intercession but He would wonderfully provide perfect redemption for His people.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.153

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.58

It was in this century that Isaiah went on to reveal the Servant-Messiah's work as a prophet. The source, wisdom, and leadership of the Messiah's teaching would be God Himself (50:4). Not only would the instrument by which he was to preach be the Holy Spirit (11:2; 42:1; 61:1) but also the land of Galilee would eventually become one of the Messiah's primary teaching locations. The scope of the Messiah's ministry would even reach out to the gentiles (42:1, 6) but first it would be necessary for a forerunning appointed prophet to prepare the way (40:3).

## VIII. THE LATER PROPHETS

This later period of prophets (Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah) extends from B.C. 759 B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem in B.C.586 B.C.

### Providence of God

The most outstanding providential work of God in this period was a promise of the "new covenant" (Jer. 31:31-34 cp. Heb.8:7-13) i.e. a new covenant for Israel. Bro. Larkin's brief remarks nicely summarize things.

*"This Covenant has not yet been made. It is to be made with Israel after they get back to their own land... It is unconditional, and will cover the Millennium and the New Heaven and New Earth. It is based on the finished work of Christ. Matt. 26:28. It has nothing to do with the Church and does not belong to this Dispensation. It is the eighth Covenant and speaks of resurrection and eternal completeness."*<sup>27</sup>

Most assuredly, this covenant rests upon the unfailing faithfulness of God!

### The Messiah

The prophet Jeremiah recorded several additional revelations about the coming Messiah's deity and incarnation. First, the assurance of His arrival, the lineage from which He would arrive, the scope of His reign, the success of His reign, and His reputation during His reign are all located in Jer 23:5-6. Secondly, we note that Jeremiah recorded that God cursed the seed of King Jeconiah by declaring that none of his descendants would sit upon the throne of King David. Since Jeconiah was from the lineage of David and it was through David's lineage that the prophesied Messiah would one day emerge and eventually ascend the same throne, we encounter what appears to be a blockage in the Messiah's birth. It is at this point that it would do us all well to review a couple of fundamental things. Mary would eventually be born into the lineage of David's son, Shammah (1Sam.16:9; 17:13; 1Sam.13; 3; 21:21; Cf.2:13) whereas Joseph would descend from David through Solomon. Thus, a long time before the birth of Jesus, God, Himself, had protected the doctrine of the incarnation.

## IX THE EXILIC PERIOD

The Exilic Period ran for a period of seventy years (B.C.605-538). In the first deportation, God used Daniel as His primary spokesperson but in the second deportation, (B.C.597) Ezekiel was God's primary prophet. It was during the time of these two men we discover a new type of prediction becoming predominate – that of the apocalypse. Prior to this, though, examples of

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<sup>27</sup> Larkin, Op. Cit. p.151

apocalyptic form had appeared in scripture, especially in Joel and Isaiah, but these end time revelations took their greatest expressions through the ministries of Daniel and Ezekiel.

### **Providence of God**

God used prophets during this age to display His ability to control the nations of the world as a whole. We learn that Ezekiel described how God would one day bring Nebuchadnezzar against Tyre (26:7-11) and later against Egypt (29:18) whereas; Daniel described the course of world events for many centuries (11:2-29).

During Judah's time in exile she viewed her destruction and dilemma as an act of punishment from God because of her sins (Am. 3:37-39; Jer. 23:26; Isa. 39:6,7).

### **Attributes of God**

Without question, the greatest display of God's integrity recorded in The Old Testament must be Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (ch.37). It was through Ezekiel, God promised and recorded to one day restore the scattered Jews to their homeland. This act of pure grace would most assuredly prove to the Jews that God is not only the God of His Word but that He is the only true God!

### **The Messiah**

God inspired Daniel to be the first to reveal the coming Messiah's appearance as the "Son of Man" (Dan. 7:13). Many centuries later Jesus, Himself, would establish the historical fact that He was, indeed, the "Son of Man" (Mk. 14:62).

The Lord also used Daniel to unroll one of the most significant Old Testament passages on the priestly work of the Messiah (Dan. 9: 24-27). It is here that Daniel described the Messiah's priestly mission as a restrainer of transgressions, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.<sup>28</sup>

## **X THE POST EXILIC PERIOD**

This final era extends from the decree of Cyrus (B.C. 538), authorizing the return of the exiled Jews to Palestine, to the completion of the Old Testament canon shortly after B.C. 423. God's additional revelations came through the writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

### **Providence of God**

Ezra recorded insight as to how God accomplished this postexilic restoration. First, Ezra mentioned that Jeremiah had earlier prophesied about it. This act not only added credibility to Jeremiah but it pointed to the mercy, grace and, once again, the integrity of God. Secondly, Ezra gave special recognition to God for stirring up the spirit of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1). This in itself required a God sent miracle!

In addition to Ezra, the entire book of Esther does a perfect job in displaying God's wonderful providential care in loving, directing, and providing for His people.

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<sup>28</sup> Payne, Op. Cit. p.276

## **The Messiah**

A bountiful reward awaits the child of God who will spend time studying the book of Zechariah. Time only permits us to mention a few of its nuggets. Zechariah spoke of a day of Christ's incarnation when the very glory of God would dwell in Jerusalem (2:5, 10, 11). Not only would God provide a place where His people could meet with Him (3:7) but also, at this place there would be an ultimate priest, the Messianic Branch, who would remove man's sin in one day (3:9).<sup>29</sup> It is in his book that we also learn that this Messiah's work would be both of a kingly and priestly (6:12-13) nature. Zechariah goes on to predict that the coming Messiah would one day enter Jerusalem on a donkey (9:9), be sold for thirty pieces of silver (11:12), and eventually be pierced (12:10). At a later point, this Messiah would once again stand upon the Mount of Olives causing it to slit to the east and to the west (14:4). Although a day previously unknown to man, this would be a very special day only known only to God (14:6-8). Last, but surely not least, Zechariah described the coming Messiah as God's "*awmeeth*" which means His "*associate, fellow, or relation*" (Zech. 13:7).

Malachi was inspired to record that as deity, as well as redeemer, the Messiah would one day come to His Temple (3: 1) and, when He makes this appearance, He will purify His people whom are serving as Levites (3:3). As was with Isaiah, God also revealed through Malachi that before He publically revealed His Messiah to humankind, He would send a forerunner to announce His arrival (3:1).

Thus, not only had the prophets presented the Messiah as king and priest but also as God of very God who was coming, would suffer for the sins of mankind, and, most assuredly, come back again to completely fulfill His will.

## **Summary**

In the Old Testament God did not reveal facts about Himself without a purpose, but rather, God progressively revealed Himself to sinful humanity for the purpose of redemption. Considering this proposition, there are two unchanging factors throughout the approximate four-thousand years Old Testament history. First, even though redemption had not been historically completed through the coming prophesied Messiah, God graciously extended redemption's benefits to those who would accept by faith the revelation that God laid out about Himself, about themselves, and, finally, about their desperate need of turning to Him in faith. Secondly, the Old Testament taught us that as God revealed Himself He did it with eternal unchanging truth. Thank God for His love, mercy, grace, redemption and unchangeableness!

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.279

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