

“A Walk Through the Old Testament - Overview”

Launch of a New Series

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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Brave Men: *(singing):*

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day. And we're thankful because it is a day that You've made. But we're also thankful because today is the day of salvation. And if our lives are hidden in Christ, then we anticipate what it is that we already have. And we look forward to the consummation of what we already enjoy.

But Father, if it is the case that there is a man among us who does not know the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray that this would be his day of salvation as well. Father, we come before You asking that Your hand would be upon us for good as we study. We certainly ask and pray that You will open our eyes to the message of Your word—the beauties of it, the interconnectedness, and Lord, the spiritual truth of the matter as it's conveyed to us and impressed upon us by Your Holy Spirit.

Father, as we come, we also think about those who have been mentioned. We think of Tom. We certainly pray for his well-being and for the doctors to be at their best as they work with him.

We pray for Nancy as well. We pray, Father, for healing for her. We pray not only for healing with regard to the cancer, but also for those other things like the u t i. We ask, Lord, that you'll bless her and keep her. We pray that you'll preserve her life. We pray that You'll mend her. Father, we pray for both Nancy and Sig as they walk through this together, and pray that this would be a time where they are enriched and that their marriage is strengthened, and that they grow to understand a greater depth of one another. And Father, we pray that You will bless them.

Lord, we pray for our brother Bruce, asking that Your hand would be upon him as well, giving him strength to continue in his ministry. Father, we pray now for our time together and ask that You would bless it. We pray for these things in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. So we're going to start a new series today. We're going to walk through the Old Testament. Even better, we're going to run through the Old Testament. But what I want us to do is that I want us to think about a few things this morning that are preliminary things. And what we're going to do for the next two weeks is get our bearings. For instance, today we're going to think about *some preliminary considerations*. We're going to think about *our approach to the Scriptures*. And then next week we're going to just look at *an overview of the whole*. We're going to just stop and

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look at the message of the whole Old Testament. And then the third week we'll start to get into the text.

Now if you'll notice on your outlines, you'll notice that there is just a brief purpose statement for each class. But then you'll notice that there is the next week's assignment. Now all I'm suggesting by that is this. If you want to read the Old Testament generally speaking, to get the flow of the whole, then you can read along with these suggestions, and it will give you something of the whole, so that as you're listening to the talks, you can have large portions of the Old Testament and the historical narrative in mind.

I'll give you another sense of what I'm going to do when we talk about this. We're going to basically look at the Old Testament from its historical point of view and how it unfolds. So if we were to draw a line across here that would represent the historical, chronological, one step after the other process of the revelation of God in the Old Testament, we'll look at the story line, in other words. And then what we'll do is we'll plug things like the Prophets into that story line. So we may not look, for instance, at all of the books of the Prophets. But we'll at least notice where this prophet enters into the story line, and so on. So you'll have that idea.

For instance, with the Psalms and Ecclesiastes and Job and all of those things, here again you'll notice where they are in our story line, though we may not look at each one of them individually with any sort of detail.

So that's the way I propose to go through it when we hit week three. And I'll remind you of that when we get to week three. But the first two weeks are going to be preliminary. We're going to look today at some preliminary issues as we approach the Old Testament. And then next week we'll look at the large picture of the Old Testament, and then we'll get into it.

So today I want to look basically at some introductory points. I want to look at our first point, *knowing God and knowing truth*. I want to think about *some concepts for understanding the Old Testament*. And then I want to think about *some principles for interpreting the Bible*. So those are the things that I'd like to do this morning. So let's get started.

The first thing I would like to have you think about is something that I'm not sure that everyone in this room might think about or struggle with or has ever thought about. But not too long ago I was in a setting where I was teaching. I was essentially teaching a six week overview of the Bible. Somebody approached me at the end of that six weeks and said to me, "Look, Pastor, I have a question for you. How were people saved in the Old Testament? In fact, were they saved in the Old Testament? I don't think they were saved. I think that in the Old Testament that they weren't saved. In the New Testament they are. I mean they might have been saved. But how would they have been saved? Would it have been by obeying the law?" I mean, that was basically what I was being asked. How was it, if at all, that people were saved in the Old Testament? And the thing that they were postulating was that if there is such a thing as salvation in the Old Testament, it's by the law.

And I came away thinking to myself, *I just went through this. (Laughter)* And six weeks may not have been enough. *(Laughter)* So anyway, what I want you to understand

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is that the Old Testament is not something that we can take or leave. The Old Testament is something vital for the New.

In fact, Augustine had a dictum. Augustine was a 4th/5th century early theologian. He’s foundational for us when we think about Reformational concepts. And he had a dictum. It goes something like this. *The New is hidden in the Old. And the Old is revealed in the New.*

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: The New, (the New Testament, that is), is hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is revealed in the New. Now that shows an inter-unity and a continuity between the Old and the New Testaments that we have to understand. It’s absolutely there and vital.

Now I’ve said this to you before. I’ve told you before that when you think about the Scriptures, (and we’ll save this for some other time), but when you think about the Scriptures you think about a unity of message. In other words, what happens in Genesis is vital for our understanding of what happens on the cross. Genesis chapter 3 is about sin. And the cross is about how sin is dealt with. We’ll talk about how it’s dealt with.

But for instance, all of us at this point are wearing clothes, right?

Tom Hansz: Yup.

Jeff: And we’re wearing clothes because of what we learn in Genesis chapter 3. They were naked and ashamed, right? Genesis chapter 3 tells us not just a lot in terms of spiritual knowledge, what it is that has to be done in order for us to be saved, but there’s a lot of experience that we gain, an experiential knowledge that we gain from the Old Testament. And it’s important that we understand that there’s a unity of thought that’s in the Old Testament.

If you have your Bible, I want you to turn with me to Luke 24, Luke 24:25-27. And if you get there, I want you to read that. Luke 24, verses 25-27. This is Jesus talking to the disciples while they walked along the Emmaus road. This is after the Resurrection. They still don’t know it’s him.

And this is what He says to them. Or it’s a summary of what He says to them. I can’t remember which at this point. But just read it when you get there, Luke 24:25-27.

Bob Busted: *“He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things, and then enter His glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.”*

Jeff: Jump to verse 44 now.

Bob: Oh, okay. Verse 44.

Jeff: Yes, just 44.

Bob: *“He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.’”*

Jeff: Okay, great. So how does Jesus summarize the Old Testament? He summarizes it by saying “The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.” He summarizes the Old Testament with those three.

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I'll try to remember to do this as we go along. Oftentimes, if you look in Acts chapter 2 for instance, Peter is preaching his sermon. And what he does is that he quotes from the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. In other words, what he's doing in that sermon, as he quotes from those three sections of the Old Testament, he's saying that Jesus has fulfilled all of the Old Testament.

And that's what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is saying, “Look. I was spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures,--in the Law, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms.”

So one of the things that we need to understand is that unity comes because the Jesus of the New Testament is in the Old Testament. And He's hidden in the Old Testament, and He's revealed in the New Testament. So there is Augustine's dictum again.

I want you to also understand that not only is the Old Testament important because there's a unity there, and Jesus is that unity. But I want you to understand something. When Jesus was walking around and had His Bible, His Bible was the Old Testament.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: You know, just a hair over 75% of our Bible is the Old Testament. Jesus is walking around with the Old Testament. When He's quoting from Scripture, He's quoting from the Old Testament. When He says, “Don't you know that the Scriptures speak of Me?”, He's speaking of the Old Testament. And so the Old Testament is vital because it's Jesus' Old Testament. It's Jesus' Bible.

Now not only that. I want you to think about something else. I want you to think about how the Bible that the apostles used is the Old Testament. Now obviously Paul is writing New Testament Scriptures. And there are others who are writing Gospels and Peter is writing epistles. But all of this is in development. What they're using immediately is the Old Testament Scriptures.

In fact, let me have you turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3 for a minute, 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16, a familiar verse. Now notice what it says. “*All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching,*” and so on.

Now that statement “*all Scripture*” right there is all of the Old Testament Scripture.

Now I want you to think about this. Go ahead.

Bill Stolze: Is that a chiasm? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I don't know.

Bill: Point A. followed by B., followed by B., followed by A. “*All Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*”

Jeff: I'm not sure that's an a.-b.-b.-a. pattern, though.

Bill: I don't know! (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Well, if you want to run it by me later, go ahead.

Bill: I thought of that.

Jeff: I know. (*Laughter*) I'm telling you. Do a little work and come back and show me that it's an a-b-b-a pattern and I'll use it later.

Don Maurer: He doesn't like Abba; that's the problem. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I know. I used to love chasms until I came here. Abba has been a real pain to me. (*Laughter*)

Tom: I think it's a 1-2-3-4 series.

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Ted Wood: Jeff, you just have to be a Suppa Troupa. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. Okay. So I want you to go to 1 Peter now. Or maybe 2 Peter.

Don: Is it 2 Peter 3?

Jeff: No. Oh, yeah yeah yeah. That’s what I’m looking for, Don. Look at verse 15. *“And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”*

Now this is one of those great texts because it talks about *“the other Scriptures.”* Now what are the other Scriptures? The other Scriptures are the Old Testament at least. But here we find that the New Testament church is understanding already that Paul’s letters are part of Scripture. So there is an addition to Scripture. There’s the New Testament canon in the development, even at this stage. But we need to understand that prior to the development of the New Testament canon, the Old Testament was the canon. So the apostles had the Old Testament as their canon.

This, for instance, is important, because I want you to understand something else. When the apostles preached the gospel, they preached the gospel from the Old Testament. Now I want you to go with me and look at Galatians chapter 3 a minute. Galatians chapter 3.

Ted: Jeff?

Jeff: Yes?

Ted: May I challenge that a bit?

Jeff: No! *(Laughter)* Yes, of course you can.

Ted: You said that when the apostles preached the gospel that they preached it from the Old Testament. They also preached it from the oral tradition that was being passed, because they referenced the life of Christ.

Jeff: Well, yes. Absolutely.

Ted: They were not quoting from New Testament Scripture. But they were quoting from the tradition, the oral understanding being passed around.

Jeff: Yes. But I mean, these guys were eyewitnesses to the Resurrection, right? So they were saying that this event—

Ted: It was eyewitness testimony.

Jeff: Yes. This event needs to be interpreted in light of, say, Psalm 16. So I want you to look at this. I want you to look at Galatians chapter 3. And look at what he says. In verse 7 he says, *“Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’”* That’s Genesis chapter 12. *“So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”*

So again the idea is that the Old Testament contains the gospel. The gospel is preached to Abraham. And those who are believers in the gospel are of the faith of Abraham. In fact, this is why in the New Testament you can find places where it says things like this.

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Paul, writing to the believing church, the Christian church, says, “*You are the true circumcision*”, because he’s taking this Old Testament image and he’s saying, “You are the true circumcision because you believe the gospel that was preached in the Old Testament.” That’s the idea.

Something else. *Jesus comes to fulfill what was said of Him in the Old Testament*. So there are shadows and there are types and there are prophecies. He is the fulfillment of the shadows. He is the antitype of the types. And He is the fulfiller of the promises. So the Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus.

Now we could go on. But why is it that I say this? I started the introduction with a story about a lady coming up to me and saying, “How were the Old Testament people saved?”

Several years ago I went on vacation down to North Carolina. I stayed in this particular place, and at the bottom of the hill from where I was staying was a small evangelical church. So I decided that I was going to go visit there. On Wednesday they had a Bible study that was going on. So I went down to the bottom of the hill and attended the Bible study.

And while I was at the Bible study, the pastor resigned. And I thought, *Well, I really foiled this party.*” (*Laughter*) But anyway, I asked the pastor at the end. I said, “Why? What’s going on?”, you know.

And he was forthcoming about it. He said, “Well, there’s a tension in the church.”

And I said, “Well, what’s the problem?”

And he said, “There’s a group of people in the church who believe that they have discovered something that has been kept from them intentionally.”

And I said, “Well, what is that?”

And he said, “Well, they’ve discovered feast days and all kinds of things from the Old Testament that we don’t practice. And they believe that the church, the New Testament church, has kept those Old Testament practices hidden from them. And now they’re rediscovering them and implementing them. And so we basically have the Old Testament being dumped back into our New Testament church.”

Now he was not able to handle that kind of thing, even to the extent where he might say to them, “Look, you’ve had the Old Testament, the 39 books for a long time. I can’t help it that you haven’t read them.” (*Laughter*) Right? “It’s not hidden from you; it’s right here on these pages,” right? But the problem was that he didn’t know how to deal with those kinds of questions. And they didn’t know how to think about the Old Testament. And I don’t—

Transcriber’s Note: A talking watch goes off. Jeff stops speaking.

Don: Go ahead.

Jeff: What was that?

Don: My watch.

Jeff: (*Laughter*) Did you set it to tell me I was done?

Don: No! (*Laughter*)

Jeff: So I think that this is one of those problems that’s out there. I think it manifests itself in a variety of different ways. This is the last thing I’ll tell you. I was on my way to

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work one day years and years ago, working at a glass factory. And I was listening to the radio. I was listening to Christian radio. And there was a Christian music artist who was on Christian radio. And she was explaining how she believed that the God of the Old Testament was a mean God, a harsh God. But the God of the New Testament was a God of love and Jesus was that God, and so on, and that He had persuaded an angry Father to think otherwise of us, and so forth.

And you know, that is not only a heresy of the early church called Gnosticism, but it's also a very unhealthy view of the Old Testament. And that was in fact the problem with Gnosticism. It was a very unhealthy view of the Old Testament. The Gnostics said that the Old Testament God is a bad God and the New Testament God is a good God. In fact, they are two separate gods. And so that's alive and well. I wish I could tell you that was the only time I heard that. But it's not. In fact, I've heard it a number of times since. But that is an unhealthy view of the Old Testament. And so we need to overcome that and get back to Augustine's dictum. *“The New is hidden in the Old and the Old is revealed in the New.”* All right? So that's all I want to say about the introduction. But do you have anything you want to ask or add before we get into the outline?

Rich Clark: Jeff, do you have that thought from any particular denomination?

Jeff: I don't think so. I don't think it comes out of any particular denomination. I think it comes out of just sort of a lack of being grounded in the Old Testament. And if the Old Testament is only used in sort of an illustrative way but it's not really taught, then I think one gets the impression that this Old Testament God is quite a harsh God, lots of killing. You know, I think the idea that Jesus has to persuade Him to receive us is kind of easy to come by. I just think that comes out of a position that doesn't know the Old Testament. Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: I would agree with that. But I add to that just the incredible sentimentalism of our culture. They just think that all of the tough language of God anywhere, in both Old and New Testament, is really not a part of revelation.

Jeff: Yes, that's very true. Don?

Don: I think it's vital that we understand, as Augustine said, (and I never get this right), that *“the Old is in the New concealed, and the New is in the Old revealed.”* Otherwise, you just can't make sense. And I've read that sometimes Jewish commentators who try to explain Psalm 16 or Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22. And their explanations just don't make a whole lot of sense.

Jeff: Well, look. I think I mentioned to you guys a week or two ago that you can look at the Old Testament like a history. And you can say, “Well, the Old Testament is just a history of Judaism.” But if that's all you're willing to say about it, then you've missed Augustine's whole dictum, because Jesus is in the Old Testament. It's more than just a history of religions text. And that's what Don was saying.

Don: Yes. And you look at the Passover, for example. We believe the Passover teaches, screams substitutionary atonement. But some Jewish commentators say, no. It's talking about bondage and freedom from bondage. Well, that's certainly part of it. But it's not the main thrust of it.

Jeff: Yes.

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Ted: One of the key foundational doctrines of the Mormon church, and I’m quoting here from the Book of Mormon, is “*that many plain and precious things have been taken out of the book.*”

Jeff: Out of the Old Testament.

Ted: Well, out of the whole book. They include the entire Bible.

Jeff: Okay. Gotcha. Anybody else. Dale?

Dale Thurston: I don’t know whether you’ll be speaking on this this morning or not. But a rule of the law in the Old Testament, as I understand it, are the laws of North Carolina. They are a lawyer’s paradise, because when there is the first inkling of a divorce becoming likely, the attorneys have a year to work on reconciliation.

Jeff: Okay. All right. So let’s go to the first point. The first point is *knowing God and truth*. And the first thing is that I want to simply say it. I’m not going to spend any time with it. *The Bible is God’s word*. That’s the position from which we’re working. And I don’t think I need to go into proof of that for you. I just want to say it up front so that you know where I’m coming from. I think you know where I’m coming from. But in case there are any new guys here, I want to talk about something that the Bible talks about. And that is that *the Bible talks about there being two world views*.

Now when you think about two world views, you think about a believing and an unbelieving world view. Now I want to try to articulate something so that you’ll understand. I had a really great Fred Flintstone cartoon which we’re going to have to give up. (*Laughter*) But I want you to see that as a rock, okay?

Now I want you to think about three areas of philosophy. I want you to think about *metaphysics*. I want you to think about *epistemology*. And I want you to think about *ethics*.

All right. Now think about that rock, okay? When you think about that rock, you’re thinking about metaphysics. Metaphysics is what is, the world around us. Now metaphysics has to do with what is beyond the world around us. But it includes the world around us. So metaphysics has to do with the world around us. In other words, the rock.

Now epistemology has to do with how we know. How do we know what we know? And so the question is how did this rock get here? The question is what do we know about this rock? And one of the questions is how did it get here? Okay?

And then there’s the ethical question. It’s the question of behavior. How do I treat the rock? Okay? (*Laughter*)

So we have three different categories of philosophy—one dealing with what is, one dealing with how we know what is, and one dealing with how we behave toward what is.

Now I want you to think about this, because when you think about this in light of two world views, we are divided right down the middle. The unbeliever says, “Well, you’re right; that’s a rock.” Now guess what! The believer agrees that that’s a rock! That is wonderful! We’ve got agreement already! (*Laughter*) Isn’t that great? (*Laughter*) It’s a rock!

Now the unbeliever says, “Okay, that’s a rock. Let me tell you how this rock got there. Billions and billions of years ago there was a catastrophic big bang. And this rock came into existence because of that big bang.”

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And the believer goes, “Whoa, time out! I don’t believe that’s how that rock got here. That rock got here because God created that rock.” And all of a sudden we have an antithesis. There’s a great divide between the believer and the unbeliever. So what we agreed on is now the subject of violent disagreement.

And that produces the ethical question. This guy, the unbeliever, says that we ought to so reverence the creation that it turns into worship. I mean, it can turn into worship.

And the believer says, “No, no, no. We ought to worship God and respect the creation.” So all of a sudden you begin to see that this provides concrete ways in which we can see the difference between how it is that there is a divide between the believer and the unbeliever, how it is that we know God and how it is that we know truth.

We are going to start with our basic view that the Bible is God’s word. And as soon as we begin there, we set ourselves apart from the world. Okay? And there’s a great divide between us.

Now that’s something that I think is straightforward for us. However, this is something I want you to understand. There’s also an enormous difference between the unbeliever’s cognitive ability and saving faith. So for instance, the unbeliever is going to be able to listen to us talk about what we agree upon, talk about why it is that we think that it came from God and how we ought to behave toward it. And cognitively they’re going to be able to accept that. Now the words we’re going to use are sentences with nouns and verbs, and so on. And they’re going to be able to understand what we’re saying. But they’re not willing to agree with what we’re saying.

And that’s where faith comes in. Faith is what we’ve talked about in the past. It’s kat with a k. It’s knowledge, it’s assent, but it’s also trust.

In other words, they can have knowledge and they can assent to that knowledge. “Yes, I understand that’s what you believe if that’s the knowledge you have. And I understand how you can assent to that.”

“Well, if you understand it, do you trust it?”

“No, I don’t trust it. I don’t trust that at all.” What are they saying? They’re saying that they have no affection for it. They have no affection for God. They hold the truth down in unrighteousness. Romans 1 clearly says that they know the truth. They look out and they know that there is a Creator of these things. But they hold it down in unrighteousness. They may even admit what they know. But they say, “I don’t believe it. I don’t love it.” That’s what they’re really saying.

We, on the other hand, have an affection for God and His word. So I think here is the difference that we need to keep in mind when we think about knowing God and knowing His truth.

All right, I’m going to move on. I want to talk to you about three concepts. This is all basic, I think, in terms of how we’re thinking about our approach. This is a believing approach.

First of all, we need to think about *covenant*. Three concepts; the first one is *covenant*.

Now what is a covenant? You know, I had my kids memorize *My First Catechism*. Did anybody ever memorize that catechism, *My First Catechism*? No?

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The question “*What is a covenant?*” is given in a really easy way. “*A covenant is a relationship that God sets up with us and guarantees by His word.*” A very easy answer that I think is really—Daniel!

Daniel: That’s not *My First Catechism*.

Jeff: No?

Daniel: No.

Jeff: You went right to *The Shorter Catechism*..

Daniel: *The Children’s Catechism*.

Tom: Luther’s *Smaller Catechism*.

Jeff: Not Luther’s. You memorized what?

Daniel: *The Children’s*. I think that’s what it was called.

Jeff: Didn’t that ring a bell? That didn’t ring a bell to you. You and I are going to talk. (Laughter) All right. It’s “*a relationship that God sets up with us, guaranteed by His word.*”

Now I want us to think about that relationship in terms of three p’s. I want you first of all to think about *the precept*. There’s a precept. And just take the example of Adam in the garden. What’s the precept? “Do not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden.” Okay, that’s the precept.

Then there is *the promise*. “If you don’t eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, you’ll have life. You’ll be able to eat from the tree of life and you’ll be able to live.”

And then there’s *a penalty*. “But if you eat from that tree of which I told you not to eat, you will surely die.”

So there are three p’s. There’s the precept,—don’t eat from the tree. There’s the promise of life if he doesn’t. And then there is the penalty if he does. And so when you think about the relationship that God sets up with us, it always comes with these three components.

Now why is this a crucial concept when we think about the Old Testament? It’s because the Old Testament has four out of the five covenants of the covenant of grace. And it also has the covenant of works in it. Now if that doesn’t mean anything to you we’ll get into that. We’ll get to that overview. But it is a covenantal book. All over the place God is setting up these relationships with us. And this is how he’s structuring them, okay? So that’s a crucial concept.

Another crucial concept is *revelation*. Now I want you to understand that I could simply say that revelation is the way that God reveals Himself. And *inspiration* is a record of that revelation.

Now I want you to understand something else. I want you to understand the way that God creates. When you think about the world around us, and you think about the way that God created Adam, let’s just think about this for a minute.

So God creates. Here’s the world. And here’s Adam in the world. And the world around Adam mediates revelation to Adam. In other words, he can’t escape the fact that he lives in a God-created world. But in addition to that he’s got a conscience. In other

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words, he can't think a conscious thought without knowing his dependence upon God. We call that the *sensus divinitatus*, the sense of divinity in man.

So he's got external revelation. He's got inward revelation. And he's got God showing up and talking to him. In other words, he cannot escape revelation.

Now there's a reason for that. The reason for that is that God creates after a fashion. And what is that fashion after which He creates? It's Himself.

Think about His existence prior to creation. There was Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now think about this: Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Does the Father ever have to ask the Son, "What are You thinking, Son?" (*Laughter*) No, He never has to ask that question. And He never has to ask the Spirit "What are You thinking?" Why? Because They know one another exhaustively.

In theology this is called *the representational principle*. In other words, God in His Persons are fully represented to one another. And God then creates in that same manner. He creates after Himself so that man has God fully represented to Him--externally in general revelation, internally in internal general revelation, and in God's word being spoken to him. He is in a similar context to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He can't escape the knowledge of God. And so when we think about revelation, we need to think about revelation in terms of God's presenting Himself to man.

Now when we think about it like that, we then think about what's put into the Scriptures. So much can be put into the Scriptures. But what is put into the Scriptures is a record of God's revealing Himself to man. It's a record of God's revealing Himself to man.

Now here's the thing about it. We already read 2 Timothy 3:16. And we understand that that record is a God-breathed-out record, which means that it's from God and therefore true. And so we call it *infallible*. And it does not wander from the truth. It is what we call *inerrant*. Infallibility is the foundation for inerrancy, okay? Infallibility has to do with the true God who speaks truly and doesn't wander from the truth.

So we think about revelation as being a very foundational concept. Any questions about this before we go on? Frank, go ahead. Are you getting ready to throw that paper towel, or are you just folding it up? (*Laughter*)

Frank Melnyk: I'm swatting flies.

Jeff: All right. I'm going to move then to *interpreting the Scriptures*. First of all, when you think about the Old Testament you think about *the language of the Old Testament*, which is mainly Hebrew. There are some Aramaic passages in the Old Testament. But it's mainly in Hebrew.

I think that when we think about how to interpret the Bible, we need to think about *the analogy of Scripture*. Now you've heard me say this before, I'm sure. But we're going to be using it as we go through this Old Testament. And the analogy of Scripture is when we let Scripture interpret Scripture. Scripture interprets Scripture.

I also want to say something to you about *a philosophy of history*, which I think is really crucial. We need to understand that the Bible is different than regular history. Why is that? Well, because there is a plan of redemption being worked out in Biblical history.

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Now Biblical history is true history. It's not that Biblical history is in some way untrue or made up or mythical. But there's a huge difference. When you think about Biblical history, one of the things that you realize is that this history and what is contained in the Scriptures is appointed by God to be contained in the Scriptures, and those events that are there are interpreted for us.

In other words, I want you to think about it this way. The Resurrection that's contained in the Scriptures is a historical event. But it is a historical event that is interpreted for us.

Can you imagine if the Resurrection was in the Scriptures, but it wasn't interpreted? People would say, "Well, I guess that means that anything can happen in history. A dead man can rise from the dead."

But is that all it means? No, it's not all it means. It means that this Man came as a fulfillment of the types and shadows and promises of the Old, and rises to life that we might have life because of the atonement that His death brings. In other words, the event is interpreted for us.

So when you think about the history of the Bible, one of the things that you think about is that these are select events from God and interpreted for us.

Now the difference between that is this. You know, I can't say that the event that's going to happen to me today, whatever that event may be, that I can provide an infallible interpretation to it. That's the difference. I cannot say that this is why this happened to me today.

But if I go back and, say, I look at Elijah's calling by Elijah, I could tell you a lot about that historical event. And I can tell you with certainty because the Bible records it. And I know that if the Bible records it, it's from the Holy Spirit, it's from God, and it's accurate. It's an accurate interpretation of what's happening to Elijah.

But I can't give that same kind of accuracy when I talk about the events of my own life. So there's a difference between the Bible's history and the history of my own life. It's God's revealed plan being exfoliated for my redemption. So it's different.

However, it's real history. I mean, we encounter Egyptians. We're going to encounter Hittites, Gergashites, stalactites, right? (*Laughter*) We're going to encounter these things—Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Romans. These are all going to be there. And so we're going to encounter them and we're going to find that the Bible is consistent with the history that we know of in history books.

But there's something else that we need to understand. And that is that the Bible focuses upon the descendants of Abraham. In Genesis chapter 12 you find Abraham. And we are children of Abraham all the way to the end. So the Bible really focuses on this figure called Abraham and his descendants, who are as many as the stars in the heavens.

So there's an important centering here. And the reason for that is obvious. The gospel is given to Abraham. And from Abraham and his descendants that gospel is to be disseminated throughout the world.

And then I want to say this about the Scriptures, and that's this. I want you to understand that *the Bible is clearly predestinarian*. God predestines all that comes to pass.

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Now I want to be the first to freely admit that how it is that a man like Adam,--and we’re going to talk about this,--how a man like Adam who has no disposition to sin, who has no propensity to sin, who has no sinful nature, how it is that he can sin. I don’t know. And equally I do not understand why it is that God ordained this man to sin. But I know He did.

Now you can give any interpretation you want to that. You can say, “Well, it was because we would know the grace of God if Adam did fall,” and so on. I mean, somebody could equally say that had Adam not sinned and obeyed, we would have life through Adam. And that was God’s plan and purpose. I understand that. But I want you to know that there are just some questions that we cannot answer.

However, just because we can’t answer them does not mean that the Bible is not fundamentally predestinarian in its orientation, because it most certainly is. You can’t get around that. Don, go ahead.

Don: Yes. I think that it even goes back further to the fall of Lucifer, right?

Jeff: Sure it does. Yes, the same thing, right? So the Bible is predestinarian. And we’re going to see that God is unfolding the events leading up to His Son. And in Acts chapter 4 we’re told that what happened in Jerusalem to the Son was exactly what God predetermined would happen. And so therefore everything that is promised in the Old is fulfilled in the New, and it’s under God’s sovereign direction as it comes to pass.

And then the final thing I want you to understand is this. I want you to understand that *the Old Testament reveals Jesus*. It reveals Jesus, and without an understanding of the Old you won’t know the full development of what it is that Jesus came to fulfill.

But secondly, one of the things that you need to know is that in the book of 1 Corinthians Paul says that these things in the Old Testament “*were written for our instruction.*”

Don: Amen.

Jeff: so it’s there for our behavioral well-being. We’re to learn about what it was to have faith and what it was to be faithless. We’re to learn about how to be godly, and so on.

And yet I’d say this to you. And this is an important thing, and we’ll talk about it more as we go along. But can I put it this way? Just as revelation is progressively revealed, in other words, there’s a progressiveness to the unfolding plan of God. So it begins with Genesis chapter 3 and the gospel there, and it climaxes with the cross.

But I want you to understand something else. I want you to understand that just as the Spirit gives knowledge progressively, so too does He give experience progressively. So the experience of the Psalmist, the spiritual experience of the Psalmist, is in keeping with the progressive giving of the Spirit.

Now what does that mean practically? What’s the payoff of that? The payoff of that is this. We oftentimes open up the Psalms and say, “Well, I wish I had the faith of the Psalmist,” when what we really ought to be thinking is that where the Psalmist’s faith ends is where my faith begins, because I am further down the road in terms of where God is in His progressive revelation of knowledge, and also in terms of what He provides by His Spirit. In other words, I have a greater intimacy with God by way of the Spirit now

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then did the Psalmist. And therefore my spiritual experiences ought to begin where the Psalmist’s ends. If my spiritual experience doesn’t begin where the Psalmist’s ends, then I need to say that I think there’s a problem with me. And I need to go back to the drawing board with God about my own experience. Okay? So are there any questions or thoughts before we wrap up? Yes, Dale?

Dale: The only word that you used so far today that bothers me is billions of years, because I do not believe that it took God billions and billions of years. And I’m glad to see that you don’t identify where Genesis began.

Jeff: Well remember, Dale, that I said billions of years is what the unbeliever believes.

Dale: What?

Jeff: I said that billions of years is what the unbeliever believes.

Dale: Okay. I’ll buy that. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: There may be some Christian folks who believe that a day is like however many years. But I just made that typical of that position.

Don: Jeff, isn’t there an excuse that some of us may be tempted to use when you say that the Psalmist’s experience ends where the New Testament believer’s experience begins? God was revealing Himself to David all the time—face to face and speaking to him regarding Bathsheba, or the promise in 2 Samuel. He’s not speaking to us that way today. What would you say to that?

Jeff: I would say that what we have a tendency to think is that what’s recorded for us in such a condensed way is indicative of what happens to him moment by moment in life.

Don: Right.

Jeff: When the fact of the matter is that even with Abraham how many years passed between God speaking to him after he did what he did with Hagar and His telling him that Isaac was on the way? You know, many, many years. But we have a tendency to read a condensed story and think that God was speaking to him all the time in that way.

The other thing too that I think we need to remember is that when you look at David, David oftentimes communicated through the priests or the prophets with God.

Don: Right.

Jeff: And that was his link.

Bob: Jeff, what do you say to someone who says, “Well, do you believe in carbon dating?” And they have evidence of maybe not billions, but certainly millions and millions. And how do you relate that to God’s time line and what’s said in the Scripture? What do you say to that person?

Jeff: That’s a good question. So I’ll give you this really quickly, and we can talk about this when we talk about Genesis. So I think that when you look at some of the more natural ways of dating the earth, you come up with a younger earth. For instance, when you count rings on oldest trees you don’t get millions of years. You get thousands, right? So the earth is supposed to slow down so many milliseconds every year. If you add on those milliseconds millions and millions of times, you get an earth that spins so fast that it can’t sustain life.

Or when the astronauts were going to land on the moon, the evolutionists said, “You need to create stilts on the space shuttle that are really tall because the space dust on the

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moon after millions and millions of years is going to be really thick.” But it only turned out to be a couple of inches thick.

And so when you think about just those kinds of natural ways of dating, you tend to come up with a younger earth. And so in my simplistic head I’ve not been able to sort of wrestle with the carbon dating, although I know that there are some inconsistencies. And I know that sometimes it works in our favor and sometimes it doesn’t. For instance, with the possibility of Noah’s ark, it’s worked in our favor. Sometimes it doesn’t.

So if you put those things aside and you ask yourself about some of the more simple things in life, I think it lends itself to a young earth. But I’m no scientist and I don’t want to pretend that I am. It’s just my simplistic way.

So when I run into people, and I say, “Well, let’s put aside the things that you and I don’t really know,--carbon dating”,--because if they know about carbon dating, they’re not asking me about it, you know? (*Laughter*) And I say, “Let’s think about some of the more natural things that we might be able to account for.” Yes?

Transcriber’s Note: Bill Stolze starts to speak.

Jeff: This is not a chiasm. (*Laughter*)

Bill: I listen to WORD FM quite a bit. And several months ago there was a gentleman on there talking about carbon dating. And he said that we can use three different methods of carbon dating of a rock, or whatever it was. And he said that he was off quite a bit. And the host asked, “How far off would you be?”

And he said that different methods were off by billions of years.

Jeff: Sure. Yes?

Bishop Rodgers: A few comments. One is that I’ve been reading a good bit about intelligent design and that whole movement. And they’re convinced that one of the great causes of our collapsed culture has been the Darwinian hypothesis, which is also one of the issues in terms of creation science today. But you have to begin to wonder with these intelligent scientists that the whole Darwinian hypothesis is very, very questionable.

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: So that’s one point. Point #2 is that I’ve also been reading a survey of the Old Testament by a man named Wright, called *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*, which Inter-Varsity has just brought out.

Jeff: Okay.

Bishop Rodgers: It’s a nice survey. And what struck me when I got done reading this book was that it said that every crucial point when God moves in a redemptive way has the elements of God’s grace and faith. And it’s not just in the New Testament that you’re saved by faith. It’s all the way through, from the very beginning to the end. It’s astonishing!

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: So Paul was quite appropriate when he was citing the Old Testament. He didn’t have any struggle with that. It was to him as clear as it could be.

Jeff: Yes.

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Jim Hamilton: I have a friend who says that there’s no definition of 24 hours to a day in the Bible, so maybe it was a million years. Six days could have been six periods of time.

Jeff: Well you know, there is that possibility. But I would say this to you. Since it was written by Moses when there was a 24-hour day, and he selected that framework to be used, I mean, let’s face it. How does one like Moses communicate the creation of the universe? Well, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he chose six 24-hour days, things that he knew, right?, to say that in the space of this time God did this and this and this. In my mind not only can the word mean 24-hour days, but in all likelihood Moses using that under the inspiration of the Spirit probably indicates that that’s the way he understood it, because he didn’t redefine what it was for people. He simply took and used it, so that when he came out of his tent and called everybody and said, “Come here; you guys have to hear this! Look at what I just wrote!”, and then read to the Israelites the account of creation that he had just written under the inspiration of the Spirit, you know how it is when you read it. He didn’t go, “Oh yeah, you guys don’t understand that this is more than 24 hours. Let me go back and check.” And you know that in the Spirit every word fits, right? I mean, he came out and read it to them, and seemingly the Israelites would have understood what he was saying, that in six 24-hour days God made this, and on the seventh day He rested. It seems to me to be a straightforward kind of thing. But again, very simplistic.

Don: He reiterates it in the Fourth commandment.

Jeff: Yes.

Jim: Well it’s pretty spectacular, whether it took Him a million years or 24 hours. He did it, either way.

Jeff: The spectacular thing is that He would have said, “Let’s do each of these in the space of a 24-hour period.” *(Laughter)*

Don: He could have done it in a second.

Jeff: Right, because He created by divine fiat, you know?

David Wessel: Well, for whatever it’s worth from the scientific standpoint of carbon dating, I put the challenge to a bunch of people from Westinghouse. Nobody would accept it scientifically. Carbon dating cannot be depended upon beyond fifty thousand years.

Bob: Beyond what? Fifty thousand?

David: Some say five thousand. The point is that you’re talking in the thousands. You’re not talking in the millions. It’s totally unreliable much beyond that.

Jeff: Because at some point it becomes subjective, right?, because you don’t have millions of years by which to put a standard to this testing, right? I mean, in my mind the carbon dating issue fails because if I can test it within an amount of years that I know to be true, then okay. But once I stretch it to the point to where I have no years to really measure if the outcome of this test is really true or not, this is subjective in my mind. I don’t know if that’s really the case or not. Yes, Kirk?

Kirk: Earlier you said to interpret Scripture by Scripture. Right at the beginning creation was six days and God rested on the seventh. But He had that same parallel thing

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He gave to the Israelites. “You will work six days and rest on the seventh.” So if creation is millions of years, but the command to work six days and rest on the seventh were days, there would be a conflict.

Jeff: You know what? I wish I had thought of that. I would have told my parents that I’m still in a Sabbath rest. *(Laughter)* They’re gone. But it’s not too late for you, though. Tell your dad that you’re still a million years into the seventh day. *(Laughter)*

All right, let’s pray. Sorry, Caleb. Father in heaven, thanks for this day, for the time You’ve given. Bless us, Lord, as we approach Your word, and help us to understand it. Help us to get a big picture of it. And Lord, help us to do that not so that we can just know history, but so that we can know the unfolding plan of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we ask these things in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*