

As a student of Scripture and Discipleship, I hear many explain that the Bible is just a cobbled together group of semi-connected stories by a small group of authors trying to explain events and circumstances that were beyond their understanding. Most modern Christians have no problem with science, philosophy and the arts, and see academia in general as compatible with Christian thought. On the other hand, humanistic detractors tend to group the Bible with other ancient myths and fables. From my perspective, much of the problem stems from Christians not really having a deep understanding of the richness of their faith and just how amazing the Bible really is. It's important to understand that the Bible is less about informing us on how things came about or even about how things work, instead the Bible is much more about introducing us to a personal and relational God who wants to be known and experienced. God has revealed Himself in Scripture; and it's a good thing because if God didn't want to be found and if He hadn't revealed Himself, we never would find Him, let alone know Him. As such, the Bible is better thought of as a lengthy personal introduction and love letter from our Creator. Hebrews 11:6 says "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." With this in mind this article will attempt to exploring a broad spectrum approach to God's plan of redemption played out in an historical context, what is known as "Redemptive History."

One of the things I most appreciate about the Bible is that it tells God's ongoing story of His love and desire for the redemption of humanity through the ages. It would be one thing for a person to sit down and write an entire story. One mind can capture a thought or vision and work it out from beginning to end. It is totally another when many different inspired writers tell one story played out through time and history, where we can observe God advancing and developing themes and concepts well over several thousand-year duration. Christians should consider the Bible as an integrated work of great art and intellect, that is written by numerous authors with different perspectives in a real cultural-historical context. A story that tells God's story in a way that makes it both approachable and believable. The first of a three-part series on Interpreting Scripture may be found on my www.authenticdiscipleship.org website – here's the link to the first part, and I certainly recommend you read all three - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/1-biblical-literacy/Interpreting%20Scripture%20-%20Part%201.pdf>

I was recently asked to teach on the following passage for Communion in **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**:

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

This passage in particular, most Christians have both read and heard countless times, and sometimes we just need to pause and ask God for a fresh perspective on it. As I was contemplating this passage, two concepts kind leaped out at me and seem to beg for me to dig a little deeper, these are the concepts of 'remembrance' and 'covenant.' While most studies tend to focus on the 'Micro-narrative' of the individual passage, this article will look more at the 'Macro-narrative' of grace and redemption throughout history.

First a short review of the “Micro-Narrative” what these two terms mean:

1. “Remembrance” – the word translated as remembrance from the Greek means not just to recollect, but rather to “personally and deliberately recall.” As such, it speaks to an intentional and rational decision to engage in a deliberate meditative effort. To remember in this context involves the strength and conviction to understand and deliberately hold onto to what God has revealed to us in Scripture.

Looking closer at this term in this passage:

- a. Note that “in remembrance of Me” is repeated twice... first in the context of the bread, and then in the context of the blood. This sort of double use forms what is known as an “*inclusio*” – which is a structural marker that Biblical writers used to call attention to what they thought was most important in the passage. It is the equivalent of a “heads up, this is what you should pay attention to.” In essence, Paul is in this instance focusing our attention on the “New Covenant,” and specifically upon the greater context of what Jesus has done for us in fulfilling redemptive history expressed in the Old Covenant. This is a key theme for Paul who in speaking to a group of believers. Messianic Jews [meaning Jews who have come to know Jesus as their Messiah and Lord] would have intuitively understood the covenant history of the Judea-Christian faith.
 - b. It is important for us to remember also, that while there was sadness in recounting what Jesus had to suffer on the Cross as many or Paul’s initial readers had actually witnessed the events and/or knew those that had, for Paul Communion was not a sad recollection but rather a somber celebration. Communion is the Sacrament in which we celebrate Jesus’s victory over sin and death that has played out over redemptive history, and it comes with the promise that we’ll spend eternity with Him forever. This is obviously “Good News” for believers – Romans 8:2-5; 12:1-2.
 - c. Thinking about this, it seems reasonable for us to look more closely at God’s roll-out of His Covenantal relations throughout redemptive history and how they paved the way directly to Messiah Jesus and also where it is ultimately taking us as Christ followers.
2. “Covenant” – as used in Scripture, this term referred to a “binding promise made between two or more parties.” It is much more than a contract, and more like a “binding and unbreakable mutual obligation and commitment that endures through time.”
 - a. The Hebrew word translated as “covenant” is “*Berit*” and its meaning is a relationship between two parties where each bound themselves to the other to perform certain prescribed obligations or service to the other. The Latin term “*Quid pro quo*” or “this for that” agreement, is often used for this sort of an arrangement. However, a general characteristic of *Berit* is that it is unalterable and of a permanently binding and enduring nature.
 - b. God’s covenants with humanity are commitments made by God which are secured by His Unchanging Character. God’s covenant of “Loving-kindness” is referred to as “Hessed” love

meaning “God’s Loyal Love” in the Old Covenant; and “Agape” love in the New Covenant.

- c. This concept of reciprocal loyal love is reflected in the oft-repeated Old Testament statement, “I will be their God and they shall be my people” – (Jerimiah 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23; Zechariah 8:8; among others).
- d. In Scripture, God’s covenantal redemptive story began in the Garden after the Fall and ends in eternity at the end of time. God uses these covenants and other key themes to advance His redemptive plan to reconcile his people to Himself. However, Scripture states this was always God’s plan, having its beginning before creation occurred – 1st Peter 1:18-20.
- e. The Biblical foundation of covenant is nicely explained in this brief statement found on **Wikipedia**: There are two major types of covenants in the Hebrew Bible, including the obligatory type and the promissory type. The obligatory covenant is more common with the Hittite peoples, and deals with the relationship between two parties of equal standing. In contrast, the promissory type of covenant is seen in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. Promissory covenants focus on the relationship between the suzerain [Great King] and the vassal [lesser king] and are similar to the "royal grant" type of legal document, which include historical introduction, border delineations, stipulations, witnesses, blessings, and curses. In royal grants, the master could reward a servant for being loyal. God rewarded Abraham, Noah, and David in his covenants with them. As part of his covenant with Abraham, God has the obligation to keep Abraham's descendants as God's chosen people and be their God. When taking this oath, we see that God is accompanied by a smoking oven and a torch. These were objects used in the procedure of taking an oath much like oaths that involved sacrificing animals while taking the oath. God acts as the suzerain power and is the party of the covenant accompanied by the required action that comes with the oath whether it be fire or animals in the sacrificial oaths. In doing this, God is the party taking upon the curse if he does not uphold his obligation. Throughout history there were also many instances where the vassal was the one who performed the different acts and took the curse upon them.
- f. “Covenant Theology” was presented in the post-Reformation era primarily by Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in the 16th century AD after the reformation of the church. Covenant Theology promotes the position that all of Scripture taken as a whole presents God as a relational Being who established covenantal relationships with humanity. These covenants individually and collectively advance God’s redemptive plan for humanity incrementally. They include His gracious promises and resultant human obligations... all of them are seen as a form of Grace. Originally presented as part of the theology of election [aka – calling], it is more recently seen as an invitation to partner with God in advancing His purposes.
- g. “Theology of Communion” will be discussed in a separate article.

3. Some of the major developments of the “Macro-Narrative” [big picture] of the redemptive story in history include the following “micro-narratives” [aka – the smaller stories that advance the big picture]:

a. **The Eden Covenant – [Edenic Covenant] this was a “works based covenant” which is typical of the Old Covenant founded upon obedience and trust, and failure to remain obedient brought judgment.**

i. **When God voiced His judgment in Genesis 3, it is important to notice that God cursed Satan directly, thereby dooming him. However, God cursed the ground directly from which humanity had been made thereby dooming Creation. By not cursing humanity directly, God leaves open the opportunity for human redemption. Notice how judgment and hope are expressed in the pronouncement as God says:**

Genesis 3:15:

“And I will put enmity
between you [Satan] and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he [Messiah] will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

At the judgment God promised Adam and Eve that an ancestor would come from them who would redeem humanity. God along with His judgment, holds out the promise of humanities reconciliation at a future time. To crush Satan’s head means a death blow; while Messiah having His heel struck means a survivable wounding. This came to pass when Jesus went to the Cross and was Resurrected, having thereby sealed Satan’s destruction and securing humanity’s opportunity for redemption.

ii. **It is quite interesting that God casts Adam and Eve out of the Garden so they do not eat of the fruit of the tree of life:**

Genesis 3:22-24: And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

At first we tend to think of the loss of living forever by the fruit of the Tree of Life to be a great loss. But from God’s perspective, think of the greater loss of humanity living forever in their Fallen condition. Being trapped in a broken and decaying world order for eternity would be hell on earth. But God had other plans as redemptive history plays out, notice that Jesus says in John 14:6:

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

This is not a statement of death, but rather an invitation to Life.

iii. **John goes on to write in Revelation the following about the Tree of Life:**

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Rev 22:2 Down the middle of the great street of the city, on each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Rev 22:14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Rev 22:19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

- iv. **The sign of the Eden covenant was the tree of life; and the New Covenant prize in eternity is the Tree of Life. It seems obvious that God had always intended the Tree of Life [and by extension the Tree of Knowledge] to be used for His people’s benefit, but on His timetable. Humanity acting in disobedience in their own knowledge, instead of obeying and trusting God. This is the first piece of God’s redemptive plan, and it obviously takes off in the Old Covenant and lands in the New Covenant.**

- b. **The Noah Covenant – [Noatic Covenant] Genesis 6:5; 8-9; 18 – in Scripture some time has now passed since Adam & Eve left the Garden, and humanity had become incurably corrupted in Noah’s lifetime. The earth had to be cleansed for the new seed that would develop from Noah who was shown in Scripture as a man of great integrity.**

- i. **Note how the story develops:**

Ge 6:5 The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil all the time.

- ii. **When the heart has gone this wrong, there is no easy cure and a hard decision has to be made. But on the other hand there is hope:**

Ge 6:8-9 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.

6:18 I will establish my **covenant** with you [Noah], and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.

- iii. **In this covenant, God would preserve humanity through a remnant from Noah, and God promised He would not destroy humanity or the earth until the end of time when He brings about the *Parousia* [the 2nd Coming and rule of Messiah Jesus].**

- iv. **The Gospel of Luke provides a wonderful introduction of Jesus as the Messiah who would save God’s people:**

Luke 2:8-14: In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

But the angel said to them, “**Do not be afraid**; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth **peace among men** with whom He is pleased.”

- v. **The Rainbow is the sign of the Noah covenant – the bow represents God’s decision to refrain from destroying humanity completely, and instead have peace with the more noble of humanity [a remnant]. Scripture makes it clear that not all of humanity will be saved:**

Matthew 7:15-23: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Luke 6:43-46: “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

- vi. **It is important to understand that all of God’s attributes... including His goodness, faithfulness, justice, mercy, love, kindness, etc.; are always in expressed in balance all the time. God’s desire for justice and mercy framed His decision to allow humanity to choose their destiny... what we call “Free will” means that individuals can chose to love and follow God, or refuse Him... even fight against Him. Because we have this responsibility to choose our destiny, we then each bear the consequence of our choices.**
- vii. **God’s peace is promised perfectly through Messiah... and we have the responsibility to accept or refuse it, but it is always offered on God’s terms and not our qualifications of it. When we stand before God at the end of days, our choices will justify us or condemn us; and I’m convinced that none will be able to say that God was unfair with us. I hold to a position that as we look into God’s perfection, our imperfection will be plainly see by each**

of us.

viii. The theme of “remnant” is also introduced in this story. God promises that there will always be some who are inclined to His heart, who are honorable and worthy of His Grace. It is for the sake of this remnant that redemptive history plays out.

c. The Abraham Covenant – [Abrahamic Covenant] the Patriarch Abram [who would later be renamed Abraham] was God’s choice to become in the lineage of God’s people. Abram was chosen because of his faith and his noble character:

i. Abram was a man of simple obedient faith, who heard God’s invitation and embarked on a 1,000-mile journey because God asked him to. God made a promise of blessing that Abram believed and acted upon.

Genesis 12:1-4

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

Genesis 15:1-6

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”

And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

ii. **Faith, belief, and obedience are intrinsically linked with a heart that loves and is inclined toward God... this is what it takes to please God.**

Genesis 15:18

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.”

God would make of this man of simple faith a great nation and provide a Promised Land that his family would inherit. As Paul writes about faith and obedience to the Philippians

in 2:12-16a:

“Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with “reverence” (awe) and “trembling” (wonder). [Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure *and* satisfaction *and* delight. Do all things without grumbling *and* faultfinding *and* complaining [against God] and questioning *and* doubting [among yourselves], That you may show yourselves to be blameless *and* guileless, innocent *and* uncontaminated, children of God without blemish (faultless, unrebukable) in the midst of a crooked *and* wicked generation [spiritually dull and perverse], among whom you are seen as bright lights (stars or beacons shining out clearly) in the [dark] world, Holding out [to it] *and* offering [to all men] the Word of Life”... from the Amplified Version.

The faith that Abraham had, and the type of faith Paul is talking about here is strong and reliant. See “on developing a Spirit Driven Life” with this AD link.

<http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.5%20-%20On%20Developing%20a%20Spirit%20Driven%20Life.pdf>

Hebrews 11:1-13 – the author of the epistle to the Hebrews talks about faith in this following passage:

“Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

For by it the men of old gained approval.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

Therefore, there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.*

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”

- iii. **Abraham becomes for all generations the standard of what a man of faith ascribes to become. The theme of ‘substitutionary sacrifice’ is introduced when God provided a substitute lamb for Isaac.**
 - iv. **The sign of the Abraham covenant was circumcision in the flesh; which looked forward to the circumcision of the heart. The meaning has to do with removing the excess which is unnecessary that needed to be cut away, for that which is essential to emerge.**
- d. **Moses Covenant — [Mosaic-Sinai Covenant] Abraham’s descendants have now become an entire nation, having emerged from a patriarchal family. God chose Moses to lead God’s people out of slavery into hope and freedom. Moses was a man who spent 40 years as a prince in Egypt, 40 years as a shepherd in Median, and 40 years as the Hebrew deliverer in Sinai.**
- i. **God’s covenant with the nation [Israel] states in Exodus 19:5-6 “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”**
 - ii. **God promised He would deliver His people from their brutal life of oppression and slavery in Egypt, and lead them into the Land of Promise and into freedom and a calling of great importance. God’s purpose must be understood in the greater context of advancing redemptive history. For example, the Pagan occupants of city-states in the land of Canaan entered into a contractual relationship with their false deities for the purpose of extracting service and nourishment through their altars. This was patterned on the “Feudal Lord” motif of society where the people’s labor as vassals supported their lords. The vassal’s labor on the lord’s land earned them protection; for which they returned a percentage of the crop to their lord.**
 - iii. **This system created a people locked into a permanent indentured service without freedom or rights. The more brutal the lord, the more oppressive the circumstances for the vassals. The deal would be sealed by a blood commitment of the vassal to their lord; with failure by the vassal subject to punishment including death. This type of deal was beneficial only to the Lord, and the enslaved vassal really had little choice. By contrast the Sinai Covenant was reciprocal with great benefit derived by the people.**

- iv. **God promised in the Sinai covenant mediated by Moses that His people would have an inheritance in the land of promise. Numbers 26:52-56 says, “The LORD said to Moses, The land is to be allotted to [the people] as an inheritance based on the number of names. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one; each is to receive its inheritance according to the number of those listed. Be sure that the land is distributed by lot. What each group inherits will be according to the names for its ancestral tribe. Each inheritance is to be distributed by lot among the larger and smaller groups.”**
- v. **In the Old Covenant, the sign of God’s deliverance of the people from their servitude and oppression in Egypt was the Passover... secured by the blood sacrifice of a lamb rather than the blood of the people.**
- vi. **In the New Covenant, the sign of God’s deliverance of the people from their servitude and oppression to sin and death was the Passover Crucifixion of Jesus... the lamb of God. The reflective development of this theme is stunning clear and amazing in retrospect.**
- e. **Levitical Covenant – here a family is chosen by God to mediate the Covenant of the Law through the blood of animals. While 11 of the 12 patriarchal families would have a land inheritance, the Levite family of priests would be supported by the people and have God as their inheritance.**
 - i. **Numbers 18:19-20 – “Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the LORD I give to you [Aaron] and your sons and daughters as your regular share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD for both you and your offspring. The LORD said to Aaron, You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.”**
 - ii. **In the Old Covenant, families owning their own land and enjoying a great amount of both freedom and civil rights and security was quite radical in these early days and was a demonstration of God’s Goodness and Hessed [loyal love] for the nation. Social justice was uncommon in these days as well, under the Law poor families were given the right to glean fields after the harvest, and harvesters were instructed to leave some for the poor. In addition, to prevent permanent servitude, the Year of Jubilee guaranteed servants would be set free from their voluntary indentured status.**
 - iii. **In the New Covenant, this family of priests has now been replaced by the church family, with God being our inheritance.**
 - iv. **In the Old Covenant, the sign of this covenant was Tabernacle and Temple [the dwelling place of God] and blood sacrificial worship, which ended with the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.**
 - v. **In the New Covenant, the sign it is replaced by believers being a “living sacrifice” [Romans 12:1] with the Temple of God now being the individual believer’s heart [1st Corinthians 3:16].**
 - vi. **The theme of substitutionary blood sacrifice is reinforced and clarified as to application**

for the people, this set the stage for the substitutionary blood sacrifice of Jesus.

- f. **King David Covenant [Davidic Covenant] – regional adversaries the Philistines brought renewed paganism along with threats of subjugation that made life miserable for God’s people. God chose a young man... a shepherd/poet/warrior... a man of intense faith to deliver and lead God’s people.**

In establishing the Monarchy, God ordained that His people would be ruled in His Name by a collaborative combination of leaders:

- 1. Priests who would clarify the Law and mediate substitutionary blood sacrifice.**
- 2. A king acting as a vassal lord obedient to the Suzerain High King [God] in protecting and providing for God’s people.**
- 3. Prophets to ordain and align the king and priests with God’s will.**

David’s faithfulness is the promise of an enduring kingdom and of a future Messianic King. Unfortunately, successive leaders would prove unworthy of leadership.

Jesus as the Messianic King in the line of David fulfilled all three roles in His ministry.

i. God says to David – 2 Samuel 7:11c-14:

The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son.

ii. David says to God – Psalm 89:1-4:

I will sing of the LORD'S great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.
I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
You said, I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,
I will establish your line forever
and make your throne firm through all generations.

iii. God promised by covenant that David’s kingdom would endure, and that the Messiah would come from his lineage.

iv. Paul writes about David – Acts 13:22-26:

After removing Saul, God made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse [to be] a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’ From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel.

As John was completing his work, he said: ‘Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

“Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent.”

- v. **Here we see that Paul declares God’s covenant faithfulness has been fulfilled in Messiah Jesus, and that He is the only One who we can look toward for salvation from sin and death.**
- vi. **The sign of this covenant is a man with a circumcised heart who deeply loves God and is committed to serving Him.**
- g. **The Prophetic Period – God’s people because of the poor leadership of the nation have again turned away and forgotten God, their faith had been corrupted by Paganism and a misguided faith in material things. Both kings and priests failed in remaining obedient and dependent upon God. The prophets warned of judgment that would be coming because the people have not lived up to their covenantal obligations. These prophets preached judgment for their unfaithfulness, but always with the promise of hope:**
 - i. **Jeremiah 31:10-11a:**

“Hear the word of the LORD, O nations;
proclaim it in distant coastlands:
‘He who scattered Israel will gather them
and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’
For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them
 - ii. **Jeremiah 31:31-34 – Jeremiah spoke clearly of a New Covenant where God would bring about a great work of salvation sometime in the future:**

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD,
“when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant
I made with their forefathers
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,”
declares the LORD.
“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time,” declares the LORD.
“I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.

**I will be their God,
and they will be my people.”**

- iii. **The prophesied announcement of a New Covenant of people who are relationally dependent upon God would be brought about by the coming Messiah Jesus.**
- iv. **Cross-reference – in the Old Covenant see – Isaiah 11:6-9; 54:11-15; 59:20-21; Jeremiah 32:36-41; 33:14-26; Ezekiel 16:59-63. In the New Covenant see 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8; 9:15; 12:24; Romans 11:27; Galatians 4:21-31.**

- h. **All of the forgoing is the backdrop for Paul’s proclamation of Jesus’ New Covenant – as presented in the 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Communion passage, is something that Messianic Jews would have known by connecting the dots of redemptive history much as we just have in this short study. Let’s read this 1 Corinthians passage again with the Macro-Narrative of redemption in mind: “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this **in remembrance** of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, **in remembrance** of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”**

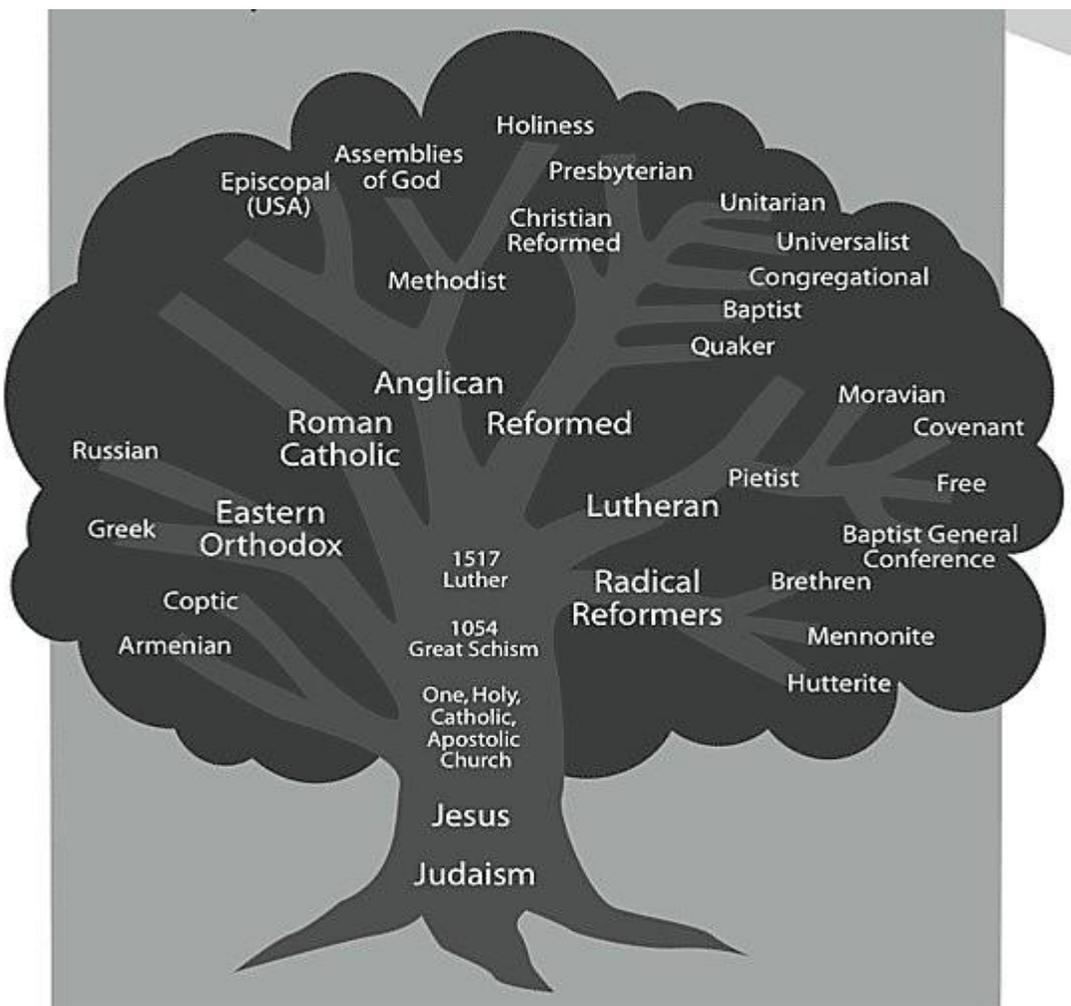
- 4. **Jesus is clearly presented by Paul as the fulfillment of the Eden Covenant, and that all the other Covenants led directly to Him. Jesus entered history knowing that His physical death as the Passover Lamb was required for God’s redemptive plan for humanity.**
 - a. **Remembrance of God’s redemptive covenantal grace as we have seen integrates a developmental process that started in the Garden and will end in the New Heaven and Earth. Jesus going to the Cross on Passover is seen as the pivotal element in redemptive history, and it resonates backward and forward through time.**
 - b. **Components of Jesus’ Messianic Mission include:**
 - i. **Advent – God coming into creation as the God/man Messiah Jesus.**
 - ii. **Messianic Ministry – depending on which list you use, Jesus in His ministry fulfilled over 300 specific prophecies regarding the Messiah – [see <http://www.bibleprobe.com/365messianicprophecies.htm>]. Obviously, the amount of prophecy devoted to the “Coming One” the Messiah is formidable, and Jesus having fulfilled such a number cannot be coincidental.**
 - iii. **The Cross Sacrifice of Passover – as the Lamb of God Jesus had to have been sacrificed on the Passover.**
 - iv. **The Resurrection – if Jesus merely died as a human sacrifice and remained dead, that would be remarkable but it would not have provided the necessary substance for an enduring eternal hope. Jesus resurrection validates the hope of eternity all believers look forward to share in.**

- v. Pentecost – the indwelling of the Spirit is the seal and proof of individual redemption and the promise of eternity that awaits all believers. It is not merely human effort that sanctifies us, but the Spirit working in us and through us to present us to God. We obviously have a role to play in cooperating with the Spirit, but our effort alone will not suffice. The indwelling Spirit draws us toward God as we seek Him.
 - vi. The Rapture – Jesus will return and collect His faithful followers before the end-time persecution known as the great Tribulation. Believers will be caught up in the air in full view of sinful humanity.
 - vii. The 2nd Advent – at the end of the tribulation Jesus will return to earth to inaugurate the Millennial – the 1,000 years’ period of Messianic peace and prosperity prior to the end of days.
 - viii. The New Heaven and Earth – at the conclusion of the Millennium, the old created order will be consumed and a new Heaven and Earth created where humanity will live in peace with God and one another. Humanity will be restored to this ideal perfected state as God had always intended for humanity to enjoy.
 - ix. For much more on the prophecy and events of the Parousia, please see <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/1-biblical-literacy/Bible%20Survey%20-%20Apocalyptic%201.3%20-%20Eschatology,%20Millenianism%20&%20the%20Rapture.pdf>
- c. Whenever we prepare to take the Communion elements, we should take a few moments to remember all of what Jesus has done for us; not just remembering the past, but also reminding ourselves of the glorious future that is coming.
- i. Communion is also the appropriate time for each to search our own hearts and to confess our sins and shortcomings to God, knowing He is faithful and True and that the Blood of the Lamb cleanses us of all unrighteousness. We as God’s family take our place just as God’s covenant people have through the ages, and like all others, we each have our own journey and our own story of how God graciously redeemed us... upon which we should reflect and thank God.
 - ii. As we have seen, redemptive history and the Bible itself is not merely a collection of random occurrences and stories. Instead they are an integrated plan God has been working out since before the beginning of time. This is something God was happy to do for you, and we should be aware that He is delighted that we have each responded to Him.
- d. The sign of the New Covenant in Jesus is the bread and the cup.
5. I recently watched a “coming of age” movie that focused on the character development of a group of late teenagers. In a conversation with his high school teacher a lead character asked why people he loved tended to settle for poor relationships. His teacher responded that most people tend to accept

the love they think they deserve. What a profound thought! I think this concept also applies to us regarding the love God has for us. God's love for us is amazing, which becomes more obvious as we take the time to see how God totally invested Himself in each of us throughout redemptive history. God invites us into something utterly amazing; and He asks us to accept it on His terms. It is such a small condition when we think about how totally invested He is in us through His Grace presented to us through Jesus. Why do we think we deserve less than God's unmerited love and favor? Think again!

6. It is also appropriate to remember that Christians for 2,000 years have celebrated Christ's victory over sin and death and his purchase of his followers' eternal redemption. Though there are many forms in which our faith is celebrated and many practices of the communion ceremony, we are one Church under One Lord. We should make reasonable efforts to be known and unified by our similarities, than to be divided by our differences.

a. The symbol of the Christian family the tree of Life, the tree is a good reminder of our unity:



- b. The Nicene Creed presents a wonderful summary document of the theological unity of the Christian faith. In essence, the following “Eight Statements of Faith” are an effective summation of what it means to be a Christ Follower:

The Nicene Creed – *The Nicene Creed, also called the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, is a statement of the orthodox faith of the early Christian church in opposition to certain heresies, especially Arianism. These heresies, which disturbed the church during the fourth century, concerned the doctrine of the trinity and of the person of Christ. Both the Greek (Eastern) and the Latin (Western) church held this creed in honor, though with one important difference: the Western church insisted on the inclusion of the phrase "and the Son" (known as the "filioque") in the article on the procession of the Holy Spirit; this phrase still is repudiated by the Eastern Orthodox Church. In its present form this creed goes back partially to the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) with additions by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). It was accepted in its present form at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but the "filioque" phrase was not added until 589. However, the creed is in substance an accurate and majestic formulation of the Nicene faith. This translation of the Greek text was approved by the CRC Synod of 1988.*

- i. We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
- ii. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made.
- iii. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made human.
- iv. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried.
- v. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
- vi. He will come again with glory, to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.
- vii. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets.
- viii. We believe in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

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