**The Story of the Old Testament**

**Lecture #3 – Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**

**The Continued Progression of Fulfillment: From Egypt to the Promised Land’s Edge**

1. **Worship**

*Your Grace Finds Me* by Matt Redman.

1. **Quick Review of the Covenants**

Does anyone remember the **6 covenants**? Let’s review them. You will find me repeating myself over and over again on the main parts of the story because that is the only way that I can learn and, I believe, that anyone can learn (unless you have a photographic memory, and, in that case, I don’t like you very much!). So, here they are:

* **The Adamic Covenant (#1) - Genesis**
* **The Noahic Covenant (#2) - Genesis**
* **The Abrahamic Covenant (#3) - Genesis**
* **The Mosaic Covenant (#4) - Exodus**
* **The Davidic Covenant (#5) – 2 Samuel 7**
* **The New Covenant (#6) – Hint in Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:22-32**
1. **Review From Our Discussion of Genesis By Reading Hebrews 11:1-22**

I want to do something different today to review what we covered last class. I want to read to you Hebrews 11:1-22 so that you can enjoy the fruit of our time together. I want you to see how your study of the Old Testament makes your New Testament come alive. Now, that is not the only reason that we study the Old Testament as it is just as much Scripture as the New Testament – but, it is no doubt and incredible blessing of what we are doing here!

*1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the people of old received their commendation. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

*4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

*8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. 11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.*

*13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

*17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. 20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. 21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*

1. **This Morning: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**
	1. **Introduction**

The more I spend time digging through these early books of the Old Testament, the more the theme of God’s amazing grace has been coming to the forefront. In all of our books this morning, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy we see God graciously and progressively revealing who He is to His people as he progressively fulfills his redemptive promises made to them.

It has been said that worship is responding with thankfulness to who God has revealed himself to be and what he has done. So, the proper response as we go through learning about who God has revealed himself to be in these great books and how he has worked in amazing ways to progressively fulfill his redemptive promises is nothing other than worship.

Thankfulness and praise should continue to rise up in our hearts as we encounter the truth of who God is and what he has done in these Old Testament books. If that is not happening, then we are not doing what we should be doing. Now, at 9:00 am, that doesn’t mean that we jump out of our seats and start shouting at the top of our lungs. Actually, that would be pretty awkward and Bob’s class may actually be a better fit for you. But, our hearts should, along with the guys walking to Emmaus in Luke 24, burn within us while the Holy Spirit opens the Scriptures to us!

Remember, these are not just stories that we are talking about – this is the story of the Old Testament, which points in its entirety to the person and work of Jesus Christ. We become a part of this great story when we are united to Christ by grace and through faith. So, if you go on ancestry.com, these stories should come up:)

* 1. **Exodus** (takes about 2 ½ hours to read for average person)

As we begin the book of Exodus, we have not made that much progress in fulfilling the promises that God made to Abraham, through which the restoration promised in Genesis 3:15 would come to fruition.

*Promise of Land* – Rather than being in the land of promise, Israel is in captivity in Egypt! They are in the wrong place!

*Promise of Numerous Offspring* – There are only 70 people within the nation of Israel when they first came to Egypt to find refuge from the famine. (Exodus 1:5) This is hardly as numerous as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16), the stars of the sky (Gen. 15:4-5, or the sand of the seashore (Gen. 22:17)!

*Promise of Worldwide Blessing* – As they were in captivity in the land of Egypt for 430 years (Ex. 12:40), they were hardly a conduit of blessing for all of the nations of the world.

But, as we noted last class, the Lord was working to fulfill his covenant promises. He had protect and preserved the line of restoration and showered them with grace upon grace. The Lord continues his gracious dealings with this people in the book of Exodus! And it is this gracious dealing that we will now turn.

* + 1. *The Lord Raises a Deliverer for His People (Exodus 1-6)*

As we enter Exodus, we see the promises to Abraham of descendants coming true – the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land [of Egypt] was filled with them.” (Ex. 1:7) The line of restoration was growing strong in their sojourning in Egypt. But, remember, Genesis 3:15 made clear that there would be enmity between the line of restoration and the line of rebellion. And, we see the line of restoration represented in the story by Pharaoh specifically and the people of Egypt more generally.

Pharaoh was not pleased with the flourishing of the line of restoration and lashed out against them by making their captivity in Egypt increasingly more difficult. Pharaoh instructed the Egyptian people, the line of rebellion, to “deal shrewdly” with the people of Israel, the line of restoration. (Exodus 1:10) He afflicted “them with heavy burdens.” (Exodus 1:11)

But, just as the enmity between the two lines was promised in Genesis 3:15 was foretold, so was the victory of the line of restoration. No matter how bad Pharaoh tried to make it for Israel, they continued to flourish because the Lord’s gracious hand of victory and preservation was with them. In Exodus 1:12 we read: “But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad.”

The line of rebellion was understandably fearful of the relentless growth and blessing of the line of restoration despite their efforts (Exodus 1:12) and they struck back and “ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.” (Exodus 1:13)

But, the darkness of the line of rebellion, and the true nature of the serpent behind it all, is seen in Pharaoh’s attempt to kill all of the male babies of Israel. (Exodus 1:15-22) But, the Lord preserves the line of restoration through midwives who fear the Lord and, presumably, through working defiance in the people of Egypt to ignore Pharaoh’s general command to all Egyptians to throw every male Israelite baby into the Nile.

The bottom line is that the peaceful and pleasant relationship between Egypt and Israel in Joseph’s day was gone. The relationship between Egypt and Israel now demonstrated the promises enmity between the line of restoration and the line of rebellion. We are no longer in a time of peace but, rather, a time of war between the lines.

Exodus 2 begins with the birth of Moses. In Hebrews 11:23 we gain insight into the faith of Moses’ parents: “By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.”

Rather than complying with the evil dictate of Pharaoh, Moses’ parents, at great risk to themselves no doubt, believed God and he graciously responded to their faith. For, Moses was not destroyed by the line of rebellion but, rather, adopted by the daughter of the Pharaoh, the main representative of the line of rebellion! This is quite amazing!

We don’t learn much from the Exodus account about Moses’ years in Pharaoh’s household, but in Acts 7:22 we learn that “Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.” The Lord was preparing Moses for the long and difficult journey ahead.

 At this point of the narrative, it is not clear whether Moses is aligned with the line of rebellion or the line of restoration. But, Exodus 2:11-12 makes it clear that Moses has aligned himself with the line of restoration in his act of delivering a Hebrew slave that was being beaten by an Egyptian. When Moses’ alignment with the line of restoration was made known to Pharaoh, “he sought to kill Moses.” (Exodus 2:15) But, Moses fled to the land of Midian.

 We learn in Hebrews 11:24-27 we gain insight into Moses’ actions and learn that his “flight” from Pharaoh was not based on *fear* but rather *faith*: “By faith Moses, when he was grown up [Acts 7:23 tells us that Moses was 40] refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.”

 I would not have gotten this by just reading the Exodus narrative, but Hebrews makes it clear that there is a current of faith working in these narratives as the Lord works to preserve the line of restoration and fulfill his covenant promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing!

 The Lord was with Moses in Midian and gave him a wife and a son. We learn in Acts 7:30 that Moses sojourned in the land of Midian for 40 years before the Lord appeared to him. 40 years. Just think about that. That is a long time. I haven’t even lived that long. The Lord’s timetable is not our timetable!

 After this 40 year period, referred to in Exodus 2:23 as “during those many days” the Pharaoh who so violently attached the line of restoration died and “the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel – and God knew.”

I love these verses. The author is intentionally pointing the reader to the covenant promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing. We have already seen the Lord fulfilling the promise of numerous offspring, so we, as readers, are expecting to Lord to start working on the fulfillment of the promise of land. It makes sense that Israel must have a home, a land of its own, before it can be a blessing for the entire world!

And, in fact, the narrative does so focus on the Lord’s activity in fulfilling his covenant promise of land. For, after allowing the Pharaoh to die and Moses to dwell in the land of Midian for 40 years, he appears to Moses through a burning bush. Out of the silence of Moses’ wanderings, the Lord calls Moses’ name and says: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” (Exodus 3:6) Again, we are pointed back to the promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing.

Then the Lord pronounces the coming freedom for his people and Moses’ role in that coming freedom in Exodus 3:7-10: “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

Moses objects to the Lord’s call on his life and the Lord overcomes each of his objections with a gracious, yet cutting rebuke. The flow of the conversation goes like this in Exodus 3:11-4:17 (my very rough paraphrase):

Moses: “Who am I?

Lord: “It doesn’t matter, I’ll be with you.”

Moses: “Who are you?”

Lord: “I am who I am. I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.”

Moses: “That’s all great, but they are simply not going to listen to me.”

Lord: “Yes they will, here are some signs that will make them listen.”

Moses: “Yeah, that’s fine, but, you see, I’m not a good speaker.”

Lord: “Who made man’s mouth?”

Moses: “You make a valid point. Okay, I’ll be a little more direct, I just don’t want to do this, I don’t think I’m up for it, could you please send someone else?
 Lord: “No, but I’ll give you Aaron as a helper.”

 Moses reluctantly gets the point and comes to grips with the fact that the Lord has chosen him to bring about the deliverance of his people in the fulfillment of his covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The line of restoration will be delivered and Moses will be the Lord’s instrument to bring about that deliverance!

 At first, it appears that the path of deliverance is going to be somewhat smooth. Moses meets Aaron on his way to Egypt, they gather together the elders of the people of Israel in Egypt and all “the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.” (Exodus 4:31)

 But, the reality of the promised enmity between the line of restoration and line of rebellion sets in quickly as we enter Exodus 5. Moses and Aaron boldly approach Pharaoh and tell him what the Lord told them to tell him: “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” (Exodus 5:1) But, Pharaoh, as the representative of the line of rebellion responds with a striking question: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.” (Exodus 5:2)

 Instead of freeing the people of Israel, Pharaoh increases their burdens. The people of Israel are understandably confused and frustrated and turn on Moses and Aaron: “The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.” (Exodus 5:21) This, in turn, caused Moses to cry out to the Lord: “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.” (Exodus 5:22-23)

You have to love the Old Testament’s realistic portrayal of the people that the Lord choses to accomplish his purposes. There is no gloss put on Moses here – no editing of his prayer to make him seem more firm in is faith than he is at this moment. Moses is a weak and fallen human being just like us. But, yet, the Lord graciously chose him as his instrument to bring about the deliverance of his people. This is a great reminded for us. While we are not Moses in this story (we are the weaker still Israelites who turned against Moses at the first sign of trouble), we should remember that the Lord is in the business of using weak people to accomplish his purposes! As we said when discussing Abraham, the life of faith is not a life of strength with periodic slumps of weakness but, rather, a lifetime of weakness through which the strength, faithfulness, and grace of the Lord is manifested. The apostle Paul makes this exact point when he explains his own journey of weakness to the church at Corinth: “Three times I pleased with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

 The Lord graciously responds to Moses’ weakness in Exodus 6:2-8 with, as Goldsworthy notes, “one of the great covenant statements of the Bible”:[[2]](#footnote-2) “God spoke to Moses and said to him, ‘I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered by covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.”

* + 1. *The Lord Delivers His People (Exodus 7-15:21)*

Exodus 7-12 turns the narrative to the Lord’s graphic and powerful action in response to his covenant promises – the Plagues. The battle between the line of rebellion and the line of restoration is brought to a dramatic climax. The main instrument of the line of rebellion is, again, Pharaoh. The hardening of Pharaoh within the narrative warrants some discussion. Goldsworthy helpfully provides the following insight: “Notice how the writer in one breath, as it were, speaks of three ways of the hardening: Pharaoh hardened his heart; the heart of Pharaoh was hardened; the Lord said, “I have hardened his heart” (Ex. 9:34-10:1). One might well wonder who did harden his heart. There is no doubt that Pharaoh’s hardening of his own heart is deliberate, and he is judged for this. One the other hand, God is still sovereign in the matter as the apostle Paul later recognizes when he discusses it in the framework of God’s election (Rom 9:14-18). This biblical perspective which asserts that human responsibility and divine sovereignty are somehow intertwined without either being in any way compromised is something that we must come to terms with even thought it is beyond our powers of understanding.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

 The Lord’s hardened adversary, Pharaoh, is eventually defeated through a series of 10 devastating plagues: (1) water is turned to blood (Exodus 7:14-25), (2) the land is covered with frogs (Exodus 8:1-15), (3) the land is swarmed with gnats (Exodus 8:16-19), (4) the land is swarmed with flies (Exodus 8:20-32), (5) the Egyptian livestock is killed (Exodus 9:1-7), (6) the Egyptian people and animals are inflicted with boils (Exodus 9:8-12), (7) the land was inflicted with a great and devastating hail storm (Exodus 9:13-35), (8) the land was covered with locusts which devoured what was left by the hail (Exodus 10:1-20), (9) the land was covered with a darkness that could be felt (Exodus 10:21-29), and (10) every Egyptian firstborn was put to death (Exodus 11:1-10; 12:29-32).

 Couched within the Lord’s glorious display of his power and sovereignty is a statement from the Lord which gives us great insight into the purpose of the Plagues. Clearly, the Lord sent the Plagues to deliver his people and bring them to the promised land in accordance with this covenant promises. But, the Plagues were brought about also so that, in the words of Exodus 9:14-16, the Lord’s fame would be known throughout the entire world: “For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.”

 As we saw in the promise of the restoration of all things in Genesis 3:15, and as was emphasized again in the Noahic covenant and the promise of worldwide blessing in the Abrahamic covenant, the Lord’s redemptive purposes are, and have always been, worldwide in scope.

 The Plague narrative also makes it clear that Israel’s deliverance from Egypt was to be remembered and intentionally brought to the forefront of the minds of the people of Israel. As Schreiner notes: “The victory that the Lord won was celebrated yearly in Israel in the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread (Exod. 12-13). Parents were to tell the story of what happened to their children so that Israel would never forget that Yahweh brought them out of Egypt ‘with a strong hand.’ (13:9). If Israel forgot, they would cease to be thankful, and if thankfulness vanished, so would faith and obedience.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Israel’s preservation from the tenth plague, the plague of the firstborn is incredibly significant. The people of Israel were spared from the plague by sacrificing a lamb and putting the blood of the lamb on their doors. The Lord communicated the importance of the lamb’s blood in Exodus 12:13: “[W]hen I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you. . . .” Schreiner helpfully notes: “The Lord could have rescued Israel simply by destroying all the firstborn in Egypt. The Passover events, however, reminded Israel that they deserved judgment as well. The Lord would ‘pass over’ the firstborn in Israel only if blood was applied to the lintel and the doorposts of the house. The Lord impressed upon Israel that they were not inherently better than the Egyptians. They were rescued from the wrath of the Lord only if they responded in faith to his instruction by putting the blood of lambs on their houses. . . . According to the NT, Passover points ahead to the sacrifice of Christ, whereby he gave his life for the deliverance of his people.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Paul clearly identifies Christ with the Passover lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:7: “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”

Pharaoh’s hardened resistance and rebellion against the Lord and the line of restoration was broken by the devastation of the last plague. The Egyptians collectively kicked the nation of Israel out of Egypt. (Exodus 12:33) The people of Israel were now a free people in the sense that they were no longer living under the yoke of Egyptian slavery. However, the realization of such a change in the state of affairs does not happen over night. Deliverance from slavery is a significant step in the fulfillment of God’s redemptive promises, but we still have a long way to go! As Goldsworthy notes: “The exodus is the end of captivity, but it is only the beginning of freedom. God has yet much work to do in order to show his people what it means to live freely as his people.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

The Lord did not free his people from Egyptian slavery and then leave them to work it out on their own. Rather, he was graciously with them every step of the way: “[T]he Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.” (Exodus 13:21-22)

The Lord’s leading did not always place Israel in easy situations. For, as Goldsworthy notes: “instead of leading the people by way of the well-worn roads out of Egypt, God brings them into an apparently blind alley against the Sea of Reeds [Red Sea] where the Egyptian army has them trapped (Ex 13:17-18; 14:1-4).”[[7]](#footnote-7)

As Pharaoh changed is tune again and again when the burdens of the plagues lifted, he once again changed his mind about letting the people of Israel go as soon as the pain of the tenth plague had time to subside. (Exodus 14:1-9) Pharaoh pursues the people of Israel and “overtook them encamped at the sea.” (Exodus 14:9) The sight of Pharaoh and his army understandably caused the people of Israel to fear greatly and cry out to the Lord. (Exodus 14:10) Out of fear, the people of Israel also lash out, once again, at Moses: “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” (Exodus 14:11-12)

Moses speaks faith into the doubt of the people in Exodus 14:13-14): “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” Moses had learned to trust that the Lord would fulfill his covenant promises.

The Lord then dramatically divided the people of Israel from the Egyptian army with the pillar of cloud and divided the waters of the Red Sea with a strong east wind that blew over the Red Sea all night. (Exodus 14:19-21) The people of Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry land experiencing the Lord’s salvation and the Egyptian army was destroyed by the waters of the Red Sea as they pursued the people of Israel, thus experiencing the Lord’s judgment. (Exodus 14:22-30)

The people of Israel responded to the Lord’s salvation through the midst with faith and worship. In Exodus 14:30 we read that “Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.” In Exodus 15, the author records a beautiful hymn of praise to the Lord praising him for who he is and what he has done. As Goldsworthy notes: “In the song of Moses . . . we see the spontaneous act of worship which becomes a kind of model for worship ever after (Ex 15:1-18). God reveals himself by his deeds, and through his word about those deeds. Worship must therefore center on retelling what God has done.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

We can get a glimpse into this spontaneous worship service by just looking at the first couple of verses: “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” (Exodus 15:1-2) On the shore of the Red Sea, then, we see the line of restoration enjoying the Lord’s salvation and the line of rebellion dramatically experiencing the Lord’s judgment.

* + 1. *The Lord Tests His People (Exodus 15:22-18)*

Exodus 15:22-18 records Israel’s difficult and trying journey from the Red Sea to Sinai. The excitement of the Lord’s deliverance and salvation through the Plagues, the exodus, and the Red Sea crossing fades rapidly as thirst sets in. In Exodus 15:22-27, we see the people grumbling because the waters were undrinkable. The Lord graciously made the water drinkable and led his people to a place of rest in Elim “where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees.” (Exodus 15:27)

The respite at Elim was short-lived. Exodus 16 records the people setting out from Elim and grumbling against Moses because of their hunger: “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” (Exodus 16:3) Rather than wiping out the people of Israel, the Lord, provides bread from heaven and meat in abundance. (Exodus 16:4-36)

In Exodus 17:1-7 we see the people grumbling against Moses once again because of their thirst: “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” Rather than wiping out the people of Israel because of their lack of faith and persistent question of his character, the Lord graciously provided water.

In Exodus 17:8-16 we see the people of Israel facing a different type of difficulty; namely, military opposition. As the Lord provided bread, meat, and water, the Lord provides military victory. In these chapters, we see the people of Israel, again and again, forget the bitterness of their Egyptian slavery in light of their present difficulties and doubt the Lord’s good and gracious intentions for them and actions on their behalf. But, we also see the Lord dealing graciously with this fickle and, for the most part, faithless and thankless people.

* + 1. *The Lord Enters Into Covenant With His People (Exodus 19-24)*

As we begin Exodus 19, we join the people of Israel camped at the food of Mount Sinai as Moses went up to meet with the Lord. (Exodus 19:1-3) It is at this point in the narrative that the Lord enters into a covenant with his people, commonly referred to as the **Mosaic Covenant**. The gracious, and yet conditional, nature of the Mosaic Covenant is capture well by Exodus 19:4-6: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

The Mosaic Covenant is gracious because the Lord’s gracious deliverance of his people from Egyptian slavery serves as its foundation. Yet, the Mosaic Covenant is conditional because obedience is required in order for the people to enjoy its benefits. The potential benefits of the Mosaic Covenant are most accurately defined by the promises made in the context of the Abrahamic covenant, namely, the promises of children, land, and worldwide blessing. The Mosaic Covenant is set forth as a potential means of fulfilling these great promises through the nation of Israel.

The Lord reveals his will for his people through the gracious giving of the law. The Ten Commandments are set forth in Exodus 20:3-17 and, as Schreiner rightly notes, all point to the requirement that: “The Lord must be first in one’s passions and affections. Once we see that the first [no other gods before me] and tenth commandments [don’t covet] address the same issue, it is clear that all the commandments fall under the same banner. Those who steal fail to trust the Lord for his provision and live as if they do not have a sovereign Lord who will supply all their needs. Those who do not honor their parents as an authority signify that they are rejecting the authority of the Lord over them, for god’s will is communicated through parents. Those who murder view themselves as sovereign over life instead of entrusting both their lives and the lives of others to the will of God. So too, those who commit adultery are not satisfied to live with the wife or husband God has given them They become their own ‘lords’ and find their joy outside of the will of God. Those who violate God’s commands proclaim, like Adam, that they are independent and wise enough to determine what should be done.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Goldsworthy further provides that: “Salvation or redemption means being restored to a position of sonship and fellowship with God. To claim to have received the gift of friendship with God while persisting in a life marked by alienation and enmity is clearly nonsense.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

In Exodus 21-23, we see detailed commands applying the general principles of the Ten Commandments to very specific situations in the daily life of the nation of Israel. While it is easy to get lost in the details of these laws, it is important to remember that, as Goldsworthy notes: “The demands of the law are not arbitrary or capricious. They stem from and reflect the character of God and his purpose for mankind in creation and redemption. They point to the nature of the reconstruction of the perfect relationship that God built into creation but which was disrupted by human sin.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

This view of the law points us back to Genesis 1-2, where all was as it should be, to Genesis 3 when everything began to unravel, and finally to Genesis 3:15 where the Lord promises to one day restore all that was lost in the Fall. The law, as Goldsworthy reminds us, is the Lord’s way to inject order into the natural state of disorder exhibited by the people of Israel. For Israel to be a conduit of worldwide blessing (restoration), they must be restored themselves and live in accordance to the Lord’s revealed will.

In Exodus 24, we see the Lord and his people entering into the Mosaic Covenant through a “covenant meal, with offerings and sacrifices, and with blood that was sprinkled on the altar.”[[12]](#footnote-12) As the shedding of blood preceded the exodus event, so now the shedding of blood preceded the Lord entering into the Mosaic Covenant with his people. Schreiner notes the significance of the shedding of blood as follows: “The establishing of the covenant with blood, as Heb. 9:15-22 explains, signifies that ‘without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins’ (9:22). Israel, because of its sin, was unworthy to enter into covenant with the Lord. It needed forgiveness of sins, which the Lord granted in his covenant mercy.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

* + 1. *The Lord Graciously Dwells With His People (Exodus 25-40)*

The narrative to this point has made two things clear: (1) the Lord is holy and faithful to his covenant promises and (2) Israel is unholy and unfaithful to their Lord. The rest of Exodus is concerned with addressing the question of how a holy God can dwell within the midst of an unholy people. The answer given in the rest of the book is the Lord’s gracious provision of the Tabernacle. Exodus 25-31:18 records very specific instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle and Exodus 35:1-40 records the actual construction of the Tabernacle in conformity with the Lord’s very specific instructions. As Schreiner notes: “The tabernacle was the place where the Lord dwelt with his people . . . . The fundamental purpose of the tabernacle was to devise a means by which Israel could maintain its fellowship with God.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

In between the instructions for the Tabernacle and its construction, we find the devastating story of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32 whereby the people of Israel break the Mosaic Covenant and the Lord’s gracious renewal of the Mosaic Covenant with the people of Israel in Exodus 33-34. As Schreiner notes: “Exodus 32-34 . . . reveals a fundamental problem with Israel and the Sinai covenant. . . . While Moses was up on the mountain, the Israelites turned away from the Lord and fashioned a golden calf (32:1-8) . . . . Even though the covenant is gracious, since the Lord liberated Israel in his mercy, the hearts of the Israelites were not transformed through the covenant. The grace of the Lord in the Sinai covenant did not extend, generally speaking, to the renewal of Israel’s heart so that they actually obeyed the Lord . . . . Hence, an internal defect in the Mosaic covenant appears . . . though the flaw is located in the human heart.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Through the book of Exodus, the nation of Israel follows in the footsteps of Adam and fails to trust and obey the Lord. Exodus makes it clear that the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant will not ultimately be fulfilled through the Mosaic Covenant. But, in his great grace, the Lord does not do away with Israel and begin again. He continues to allow his presence to dwell in the midst of a rebellious people through the Tabernacle.

As we come to the end of the book of Exodus, where are we in the fulfillment of the promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing given the context of the Abrahamic Covenant?

* *Promise of land* - We have seen significant movement by the Lord towards the fulfillment of the promise of land. The nation of Israel has been freed from Egyptians slavery and is on its way to the land of promise. But, the fact remains that Israel is still not in the right place, for they are sojourners in the wilderness.
* *Promise of numerous offspring* – We have seen the Lord fulfill this covenant promise in that the people of Israel have become exceedingly numerous.
* *Promise of worldwide blessing* - We appear to be marching closer to Israel become a blessing to the world, but we are not there yet as Israel finds itself wandering in the wilderness and not yet experiencing fully the restoration to which the worldwide blessing pronounced in the context of Genesis 3:15 and the Abrahamic Covenant points.
	1. **Leviticus** (takes about 2 hours 15 minutes for average person to read)
		1. *The Holy Lord Graciously Dwells With His Unholy People Through The Sacrificial System (Leviticus 1-7, 16)*

As we mentioned in our broad overview of the Old Testament during the first session, the book of Leviticus does not carry the narrative forward. That is, the story is paused and we are given 27 chapters to see and understand how a holy God can dwell in the midst of an unholy people. For, the book of Leviticus makes it clear that the Lord does indeed desire to dwell with them. For example, Leviticus 26:11-13 provides the following: “I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.” Schreiner puts it this way: “Leviticus stops the narrative and considers how the Lord can continue to live in the midst of Israel, a sinful people. . . . Leviticus is particularly concerned with holiness and purity, explicating how the holy one of Israel may continue to dwell with Israel.”[[16]](#footnote-16) But, as the quote from Leviticus 26:11-13 makes clear, the book of Leviticus can only be understood by remembering what has gone before in the books of Genesis and Exodus.

In Genesis the Lord created all things in perfect order. The chief of his creation, man and woman, enjoyed a perfect relationship with him in the Garden of Eden. But, the chief of creation rebelled against their creator and the perfect order was lost and everything began to unravel. But, the Lord promised that all things would be restored. This restoration was to be accomplished through the covenant promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah.

The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) were preserved from destruction by finding refuge in Egypt. But refuge turned to slavery for 430 years. The Lord did not forget about his covenant promises, and acted in conformity with them by freeing his people from bondage, entering into a covenant with them, and providing the tabernacle where the holy one could dwell among his unholy people. In Leviticus, “the various sacrifices to be performed at the tabernacle are given” and the meaning of God’s holiness and the implications of his holiness for his unholy people are given.[[17]](#footnote-17)

It is easy to get lost in the details of Leviticus and to lose the big picture. I have personally given up on my read-the-bible-in-a-year program more than once by getting lost in the details of Leviticus. But, when we view the details of the book of Leviticus through the lens of the main question addressed by the book, the details come into focus and the book gives us great insight into what it truly means to say that the Lord is holy and the implications of that fact for God’s people.

So, before we proceed further, we need have a preliminary understanding of the concept of what it means to say that the Lord is holy and the basic implications of that fact for the people of Israel. Goldsworthy helps us greatly here: “Of all the words used in the Bible to express the character of God, holy is one of the most prominent . . . . the essential meaning stands out particularly in relation to the law in Exodus and Leviticus. If we say, “God is holy,’ for many this implies that we are saying something about God on the basis of an already known concept. Thus holy means good or pure, and so God is good or pure. But the method used in the law to prescribe holiness in the people of God indicates the opposite approach. The whole complexity of laws relating to holiness is meant to bring home to Israel that God reveals his holiness in his saving acts, and calls upon them to be conformed to that standard. . . . The covenant as the possession of the elect nation means that the character of God revealed in his word and acts must be the mark of his people. The law, which was so easily misused and made to be the grounds of exclusiveness and self-righteousness, was in fact that which highlighted the nature of the new creation which was being formed around the faithful while they remained within the old, fallen, and sinful confused world. . . . God has saved Israel because he is faithful to his covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that he would be their God and they his people. By brining them out of Egypt he has openly declared that they belong to him, and in his law he reveals how they should live as his people.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

 The first seven chapters make it clear that the Lord graciously dwells with his unholy people through the sacrificial system, which temporarily held back the wrath of God. Or, to say it another way, the Lord’s holiness requires sacrifice.

 In Leviticus 1-7 we see several types of sacrifices: (1) *burnt offerings*, where the sacrifice is totally consumed by fire and which primarily sought atonement (which, very basically, means forgiveness) (1:1-17; 6:8-13), (2) *grain offerings* which are made for the purpose of thanksgiving and praise (2:1-16; 6:14-23), (3) *peace/fellowship offerings* which were made to facilitate the enjoyment and renewal of fellowship with the Lord (3:1-17; 7:11-36),[[19]](#footnote-19) (4) *sin/purification offerings* (4:1-5:13; 6:24-30) and (5) *guilt/reparation offerings* (5:14-6:7; 7:1-10) which both focused on human sin and the fact that atonement was necessitated by such sin in light of the holiness of God.[[20]](#footnote-20)

 As Schreiner notes: “If we consider the sacrifices as a whole, their fundamental purpose is to atone for sins before God so that fellowship may be maintained with him. Some of the sacrifices focus on atonement, while others signify the joy and fellowship between the Lord and human beings. Still, we must guard against separating these two features of the sacrifices too sharply from each other, since they are intertwined.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Schreiner provides further that: “Sacrifices were brought so that Israel could enjoy the beauty and joy of the Lord’s presence without being annihilated by his intense holiness. The Lord, in his love, provided forgiveness so that his people would have fellowship with him.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Again and again, the book of Leviticus makes it plain that sin and the resulting lack of holiness among the people of God is no small matter. In Genesis 2:17, the Lord made clear that death was the penalty for sin. The sacrificial system provides a way for death to occur without the death of the offender. For the death deserved by the offender is transferred to the sacrifice. This transfer of guilt is signified by the act of the offender laying his or her hands on the head of the sacrifice: “He shall lay his land on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” (Leviticus 1:4)

 The priesthood played a crucial role in the sacrificial system instituted by the Lord. For, the reality and serious of sin required a mediator between the unholy offender and the holy God who was offended. But, the priests who provided the mediation between the holy God and the unholy people were unholy themselves. Thus, the priests had to be consecrated through a detailed and intensive process of purification and sacrifice. (Leviticus 8-9)

 The story of Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu makes it clear that relationship with the Lord is on his terms. Nadab and Abihu offered “unauthorized fire before the Lord” and, in return, “fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” (Leviticus 10:1-2) Again, the encountering the holiness of the Lord as an unholy person is a serious thing for, as the Lord makes clear in Leviticus 10:3: “Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.” As Schreiner notes: “Humble obedience to the Lord’s directives is required . . . . No one can obtain access to the Lord without approaching him in the way prescribed.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

The Day of Atonement set forth in Leviticus 16 was a central part of the sacrificial system for the people of Israel. The Day of Atonement was the only day of the year that the high priest could enter the holy of holies, where the Lord’s presence dwelt in a special manner. (Leviticus 16:34) On this special day, sacrifices were offered for both the high priest and the people.[[24]](#footnote-24) The sacrifice for the people took the form of two goats. (Leviticus 16:7) One of the goats was slaughtered as a sin offering and the other goat, called Azazel, was sent away into the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:10) In the sin offering, the death of the goat provided a substitute for the death of the people that they deserved because of their sin.

The exile of the second goat, Azazel, provides a different aspect of atonement which is highlighted in Leviticus 16:21-22: “Aaron shall lay both hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and sent it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.”

As Schreiner notes: “The inclusion of Azazel, then, illustrates further the punishment warranted by sin. Both death and departure from God’s presence are the penalty for human sin. The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, therefore, highlight both the holiness and grace of God. The Lord is holy, for no one can stand in his presence without forgiveness of sins, but he is also gracious, for he provides the means of atonement because of his love for his people.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

 As we turn our eyes to how the sacrificial system points to the person and work of Christ, we find great help in the following from Schreiner: “If we consider sacrifices canonically, they point to the sacrifice of Christ. Hebrews emphasizes that old covenant sacrifices are inferior since they did not truly cleanse the worshiper in conscience and did not bring complete and permanent forgiveness of sins (7:1-10:18). Bold access to the holy place (God’s very presence) is no longer limited to the Day of Atonement, where God’s presence is accessed only once a year. Now, believers boldly enter God presence every day through the blood of Jesus Christ (9:6-8; 10:19-22). According to Romans, the sin offering is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (8:3), so that ‘there is no condemnation’ for those who belong to him (8:1). His sacrifice has brought justification and redemption through his blood (3:24-26). Glad fellowship with God has been restored forever through the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

* + 1. *The Holy Lord Graciously Dwells With His Unholy People By Giving Them Purity Regulations (Leviticus 11-15)*

Leviticus 11 delineates between clean and unclean animals. Leviticus 12 provides for purification after childbirth and restates the requirement of circumcision. Leviticus 13-14 provide regulations related to skin diseases. Leviticus 15 provides regulations related to bodily discharges. After reading theses chapters in Leviticus, the modern ready is left spinning with these seemingly arbitrary and bizarre delineations and regulations.

There have been many different proposed interpretations of these extensive delineations and regulations throughout history.[[27]](#footnote-27) I think Schreiner’s proposed interpretation (adopted from Sprinkle) is sound and fits well into the overarching purpose of the book (explaining how a holy God can dwell with an unholy people): “Israel’s laws separated them from the Gentiles to prevent Israel from being contaminated by the idolatry and evil practiced by the Gentiles. The food laws made it difficult for Jews to enjoy table fellowship with Gentiles, and if peoples do not share at table together, they are less likely to influence on another. The NT clearly teaches that during the old covenant it was God’s intention for Jews to be separated from Gentiles. The era of such separation has now ended in Jesus Christ, for the laws relating to cleanness are no longer binding (see Acts 10:1-11:18). The separation between Jews and Gentiles has ended with the coming of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:11-22; 3:2-13). Now Jews and Gentiles in Christ are equally members of the people of God (Gal. 3:28). In the old covenant, however, the law separated Jews from Gentiles so that the Jews would non imbibe the idolatry and pagan practices that were endemic among Gentiles.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

The foregoing is not to say that the Lord’s redemptive purposes were not of worldwide scope from the very beginning. We have already seen that this is, in fact, the case. The promise of restoration in Genesis 3:15 was worldwide in scope. The Noahic Covenant made it clear that the entire world would be spared from destruction until the Lord’s redemptive and restorative purposes were accomplished. The covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob promised worldwide blessing. However, the foregoing interpretation accurately reflects the theme that there are two lines: the line of restoration and the line of rebellion. At this point in the narrative, the line of restoration is identified with the people of Israel and the line of rebellion is identified with the surrounding nations.

* + 1. *The Holy Lord Graciously Dwells With His Unholy People Through Their Grateful Obedience to His Revealed Will (Leviticus 17-27)*

As the line of restoration, and, thus, the Lord’s people, Israel was called to reflect the holiness of their holy God. Leviticus 17-27 spells out this call to holiness in great detail. Victor P. Hamilton has given these chapters the title “A Holiness Manifesto.”[[29]](#footnote-29) There is no doubt that these chapters seem quite foreign and strange to the modern reader. And, as has been previously stated, it is easy to get lost in these chapters if the main question being addressed by the book is forgotten; namely, how can a holy God dwell among an unholy people?

These chapters are striking in their scope. Leviticus 17-27 cover the proper place of sacrifice (Leviticus 17:1-9), prohibitions regarding the eating of blood (Leviticus 17:10-16), prohibitions regarding certain sexual acts (Leviticus 18:1-30), proper timing regarding the consumption of peace offerings (Leviticus 19:5-8), regulations regarding the equitable treatment of other people summed up with the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:9-18), prohibitions against mediums and necromancers (Leviticus 19:31), prohibitions against child sacrifice (Leviticus 20:1-5), regulations protecting the holiness of the priesthood (Leviticus 21:1-22:16), regulations specifying what is required for acceptable offerings (Leviticus 22:17-33), regulations regarding the appointed feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23), regulations regarding provisions for the Tabernacle (Leviticus 24:1-9), a story regarding blasphemy and a resulting regulation setting for the death penalty therefor (Leviticus 24:10-16), the famous regulation calling for a punishment equal to the crime in the context of human injury – “eye for eye, tooth for tooth.” (Leviticus 24:17-23), regulations regarding the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25), and regulations regarding vows (Leviticus 27).

The Lord and the people of Israel enjoy a covenant relationship through the covenant we are referring to as the Mosaic Covenant. In our first session we defined a covenant as an “all-encompassing relationship . . . a claim on someone’s total loyalty and allegiance . . . with ongoing obligations, blessings, and curses.”[[30]](#footnote-30) In Leviticus 17-27, we get an exhaustive picture of this all-encompassing relationship and the blessings that flow from obedience and the curses that flow from disobedience. The Lord makes it clear in Leviticus 20:26 (and at several other places in Leviticus) that the people of Israel “shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.”

Schreiner provides a helpful summary of these chapters in Leviticus: “The Lord demands obedience because Israel belongs to him, because he is Israel’s master and covenant Lord. The call to obey, however, is rooted in the grace of the Lord, in his delivering Israel from Egypt. . . . The summons to obedience is presented not as an oppressive duty but rather as a grateful response to the Lord’s saving love. The Lord who saved them declares how they should live under his lordship.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

 Leviticus 26 is crucially important. For in this book the blessings flowing from obedience and curses flowing from disobedience are clearly set forth. The blessings are set forth in Leviticus 26:1-13. If Israel walked in grateful obedience to the Lord’s revealed will, they will enjoy: fruitful harvests and have abundant provision (Leviticus 26:3-5), peace in the land (Leviticus 26:6-8), the fulfillment of the Lord’s covenant promises of numerous offspring (Leviticus 26:9), and the Lord’s gracious presence: “I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” (Leviticus 26:11-12)

The curses are set forth in Leviticus 26:14-39. If Israel failed to walk in grateful obedience to the Lord’s revealed will, they will experience panic, wasting disease, famine, military defeat, severe discipline, futility, destruction, death, pestilence, hunger to the point of eating the flesh of their sons and daughters, separation, desperation, devastation, and exile. This is a staggering pronouncing of judgment that affects every area of human existence.

However, the curses in Leviticus 26:14-39 are not the last word. For, as a promise of restoration was embedded within the curses of Genesis 3, so also a promise of restoration is found in Leviticus 26:40: “**But if they confess** their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies-**if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac, and my covenant with Abraham**, and I will remember the land. **But the land shall be abandoned by them** and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. **Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord**.”

These verses are immensely important for they set forth, in large part, the story of the Old Testament. Even before the people of Israel are given possession of the land of promise, it becomes clear that they will break the covenant, as they did in Exodus, and experience the Lord’s judgment and be exiled from the land. However, exile is not the last word for there will be a day when they confess their sin and by “the miracle of grace”[[32]](#footnote-32) return to the Lord in humility. In response to their confession and humility, the Lord will remember his covenant promises and bring them back to the land of promise.

But, this is all looking forward into the story. As we come to the end of the book of Leviticus, where are we in the fulfillment of the promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing given the context of the Abrahamic Covenant? As we noted at the beginning of our discussion of Leviticus, the story is not advanced in this book, so we are at the same place we found ourselves at the end of the book of Exodus:

* *Promise of land* - We have seen significant movement by the Lord towards the fulfillment of the promise of land. The nation of Israel has been freed from Egyptians slavery and is on its way to the land of promise. But, the fact remains that Israel is still not in the right place, for they are sojourners in the wilderness.
* *Promise of numerous offspring* – We have seen the Lord fulfill this covenant promise in that the people of Israel have become exceedingly numerous.
* *Promise of worldwide blessing* - We appear to be marching closer to Israel become a blessing to the world, but we are not there yet as Israel finds itself wandering in the wilderness and not yet experiencing fully the restoration to which the worldwide blessing pronounced in the context of Genesis 3:15 and the Abrahamic Covenant points.
	1. **Numbers** (takes about 3 hours for average person to read)
		1. *The Lord Graciously Prepares His People For the Journey Ahead (Numbers 1-10)*

The narrative picks up again as we begin the book of Numbers. The promise of restoration in Genesis 3:15, which will be fulfilled through the covenant promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now appears to becoming a reality through the nation of Israel and the Mosaic Covenant. But, Israel is an unholy people and prone to rebel against their holy God. Given that fact, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Promises through the nation of Israel and the Mosaic Covenant seems somewhat uncertain.

We begin Numbers with the same generation of Israel that had experienced Egyptian slavery, the Lord’s gracious deliverance through the plagues and the Red Sea Crossing, the Lord’s wilderness provision of water, food, and military victory, the covenant ceremony and the giving of his gracious laws, and the construction of the Tabernacle. This generation had experienced the Lord in amazing ways. And, as a reader we are anticipating that they will experience his gracious provision of the land of promise.

And it is with this expectation that we begin Numbers 1 with the census of the exodus generation of Israel. There were 603,550 men twenty years old or order that were able to go to war. (Numbers 1:44-46) The Lord was clearly fulfilling the promise of numerous offspring. We started the book of Exodus with 70 people in Israel and we now have 603,550 adult men ready for battle!

After the census in Numbers 1:1-44, the first 2 chapters (Numbers 1-2) are primarily concerned about the arrangement of the camp of the people of Israel as they journeyed to the land of promise. The ordering of the camp reflects the question that Leviticus addressed – how can a holy God dwell with an unholy people? The Levites were to camp around the Tabernacle and make sure that the holiness of the Lord is not improperly approached. Numbers 1:53 captures the seriousness of Levite’s guarding of the Tabernacle: “But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the people of Israel.”

Approaching a holy God as an unholy people is no light thing and must be done in the manner that he prescribes. As Schreiner notes: “This was no ordinary camp or army, for the Lord dwelt in the midst of Israel. His presence was what made Israel distinct, and if Israel followed the Lord’s instructions, they would know the joy and glory of his presence.”[[33]](#footnote-33) With the tabernacle protected by the Levites, the rest of the tribes of Israel are located within the camp in the order and manner prescribed. Each of the tribes are to face the tent of meeting. (Numbers 2:2) We have seen in Genesis that the tribe of Judah would be the one through which the line of restoration would be carried forward. Schreiner picks up on how the location of Judah in the camp reflects this reality: “Judah occupies a special place in the camp (2:3-4), forecasting the truth that a king would come from it.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

Numbers 3-8 goes back to the theme of the Lord’s holiness and the implications for the people of Israel in the giving of certain instructions for the priests, regulations regarding unclean people, confession and restitution, an interesting test for adultery, the Nazirite Vow, the mass giving of offerings at the Tabernacle’s consecration. The heart of all of these instructions in holiness is captured in Aaron’s blessing in Numbers 6:24-26: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” The verse following the blessing makes it clear that the Lord longed to dwell with this people and to bless them: “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” Again we see that the laws of the Old Testament were not meant to impose heavy burdens upon the Lord’s people but rather to make clearly known his love for them and to allow them to respond to that love in grateful obedience to his revealed will! The Lord is gracious and compassionate toward his people!

In Numbers 9:1-14 we see Israel gratefully obeying the instruction to observe the Passover. Schreiner notes the significance of Israel’s observance of the Passover in the wilderness: “[Israel’s observance of the Passover] here is significant, Israel celebrated Passover before entering the land of promise, for they could enter the land only as a pure and obedient people.”[[35]](#footnote-35) But, this obedience was not obedience for obedience’s sake. It was a grateful obedience that would draw the hearts of the people to worship the Lord who had heard their cries for help in Egypt and delivered them through the plagues and the Red Sea crossing.

The presence of the Lord with his people is captured in the cloud that covered the tabernacle by day and the appearance of fire that covered the tabernacle by night. (Numbers 9:15-16) And, this was also the means by which the Lord led his people through the wilderness. As Goldsworthy notes: “This is a pilgrim people whose God goes with them. God is the warrior who fights for his cause, which is to bring blessing to Israel. Thus, when the movement of the cloud signals the time for departure Moses says: ‘Rise up, O Lord! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.’ Then as the ark comes to rest he says: ‘Return, O Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel.’ (Num 10:35-36)”[[36]](#footnote-36)

* + 1. *The Lords People Respond to the Lord’s Grace With Rebellion and Experience His Judgment (Numbers 11-20, 21:4-9)*

So far in the book of Numbers, so good. The Lord gives instructions to his people, and they gratefully obey his instructions. But, the tune of the people changes abruptly as we enter Numbers 11: “And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp.” (Numbers 11:1)

As we learned over and over again in the book of Leviticus, the holiness of the Lord is a serious thing and has serious implications for his people. Leviticus 26 made this point home in a shocking manner. By responding to the Lord’s grace with complaint rather than gratefulness is a frightening place to be. Moses intercedes again for the people and the Lord relented in his just judgment upon his unholy and rebellious people. (Numbers 11:2-3) And in his relenting, we once again are reminded of the centrality of grace in the story of the Old Testament. Goldsworthy highlights the centrality of grace in the following: “Nothing is more remarkable than the grace of God, and nothing illustrates that grace more than God’s perseverance and goodness to a continually rebellious people.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

Israel did not learn its lesson, and once again complained about what was on the menu in Numbers 11:4-6: “And the people of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

As a reader, we are rightly nervous for the judgment that will, no doubt, flow from Israel’s complaint. Schreiner captures the essence of what is going on here well: “In essence, they were rejecting Yahweh as their God, saying that their lives would have been better had he not intervened on their behalf. This was tantamount to saying that the Lord was evil . . . .”[[38]](#footnote-38)

In Numbers 11:10-35, the expected judgment comes. In these verses we see that “the anger of the Lord blazed hotly“ and he gave them meat to eat until it came out of their nostrils and became loathsome to them because they had rejected the Lord by saying, “Why did we come out of Egypt?” But, as soon as “the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague.”

Israel’s complaint was no small thing. And neither is ours. A perceptive reader will also experience a pang of guilt for our daily “complaints” that reach the throne of our Lord. That is not to say that we should not bring our requests before the Lord. Rather, we should bring our requests to the Lord in faith. Or, to say it another way, we should complain in faith. Israel here was complaining without faith and essentially telling the Lord that they would be better off without him. That is not the same as bringing our hurts and hardships to the Lord trusting in his goodness and sovereign power to bring healing and comfort through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the life-changing truths and realities flowing from the gospel of Jesus Christ!

If only the rebellion of the people would have stopped at this point. But, unfortunately, we have just begun. In Numbers 12, we see the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron (Moses’ siblings) against the unique and authoritative role that Moses fulfilled at this point in the story: “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?” (Numbers 12:2) The preceding narrative suggests of coming judgment, as does the following phrase in Numbers 12:2: “And the Lord heard it.”

In response to Miriam and Aaron’s rejection of Moses’ unique role, the Lord calls the three of them out and instructs them to present themselves at the tent of meeting. The Lord then called Aaron and Miriam out and rebukes them: “Here my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?’ And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed.” (Numbers 12:6-9)To have to anger of the Lord kindled against you is not a good thing, to say the very least. Miriam was left leprous in the wake of the Lord’s judgment and exiled from the camp for a period of seven days. (Numbers 12:10-16)

If only the rebellion of the people would have stopped at this point. But, unfortunately, the worst of it remains before us. And, as we enter Numbers 13-14, we encounter the height of Israel’s rebellion that results in the most devastating judgment to this point in the story. The Lord sends spies into the Land of Canaan to see the land of promise and its inhabitants and report back to the people. (Numbers 13:1-20) The spies went into the land and spied for 40 days. (Numbers 13:21-25) The spies showed the amazing grapes, pomegranates and figs that they took from the land and described the land as flowing with milk and honey. (Numbers 13:26-27) But, then the report starts to reek of a lack of faith: “However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. . . . We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.” (Numbers 13:28, 31)

Caleb, however, spoke a different report, a report of faith, and said: “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” (Numbers 13:30) So, as readers, the question naturally becomes, “Which report with the people of Israel believe – the report of faith or the report without faith?” Unfortunately, we have come to know the people of Israel well enough by this point in the story to predict their response recorded in Numbers 14:1-4: “Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? And they said to one another, ‘Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.’”

This is the climax of Israel’s rebellion. As readers, we are bracing for the judgment to come based upon what has come before. Moses and Aaron fall on their faces. Joshua and Caleb, who were the only faithful spies, tear their clothes and call out for the people to trust in the Lord’s faithfulness to his covenant promises rather than rebel against him in this manner. The Lord’s words to Moses in response to the people’s rebellion are devastating: “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.” (Numbers 14:11-12) Just sit in the wake of these devastating words of judgment for a moment. How could this be? We have come to know that the Lord’s faithfulness is greater than the people’s unfaithfulness.

And, indeed, the faithfulness of the Lord is greater than his people’s unfaithfulness! What we have learned about the Lord to this point in the story stands true! In Numbers 14:13-19, Moses intercedes for the people based upon the Lord’s revealed character and covenant promises: “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O Lord, are in the midst of this people. For you, O Lord, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, ‘It is because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.’ And now, please le the power of the Lord be great as you have promised saying, ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on children, to the third and fourth generation.’ Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.”

The Lord graciously responds to Moses’ intercession in a manner that both reflects his relentless grace and undying faithfulness and his perfect justice: “I have pardoned, according to your word. But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.” (Numbers 14:20-24)

As we have already seen, the Lord is faithful to his covenant promises – he will bring his people into the land of promise. However, only those who respond in faith to his covenant promise through grateful obedience will enjoy the fulfillment. This is graphically displayed in the generation of Israel that we began Numbers with dying in the wilderness and a new generation, characterized by the faith Joshua and Caleb, being raised upon in the wilderness to partake of the Lord’s fulfillment of his covenant promise of land. The destruction of the rebellious generation and the raising up of a new generation takes 40 years of wilderness wandering – one year for each of the days that the spies were in the land of promise on their reconnaissance mission: “According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.’ I, the Lord, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.” (Numbers 14:34-35)

 The rebellion of the wicked generation of Israel did not end, however, with this devastating judgment upon them. The Sabbath was broken (Numbers 15:32-36), the people rebelled against Moses’ leadership once again with Korah (Numbers 16:1-50), and they continued to experience the Lord’s just judgment in the wake of their rebellion until they finally appear to come to the end of themselves and cry out to Moses: “Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone.” (Numbers 17:12)

But, alas, the wicked generation is not done with their rebellion as we leave Numbers 17. The people grumbled against Moses in their thirst (Numbers 20:2-9), Moses and Aaron themselves are judged and precluded from the land of promise because of their lack of faith (Numbers 20:10-13), and the people grumbled against the Lord and Moses in their hunger and thirst and are struck with a plague of serpents (Numbers 21:4-9). We must pause here for the means of deliverance for the people in merely looking upon the serpent that Moses raised before the people is picked up by John in his gospel. As Schreiner notes: “In the NT, of course, John picks up this narrative and applies it to Jesus’ work upon the cross, promising that those who believe in the crucified and risen Lord will enjoy eternal life (John 3:14-15)[[39]](#footnote-39)

* + 1. *The Lord’s Faithfulness to His Covenant Promises Overcomes the Unfaithfulness of His People As He Provides Military Victory Over Arad, Sihon, and Og (Numbers 21:1-3, 10-35)*

The fulfillment of the Lord’s covenant promises will not come without a battle. In Genesis 3:15, the Lord made clear that there would always be enmity between the line of restoration and the line of rebellion. In Numbers 21, this battle is seen in Israel’s fighting with Arad, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan. In each case, the Lord graciously gives victory to his people and continues to actively work towards the fulfillment of his covenant promises despite the lack of faith and obedience of his people.

The writers of the Old Testament come back to these early victories again and again as they reflect upon, and worship the Lord for, his faithfulness to his covenant promises. These victories are recounted, for example, several times in Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Nehemiah, and the psalms.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Again, the big picture should be brought into mind at this point on the story. The Lord promised restoration in Genesis 3:15, this restoration will be accomplished through his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing. The Mosaic covenant entered into between the Lord and Israel appears to be the means through which these Abrahamic promises are to come into reality. But, this restoration will not come easily, for the line of rebellion continues to wage war against the line of restoration. And, the people of Israel themselves, continue to look more like the line of rebellion than the line of restoration.

But, the Lord continues to fulfill his covenant promises despite the level of opposition which is raised against such fulfillment. The Lord’s faithfulness is greater than the unfaithfulness of his people. The Lord’s power is greater than any power that rises up against him. The promised restoration will come!

* + 1. *The Lord’s Promise of Restoration Is Recounted Through the Balaam Oracles (Numbers 22-24, 25)*

In Numbers 22-24, we find the curious story, which includes a speaking donkey!, of Balak, the king of Moab, who summoned Balaam to pronounce curses upon the nation of Israel. But, Balaam is not able to do so for the Lord appeared to him and said: “You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.” (Numbers 22:12) This curious story is meant to point the reader back to the promises the Lord made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing. Israel was a blessed people and the Lord would bless those who bless them and curse those who curse them.

As Schreiner notes: “The placement of these chapters is quite striking, for the preceding narrative portrays Israel as disbelieving, quarrelsome, and longing to return to Egypt. Nevertheless, the Lord’s promises have not been withdrawn from this recalcitrant and refractory people.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Further, the narrative immediately after these chapters gives further expression of Israel’s rebellious nature. In Numbers 25, we see the people of Israel participating in Baal worship and experiencing the Lord’s just judgment in response.

* + 1. *The Lord Graciously Prepares a New Generation of His People Who Will Possess the Land of Promise (Numbers 26-36)*

The rebellion of Israel is relentless. But, the Lord’s faithfulness is even more so. Though a generation of Israel will die in the wilderness because of their rebellion, the Lord’s faithfulness to his covenant promises will be expressed through a new generation. Numbers 26 recounts this census of this new generation that will take possession of the land of promise. The new generation had approximately the same amount of males twenty years of age or older who were able to go to war.[[42]](#footnote-42)

With a new generation comes a new leader – Joshua. In Numbers 27:22-23, Moses presents Joshua before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation and lays his hands on him and commissioned him pursuant to the Lord’s instructions. Moses will not take the new generation into the land of promises, for he to rebelled against the Lord and will experience death in the wilderness for his rebellion.

In Numbers 35:1-15, the Lord sets forth the boundaries of the land of promise.

So, as we leave the book of Numbers, were are we in the fulfillment of the promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing given in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant?

*Promise of Land* – The story of Numbers demonstrates a good deal of movement by the Lord in the fulfillment of this promise. In Exodus, we saw the people of Israel freed from their Egyptian slavery, delivered through the Red Sea, and on its way to the land of promise. In Numbers we continue this journey and see Israel rebel again and again until, at last, the generation that saw the works of the Lord in Exodus, and yet rebelled, would not be able to taste the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises and would die in the wilderness. But, the Lord’s faithfulness was greater than the faithlessness of his people. As we leave the book of Numbers, we have a new generation who will finally take possession of the land of promise, a new leader who will lead them to the land of promise, and a particular description of the land of promise!

*Promise of Numerous Offspring* – We have seen the Lord fulfill this covenant promise as the people of Israel have become exceedingly numerous!

*Promise of worldwide blessing* - We are closer than ever to Israel become a blessing to the world, as a new generation stands on the edge of the land of promise poised to take possession of it!

* 1. **Deuteronomy** (takes about 2 ½ hours for average person to read)
		1. *The Lord Graciously Calls His People To Remember and Obey (Deuteronomy 1-11)*

 As we enter the book of Deuteronomy, we are, as Goldsworthy notes, listening in on “Moses’ words to the nation [of Israel] as it prepares to enter the Promised Land.”[[43]](#footnote-43) And, these are Moses’ last words; for, the book of Deuteronomy records Moses’ death. (Deuteronomy 34:5-6) We are there for Moses’ birth in the book of Exodus and, now in Deuteronomy, we are there for his death.

 Like the book of Leviticus, the narrative is not advanced significantly in Deuteronomy. In Leviticus the narrative slowed down to explain how a holy God could dwell with an unholy people. In Deuteronomy, the narrative slows down as we join the people of Israel in hearing their final instructions before entering the land of promise.[[44]](#footnote-44) Schreiner summarizes the entire book as follows: “Deuteronomy calls upon Israel to obey Yahweh in order to enter and stay in the land. Only those who submit to Yahweh’s lordship will experience his blessing. It is imperative to see, however, that the call to obedience is predicated upon the grace of God.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

 The fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob play a central role in the book of Deuteronomy. The nearness of the fulfillment of the promise of land plays a central role in the book of Deuteronomy from the very beginning: “See, I have set the land before you. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their offspring after them.” (Deuteronomy 1:8) The fulfillment of the promise of numerous offspring is recounted at the beginning of the book, as well: “The Lord you God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as the stars of heaven.” (Deuteronomy 1:10) The third covenant promise of worldwide blessing is not emphasized at the beginning of the book; however, clearly the fulfillment of the other two covenant promises – the promise of land and the promise of numerous offspring, bring us closer than we have ever been to the fulfillment of the promise of worldwide blessing!

 As we work through Deuteronomy 1-3, we see that these chapters generally recall “the history of Israel during the period covered by the book of Numbers. It emphasizes the covenant love of God as he performs mighty deeds to fulfill his promises to Israel. It also recounts the faithlessness and rebellion of the people in the wilderness.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

 Deuteronomy 1:19-46 recounts Israel’s failure to take the land of promise when it was first offered because they listened to the report of the spies that lacked faith and the judgment that flowed from that rebellion. The disobedient generation would die in the wilderness for their rebellion and lack of faith. But, the Lord’s faithfulness to his covenant promises would continue with a new generation of Israel that will enter and take possession of the land of promise.

 Deuteronomy 2:26-3:22 recounts Israel’s victories of Sihon, king of the Amorites[[47]](#footnote-47) and Og, the king of Bashan. Despite Israel’s failure and lack of faithfulness to the Lord, the Lord remains faithful to his people and his covenant promises!

As we have seen, over and over, throughout the story to this point is that while the Lord’s promises are unconditional, only those who respond to those promises in faith through the fruit of grateful obedience will experience the fulfillment of his promises. As we enter Deuteronomy 4, we see Moses pleading with the people of Israel to live lives of grateful obedience in response to the Lord’s gracious dealings with them: “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 4:1)

As the Lord’s deliverance of the people of Israel brought the Lord fame throughout the entire earth, so Israel’s grateful obedience to the Lord’s revealed will also glorifies the Lord among the nations: “See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statues, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statues and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?” (Deuteronomy 4:5-8)

In light of the singular and supreme position that the Lord and his revealed will are to have in the life of the nation of Israel, Deuteronomy 4:15-40 continues with a prohibition of idolatry and a reminder that the Lord alone is God. As we saw in Leviticus 26, we see once again that Israel will fail, experience exile, and then return to the land once again: “[Y]ou will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord. . . . But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and obey his voice. For the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.” (Deuteronomy 4:26-27, 29-31)

In Deuteronomy 5, we encounter a restatement of the Ten Commandments. Moses not only encourages obedience, but makes clear exactly what the people are to obey! The all-encompassing call to grateful obedience issued by Moses throughout the book of Deuteronomy is captured well in Deuteronomy 6:4-9: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all our soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

As Schreiner notes, however, “True love can never be separated from the keeping of his commands (7:9; 11:1). Love is not merely a pious feeling; it is an affection that results in concrete obedience to the Lord. Loving the Lord cannot be separated from fearing him, walking in his paths, and serving him (10:2).”[[48]](#footnote-48) Schreiner further notes: “Obedience to the Lord must be concrete and practically worked out in everyday life. But . . . there is the danger of thinking that obedience is mere external conformity to the Lord’s will. True obedience involves affection-loving the Lord and clinging to him, finding him to be the praise and joy of one’s life.”[[49]](#footnote-49) The Lord’s requirement of obedience to his revealed will is indeed a grace to his people for, as Schreiner notes: “[h]e knows the paths that will lead to life and joy for his people.”[[50]](#footnote-50)

We have been tracing the battle between the line of rebellion and the line of restoration as we have proceeded in the story from Genesis to Deuteronomy. A monumental victory for the line of restoration awaits when they take possession of the land of promise and, by necessity, disposes those currently living there; namely, the “Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.” (Deuteronomy 7:2) The great victory for the line of restoration means great judgment for the line of rebellion, for the people of Israel are to “devote them to complete destruction . . . show no mercy to them . . . not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. . . break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire.” (Deuteronomy 7:2-5) As Schreiner notes, “the call to utterly destroy the peoples of Canaan is a shock to modern sensibilities . . . .”[[51]](#footnote-51) However, such judgment upon the line of rebellion is in perfect line with the justice of God. The Lord has made clear from the very beginning of the story that death is the consequence that flows from rebellion against him. (Genesis 2) This is the deserved fate of all humanity, including Israel, absent the intercession of the Lord’s grace and mercy.

And, it is the Lord’s grace and mercy, and upon that basis alone, that Israel is preserved from the same fate. Fore, what the past narrative has made clearly implicitly, Deuteronomy 7:6-11 states explicitly; namely, that the Lord did not chose the people because of any character trait that they possessed in themselves: “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, form the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with the one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.”

Bervard Childs notes that Israel’s choice is based solely upon “the mysterious and inexplicable love of God.“[[52]](#footnote-52) Schreiner further notes: “The reason why Yahweh chose Israel eludes and surpasses human understanding. He chose Israel because he wanted to show them his love, even though they were not inclined to follow him. Clearly, Israel did not serve to be God’s special possession, but he chose to dispense his grace on them.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

Deuteronomy 8:2-5 makes clear that just as the Lord’s choice of Israel from among the nations was by the Lord’s grace, so was the Lord’s discipline and preservation of, and provision for, the people of Israel in the wilderness: “[Y]ou shall remember the whole way the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.”

Deuteronomy 9:3-5 makes clear that just as the Lord’s choice of Israel was solely based upon grace, and as the Lord’s discipline, preservation, and provision in the wilderness was solely based on grace, so is the provision of the land of promise and the military victory related to such provision: “Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the Lord your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the Lord has promised you. . . . Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

Deuteronomy 9:6-10:11 recounts in detail the past failures of the people of Israel to highlight the faithfulness of God toward an unfaithful people and the centrality of grace in his dealings with them. Moses walks the people through the Golden Calf rebellion, the rebellion at Taberah (the general grumbling of the people in Numbers 11:1-3), the rebellion at Massah (the grumbling because of thirst in Exodus 17:1-7), the rebellion at Kibroth-hattaavah (the plague when the quail was still in their mouths because complaining about the menu), and the ultimate rebellion when the people of Israel failed to believe the Lord and take possession of the land of promise in Numbers 13-14.

Deuteronomy 10:12-16, like Deuteronomy 6:4-9, beautifully captures the all-encompassing call to grateful obedience issued by Moses throughout the book of Deuteronomy: “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.”

* + 1. *The Lord Graciously Gives His People Law Through Which They Can Reflect His Holiness and Enjoy His Presence (Deuteronomy 12-26)*

Deuteronomy 12 serves as a significant transition in the book of Deuteronomy, for in Deuteronomy 12:1 we read: “These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth.”[[54]](#footnote-54) These statues and rules include:

* instructions regarding the Lord’s chosen place of worship (Deuteronomy 12:2-28),
* repeated warnings against idolatry and instructions regarding false prophets (Deuteronomy 12:29-13:18),
* prohibition against deforming one’s self for the dead (Deuteronomy 14:1-2),
* repeated instructions regarding clean and unclean food (Deuteronomy 14:3-21),
* instructions regarding tithes (Deuteronomy 14:22-29),
* instructions regarding the year of Sabbath (Deuteronomy 15:1-18), i
* instructions regarding the firstborn of animals (Deuteronomy 15:19-23),
* instructions regarding the Passover (Deuteronomy 16:1-8),
* instructions regarding the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:9-12),
* instructions regarding the Feast of Booths (Deuteronomy 16:13-17),
* instructions regarding the appointment of judges and officers (Deuteronomy 16:18-20),
* instructions regarding forms of worship and instructions regarding those who violate such instructions (Deuteronomy 16:21-17:7),
* instructions regarding the binding nature of decisions issued by priests and judges (Deuteronomy 17:8-13),
* instructions regarding kings (Deuteronomy 17:14-20),[[55]](#footnote-55)
* instructions regarding the provisions for the priests (Deuteronomy 18:1-8),
* prohibitions against child sacrifice and the practice of divination (Deuteronomy 18:9-14),
* instructions regarding cities of refuge (Deuteronomy 19:1-13),
* instructions regarding property boundaries (Deuteronomy 19:14),
* instructions regarding witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15-21),
* instructions regarding warfare (Deuteronomy 20:1-20),
* instructions regarding unsolved murders (Deuteronomy 21:1-9),
* instructions regarding female captives (Deuteronomy 21:10-14),
* instructions regarding inheritance rights (Deuteronomy 21:15-17);
* instructions regarding rebellious children (Deuteronomy 21:18-21),
* instructions regarding the death penalty (Deuteronomy 21:22-23),
* instructions regarding sexual relations (Deuteronomy 22:13-30),
* instructions regarding the exclusion of certain people from the assembly (Deuteronomy 23:1-14),
* instructions regarding divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4),
* additional instructions regarding tithes and offerings (Deuteronomy 26), and
* instructions regarding numerous other miscellaneous matters.

The exceedingly list set forth above makes it clear that a life of grateful obedience influences every area of one’s life. As Vogt notes: “The entirety of life in the land is to be lived before Yahweh and, therefore, is religiously significant and is considered as falling to some degree in the realm of worship.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

Significantly, there is a break in the exposition of law in which Moses pronounces that: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers-it is to him you shall listen . . . . I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.” This prophet like Moses is clearly speaking of Jesus Christ: “As Sailhamer points out, it is clear in both Joshua . . . and Judges . . that a prophet like Moses did not arise in the days immediately following Moses. Indeed, we can say that such a prophet did not arise during the OT era. Only with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth and the dawning of the kingdom did such a prophet arise . . . .”[[57]](#footnote-57)

As we come to the end of this portion of the book, Deuteronomy 26:5-9 recounts the grace that has been poured out upon the people of Israel that should serve as the motive for their response in giving: “A wandering Aramean was my father. And we went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a might hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders, And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O Lord, have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the Lord your God and worship before the Lord your God. And you shall rejoice in all the good that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house. . . .”

* + 1. *The Lord Graciously Sets Forth the Two Paths Before His People: Blessings or Curses (Deuteronomy 27-34)*

In Leviticus 26, we saw the Lord clearly putting the blessings which flow from obedience and the curses which flow from disobedience before his people. We see this once more in Deuteronomy 28. In this chapter we see several tribes gathered on Mount Gerizim to bless the people and several tribes on Mount Ebal to curse the people. The blessings contain only 14 verses while the curses contain more than fifty verses.[[58]](#footnote-58)

If the people of Israel obey the Lord, they will experience the pronounced blessings. They will be set high above the other nations, be blessed in the city and in the field, be fruitful and multiply and have abundant provision, enjoy military victory, enjoy the blessing of his presence and the identity of being his people, enjoy great wealth and be a blessing to the nations. (Deuteronomy 28:1-14) In other words, the people will enjoy the fulfillment of the promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

However, if the people of Israel disobeyed the Lord, they will experience dreadful judgment in every area of life. This all-encompassing devastation is summarized by Schreiner as follows: “Yahweh promised that if Israel transgresses the law, they will suffer poverty, confusion, frustration, pestilence, famine, disease, defeat before their enemies, insanity, rape, removal of sons and daughters from parents, the eating of their children, and finally exile from the land.”[[59]](#footnote-59) In other words, the people will be deprived of the fulfillment of the promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by experiencing the exact opposite reality. As Schreiner rightfully notes: “The horror of disobedience recounted so vividly in chapter 28 leaves the reader dazed at the prospect that awaits Israel if they fail to do what the Lord commanded.”[[60]](#footnote-60)

In Deuteronomy 29 we see the Lord renewing the covenant he made with his people in Exodus; namely, the Mosaic Covenant. The covenant renewal reminds the people of the Lord’s past faithfulness and warns the people again against violating the requirements of the covenant – for blessing will flow from obedience and curses from disobedience (as was made quite clear in Deuteronomy 28!)

As we enter Deuteronomy 30, Moses again makes it clear that the people of Israel will rebel and violate the provisions of the covenant, thus experiencing the full-breadth of the curses pronounced, including exile from the land of promise. (Deuteronomy 30:1). However, Moses again makes it equally clear that exile is not the last word and that there will be a time when the people will return to the Lord with all of their hear and soul and thus return to an enjoyment of his covenant promises. While the promise of return clearly speaks of the coming return of the people of Israel from exile, it certainly points beyond such a return, as well, for we learn that at a future time: “[T]he Lord your God will circumcise your heard and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may life.” (Deuteronomy 30:6) As Schreiner notes: “Here we see an anticipation of the new covenant fleshed out by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 11:18-19); 36:26-27), which has become a reality in Jesus Christ.”[[61]](#footnote-61)

As we come to the end of Deuteronomy 30, Moses clearly presents the two options set before the people: “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.” (Deuteronomy 30:15) Life and good flows from obedience. Death and evil flows from disobedience. There is no grey area. There is no middle ground.

As we come to Deuteronomy 31, we see Joshua being appointed as the new leader of the people of Israel, the writing of the law to be read periodically by the priests before the people of Israel, and Israel’s future failings once again made certain.

Deuteronomy 32 records what is known as the Song of Moses. The Song of Moses worships the Lord for who he is and what he has done – particularly his faithfulness to the people of Israel, reminds the people of their rebellion and the judgment that rightfully flows from their rebellion, and the future hope that they have when “the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining, bond or free.” (Deuteronomy 32:36) At this time “he will turn and crush Israel’s adversaries (32:37-42) and will have mercy on Israel once again (32:43).”[[62]](#footnote-62)

The nature of the Lord’s revelation of his will to his people is captured powerfully by Deuteronomy 32:46-47: “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”

In Deuteronomy 33, we see Moses blessing the tribes of Israel immediately before his death. In Deuteronomy 34, we read the account of Moses’ death.

So, as we end the book of Deuteronomy, were are we in the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises of land, numerous offspring, and worldwide blessing given in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant?

*Promise of Land* – As we leave the book of Deuteronomy, we are in the same place we were as we left the book of Numbers - we have a new generation who will finally take possession of the land of promise, a new leader who will lead them to the land of promise, and a particular description of the land of promise!

*Promise of Numerous Offspring* – We have seen the Lord fulfill this covenant promise as the people of Israel have become exceedingly numerous! The fulfillment of the covenant promise of numerous offspring is clearly memorialized by Deuteronomy 10:22: “Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.”

*Promise of worldwide blessing* – Like we were at the end of Numbers, we are closer than ever to Israel become a blessing to the world, as a new generation stands on the edge of the land of promise poised to take possession of it!

1. 2 Cor. 12:8-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 145-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In connection with the peace/fellowship offering, Schreiner makes the devotionally powerful point: “God instituted sacrifices so that human beings could enjoy the wonder and loveliness of his presence.” Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 49-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Victor P. Hamilton, *A Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology In the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 150-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See, e.g., Psalm 135:1-12 and Psalm 136:1-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Numbers 26:51 provides that the new generation had 601,730 adult males at least 20 years old who were able to go to war. The first generation had slightly more than that at 603,550 (Numbers 1:46) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. As Schreiner notes: “Deuteronomy is not primarily a narrative that rehearses Israel’s history. The book concentrates on Israel’s responsibility to obey the Lord as they are poised to enter the land of promise.” Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Goldsworthy, According to Plan, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Heshbon is a smaller location from which Sihon reigned. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 83 (quoting Bervard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflections on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 426). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 81-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. That the Lord’s promised restoration will come through a king has become increasingly certain as we have gone through the story of the Old Testament to this point. It is even more certain with the giving of these laws! [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Schreiner, The King in His Beauty, 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)