



REDEMPTION HISTORY: EDEN TO EGYPT

Redemption History and why we need to know it.

We can't know who we are as a person unless we consider our past. We can't be in relationship with another person without knowing something of their past. The past is prologue to who we are in the present, and it's no different with Jesus Christ.

For us to be in relationship with Jesus, we can't avoid the fact that we need to know the backstory behind why He had to come to earth as a man and why He had to die on the cross if we're going to have full understanding of the promises that He's making us and where our relationship with Jesus is heading.



BIBLICAL READING FOR THIS SECTION: GENESIS 1-3

THE GENESIS NARRATIVE IS FOUNDATIONAL FOR UNDERSTANDING EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS IN THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE OF WHAT WE CALL REDEMPTION HISTORY.

GENESIS SHOWS THAT WHEN GOD SPEAKS, THE WHOLE OF CREATION RESPONDS. THIS IS BECAUSE OF GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE AS THE CREATOR. WHAT IT ALSO SHOWS IS THAT CREATION IS ORDERLY, BEAUTIFUL, HARMONIOUS., AND INTENTIONAL. GOD, MAN, AND CREATION WERE IN HARMONY, A STATE OF COMMUNION THAT REFLECTED THE COMMUNAL NATURE OF THE GODHEAD (HOLY TRINITY)

IT ALSO SHOWS THAT GOD IS INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN HIS CREATION. HUMANKIND WAS CREATED AS GOD'S IMAGE AND GIVEN AUTHORITY OVER GOD'S CREATION. THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT MAN KIND DOMINATED AND CONTROLLED ALL CREATURES, BUT RATHER THAT HE LIVED IN HARMONY WITH GOD AND WITH CREATION, A CARETAKER AND VISIBLE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. GENESIS 1-2 DEPICTS A WORLD WITHOUT SIN. THE ONLY OTHER PLACE IN THE BIBLE THAT SHOWS A WORLD WITHOUT SIN IS THE FINAL CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION.



GENESIS 3 DEPICTS THE FALL OF ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, THE EVENT THAT NECESSITATED GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEEMING MANKIND, THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS ON THE CROSS, AND CULMINATES IN THE FINAL DEFEAT OF SATAN AS PROPHECIED IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE HOLY TRINITY AS A COMMUNAL GODHEAD, IT MEANS THAT GOD THE FATHER, CHRIST THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT EXIST AS THREE PERSONS IN ONE. THIS TRINITY LIVES A RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE THAT IS SELF-GIVING, SACRIFICIAL, AND LIFE SUSTAINING. EACH PERSON OF THE TRINITY PLACES THE NEEDS OF THE OTHER TWO FIRST. THE PERSON THAT IS FOREFRONT AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT DEPENDS ON THE SITUATION. IN GENESIS, WE SEE GOD THE FATHER DOMINANT, AS THE ALL-KNOWING AND ALL-POWERFUL CREATOR OF ALL THINGS. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, CHRIST THE SON WILL BE FOREFRONT.

MANKIND IS INTENDED TO BE THE VISIBLE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD ON EARTH. GOD CREATED US AS TRIUNE BEINGS, WHICH MEANS WE HAVE A BODY, A SOUL, AND A SPIRIT. THE SPIRIT IS WHAT CONNECTS US WITH GOD. THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELLS THE BELIEVER TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION SO THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD AND DISCERN GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES.

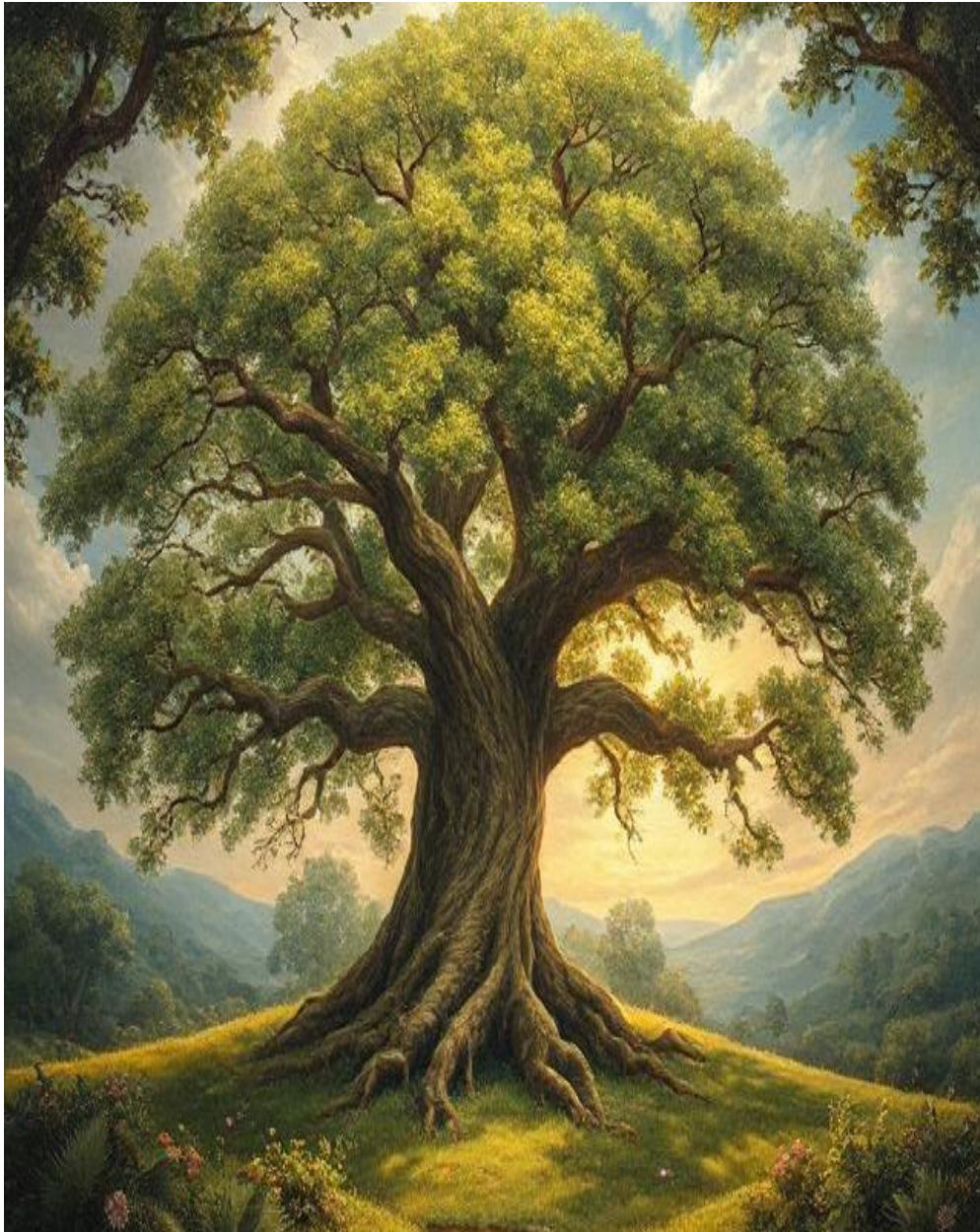
GOD DIDN'T CREATE MAN TO BE INDIVIDUALS. WITHIN ADAM WAS THE ENTIRE RACE OF HUMANKIND (EVEN EVE CAME FROM WITHIN ADAM). GOD WAS CREATING A COMMUNITY CALLED MAN (NOT THE USE OF PLURALS WHEN GOD SPEAKS). GOD DOES NOT THINK INDIVIDUALLY. ANYTIME HE IS SPEAKING OR GIVING COMMANDS TO MAN IN THE BIBLE, HE IS ADDRESSING ALL OF HUMANKIND, NOT INDIVIDUALS.



WHY DOES THIS MATTER? LET'S EXAMINE SATAN AS THE ENEMY. SATAN (OR LUCIFER IS HE IS SOMETIMES CALLED) DESIRED TO BE LIKE GOD IN ALL THE WRONG WAYS---HE WANTED POWER, WORSHIP, AND GLORY FOR HIMSELF. WHEN HE REBELLED AGAINST GOD, HE SET HIMSELF TO OPPOSE EVERYTHING THAT GOD WANTED TO ACCOMPLISH IN CREATING MANKIND.

THIS MEANS THAT WHEN THE SERPENT TEMPTED EVE, PROMISING HER THAT SHE WOULD BE LIKE GOD, HE WAS TEMPTING HER OUT OF THE COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD INTO *INDIVIDUALISM*. MANKIND CANNOT BE THE IMAGE OF GOD AS AN INDIVIDUAL BECAUSE GOD IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL. EATING OF THE FRUIT OF THE FIRST TREE (THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL) DID NOT MAKE ADAM AND EVE LIKE GOD---IT BROKE THE HARMONY BETWEEN GOD AND MANKIND AND MADE MAN AN IMAGE OF THE SINFUL, REBELLIOUS, INDIVIDUAL ENEMY SATAN. MAN WAS ESTRANGED FROM GOD, FOR A HOLY GOD CANNOT DWELL IN A CORRUPT, SINFUL, WICKED VESSEL (IN THIS CASE MAN).

ADAM CONTAINED WITHIN HIM EVERY HUMAN THAT WOULD FOLLOW. NOW, ADAM WAS CORRUPTED WITH THE DISEASE OF SIN. A TREE THAT IS DISEASED CANNOT BEAR GOOD FRUIT. EVERY HUMAN THAT WOULD DESCEND FROM ADAM WOULD BE CORRUPTED WITH SIN, ETERNALLY SEPARATED FROM GOD...UNLESS GOD INTERVENED TO SAVE US.

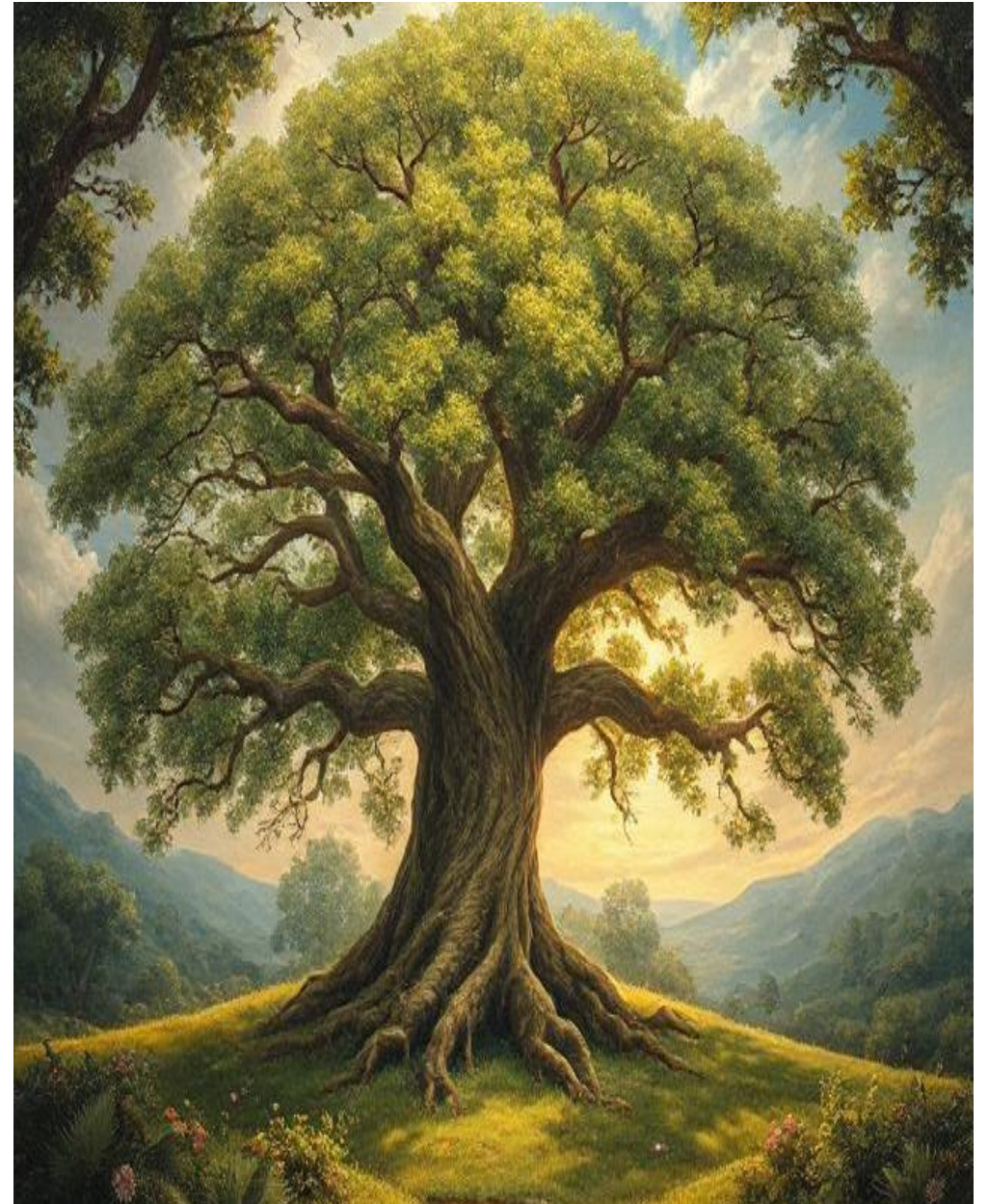


THE OTHER DANGER WAS THE PRESENCE OF THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE GARDEN (A.K.A. THE TREE OF ETERNAL LIFE). BIBLICAL THEORIES ABOUT THIS TREE CAN BE COMPLICATED, BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS: IF ADAM AND EVE HAD EATEN OF THIS TREE AFTER THEIR FALL, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN ETERNALLY TRAPPED IN THEIR SINFUL STATE, WITH NO HOPE OF REDEMPTION OR RECONCILIATION WITH GOD. THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN ETERNALLY AN IMAGE OF SATAN RATHER THAN GOD, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT COULD NEVER DWELL IN THEM AS GOD HAD INTENDED. THIS, MORE THAN SIMPLE PUNISHMENT FOR DISOBEDIENCE, WAS LIKELY AT THE HEART OF GOD BANISHING MAN FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

THERE'S ALSO CONTROVERSY IN HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN CHANGED BECAUSE OF THE FALL. FIRST, THERE'S WASTEFUL SPECULATION OVER WHETHER ADAM OR EVE WAS TO BLAME FOR THE FALL. THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE: BOTH OF THEM. ADAM FAILED TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY BY REMOVING THE SERPENT FROM THE GARDEN. BOTH OF THEM FAILED TO OBEY GOD'S COMMAND NOT TO EAT OF THE TREE. MEN WERE MADE TO BE THE AUTHORITY FIGURE OF THE FAMILY, BUT THIS DOES NOT NEGATE THE FACT THAT WOMEN ARE MEANT TO BE THE PARTNER AND HELPER OF MAN. WOMEN WERE NOW MADE TO GIVE BIRTH TO CHILDREN BY PAIN AND SUFFERING AND THEIR DESIRES WOULD BE TOWARDS THEIR HUSBANDS. IN THE FUTURE, THE APOSTLE PAUL WOULD CLARIFY THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP: HUSBANDS WOULD LOVE AND TREAT THEIR WIVES AS THEY WISHED TO BE TREATED THEMSELVES AND BE MEN WHO REFLECTED GOD'S LOVE, WISDOM, HOLINESS, AND GRACE; WIVES WOULD RESPECT AND SUPPORT THEIR HUSBANDS. MARRIAGE WOULD BE A PARTNERSHIP, A MICROCOSM OF THE SELF-GIVING, UNCONDITIONAL, SACRIFICIAL LOVE IN THE HOLY TRINITY.

WE HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT GOD IS OUR FATHER, AND HE DISCIPLINES THOSE CHILDREN THAT HE LOVES NOT TO PUNISH BUT TO HELP US GROW TO BE IMAGES OF HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, MERCY, GRACE AND HIS LOVE. REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST IS ABOUT CLEANSING AND RESTORING US INTO BEINGS WHERE HIS SPIRIT CAN DWELL, BEINGS WHO CAN BE ETERNALLY CONNECTED IN RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. ALL THAT GOD DOES IN THE BIBLE IS TO DIRECT THE *COMMUNITY* THAT IS MAN TOWARDS THIS GOAL.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE FALL HAD OTHER CONSEQUENCES. THE FALL OF MAN INTRODUCED SUFFERING, TOIL, AND DEATH TO THE WHOLE CREATION THAT GOD HAD FORMED. MAN WAS NOT ONLY ALIENATED FROM GOD; HE WAS SEPARATED FROM THE WHOLE OF CREATION, OVER WHICH HE ONCE HAD AUTHORITY. ALL THINGS IN NATURE WOULD RESIST MAN. THE CROPS OF THE FIELD NO LONGER OBEYED MAN, WE WOULD HAVE TO TOIL AND STRUGGLE FOR OUR SURVIVAL. NATURE WAS NO LONGER A FRIEND OF MAN, IT HAD TO BE TAMED AND DOMINATED. MAN WOULD GROW OLD AND DIE, AS EVERYTHING IN NATURE WOULD WITHER AND PASS. THIS WAS NOT THE CREATION THAT GOD HAD INTENDED. DID GOD KNOW THINGS WOULD TURN OUT THIS WAY? THAT HIS CHILDREN WOULD REBEL AND BECOME SEPARATED FROM HIM? GOD IS OMNISCIENT (ALL KNOWING), SO HE SURELY SAW THE FUTURE EVEN BEFORE HE CREATED US.



YET, OUT OF HIS GREAT LOVE AND DESIRE FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH US, GOD CREATED MANKIND ANYWAY. HE SURELY KNEW THAT THE FALL OF MAN WOULD NECESSITATE A RESTORATION THAT MAN COULD NOT ACCOMPLISH IN OUR FALLEN STATE—DIVINE INTERVENTION WOULD BE REQUIRED. GOD LOVED US ENOUGH TO INTERVENE FOR US.

NEITHER WOULD THIS BE AN INSTANTANEOUS FIX. THEOLOGISTS COULD SPECULATE ON MANY DIFFERENT WAYS GOD COULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED MAN'S REDEMPTION, BUT IT WOULD ONLY BE SPECULATION. THE BIBLE SHOWS US THAT COURSE OF REDEMPTION THAT GOD SET FORTH, AND IT WOULD BE A PROCESS SPANNING MILLENIAS. THE CONCEPT OF BLOOD SACRIFICE WOULD COME INTO EXISTENCE IN THE DAYS AFTER NOAH. A SPECIAL LINEAGE OF MAN WOULD BEGIN WITH ABRAHAM AND END WITH CHRIST THE SON COMING TO EARTH TO BE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE. IT WILL CULMINATE IN GOD'S FINAL DEFEAT OVER SIN AND DEATH.

AFTER THE FALL, GOD PROMISES THAT THE SEED OF THE WOMAN, EVE, WOULD ONE DAY CRUSH THE HEAD OF THE SERPENT. THIS WAS THE ADAMIC COVENANT, THE FIRST OF MANY PROMISES GOD WOULD MAKE AND FULFILL WITH MANKIND. THIS SHOWS US THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL AND THAT HIS PURPOSES FOR MANKIND TO BE HIS IMAGE WILL NOT BE THWARTED BY ANY ENEMY, FOR HIS PURPOSES WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED. WHAT STARTED OUT AS A CURSE FOR MANKIND WILL BE TURNED INTO BLESSINGS BECAUSE GOD HAS PROMISED OUR REDEMPTION. AMEN!



BUILDING OUR BIBLICAL VOCABULARY

IMAGIO DEI refers to the concept of mankind as the image of the Godhead. This speaks to the characteristics within mankind that reflect God. We cannot be images of God—the only man who was capable of being the image of God was Jesus Christ. When we receive Christ and are redeemed (said to be living in Christ), we become images of God *in* Christ. As Christians, we strive to become more like God in being loving, merciful, moral, and spiritually aware. This means that qualities of God manifest in how we live and how we relate to one another.

COVENANT in the biblical sense means a promise that God has made to mankind. Sometimes it is a conditional promise that requires a response from mankind (such as the expectation that mankind would obey the terms of the Mosaic covenant), but usually God's promises are unconditional, which means He alone is responsible (and capable) of fulfilling the promise. God's ongoing relationship with mankind—from biblical times to the present day—is sometimes referred to as a covenant relationship. Yes, we are still living in covenant times, the times of the New Covenant. That covenant began with the manifestation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which atoned for the sins of man and restored us to relationship with God. It will culminate when Jesus Christ returns to take what is called the Davidic throne.

BIBLE READING FOR THIS SECTION: GENESIS 4-9

In these chapters, we see that the rebellion which began with Adam and Eve remained pervasive in their descendants, beginning almost immediately when their son Cain murdered their son Abel. Mankind's descent into corruption and sin became so rampant that God actually regretted creating humankind. His judgment was that He would start anew by wiping away man and nature with a cataclysmic flood. HOWEVER, God would spare Noah and his family. Why? Because we have said that God is faithful and that He keeps His covenant promises. God promised that the one who would defeat evil and redeem mankind would be the seed of the woman, Eve. If all of Eve's descendants were wiped from the earth, God would have broken His promise. God keeps His promises. Noah was the descendant of Eve's son, Seth. Preserving Noah and his family preserved the line that would lead to Jesus Christ.



Noah was chosen by God to build the Ark, and Noah's response is an example for all believers: He *believed* God's word (in this case, God's warning that there would be a flood). He knew God was capable of doing all that He'd said He would do. He *obeyed* God's command to build an Ark even when he didn't fully know or understand. He *trusted* that God would be faithful to keep His promise to preserve Noah and his family. He *worshipped* God out of *gratitude* for all that God did for him and his family, for God's great *love, mercy, and grace* and God's enduring *faithfulness* to keep His promises.

The Noahic Covenant follows after the waters of the Great Flood eventually receded. This is a universal covenant between God and all mankind. God promised never to destroy the world (by flood) again. This assured the continuity and survival of mankind until God's purposes are fulfilled in the days of Christ's second coming. This gives us hope and security for the future. God placed the rainbow in the sky as a symbol of His faithfulness to mankind; it represents His mercy, grace, and commitment to us. However, man's inclination to sin and the need for divine intervention would continue.



Shem, Ham, and Japheth were the sons of Noah and the forefathers of all the modern nations of mankind. Genesis 9 recounts how Ham happened upon Noah passed out drunk and naked in his tent and told his brothers. Japheth and Shem treated their father respectfully by covering Noah up without looking at him in his naked state. Ham and his descendants, however, were cursed by Noah—specifically the nation of Canaan was cursed to be the servants of the nations that descended from Shem and Japheth. Canaan would be the land that God promised to the nation of Israel (descendants of Shem) and would be almost entirely wiped out.

Ham's descendants are linked to early Mesopotamia and Egypt, Ethiopia and Libya. Don't feel too badly, though, for the Book of Revelation promises that the Kingdom of Christ will include people from ALL nations, including Ham's descendants.



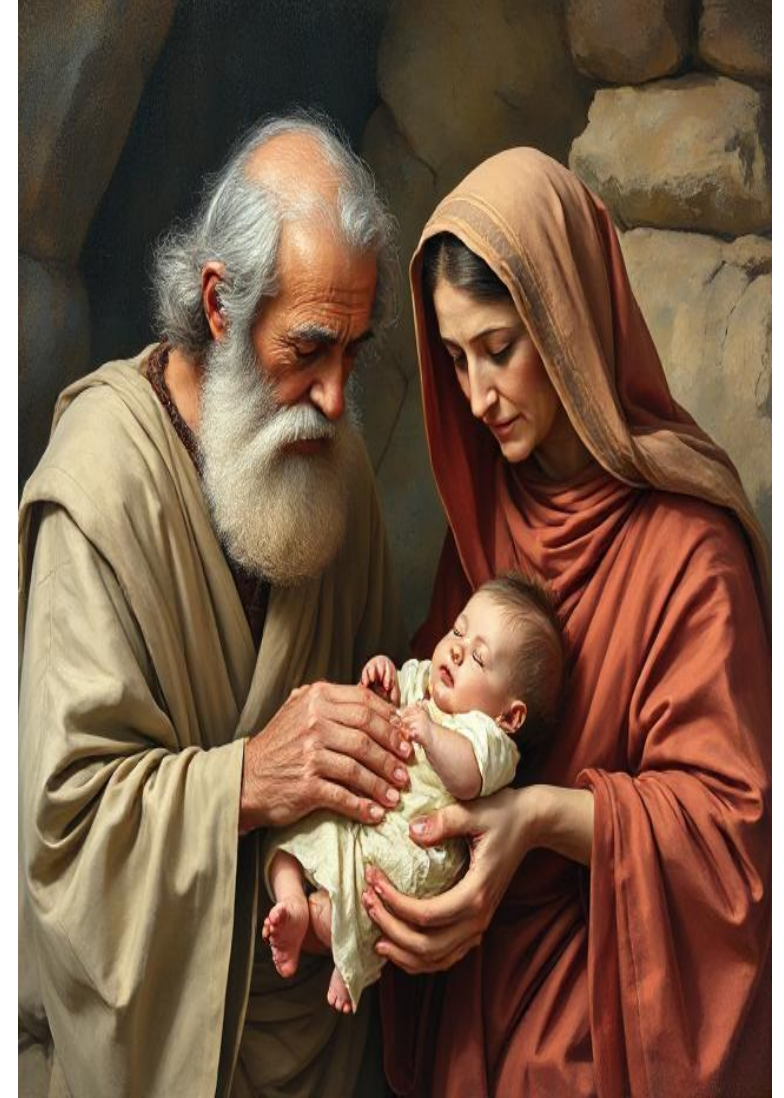
Jesus would descend from the line of Shem through the nation of Israel. Shem is the forefather of many Middle Eastern nations and is frequently linked with monotheistic nations

Japheth is the progenitor of many Indo-European descendants from Europe to Asia Minor and in many Northern and Western parts of the world.



God's covenant with Abraham marks a pivotal moment in biblical history. Abram was a tenth-generation descendant of Noah through Noah's son, Shem. The covenant really begins with Abram's unwavering faith and obedience to God's commands. God commanded Abram to take his wife Sarai and leave his father-in-law's house to live in the land that God commanded.

God would change their names to Abraham (meaning "exalted father" although some theologians translate it to "father of multitudes") and Sarah (a princess, though some theologians translate it to "mother of nations"), representing their new places in God's redemption plan. Name changes hold significance in biblical history. God would rename Abraham's grandson Israel (formerly Jacob) for the nation that his descendants would become. Jesus would change the name of His disciple Simon to "Peter", which reflects Peter's apostolic future as the "rock" of Christ's early church. Persecutor of the church Saul would be renamed Paul when he believed and became the apostle of Christ.





God's covenant with Abraham more fully reveals His plans for the redemption of mankind and restoration of mankind to relationship with Him (see Genesis 15-17). It was an unconditional promise of land, descendants, and blessing: God would give Abraham countless descendants and make a great nation of them (the nation bearing the name of Abraham's grandson, Israel). Through this nation all nations of the world would be blessed. God promised that many kings would descend from Abraham, the kings of Israel, including King David. All the nations of the world would be blessed through the greatest king to descend from Abraham: Jesus Christ. God would provide a specific Promised Land for Abraham and his descendants. Finally, God promised to make Abraham's name great, to bless him and those who blessed Abraham and to curse those who cursed Abraham. The land given to Abraham was expanded later in the Palestine Covenant. The conquest of this land is depicted in the Book of Joshua. That land was Canaan, descendants of Ham.

This covenant was signified by blood, with God passing between two halves of a sacrificed animal. In doing this, God took all responsibility for fulfilling this covenant upon himself. Though God's word alone would have been enough, the blood covenant was a solemn promise of those biblical times and the symbolic act would indicate the gravity of what God had vowed. The Jewish act of circumcision also began with this covenant. God ordered that all males of Abraham's household (including male servants) be circumcised as an act indicating that they were included in this covenant. An uncircumcised male was considered to be outside the covenant and all that it promised.

Why Abraham? The Bible does not usually give reasons why certain people are predestined for God's salvation and service. We can usually find some clues in their stories. Abraham was a man who obeyed all that God told him to do (including nearly sacrificing his son at God's command). Wherever Abraham traveled, he built altars to worship God. Among the pagan nations, he was a man with a reputation for being God-fearing and just. Faith, trust, worship, and obedience are qualities crucial to any real relationship with God.



Sarah was beyond childbearing years, so how would God accomplish this promise? Unfortunately, Sarah and Abraham's story at this point gives us examples of how *not* to seek after God's promises. First, there was doubt in Sarah's response: She laughed at the idea that she could have a child. We have to remember that God is who He says He is, and God will do what He says He will do. The Bible tells us that nothing is too difficult for the Lord. Next, Sarah and Abraham tried to fulfill the promise of a child by their own efforts, specifically Sarah gave Abraham her maidservant to produce a child for Abraham. Predictably, this led to much jealousy and resentment between Sarah and her servant Hagar and later between Sarah's son, Isaac, and Hagar's son Ishmael.

The conflict between the descendants of Isaac (patriarch of Jewish and Christian nations) and the descendants of Ishmael (traditionally considered the patriarch of Arab and Muslim nations). This is another point where we must look to the Book of Revelation to realize that, regardless of the fact that Ishmael was not the son through which God would produce the nation of Israel, God's redemption plans would include the descendants of both of Abraham's sons.

This reminds us that redemption and salvation are gifts of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not something that mankind can achieve by self-efforts.

Conflict between siblings would mark the next two generations of Abraham's descendants. In Genesis 27, his son, Isaac, would have two sons of his own: Jacob and Esau. The two would compete for Jacob's blessing, which younger son Jacob would receive after some deception of his father. While the practice of deception is not what God desires of it, in His omniscience, God was aware and purposed that Jacob would receive the blessings, even telling Rebekah that her older son would serve her younger son. Isaac realized that God's will had been done and allowed the blessing to stand. Esau was also guilty of disregarding his spiritual heritage, first by selling his birthright to Jacob for a meal and later by marrying a Canaanite woman (God would later prohibit intermarriage between Israelites and Gentiles). Isaac submitted to God's will and purposes by allowing the blessing to stand.

Jacob suffered consequences for his actions. He spent 20 years fleeing the wrath of his brother, leaving him poor and living in a strange land. Jacob would be deceived in turn by his father-in-law into marrying both of the man's daughters, Leah and Rachel, when Jacob only desired Rachel. Again, this deception was born of human actions but was used for God's purposes. Rachel and Leah would become the mothers of the twelve tribes of the nations of Israel.

Jacob's spiritually transformational moment comes when he wrestles with God as seen in Genesis 32. The name Jacob meant "heel catcher" or generally a person who follows to deceive. We saw this is in his manipulation to gain Esau's birthright and the blessing intended for Esau, which led to two decades of hostility between the brothers before Esau forgave Jacob.

Wrestling with God symbolizes the constant struggles that would mark Jacob's life. Jacob endured the wrestling, even when the stranger who identified himself as God broke Jacob's hip to end the match. Again, Jacob demanded a blessing of God.

He received a new name: Israel, which means "he struggles with God". This marks a new spiritual direction for Israel's life, a break from his past as he embraced God's purposes for his life. As believers, we will all experience times of vulnerability, doubt, fear, struggle, and suffering. It's important to remember that our relationship with God will carry us through these struggles. We may wrestle with keeping the faith, but God is gracious and just to forgive us when we return to Him, embracing His will and His purposes for our lives. Redemption history is the continuing story of man's faithfulness and failures and God's commitment to our redemption and salvation.



The story of Joseph exemplifies a relationship that is trusting, submissive, and obedient to God's purposes. Joseph's status as one of Jacob's favorite sons led to his father gifting the boy with a special coat of many colors. His jealous brothers sold Joseph into slavery and then deceived their father into believing the boy had died. This was the beginning of a series of misfortunes for Joseph, culminating in his imprisonment on false charges. Yet, Joseph kept his faith in God's intentions throughout his trials. Ultimately, God gifted Joseph with the ability to interpret dreams, a skill which brought Joseph to the attention and service of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph was promoted to a position of influence from which he helped guide Egypt into preparing for a severe drought and famine. Joseph's submission to God's will saved countless lives in Egypt and in other lands, including the lives of his family in Canaan. It also set the stage for the Book of Exodus and a pivotal moment in redemption history.



The Book of Exodus



God's ability to intervene in human affairs and sovereignty over history and creation and His caring for those who are faithful to Him is fully displayed in the narrative of Exodus. For 430 years, the descendants of Israel/Jacob lived in Egypt, becoming slaves after the days and deeds of Joseph were forgotten. Despite their sufferings, they remained faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God (according to His redemptive plans) finally answered their prayers. This proves again that God is faithful in keeping His promises and covenants with mankind.

Moses was chosen by God to speak on his behalf before Pharaoh. Moses lacked confidence in his own speaking abilities; God appointed Moses's brother, Aaron, to accompany Moses. Moses would become God's prophet, and Aaron would become the first high priest of Israel. This is also the first time in the Old Testament where Jewish believers are identified by their tribe. The twelve tribes were named after the sons and grandsons of Israel/Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi (the tribe of priests and those who serve God's temple), Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Benjamin, and two "half-tribes" named for Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim. It's no coincidence that Jesus Christ would descend from the tribe of Judah. The nation of Judah would break from Israel, remaining faithful to their covenant God.

God sent the twelve plagues on Egypt for two purposes: Primarily, it was the liberation of His chosen people from enslavement, for the time had come for them to set out to the land that God had promised Abraham. The second purpose was to establish before the Egyptians (and for history to record) that He alone is God. In addition to its pantheon of false gods, the pharaohs were also considered to be divine. Each plague struck at the foundations of Egypt's power and religious beliefs. God showed his power and justice by bringing insects, disease, and weather disasters as His judgement on Egypt. The final plague foreshadows the future coming of Christ the Messiah and His death upon the cross. In this plague, the firstborn of every Egyptian person and animal was struck dead. The children of the Israelites sacrificed a perfect lamb and placed its blood on their doorframes so that death would bypass their homes. The Jewish holiday of Passover, marked by the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb, would be commemorated every year. Jesus Christ was the final lamb, sacrificed to save all of mankind from the curse of eternal death.

The parting of the Red Sea, which allowed the escape of the Israelites and caused the annihilation of the pursuing Egyptian army, was a profound demonstration of God's deliverance and protection over believers regardless of the obstacles.

Still, mankind wrestled with their tendencies towards sin, idolatry, fear, and doubt. God (referred to as Yahweh or YHWH, had personally descended upon Mount Sinai in the form of smoke and fire, to prepare a covenant with the Israelites. The covenant begins with the Ten Commandments, the foundational principles of Jewish and Christian faith even today. The people were given three days to consecrate themselves before entering into this covenant. The people reacted to the glory of God's presence with fear, begging Moses to speak to God on their behalf. They agreed to God's terms for the covenant, sealing the covenant with the required blood sacrifices.

However, their faith would falter. Moses returned to the mountain to meet with God to receive specific instructions on matters like building God's tabernacle and other laws of the covenant, disappearing for forty days. Doubt got the better of the Israelites, who begged Aaron to fashion a "new god" for them: The golden calf idol. Idolatry would be a continuous stumbling block impacting Israel's relationship with God. Fortunately, God remains faithful and keeps His word even when mankind fails.



Even today, believers must be cautious not to place the "idols" of this world as higher priority than time and relationship with God. Idols can take many deceptive forms such as money, fame, professional success, gaming, competition, and personal possessions. While we must make our way in this world, we must remember that God is our ultimate provider and will give us all we need (which does not mean we get anything we want or desire. Wealth does not indicate God's blessings nor does lack of wealth indicate that God is displeased with us.)





Despite their failing, God would still enter into a new covenant with the people of Israel. The terms of the Mosaic Covenant are outlined in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This covenant was a specific framework of daily living for God's chosen people. This comprehensive legal code became what is known as the Law of Moses or simply the Law. It serves multiple purposes in God's redemption plan:

- 1) It reveals God's holiness and righteousness by serving as a mirror through which humanity can see our sinful condition and recognize our need for God's redemption. Our sinful condition makes it impossible for man to live up to the standards outlined in the Law. God knew this, so He made provisions. The first is the system of blood sacrifices, which would offer temporary atonement for personal sins. The second is the future Messiah, who would be the blood sacrifice that would permanently and completely atone for the sins of all who believe in Him.
- 2) The pedagogical purpose of the Law was to teach believers about God's character, His will, and His expectations for believers. It establishes the standards for community life (remember that God is a community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Living in community is one way in which believers live as the image of God in Christ in this world). The point is for mankind to pursue living according to God's will for better understanding of God and maturing in our relationship with God.
- 3) The Law prepares the way for future events in God's redemptive plan. It shows the need for Jesus not only as the blood sacrifice but as the ultimate High Priest and mediator between God and man. When Jesus lived a life that perfectly fulfilled the Law, He freed believers from the penalty required by breaking the Law (namely death and eternal separation from God).

Fear and doubt would again cause the people of Israel to stumble. After they sent spies to survey the land of Canaan (which God had promised would become their Promised Land), the spies reported a good land occupied by fearsome people. The Israelites' faith in God's promises faltered, causing judgement to fall upon them. The adult generation of Israel (except for Joshua and Caleb, who remained confident in God's provision and sovereignty) were forbidden to enter Canaan, consigned to live out their lives wandering in the wilderness until every member of the doubting generation had passed away. Joshua would lead the next generation of Israelites to conquer the promised land. Even Moses was banned from entering the land for failing to hallow God (see Book of Numbers 20:1-13).

The conquest of Canaan was a period that alternated between times of military conflict and periods of peace. It also continued to be a time that tested the spiritual faithfulness of God's people. God demonstrated His providence, intervention, and power by repeatedly bringing victory to the Israelites in the face of impossible obstacles. The city of Jericho, for example, was conquered when God caused the walls to fall merely from trumpets and the collective shout from His people. In another battle, God caused stones to fall from heaven to strike down only members of the Amorite army in Joshua 10:11 while the Israelites were unharmed.

An important footnote to this event is the story of Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute in the city of Jericho. She had heard of the many conquests of the God of the Israelites and feared this God. In other words, she believed in God's power and sovereignty...so much so that she sheltered the Israelite spies in her city in the hopes of obtaining God's mercy on herself and her family. God was indeed merciful. Rahab and her family were spared when Jericho was conquered. If you check the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1, you will see that Rahab is an ancestor of Jesus. This is another biblical example of God's mercy on those who believe in Him, regardless of their origin, nationality, or social status.





Rahab's presence in the lineage of Christ proves that God's mercies are not limited to the people of Israel but to all who believe He is who He says He is and has the power to do all that He says He will do, those who receive Him as their One True God.

Rahab was the mother of the Israelite Boaz, who would take a Moabite woman named Ruth as his wife. We will revisit their story when we discuss the concept of a kinsman-redeemer and how it points to Jesus Christ. For now, it's important to understand how Ruth came to her place in redemption history.

Ruth was the widow of an Israelite man (a man from the town of Bethlehem and the tribe of Judah, another allusion to the future Messiah). Left with the choice of returning to her people or staying with her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth's great love prompted her vow to go with Naomi to Israel, accepting the Israelite people and their God as her own.

In everything that Ruth did, she was obedient to Naomi and gained a good reputation, and the protection of Boaz, a relative of Naomi's late husband. An honorable man, Boaz redeemed the land of Naomi's late husband and married Ruth. They became the great-grandparents of King David.



The conquest of Canaan and God's requirements that the Israelites leave no survivors and make no accord with any of the tribes of the land is a complicated subject matter that has yielded much theological debate.

The first reason is that Canaan was a land steeped in idolatry and polytheism. As we have seen, the Israelites had been vulnerable to the temptation of such practices. Worse, the worship rituals of the pagan gods required child sacrifice, which God found abhorrent. God's command in part was to protect Israel from the temptations of this kind of paganism.

Canaan was also a land of moral corruption. In the Book of Genesis, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as divine judgment for various forms of moral corruption. God's holiness cannot tolerate or dwell in places of sin and immorality nor did He want His chosen people to succumb to such temptations. The Israelites had made a covenant of faithful relationship to God alone, no other gods.

We see again that Israel could not quite live up to God's commands. The Gibeonites, for example, deceived the people of Israel into making a peace treaty with them. They were unable to completely drive the Jebusites out of Judah's land. Other times, the Israelites' fear of the Canaanites power caused them to compromise rather than trust in God's power. After the death of Joshua, without a central leader, the failure of the Israelites continued. As we see in the Book of Judges, their people defied God's prohibition about intermarriage with the Canaanites, taking wives from Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites.



As God warned, this caused many Israelites to fall into apostasy and idolatry. Judges 2 speaks of Israelites worshipping pagan gods. Disobedience of God also placed Israel in a position of political and military vulnerability. The surviving Canaanites and surrounding pagan nations repeatedly attacked and conquered and oppressed the Israelites. Their very national and spiritual identity as Israel, God's chosen nation, was endangered.

Still, God remained faithful to His promises even as His chosen people failed. He raised up leaders known as Judges who delivered the Israelites out of the hands of their enemies. Israel was already deep in a cycle of apostasy, repentance, and divine forgiveness that would plague them until the eventual Exile of both nations (Israel and Judah) as captives in Assyria and Babylon.

There was no greater rejection of God than the time that Israel demanded a human king so that they could have a monarchy like the surrounding nations. *"Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day, I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you"* (1 Samuel 8:7-8).

Sin tempts us to pursue our own desires, even if it means rejecting God. Requesting a human king was, in part, motivated by the Israelites' desires to indulge in worship of false gods and live by their own rules even though they were in covenant with the One True God. The priest Samuel warned the people of all that they would suffer with a human king, but the people would not relent. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Samuel 8:19-20). In part 2, we'll examine how this demand affected Israel's history and led to the Davidic Covenant.

REFERENCES FOR THIS LESSON:

“Noah’s Sons and Their Descendants”. Biblehub.com;
biblehub.com/topical/n/noah's_sons_and_their_descendants.htm

“Hebrew Names: Abraham”, Jeff A. Benner; Ancient Hebrew Research Center;

“What Does the Name Sarah/Sarai Really Mean?”, Bible Hermeneutics; hermeneutics.stackexchange.com; 2025

“Why Did Isaac Still Bless Jacob After He Lied?”, BibleAskTeam, March 2015;
bibleask.org/why-did-isaac-still-bless-jacob-after-he-lied/

“What is the meaning of Jacob wrestling with God?”, GotQuestions.org; www.gotquestions.org/Jacob-wrestling-with-God.html

“Why did the Israelites make a golden calf?”, Josh Drummond; Biblicalarcheology.org; April 9, 2025

“Why Didn’t the Israelites Destroy the Canaanites?”, BibleAskTeam, March 18, 2012; bibleask.org/why-didnt-the-israelites-destroy-the-canaanites/

“Why Did the Israelites Want an Earthly King When They Had God?”, Vivian Bricker; Christianity.com; 1/5/22