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THE PEOPLE OF GOD:
TOWARD AN EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

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the Faculty of
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APPROVAL SHEET

THE PEOPLE OF GOD:
TOWARD AN EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

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To Jeanine,

My heart trusts in you, and I have had no lack of gain.

You have done good to me and not harm all the days of your life.

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PREFACE

My personal journey in all stages that led toward the completion of this dissertation has been influenced on many levels by various people whom God has placed in my life. I am thankful to God for all the professors from whom I learned during my time at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In particular, though, I remember sitting in Dr. Paul House's Old Testament Survey as the Bible began to come alive. At that time I did not understand what Biblical Theology was, but the seeds were already being planted. Dr. Stephen Wellum introduced me to Graeme Goldsworthy and helped me to put the pieces together while completing a ThM under his supervision. Dr. Gregg Allison encouraged me to pursue work in prolegomena to ecclesiology, and Dr. Chad Brand got me started on this road. However, as time went on, the direction changed, and I realized the value of the concept of the image of God for ecclesiology. Because of his work in ecclesiology, it was natural for Dr. Allison to take over as my supervisor. His comments, his encouragement, and his challenges, were invaluable to me during the process, and I am deeply thankful for his guidance.

At the level of ecclesiology in the local church, no one has been more helpful to me than Dr. Mark Dever. I thank God for his faithfulness to Christ and his church, and for caring for young pastors. The original laboratory as I worked out my ecclesiology personally was Ryker's Ridge Baptist Church in Madison, Indiana. I thank God for their patience and love toward me and my family. It is a joy to visit there again from time to time and see the Lord continue to work among them. Since August of 2005, I have had the immense privilege of serving as senior pastor of High Pointe Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. I thank God for this congregation and its elders; they serve faithfully and

love me unconditionally. They have been especially patient with me as I finished writing this dissertation.

Finally, I cannot say enough about my wife, Jeanine. I thank God that she is a strong woman who fears the Lord. She has encouraged me along this journey even when it seemed like it would never end. I am greatly humbled by this divine gift of help in my life. She has been a cheerleader both to me and before our children, who have never known a father who was not in school. Now they will. May the Lord continue to give us a glorious view of Christ, and may we grow in our love for his bride, the church.

Juan R. Sanchez, Jr.

Austin, Texas

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As early as 1970, Francis Schaeffer observed that “everywhere men are asking if the church has a future as we come to the close of the 20th century.”¹ Three decades later, as the twenty-first century dawned, Richard Phillips, Philip Ryken, and Mark Dever confirmed Schaeffer’s observation when they noted that “the idea of the church did not fare very well in twentieth-century evangelicalism.”² This bold assessment is echoed by other evangelicals as well. Mark Husbands and Daniel Treier conclude that by various accounts evangelical ecclesiology is “‘in crisis’ or even ‘non-existent.’”³ Howard Snyder also wonders if an evangelical ecclesiology even exists, or if it is better to speak of evangelical ecclesiologies,⁴ while Bruce Hindmarsh suggests “that ‘evangelical

¹Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970), 9.

²Richard D. Phillips, Philip G. Ryken, and Mark E. Dever, *The Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), ix.

³Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, eds., *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 9. Husbands and Treier suggest, “Confirmation of this [crisis] comes from any number of angles. (1) Others have recently taken up similar concerns. (2) Even on a charitable reading, the dominant resources shaping pastoral ministry and church life among ‘evangelicals’ are significantly nonecclesiological and often, perhaps not surprisingly, nontheological. (3) It is a frequent complaint among evangelical theologians and teachers that solid and accessible monographs and textbooks on the doctrine of the church are difficult to find. (4) Quite regrettably, it is certainly the case that the wider intellectual influence of evangelical ecclesiology is almost nil, whatever the movement’s populist impact. . . . (5) Many evangelicals have been confessionally vague or even silent about the church. . . . (6) Finally, we may mention the comparative irrelevance of North American evangelicals with respect to public theology” (9-10).

⁴Howard A. Snyder, “The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology,” in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?*, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 77.

ecclesiology' is an oxymoron, like 'an honest thief' or 'airline food.'"⁵ The current crisis within evangelicalism related to the doctrine of the church does not merely serve to highlight disagreements among evangelical theologians that must be addressed before constructing an ecclesiology, it raises the very question of whether or not it is even possible to construct an evangelical doctrine of the church.

If evangelical theologians are at odds in relation to ecclesiology, it should be no surprise that many evangelicals in general seem ambivalent, ignorant, or at the very least unclear as to the doctrine of the church.⁶ Melvin Tinker suggests that "as a result of this lack of clarity in thinking about the church, evangelicals become all the more prone to accept views about the church which are far from Scriptural."⁷ Because of such ignorance and confusion over the doctrine of the church, evangelicalism in general and the evangelical church in particular received much needed self-criticism as the twentieth century came to a close and a new century dawned. Of particular interest because of their direct bearing on ecclesiology are two broad streams of evangelicals who coexist within the broad tent of evangelicalism and whose love and concern for the church leads them to voice their critiques against one another. Both groups agree that the church faces grave problems in the new millennium; they disagree, however, as to the solution.

On one side of the debate stand those evangelicals who wish to safeguard the church's identity (and its mission) by proposing and defending a deposit of apostolic doctrines held in continuity with the early church and recovered during the Protestant Reformation. These "confessional" evangelicals express concern that the evangelical

⁵Bruce Hindmarsh, "Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective," in *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 15.

⁶Melvin Tinker, "Toward an Evangelical View of the Church," in *Evangelical Concerns* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001), 223.

⁷*Ibid.*, 224.

church has been steadily moving away from its historically Protestant, confessional roots.⁸ One such concern is the recent quest for a “mere Christianity,” the core of which, as Jim Belcher explains, “is found in the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed and the so called Athanasian Creed.”⁹ Confessional evangelicals fear that a “mere Christianity” may minimize the very gospel recovered during the Protestant Reformation.¹⁰

Confessional evangelicals also suspect that a “mere Christianity” will necessarily lead to a “mere ecclesiology” that will minimize beliefs and practices over which evangelicals legitimately disagree: the identity of God’s people (regenerate or mixed community), baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.¹¹ These are not insignificant disagreements that may merely be glossed over; they strike at the very heart of the question, “What is the church?”

Finally, as it relates to culture and mission, confessional evangelicals suggest that the further evangelical churches stray from their historically Protestant confessional

⁸James Montgomery Boice and Benjamin E. Sasse, eds., *Here We Stand: A Call from Confessing Evangelicals for a Modern Reformation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004). For an example of the work of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, see Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, accessed January 17, 2009, <http://www.alliancenet.org>. See also the representative literature provided in n12 of this chap. Most recently a younger generation of confessional evangelicals raised concerns about the potential loss of the church’s evangelical identity and is calling for a return of the church to its confessional roots. See for example Kevin DeYoung, ed., *Don’t Call It a Comeback: The Old Faith for a New Day* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

⁹Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 54. For an academic argument for a “mere ecclesiology,” see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Evangelicalism and the Church: The Company of the Gospel,” in *The Futures of Evangelicalism: Issues and Prospects*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Robin A. Parry, and Andrew West (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 40-99.

¹⁰Greg Gilbert, “Book Review: Deep Church: A Third Way beyond Emerging and Traditional, by Jim Belcher,” 9Marks, March 2, 2003, accessed June 06, 2013, <http://9marks.org/review/deep-church-third-way-beyond-emerging-and-traditional-jim-belcher>. Note also Gilbert’s concern to explain the gospel from a confessional evangelical perspective: Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

¹¹Stephen J. Wellum, “Beyond Mere Ecclesiology: Toward a Theology of the Church,” in *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, ed. Kendell H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 183-212.

roots in order to reach the culture, the greater likelihood they will conform to the present culture instead of reaching it,¹² and confuse the church's mission instead of advancing it.¹³ The solution, suggest confessional evangelicals, is a return to the biblical, gospel truths recovered and confessed during the Protestant Reformation.¹⁴

On the other side of this evangelical divide stand “missional”¹⁵ evangelicals who believe that the church's identity is somewhat fluid and must be adaptable in order

¹²The amount of literature is overwhelming; this is just a representative sample: Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1984); Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); John Seel, *The Evangelical Forfeit: Can We Recover?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); John H. Armstrong, ed., *The Coming Evangelical Crisis: Current Challenges to the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel* (Chicago: Moody, 1996); David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be* (Chicago: Moody, 2008). Particularly helpful is David F. Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), which is a culmination of his previous critiques and in which he provides a lay of the evangelical landscape along with the proposal that evangelicals must have the courage to embrace once again the doctrines recovered by the Protestant Reformation.

¹³Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom and The Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

¹⁴For a collection of confessions of the Reformation era, see Mark A. Noll, *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991). For the call to return to historic Protestant confessional roots, see Armstrong, *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*; Boice and Sasse, *Here We Stand*; Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*; Derek W. H. Thomas, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. Gowan (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006); Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* (Chicago: Moody, 2010).

¹⁵Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren note that the term “missional” was introduced in 1998 by Darrell Guder and the research team at the Gospel and Culture Network “as an invitation for people to consider a new way of being the church.” Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 30-31. Because of the vast amount of literature from the missional perspective, I list only a representative sample from various publishers. The foundational work that laid the groundwork for a missional understanding of the church is Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). For a general introduction to the concept of missional church, see Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*. For scholarly treatments that seek to base the concept of missional on a biblical and theological basis rather than just praxis, perhaps the most important work is Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006). Wright lays the biblical foundation for the missional nature of the church by arguing that it is necessary to read the Bible with a missional hermeneutic. For others arguing for the missional nature of the church from a scholarly perspective, see also Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community*

to reach a particular culture, lest the church be in danger of irrelevancy.¹⁶ Jonathan Wilson, for example, argues for a missional ecclesiology that is both committed to mission and flexible without compromising faithfulness to the church's commission.¹⁷

Wilson explains,

The best way to describe this and equip ourselves for faithful flexibility is to add to our missional ecclesiology an *improvisational* dimension. When evangelical ecclesiology is improvisational it enables the church to fulfill its mission in changing circumstances.¹⁸

One such improvisational innovation has been the multi-site church model—"one church meeting in multiple locations."¹⁹ However, that is not to say missional evangelicals are mere pragmatists.

Created by the Spirit (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011); Samuel T. Logan, *Reformed Means Missional: Following Jesus into the World* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2013). Finally, Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), deserves special mention. Keller meticulously analyzes the issues in contemporary American culture, evaluating the various approaches to culture and presents a holistic, missional ecclesiology.

¹⁶There is no dearth of literature warning of the church's impending irrelevancy. Commenting on the amount of literature presently being published on the church, John Stott notes, "What has precipitated this avalanche of books is the sense that the church is increasingly out of tune with contemporary culture, and that unless it comes to terms with change, it faces extinction." John Stott, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 12. Those warning about the church's impending irrelevancy if it does not adapt to contemporary culture include Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); Pete Ward, *Liquid Church: A Bold Vision of How to Be God's People in Worship and Mission: A Flexible, Fluid Way of Being Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002); Jim L. Wilson, *Future Church: Ministry in a Post-Seeker Age* (Nashville: B & H, 2004).

¹⁷Jonathan R. Wilson, "Practicing Church: Evangelical Ecclesiologies at the End of Modernity," in *The Community of the Word*, 71.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church . . . in Many Locations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 8, quoted in Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 310. For an academic study of multi-site churches, see Brian Nathaniel Frye, "The Multi-Site Church Phenomenon in North America, 1950-2010" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010). For a biblical and theological argument for multi-site churches, see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 310-17. For a scholarly argument against some types of multi-site churches, see Darrell Grant Gaines, "One Church in One Location: Questioning the Biblical, Theological,

Missional ecclesiologies have arisen out of concern over the marginalization of the Protestant church in North America.²⁰ Whereas some evangelicals have sought to address the decline of the American evangelical church by promoting new and better methods in “how to” books, Guder correctly understands that “the real issues in the current crisis of the Christian church are spiritual and theological.”²¹ Missional evangelicals charge that the mission of the Western church placed the church itself as its center and goal. Guder notes,

The subtle assumption of much Western mission . . . was that the church’s missionary mandate lay not only in forming the church of Jesus Christ, but in shaping the Christian communities that it birthed in the image of the church of western European culture.²²

In place of this ecclesiocentric view of mission, Guder and others propose a theocentric view of mission. Since God is a missionary God, the church is sent out on God’s mission.²³ Guder writes, “In the ecclesiocentric approach of Christendom . . . mission became only one of the many programs of the church,”²⁴ whereas in a missional church, missions “defines the church as God’s sent people.”²⁵ Guder is encouraged that “we have begun to see that the church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or goal of the

and Historical Claims of the Multi-Site Church Movement” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

²⁰Guder, *Missional Church*, 2; Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 9-10. These leaders of the missional movement, originating out of the Gospel and Our Culture Network, were largely influenced by the work of Leslie Newbigin. See Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); idem, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). For a general introduction to Newbigin’s thoughts on mission, see Paul Weston, comp., *Leslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian, A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

²¹Guder, *Missional Church*, 3.

²²Ibid., 4.

²³Ibid. See also Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 30-31. In this work, Van Gelder proposes a missional ecclesiology.

²⁴Guder, *Missional Church*, 6.

²⁵Ibid.

gospel, but rather its instrument and witness.”²⁶ Missional evangelicals are concerned that when the Western church marginalizes God’s mission by placing itself as the center and goal of mission, then mission becomes a mere function of the church. Missional evangelicals argue that mission should be the essence of the church,²⁷ the church’s very identity.²⁸

One may take issue with the broad generalizations I am making in pitting confessional and missional evangelicals against one another. I in no way wish to deny that there are manifestations of the church which maintain the church’s Protestant confessional history while also emphasizing the church’s missional mandate.²⁹ I am using these terms merely to represent two opposite approaches to ecclesiology in order to place the current discussions and disagreements within evangelical ecclesiology in a contemporary context.

Disparate Solutions

The current debates over the identity and mission of the church highlight disparate theological conclusions among evangelicals. According to Donald Bloesch, the debate in contemporary theology revolves more and more around the role of the church in the economy of salvation. It is increasingly recognized that the Reformation itself was propelled by deep divisions concerning the identity and mission of the church.³⁰

²⁶Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

²⁷Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 30-31.

²⁸Goheen argues that “the word ‘missional’ is understood in a different way when it is used to describe the nature of the church. At its best, ‘missional’ describes not a specific *activity* of the church but the very *essence and identity* of the church as it takes up its role in God’s story in the context of its culture and participates in God’s mission in the world. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 4.

²⁹For an academic ecclesiology that maintains the church’s confessional history while also emphasizing the church’s mission, see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*. For the best representation of such an approach aimed at pastors and church leaders, see Keller, *Center Church*. Note also the work of the Acts 29 church planting network. See Acts 29 Network, accessed January 17, 2009, <http://www.acts29network.org>.

³⁰Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove,

These deep divisions over the church's identity and mission have yet to be bridged. Noting that some scholars are moving away from the traditional understanding of the church as institution and sacrament, Bloesch states, "Scholars like Emil Brunner, Jürgen Moltmann, Hans von Campenhausen, Hans Küng, Leonardo Boff and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza contend that the original Pauline view was that of the church as a charismatic fellowship."³¹ In other words, in contradistinction to the institutional church, such scholars suggest that the church is a charismatic community without structures and without hierarchy. This is not a new debate;³² however, some contemporary evangelicals who are influenced by such arguments are popularizing these old proposals in an effort to discredit the very idea of an organized, structured church.³³

Other evangelicals, under the influence of Roman Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiologies, are moving more in the direction of what Bloesch calls the traditionalist or sacerdotal model of the church.³⁴ Both movements toward and away from traditionalist ecclesiologies are confronted with the question of authority and the church. Bloesch continues,

IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 27.

³¹Bloesch, *The Church*, 27-28. See also James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experiences of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 260-65.

³²At the turn of the twentieth century, Rudolf Sohm, in conversation with Edwin Hatch and Adolf von Harnack, suggested that the institutionalization of the church as seen in Roman Catholicism arose as a defense against the Gnosticism of the primitive age. See Rudolf Sohm, *Outlines of Church History*, trans. May Sinclair (Boston: Beacon, 1958), 31. Out of this conviction Sohm proposed his charismatic community, which was organized around the charismatic gifts, not offices or hierarchical structures. See Peter Haley, "Rudolph Sohm on Charisma," *The Journal of Religion* 60, no. 2 (1980): 185-97.

³³One such example is Frank Viola and George Barna, "The Pastor: Obstacle to Every-Member Functioning," in *Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Tyndale, 2008), 105-43.

³⁴Bloesch, *The Church*, 28.

Today there is a catholicizing movement in Protestantism that seeks to recover the normative role of church tradition in the shaping of theological authority. Magazines like *Pro Ecclesia*, *Touchstone*, *The Evangelical Catholic* and *Lutheran Forum* are intent on uniting scriptural authority with that of the ‘great tradition’ of the undivided church.³⁵

This catholicizing tendency is evident in the recent sentiments to return to a “mere Christianity” that is rooted in the great Christian tradition and upon which a new ecumenism may flourish.³⁶ Bloesch is correct to raise the question “whether the scripture principle of evangelical Protestantism is being abandoned for the authority of sacred tradition.”³⁷ As for the relationship between adopting sacred tradition as a theological minimum and ecclesiology, one wonders if this quest for a “mere Christianity” will require a “mere ecclesiology.”³⁸

Concerning the mission of the church, Bloesch observes, “With the rise of new schools of theology it is not surprising that the mission of the church is being drastically reinterpreted.”³⁹ He suggests, “Whereas liberation and feminist theologies tend to politicize the church’s mission, the New Age spiritualizes or privatizes this mission.”⁴⁰ As to evangelicals’ concern over how the church is to engage in mission, Tim Keller suggests that “the relationship of Christians to culture is *the* current crisis point for the church.”⁴¹ This debate over contextualization centers around how the church is supposed

³⁵Bloesch, *The Church*, 30.

³⁶D. H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); idem, *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

³⁷Bloesch, *The Church*, 30.

³⁸Belcher, *Deep Church*, 51-68. In arguing for a “mere Christianity” rooted in the great tradition, Belcher admits that in their ecclesiology “we have a low bar for membership. We don’t require a member to subscribe to anything that is outside the bounds of Nicene Christianity and other evangelical churches” (67). Note also Vanhoozer, “Evangelicalism and the Church,” 40-99.

³⁹Bloesch, *The Church*, 32.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 34.

⁴¹Tim Keller, “Being the Church in Our Culture” (lecture given at Reform & Resurgence Conference, May 2006), emphasis original, accessed online July 16, 2009, <http://www.journeyon.net/>

to communicate the gospel to and relate with contemporary culture.⁴² Rienhold Niehbur established the categories of Christian cultural engagement,⁴³ while D. A. Carson recently reevaluated Niehbur's proposal in an attempt to help the church navigate through the current cultural confusion.⁴⁴ While initially the majority of the conversation took place in conferences and on the internet,⁴⁵ the major proposals regarding the church's relationship to culture are now in book form.⁴⁶

In some cases, these ecclesiological disagreements expose what Melvin Tinker suggests is a "failure to distinguish between AD from BC, . . . Instead, what tends to happen is that practices and models are lifted straight from the Old Testament and applied with one or two adjustments to the church today."⁴⁷ This failure to appreciate and account for both the continuities and discontinuities between the testaments raises further issues,

media/being-the-church-in-our-culture.pdf. For an extended argument on contextualization, see Keller, *Center Church*, 89-134.

⁴²Keller, *Center Church*, 89-134.

⁴³H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).

⁴⁴D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁴⁵To be sure, the conversations continue online. Though they are too many to cite, one helpful example is the ongoing exchange within the Reformed community regarding the Two Kingdoms view versus the Kuyperian Neo-Calvinist view. See Kevin DeYoung, "Two Kingdom Theology and Neo-Kuyperians," *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), August 14, 2009, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2009/08/14/two-kingdom-theology-and-neo-kuyperians>; Staff, "A Summary of a Discussion on Transformationalism: Trueman, Evans, DeYoung, and Hart," *The Aquila Report* (blog), September 29, 2013, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://theaquilareport.com/a-summary-of-a-discussion-on-transformationalism-trueman-evans-deyoung-and-hart>.

⁴⁶See for example, Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008). Cf. n16 in this chapter for additional literature. The major debate regarding Christian engagement with culture is occurring between those who hold to a Two Kingdom View and Kuyperian Neo-Calvinists. For the Two Kingdoms view, see David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). For an introduction to the Kuyperian Neo-Calvinist view, see Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴⁷Tinker, "Toward an Evangelical View of the Church," 230. Such is the case, for example, with Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, in which they assert that virtually everything evangelical churches do today is rooted in paganism, therefore, a-biblical: neither biblical, nor unbiblical.

such as the relationships between the covenants, between the law and the gospel, and between the church and Israel.⁴⁸

These various disagreements within ecclesiology serve to highlight the much deeper issues of the identity, nature, and mission of the church. Does one define the church by what it does (functionally),⁴⁹ by its purpose or goal (teleologically),⁵⁰ or by what it is, its essence (ontologically)?⁵¹ The disparity over the nature of the church among evangelicals is evident even in the manner in which the question is posed. Wayne Grudem ponders, “What makes a church a church? What is necessary to have a church? Might a group of people who claim to be Christians be so unlike what a church should be that they should no longer be called a church?”⁵² Following a bio-genetic motif, Howard Snyder asks, “What is the church’s DNA? Can it be decoded? Can it help us better understand what the church is essentially—how it lives, grows, reproduces, and fulfills

⁴⁸For such issues, see John S. Feinberg, ed., *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988).

⁴⁹Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 20-21, notes that “this literature usually emphasizes the importance of rediscovering the biblical ministry of the church and using these insights to make the ministry of the church more relevant to today’s world” (20). Within the category of functional approaches, Van Gelder lists seeker-sensitive church, Purpose-Driven church; small group church, user-friendly church, seven-day-a-week church, and church for the twenty-first century (21). Such literature focuses on the church’s practices: what it does. See n16 in this chapter for a sampling of such literature.

⁵⁰Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 51. Allison briefly explains Jonathan R. Wilson’s teleological approach in *Why Worship Matters: Worship, Ministry, and Mission in Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

⁵¹Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006); Colin E. Gunton, “The Community: Trinity and the Being of the Church,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997); Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, takes this ontological approach.

⁵²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 864.

God's purposes?"⁵³ Edmund Clowney simply asks, "How may we describe the church?"⁵⁴ More comprehensively, Thomas Oden wonders,

Are there some signs (*sēmeion*, *signa*, *criteria*) or marks (*stigma*), or characteristics (*proprietates*), or notes (*notae*) or predicates that signal clearly where the *ekklēsia* is to be found? Are certain attributes of communities able to be tested to distinguish between authentic and counterfeit claims, between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, truth and falsity? If not, we are left with no way to identify the *ekklēsia* even if it should be there.⁵⁵

The impetus behind these questions is whether or not there are essential attributes or features of the church that allow for distinction between a true and false church.⁵⁶

Historically, the church has been identified as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."⁵⁷ Throughout the church's history, however, certain conflicts have forced particular theologians to qualify this creedal statement, leading to divergent interpretations of the attributes and forcing evangelicals to ask whether or not these so called essential attributes present an adequate understanding of the church for today.⁵⁸ This divergence is evident in the Reformers themselves, for Calvin, in describing the nature of the church in the *Institutes*, follows, not the Nicene Creed, but the Apostles' Creed.⁵⁹ Hence, he

⁵³Howard A. Snyder and Daniel V. Runyon, *Decoding the Church: Mapping the DNA of Christ's Body* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 17.

⁵⁴Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 71.

⁵⁵Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1987), 3:298.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷The oneness, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity are known as the attributes of the church. For a discussion of the attributes and marks of the church, see G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 11-17. Berkouwer shares the common theological agreement that "there is a common attachment everywhere to the description of the Church in the Nicene Creed: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" (14).

⁵⁸See especially Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 77-103. Also, Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 104.

⁵⁹Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.1.2-3.

directly addresses the attributes of the church's holiness and catholicity, while assuming the church's oneness.⁶⁰ Further, from the Apostles' Creed, Calvin emphasizes the importance of the "communion of the saints," saying, "this article of the Creed also applies to some extent to the outward church, in that each of us should keep in brotherly agreement with all God's children, should yield to the church the authority it deserves, in short, should act as one flock."⁶¹ In fact, Calvin regrets that this clause "is generally omitted by the ancients."⁶²

Although Martin Bucer, Calvin's mentor, considered the faithful exercise of church discipline as an essential mark of the church, Calvin did not.⁶³ Nevertheless, later Reformers did add the faithful exercise of church discipline as a third essential mark.⁶⁴ Thus, even the Reformation evidences various interpretations of the nature of the church (i.e., Nicene Creed vs. Apostles' Creed), and there seemed to be no consensus on the number of identifying marks. Luther proposed seven,⁶⁵ Calvin two,⁶⁶ and later Reformers three.⁶⁷ Regardless, Berkouwer is surely correct when stating, "In spite of such differences,

⁶⁰Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.1.1-4.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 4.1.3.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Timothy George does point out that "in the first edition of the *Institutes* Calvin did include 'example of life' among the 'certain sure marks.'" Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman, 1988), 235n125.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁵Martin Luther, "On the Councils and the Church, Part III," in *Martin Luther's Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 539-75. Luther's seven marks are (1) the "word preached, believed, professed, and lived," (2) baptism, (3) Lord's supper, (4) discipline (i.e. "office of the keys exercised publicly"), (5) church offices/officers, (6) worship, (7) persecution.

⁶⁶Much tradition follows Calvin on the two marks. For example, see *The Augsburg Confession* (1530), article V; *The Genevan Confession* (1536), article XVIII; *The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (1563), article XIX.

⁶⁷*The Belgic Confession* (1561), article XXVII.

the motive underlying the *notae* is perfectly clear. The decisive point is this: the Church is and must remain subject to the authority of Christ, to the voice of her Lord. And in this subjection she is tested by Him.”⁶⁸

Thomas Oden views the Nicene attributes and the Reformation marks as complementary and concludes, “That *ekklēsia* in which the Word is rightly preached and sacraments rightly administered and discipline rightly ordered will be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.”⁶⁹ Wayne Grudem suggests that the way to distinguish between a true and false church is by the two Reformation marks.⁷⁰ Robert Reymond wishes to maintain the four Nicene attributes as essential to the identity of the church,⁷¹ while also maintaining the two Reformation marks plus church discipline.⁷² Mark Dever accepts the traditional Reformation marks as distinguishing between the true and false church,⁷³ but proposes nine marks of a healthy church.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Howard Snyder questions the sufficiency and clarity of the Nicene attributes, and in the most recent evangelical ecclesiology, Gregg Allison avoids them altogether.⁷⁵ Finally, Donald Bloesch, after highlighting twelve marks compiled from various church traditions, offers his own thoughts regarding

⁶⁸Berkouwer, *The Church*, 15.

⁶⁹Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 299, emphasis original.

⁷⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 864-66.

⁷¹Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 839n4.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 849-60.

⁷³Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 10.

⁷⁴*Ibid.* Dever’s marks are (1) expository preaching; (2) biblical theology; (3) the gospel; (4) a biblical understanding of conversion; (5) a biblical understanding of evangelism; (6) a biblical understanding of church membership; (7) biblical church discipline; (8) concern for discipleship; and (9) biblical church leadership.

⁷⁵Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 29. Instead of the classic attributes of the church, Allison proposes the local churches as “being doxological, logocentric, pneumadynamic, covenantal, confessional, missional, and spatio-temporal/eschatological.”

the identity of the church: “In my opinion the marks that define the essence of the church include the classical marks of oneness, catholicity, apostolicity and holiness together with the preaching and hearing of the Word, the fellowship of love and the practice of prayer.”⁷⁶

It is evident that as the twenty-first century dawns, evangelicals are still uncertain how to define the church and what belongs to its essence and what simply contributes to its wellbeing. Yet, in spite of this uncertainty, evangelicals share a common concern to uphold the Word of God as the foundational mark of the church out of which all other marks flow.⁷⁷

Thesis

At the heart of a quest for a biblical ecclesiology lies a motivation to safeguard the church’s identity and remain faithful to its mission in contemporary culture. If the church forfeits its biblical identity, as confessional evangelicals warn, its mission is sure to fail.⁷⁸ Yet, if the church neglects its biblical mission, as missional evangelicals warn, it has already forfeited its identity. An ecclesiology rooted in Scripture will be faithful both to the church’s biblical identity (what the church is as defined by Scripture) and its missional mandate (what the church does in the contemporary culture it exists).⁷⁹ However, evangelicals must say more than ecclesiology must be based on the biblical data. They must also evaluate their particular theological methods, for if one remains

⁷⁶Bloesch, *The Church*, 108. Though seeing the sacraments as important, Bloesch is unwilling to see them as being part of the essence of the church.

⁷⁷Clowney, *The Church*, 73. For recent challenges to the evangelical doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture in particular and the evangelical understanding of biblical authority in general, see G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁷⁸Seel, *Evangelical Forfeit*, 11.

⁷⁹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

unaware of personal methodological assumptions, those assumptions will likely drive their theological conclusions.⁸⁰

It is generally agreed that theological construction should involve at least four elements: interpretation of the pertinent biblical data (exegetical theology), consideration of the unfolding historical context within redemptive history of the key themes and ideas that emerge from exegesis (biblical theology), investigation of how the particular biblical data and theological themes emerging from that data have been interpreted by the church throughout its history (historical theology), and synthesis of these materials into a coherent contemporary doctrine (systematic theology).⁸¹ It is not within the scope of this work to construct an ecclesiology; I only seek to lay the groundwork for such a task by providing a prolegomenal that will help to clarify the church's identity and mission from an evangelical perspective. In light of the fact that, of the four elements of theological construction stated, biblical theology has been the most neglected,⁸² I will emphasize the necessity of biblical theology as an intermediate hermeneutical step before the construction of a doctrine of the church.⁸³ In particular, I argue and defend the thesis that in a day of ecclesiological confusion among evangelicals over who belongs to the church and what the mission of the church is, the biblical concept of the image of God, interpreted in its

⁸⁰Paul R. House, "Biblical Theology and the Wholeness of Scripture: Steps toward a Program for the Future," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 268; William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 87.

⁸¹Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 382-90. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 263-85.

⁸²Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, in *The Goldsworthy Trilogy: Three Classic Books in One Volume* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 44; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 32.

⁸³Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 46-49; D. A. Carson, "Systematic and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond. Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 2000), 91, 94.

textual, redemptive-historical, and canonical contexts, reveal a common pattern for the people of God that serves as an interpretive key to understanding the identity, nature, and mission of the church.⁸⁴ The pattern of the people of God revealed in such a study provides a foundation upon which to construct an ecclesiology that is biblically rooted, historically informed, and culturally applicable.

Background

My personal interest in ecclesiology has grown out of a particular love for the local church. Since the age of nineteen, I have served the local church in some capacity and have grown to love God's people. More importantly, however, I have come to understand that the church plays a central role in God's eternal plan (Eph 3:9-12). Through the church, God displays his glory to the cosmic powers by creating one people from the multiplicity of ethnicities in the world and gathering them under Christ to the place of his presence in the new heavens and earth, where God and people will eternally dwell together under God's rule and care, for his glory and their joy.

In light of the many critiques and questions regarding the evangelical church, it is evident that a clearer understanding of the church is sorely needed. Many authors who share a love for the church and see fundamental problems with the contemporary church in America have sought to clarify the identity and mission of the church.⁸⁵ Though diverse

⁸⁴Sidney Greidanus classifies this particular approach of tracing themes throughout Scripture as longitudinal. Greidanus proposes, "The Bible discloses the gradual development of themes because God progressively reveals more of himself and his will as he works out his redemptive plan in history." Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 222. He further suggests that "today it is especially the discipline of biblical theology that helps us trace longitudinal themes from the Old Testament to the New" (267).

⁸⁵Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008); Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007); Aubrey Malphurs, *A New Kind of Church: Understanding Models of Ministry for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Thomas C. Oden, *Turning around the Mainline: How Renewal Movements Are Changing the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006); Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: B & H, 2006); Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: B & H, 2006); Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your*

in their proposals, these authors desire to reclaim the central role of the church in contemporary culture. I am simply one voice along with many others who seeks to see God glorified through the church.

Methodology

Though much work has been done and is being done at the popular level to address many of the issues related to the church, these proposals tend to focus on praxis, i.e., how to do church.⁸⁶ More work also continues to be done to address issues of ecclesiology at the academic level.⁸⁷ Yet, as important as these contributions are, some of the academic work on ecclesiology tends toward general introductions and either utilizes presupposed systematic theological categories⁸⁸ or organize around a particular theme or issues within ecclesiology.⁸⁹ Additionally, with the exception of Gregg Allison's

Ministry on the Gospel (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005); Udo W. Middelmann, *The Market Driven Church: The Worldly Influence of Modern Culture on the Church in America* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); Wilson, *Future Church*; Brian D. McLaren and Tony Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point: How the Culture-Controlled Church Neutered the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Leonard Sweet, ed., *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Ward, *Liquid Church*; Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001); Randy Pope, *The Prevailing Church: An Alternative Approach to Ministry* (Chicago: Moody, 2002); Bob Russell and Rusty Russell, *When God Builds a Church: 10 Principles for Growing a Dynamic Church, The Remarkable Story of Southeast Christian Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard, 2000); Lynne Hybels and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growing without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

⁸⁶Simply note all the books at any Christian bookstore with the name, *The _____ Church*, some of which have already been noted in n85.

⁸⁷Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008); Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009). Most recently, Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*; Easley and Morgan, *The Community of Jesus*.

⁸⁸Clowney, *The Church*; Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Bloesch, *The Church*; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005); Gabriel Fackre, *The Church: Signs of the Spirit and Signs of the Times, The Christian Story-A Pastoral Systematics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁸⁹Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, The New Testament Library

Sojourners and Strangers, few works, if any, on ecclesiology address issues of prolegomena in the detail required for theological construction.⁹⁰

In order to construct a biblical ecclesiology, evangelicals must begin with exegetical theology and understand those exegetical results within the storyline of the entire canon before constructing an ecclesiology.⁹¹ To propose the reading of particular texts within the context of the canonical storyline is not new. Stephen Dempster suggests,

This literary/theological approach has much promise, since, if it is the case that the Hebrew canon is also a Text with a definite beginning, middle, ending and plot, then the task of discovering a fundamental theme becomes not an exercise in futility but an imperative of responsible hermeneutics.⁹²

(1960, repr., Louisville: Westminster, 2004); Stackhouse, *Evangelical Ecclesiology*; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 17 (Leicester, England: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Husbands and Treier, *The Community of the Word*. One particular area that has received a large amount of attention within ecclesiology is polity; see Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995); Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman, eds., *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity* (Nashville: B & H, 2004); Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government*, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). For the issue of baptism, see Gregg Strawbridge, ed., *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003); Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, eds., *Believers Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B & H, 2006); John H. Armstrong, ed., *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

⁹⁰Allison admits that “most ecclesiology books—e.g., James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline, and Government of the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868); D. Douglas Bannerman, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church Historically and Exegetically Considered* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1887); John L. Dagg, *Manual of Theology, Second Part: A Treatise on Church Order* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1859); Edmund Clowney, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995); Earl D. Radmacher, *The Nature of the Church* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1996); David L. Smith, *All God's People: A Theology of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint/Victor, 1996)—do not offer any prolegomena for their ecclesiology.” Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 32-33n13.

⁹¹Methodologically, I utilize biblical theology as an intermediate or bridge discipline between exegesis and systematic construction. For biblical theology as a bridge discipline between exegesis and systematic construction, see Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 46-49.

⁹²Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 43. Dempster argues for reading the Old Testament in the canonical order of the Tanakh, which exposes two main themes in the biblical storyline: dominion (land) and dynasty (genealogy). I am not arguing that the Old Testament must be read in the order of the Tanakh, though I am not opposed to that. I am merely pointing out that numerous

In his proposal for theological method, Michael Horton seeks to do something similar. He claims that his contribution is an “attempt to integrate biblical theology and systematic theology on the basis of Scripture’s own intrasystematic categories of covenant and eschatology.”⁹³ However, regardless of what organizing themes Horton uses, though he seeks to wed biblical theology and systematic theology, his method is short on exegesis and biblical theology and long on systematic theology; for his covenant theme does not appear based so much in an intrasystematic theme in Scripture as much as the covenant theology of his particular ecclesiastical tradition.⁹⁴

I seek to lay the prolegomenal foundation that allows me to approach ecclesiology by focusing attention primarily on the biblical data, tracing the concept of image of God throughout both Old and New Testaments within the context of redemptive history. I admit that each interpreter comes to the biblical text with a prior understanding of the world and reality that has been shaped by experiences, culture, education and personal history.⁹⁵ Whether accurate or inaccurate, these assumptions or “preunderstandings” function as both a starting point and a filter for understanding and

scholars argue for the necessity of understanding the biblical storyline for responsible hermeneutics. For example, Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum argue that the literary structure of the canon is God establishing his rule on the earth through covenants with Adamic figures. See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). Likewise, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 16. Beale argues for a particular canonical storyline related to God establishing his new creational rule through an Adamic king for his glory. Neither Gentry and Wellum, nor Beale, argue for one central theme to all of Scripture; they are arguing for a particular canonical storyline which undergirds the biblical message and which serves to inform the interpretation of individual texts.

⁹³Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1.

⁹⁴For a critique of covenant theology in general and Horton’s covenant proposal in particular, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 56-80.

⁹⁵House, “Biblical Theology and the Wholeness of Scripture,” 268; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 87.

interpreting reality.⁹⁶ I am no different.⁹⁷ Methodologically, I begin with the evangelical assumption of biblical authority⁹⁸ and utilize a biblical-theological method as presented in Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum’s *Kingdom through Covenant*.⁹⁹ With these preunderstandings in mind, I argue that the theological concept of the image of God contains the structural pattern of the people of God which informs the church’s identity and mission. In the end, I aim to provide a ground from which an ecclesiology may be

⁹⁶Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 98-99. According to Anthony Thiselton, “Friedrich Schleiermacher was one of the first major thinkers to wrestle with this problem” —the problem of preunderstanding. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 103. David Clark also acknowledges Schleiermacher’s initial work and resulting influence in relation to preunderstanding. David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 104-5. For evangelical treatments of preunderstandings, see Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 103-14; and Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 98-110.

⁹⁷I grew up in Puerto Rico in a Hispanic home that was culturally Roman Catholic. After arriving in the United States in my pre-teen years, I became a devout Roman Catholic. At the age of 17, I left the Roman Catholic Church and embraced evangelical Christianity within the context of a Southern Baptist church. As a new Christian, I served under a Church of God in Christ chaplain in the United States Navy who was trained at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. Under his tutelage, I was introduced to and embraced, to some degree, Protestant Liberalism. However, in university I discarded Protestant Liberalism and became convinced of the evangelical view of Scripture. As I grew in my faith, I became attracted to covenant theology as expressed in Reformed Presbyterian churches but remained finally unconvinced of infant baptism. Since I do not identify with either dispensational nor covenant theology, I find the new proposal in *Kingdom through Covenant* of Gentry and Wellum of progressive covenantalism appealing and increasingly convincing.

⁹⁸Evangelicals see themselves following in historical continuity with those who have embraced biblical authority. See Alister E. McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 19, 21, 23; also, Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition*, 179.

⁹⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 21-126. Gentry and Wellum do not argue for covenant or kingdom as the central theme of the Bible. They claim, “The biblical covenants form the backbone of the metanarrative of Scripture, and apart from understanding each biblical covenant in its historical context and then in its relation to the fulfilment of all the covenants in Christ, we will ultimately misunderstand the overall message of the Bible” (21n2). Beale also suggests that he is not “positing a center or single topic as the key to OT theology but rather a storyline around which the major thematic strands of the OT narratives and writings revolve” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 61. Beale formulates the storyline of the Old Testament: “The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory” (62).

constructed that is faithful to Scripture, concerned to maintain its historical mooring to the church of the ages, and be able to speak to contemporary culture.

Chapter Summaries

In many ways chapter 2 is the heart of my argument. Here I argue that the biblical concept of the image of God, interpreted in its textual, redemptive-historical, and canonical contexts, reveals a common pattern for the people of God that serves as an interpretive key to understanding the identity or nature and mission of the people of God. In particular, I argue that the creation of man as God's image reveals God's purpose to create (1) a people with whom he will relate in a father/son relationship (sonship) under his rule and care (covenant), (2) a people who will dwell in his presence to serve him as priests (priesthood) and (3) a people who will represent his sovereign rule on earth (kingship) by (3a) exercising dominion over creation and extending the borders of the garden sanctuary and (3b) reproducing the divine image through godly offspring until the whole earth is filled with the glory of God (mission). In other words, the concept of the image of God communicates sonship, kingship, and priesthood within a covenant relationship in which God's people serve as God's instrument by which he will establish his kingdom on the earth.

In chapter 3, I show that this pattern of God's people established in the garden sanctuary (sonship, covenant, priesthood, kingship, and mission) is transferred to Abraham (Gen 12, 15, 17, 22), an Adamic figure through whom God creates a new people, and Israel (Exod 19:4-6), the newly created people of God through Abraham, who, as a corporate Adamic figure, was to serve as a royal priesthood in order to model the kingdom of God to the surrounding nations. The Adamic pattern of the people of God culminates in one individual, namely David, the typical royal priest. Unfortunately, like the first Adam, Israel's failure to keep covenant under the leadership of the Davidic kings brought judgment and ultimately exile from the sacred place in which God had promised to dwell with his people.

Judgment is not the final word, however. So in chapter 4, I note that Israel's failure to keep covenant does not negate God's original purpose; instead, the biblical storyline looks forward to a time when God will reestablish these very purposes for his people in a new covenant through a faithful image bearer. Yet, before proceeding to the New Testament data, I utilize Isaiah 54-56 as a paradigmatic new covenant text in order to identify the entailments of the new covenant. Other new covenant texts in Jeremiah and Ezekiel serve to round out the discussion.

Having argued in chapters 2 through 4 that the biblical concept of the image of God reveals the pattern of the people of God that discloses God's original intention to establish and display his rule on the earth through an Adamic king who would populate the earth with the divine image, and having further shown that the ensuing Adamic figures (i.e., Noah, Israel) failed to fulfill God's original intention, in chapter 5 I show that Jesus' mission as the Son of God from David's line to restore Israel on the basis of a new covenant reveals that Jesus is the true and faithful image of God who inaugurates the kingdom of God on the earth and begins populating it with the divine image by gathering a people through the gospel.

Historically, the new covenant community beginning at Pentecost has been designated as "the church." In chapter 6 I argue that the New Testament applies the language of Israel (Exod 19:4-6) to the church (1 Pet 2:9) because it is the new Israel constituted on the basis of the promised new covenant, created to serve as a corporate Adam for the purpose of mission. I show that as a corporate Adam, the church is called to image God on the earth and fulfill the mission of eschatological ingathering until the return of Christ. Since I establish from Exodus 19:4-6 that Israel is a corporate image of God, and since there is a direct allusion of Exodus 19:4-6 in 1 Peter 2:9, I establish the pattern of the new covenant people of God as a new covenant corporate Adam from that text and explore other pertinent New Testament texts as appropriate.

After laying a biblical foundation in chapters 2 through 6, in chapter 7 I offer theological conclusions from the biblical data to address the questions related to the identity, nature, and mission of the church. First, I propose a three-part working definition of the church, beginning with (1) the ontological ground from which (2) the functional roles flow toward (3) God's intended goal. I will then interact with various definitions of the church proposed by theologians of varying ecclesiastical traditions. Third, because the definition of mission has broadened over the last decades, I consider four differing definitions of mission and propose my own. Finally, I provide suggestions for further work. My ultimate goal in this work is to show that the pattern of the people of God as revealed in the biblical concept of the image of God helps clarify the identity, nature, and mission of the people of God. From a clear understanding of the identity, nature and mission of the people of God, an ecclesiology may be constructed that is biblically rooted, historically informed, and culturally applicable.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMAGE OF GOD: THE PATTERN OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

As seen in the previous chapter, there is much confusion among evangelicals over the identity and mission of the church. In light of such confusion I argue that the biblical concept of the image of God, interpreted in its textual, redemptive-historical, and canonical contexts, reveals a common pattern for the people of God that serves as an interpretive key to understanding the identity, nature, and mission of the people of God as structured within a covenant relationship. Gregg Allison suggests, “The Adamic covenant or covenant with creation establishes the structured relationship between God and his human creatures in the created order.”¹ Therefore, I begin with the creation of mankind in Genesis 1 and 2.

In this chapter I argue that the creation of Adam as God’s image reveals God’s purpose to create a people with whom he would relate in a father/son relationship (sonship) under his rule and care (covenant), in order to serve in his presence as priests (priesthood) and represent his sovereign rule on the earth by exercising dominion over the creation (kingship), extending the borders of the sacred garden space, and reproducing the divine image through godly offspring until the whole earth would be filled with the glory of God (mission). I propose that this pattern, established in the account of the creation of man as God’s image, will begin to illumine understanding of the nature and mission of the people of God throughout the Old and New Testaments.² As this pattern is traced throughout the

¹Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 69.

²I am not arguing that the biblical concept of the image of God is the central theme of

Bible, it will serve as an aid to unlocking a fruitful path toward the construction of an ecclesiology that is biblically rooted, historically informed, and culturally applicable.

The Existential Question of Purpose

The existential question of purpose is not one of mere incidental interest. The answer not only provides direction as to which personal pursuits are of ultimate importance; for ecclesiological purposes it provides direction as to the reason for which God created a people. Since the adoption of “The Larger Catechism” of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* in 1648,³ Protestant Christians in the English-speaking world have confessed that “man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.”⁴ The biblical texts which reveal God’s chief end is to glorify himself confirm that all creatures exist for the glory of God.⁵ That being the case, one is left to wonder with the Psalmist, “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Ps 8:4). In this poetic recitation of Genesis 1 and 2, the psalmist provides a clue: mankind is the crown of God’s creation (Ps 8:5-8).⁶

Scripture. My proposal is much more modest. Neither am I proposing that the biblical concept of the image of God provides the structural storyline of Scripture, though I would argue that it highlights an aspect of the literary structure for which Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum argue: God establishing his kingdom through a human Adamic king through covenant relationships. See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). Beale similarly argues for a storyline that provides the literary structure of the Bible out of which the major themes flow, “of which the new-creational kingdom and its expansion are the central element.” G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 23. While Beale’s proposal for a storyline is similar in some ways with Gentry and Wellum’s, I assume the latter’s proposed literary structure of kingdom through covenant in this dissertation.

³*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 127-29.

⁴Westminster Larger Catechism, “Question 1,” in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 129.

⁵John Piper makes the case that God pursues his own glory and lists several passages to that effect in “The Supremacy of God in Missions through Worship,” in John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 16-22.

⁶Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, The Heritage of Biblical Israel, vol. 1 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966), 14. Peter Gentry argues that along with the evidence in Ps 8, “A large number of literary techniques [particularly in Gen 1:1-2:3] point to the significance of the creation of humans.” Peter J. Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image,” *The Southern*

Adam: The Image of God

What distinguishes man as unique from other creatures is his being created as God's image.⁷ Though the language of man as the image of God is scarce in the Old Testament (only Gen 1:26; 5:2; 9:6),⁸ D. J. A. Clines is justified when he declares, "We become aware, in reading these early chapters of Genesis and in studying the history of the interpretation of these passages, that the importance of the doctrine is out of all proportion to the laconic treatment it receives in the Old Testament."⁹ Just what it means that man is God's image has long been debated.¹⁰ Nevertheless, recent scholarship has begun to shed light on the fact that when the biblical terms "image" (מִצַּד) and "likeness" (דְּמוּת) are understood in both their textual and ancient Near Eastern historical contexts,

Baptist Journal of Theology 12, no. 1 (2008): 23. In all, Gentry lists ten such literary evidences for man as the crown of God's creation. Gentry, "Kingdom through Covenant," 22-23. For a fuller explanation, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 181-84.

⁷Theodorus C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 144. For a comprehensive survey of the interpretation of the *imago dei* in Old Testament research from 1882-1982, see Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research*, Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series 26 (Lund, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988). Jónsson admits that "the literature on this topic is nearly infinite, irrespective of the discipline, whether it be systematics, the history of ideas or exegesis. There is currently no indication that this interest has waned" (1). Hence, it is not within the scope of this dissertation to revisit the history of interpretation of the *imago dei* in Genesis 1:26-28. I only seek to establish the interpretation of the *imago dei* from recent scholarship as a foundational pattern for the people of God in the Old Testament, and later in the New.

⁸Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 2.

⁹D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53.

¹⁰Jónsson, *Image of God*, 219. After his survey of the history of interpretation of the *imago dei* in the history of Old Testament interpretation, Jónsson concludes, "The functional interpretation which appeared only very rarely during the period 1882-1982 is now the predominant view." For other historical surveys of the interpretation of the *imago dei*, see Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 33-65; and Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 10-14. For a theological survey of the interpretation of the *imago dei*, see G. C. Berkouwer, "The Meaning of the Image," in *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962). For a survey of the progression of the interpretation and understanding of the image of God in man throughout history, see Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine: A Companion to Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 321-41. A concise survey of the various views related to the *imago dei* is found in Gentry, "Kingdom through Covenant," 23-24. The classic study on the image of God, which includes a survey of the differing views, is Clines, "The Image of God in Man," 53-103. Clines provides a thorough history of interpretation of the divine image but ultimately concludes, "It appears that scholarship has reached something of an impasse over the problem of the image, in that different starting points, all of which seem to be legitimate, lead to different conclusions" (61).

they point to the fact that man was created as God’s son to represent God’s sovereign rule over creation as king and to serve in God’s presence as priest.¹¹

The Language of Image and Likeness

In Genesis 1:26, God declares, “Let us make man ‘as’ (כְּ, *bē*) our image, ‘according to’ (כַּד, *kē*) our likeness.”¹² In other words, as Scott Hafemann suggests, “Mankind does not *possess* the image of God. Mankind *is* the image of God. Hence, the

¹¹Dan G. McCartney, “*Ecce Homo: The Coming of The Kingdom as The Restoration of Human Viceregency*,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 3; see also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 181-216; David Stephen Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ’s Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to Extent of the Atonement” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 56-65; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 81-93; Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008).

¹²My translation. So also Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 80; J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 45; Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 56. Traditionally in this context, the preposition *bē* (כְּ) has been translated “in.” See Francis Brown et al., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), 88. The preposition *kē* (כַּד) has been translated “according to” or “after.” Brown, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 454. For a thorough study of the use of the prepositions כַּד and כְּ as it relates to Gen 1:26, see W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Likeness: Humanity, Divinity and Monotheism*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 15, ed. B. Halpern et al. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 95-115. For a recent explanation of the uses of *bē* and *kē* in Gen 1:26, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 197-200. Additionally, Gentry suggests that Randall Garr’s “careful and thorough linguistic analysis reveals that the preposition *bē* = ‘in’ emphasises (*sic*) proximity while the preposition *kē* = ‘as’ or ‘according to’ emphasises (*sic*) something similar, yet distinct and separate” (198-99). “Thus,” Gentry concludes, “*bē* emphasises (*sic*) a way in which humans are closely like God, *kē* a way in which humans are similar, but distinct” (199). However, there remain questions as to the precise manner in which these two prepositions in Gen 1:26 are being used. Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 47-48, acknowledges that “apart from the quite inconclusive debate about the precise nuances of the prepositions themselves (since each preposition can also mean simply ‘as’), there is simply no agreement on the significance of this variation.” Yet, Middleton himself states that כַּדִּמְיוֹנֵנוּ; *sē-lēm* “describes humans created as the ‘image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27 [twice]; 9:6)” (45). While Middleton is of the opinion that “neither a narrowly linguistic nor a syntactical approach to Genesis 1:26-28 yields conclusive results,” he understands that “such focused study is a necessary foundation for broader literary and intertextual approaches to the text” (44). Consequently, further exegesis must support the fact that mankind is not merely created “in” God’s image but “as” God’s image; man is the image of God. Cf. Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness*, 95-115.

term *image of God* describes the essence of who we have been created to be.”¹³

However, just what does it mean that man is God’s image?¹⁴

The terms “image” (צל; *sē-lēm*) and “likeness” (דמיון; *dēmūt*) are first found in Genesis 1:26-27, where the account of the creation of man is set in contradistinction to the prior creation of the animals.¹⁵ The use of “image” (צל) in the Bible is rare, making it difficult to interpret,¹⁶ but where it is used it frequently refers to idols: that is, to

¹³Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith: Understanding the Heart of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 25. So also, Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2004), 119, quoted in Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, 421; Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 45; Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 80. As concerns the prepositions, Gordon Wenham acknowledges they are “not exact synonyms,” but based on the different pairing of the prepositions in Genesis 5:3, suggests that the prepositions are interchangeable. See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 28-29. Cf. Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 47-48.

¹⁴Questions also remain as to the plural use of “us” in Gen 1:26. That it is God speaking is not in question. The question relates as to who is included in the plural “us.” The problem of the plural use of “us” does not directly affect my argument related to man as the divine image. For a representation of the various possible answers to the question of the plural use of “us,” see Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 62-69; and Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 203-8. Traditionally, the plural “us” has been interpreted as referring to plurality within the Godhead. So, Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 69; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville: Broadman, 1996), 162-63; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 61-62. Recently, scholarship has embraced the idea that the plural “us” refers to a heavenly court or assembly to whom God is speaking. So John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 129; Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 55-60; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 204-8; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 57.

¹⁵Derek Kidner suggests, “*Vis-a-vis* the animals man is set apart by his office . . . and still more by his nature (2:20); but his crowning glory is his relation to God.” Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 50. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 55, notes that “the creation of man is introduced more impressively than any preceding work by the announcement of a divine resolution: ‘Let us make man.’” Cf. John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 30. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 14, also notes that “man, in fact, is the pinnacle of creation and the entire story has a human-centered orientation.”

¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29. So also Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 15. According to Brown, Driver and Briggs, “image” (צל) comes from a root which means “to cut off.” In this semantic range (צל) can refer to an image which has been cut or carved out, as were idols and other images (1 Sam 6:5). Brown, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 853. Cf. Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 44, 45. Middleton suggests that the various scholarly word studies “produce very little by way of results” (44) and that “word studies yield notoriously inconclusive results” (45).

physical representations of a deity.¹⁷ Gentry succinctly defines the term: “‘image’ (מַצֵּלֶמֶט) frequently refers to an object in the real world that can have size, shape, colour (*sic*), material composition, and value.”¹⁸ That the image of God in man may somehow be physical makes some Christian theologians uncomfortable.¹⁹ So, for example, Clines wonders whether or not “image” (מַצֵּלֶמֶט) may be used metaphorically “as referring to some quality or characteristic of the divine nature on the pattern of which man is made?”²⁰ Nevertheless, though “image” is used metaphorically at times in the Old Testament, Clines is forced to admit that “the linguistic evidence would suggest that it is most unlikely that מַצֵּלֶמֶט means anything here [Gen 1:26] but a form, figure, object, whether three- or two-dimensional.”²¹ Yet, contrary to the linguistic evidence, Clines jettisons the most logical linguistic conclusion. Instead, he concludes, “What is at first sight the most obvious meaning of מַצֵּלֶמֶט אֱלֹהִים, ‘according to God’s image,’ is very probably not the correct meaning, and that we should look in another direction for the clue to its significance.”²² Contrary to Clines, I propose that there is no compelling exegetical reason to reject the

¹⁷Num 33:52; Ezek 7:20; 16:17; 2 Kgs 11:17; 2 Chr 23:17; Dan 2:31, 32, 34, 35; 3:1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18; Amos 5:26. As to the uses of מַצֵּלֶמֶט in the Old Testament, Wenham suggests that “of the 17 occurrences, 10 refer to various types of physical image, e.g., models of tumors (1 Sam 6:5); pictures of men (Ezek 16:17; or idols (Num 33:52); and two passages in the Psalms liken man’s existence to an image or shadow (Pss 39:7; 73:20). The other five occurrences are in Gen 1:26, 27; 5:3; 9:6.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29.

¹⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192; cf. Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 25. Von Rad acknowledges that מַצֵּלֶמֶט “means predominantly an actual plastic work, a duplicate, sometimes an idol (1 Sam 6.5; Num 33.52; II Kings 11.18; a painting, Ezek 23.14).” Von Rad, *Genesis*, 56-57.

¹⁹House, *Old Testament Theology*, 61. However, see Von Rad, *Genesis*, 58, who argues for a wholistic view of the *imago dei*, warning that “one will do well to split the physical from the spiritual as little as possible: the whole man is created in God’s image.” Nevertheless, Von Rad’s emphasis is on the functional view of the image as exercising dominion over creation. See Von Rad, *Genesis*, 59-60; cf. Jónsson, *Image of God*, 95-96.

²⁰Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 73.

²¹*Ibid.*, 75.

²²*Ibid.*

obvious interpretation of “image” as a physical representation or idol, except for personal theological presuppositions.²³ I argue that man, as God’s image, is a physical representation of God on the earth. This conclusion is consistent with the predominant interpretation of “image” as idol.

On the other hand, defining “likeness” (דְּמוּת) does not bear the same difficulties;²⁴ it refers to bearing some sort of resemblance or similarity.²⁵ Though some scholars argue that the terms “image” and “likeness” are used interchangeably,²⁶ a case can be made that each word signifies a distinct nuance that communicates man’s created purpose and establishes the pattern of God’s people.²⁷ To understand such distinctions, interpreters need to consider “image” and “likeness” in their ancient Near Eastern context.²⁸

²³Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 24, laments theologians’ dismissal of image as “body.” Von Rad, *Genesis*, 56, also acknowledges that the predominant interpretation of image is a physical representation.

²⁴A. H. Konkel, “Pattern . . . ,” “*demuth*,” in *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:969. Also, Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192.

²⁵Konkel, “Pattern . . . ,” “*demuth*,” 967. Konkel states, “The vb. *dmh* in the q. is found 13x, always in the sense of observing a likeness; the pi. has the meaning compare in four of its occurrences.” Wenham agrees, saying, “‘Likeness,’ [*demuth*], on the contrary, is transparent in meaning. It has an ending typical of an abstract noun and is obviously related to the verb [*dmh*] ‘to be like, resemble.’” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29; cf. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 57-58.

²⁶Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 13. Hoekema argues that “image” and “likeness” are virtually synonymous, though he also wants to recognize “a slight difference between the two” terms.

²⁷Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness*, 165. From his linguistic study of both terms, “image” and “likeness,” Garr concludes that the idea that the terms are used interchangeably may be “dismissed offhand.”

²⁸For an exposition of ancient Near Eastern themes and their use in the biblical theology of the Scriptures, see Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes*. For a study of an ancient Near Eastern background for the image of God, see Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 93-145. For a thorough study of the terms “image” and “likeness” in both biblical and ancient Near Eastern contexts, see Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness*, 117-76. Note also W. Randall Garr, “‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ in the inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 50, nos. 3/4 (2000): 227-34; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 190-202; Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 29-93. Because there is scholarly consensus regarding the ancient Near Eastern background for Genesis 1-2, I will not reargue the connections from the primary literature. Instead, I utilize the summaries and conclusions of those who

The Concept of the Image of God in the Ancient Near Eastern Context

The Israelites in Egyptian captivity would have been familiar with the idea that the Egyptian king was the image of a god who, as Gentry suggests, was seen as a “living statue of such and such a god.”²⁹ As to what the Egyptians would have understood the concept of the image of god to entail, Gentry suggests,

The term “image of god” in the culture and language of the ancient Near East in the fifteenth century B.C. would have communicated two main ideas: (1) rulership and (2) sonship. The king is the image of god because he has a relationship to the deity as the son of god and a relationship to the world as ruler for the god. We ought to assume that the meaning in the Bible is identical or at least similar, unless the biblical text clearly distinguishes its meaning from the surrounding culture.³⁰

In addition to the idea that the Egyptian king represented a deity, Kenneth Mathews notes that “among the Mesopotamians and Canaanites, royal figures were considered ‘sons’ adopted by the gods to function as vice-regents and intermediaries between deity and society.”³¹

Gentry finds that the use of the terms “image” and “likeness” in the inscription at Tell Fakhariyeh are “particularly instructive for Genesis 1:26-28.”³² After comparing other ancient Near Eastern texts that utilize similar language in reference to the king as the image of a god, Gentry concludes that according to the use of “image” and “likeness” in the ancient Near East, as the Israelites reading Genesis would have understood it, “‘likeness’ specifies a relationship between God and humans such that *’ādām* can be

have read the primary documents.

²⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 191. Cf. Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 108-11.

³⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192. See also Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 168-71. Mathews agrees that “image of god” communicates rulership and sonship. From the ancient Near Eastern evidence, John Walton also sees rulership, though he only alludes to sonship. See Walton, *Genesis*, 130-31.

³¹Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 169. So also, Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes*, 99-115.

³²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 193.

described as the son of God, and ‘image’ describes a relationship between God and humans such that *’ādām* can be described as a servant king.”³³ From this brief survey of the terms “image” and “likeness” as used in Genesis 1:26 and informed by the historical context of the ancient Near East, certain concepts begin to emerge that establish a pattern for the people of God created in the divine image.

Kingship: A Royal People

Theologians have historically identified the image of God in man in either structural terms, what man *is* (e.g., character qualities, personality, rationality), or functional terms, what man *does* (e.g., dominion, rule).³⁴ More recently, the image has been understood in relational terms: man, like God, is a relational being.³⁵ Admittedly, the command in Genesis 1:28 to exercise dominion over the creation might lead one to emphasize man’s functional dominion as what the image of God entails,³⁶ but the concept of the image of God should not be equated with man’s function to rule. As I later argue, the divine image should be interpreted ontologically; the ruling function is a consequence of being the image of God.³⁷ Similar to other ancient Near Eastern kings, as God’s image, man was created to rule as a king over the creation, representing God’s sovereign rule over all the earth.³⁸ “The male and female as king and queen of creation,” argues

³³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 194-95.

³⁴Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 68-69, emphasis added.

³⁵See 27n10.

³⁶Jónsson, *Image of God*, 219-20. Gunnlaugur Jónsson, in his comprehensive survey of the history of the interpretation of *imago dei*, concludes that the functional interpretation has received consensus most recently. So, for example, Beale in his most recent and important work opts for a functional interpretation of the *imago dei*. See Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 30-33. Beale admits there may be an ontological component to the image, but opts for the likelihood of a functional understanding (32n13).

³⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200.

³⁸Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 126, states that in Mesopotamia “the king was clearly associated with the realm of the divine in a manner appropriate to his exalted status as the gods’

Stephen Dempster, “are to exercise rule over their dominion, the extent of which is the entire earth. . . . Being made in the image of God signifies humans exercising dominion as God’s vicereagents of creation.”³⁹

What is unique about the biblical account of man’s creation as God’s image is that, while in the ancient Near East only the king was the image of a god,⁴⁰ in Genesis 1:27 both the man and the woman are said to be the image of God. Victor Hamilton understands the implication of this difference between the biblical worldview and that of the ancient Near East when he observes, “In God’s eyes all of mankind is royal. All of humanity is related to God, not just the king. Specifically, the Bible democratizes the royalistic and exclusivistic concepts of the nations that surrounded Israel.”⁴¹ Thus, God intended to create humanity as a royal people to represent his sovereign rule over all the earth.

Sonship: A People in Relationship with God as Father

The terms “image” and “likeness” as used in the ancient Near East not only communicated rulership; they also communicated sonship.⁴² Gentry states, “The king is

intermediary or viceroy—I would dare to say image—who represents their rule on earth.”

³⁹Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 59, emphasis original. That the term “image of god” communicated rulership is agreed upon by many Old Testament scholars. See Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 168-72; Walton, *Genesis*, 130; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 30-32; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 135; T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God’s Plan on Earth* (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2008), 76-78; William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 19; and Von Rad, *Genesis*, 58. Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 121, concludes that “the description of ancient Near Eastern kings as the image of a god, when understood as an integral component of Egyptian and/or Mesopotamian royal ideology, provides the most plausible set of parallels for interpreting the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1.”

⁴⁰Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 81-85.

⁴¹Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 135. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 197.

⁴²Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 146-47.

the image of God because he has a relationship to the deity as the son of god and a relationship to the world as the ruler for the god.”⁴³ In the world of the Israelites for whom Genesis was written, the concept of royalty would have been closely related to the concept of sonship.⁴⁴ Consequently, for Israel as well, royalty and sonship stood together (2 Sam 7:13-16; Pss 2; 72; 89).⁴⁵

The concepts of sonship and the image of God are linked together in Genesis 5:1-3.⁴⁶ In Genesis 5:1 the biblical author recalls that “when God created man, he made him in the likeness [דְמוּת] of God.” In Genesis 5:3, Adam is said to have “fathered a son in his own likeness [דְמוּת], after his image [צֶלֶם].” Clearly, the words “Adam,” “image,” “likeness,” “male,” “female,” “created,” recall Genesis 1:26-28.⁴⁷ Not only does Genesis 5:3 indicate that man retained the image of God after the fall,⁴⁸ it also ties together “likeness” and “sonship.” Stephen Dempster makes this exact point:

By juxtaposing the divine creation of Adam in the image of God and the subsequent human creation of Seth in the image of Adam, the transmission of the image of God through this genealogical line is implied, as well as the link between sonship and the image of God. As Seth is a son of Adam, so Adam is a son of God. Language is being stretched here, as a literal son of God is certainly not in view, but nevertheless the writer uses an analogy to make a point.⁴⁹

⁴³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192. Also, McCartney, “*Ecce Homo*,” 3.

⁴⁴Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 126.

⁴⁵Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 169.

⁴⁶Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 58. See also McCartney, “*Ecce Homo*,” 3; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 195; Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 170-71; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 45-46.

⁴⁷Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 305, 307; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 126; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 255.

⁴⁸Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 305, 307.

⁴⁹Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 58-59. Also quoted in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 195.

The New Testament bolsters this link between “image” and sonship in Luke 3:36-38 where the genealogy of Genesis 5 is given in the reverse in order to indicate the origin of humanity with Adam who is identified as “the son of God” (Luke 3:38).⁵⁰ Thus, God intended to relate with the people whom he created to rule over the earth as a Father to sons and daughters; they were to be his royal children.

Priesthood: A People Serving in God’s Presence

As God’s image, Adam was not only to relate to God as son and represent God’s rule over the earth as a king; he was also to relate to God as a priest. While the concept of priesthood connotes a mediatorial function,⁵¹ it is important to recognize that a primary component of priesthood in Genesis 1 and 2 is the special privilege of access to God’s presence.⁵² As the text describes the geography of the garden in Genesis 2:8-17, it becomes clear that God placed Adam in a garden-sanctuary/temple.⁵³ Throughout the Old Testament, the tabernacle/temple is the place of God’s presence,⁵⁴ and recently several Old Testament scholars have proposed that the garden was designed as a cosmic temple, the place of God’s presence on earth, whose pattern is later reflected in Israel’s tabernacle and temple.⁵⁵

⁵⁰Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 170; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 195

⁵¹Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 304.

⁵²Ibid. So also J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 199; John Arthur Davies, “A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (2002): 172-74.

⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 61-62; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 62; Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 20-31. The most comprehensive argument for Eden as sacred space is found in Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66-80. Cf. Craig G. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 26-29.

⁵⁴Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 211.

⁵⁵Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *I Studied*

Additionally, the task given to Adam in relation to the garden (Gen 2:15) to “serve/work it and keep it” (*lě‘ obdāh ůlēšomrāh*) is communicated in priestly language.⁵⁶ Peter Gentry notes, “The only other passages in the Torah where the same two verbs occur together are Numbers 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6,” all of which refer to the priestly duties and responsibilities of the Levites.⁵⁷ John Walton elucidates this point in his summary conclusions on the point of priestly language in Genesis 2:15:

To conclude, then, (1) since there are a couple of contexts in which *šmr* is used for Levitical service along with *‘bd* (e.g., Num. 3:8-9), (2) since the contextual use of *šmr* here favors sacred service, (3) since *‘bd* is as likely to refer to sacred service as to agricultural tasks, and (4) since there are other indications that the garden is being portrayed as sacred space, it is likely that the tasks given to Adam are of a priestly nature – that is, caring for sacred space.⁵⁸

Part of Adam’s responsibility as a priest in the garden in caring for the sacred space was, in the words of Beale, “to ‘manage’ it by maintaining its order and keeping out uncleanness”: a duty that “may also be reflected in the later role of Israel’s priests who were called ‘guards’ (1 Chr. 9:23).”⁵⁹ Additionally, Beale suggests that Adam was to “guard” or “keep” God’s commands:

In 1 Kings 9:6, when both “serving” and “keeping” occur together, the idea of “commandments to be kept” is in view. . . . Hence, it follows naturally that after God puts Adam into the Garden for “cultivating/serving and keeping/guarding” (v.

Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, vol. 4, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399-404; Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66-75; Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 13-73; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 213-16.

⁵⁶Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 404; Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66-70. Also, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 67; Walton, *Genesis*, 172-73; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 64; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 211-12.

⁵⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 211-12.

⁵⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 173.

⁵⁹Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 69.

15) that in the very next verse God would command Adam to keep a commandment.⁶⁰

Based upon the work of Beale and others in Genesis 1-2, Schrock proposes three aspects to Adam's priesthood: (1) "to 'guard' the sanctuary (Gen 2:15),"⁶¹ (2) "to propagate God's word,"⁶² and (3) "to mediate a covenant."⁶³ Adam was not only created as God's son to represent God's sovereign rule over the earth as king; he was also created to be a priest in the service of God in the place of God's presence. Once one understands the image of God in these terms, one may begin to understand man's original purpose or mission.

Mission: The Whole Earth Filled with the Image of God

In Genesis 1:28, the man and the woman are commanded to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion."⁶⁴ Beale proposes that "because Adam and Eve were to subdue and rule 'over all the earth,' it is plausible to suggest that they were to extend the geographical boundaries of the garden until Eden covered the whole earth."⁶⁵ Likewise, John Walton advances an argument for the expansion of the garden-sanctuary based upon the priestly language used of Adam, and concludes,

⁶⁰Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 68.

⁶¹Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 61.

⁶²Ibid., 62-63. Schrock concludes that Adam was to propagate God's Word because he received God's command as it is implied that he passed the command on to Eve (Gen 3:2-3).

⁶³Ibid., 63-65. Schrock likewise argues for an Adamic covenant and argues that "throughout the canon each covenant is mediated by a priest" (65).

⁶⁴G. K. Beale suggests that "Genesis 1:28 is best taken as a command, possibly with an implied promise that God will provide the ability to humanity to carry it out." See, Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 86. For his argument for taking Gen 1:28 as a command, see *ibid.*, 86n13.

⁶⁵Ibid., 81-82.

It is necessary, however, to move beyond the “serving and preserving” role. If people were going to fill the earth, we must conclude that they were not intended to stay in the garden in a static situation. Yet moving out of the garden would appear a hardship since the land outside the garden was not as hospitable as that inside the garden (otherwise the garden would not be distinguishable). Perhaps, then, we should surmise that people were gradually supposed to extend the garden as they went about subduing and ruling. Extending the garden would extend the food supply as well as extend the sacred space (since that is what the garden represented).⁶⁶

Adam was to expand the borders of the sacred garden-space and populate it with the divine image. Eventually, the sacred garden-space would cover the entire creation, and the world would be populated with the divine image. Desmond Alexander explains, “Understood in the light of ancient Near Eastern practices, an increasing population would create a city around the temple. Through time, the whole earth would become a holy garden-city.”⁶⁷ Thus, God creates the garden in Eden, then places man in that garden,⁶⁸ where he commissions man for his task: simultaneous expansion of the sacred space and multiplication of the divine image. Genesis 2 initiates this process whereby the whole earth will be subdued and display the glory of God.⁶⁹ Alexander determines,

Interpreted along these lines, the opening chapters of Genesis enable us to reconstruct God’s blueprint for the earth. God intends that the world should become his dwelling place. Remarkably, this blueprint is eventually brought to completion through the New Jerusalem envisaged in Revelation 21-22.⁷⁰

As the image of God, then, man was to represent God’s sovereign rule as he exercised dominion over the creation and served in God’s presence as priest, extending the borders of the garden sanctuary and filling the earth with godly offspring until God’s glory

⁶⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 186.

⁶⁷Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 25. For the expansion of ancient Near Eastern temples through the priest-kings in the image of the deity, see Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 87-93. For the building of cities after the fall, see Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 32-43.

⁶⁸William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 35.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 25-26. See also, Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 83.

⁷⁰Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 26.

covered the face of the earth through his image bearers.⁷¹ In a world without sin, the offspring of Adam and Eve would faithfully image God. Thus, God originally intended to have a people for himself with whom he would relate as a father to sons/daughters, who would represent his sovereign rule on the earth, and dwell in his presence to serve him as priests. As offspring of Adam and Eve in a world without sin, all would have been biologically related to Adam and Eve, and all would have known God personally and be expected to faithfully image him. The faithful God structured this relationship in a covenant with Adam and creation.

Covenant: The People of God Defined

The nature and structure of the relationship between God and his people is communicated throughout the canon as covenant.⁷² Admittedly, scholars debate the meaning of “covenant.”⁷³ From his own lexical study, Gordon Hugenberger concludes that “the predominant sense of *בְּרִית* in Biblical Hebrew is that of ‘an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation established under divine sanction.’”⁷⁴ Peter Gentry

⁷¹Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 25. For the specific argument that Adam as a priest-king was to extend the borders of the garden-sanctuary over the face of the earth until the whole earth was filled with the glory of God, see Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 81-121.

⁷²O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 17. See also Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64; Scott J. Hafemann, “The Covenant Relationship,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 21.

⁷³Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 8; Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 35; Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant,” 16; Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 5n3.

⁷⁴Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 215, cf. 176-85. See also Hafemann, “The Covenant Relationship,” 26. Paul Williamson agrees that “a covenant involves an elective relationship, and incorporates obligations on one or both covenant parties;” yet, he argues that the key aspect of the concept of covenant “is the solemnizing of the promise and/or obligation by means of a formal oath.” Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 43.

agrees with Hugenberger’s basic definition of “covenant”⁷⁵ and, quoting John Davies, writes,

Davies helpfully notes that “the fundamental image behind each of the applications of ברית [bērit] is the use of familial categories for those who are not bound by ties of natural kinship.” Thus, by a ceremony or (quasi-)legal process, people who are not kin are now bound as tightly as any family relationship. Marriage is the best example and illustration of this. A man and a woman, who are not previously related, are now bound closer than any other bond of blood or kinship.⁷⁶

In a comprehensive study on the use of the word for covenant (בְּרִית, *bērit*) in the Old Testament, Daniel Lane states,

A berith is an enduring agreement which establishes a defined relationship between two parties involving a solemn, binding obligation to specified stipulations on the part of at least one of the parties toward the other, which is taken by oath under threat of divine curse, and ratified by a visible ritual.⁷⁷

In the most recent ecclesiology written by an evangelical scholar, Gregg Allison embraces Lane’s definition of covenant and clarifies that a covenant may not only establish a new relationship but may also formalize an already existing relationship.⁷⁸ Gentry accounts for Allison’s nuance and likewise adapts Lane’s definition of covenant with minor changes of his own, proposing as a starting point the definition of covenant as “an enduring agreement which defines a relationship between two parties involving a solemn, binding

⁷⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 132.

⁷⁶Ibid., 133. Gentry cites John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 177. For a helpful explanation of the concept of covenant (בְּרִית, *bērit*), see Gentry, “The Notion of Covenant in the Bible and in the Ancient Near East,” in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 129-45. See also Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 170-88; Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 168-215; Hafemann, “The Covenant Relationship,” 20-65.

⁷⁷Daniel Clifford Lane, “The Meaning and Use of *Berith* in the Old Testament” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity International University, 2000), 314.

⁷⁸Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64. So also Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant,” 16, where Gentry clarifies that “a covenant does not necessarily begin or initiate a relationship. It forges or formalizes in binding and legal terms a relationship between parties developed and established before the covenant is made.”

obligation(s) specified on the part of at least one of the parties toward the other, made by oath under threat of divine curse, and ratified by a visual ritual.”⁷⁹

Though, as Paul Williamson admits, “there is no universally agreed understanding of what is meant by ‘covenant’ in Scripture,”⁸⁰ the biblical covenants do contain elements that when identified begin to reveal common characteristics recognized by Old Testament scholars that expose certain fundamental marks of such binding agreements.⁸¹ “Fortunately,” acknowledges Hugenberger, “there is substantial scholarly consensus as to what these elements [which comprise a covenant] are.”⁸² Hugenberger identifies four essential elements in an Old Testament understanding of “covenant” (בְּרִית, *bērît*): “(1) a relationship (2) with a non-relative (3) which involves obligations and (4) is established through an oath.”⁸³ Allison similarly summarizes four common characteristics of the concept of covenant in Scripture: “covenants (1) are unilateral (established by God and God only); (2) create or formalize a structured relationship between God and his covenant partners; (3) feature binding obligations; and (4) involve covenantal signs or the swearing of oaths.”⁸⁴ From Gentry’s adaptation of Lane, one may also break down the following characteristics of a covenant as

an enduring agreement that (1) defines a relationship between two parties; (2) which involves solemn, binding obligations, specified in the part of at least one of the

⁷⁹Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant,” 16. I use this definition of covenant.

⁸⁰Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 35.

⁸¹Ibid., 35-43.

⁸²Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 11.

⁸³Ibid., 215. Also, Hafemann, “The Covenant Relationship,” 31; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 132. Gregg Allison proposes four similar components of “covenant”: “covenants (1) are unilateral (established by God and God only); (2) create or formalize a structured relationship between God and his covenant partners; (3) feature binding obligations; and (4) involve covenantal signs or the swearing of oaths.” Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

⁸⁴Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

parties toward the other; (3) and is made by an oath under the threat of divine curse or ratified by a visual ritual.⁸⁵

Hugenberger, Allison, and Gentry are in essential agreement as to the components of a covenant. For the purposes of this dissertation, I use Allison's four definitional characteristics of a covenant, for his characteristics are more specifically suited for covenants made by God with his covenant partners, whereas Hugenberger is more generally defining the overall concept of covenant, including those entered into by two equal partners.⁸⁶ The fact that covenant agreements between God and his people are unilateral in the sense that "God and God alone is the initiator," Allison's first common characteristic of covenant agreements⁸⁷ is not in dispute;⁸⁸ however, it is a helpful reminder that the relationship between God and his people is always initiated by God and established on his terms. Thus, while covenant agreements may be entered into by equal partners,⁸⁹ for ecclesiological purposes, one need only be interested in covenant as it defines or structures God's relationship to his people, that is, those covenants in which God as the greater party defines his relationship to the lesser party.⁹⁰ This is the second common characteristic of the concept of covenant mentioned by Allison.⁹¹

⁸⁵Gentry, "Kingdom through Covenant," 16. Lane, "The Meaning and Use of *Berith*," 314.

⁸⁶Cf. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 215; and Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

⁸⁷Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

⁸⁸Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 141. Vriezen likewise sees the covenant concept as unilateral. Cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 120.

⁸⁹Lane, "The Meaning and Use of *Berith*," 314. Lane labels such an agreement as a parity covenant which is "entered into by two roughly equal parties. It involves a solemn, binding obligation under oath on the part of both parties."

⁹⁰*Ibid.* Lane labels such a covenant as a non-parity covenant: A non-parity *berith* may consist primarily of a benevolent grant from the superior (involving some manner of self-obligation), or primarily of obligations largely imposed by the superior onto the lesser member (vassal). But even in such primarily one-sided *beriths*, there is still at least some element of obligation or expected participation on the part of the other party.

⁹¹Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

Understanding how God defines and structures his relationship with his people in a particular covenant will shed light on both the identity of the people with whom God is covenanting and the nature and structure of that relationship.

By considering the binding, solemn obligations or stipulations unique to each covenant, Allison's third common characteristic of covenant,⁹² one will better understand what God expected of his people and what he purposed for them under a particular covenant.⁹³ In other words, the covenant obligations or stipulations, both promises and curses, provide insight into the purpose or mission of the people of God under each covenant. Finally, the visual oath sign or oath under the threat of divine curse, Allison's fourth common characteristic of covenant⁹⁴ will help to confirm whether or not a particular relationship has been established as a covenant.

Adamic covenant. Much debate exists regarding the question of whether or not the concept of covenant is present in Genesis 1-2.⁹⁵ To be sure the word "covenant"

⁹²Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

⁹³There is much debate as to whether specific covenants are conditional or unconditional. Traditionally, both Dispensational theologians have embraced the idea of the Abrahamic, Davidic and new covenants as unilateral and unconditional or royal grant covenants, while explaining the Adamic and Mosaic covenants as bi-lateral and conditional in the tradition of the Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties. Covenant theologians have explained the Adamic covenant as a conditional covenant of works, while the overarching covenant of grace as unconditional. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 39-80. For the pertinent literature by dispensational and covenant theologians proposing such views, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 608n26. I concur with Gentry and Wellum that it is unhelpful merely to categorize the covenants as either conditional or unconditional. Instead, with Gentry and Wellum, I agree that "dividing up the biblical covenants in terms of unconditional versus conditional is not correct. Instead, the Old Testament covenants blend both aspects and in an unfolding way tell a story of God's incredible promises, his unilateral action to save, and the demand for a covenant mediator who, unlike his Old Testament counterparts, obeys perfectly, even unto death on a cross, and thus accomplishes our redemption." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 120.

⁹⁴Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

⁹⁵Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 17-18. Historically, in the Reformed tradition God is understood to have entered into a covenant relationship with Adam. This covenant relationship is typically called a "covenant of works." For a brief review of those who have espoused such a covenant of works, see Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 118-19. Hoekema also notes that some in the Reformed tradition are moving away from a covenant of works (119). Hoekema himself rejects a covenant of works at creation. This covenant of works may also be referred to as a covenant of/with creation or a covenant of law. For a

(בְּרִית, *bērît*) is not found until Genesis 6:18. However, the absence of a word does not indicate that the concept is not present.⁹⁶ Palmer Robertson suggests, “If all the ingredients essential to the making of a covenant were present prior to Noah, the relationship of God to man prior to Noah may be designated as ‘covenantal.’”⁹⁷ Therefore, to discern whether or not the concept of covenant is present in Genesis 1-2, I begin with Allison’s four characteristics of a covenant.⁹⁸ Consequently, if the relationship between God and Adam/Eve may be termed covenantal, then it would necessarily entail (1) an agreement unilaterally established by God, (2) that defines or structures the relationship between God and his people, (3) involving binding obligations on the part of one or both parties, and (4) is established through a visual sign or an oath under threat of divine curse.⁹⁹

From the exegesis of Genesis 1:26-28 I propose that Adam’s and Eve’s creation in the divine image (2) defines the nature and structure of their relationship to

recent defense of such a covenant of creation, see Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 83-104. Horton proposes that this covenant of creation “presupposes a righteous and holy human servant entirely capable of fulfilling the stipulations of God’s law. It promises blessing on the basis of obedience and curse upon transgression” (83). For a case against a covenant of works/creation, see Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 52-58. Those in the dispensational tradition recognize the biblical covenants beginning with Noah but have tended to emphasize the Abrahamic covenant as foundational to all others. See Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought*, A BridgePoint Book (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993), 28-30, 37-39. Progressive Dispensationalists correct some of the problematic interpretations of the biblical covenants of prior dispensationalists. *Ibid.*, 53, 128-73.

⁹⁶Contra Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 55. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 177-78, 612. Robertson notes that “it should be acknowledged that the absence of the term ‘covenant’ before Genesis 6:18 should be given its full weight of significance.” However, he also adds that “nowhere in the original account of the establishment of God’s promise to David does the term ‘covenant’ appear (II Sam. 7; I Chron. 17). Yet this relationship clearly is covenantal. . . . Since such a situation existed in the case of God’s relationship to David, it also could have existed in the case of God’s relationship to man before Noah.” Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 18.

⁹⁷Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 18-19.

⁹⁸See p. 42 of this diss.

⁹⁹For the specific language of the characteristics or elements of a covenant, see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 65; Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 215; and Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant,” 16. Admittedly, my fourfold characteristics are an amalgam of the works of Hugenberger, Gentry, and Allison.

God. Adam and Eve were God's son and daughter who were to serve as God's viceregents, representing the divine rule on the earth and serving in his presence as priests. That God unilaterally established (1) a relationship with Adam is evident in the fact that God created *ex nihilo*.¹⁰⁰

Additionally, it is clear that whatever one may call the relationship between God and man, it is a relationship (3) involving obligations on the part of man with promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. In Genesis 2:17, God forbade Adam from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam should have responded in obedience (trust in God's word).¹⁰¹ Such obedience, flowing from trust in God, would have permitted Adam to remain under God's blessing (Gen 1:28). However, Adam disobeyed and received the curses instead (Gen 3:17-19). So, as Wellum suggests, "Though the word 'covenant' is not used [in Gen. 1-2], all the elements of a Lord/vassal agreement are in the context, including conditions of obedience with sanctions for disobedience."¹⁰²

The theological question of whether or not a covenant with Adam exists in Genesis 1-2 in accordance with Allison's characteristics of a covenant (4) hinges on the presence or absence of an oath. Though one may object that no oath is present in Genesis 1-2 to establish a covenant, Hugenerberger cautions,

There has been a tendency to reduce "oath" to verbal self-malediction. In response to this . . . we have argued that an "oath" can be any solemn declaration or enactment (an "oath-sign") which invokes the deity to act against the one who

¹⁰⁰I understand that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* may be in dispute within some evangelical circles today; nevertheless, it is my assumption that God created Adam from nothing. For an argument for *creatio ex nihilo*, see Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2004).

¹⁰¹Hafemann writes, "This is a consistent pattern. Reflecting its origins, the covenant relationship in the Bible translates the concept of divine kingship in terms of fatherhood, the category of vassal subjects in terms of sonship, the exercise of sovereignty in terms of love, and the call for obedience in terms of faithfulness within a family." Hafemann, "The Covenant Relationship," 34:

¹⁰²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 613.

would be false to an attendant commitment or affirmation. In particular, it was noted that oaths are often not self-maledictory and may consist simply of a solemn positive declaration (i.e., *verba solemnia*) or a solemn depiction of the commitment being undertaken (i.e., oath-signs such as sharing in a meal or the giving of a hand).¹⁰³

Perhaps the best-known oath of self-malediction is that found in Genesis 15:13-17. When God assured Abram that all the divine promises made to him would be fulfilled, God then walked through the divided animal carcasses indicating, that if he failed to fulfill what he had promised Abram, he should be torn in two just like the animals.¹⁰⁴ While Genesis 15 clearly presents a covenant ceremony that includes a self-maledictory oath, Hugenberg's point is that self-malediction is not required in every case. A covenant oath may take other forms. This is precisely what Palmer Robertson suggests:

At one point a verbal oath could be involved (Gen. 21:23, 24, 26, 31; 31:53; Exod. 6:8; 19:8; 24:3, 7; Deut. 7:8, 12; 29:13; Ezek. 16:8). At another point some symbolic action could be attached to the verbal commitment, such as the granting of a gift (Gen. 21:28-32), the eating of a meal (Gen. 26:28-30; 31:54; Exod. 24:11), the setting up of a memorial (Gen. 31:44f.; Josh. 24:27), the sprinkling of blood (Exod. 24:8), the offering of sacrifice (Ps. 50:5), the passing under the rod (Ezek. 20:37), or the dividing of animals (Gen. 15:10, 18). In several passages of Scripture the integral relation of the oath to the covenant is brought out most clearly by a parallelism of construction (Deut. 29:12; II Kings 11:4; I Chron. 16:16; Ps. 105:9; 89:3, 4; Ezek. 17:19). In these cases, the oath interchanges with the covenant, and the covenant with the oath.¹⁰⁵

Consequently, the absence of a self-maledictory oath does not negate the presence of a covenant in Genesis 1-2. Hugenberg has provided convincing arguments for marriage as a prelapsarian covenant in which an oath, whether or not self-maledictory, is not immediately obvious.¹⁰⁶ He concludes that the sexual union "may be the requisite covenant-ratifying (and renewing) oath-sign for marriage."¹⁰⁷ To be sure, there may be

¹⁰³Hugenberg, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 215.

¹⁰⁴Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 130.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁶For Hugenberg's arguments in overcoming the charge that the concept of oath is missing from marriage as a covenant, see Hugenberg, *Covenant as a Marriage*, 182-215.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 240. For his arguments for the sexual union as the likely requisite covenant-ratifying

other reasons why an oath-sign is not immediately present. Allison adds that oath/oath-sign “is not present, perhaps due to the fact that, first, God creates the covenant partners themselves and, second ‘in a world not invaded by sin, there would be no need for adding oaths to commitments.’”¹⁰⁸ One should not rush to judgment as to the absence of an oath/oath-sign establishing a covenant with Adam.

One may find textual evidence for a creation covenant in Hosea 6:7 and, possibly, Jeremiah 33:19-26.¹⁰⁹ Since Williamson rejects Jeremiah 33 without much explanation or exegesis, he considers Hosea 6:7 to be of utmost significance in the case for an Adamic covenant. Without it, he suggests, “there is no explicit textual support for a covenant established between God and Adam.”¹¹⁰ Though disputed, Hosea 6:7 reads as follows: “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.”¹¹¹ Williamson ultimately dismisses Hosea 6:7 as a textual ground for an Adamic covenant. Rather than interpreting *kě ’ādām* in a personal sense referring to Adam, Williamson prefers to read it as a place reference. He admits that those who see *’ādām* as a place reference must emend *kě* (like) *’ādām* to *bě* (in) *’ādām*, though such an emendation is not required.¹¹² Instead, Williamson proposes that on the basis of the references to

and renewing oath-sign for marriage, see *ibid.*, 240-79.

¹⁰⁸Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 65. Allison cites Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant,” 21; and John H. Stek, “‘Covenant’ Overload in Reformed Theology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 40, which is cited in Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant,” 21.

¹⁰⁹For a brief explanation of the relation of Jer 33:19-26 to the creation covenant, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 220-21. Cf. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 65. Allison views Hos 6:7, along with Gen 6-9, as confirming the Adamic covenant (65n9).

¹¹⁰Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 56.

¹¹¹On the textual difficulties of Hos 6:7 and the arguments for a natural reading, which indicates a pre-lapsarian covenant with Adam, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 217-20. See also Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 55, who declares that “its interpretation is notoriously difficult.”

¹¹²Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 55.

Gilead in Hosea 6:8 and Shechem in 6:9, *'ādām* should be read as a place reference.¹¹³

However, Thomas McComiskey counters that “the occurrence of Gilead and Shechem (6:8-9) does not require us to view Adam as a geographical site.”¹¹⁴ Rejecting *'ādām* as a reference to a place, McComiskey argues,

The suggestion that the word *Adam* represents the town of that name seems attractive in view of the place-names in the succeeding verses (Gilead and Shechem), but two names hardly establish a dominant sequence. . . . If Adam is understood as a geographical site, we should expect that some act of corporate disobedience took place there that had tainted the people’s relationship to God and which lived on in their national memory. In all probability this would have taken place in Israel’s earlier history, but the town of Adam seems not to have figured prominently in that period.¹¹⁵

Instead, arguing in favor of an Adamic covenant, McComiskey concludes,

As Adam violated covenant strictures imposed on him, so the people of Hosea’s day had violated the covenant made with them at Sinai. The strictures placed on the man Adam fall into the category of *bērît* (covenant), even though the term *bērît* (covenant) does not appear in the context that describes the nature of Adam’s probation (Gen. 2:17).¹¹⁶

Admittedly, the textual reference in Hosea 6:7 is not without ambiguity; however, the probability of a reference to an Adamic covenant in Hosea 6:7 continues to add weight to the argument for a prelapsarian covenant with Adam.

Perhaps an even clearer case for an Adamic covenant may be made from the technical language of “cutting a covenant” (*kārat bērît*) and “confirming a covenant” (*hēqîm bērît*).¹¹⁷ According to a growing number of Old Testament scholars, the use of *bērît* in Genesis 6:18, does not indicate that a covenant is being initiated.¹¹⁸ William

¹¹³Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 55.

¹¹⁴Thomas E. McComiskey, “Hosea,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 95.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Gordon Wenham alludes to the fact that it was historical critical scholarship that equated the terms *hēqîm bērît* and *kārat bērît* as initiating a covenant. See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 175.

¹¹⁸See the general summary argument for a distinction between the terms *hēqîm bērît*

Dumbrell argues that the language of “establish my covenant” (*hēqîm bĕrît*) in Genesis 6:18 does not refer to the institution of a covenant but to its perpetuation. Instead, Dumbrell argues, “*kārat bĕrît* is universally used throughout the Old Testament period by biblical writers to describe the point of covenant entry.”¹¹⁹ Therefore, Dumbrell suggests, “What is being referred to in Gen. 6:18 is some existing arrangement presumably imposed by God without human concurrence, since it is referred to as ‘my covenant.’”¹²⁰ Williamson rejects such a distinction between *hēqîm bĕrît* and *kārat bĕrît*,¹²¹ and thus rejects an Adamic covenant.¹²² Gentry clarifies Dumbrell’s conclusion that *kārat bĕrît* always means to “cut a covenant.” Gentry suggests that “frequently *kārat bĕrît* is employed for renewal covenants since they can be viewed as separate covenants even though they entail ratifying a previously existing covenant.”¹²³ So, *contra* Williamson, based on the normal meaning of *hēqîm*, Gentry concludes,

Linguistic usage alone demonstrates that when God says that he is confirming or establishing his covenant with Noah, he is saying that his commitment initiated previously at creation to care for and preserve, provide for and rule over all that he has made, including the blessings and ordinances that he gave to Adam and Eve and their family, are now to be with Noah and his descendants.¹²⁴

(confirming a covenant) and *kārat bĕrît* (as cutting or initiating a covenant) in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 157-61. Cf. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 25-26.

¹¹⁹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 25.

¹²⁰Ibid., 26. For Dumbrell’s entire argument regarding the language of covenant institution versus covenant perpetuation, see *ibid.*, 15-26. Both Gordon Wenham and Kenneth Mathews agree with Dumbrell that *kārat bĕrît* means to initiate a covenant, while *hēqîm bĕrît* means to confirm a covenant. However, instead of pointing back to Gen 1 and 2, they look to the covenant which God initiates with Noah in Gen 9. See Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 367; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 175.

¹²¹Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 72-73.

¹²²Ibid., 73.

¹²³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 161.

¹²⁴Ibid.

That a previous covenant with Adam is in view is further bolstered by the fact that Genesis 6-9 presents Noah as a new Adam who also bears the divine image (Gen 9:6) and, therefore, who was to fulfill a similar role as the first Adam.¹²⁵ One need only notice the parallels between Adam/creation narrative and Noah/re-creation narrative.¹²⁶ As the new Adam, Noah too is commanded to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). Yet, while Noah’s line provides hope that the seed of the woman will prevail, it must flourish in the face of the continual threat of the serpent’s line (Gen 3:15).

As the image of God, Noah will still rule over creation as a representative of the divine rule on the earth, but Bartholomew notes that because sin has entered creation, “the animals will now fear humankind, and they will now be available as food to humans” (Gen 9:2-3).¹²⁷ Unfortunately, like the first Adam, Noah too fell into temptation. Gentry aptly summarizes this “fall”:

Like the first Adam, the second Adam is also a gardener who plants a vineyard. Like the first Adam, the second Adam is also a disobedient *son* whose sin results in shameful nakedness. One of the points this episode is making is that once again the human partner has failed as a covenant keeper, and that the fulfillment of the promise will be due solely to the faithfulness and grace of God, who is always a faithful covenant partner. This is the parallel in the Noah story to the Fall in Genesis 3.¹²⁸

Though there will continue to exist those who reject the idea of an Adamic covenant, I propose from the evidence provided above that God created Adam to relate with him in a covenantal relationship. The Adamic covenant structures or defines the relationship between God and the people of God: Adam and Eve. According to Scott Hafemann,

“Covenant” is the biblical-theological concept used to explain (1) the essential character of God as King or Sovereign Ruler, (2) the election of a people under his

¹²⁵Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 67-71. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 161-65.

¹²⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 161-62. Cf. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 110; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 27.

¹²⁷Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 35-36.

¹²⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 170.

rule who, as his “adopted” children, live in dependence upon him, and (3) the corresponding nature of God’s bond with them as their “Sovereign Father.” The content of this covenant relationship is thus summarized in what has come to be known as the “covenant formula,” i.e., that YHWH declares, “I will be God for you [=your God] and you shall be a people of me [=my people],” a mutual belonging between God and Israel that eventually encompasses the nations and consummates history (Ezek. 37:26-28; Zech. 2:11; Rom. 15:10; Rev. 21:3).

This “covenant relationship,” in which the basic categories of kingship (Sovereign Ruler) and kinship (Father) are mutually interpretive, is not static. It is the dynamic, historical arena within which God reveals himself. As such, it provides the interpretive lens for understanding who God is, who his people are and how they relate to one another.¹²⁹

The Pattern of the Adamic People of God: A Summary

In this overview of the account of man’s creation as God’s image, I argued that God established the pattern of the people of God in Adam: a pattern that communicates kingship, sonship, priesthood, and mission structured within a covenant relationship. The identity of the people of God in Genesis 1 and 2 is clear. God’s people were to have been composed of Adam, Eve, and their offspring. In other words, the people of God were supposed to have been all of humanity, with the expectation that they, like their initial parents, would faithfully image God. God would be their God, and they would be his people. Like Adam and Eve, they would be expected to respond to God in covenant faithfulness—obedience to God’s Word. Of course, universal humanity as God’s people changed after sin entered the creation, for after the fall the offspring of the woman faces the perpetual threat of the offspring of the serpent. Instead of one people, now two remain in perpetual conflict until one would conquer the other (Gen 3:15).

I also argued that the nature of this paradigmatic relationship between God and man in Genesis 1 and 2 is revealed in covenantal terms. God created a people with whom he would relate in a father/son relationship (sonship). God and people would dwell together in the sacred garden-space, where mankind would serve in God’s presence as priests (priesthood). Accordingly, God placed his people under his rule and care in a

¹²⁹Hafemann, “The Covenant Relationship,” 21-22.

structured relationship (covenant). Gentry well summarizes that the creation of mankind in the divine image, understood in its textual, ancient Near Eastern and redemptive historical contexts, “speaks of man’s relationship to God as son and his relationship to creation as servant king. In the ancient Near East, both the context of the family and the relationship of king and people is covenantal, requiring loyal love, obedience and trust.”¹³⁰

Finally, as the divine image, Adam’s mission was to represent God’s rule on earth by exercising dominion over the creation (kingship), extending the borders of the garden sanctuary, and reproducing the divine image through godly offspring until the whole earth was filled with the glory of God (mission). As God blessed the man and the woman with fruitfulness, they were to multiply the image of God on the earth while expanding sacred space.¹³¹ Beale suggests, “Adam’s kingly and priestly activity in the garden was to be a beginning fulfillment of the commission in 1:28 and was not to be limited to the garden’s original earthly boundaries but was to be extended over the whole world.”¹³² Ultimately, the sanctuary would cover the whole earth and be filled with godly offspring bearing the divine image. Once Adam’s work was done, mankind would enter into God’s rest.¹³³ As God’s image, the man would eventually establish the kingdom of God on the earth.¹³⁴ This was Adam’s commission, but he failed. Adam transgressed the covenant; instead of exercising his rule over creation, he was ruled by the serpent. As a result, he was exiled from God’s presence, receiving the curses of the covenant and raising the question, “What will become of God’s people and God’s kingdom?”

¹³⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 217.

¹³¹Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 81-83.

¹³²Ibid., 83.

¹³³David VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 40-43. Also, Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 208-9; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 34-36.

¹³⁴Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 66. So also Hafemann, *The God of Promise*, 25.

CHAPTER 3

THE PATTERN OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN ABRAHAM, ISRAEL AND DAVID

The confirmation of the creation covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18 indicates that God is not through with humanity.¹ Noah was a second Adam who was given the same commission as the first to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 9:1, 7).² Clearly, God's original plan to establish his sovereign rule on the earth through an Adamic figure still stands, though with slight variations due to the fact that now, unlike originally with Adam, sin is present and a competing line of offspring will threaten the chosen line.

¹For the arguments stating that the Noahic covenant is a confirmation of the original Adamic covenant, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 157-61; also, W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 15-26. I dealt with these arguments on pp. 49-52 and also conclude that the Noahic covenant is a confirmation of the original Adamic covenant. It is not within the scope of this work to look at every covenant in the Old Testament. Hence, I am not addressing the covenant with Noah separately since the covenant structure in Gen 6 indicates that God is upholding the original creation covenant. Additionally, as Christopher Wright notes, "Arguably God's covenant with Abraham is the single most important biblical tradition within a biblical theology of mission and a missional hermeneutic of the Bible." Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 189. Since my argument seeks to inform both the identity of the people of God and their mission, I too pick up the biblical storyline in this chapter with Abraham. For arguments for Noah as a new Adam, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 52-57; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 163-75, 302-3; and Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 313.

²Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 46-58, notes how Adam's commission in Gen 1:28 was passed on to his descendants (46-52) but also notes the differences between Adam's original commission and that passed on to his descendants (52-58). See also N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 21-22. Wenham suggests that Genesis "9:1-7 can be seen not simply as reasserting 1:28-29 but as modifying the food law (cf. 1:29) and reasserting the sanctity of human life in light of chapter 4." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 192-94. Cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 165-68. As the original Adamic commission and how it continues and changes as it is passed on is an important implication in my thesis, I address such changes as they arise in my argument.

Like Adam, Noah's response was to have been obedience or covenant faithfulness with every expectation of God's blessing (v. 1). Yet, like the first Adam, Noah fell into temptation (vv. 20-21), bringing about increased sin, rebellion, and chaos that culminated at the tower of Babel incident (Gen 11).³ Once again, Genesis raises the question concerning the survival of the promised seed and the fate of mankind as the divine image through whom God would establish his kingdom on the earth.

In the previous chapter I argued that God's creation of Adam as his image reveals a pattern that informs the identity, nature, and mission of the people of God. In this chapter I argue that though the first Adam failed to establish the kingdom of God on the earth, the pattern of the people of God revealed in the image of God at creation continues in Abraham and his descendants whom God raised up as another Adam through whom he would display his sovereign rule on the earth. In other words, through Abraham and his descendants, namely Israel, God creates another Adamic people. God relates to them in a father/son relationship (sonship), and they live under his rule and care (covenant) to serve as a royal priesthood (kingship and priesthood) in order to exercise dominion over the world by conquering God's enemies and taking possession of Canaan, the new Eden, in order to establish the boundaries of the sacred space of God's dwelling and display a model of the kingdom of God on earth as a light to the nations. I advance this argument in three parts. First, I argue that although Adam's rebellion distorted the image of God in man, the pattern of the people of God revealed in Adam as the image of God in Genesis 1:26-28 and reaffirmed in Noah continues in Abraham who is a new Adam through whom God promises to create a new people who will establish his kingdom on earth. Second, I argue that God fulfills the Abrahamic promises of seed and land in Israel which, as God's image, is a corporate Adam called to establish the model of the kingdom of God on the earth by exercising dominion over its enemies and taking possession of

³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 303.

Canaan, the new Eden, in order to be a light to the nations. Finally, I argue that David is a typical Adamic king in whom the pattern of the people of God revealed in the image of God coalesces in one person. He establishes the model kingdom of God on earth and typifies the expectant messianic royal priest who will truly image God and establish the eternal kingdom of God on the earth.

Abraham: A New Adam

Out of the chaos at Babel (Gen 11),⁴ the biblical narrative in Genesis 12 introduces a new Adam and a new creation.⁵ By tracing the line of the godly seed (Gen 3:15) to Abram (Gen 11:27-32), the biblical author identifies him as the answer to humanity's problems.⁶ "Abraham, like Noah," notes John Sailhamer, "marks a new beginning as well as a return to God's original plan of blessing 'all humankind' ([Gen] 1:28)."⁷ As a new Adam, Abram receives the same commission to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen 1:28). However, the original commission comes to Abram in the form of a promise ensuring that the lost Edenic blessings (i.e., God's

⁴William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 33; see also Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter Thomas O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 28.

⁵For Abram as a new (second) Adam, see Wright, *The Mission of God*, 212. For Abram as a new Adam and Gen 12 as a new creation, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 224-28. See also John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 139-40; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 16.

⁶N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 262. See also Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 47; Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 40. Dempster notes, "The previous millennia can be described in eleven chapters (Gen 1-11); the next twenty-five years occupy ten chapters! In the narrative world, it is as if the world has been waiting for this moment, the arrival of Abram, the tenth from Noah. . . . Against the dark background of the Table of Nations and the fiasco of Babel, the blessing of Abraham is clearly an answer to the fundamental problem of the human condition." Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 76-77.

⁷Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 139. So also Wright, *The Mission of God*, 203.

kingdom on earth) will be recovered through him and his descendants (Gen 12:1-3; 17:2-8; 22:16-24).⁸ “We have seen that God’s kingdom will be realized through the offspring of the woman (3:15),” notes Thomas Schreiner, “and Gen. 12 clarifies that the offspring will be from Abraham’s family.”⁹

After identifying Abram with the godly seed of the woman (Gen 11:10-32; cf. 3:15; 9:26),¹⁰ God commands Abram to leave what he knows and to bless all the families of the earth.¹¹ Christopher Wright notes, “enveloped in between the narrative record of YHWH’s address to Abraham and Abraham’s obedience, God’s actual speech falls into two halves, each launched by an imperative (‘Go,’ and ‘Be a blessing’).”¹² Following each command is a triad of promises:¹³ “Go” . . . (1) “I will make of you a great nation, and (2) I will bless you and (3) make your name great” (Gen 12:1-2); “Be a blessing” . . . (1) “I will bless those who bless you, and (2) him who dishonors you I will curse, and

⁸Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 17. Wright suggests that “at major turning-points in the story [of Abraham] . . . the narrative quietly insists that Abraham and his progeny inherit the role of Adam and Eve. Two differences emerge in the shape of this role. The command (‘be fruitful . . .’) has turned into a promise (‘I will make you fruitful’), and possession of the land of Canaan, together with supremacy over enemies, has taken the place of Adam’s dominion over nature.” Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 263.

⁹Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 19.

¹⁰Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 56.

¹¹Ibid., 64-65. See also Wright, *The Mission of God*, 57; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 231. Gentry states, “In the Hebrew text, there are two commands . . . ‘go’ and ‘be.’ Each of these two commands is followed by three prefix forms . . . and normally prefix forms following commands mark purpose or result. Thus, three promises flow from each of the two commands.” On the command to “be a blessing,” see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 231-34. See also Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, vol. 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 78-79; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 373; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 64-65.

¹²Wright, *The Mission of God*, 201.

¹³On the structure of Gen 12:1-3, see Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 64. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 230-31; Wright, *The Mission of God*, 200-2.

(3) in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (vv.2-3).¹⁴ Schreiner states, “The promises made to Abraham were the means by which God would undo the devastation wrought by Adam and would bring in his kingdom.”¹⁵

As a new Adam who images God, the pattern of the people of God revealed in the first Adam continues in Abraham, that is, the pattern of sonship, kingship, priesthood and mission within a covenant relationship. Abraham is another Adam through whom, as Wright suggests, God will “restore what humanity seemed intent on wrecking.”¹⁶ Through Abraham and his descendants, God will establish his sovereign rule over all the earth.

Priesthood

God’s command to Abram to leave his country for the land God would show him (v. 1), and his promise that he would make from Abram a great nation (v. 2), contain an implicit promise of land,¹⁷ which becomes explicit upon Abram’s obedience (v. 7).¹⁸ As the Old Testament unfolds, the Promised Land is identified as the place where God and man will dwell together. It will be sacred space, a place of rest from enemies and an inheritance from God (Deut 12:1-14). As sacred space, the land will be equated with God’s mountain; the place where God dwells, his sanctuary (Exod 15:17; Ps 78:54).¹⁹

¹⁴Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 230-31.

¹⁵Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 17. So also Wright, *The Mission of God*, 199.

¹⁶Wright, *The Mission of God*, 211.

¹⁷Gentry notes that “you cannot have a great nation without land, without territory, without a place for a large number of people to live and call home. So the idea of land is implied in this promise.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 235. See also Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 274; Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 44.

¹⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 235. Also, Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 64-65; Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 44.

¹⁹Dumbrell states that “since Eden is considered a divine space, Canaan is not only paralleled to Eden (Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35) but also fulsomely presented as an Israelite correspondence to Eden (cf. Deut 8:7-10; 11:8-17), inasmuch as it too in its totality is a divine space (cf. Exod 15:17; Ps 78:54).” William J. Dumbrell, “Genesis 2:1-17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect &*

Since the land promised to Abram would become sacred space, it should not be surprising that within this land Abram/Abraham is depicted as a priest who builds altars, calls upon the name of the Lord, and offers sacrifices (Gen 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; 22:9).²⁰

G. K. Beale aptly summarizes Abraham's altar building activity:

The result of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob building altars at Schechem, between Bethel and Ai, at Hebron, and near Moriah was that the terrain of Israel's future land was dotted with shrines. This pilgrim-like activity 'was like planting a flag and claiming the land' (Longman 2001:20; sim. Pagolu 1998: 70) for God and Israel's future temple, where God would take up his permanent residence in the capital of that land. Thus, all these smaller sanctuaries pointed to the greater one to come in Jerusalem.²¹

Thus, after Noah, Abram continues to fulfill the Adamic priestly role established in the garden.²²

Kingship

While the promise of nationhood provides implicit expectations of land as sacred space, and while the land as sacred space provides a context for Abram's role as a priest, the promise of a great name points to Abram's royal place in the world.²³ Gordon

Prospect, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 58.

²⁰Gentry notes that "the altar is mentioned only in connection with sojourning in Canaan. . . . There is no altar during his sojourns in Egypt or in Gerar." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 235. Note also G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 99; T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 83; Carl E. Armerding, "Were David's Sons Really Priests?," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 77.

²¹Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 99. Beale cites Tremper Longman III, *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 20, and Augustine Pagolu, *The Religion of the Patriarchs*, Journal for the Study of Old Testament, vol. 277 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

²²David Stephen Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ's Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 71-92. Schrock argues for six ways in which Abraham is seen to be a priest, including the particular atoning sacrifice in Gen 22.

²³Dempster argues that the promise of nationhood also points to Abram's role as a king: "[Abram] and his barren wife, Sarai, hold the key to the promise, as they will be shown that land and, what

Wenham proposes, “What Abram is here promised was the hope of many an oriental monarch (cf. 2 Sam 7:9; Ps 72:17).”²⁴ Unlike the monarch’s around Abraham, however, God’s promise of blessing indicates that God will be the source of all good that comes to Abram, both nationhood and name.²⁵

That Abram is to be considered a royal figure is evident in the parallel language seen in reference to David and his dynasty. Wenham points out, “‘Make your name great’ has its closest parallel in the promise to David in 2 Sam 7:9: ‘I will make for you a great name.’”²⁶ Victor Hamilton likewise points to 2 Samuel 7:9 and Psalm 72:17 (“May [the king’s] name endure forever”) and concludes that “this is royal language, and Abram is to be viewed as a regal figure.”²⁷

As a royal figure, it is only natural that Abram be viewed as equal to other kings.²⁸ That is precisely what occurs in Genesis 14, where Abram rescues his nephew Lot by defeating “Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him” (Gen 14:13-16). Upon his return from battle, Abram is honored by Melchizedek, the king of Salem, and an unnamed king of Sodom as an equal (Gen 14:17-20).²⁹ Abram refused to receive

is more, they will become a great nation through which all the families of the ‘*ādāmā* will be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). This indicates not only the genealogical dimension to the promise but also a royal one, as the promise to become a great nation assumes a political and regal destiny. This point will emerge later [in the Genesis narrative] in an even more powerful form, as Abram will become the father of a multitude of nations and his wife the mother of a royal dynasty (Gen. 17:6, 16).” Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 76.

²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275.

²⁵Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant*, 67.

²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 275. Wenham continues, “Ruprecht (*VT* 29 [1979] 452) quotes several royal inscriptions from early second-millennium Mesopotamia promising a great name to kings.” Ibid.

²⁷Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 372.

²⁸Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 82.

²⁹Walton suggests, “The communal meal [Abram and Melchizedek] share typically indicates a peaceful agreement. Hittite treaties refer to the provision of food in wartime by allies. Melchizedek is anxious to make peace with such a proven military force, and Abram submits to the chief king of the region by paying a tithe, thereby acknowledging Melchizedek’s status by giving him a portion of the spoils.” John

anything that had not come from God's hand, and as Melchizedek's blessing indicates, it was by God's hand that Abram defeated his enemies. Alexander proposes, "The actions of the two kings who meet Abraham provide a fascinating contrast."³⁰ Alexander continues,

Two distinctive forms of kingship are represented by the kings of Salem and Sodom. Melchizedek displays the kind of kingship acceptable to God. As a priest-king he acknowledges God's right to exercise sovereignty over the earth. The king of Sodom, in marked contrast, typifies earthly or godless kingship that places sovereignty in the power of the individual. Such kingship extols the virtue of becoming wealthy by grasping all one can, regardless of the consequences.

By affirming the truthfulness of what Melchizedek has to say and rejecting the offer of the king of Sodom, Abraham indicates his own commitment to be a righteous king-priest. Abraham will not inherit the earth through the use of aggressive military power, although clearly his defeat of the eastern kings indicates he has the capacity to do so. Rather, he looks to God to provide for his future well-being.³¹

God's promises that Abram and Sarai's offspring will include kings (Gen 17:8, 16), and that the inhabitants of Hebron call him "the prince of God among us" (Gen 23:6), only bolster the case for Abram's royal role in the world as a new Adam.³² Thus, Abram also fulfills the Adamic royal role established in the garden, and should be considered a righteous, royal figure. At this point, then, it may be summarized that Abraham was chosen by God to be a priest-king or a royal priest. But to what end?

Mission

While the first three promises (nationhood, blessing, and name) following the first imperative ("Go") deal directly with Abram, the second triad of promises following

H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 419.

³⁰Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 81. Also, Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 237.

³¹Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 81-82. Also, Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 237-38.

³²Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 81-82. See also Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 372; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 236-37; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 77.

the second imperative (“Be a blessing”) are directed toward the surrounding nations.³³ God does not merely bless Abram for his own sake; he blesses Abram for the sake of the nations.³⁴

The first clue that God will bless Abram for the sake of the nations may be found in the terminology used to distinguish Abram from the rest of the peoples of the world. God promises to make Abram a great nation (*gôy*) in whom all the families (*mišpāhâ*) of the earth will be blessed. Israel is not normally referred to as a *gôy* (nation); this term is reserved for non-Israelite peoples.³⁵ The term normally used of Israel is “people” (*‘am*), which as Gentry explains, “is a *kinship* term which expresses effectively the closeness of the family/marriage relationship between God and Israel established by the covenant made at Sinai (Exod. 24).”³⁶ However, here, in Genesis 12:2, God applies the term *gôy*, “nation” to Abram. Gentry notes, “The basic meaning of *gôy* is an *organized* community of people having *governmental, political, and social structure*.”³⁷ William Dumbrell suggests, “The use of ‘nation’ warrants scrutiny, for it is generally only applied to Israel in the derogatory sense of failed Israel (Deut. 32:28; Judg. 2:20; Isa. 1:4; Jer. 5:9).”³⁸ Dumbrell adds,

Perhaps “nation” is used to represent a political alternative to the world assembled at Babel in chapter 11, the message being that political unity will be divinely given

³³Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 373-76; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 65.

³⁴Wright, *The Mission of God*, 211.

³⁵Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 34; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 243.

³⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 243. See also Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 34. Mathews defines *gôy* as “generally characterized as a political unit with common land, language, and government.” Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 112.

³⁷Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 34.

³⁸Ibid. Also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 243.

rather than constructed from within the world itself! In the call, God perhaps has in mind final governmental structures—those of his kingdom on earth.³⁹

Gentry well summarizes the reason for the distinct terminology used of Abram at this point:

Genesis 12 presents a political structure brought into being by the word of God, with God at the centre and God as the governmental head and rule of that community. In other words, we have the kingdom of God brought into being by means of the covenant (i.e., the covenant between God and Abram). . . . The author's choice of terms emphasizes that the family of Abram is a real kingdom with eternal power and significance while the so-called kingdoms of this world are of no lasting power or significance.⁴⁰

In comparison, the other “nations” of the world are merely “clans” or “families” (*mišpāhâ*). Gentry explains that “this word refers to an amorphous kin group larger than an extended family and smaller than a tribe.”⁴¹ In the words of Dumbrell, “within the context of Abram’s call, the only alternative to the great nation that the Abrahamic descendants will become is the nondescript clans (v. 3 ‘people’) of the rest of the world.”⁴²

Because Abram will not realize these promises in his lifetime, God’s promises to him of nationhood and name clearly point forward to fulfillment in the nation of Israel (Gen 15:13-16; Exod 1:1-7).⁴³ Dumbrell acknowledges “The promises of land and progeny to which this unilateral divine commitment will refer, are not intended by extension to Abraham to provide a link with the past. They are expected to provide a platform from which the historical Israel will finally emerge.”⁴⁴ As such, already in God’s promises to Abram, God is revealing his plan to restore his rule over all the earth (the

³⁹Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 34.

⁴⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 244.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 34.

⁴³Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 93; Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 84-86.

⁴⁴Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 55.

kingdom) through Abram and, ultimately, the nation of Israel.⁴⁵ Thus, the blueprint revealed in Genesis 12:1-3 indicates that God will bless Abram with progeny and land, a promise that will be fulfilled in Israel.

Yet, Abram is commanded now to “be a blessing” to the world.⁴⁶ The surrounding nations’ future destiny (blessing or cursing) will be contingent upon how they deal with Abram and, later, Israel.⁴⁷ Or, in Hamilton’s words, “God’s relationship to others will be determined by the relationship of these others to Abram.”⁴⁸ God “will bless those who bless” Abram and “curse those who curse” Abram (Gen 12:3).

Köstenberger and O’Brien rightly ask, “But how are the peoples of the earth to be brought into contact with Abram? Is Abram’s responsibility to reach out to them?”⁴⁹ Genesis 12:3 raises the important question of mission in the Old Testament. Köstenberger and O’Brien are correct in their assessment that the answer to the theological question of mission for Abraham, and later for Israel, “turns, in part, on how we translate the final verb *bless* in verse 3.”⁵⁰ Köstenberger and O’Brien summarize the two translation options and their implications for understanding mission in the Old Testament:

The passive, “all peoples . . . will be blessed” (NIV), suggests that Abram is the mediator of the blessing to all peoples, and this accords with the stress that falls on the last clause. The reflexive, “and by you all the families of the earth shall bless

⁴⁵Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 66.

⁴⁶There is much debate as to the meaning of the last promise: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” For a thorough analysis of the debate and a fair treatment of the two options that are grammatically possible and proposed by differing scholars, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 238-41. For a concise treatment and explanation of the three interpretive options (passive, reflexive, or middle), see Wright, *The Mission of God*, 216-20.

⁴⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 233, 238.

⁴⁸Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 373

⁴⁹Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 30.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

themselves” (RSV), makes Abram the model for rather than the source of blessing, and this interpretation is anticlimactic.⁵¹

With Köstenberger, O’Brien, and Gentry, the verb in question should be taken as passive, “shall be blessed,” rather than reflexive, “shall bless themselves.”⁵² E. A. Speiser, helpfully summarizes the impact of the decision for the passive interpretation when he suggests, “If the verb in question has passive force, then 12:3 clearly articulates the final goal in a divine plan for universal salvation, and Abram is the divinely chosen instrument in the implementation of that plan.”⁵³ One example of Abraham’s mediatorial role on behalf of the nations is found in Genesis 18:22-33. There, Abraham intercedes on behalf of Sodom. Dempster explains,

Abraham—the father of nations—pleads for the salvation of the city on behalf of its righteous. His prayer does not succeed in saving the city but it does save the righteous. There is a suggestion in the text that Abraham’s role (and by implication his seed) will have consequences for the salvation of the nations.⁵⁴

While Dumbrell agrees that “the climactic last clause of verse 3 demands an understanding of Abram as the mediator of the blessing, such as the passive supplies,”⁵⁵ he concludes that a combination of the passive and reflexive interpretation may communicate the intended meaning best:

Possibly, neither the passive nor the reflexive does justice to the thought intended, but what is needed is a combination of the two, as in “win for themselves a blessing.” This climactic rendering would mean that the peoples of the world would find blessing by coming to the Abrahamic descendants, rather than by later Israel’s outreach. And this interpretation is consistent with the way mission is presented in the Old Testament—nations come in pilgrimage to Israel’s God.⁵⁶

⁵¹Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 30.

⁵²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 238-41. So also Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 374-76; Walton, *Genesis*, 394-94. For an argument for a reflexive interpretation, see Wright, *The Mission of God*, 216-20.

⁵³E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 86, quoted in Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 374.

⁵⁴Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 83.

⁵⁵Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 35.

⁵⁶*Ibid.* Gordon Wenham also opts for a combination of the passive and reflexive interpretation

Dumbrell's interpretation is helpful in that he provides a legitimate grammatical solution to the problem of the passives in verse 3. More importantly, as I argue below, Dumbrell's interpretation is consistent with the way the Old Testament presents how Israel was to relate to the nations: historically through incorporation and eschatologically through ingathering.⁵⁷ Thus, Abram/Abraham, though not having realized the promises, serves as a prototype of how Israel will fulfill its mission to the surrounding nations. As the nations interact with Abram/Abraham, they will either be blessed or cursed, depending on their response to him.

In essence, Genesis 12:1-3 contain promises of the restoration of the fallen world through Abram.⁵⁸ Dumbrell proposes, "We have suggested that the goal of world redemption had as its aim the restoration of kingdom of God rule, divine dominion established once again over the world in which man functions once more as the completely recovered divine image."⁵⁹ Abram is the new Adam, continuing the pattern of God's people, through whom God will recover his kingdom rule that is now being challenged by the rebellious seed of the serpent. Since God's promises to Abram point to the future, it is also clear that Abram represents the promise that God will create a people, beginning with Abram himself, through whom God will bless the world. Dempster explains that

of "bless." See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 277-78.

⁵⁷Cf. Charles H. H. Scobie, "Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 43, no. 2 (1992): 283-305. Contra, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), who argues for continuity between Israel's mission and the church: a mission of outreach to the nations (14-16).

⁵⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 242-43; Wright, *The Mission of God*, 211-14.

⁵⁹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 66. Wright suggests that with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), "we have the launch of God's *redemptive* mission." Wright sees the first two "missional" texts (Gen 1:28; 9) as creational and "nearly identical." Wright, *The Mission of God*, 211. One of the points I seek to make is that throughout all the covenants, God is seeking to reestablish his kingdom rule on the earth through a faithful Adam. Thus, I take God's redemptive mission to be outlined in Gen 3:15 and worked out through the ensuing covenant relationships with the ensuing Adams.

even in Abram's life, as indicated by the blessing of Melchizedek, "the blessing of creation is now transferred to the arena of history, where the Creator's global purposes are being achieved."⁶⁰ Dempster concludes,

The most high God, the Creator and conqueror of chaos, is at work defeating the enemies of Abram, giving this aged nomad regal dominion and authority over the kings of the nations. God's programme with and through Abram is to restore the original condition of creation described in Genesis 1-2 (Gen. 14:19-20). The fact that the blessing is given by someone who originates from what will become the holiest site in the Bible is significant. (Jeru)Salem emerges as a geographical source of blessing for Abram; later it will surface as a source of universal blessing!⁶¹

Abraham is the new Adam who images God and through whom God promises to restore the Edenic blessings and establish his kingdom on the earth. Through Abraham, God will mediate blessing to those who receive him and cursing to those who do not.

Covenant: God's Confirmation of His Promises

To confirm his intention to establish his sovereign rule over all the earth through Abram, the new Adam, God enshrined the grand promises of progeny and land by cutting a covenant between himself and Abram that included Abram's offspring.⁶² The covenant in Genesis 15 guaranteed that God would reestablish his kingdom on earth through Abram's seed. This covenant relationship "cut" in Genesis 15 is "established" in Genesis 17 and confirmed with an oath in Genesis 22.⁶³ Thus, a progression is evident in God's

⁶⁰Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 79.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 35. For the technical use of the language of "cut a covenant" (*kārat bērit*) and "confirm a covenant" (*hēqīm bērit*), see pp. 49-50 of this diss. "Establish my covenant" (*hēqīm bērit*) (cf. Gen 6:18) does not refer to the institution of a covenant but to its perpetuation. Instead, *kārat bērit*, or to "cut a covenant" is the language used of instituting a covenant.

⁶³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 248, 283-86; Dumbrell states that "unlike the covenant with Noah, which was 'established,' the one with Abram is 'cut.'" Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 35. Contra Williamson, who fails to distinguish between "cut a covenant" (*kārat bērit*) and "confirm a covenant" (*hēqīm bērit*), and consequently proposes two Abrahamic covenants. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 84-90. I hold that there is only one Abrahamic covenant progressively revealed in stages. In distinguishing two Abrahamic covenants, Williamson proposes that Gen 15 contains a unilateral covenant in the tradition of a royal grant, whereas Gen 17 contains a bilateral covenant in the tradition of the

revelation of his saving plan through Abram. The promises are given in Genesis 12, but by Genesis 15 Abram requires further assurance of the divine promises.⁶⁴ In Genesis 15 the Lord appeared to Abram in a vision and promised him a great reward (v. 1).

Nevertheless, Abram still wondered whether or not he would continue childless and be forced to adopt an heir since God had not granted him offspring (vv. 2-3).⁶⁵ The word of the Lord came to Abram and assured him that he would have a biological son for an heir; in fact, God promised that Abram's descendants would be as innumerable as the stars in the heavens (vv. 4-5). Abram believed God, and God credited Abram's faith as righteousness (v. 6).⁶⁶ Abram's faith becomes a model for his future offspring, the promised people of God (cf. Rom 4:1-18).⁶⁷

That God initiated a covenant with Abram is clear from both the ritual described in Genesis 15:9-11 and the language of cutting a covenant in verse 18.⁶⁸ The nature of this covenant relationship is a radical commitment on God's part to ensure that his promises to Abram come to fruition, made evident in God's action who, when instituting this covenant, alone walked through the divided carcasses, indicating that all obligations

Suzerain-Vassal treaties of the ancient Near East.

⁶⁴O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 128.

⁶⁵Ibid. On the difficulties surrounding the interpretation of Eliezer of Damascus in v. 2 and of the background of adoption of an heir, see Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 327-29; cf. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 419-22.

⁶⁶For an argument for the traditional interpretation of Abram believing and God counting it (his faith) as righteousness, see Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 423-26; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 329-30.

⁶⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 330.

⁶⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 250-51; Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 35. On the language of "cut a covenant" versus "confirm or uphold a covenant," see n62 in this chap. In Gen 15:18, *kārat bērit* is used, indicating that a covenant was "cut" or instituted. Further, the covenant ritual/ceremony itself, with the cutting of the animals in halves, further strengthens this argument. Note also that God initiating a covenant with Abraham meets Allison's first criteria that defines covenant: unilaterally-established by God alone. See Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 64, 66.

for fulfillment of the promises rested on him alone. His action likely communicates a self-maledictory oath.⁶⁹ By initiating this covenant with Abram, God enshrined his promises to Abram of progeny and land.⁷⁰

Questions still remained as to whether or not God would fulfill his promises. Consequently, Abram entertained alternate means for obtaining an heir, for example, appointing an heir (Gen 15:2-3) and bearing offspring through a surrogate (Gen 16). In the midst of such questions, Abram was in a place where he required reassurances. In this context, God confirmed his covenant with Abram in order to advance his plan to restore his divine rule over the earth through this new Adam and the promised people that would come from him. In Genesis 17, God “established” his covenant relationship with Abram,⁷¹ focusing on the second set of three promises made in Genesis 12:3—that Abram would be a blessing and that the fate of the nations would rest on their response to Abram’s offspring.⁷² Williamson notes,

Although the promises of Genesis 15 are not altogether absent (cf. Gen. 17:8), the stress in Genesis 17 is on Abraham’s international significance. His numerical proliferation (Gen. 17:2) is elaborated in terms of his becoming “the father of multitudinous nations.”⁷³

⁶⁹For an explanation of the covenant ritual and the arguments for and against a self-maledictory oath, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 250-56. Wenham rejects the idea of a self-maledictory oath. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 330-34. Robertson sees God’s action of walking between the carcasses as establishing a self-maledictory oath. Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 130. The presence of a self-maledictory oath meets Allison’s fourth criteria that defines a covenant: covenantal sign or oath, though Allison only points to circumcision as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64, 66. As already mentioned, however, the revelation of the covenant with Abraham is progressively revealed in stages.

⁷⁰Gentry proposes that “the covenant, therefore, enshrines the promises given in Genesis 12, with a focus on fulfillment of the first three promises in Genesis 12:1-3, i.e., a focus on the divine promises particularly to Abram himself.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 248.

⁷¹For arguments for only one Abrahamic covenant instituted in Gen 15 and confirmed in Gen 17, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 265-69, 275-80; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 74-77. Contra Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 84-90.

⁷²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 268.

⁷³Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 88. So also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through*

Accordingly, God changed Abram's name to Abraham (Gen 17:5), which means "father of a multitude of nations."⁷⁴ Stephen Dempster suggests that "what is in view is not just a new nation but a new humanity! The echoes of Genesis 1 resound."⁷⁵ Thus, through Abraham and his promised seed, God would restore his kingdom on earth through a people with whom he would relate in a covenantal father/son relationship, who would dwell in his presence to serve him as priests, and display his sovereign rule to the surrounding nations. However, the covenant did not only confirm the promise made to Abraham; it also structured the relationship in a way that it revealed how Abraham, as God's son, was to relate to him, and it identified who was to be related to God through this covenant by means of a specific covenantal sign.⁷⁶

Covenant stipulations. While God unilaterally established his covenant with Abram by placing all the obligation of its fulfillment upon himself (Gen 15), God still required obedience from Abraham.⁷⁷ In other words, the nature of this covenant relationship between God and Abraham was one in which Abraham was expected to respond to God's faithfulness with loving obedience and covenant faithfulness.⁷⁸ God

Covenant, 266.

⁷⁴Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 88. See also Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 463-64; Walton, *Genesis*, 449; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 21.

⁷⁵Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 81.

⁷⁶To be sure, Abraham is not directly called God's son, but God called him to leave his father and follow him. God also changed his name. More importantly, God entered into a familial relationship with Abraham by cutting a covenant. Abraham as God's son is implied in the fact that he is traced back to the seed of the woman and in the fact that God calls Israel his son. Additionally, as I have argued, the idea of being created in the divine image and likeness indicates sonship, even though it is not explicitly mentioned that Abraham was God's son.

⁷⁷Obedience meets Allison's third criteria that defines a covenant: binding obligations. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64, 66.

⁷⁸There are ongoing questions as to whether or not God's covenant with Abraham is unconditional or not. Christopher Wright adds that "in the light of the subtle but clear theology of these texts, the old dispute over whether the covenant with Abraham was conditional or unconditional seems far

commanded Abram to “walk before me and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly” (Gen 17:1-2). Based upon John Walton’s study on the concept of covenant, Gentry concludes,

When people walk before God, it means that they serve as his emissary or diplomatic representative. In Genesis 17:1 God commands Abram to walk before him. Thus, Abram is to be God’s agent or diplomatic messenger and representative in the world. When the world looks at Abram they will see what it is like to have a right relationship to God and to be what God intended for humanity.⁷⁹

In commanding Abram to be “blameless,” Gentry adds, “God is calling Abram to be morally blameless and impeccable, honest and sincere in the covenant relationship.”⁸⁰ The nature of the relationship between God and Abraham, and Abraham’s seed under this covenant, required faithfulness, even though the covenant was unilaterally established by God with promises that God himself would bring about.

Covenant formula. Genesis 17 not only summarizes the Abrahamic covenant, it also explains and expands on those previous promises.⁸¹ The covenant is now said to include Abraham’s descendants in an everlasting covenant (v. 7). Thus, the identity of the people of God under the Abrahamic covenant is genealogical: Abraham and his descendents. The nature of this relationship is such that God declares himself to be the God of Abraham and Israel, whom he takes for himself as his people (vv. 7-8).⁸² As in verses 7-8, the covenant relationship between God and his people is summarized throughout the Old Testament in a covenant formula: “I will be your God (formula A),

too simplistic in its neat binary alternatives. The reality incorporates both.” Wright, *The Mission of God*, 205-6. See also Gentry and Wellum, 634.

⁷⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 260.

⁸⁰Ibid., 262.

⁸¹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 74; Walton, *Genesis*, 449.

⁸²That the covenant structures the relationship between God and Abraham and his descendents, evidences Allison’s second criteria that defines a covenant. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64, 66. Thus, the Abrahamic covenant meets all the definitional criteria laid out by Allison.

and you will be my people (formula B).”⁸³ Rolf Rendtorff provides a thorough exegetical and theological study of this covenant formula and explains its significance in Genesis

17:7-8:

God establishes (הקימ) his covenant (בְּרִית) as an ‘eternal covenant’ (ברית עולם) between himself and Abraham’s descendants. The content of this covenant is ‘to be God for you and for your descendants after you’ (v. 7). Here, therefore, there is a very close link between Formula A and the *bērît* itself: Ywhh’s being God for Israel is the substance of the covenant. Then comes the additional promise, the gift of the land, a promise which will be fulfilled only for Abraham’s descendants (v. 8a). Finally the text repeats once more: ‘and I will be God for them’ (v. 8b). Formula A is therefore used twice here, and frames the promise of the land. Here it is especially significant that in this case the covenant formula stands right at the beginning of God’s history with Israel, as an explanation of what God’s *bērît* means for Abraham and his descendants.⁸⁴

This “covenant formula” is repeated in part or in whole, summarizing the covenant relationship between God and his people, even in instances where the word “covenant” (בְּרִית, *bērît*) is absent (cf. Exod 6:7; 2 Sam 7:24; Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:28).⁸⁵

But as the covenant is progressively revealed, the participants in the Abrahamic covenant become delineated from all others through the use of a covenant sign.

Covenant sign: circumcision. One significant advancement revealed in the confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 17 is the inclusion of the covenant sign of circumcision, demarcating membership in the covenant community.⁸⁶ God himself declares, “Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his

⁸³Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 13-37. Rendtorff examines the formula in whole and in its parts: (A) = “I will be God for you”; (B) “You shall be a people for me”; and (C) the formula in its entirety (A+B). For a list showing each Old Testament reference to the covenant formula, whether citing just (A), (B), or both (C). Ibid., 93-94.

⁸⁴Ibid., 15.

⁸⁵Ibid., 11. For a full list of citations of the covenant formula in whole or in part, see *ibid.*, 93-94.

⁸⁶Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 469-70; Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 149-50; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 23.

foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant” (Gen 17:14). Though, as Walton notes, “Circumcision was practiced widely in the ancient Near East” for a variety of reasons, “what is unique in [Israelite] practice is that the ritual is used as a theological rite of passage into the covenant community rather than a passage into adulthood or a new family group through marriage.”⁸⁷

Since circumcision served as a sign for covenant participation (Gen 17:12-14), it is no surprise that the concept of “circumcision” came to signify covenant faithfulness, while “uncircumcision” came to indicate faithlessness to the covenant (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:12-17; cf. Jer 6:10).⁸⁸ Unfortunately, this is the only assertion regarding circumcision that goes unquestioned, for there is little agreement among scholars as to the significance of circumcision beyond it signifying inclusion in the covenant community.⁸⁹ However, the application of circumcision as an identifying marker for covenant membership raises

⁸⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 450-51.

⁸⁸Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., “Circumcision” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: An Encyclopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures of Speech and Literary Patterns of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 148-49.

⁸⁹Mark E. Ross, “Baptism and Circumcision as Signs and Seals,” in *The Case for Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 85-111. Ross argues that circumcision is a sign for our benefit, remind us of God’s faithfulness, and “giving us greater assurance.” *Ibid.*, 86. Deducing from its assumed hygienic benefits, Robertson suggests that circumcision signified the need for cleansing and the very process of cleansing. Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 150-52. One recently proposed explanation of circumcision adds to the ongoing argument regarding Abraham as a priest of God. Following the work of John D. Meade, Gentry advances Meade’s argument that “Egyptian circumcision was an initiation rite for priests.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 273. Gentry quotes Meade at length: “Just as the king-priest was the son of the god in Egypt, and was consecrated to him through circumcision, Israel as the first born son of Yahweh (Ex. 4:22-23) has undergone and will undergo circumcision (Josh. 5:2-9) in order to be consecrated to his service. . . . [I]t is interesting to note that the Egyptian background would reveal to Israel that they indeed belonged to Yahweh as his first born Son, since they had undergone circumcision just as the Pharaoh.” *Ibid.* Additionally, argues Meade, while “only the priests were obligated to be circumcised in Egypt,” the rite is passed on to every male in Israel. Thus, Meade concludes, “As a kingdom of priests, circumcision is the appropriate sign for the people of Israel, for it will remind every male Israelite that he is a priest, specially consecrated to Yahweh and his service.” *Ibid.* Gentry is citing John D. Meade, “The Meaning of Circumcision in Israel: A Proposal for a Transfer Right from Egypt to Israel,” *Adorare Mente* 1 (2008): 14-29. Email correspondence with the author revealed that the case for circumcision as a priestly right will be made in a forthcoming monograph. Cf. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 19, agrees with this assessment.

the fact that membership in the community was not based on mere biological descent. To be sure, Ishmael is a special case since he was circumcised (Gen 17:26) but was excluded from the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:18). It is interesting to note, though, that as Abraham's biological descendant, God promised Ishmael blessing, fruitfulness, fatherhood over princes, and nationhood (Gen 17:10).⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the point stands that membership in the covenant community was not indicated merely by biological descent. Obedience was necessary (Gen 17:14); and for Abraham, God required that he obey the covenant stipulation to circumcise all the males of his household (Gen 17:12-13).

In Genesis 22 God tests Abraham's obedience by asking him to sacrifice the promised seed. Abraham is faithful; God provides a substitute sacrifice and God once again confirms the promises to Abraham, this time with an oath (Gen 22:15-18). Wenham notes that "this is the first and only divine oath in the patriarchal stories, though it is frequently harked back to (24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Exod 13:5; often in Deuteronomy)."⁹¹ In addition, God expands on the previous promises. Kenneth Mathews explains,

This culminating passage gathers descriptions of the Abrahamic promises from earlier narratives and expands upon them: (1) "I will surely bless you" adds "surely" to the first occasion of the pledge in 12:2; (2) "the stars in the sky" recalls Abram's night vision (15:5) but here includes "and [I will surely] make your descendants as numerous" . . . (3) the motif of immeasurable "sand" . . . and (4) "possession of the cities [lit., gate] of their enemies" (v. 17) is new to the promise.⁹²

Thus, while God initiates a covenant relationship with Abraham based solely on God's grace in choosing him, Abraham is still expected to respond in covenant faithfulness. Abraham must circumcise all males in his household. Only those males who are marked by physical circumcision, and presumably their female family members,

⁹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 27.

⁹¹Ibid., 111. After Abraham's obedient response to sacrifice the promise, God confirms his covenant with an oath (Gen 22:16), saying, "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen 22:17-18). For the place of Gen 22 in the Abrahamic covenant, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 283-89.

⁹²Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 298.

are included in the Abrahamic covenant community. In turn, God will bless Abraham with the goal that through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Thus, God promises to reestablish his earthly rule through Abraham and his descendants.

Israel: A Corporate Adam

Because God's promises to Abraham included his offspring, the foundation for God's relationship to Israel is the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 2:23-25).⁹³ Paul Williamson helpfully clarifies that "the giving of the law was not intended to set aside the promise (cf. Gal. 3:17); rather, it was the means by which the goal of the promise would be advanced in and through Abraham's national descendants (Gen. 12:2; cf. 18:18-19)."⁹⁴ Consequently, from Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, God created Israel as a national people with whom he would relate in a father/son relationship (sonship) under his rule and care (covenant), and who would dwell in his presence as priests (priesthood) and represent his sovereign rule on earth (kingship) by conquering their enemies and reestablishing the boundaries of the sacred space in order to establish God's model kingdom on the earth as a light to the nations (mission).

God's promises to Abraham of progeny and land would be fulfilled through Israel under the Mosaic covenant.⁹⁵ The Exodus account begins by reviewing the list of

⁹³Davies argues, "The Abrahamic covenant with its grant of land, its promise of nationhood and above all a relationship with God is very much in view as providing the framework for the exodus and Sinai covenant." John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 180. Because of the promise of universal blessing, the Abrahamic covenant serves as the ground from which God will deal with all of humanity. Gentry argues that "the covenant with Abraham is the basis for all of God's dealings with the human race from this point on, and the basis of all his later plans and purposes in history." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 295. So also Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 94; T. Desmond Alexander, "Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings," *Tyndale Bulletin* 49, no. 2 (1998): 197.

⁹⁴Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 94.

⁹⁵Peter Gentry states, "The Mosaic covenant is given at this time to administer the fulfillment of the divine promises to Abraham and to the nation as a whole, and through them to the entire world." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 304. So also, Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 282. There is debate as to how the structure of the Mosaic covenant should be understood. Ever since G. E. Mendenhall's *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (1955), scholars have identified the

Israel's (Jacob's) sons remaining in Egypt in order to show that God's promise to Abraham of many descendants is coming to pass. Reaching back to the language of Genesis 1:28, the author declares that "the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong" (Exod 1:7).⁹⁶ Thus, what began as a command to Adam (Gen 1:28) and became a promise to Abraham (Gen 12:2; 17:2, 6) is fulfilled in even greater than expected terms.⁹⁷ God's promise to Abraham that his

structure of the Mosaic covenant as similar to the ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties. See E. C. Lucas, "Covenant, Treaty, and Prophecy," *Themelios* 8, no. 1 (1982): 19. This view has become the majority position. See John Arthur Davies, "A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6," *Tyndale Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (2002), 159; Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 439-40; Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath*, 98n8. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 308. Recently, some Old Testament scholars have begun to reject the comparison of the Mosaic covenant to ancient Near Eastern treaties. John Durham is skeptical of the close association with ancient Near Eastern treaty forms, noting that God is not forcing Israel to serve him, much as a conquering king who would draw up a suzerain-vassal treaty would do. John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 262. John Davies is concerned that the suzerain-vassal framework that has been utilized over-emphasizes discontinuity between the Abrahamic covenant of "promise" and the Mosaic covenant. Davies, "A Royal Priesthood," 159. William Dumbrell suggests it is probable that the covenant spoken of in Exod 19 is not even a new covenant made with Moses. Instead, Dumbrell suggests that it may simply refer to the Abrahamic covenant. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 44. Peter Enns, however, leaves no room for doubt: "What is about to transpire on Mount Sinai is *not* a new covenant, but the continuation and deepening of an existing covenant, the covenant God made with Israel's ancestors long ago. . . . The clause 'keep my covenant' is a call to Israel to remain faithful to the covenant initiated with Abraham—the covenant that will be given greater substance in the following chapters." Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 387-88. I propose that the Mosaic covenant is a distinct covenant from the Abrahamic covenant, as it contains the four definitional criteria outlined by Allison. Cf. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64. While debate continues as to the literary structure of the Mosaic covenant, I agree with Peter Gentry that regardless, the parallels between the Mosaic covenant structure and ancient Near Eastern treaties are "noteworthy" and would have been in a recognizable form to Israel. Thus, Gentry suggests that "the covenant is formulated as a suzerain-vassal treaty in order to define God as Father and King, and Israel as obedient son in a relationship of loyal love, obedience, and trust." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 308.

⁹⁶God had commanded Adam originally to "be fruitful [פְּרֹה] and multiply [רַבֵּה] and fill the earth" (Gen 1:28). This command is repeated to Noah (Gen 9:1, 7), another Adam. It is also repeated to Abraham, except in the form of a promise (Gen 12:1-3; 17:2-8; 22:16-24). See Stewart, *Exodus*, 60-62. Köstenberger and O'Brien argue that the exodus rescue is recounted as a new creation in the Song of Moses (Exod 15:1-18): "The appearance of creation motifs in the song suggests that Yahweh's redemption of Israel with a high hand and an outstretched arm is a renewal of the creation mandate." Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 32.

⁹⁷The language goes beyond that of Gen 1:28, indicating that the fulfillment is greater than expected. Added to the language of Gen 1:28 ("be fruitful and multiply") is the idea of multiplication that is normally used of animals with the word "swarm" [שָׂרַץ]. This word is only used in reference to man in Gen 9:1, 7, and here. See William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and*

descendants would be innumerable (Gen 15:5; 22:7) is now becoming a reality, for “the land was filled with them” (Exod 1:7). T. Desmond Alexander notes,

Later, as the Israelites prepare to enter the land of Canaan, Moses acknowledges that the promise of Genesis 15:5 has been fulfilled: “The LORD your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as many as the stars of the sky” (Dt. 1:10; cf. Dt. 10:22; 28:62; Ne. 9:23).⁹⁸

Terence Fretheim well summarizes that “this is a *microcosmic fulfillment of God’s macrocosmic design* for the world (cf. 40:34-48). Israel is God’s starting point for realizing the divine intentions for all.”⁹⁹ However, as the book of Exodus opens, Abraham’s descendants are not in the Promised Land; they are in Egyptian captivity under a foreign king, while the promise of land remains unfulfilled and in danger.

In order to fulfill the Abrahamic land promise, God initiates a rescue of Israel out of Egypt (Exod 6:1-8).¹⁰⁰ After God’s miraculous rescue, he guides Israel to the place of his presence, Mount Sinai, in order to define their relationship from this point forward, that is, to make a covenant with them (Exod 19-24). To understand the place of Israel in God’s unfolding plan, Exodus 19:3-6 is a key text.¹⁰¹ The striking reality of this passage

Commentary, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 134; Durham, *Exodus*, 4.

⁹⁸Alexander, “Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings,” 197-98.

⁹⁹Terrence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 25; Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 180, emphasis original.

¹⁰⁰Gentry states that “the point of the book of Exodus will be to add, by way of redemption from slavery, the gift of the land.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 295. So also Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 32.

¹⁰¹Gentry rightly suggests that Exod 19 “provides the background to the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 19-24) and acts as a bookend on the opening side of the covenant document.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 309. Thus, chap. 19 is significant in the literary structure of the Mosaic covenant. Additionally, for our purposes, Exod 19:3-6, in particular, defines the relationship God will have with Israel as a new Adam. Therefore, I only comment on the Mosaic covenant from Exod 19. For the Mosaic covenant as stated in Deut, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 357-88. Gentry argues that the Deuteronomic covenant “is a covenant in its own right,” but that it is only “a *supplement to*—and not a replacement for—the covenant at Sinai” (378). Of Exodus 19:5-6, Wright also notes that “this is a key missional text. . . . It is as pivotal in the book of Exodus as Genesis 12:1-3 is in Genesis. It is the hinge between chapters 1-18, describing God’s gracious initiative of redemption (the exodus), and chapters 20-40, which describe the making of the covenant, the giving of the law, and the building of the tabernacle. Like Genesis 12:1-3 it also has a combination of imperative (how Israel must behave) and

is that God brought Israel into his very presence, declaring, “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself” (Exod 19:4). God clearly intended to return his people to the place of his presence, which is here identified as his holy mountain (Exod 15:13, 16-17).

John Davies suggests,

The point, then, of the “eagle” image in Exodus 19:4, would seem to be the divinely granted ability to “fly” or be transported in flight to the heights where God dwells—a region normally inaccessible to human endeavor and beyond human comprehension.¹⁰²

In other words, the final destination of God’s people is God himself.¹⁰³ Davies adds, “It is this privilege of nearness, or access (בוא) to the presence of God (perhaps as a king might invite his favoured courtiers to draw near to him) which serves as the setting for the declarations of vv. 5-6.”¹⁰⁴

The relationship between God and Israel is based upon God’s grace.¹⁰⁵ That this is so is evidenced, first of all, by the continuity between the Abrahamic covenant and God’s relationship with Israel (Exod. 2:24; 3:6, 16; 4:5; 6:2-8).¹⁰⁶ On the basis of his relationship with Abraham, which is of grace, God calls Israel his firstborn son (Exod 4:22-23). Not only does the pattern of sonship continue in Israel,¹⁰⁷ but the foundation of a divine-human relationship continues to be God’s grace. Second, God’s rescue of Israel

promise (what Israel will be among the rest of the nations).” Wright, *The Mission of God*, 224.

¹⁰²Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 40.

¹⁰³Ibid., 41.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Gentry states that “a lot of misunderstanding has been caused by comparing the old covenant to the new in terms of ‘law’ and ‘grace.’ This text is clear: the old covenant is based upon grace, and grace motivates the keeping of the covenant, just as we find in the new covenant.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 312.

¹⁰⁶Fretheim, *Exodus*, 209.

¹⁰⁷Beale admits that “the likely reason that Israel was referred to as God’s ‘son’ or ‘firstborn’ is that the mantle of Adam had been passed on to Noah and then to the patriarchs and their ‘seed,’ Israel.” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 402.

before ratifying the covenant at Sinai (Exod 24) is all grace (Exod 19:4).¹⁰⁸ So then, it is on the basis of God's gracious initiative in salvation, as witnessed by Israel (Exod 19:4), that God calls Israel to full obedience (Exod 19:5). John Davies notes,

The requirement for unquestioning obedience, might be compared with the command in the garden in Genesis 2:16-17. In view of the other creation motifs to be observed in the compositional design of the book of Exodus . . . this parallel may be significant.¹⁰⁹

This entire pericope in which God establishes who he is and what he has done, along with the stipulations for obedience, clearly evidences a covenantal framework.¹¹⁰ As Davies proposes, Exodus 19:4-6 is "an anticipatory summary of the terms of the new development of the Sinai covenant."¹¹¹ To this point in the biblical narrative, all God's dealings with his people have been founded on grace and at his initiative: creation of Adam; rescue of Noah; election of Abraham; redemption of Israel. This pattern continue throughout Scripture as I shall argue. Therefore, it is unhelpful to explain the discontinuity between the old and new covenants as one of "law" and "grace."¹¹² Rather, what one will continue to observe is that one of the continuities in God's dealing with his people is that he initiates a relationship based on grace, and the only appropriate response is obedience.

¹⁰⁸Understanding God's relationship with Israel in the context of his initiating grace avoids the reductionism of seeing the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant in either conditional or unconditional categories. Davies rightly warns that "the contrast between conditional and unconditional covenants has frequently been too starkly drawn." Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 181. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 314, 397, 608-11. As seen from Allison's and Hugenberger's definitional categories of covenant in the Old Testament, all covenants contain binding obligations. See Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64; Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 215.

¹⁰⁹Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 51. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 308-10.

¹¹⁰Compare the four definitional characteristics of a covenant as presented in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

¹¹¹Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 50. See Fretheim, *Exodus*, 205. Köstenberger and O'Brien propose that Exod 19:3-6 is a passage of "great significance" because here God explains Israel's role in his unfolding plan. Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 32.

¹¹²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 312.

The discontinuity arises in relation to the source of motivation or power for obedience.

The conditional clause of Exodus 19:5a reveals that God demands total obedience and faithfulness in this covenant relationship.¹¹³ Such conditions fit within a covenant framework; for a covenant is characterized by such binding obligations.¹¹⁴ Still, scholars disagree as to the nature and logic of the conditional clause.¹¹⁵ Regardless, a natural reading of the Exodus narrative shows that Israel does not become God's people by choosing to obey; they are already God's people.¹¹⁶ God did not bring Israel to the place of his presence only to make them an offer, which had they refused, he would have found another nation to be his people.¹¹⁷ Davies contends,

¹¹³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 312.

¹¹⁴Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64; Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 215.

¹¹⁵Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 313, admits that "scholars have debated the logic of the conditional sentence in verses 5-6." So also Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 42. For a summary of various treatments and interpretations regarding the conditional clause of vv. 5-6, see Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 41-47. Several consequences arise based upon how one interprets the conditional clause. So, for example, if one takes the conditional as real, then it may be said that there is the potential that Israel may reject God's offer. John Durham believes that in Exod 19:5, God is creating Israel as a nation, and Israel has the option to decline. Durham, *Exodus*, 262. Fretheim objects and instead proposes that Israel is already God's people. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 209. But, it is important to note that Fretheim's conclusions are driven more by his theological system (Arminianism) than by his exegesis. Fretheim emphatically opposes Israel's election as the people of God at Sinai (208-9, 213). Also taking the conditional as real, much to the consternation of the Reformed covenantal community, Michael Horton interprets the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of law (i.e., works), conditioned upon Israel's obedience. For Horton, there are only two kinds of covenants: covenants of law (works) or covenants of promise (inheritance). Michael Scott Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 35-37, 47.

¹¹⁶Hamilton explains, "The purpose of the Lord's offering Israel a covenant is not to 'make' Israel God's people. They are already God's people. Earlier in Exodus the Lord has already called Israel 'my people' (e.g., 3:7, 'I have seen the misery of *my people* in Egypt'), 'my firstborn son' (4:22), 'my son' (4:23). Also, Moses, in conversation with the Lord has called Israel 'your people (5:23)." Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 301.

¹¹⁷Contra Dale Patrick, "The Covenant Code Source," *Vetus Testamentum* 27, no. 2 (1977): 149. Patrick goes on to say that "if the people had refused to pledge obedience, the offer would have been rejected and Yahweh and Israel would have gone their separate ways." Durham views the clause as a real conditional, stating that "an affirmative response to Yahweh's 'if' on the part of the people of Israel will mean the birth of 'Israel' as Yahweh's people. Without that affirmative response, indeed, there would have been only 'sons of Israel,' the descendants of Jacob. With the affirmative response, 'Israel,' a community of faith transcending biological descendancy, could come into being." Durham, *Exodus*, 262.

The relationship already exists and is the basis for the appeal for (continued) loyalty. . . . This understanding of the protasis as a declaration requiring a response is confirmed by the report of the people's acceptance in vv. 8a. The covenant thus comes into effect no later than the moment when the people pledge their commitment to it.¹¹⁸

Thus, God is redefining or restructuring an already existing relationship; this is one of the defining marks of a covenant.¹¹⁹ In this conditional clause, proposes Gentry, God is "proclaiming the privileged status of Israel inherent in the covenant relationship."¹²⁰ "The 'then clause' or apodosis (19:5b-6) defines the result in terms of relationship to Yahweh: they will belong to him in two ways: as (1) as a king's treasure, and (2) a kingdom of priests and holy nation."¹²¹

Israel: God's Special Treasure

According to Davies, Exodus 19:5-6 "describes the covenant people by means of a single image ('special treasure') with expansionary or explanatory glosses in vv. 5bβ and 6a. Israel is, or is to be, or become a אגלה." ¹²² Likewise, Victor Hamilton suggests

¹¹⁸Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 43-44.

¹¹⁹Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

¹²⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 313. Gentry goes on to note that "important parallels in Deuteronomy such as 7:6-11, 14:2, and especially 26:18-19 also substantiate this view." Ibid. Davies suggests that "there would be no significant weakening of the case being presented below for the meaning and function of the honorific designations of Israel in vv. 5-6a if one were to read some form of conditional reward at v. 5, provided this is understood to be within the framework of an already established relationship." Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 46. Contra James Muilenburg and following Dale Patrick, Gentry likewise argues that the protasis or "if clause" does not so much lay down a precondition for benefits as define the content and nature of the status in the apodeses or "then clauses." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 313. For Muilenburg's argument, see James Muilenburg, "The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations," *Vetus Testamentum* 9 (1959): 347-65. For Patrick's argument, see Patrick, "The Covenant Code Source," 145-57. Whereas Muilenburg classified the conditional statement as "promising divine favor for obeying Yahweh's will or threatening punishment for disobeying," Patrick classifies it as "a conditional promise."

¹²¹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 312.

¹²²Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 51. So also Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 89. For an interpretation of the ו clause as explanatory rather than causal, concessive, or asseverative, see Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 55-60. For the meaning of *segulla*, see Moshe Greenberg, "Hebrew *segulla*: Akkadian *sikiltu*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 71, no. 3 (1951): 172-74.

that סגלה is “the key word used to describe Israel, God’s covenant people in v. 5.”¹²³

Hamilton notes,

One cannot avoid the fact that this phrase (*segulla*), and its positioning as the first in a list of three, highlights Israel’s uniqueness and the special affection the Lord has for Israel. . . . Israel has a special relationship with the Lord that no other nation can claim or experience.¹²⁴

Gentry agrees, noting the two phrases (personal treasure and royal priesthood/holy nation) are coreferential. He suggests that “both statements are saying the same thing, but each does so in a different way and looks at the topic from a different perspective.”¹²⁵

As to interpretation, Moshe Greenberg argues that the Hebrew *segulla* is a cognate of the Akkadian *sikiltu*, which literally means “a private accumulation or hoard” as evidenced by the use of *segulla* in 1 Chronicles 29:3 and Ecclesiastes 2:8.¹²⁶ In addition to its literal use, Greenberg argues,

A more spiritual connotation became attached to the word. The material aspect of “private savings” gave way to the spiritual attachment to objects diligently and patiently acquired. Thus *segulla* comes to mean a dear personal possession, a ‘treasure’ only in the sense of that which is treasured or cherished.¹²⁷

Greenberg contends that *segulla* is used in this manner in Exodus 19:5 (cf. Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4; Mal 3:17). Alec Motyer explains,

We must understand [סגלה] against the background of absolutist monarchies of the ancient world, where the king was the theoretical owner of everything. Within this total ownership, he might gather and put to one side things that he specially prized and considered to be his own in a unique way. It was this that was his [סגלה], his choice, personal treasure.¹²⁸

¹²³Hamilton, *Exodus*, 302.

¹²⁴Ibid., 303.

¹²⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 316.

¹²⁶Greenberg, “Hebrew *segulla*,” 173. So also Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 85.

¹²⁷Ibid., 174.

¹²⁸J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 198-99. So also Durham, *Exodus*, 262. The concept of a king’s personal, private treasure may be seen in 1 Chr 29:3 and Eccl 2:8.

And that special treasure is what God proclaims Israel will become if she remains faithful.¹²⁹ By his redeeming actions, God has shown that all the earth belongs to him, but out of all the nations over which he is sovereign, he chose Israel to be his treasured possession (*segulla*). On the basis of who God is and what he has done for them (Exod 19:4), God called Israel to enter into a covenant relationship with him in which, if they promised to remain faithful, they would be his personal treasure (v. 5).

What it means to be God's treasured possession is described in the parallel phrases, royal priesthood and holy nation;¹³⁰ however, I make note of two particular nuances. The first sense of personal treasure is obvious from what is stated above. The concept of a king's personal treasure indicates separation or distinction from his general treasure.¹³¹ Thus, in the case of Israel, being God's personal treasure indicates separation and distinction from the other nations.¹³² Clearly, the idea of election is present; God chose Israel out of all the nations of the world to be his personal treasure. But the idea of separation and election, as seen next, is for a particular purpose.¹³³

The second sense of personal treasure is less obvious, but, if correct, sheds much light on the type of relationship God expects from Israel as his personal treasure. Davies argues that while understanding *sikiltu* in its commercial sense is helpful, "more important for our purposes is the use of *sikiltu* with a transferred meaning to express personal relationships in a royal or divine context."¹³⁴ Davies finds such a use of *sikiltu* "in the

¹²⁹Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 44.

¹³⁰Ibid., 60; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 316.

¹³¹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 85.

¹³²Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 54.

¹³³Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 14.

¹³⁴Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 53.

Old Babylonian period (no later than the fifteenth century)”¹³⁵ and of the Ugaritic *sgh* “from the early twelfth century”¹³⁶ in which both use the concept of personal treasure in reference to a son who faithfully serves the king.¹³⁷ In one particular Ugaritic text, Davies finds the words “servant ([‘]bdh) and *sgh*” paired together in a royal context.¹³⁸ The same word pair (servant—עבד/personal treasure—סגלה) is found together in a royal context in Malachi 3:17: “They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession (סגלה), and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves (עבד) him.”¹³⁹ Davies explains the significance:

Here, while it is with בן (‘son’) that סגלה is more formally parallel, the verb עבד (‘to serve’) is a significant qualifier of the type of filial relationship, just as בן is a qualifier of the type of service involved. Here is no menial servitude, but the honorific service of a devoted son. This parallel may then elucidate the nature of a סגלה relationship in Exod. 19:5 as being one where filial loyalty would be an appropriate response.¹⁴⁰

Gentry well summarizes the significance of this particular sense of סגלה for my particular thesis when he notes, “We are back, here, to the divine image in Genesis 1:26-28. Israel has inherited an Adamic role, giving the devoted service of a son and honoured king in a covenant relationship.”¹⁴¹

As mentioned, the phrases royal priesthood and holy nation are parallel and together are coreferential with personal treasure.¹⁴² Gentry argues, “Once the terms are

¹³⁵Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 53.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid. Cf. Mitchell Dahood, “Ugaritic Hebrew Parallel Pairs,” in *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Loren R. Fisher (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975), 2:24-25. Cf. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 85.

¹³⁹Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 53.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 54.

¹⁴¹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 318.

¹⁴²Having argued for the semi-poetic character of Exod 19:3b-6, Davies writes, “The reader

explicated it will become clear that ‘royal priesthood’ and ‘holy nation’ taken together is another way of saying, ‘God’s personal treasure.’”¹⁴³ How one interprets royal priesthood/holy nation bears significance on Israel’s function in relation to the surrounding nations, that is, Israel’s mission.

Israel: A Royal Priesthood

“The Hebrew word for ‘kingdom,’” notes Gentry, “may refer to the domain or realm which is ruled, or to the exercise of kingly rule and sovereignty.”¹⁴⁴ As it relates to Israel, then, it may mean either that Israel is a “kingdom” of priests over whom God rules, or that Israel is a priestly class with ruling power.¹⁴⁵ Dumbrell seems to accept both readings simultaneously.¹⁴⁶ In fact, there is no reason to exclude either interpretation. Gentry explains, “Both meanings are intended, so that both the relationship between God and Israel and the relationship between Israel and the world is indicated.”¹⁴⁷

will be predisposed to see balancing hemistichs here and to look for further elements of cohesion such as semantic or grammatical parallelism. The terms ממלכת and גוי are a natural word pair . . . while the terms גוי קדוש and כהנים belong to closely related semantic domains. These facts serve to confirm our impression that the noun phrases in which they occur are best understood as balancing each other structurally, and that we should therefore read ממלכת כהנים as a single constituent to match the single constituent גוי קדוש. On this reading, each phrase is an epithet of the addressee, Israel, further defining the manner in which the nation will relate to God. We can thus expect the phrases to be mutually explicative.” Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 84. Cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 318; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 88-89.

¹⁴³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 316.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 319.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. Cf. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 70-86. Davies labels the idea that ממלכה in Exod 19:6 means a kingdom (of priests) over which God rules as passive (70-73). The idea that ממלכה should be interpreted as a reference to Israel as a priestly class who shares in God’s rule, Davies labels as active (75-76). Additionally, Davies suggests the possibility of an active-elite interpretation in which the referent is an elite priestly ruling class (73-74), but he quickly dismisses it (81), as does William Dumbrell. See Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 88. Davies settles tentatively on the active-corporate understanding of Israel (82-84), but is open to the reading which is ambivalent between the active and passive understandings (84-86). Gentry argues that this approach to Hebrew grammar is not correct. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 319n36.

¹⁴⁶Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 86-87.

¹⁴⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 319.

As to what function Israel may serve as a royal priesthood, Hamilton suggests there are two possible choices.¹⁴⁸ “Priesthood” either represents the special privilege of access to God’s presence that its members enjoy,¹⁴⁹ or it points to the mediatorial function of its members in relation to the other nations.¹⁵⁰ Hamilton rejects the idea of a mediatorial function for Israel to the other nations.¹⁵¹ Likewise, J. A. Motyer emphasizes the free access to the presence of God. “The elect, covenant-people are citizens of the kingdom of the divine King,” states Motyer, “but within that kingdom, ideally considered, each citizen is a priest, with the privilege of priestly access to the king’s presence.”¹⁵² Davies also concludes that priesthood connotes special access to the divine presence.¹⁵³ Davies summarizes his argument saying, “God’s people are his treasure—that is, in distinction to other nations, they enjoy the status of royalty and priesthood, depicted in terms of access to his heavenly court.”¹⁵⁴ Yet, one must ask, in what way is Israel royal and priestly?

Davies argues that in the Mosaic covenant, God is granting Israel the honorific title of sovereign under his rule. Davies proposes,

The primary thrust of the cotext of Exod. 19:6 suggests that the “royalty” or “sovereignty” enjoyed by Israel is an honorific status—an endowment which enhances their perception of the privileged and treasured relationship being granted them, and which, in association with the grant of “priesthood” equips Israel to participate in the royal court of the divine king.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸Hamilton, *Exodus*, 304.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Motyer, *The Message of Exodus*, 199.

¹⁵³Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*. For a synopsis of Davies’ arguments, see Davies, “A Royal Priesthood, 172-74.

¹⁵⁴Davies, “A Royal Priesthood,” 157-59.

¹⁵⁵Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 85.

As to what Israel may have understood by the term כהנים, Davies suggests,

On any view of Pentateuchal origins, Israel had a recognized priesthood by the time of the composition of the Sinai pericope. The reader of Exodus 19 is assumed to have knowledge of some form of institutional priesthood (vv. 22, 24). It is difficult to believe, then, that Israelite readers were not to make a conceptual connection between כהן in Exod. 19:6 and the priesthood of their experience, or with the other occurrences of the word in the same document.¹⁵⁶

The question, though, is, as Davies asks, “which particular aspect or aspects of priesthood may be intended by the use of the word in Exod. 19:6?”¹⁵⁷ For Davies, the particular aspect of the priesthood being assigned to corporate Israel is that of special access to the divine presence.¹⁵⁸ Yet, the question of what Israel would have understood in relation to the priesthood is important because it relates to the concept of mission in the Old Testament for the people of God,¹⁵⁹ and it seems to argue against an interpretation of royal priesthood that would be devoid of a mediatorial function.

Walter Kaiser argues that Israel’s “task as a nation was a mediatorial role as she related to the nations and people groups around her.”¹⁶⁰ However, Kaiser sees Israel’s mediatorial role as an active missionary outreach to the nations.¹⁶¹ In this sense, Israel’s mission, as given by God at Sinai, was not unlike the one given to the church under the new covenant.¹⁶² This idea that Israel had a missionary mandate is debatable,

¹⁵⁶Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 89.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 91.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 98-100.

¹⁵⁹Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 14.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 15.

¹⁶²Ibid. Kaiser suggests that Israel forfeited this mission by rejecting to hear from God directly and instead asking Moses to go up the mountain to meet with God “Unfortunately for Israel,” states Kaiser, “when this ministry for all the believers was opened to them in Moses’s day in this eagles’ wings speech, they turned back from so awesome a task. Instead, they urged Moses to go to Mount Sinai on their behalf to get the revelatory word from God, for they felt both unworthy as sinners and too frightened personally to stand in the presence of so holy a God and receive his word directly. But what was rejected at this moment was never disposed of; it was simply delayed in its fullest expression until New Testament

however.¹⁶³ Though Christopher Wright argues that Israel “would have the historical task of bringing the knowledge of God to the nations, and bringing the nations to the means of atonement with God,”¹⁶⁴ and further argues that the priestly role had both “centrifugal” and “centripetal” dynamics,¹⁶⁵ he adamantly rejects the idea that Israel had a missionary role.¹⁶⁶ Dumbrell likewise agrees that Israel served a mediatorial role but suggests that the priestly ministry of Israel was passive rather than missionary.¹⁶⁷ He contends, “The major point which v. 6 makes is in expansion of the argument of v. 5, namely that Israel will affect her world by being the vehicle through whom the divine will is displayed. Thus the notion of v. 6 is basically passive rather than missionary.”¹⁶⁸

Nothing within the context of Exodus 19:3-6 would lend itself to being interpreted as what Israel was to do; instead, in the covenant God proposed in Exodus 19 the emphasis is on what Israel was to be or become: God’s treasured possession (19:5): that is, a royal priesthood/holy nation (19:6). Therefore, with Gentry, I propose that there is no reason to exclude from the concept of priesthood the idea of special access to the divine presence or a mediatorial function in which Israel is to demonstrate to the

times. It was not scrapped. It remained God’s plan for believers: the priesthood of all believers!” Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 14.

¹⁶³See Wright, *The Mission of God*, 501-5, for a helpful and concise summary of the debate in which he interacts with pertinent sources. Cf. Graeme L. Goldsworthy, “The Great Indicative: An Aspect of a Biblical Theology of Mission,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 55, no. 1 (1996), 2-13; Scobie, “Israel and the Nations,” 283-305; Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Israel, The People of God, and The Nations,” *Journal of The Evangelical Society* 45, no. 1 (2002): 35-57.

¹⁶⁴Wright, *The Mission of God*, 330-31. Wright’s argument is founded upon his conclusion that the priests had a two-fold task: “teaching the law” and “handling the sacrifices.”

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 331. Wright uses “centripetal” and “centrifugal” in reference to the direction of mission: to draw inward or outward.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 501-5.

¹⁶⁷Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 90. So also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 319; Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 97.

¹⁶⁸Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 90.

surrounding nations what it is to be the kingdom of God.¹⁶⁹ Gentry's explanation is helpful:

Just as in Genesis 1-2 God establishes his rule through a covenant relationship between himself and man and between man and the creation (wherein Adam's priority according to Genesis 2 is to spend time in the divine presence to order his perspectives and role in the world), so through the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12-22), promising blessing to the nations in relationship to Abraham and now through the covenant with his family Israel (Ex. 19-24) as a royal priesthood (with a priority on worship that results in being a light to the nations), God is extending his rule. Since Israel is settled at the navel [center] of the world, the nations of the world will see displayed a right relationship to God, social justice in human interaction, and good stewardship of the earth's resources.¹⁷⁰

In summary, the concept of royal priesthood communicates that Israel as a nation has the special privilege of access to the divine presence. In fact, the instructions for Israel to build the tabernacle mean that they will carry God's presence with them everywhere they go.¹⁷¹ In addition, Israel as a royal priest meant the nation would serve in a mediatorial role as it lived out the covenant before the surrounding nations of the world.

Israel: A Holy Nation

The concept of Israel as a nation should recall God's promises to Abraham: "And I will make of you a great nation" (Gen 12:2). To restate an earlier argument, nationhood indicates a structured socio-political nation-state with a governmental head.¹⁷² Specifically as it relates to Israel, Gentry is correct in suggesting,

This is the city of God, the kingdom of God. In fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises to Abraham, Israel, by virtue of the Mosaic covenant, will provide under

¹⁶⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 321.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 322.

¹⁷²See pp. 59-61 of this diss.

the direct rule of God a model of God's rule over human life, which is the divine aim for the entire world.¹⁷³

However, what does it mean for Israel to be a holy nation?

In addition to holiness as being separate or distinct, a meaning which is already inherent in personal treasure, as noted, Gentry argues that the concept of holiness indicates "consecration to" or "devotion to" God. "A holy nation, then, "is one prepared and consecrated for fellowship with God and one completely devoted to him."¹⁷⁴ The implication of Israel's holiness, as evidenced in the holiness of God and the provision of the legal code indicates that "complete devotion to God on the part of Israel would show itself in two ways: (1) identifying with his ethics and morality, and (2) sharing his concern for the broken in the community."¹⁷⁵ As argued earlier, holy Israel was to live out the covenant as God's people on the earth as a light to the nations. Gentry's summary is again helpful:

Explanation of the terms "personal treasure," "kingdom of priests," and "holy nation," then, shows the goal and purpose of the Sinai covenant for Israel. . . . The covenant entails relationship with God on the one hand and relationship with the world on the other hand. Israel will model to the world what it means to have a relationship with God, what it means to treat each other in a genuinely human way, and what it means to be good stewards of the earth's resources. As priests, they will mediate the blessings of God to the world and will be used to bring the rest of the world to know God.¹⁷⁶

Israel and Mission

Thus, Israel's mission flowed from and was in continuity with the Abrahamic promises. The purpose of the Mosaic covenant was to fulfill the Abrahamic promises of land and descendants through whom God would reestablish his kingdom of God on the earth. Dempster explains,

¹⁷³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 325.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 326.

Abraham's name will be made great by God's building him into a great nation that will bless the nations that have just been enumerated (Gen. 10) and that are now living in exile under divine judgment. That nation later becomes Israel. At the beginning of Israel's history, then, is the fundamental fact that it has been made for the benefit of the world. Israel's calling is missiological; its purpose for existence is the restoration of the world to its pre-Edenic state. Genesis 12:1-3 is thus 'the aetiology of all Israelite aetiologies', showing that 'the ultimate purpose of redemption which God will bring about in Israel is that of bridging the gulf between God and the entire human race' (von Rad 1966:65).¹⁷⁷

The question remains, "How was Israel to fulfill its mission?" Köstenberger and O'Brien suggest, "The cluster of questions [related to Israel's mission] is one of the most hotly debated among recent interpreters at both a popular and a scholarly level."¹⁷⁸ The question, as touched on, seeks to address whether or not Israel had a missionary obligation to reach the nations or whether Israel was merely to model the life of the kingdom of God on the earth.¹⁷⁹ I concluded that while Israel's mission was globally focused, it was not one of missionary outreach. Köstenberger and O'Brien suggest, "To contend that Israel had a missionary task and should have engaged in mission as we understand it today goes beyond the evidence."¹⁸⁰

In fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises (Gen 12:1-3) and in continuity with the creation mandate (Gen 1:26-28), Israel's mission was to exercise dominion over the world by conquering its enemies and taking possession of the land which God designated as sacred space by virtue of his presence in it (royal priesthood). Through Israel, God would defeat the serpent and reclaim what was lost in the original Eden (cf. Gen 3:15; Mic 7:16-17). Once settled in the sacred space, as a holy nation, Israel was to display to the surrounding nations what it was like to be the people of the God who alone is the

¹⁷⁷Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 76-77.

¹⁷⁸Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 34. For Israel as a missionary nation with obligations to reach the nations, see Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 14-16.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 34-35.

¹⁸⁰Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35.

sovereign ruler over all. Thus, God gave Israel the Law, summarized in the ten words, in order that they might display to the nations how one was to relate to God and one another under God's divine rule.¹⁸¹

Specifically, Charles Scobie proposes, "Israel relates to other peoples in the Old Testament in two ways: historically, through incorporation, and eschatologically, through the ingathering of the Gentiles."¹⁸² Anyone who wished to become a part of Israel could become a Yahweh worshiper and be incorporated into the people of God.¹⁸³ As evidence for Gentile incorporation into Israel, Scobie notes there is sufficient biblical support "from the 'mixed multitude' which accompanied Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 12:38), to the adoption of Rahab and her family (Jos. 6:25), to the undoubted acceptance of foreigners within the kingdom of David (2 Sam. 11:3; 15:19-23)."¹⁸⁴ Additionally, Scobie points out, "The legislation of the Torah shows a special concern for the *gēr*, the stranger or sojourner, who for whatever reason is resident within Israel."¹⁸⁵

As to the role of the eschatological ingathering of the Gentiles (cf. Isa 2:1-5; 56:1-8; Mic 4:1-5; Matt 28:19-20; John 10:16; Rev 5:9-10; 7:9), Scobie proposes, "It is this Old Testament eschatological expectation which provides the clue to understanding the New Testament theology of mission to the Gentiles, as with the Christ Event the new age is inaugurated."¹⁸⁶ Graeme Goldsworthy contends, "A lexicographical survey of key

¹⁸¹Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 36-37.

¹⁸²Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 283-305. So also Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35; Goldsworthy, "The Great Indicative," 6-7.

¹⁸³Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 286, cited in Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35.

¹⁸⁴Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 286-87, cited in Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35. So also, Goldsworthy, "The Great Indicative," 7.

¹⁸⁵Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 287, cited in Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35.

¹⁸⁶Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 283, cited in Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the*

terms such as *nations* and *foreigner*, reveals important dimensions to the eschaton as they affect these non-covenanted groups.”¹⁸⁷ After listing such textual evidence,¹⁸⁸

Goldsworthy concludes,

There is an absence of any notion that Israel should have in the past, or would one day in the future, engage in “cross-cultural” or foreign mission. The nation of Israel witnesses to the saving purposes of God by experiencing them and living according to them. The function of Israel in the purposes of God to bring salvation to the nations is in the indicative, not the imperative. The overwhelming evidence of the passages cited above is that the promises to Abraham concerning the blessings to the nations will come about as an eschatological event. Even the alleged missionary focus of Psalm 67 emphasizes that God himself must act for the nations to be blessed.¹⁸⁹

Köstenberger and O’Brien nicely summarize Israel’s mission when they propose, “Israel’s calling in Exodus 19:5 had the whole world in view. The nation was to be holy and to serve the world by being separate. Her life was to give clear evidence of Yahweh’s rule over her, and thus to be a model of his lordship over the whole world.”¹⁹⁰

The generation that left Egypt under Moses’ leadership, however, rebelled against God. Because of a bad report (Num 13:25-33), they refused to believe God’s promises (Num 13:25-33; Deut 1:33). Instead of entering the land, they desired to return to Egypt under new leadership (Num 14:1-5). So God promised that none of that generation who were twenty years old and above would ever enter the land that they had rejected (Num 14:20-29; Deut 1:34-40). Only Joshua and Caleb, the faithful spies who trusted God to give them the land, and those under twenty year of age at the time, would ever see the land (Num 14:30-38).

Ends of the Earth, 35.

¹⁸⁷Goldsworthy, “The Great Indicative,” 7.

¹⁸⁸See Goldsworthy, “The Great Indicative,” 7, for a list of such texts and summary predications.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁹⁰Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 34.

God raised up a new generation that would enter the land in order to image him faithfully. God renewed the Sinaitic covenant with a new Israel (Deut 5:1-33).¹⁹¹ God appealed to this new generation to keep all his statutes and commandments and to be careful to do all of them (Deut 6:1-2), “that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deut 6:3). Not surprisingly, God applies the same Adamic language to this new generation, though it is now explained in summary fashion and in factual rather than conditional language. They are “a people holy to the Lord your God” (Deut 7:6a), meaning they were to be wholly devoted to God alone (Deut 6:4) and distinct from the other nations. Consequently, they were to destroy completely the inhabitants of the land and not to make any covenants with them; they were not to intermarry with them; and they were to destroy their pagan altars (Deut 7:2-5). As in Exodus 19:5, the controlling image is that of Israel as God’s treasured possession (Deut 7:6b). It was because God had chosen them out of all the nations of the world that they were God’s special treasure. Thus, they were to be distinct/holy if they were to faithfully image God to the surrounding nations. And yet, in spite of the fact that God fulfilled all his promises to Israel, “not one of them has failed” (Josh 23:14), Israel was unfaithful to the covenant. The book of Judges explains that Israel needed a king.

David: God’s Son and Royal Priest

Rejecting God as sovereign king, Israel insisted on having a king like all other

¹⁹¹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 114, argues, “The [Sinaitic] covenant was not only renewed but expounded in the interests of the expression of a total national commitment in a promised land shortly to be entered.” Cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 377-82. Gentry contends that though the covenant in Deuteronomy is a separate covenant “in its own right . . . this covenant is a supplement to the covenant at Sinai. The covenant making on the plains of Moab is also a covenant renewals of the broken Sinai/Horeb covenant with the subsequent generation. Thus, although the book of Deuteronomy is a separate covenant, at the same time it is part and parcel of the covenant at Sinai and therefore the two are fused together as one in many passages in Deuteronomy.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 381-82.

nations (1 Sam 8:4-5). In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, God had already spelled out the requirements for Israel's king. Gentry notes, "The only positive requirement is that the king embody Torah as a model citizen."¹⁹² After Israel's failed experiment at a monarchy with a disobedient Saul,¹⁹³ God raised up David as his king to lead his people (Ps 2). In David, the pattern of the people of God revealed in the image of God at creation (sonship, kingship, priesthood, mission, covenant) coalesces in one person who typifies the expectant messianic royal priest who will truly image God. The key text for understanding the relationship of David to Adam, Abraham, and Israel is 2 Samuel 7 (cf. 1 Chr 17; Ps 89).¹⁹⁴

David as God's Son and Vice-Regent

While the Abrahamic covenant promised land and descendants, the Mosaic covenant served to fulfill, at least in part, those very promises as Israel functioned as God's royal priesthood, conquering its enemies and taking possession of the land. However, by the end of the book of Judges, the Israelite mission is endangered as the people of God under the Mosaic covenant fail to keep God's word and, as a result, struggle to conquer its enemies and possess the land. The book of Judges ends on a tragic note: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 21:25).¹⁹⁵

Though Israel had a failed attempt at a monarchy with Saul (1 Sam 8-15), the Bible makes it clear that David is God's chosen king (1 Sam 16:1-13) whom he placed on his throne. After the Lord granted him some measure of rest from his enemies, David desired to build a dwelling place for God in Jerusalem (2 Sam 7:1). God declined,

¹⁹²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 399.

¹⁹³Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 133-36. Dumbrell states that Saul was the king the people wanted so that they would be like the surrounding nations, while David was the king God wanted.

¹⁹⁴Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 37; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 392.

¹⁹⁵Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 129. Dumbrell questions the common understanding that the indictment in Judg 21:25 indicates an endorsement of the need for a king.

declaring that he never asked for a house and never had need for a house (2 Sam 7:3-7), but that instead, God would build David a house, a dynasty (1 Sam 7:11-12, 16).¹⁹⁶

God reminded David that he chose him to be king over his people Israel while David was a mere shepherd boy (2 Sam 7:8). God also reminded David of his constant presence and deliverance from enemies (v. 9); additionally, in language reminiscent of Genesis 12:2, God promised to make for David a great name (2 Sam 7:9). Here one sees the unilateral nature of God's covenant with David: God chose David; God was with David; and God will give him a great name.¹⁹⁷ Clearly, God is the one who initiates, establishes, and maintains the relationship.

The covenant relationship between God and David and his offspring is described in father/son terms (vv. 13-15).¹⁹⁸ The Davidic covenant defines the identity, nature, and structure of the relationship between God and David; this is the second definitional mark of a covenant.¹⁹⁹ The covenant partners are identified as David himself (v. 8) and his future offspring (v. 12).²⁰⁰ To David, God promised his continuous presence and a great name (v. 9). To Solomon, God promised to establish his kingdom and permit him to

¹⁹⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 394.

¹⁹⁷Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64, 68. While the word for covenant (ברית) is not found in 2 Sam 7, the agreement between God and David is referred to as a covenant elsewhere (2 Sam 23:5; Pss 89:3, 28, 34, 39; 132:12; Isa 55:3; and 2 Chr 13:5). Cf., Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 392-93. Nevertheless, as I argued in chap. 2, the concept of covenant may be present when the word itself is absent. Such is the case in 2 Sam 7, where the structure of the text itself evidences all the marks of a covenant agreement as listed by Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64; and Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 215. I am following Allison's four definitional marks of a covenant: a covenant (1) is unilaterally established by God; (2) creates or formalizes a structured relationship between God and his covenant partner; (3) contains binding obligations; and (4) is established with an oath/oath sign.

¹⁹⁸Gentry observes that in the literary structure of 2 Sam 7, the promises to David are given in vv. 8-11, then repeated again in v. 16, evidencing a chiasm. "At the centre of this A-B-A' chiastic structure is the covenant between Yahweh and David, defined as a father-son relationship." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 394

¹⁹⁹Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64, 68.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 68.

build God a house, the temple (vv. 12-13). It is Solomon's rule on David's throne, notes Desmond Alexander, that "provides an interesting picture of the kind of rule which God intends to establish through the promised 'seed' of Abraham."²⁰¹

However, the offspring of David includes more than just Solomon, for in declaring that he would build David a house, that is, raise up offspring from David's line and establish David's kingdom, God intends to provide David a dynasty in perpetuity (vv. 11-12). Thus, while it is true that David fulfills the royal aspect of the image of God as his vice-regent, what is remarkable is that God promises that David's royal line will never end and will rule over an eternal kingdom (vv. 11-12, 16).²⁰²

The nature of this covenant relationship between God and the Davidic sons is that it requires obedience (v. 14). Thus, 2 Samuel 7 also evidences the third definitional mark of a covenant: binding obligations (cf. Ps 132:11-12).²⁰³ While previous interpreters have understood the Davidic covenant to be unconditional, the text itself points to the necessity for obedience on the part of the Davidic son, lest he receive God's discipline (2 Sam. 7:14).²⁰⁴ Yet, God too binds himself to the promises he makes to David. Gentry suggests, "In effect, verses 14-15 are saying that the covenant will be fulfilled not only by a faithful father alone (i.e., Yahweh keeping his promises), but also by a faithful son (i.e., king to Yahweh's Torah)."²⁰⁵ As it relates to the Abrahamic promise of land, God binds

²⁰¹Alexander, "Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings," 207.

²⁰²Ibid. So also Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 227.

²⁰³Gentry argues that the literary structure of 2 Sam 7 highlights the covenant obligations. "The divine obligations or promises are divided by the literary structure into promises to be fulfilled during David's lifetime and promises to be fulfilled after David's death." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 394. Note especially Ps 132:11-12 on binding obligations in a father/son relationship within the Davidic covenant.

²⁰⁴Ibid., 395.

²⁰⁵Ibid.

himself to establish his people in a dwelling place where their enemies will disturb them no more (v. 11). In other words, God promises that his people, under the Davidic king, will enter his rest.

As it relates to David, God binds himself to provide descendants, an everlasting kingdom, and an everlasting throne (v. 16).²⁰⁶ Accordingly, one purpose of the Davidic covenant is to advance the Mosaic covenant, which purposed to fulfill the Abrahamic promises.²⁰⁷ The binding obligations relate both to God and the Davidic son, and both will be faithful, for God will not remove his covenant love from him (v. 15).²⁰⁸ These binding obligations, along with God's faithfulness, point forward to a Davidic king who will be faithful and truly image God as a faithful and obedient son.²⁰⁹ Yet, both David and Solomon fail in their leadership. Nevertheless, God promised never to forsake David's dynasty as he had Saul's (v. 15). David's dynasty and kingdom will be eternal (v. 16). God's promises to David point forward to a future descendant who will sit on David's eternal throne and rule God's eternal kingdom.

David as Royal Priest

The fact that David was king of Israel is not debated; as to whether or not David served the role of priest, however, is not as settled. Nonetheless, there is sufficient biblical evidence to point to David as a priestly figure who fulfills priestly functions.²¹⁰ Carl Armerding argues that "there is a strong tradition of a royal priesthood within the

²⁰⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 395.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 389.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

²⁰⁹Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 68, 70.

²¹⁰Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 280.

[Old Testament] itself.”²¹¹ Melchizedek is a case in point, for he was king of Salem and priest of the most high God (Gen 14:18). In Psalm 110, argues Armerding, “there is a direct relationship between the king-priest and his God. He himself is both the vice-regent under God, and the mediator between his people and God.”²¹²

The biblical data show that David too was a king who performed priestly duties. First, David ate the holy bread of the presence, which only the Levitical priests were permitted to eat (1 Sam 21:1-6; cf. Exod 25:30; Lev 24:5-9), but the Bible nowhere condemns him (cf. Matt 12:1-13).²¹³ Second, while it is true, as some suggest of David eating the bread of the presence, that the Law may be set aside under certain circumstances where mercy was required,²¹⁴ David performed priestly duties at other times. David’s priestly function is most clearly seen in 2 Samuel 6:12-15.²¹⁵ There, David was bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem (v. 12), and during the journey he offered sacrifices (v. 13). What is most curious, however, is the fact that he was wearing a linen ephod, a garment that God had directed Moses to have constructed for the Levitical priests (v.14; cf. Exod 28:1-6; 1 Sam 30:7-8).²¹⁶ According to 1 Chronicles 15:27, David and the priests were dressed similarly in linen robes, but it was David who wore a linen ephod. In addition, in one instance David built an altar, offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and the Lord responded favorably (1 Chr 21:18-27).

²¹¹Armerding, “Were David’s Sons Really Priests?,” 76.

²¹²Ibid., 77.

²¹³Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 147; Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 180.

²¹⁴Robert D. Bergen, *I, 2 Samuel*, New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 222.

²¹⁵Eugene H. Merrill, “Royal Priesthood: An Old Testament Messianic Motif,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150, no. 597 (1993): 60.

²¹⁶Bergen, *I, 2 Samuel*, 331; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 105. For a rejection of the ephod as evidence of a priestly role, see Anthony Phillips, “David’s Linen Ephod,” *Vetus Testamentum* 19, no. 4 (1969): 485-87.

Eugene Merrill likewise admits that the “notion of royal priesthood is pervasive in the ancient Near East.”²¹⁷ For David, however, Merrill also makes the connection between priesthood and kingship through Melchizedek.²¹⁸ Merrill argues that Psalm 110 is written by David and is about David.²¹⁹ Consequently, Merrill surmises, David is a priest “after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4).²²⁰ Since the author of Hebrews makes the connection between Melchizedek and Jesus’ better priesthood (Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17, 21),²²¹ Merrill concludes that “the priesthood of Christ is typified by that of David who in turn was a priest of a non-Aaronic order, that of Melchizedek.”²²² As such, this other order had differing function and responsibilities. Armerding states, “The royal priest, unlike the other priests, served directly under God, a fact that is corroborated in Ps 110:1, when the one to whom the Psalm is addressed is seated at the right hand of Yahweh.”²²³ Merrill notes that the fact that David’s sons are said to be priests (2 Sam 8:18) points to a succession of this Melchizedekian priestly order “outside the boundaries of the Sinaitic covenant.”²²⁴ Merrill explains,

²¹⁷Merrill, “Royal Priesthood,” 57.

²¹⁸Ibid., 53.

²¹⁹Ibid., 54-57.

²²⁰Bergen makes this connection as well; however, he suggests that “if indeed this title [Melchizedekian priest] applied to David as well as one of his descendants (cf. Heb 7:14-21), he most likely acquired it by right of conquest: having conquered Jerusalem, he became possessor of all the titles and honors traditionally accorded to the king of the city.” Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 332. However, it is better to see it as explained by Merrill who sees the Melchizedekian priesthood as “outside the boundaries of the Sinaitic covenant, the purpose of which was to validate the selection of Israel as a ‘kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Exod. 19:4-6) and to regulate the behavior of the nation as it undertook this redemptive mission.” Merrill, “Royal Priesthood,” 59.

²²¹Merrill, “Royal Priesthood,” 52.

²²²Ibid., 57.

²²³Armerding, “Were David’s Sons Really Priests?,” 77.

²²⁴Merrill, “Royal Priesthood,” 60. Though some scholars have sought to avoid translating כהן as priest in 2 Sam 8:18, Armerding argues that “the texts do say [David’s sons] were priests and no amount of explaining away will rid us of that fact.” Armerding, “Were David’s Sons Really Priests?,” 76. In this

What this means, among other things, is a direct connection between the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants, a connection recognized for some time now on both theological and form-critical grounds. Thus the functional role of Israel and the Sinaitic Covenant takes on heightened clarification. The Melchizedek-David-Jesus priesthood is a straight-line extension that operates outside of and superior to that of Aaron and the nation of Israel.²²⁵

In summary, David was a royal priest who, in the words of Armerding, served directly under Yahweh as “vice-regent, and the mediator between [Israel] and God.”²²⁶

The Mission of the Davidic Royal Priest

If, as argued, Israel was God’s son (sonship) under God’s rule and care (covenant) to serve as a royal priesthood (kingship and priesthood) and exercise dominion over the world by conquering its enemies and taking possession of Canaan, the new Eden, in order to establish the boundaries of the sacred space of God’s dwelling and display the kingdom of God to the surrounding nations, then David is the royal priest who led Israel to accomplish its mission. Clearly, the promise of land is initially fulfilled by Joshua as recounted in the canonical book bearing his name.²²⁷ Indeed, by the end of the book of Joshua (23:1) it appears that Israel has been granted rest from her surrounding enemies as had been promised (cf. Josh 23:14). Yet, it is also clear in the remainder of Joshua 23 that the conquest is not complete. God will be with Israel to complete the conquest in full, but if it does not remain faithful, the conquest will fail and Israel will perish (Josh 23:10-13).

essay, Armerding argues for a natural reading of the text which leads to translating קֹהֵן as priest and an existence “of a non-Levitical, royally connected priesthood in early Israel.” Ibid.

²²⁵Merrill, “Royal Priesthood,” 59.

²²⁶Armerding, “Were David’s Sons Really Priests?,” 77.

²²⁷Dumbrell notes, “The concern of the book of Joshua which reports the conquest is, however, to see the irruption into Palestine as the implementation of the Mosaic programme sketched in the book of Deuteronomy.” Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 128.

The book of Judges outlines many of Israel's failures to complete the conquest. However, through David, the king who faithfully images God and represents all Israel, God completes the conquest and gives Israel rest from all her surrounding enemies (2 Sam 7:1). Dumbrell explains the conclusion of the conquest under David:

In 2 Sam. 7:1, therefore, with rest of a more permanent character now having been granted, David, as Carlson noted, is fulfilling the charge of Deut. 8:12-14 to Israel. . . . 2 Sam. 7:1 thus indicates, and verse 11 confirms, that the defeat of the Philistines had meant that the occupation of Palestine and therefore the conquest had been completed. What Joshua's successors in the Judges period had been unable to effect because of the infidelity of the age (2 Sam. 7:11), namely to fill in the framework that Joshua's conquests had provided, David had now done.²²⁸

David clearly functions under the Mosaic covenant to bring about the Abrahamic promises. In Deuteronomy 12:10, Israel was promised that if it remained faithful to the Mosaic covenant, after crossing the Jordan God would give it rest from their surrounding enemies.²²⁹ David completes this task by conquering the enemies of God and of his people, thereby providing rest from its enemies.²³⁰ Dempster's summary provides an apt conclusion to the consideration of David as an Adamic figure:

Thus is introduced one of the most important chapters in the entire Hebrew Bible: 2 Samuel 7. The matters of geography and genealogy have been settled: Jerusalem and David, Zion and Scion. From this one location in world geography and this one person in world genealogy will flow blessing to the entire world and its inhabitants. This is the theme of this chapter that reverberates throughout the rest of the Bible.²³¹

Summary: The People of God under the Old Covenant

After the fall of Adam and Noah, the Bible presents Abraham as the new Adam, following in the pattern of God's people established at creation (sonship, kingship,

²²⁸Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 146. Cf. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 140.

²²⁹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 145. It is interesting, as Dumbrell notes, that this promise is linked in the very next verse (Deut 12:11) with the revelation that God will choose a central sanctuary location where all offerings would be brought. The chronology is the same in 2 Sam 7. David is prohibited from building God's house (sanctuary) until the rest is accomplished.

²³⁰Ibid., 128; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 140.

²³¹Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 142.

priesthood, covenant, mission). Dempster helpfully summarizes God's work in Abraham:

Abram's name will be made great by God's building him into a great nation that will bless the nations that have just been enumerated (Genesis 10) and that are now living in exile under divine judgment. That nation later becomes Israel. At the beginning of Israel's history, then, is the fundamental fact that it has been made for the benefit of the world. Israel's calling is fundamentally missiological; its purpose for existence is the restoration of the world to its pre-Edenic state. Genesis 12:1-3 is thus "the aetiology of all Israelite aetiologies," showing that "the ultimate purpose of redemption which God will bring about in Israel is that of bridging the gulf between God and the entire human race" (von Rad 1966:65).²³²

Like the paradigmatic people of God in the garden-sanctuary, the relationship between God and his people was based on grace. God initiated a relationship with Abraham and structured it in a covenant (Gen 15, 17). The make-up of the people of God under the Abrahamic covenant was genealogical; that is, they were related biologically through Abraham. However, unlike the paradigmatic people of God in the garden, Abraham's line faced the existing threat of the offspring of the serpent. The people of God under the Abrahamic covenant were distinguished from the serpent's offspring as the elect line of God by the covenant sign of circumcision. Yet, the make-up of the Abrahamic covenant community was not merely genealogical, for Ishmael was circumcised but excluded from the covenant community (Gen 17:18-19). While circumcision marked the males as members of the community, God expected undivided obedience to the covenant. The disobedient would be cut off from the people on the grounds of breaking the covenant (Gen 17:14). Likewise, God established his relationship with Israel on the basis of grace (Exod 19:4) with the expectation of undivided obedience (Exod 19:5). Out of all the nations of the world, God chose Israel to be his special treasure. Having been separated from the world and consecrated to God for service, they experienced privileged access to God's presence.

Beginning with Abraham, the mission of the people of God was to be God's instrument of blessing to all the nations of the world (Gen 12:1-3). Through Abraham

²³²Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 76-77.

and his descendants, God created a people who were to represent his sovereign rule on the earth by being a display of God's kingdom on the earth (Exod 19:4-6). As a royal priesthood, Israel had a mediatorial role in relation to the nations. They were to display to the surrounding nations the character of their God, the kind of relationship possible with such a God, and the life in God's kingdom. The world would be blessed based upon how they responded to God's people. Anyone who embraced Israel's God could be incorporated into the covenant community, provided they too kept the covenant.²³³ Thus, Israel mission was not one of evangelistic outreach. Instead, they were God's special treasure who, as a royal priesthood and holy nation, were to be a light to the nations.

If Israel was to fulfill its mission, it would need faithful leadership. Joshua led Israel to conquer the enemy nations and establish the boundaries of the sacred space where God had promised to dwell in the midst of his people and give them rest.²³⁴ However, as the book of Judges shows, Israel's unfaithfulness hindered their progress to conquer the enemy nations and establish the boundaries of the sacred space. So God, in his faithfulness, raised up David from among Israel as his instrument by which he would bring about the Abrahamic promises of land and rest once and for all (2 Sam 7).²³⁵ Though it was through Solomon that the temple was constructed, the Abrahamic promises seemed completed, and the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28 appeared fulfilled: God and people dwelling together in the promised sacred space displaying God's rule on the earth as a light to the nations.²³⁶ Unfortunately, the biblical narrative quickly reveals that Israel and its kings were unfaithful, so the promises once again are in question.

²³³Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 286-88.

²³⁴Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 128.

²³⁵Köstenberger and O'Brien argue, "The covenant expectations of Exodus 19:6, that Israel would become a priestly royalty, are embodied in the person of the king." Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 39.

²³⁶Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 65-73.

Nevertheless, the prophets reveal that God would raise up another Adam like David.
This anointed king would gather God's people back to God under a new covenant.

CHAPTER 4
THE PEOPLE OF GOD: THE NEW COVENANT
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

I have argued that God created mankind as his image and that the divine image in man reveals a pattern which informs both the identity of the people of God and the purpose for which God created his people: to establish his sovereign rule on the earth through a human king who would populate the earth with the divine image until the whole earth was filled with the glory of God (Gen 1:26-28).¹ While the first Adam's rebellion distorted the image of God in man and failed to produce God's rule on the earth, God maintained his plan to restore the Edenic kingdom and blessings through a human seed who would serve as an Adamic king, faithfully imaging God and ultimately establishing God's kingdom on earth (Gen 3:15).² The genealogical structure of Genesis exposes an interest in identifying who that promised seed would be.³ "A key purpose of genealogies

¹For similar arguments flowing out of the overarching biblical storyline that God is establishing his kingdom through an Adamic king, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011); and Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), though each states their case slightly differently—Gentry and Wellum, "kingdom through covenant"; Beale, "new-creational kingdom and its expansion"; Dempster, "dominion (land) and dynasty (genealogy)."

²See Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 29-87. Though Beale opts for a functional definition of the image of God in man, he argues similarly for the significance of understanding the image of God as explaining Adam's role as a priest-king who received a commission from God to dwell and serve in God's presence and extend the boundaries of the sacred garden space and populate it with the image of God. Beale further traces how Adam's commission was passed on to other Adamic figures and how the Old Testament expected an eschatological Adamic king who would restore the Edenic blessings in a new creation.

³The book of Genesis is structured in ten genealogies, as outlined by the literary device, "these are the generations [*tōlēdōt*] of." See Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 27-35. Though Mathews acknowledges that there is no

in some contexts,” observes Stephen Dempster, “is to show a divine purpose that moves history to a specific goal.”⁴ I suggest that the ultimate goal of the genealogies in Genesis is to identify the royal human seed (Gen 3:15) who will conquer evil and establish the new-creational kingdom for the glory of God and the joy of his people.⁵

Secondly, I also argued that after the first Adam’s failure God elected other Adamic representatives with whom he initiated specific covenants that defined and structured the relationship between God and the people through whom he would establish his divine rule on the earth. The book of Genesis traces the promised Adamic seed through Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:1-3; 15; 17; 22), while Exodus establishes that Israel, the elect people through Abraham and the corporate Adam, was to serve God as royal priests who would conquer the evil nations and reclaim the sacred space in which God and mankind would dwell together in order to show the surrounding nations what it meant to live as the people of God under God’s rule, thus establishing God’s kingdom on the earth (Exod 19:4-6).⁶

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel identify David as the particular seed from whom the true and faithful Adamic king would come to establish once and for all the divine rule on the earth.⁷ While David’s son Solomon appeared to have achieved the idealic reign

scholarly consensus as to how the *tōlēdōt* phrase serves the structure of Genesis, he proposes that “within the flow of human history, from the universal to the particular, the genealogies indicate God is separating out by selection a righteous lineage by whom he chooses to bless the world of nations” (34). Cf. T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002), 102.

⁴Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 47.

⁵Beale proposes the following New Testament storyline out of which the major themes of the /Bible flow: “Jesus’ life, trials, death for sinners, and especially his resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God’s glory.” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 16.

⁶I argued this claim in chap. 3.

⁷Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 65-73.

originally purposed in Genesis 1:28 and promised in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12, 15, 17, 22),⁸ it is clear from the testimony of 1 and 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles that he and the ensuing Davidic kings failed to lead Israel to image God and establish the divine rule on the earth (1 Kgs 11-2 Kgs 25; 2 Chr 10-36).⁹ Nevertheless, God promised to raise up an ultimate Adamic son who would faithfully image God and fulfill the original creation mandate to exercise dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28) and establish God's kingdom by crushing the serpent once and for all (Gen 3:15) and populating the earth with godly offspring who would bear God's image and fill the earth with the glory of God. This last Adam from David's line will accomplish God's plan by inaugurating the kingdom of God on the earth through a new covenant which restructures the relationship between God and people and communicates the identity and mission of the new covenant people of God.

Because the New Testament assumes an understanding of the new covenant,¹⁰ in order to understand what the new covenant entails one must begin with the Old Testament passages that look forward to its inauguration.¹¹ Due to the limited scope of this dissertation, I will consider the new covenant promises primarily from the prophecy of Isaiah, for an overview of Isaiah 54-56 in relation to the new covenant will reveal the

⁸Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 66. Beale argues that Solomon's reign was the "zenith of Israel's kingdom" by noting allusions to Gen 1-3 in the Old Testament's record of the life of Solomon.

⁹Ibid., 73.

¹⁰In the New Testament, the new covenant is referred to in conjunction with the Lord's Supper in Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor 11:25. Matt 26:28 and Mark 14:24 speak of the cup in the Lord's Supper being the "blood of the covenant." The new covenant is distinguished from the old in 2 Cor 3, where references to the old covenant are clearly linked to the Mosaic covenant (cf. 2 Cor 3:3, 7, 13-15). The most explicit dealing of the new covenant in distinction to the old (Mosaic) in the New Testament is found in Heb 7:22; 8:6-13; 9:1-22; 10:16-17; 12:18-24. Yet, what the new covenant entails is most clearly explained in the Old Testament.

¹¹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 434, states the "major texts dealing with a new covenant" in the Old Testament as follows: "1. Everlasting covenant: Jeremiah 32:36-41; 50:2-5; Ezekiel 16:59-63; 37:15-28 (esp. v. 26); Isaiah 55:1-5; 61:8-9. 2. Covenant of peace: Isaiah 54:1-10 (esp. vv. 9-10); Ezekiel 34:20-31 (esp. v. 25); 37:15-28 (esp. v. 26). 3. Promise of a new heart and a new spirit: Ezekiel 11:18-21; 18:30-32; 36:24-32 (esp. v. 26) [cf. Isa. 59:21]. 4. New covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34."

identity, structure, and mission of the new covenant people of God that will confirm my thesis and reveal that the pattern of the people of God revealed in the image of God continues in the new covenant, though with significant differences. I also briefly address the new covenant from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in order to confirm the conclusions found in Isaiah and round out my investigation before providing a summary of the identity, structure, and mission of the people of God under the new covenant.

The Promised New Covenant in Isaiah

Peter Gentry suggests that the major theme of the prophecy of Isaiah “is the development from corrupt Zion in the old creation to restored Zion in the new creation.”¹² Because of Israel’s corruption, God will exile his people (Isa 39:5-8). However, God calls on his messenger to comfort his people (Isa 40:1-2) because God will bring them back from exile through a second exodus that will be greater than the first (Isa 43:18-19). The purpose of this restoration will be so that God’s people “might declare my praise” (Isa 43:21). Israel is to look forward to this eschatological deliverance. Thus, Alec Motyer suggests that “in the ultimate, expectation [in Isaiah’s prophecy] is centred on the eschaton, ‘that day’ when the true and divine Davidic King will reign and the divine Anointed Conqueror will have finally settled all outstanding issues.”¹³

¹²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 435. So also J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 13-14; William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 6. Motyer argues, “The Isaianic literature is built around three Messianic portraits: the King (chapters 1-37), the Servant (chapters 38-55) and the Anointed Conqueror (chapters 56-66),” which “are facets of the one Messianic person.” Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 13. Motyer then proposes that the movement of Isaiah “is from a central work outwards:” i.e., from a need for a restored Zion to a final restoration which includes Jews and Gentiles as co-equals (13-14). Cf. John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 7. While Oswalt argues that the central theme of Isaiah is “the servanthood of God’s people through whom his saviorhood is revealed” (7), he sees that “the function of the Servant [introduced in chapter 42] is to restore Israel” (9). For a literary analysis of Isaiah and a warrant for the development from corrupt Zion to the new, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 435-44.

¹³Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 32. Cf. Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 274-75. While not arguing for a central theme, House suggests that “there is a significant amount of agreement across traditional and non-traditional lines about Isaiah’s theology”

Yet, the restoration of Zion is not a mere return to the land after God's judgment of exile. Isaiah 38-55 reveal that the restoration of Zion includes both geo-political/physical and spiritual promises on the basis of a new covenant. To be sure, Israel's redemption will include a physical return from exile to the land and a restoration of the city and its temple under the hand of Cyrus, king of Persia (Isa 44:21-45:7; cf. Ezra; Neh). However, as Ezra and Nehemiah indicate, the glory of the physical restoration is lacking compared to the former glory of Israel and its temple (Ezra 3:12-13), and the people remain unchanged.¹⁴

Thus, Isaiah looks forward to an eschatological redemption and restoration of Israel (Isa 43:22-43) that will be accomplished by the servant of the Lord (Isa 49:1-53:12) on the basis of a new covenant (Isa 54-56). This "spiritual" return from exile will lead the people away from rebellion by granting them circumcised hearts and providing forgiveness of sin. With this overarching structure in mind, therefore, I commence my investigation into what the new covenant entails and whom it includes in Isaiah 54-56 where the restoration of Zion in the new creation is related to the new covenant.¹⁵

The New Covenant People of God: Of Supernatural Birth

Isaiah 54 and 55 are set in the context of the announcement (Isa 52:1-12) of the Lord's coming salvation through his Servant (Isa 52:13-53:12).¹⁶ The good news just

(274). House highlights this same eschatological emphasis when he states that "the creator who redeemed Israel from Egyptian slavery will lead the people in a new exodus, one that will bring them from the ends of the earth back to their ancestral home" (274). Additionally, House notes Isaiah's emphasis on the "coming Davidic Savior. . . . It is this figure that prophecy anticipates, and it is this character who will rule all creation when history flows into perfection" (274-75).

¹⁴Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 438.

¹⁵Gentry proposes that "Isaiah 54:1-55:13 is a major text dealing with the new covenant. We see the terms "covenant of peace" in 54:10 and "everlasting covenant" in 55:3." *Ibid.*, 435.

¹⁶Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Isaiah*, in vol. 6 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 308; F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 7, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 342; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, The New

announced calls for a response (Isa 54-55).¹⁷ So the Lord calls “the barren one” to shout for joy because, on the basis of the servant’s work, her children will be more numerous than the woman who is in a marital relationship in which natural childbirth is expected (Isa 54:1).¹⁸ Generally, the “barren one, who did not bear” set against the “one who is married and able to have children” recalls the numerous accounts in the Old Testament where barren women were looked down upon by women able to bear children naturally (Gen 29:31; 1 Sam 1:3-8).¹⁹ In such cases of barrenness, the Old Testament emphasizes the sovereign God’s ability to overcome barrenness and bring about birth through supernatural means (Gen 30:22; 1 Sam 1:19-20; cf. Gen 25:21).²⁰

The mention of “the barren one” with the promise of innumerable offspring (Isa 54:3) specifically recalls Sarah (cf. Gen 11:30; 16:1),²¹ who in the words of Alec

American Commentary, vol. 15B (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 473. Both Motyer and Gentry argue that the servant song in chap. 53 is tied to chaps. 54-55 with certain key words. See Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 441. Oswalt points out that many commentators “see little direct connection between 52:13-53:12,” but admits that “if one omits that poem and tries to move directly from 52:14 to 54:1, the shift is unaccountable. But if 52:13-53:12 is understood as an expression of the means by which a restored relationship between God and his people is possible, then the change in atmosphere is entirely understandable.” Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 413-14.

¹⁷Grogan, *Isaiah*, 308; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 415; Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 476; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 440. Motyer notes that “response is the keynote of chapters 54-55. Many divine acts are spoken of but the only human acts envisaged are responses: to sing (54:1), to enlarge the tent (54:2), to come to the banquet (55:1), to seek the Lord (55:6).” Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 444.

¹⁸Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 428. For the grounding of the promise in the work of the Servant, see n16 in this chap.

¹⁹Henri Blocher, “Glorious Zion, Our Mother: Readings in Isaiah,” *European Journal of Theology* 11, no. 1 (2002): 7; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 416. For the theme of barrenness in the Old Testament see, Karen H. Jobes, “Jerusalem, Our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Galatians 4:21-31,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 306-8.

²⁰Jobes, “Jerusalem, Our Mother,” 307; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445. Contra Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 477-78.

²¹W. A. M. Beuken, “Isaiah LIV: The Multiple Identity of the Person Addressed,” in *Language and Meaning, Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis: Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference Held at London, 1973*, ed. James Barr, Old Testament Studies, vol. 19 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1974), 37-39. So also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 442; Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 342; Blocher, “Glorious Zion,” 7. Smith rejects the barren woman as an allusion to Sarah,

Motyer, was “the barren woman who was to bear the miracle child and become the mother of a family more numerous than the stars” (cf. Isa 51:2).²² The context does not merely look backwards, however; it also points forward to a time when God will yet bring about the supernatural birth of the innumerable children of “the barren one.”²³ Thus, the promise of children through supernatural means is also tied to the restoration of the marriage relationship between God and Israel in a future new covenant (Isa 54:6-10).²⁴ This new covenant is linked with the Abrahamic covenant (Isa 54:1-3), the Noachic covenant (Isa 54:9) and the Davidic covenant (Isa 55:3),²⁵ yet the promise looks forward to an eschatological restoration of Zion that combines Edenic language (Isa 54:2-3; cf. 51:2-3) with that of an eschatological city-temple (54:11-12; cf. Rev 21) in which the people of God will dwell in perpetual peace (Isa 54:13; cf. 54:10) and eternal security in God’s presence (Isa 54:13-17).²⁶

While the juxtaposition of “the barren, desolate one” with “the one who is married” may merely be a general contradistinction emphasizing the supernatural origin of the new covenant people of God granted to the barren one,²⁷ there is reason to consider

however, he rightly sees this as a future promise regarding Zion and her spiritual children: i.e., children brought about by supernatural birth. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 477-78.

²²Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445. Also G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 130. Beale argues that Isa 54:1 further develops 51:2, which echoes Gen 1:28 and is couched in Edenic language (51:3).

²³Dumbrell states that “Isa 54:1-3 infers a revival of the Abrahamic promises, a revival resulting from the servant’s ministry which brought a renewed Israel into being.” Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 98.

²⁴Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 442-43; Blocher, “Glorious Zion,” 7-8; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 447-49.

²⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 441; Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 18.

²⁶Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 131-33. Beale connects Isa 54:2-3 to Eden via Isa 51:2-3.

²⁷Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445.

that “the one who is married” is a reference to Israel under the old covenant.²⁸ If this is the case, then the juxtaposition of the two women is meant to highlight the distinction between the people of God under the old covenant who were identified genealogically and the new covenant people of God who will be identified by this supernatural birth: i.e., spiritually.

Addressing the theme of barrenness in the historical context in which Isaiah was written, Karen Jobes argues, “It was a colloquial idiom to personify the capital city of an ethnic population as a female . . . whose husband was the local deity. The population represented by that city was referred to as the ‘children.’”²⁹ Additionally, Jobes notes, “When a nation was conquered, its capital overrun and its people exiled, the city was considered to be a barren woman rejected by her husband.”³⁰ Clearly, this picture serves as a backdrop to the manner in which the prophets spoke of Israel: a faithless, whoring bride (Ezek 16:15-52; Hos 2:1). In judgment Yahweh abandoned Israel and permitted her to be conquered and exiled. Yet, behind all the prophetic warnings was the promise of restoration on the basis of a renewed marriage covenant (cf. Ezek 16:53-63), which is the context of Isaiah 54. The reference to the married woman is Israel under the old covenant, which she broke. The barren woman is restored Zion, that is, Israel returned from exile.³¹ It is this city that will be populated with offspring of supernatural origin.

This background also fits the apostle Paul’s use of Isaiah 54:1 in Galatians

²⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 442. Contra John Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 341, who argues that the desolate woman and the married woman are two contemporary women.

²⁹Jobes, “Jerusalem, Our Mother,” 308.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 304.

4:27.³² Paul identifies the two women of Isaiah 54:1 as representing two covenants:³³ the Mosaic (Sinai) covenant, which Paul identifies as Hagar and connects to the Jerusalem of his day (Gal 4:24-25; cf. Gen 16:1-7), and an unnamed covenant, which Paul connects to the heavenly Jerusalem whom he calls the mother of all Christians (Jew and Gentile).³⁴ According to Paul, all who are in Christ (i.e., Christians) are children of the heavenly Jerusalem through Christ (Gal 4:26), the offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:29);³⁵ therefore, argues Paul, Christians are free from the Mosaic covenant and its law (Gal 4:27-28, 31). Thus, Isaiah 54:1 serves as the ground for Paul's argument for Christian freedom from the Mosaic covenant and identification with the heavenly Jerusalem (i.e., new covenant).³⁶

While there is debate as to whether the unnamed covenant in Galatians 4:24-26 should be identified with the Abrahamic or the new covenant,³⁷ the context of Isaiah 54:1, which points to a restored Zion in the eschaton based on the work of the Servant (Isa 53) and grounded in an eternal covenant of peace (Isa 54:10) along with the reference to the

³²Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," 308.

³³For the issues concerning Paul's use of allegory, see Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 208-11; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 300.

³⁴Schreiner, *Galatians*, 294-95. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, trans. Henry Zylstra, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 175-76.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 303.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 295, 303-4. Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 213-15. Longenecker notes the background for a Jewish understanding of a heavenly Jerusalem as the eschatological hope of restored Zion. Longenecker further adds that Paul likely does not use Zion as does the writer of Heb 12, because Jews tended to conflate present day Jerusalem with Zion.

³⁷Moisés Silva, *Galatians*, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 808. Schreiner notes that "strictly speaking, the second covenant remains unnamed, but given the discussion in 3:15-18, it is possible that the covenant with Abraham is in view." Schreiner, *Galatians*, 301n30, for a list of those who identify the unnamed covenant as the Abrahamic. "Other scholars," Schreiner adds, "argue that the reference is to the new covenant in contrast with the old." See *ibid.*, 301n31, for a list of those who identify the unnamed covenant as the new covenant.

heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26), weighs in the direction of the new covenant.³⁸ Thomas Schreiner agrees that “probably the new covenant is in view here,” but cautions that “the new covenant fulfills the covenant made with Abraham, so we should not exaggerate the difference between these two options. The citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 signals the eschatological fulfillment of the covenant enacted with Abraham.”³⁹ Isaiah 54:1, then, particularly in light of Galatians 4:24-28, indicates that the new covenant people of God will be composed of the children of Abraham who come about,⁴⁰ not by natural birth as were those of the old covenant but, by supernatural birth on the basis of faith in the seed of Abraham, namely Jesus (Gal 3:24-29).⁴¹ As Gary Smith insightfully states, “These children are spiritual children in an eschatological era as [Isa.] 49:23; 52:6; 54:10, 13-14 suggest, for at that time these people will acknowledge God and will be taught by God himself (cf. 2:1-5).”⁴²

The New Covenant People of God: A Missionary People to the Nations

Because the new covenant children of Abraham by spiritual birth will be so great in number (Isa 54:1), the barren, desolate wife is commanded to “enlarge the place of your tent and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out” (Isa 54:2). John Oswalt suggests that “there is a note of faith here, since the woman is presumably still barren when she receives this command.”⁴³ In faith, the barren woman is to make

³⁸Blocher, “Glorious Zion,” 8; Silva, “Galatians,” 808.

³⁹Schreiner, *Galatians*, 301.

⁴⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 442; Blocher, “Glorious Zion,” 7.

⁴¹Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445.

⁴²Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 477-78.

⁴³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 416.

preparations for a large number of children,⁴⁴ and she is not to “hold back,” that is, let her imagination limit the size of her tent (Isa 54:2c).⁴⁵ Smith notes, “‘Make it wide’ and ‘stretch it out’ encourage the woman to not be shortsighted or pessimistic about how many children will be added and how much space will be needed.”⁴⁶

The woman’s faith to expand her tent is grounded in the divine promise that she will spread out (פָּרֹץ) in every direction and her offspring (זָרַע) will possess the nations and the desolate cities (Isa 54:3).⁴⁷ While the language of Isaiah 54:3 at first glance appears reminiscent of the language of conquest promised to Israel under the old covenant (i.e., Exod 34:24; Deut 9:1; 11:23; 31:3),⁴⁸ Gentry rightly argues that “verse 1 will not allow this interpretation.”⁴⁹ As seen, Isaiah 54 rests within the context of the new covenant promises of the restoration of Zion which will be populated by children born through supernatural means: i.e., spiritual children in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises (Gen 12:1-3). Additionally, the fact that Isaiah 54:3 is likely an allusion to Genesis 24:18 also indicates that this verse is an advancement of those very promises.⁵⁰ In Genesis 24:18, the verb “spread abroad/out (פָּרֹץ)” is used when Jacob is told, “Your offspring (זָרַע) shall

⁴⁴Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445.

⁴⁵Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 478; Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 526.

⁴⁶Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 478. The expansion of her tent resolves the complaint raised in Isa 49:20-21. So also, Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 131-32.

⁴⁷Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: 40-66*, 417; Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 479; Cf. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445.

⁴⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 441-42.

⁴⁹Ibid., 442. Smith reminds that “there is no claim that the Israelites will live in any other specific nation, but if Egyptians, Assyrians (19:18–25), and people from many other nations (2:2-4; 45:22-25) become believers when God sets up his kingdom, one can understand how the people of God will exponentially increase beyond anything that one can imagine.” Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 479.

⁵⁰Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445; Grogan, *Isaiah*, 308; Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 130-31. See also, Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 343; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 417. Delitzsch and Oswalt recognize the language of Gen 28:14 and Isa 54:3 are the same.

be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad (פּרִץ) to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south and in you and your offspring (זרע) shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (cf. Gen 12:3).⁵¹ Jacob is here promised that through him and his seed/offspring (זרע) God will fulfill the Abrahamic promises of multiplication of descendants and blessing to the nations. The allusion to Genesis 28:14, which advances the Abrahamic promises of innumerable offspring and the blessing of the nations, sheds light on how to understand both how the woman’s spiritual children will “spread (פּרִץ) abroad to the right and to the left” and how her seed/offspring (זרע) will possess the nations (Isa. 54:3). Peter Gentry aptly summarizes Isaiah 54:1-3:

Thus the reference to the barren woman is a way of referring to the Abrahamic covenant and so recalls the promise to Abraham of descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore and as the stars of the sky. But the covenant with Abraham also promised blessing to the nations throughout Israel. Thus Israel dispossesses the nations not as a destructive military conquest but as the blessing brings them into the family. Simply bringing the exiles back to the land to grow and prosper as a nation does not explain sufficiently the need for a massive enlargement of the family tent.⁵²

Isaiah 54:3 communicates that the children of the desolate woman will be innumerable in part because they will include people from all nations. Thus, in the first few verses of Isaiah 54 one sees that while under the old (Mosaic) covenant the people of God were genealogically and ethnically identified, the Abrahamic covenant looked forward to a time when the people of God would include all ethnicities (Isa 54:3). In other words, “all, Gentiles and Jews alike,” notes John Oswalt, “may become the blessed people of God.”⁵³

Of particular importance to my argument is the fact that if the concept of “spreading abroad” (Gen 28:14; Isa 54:3) in all directions does not refer to conquest, then

⁵¹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 417; Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 479; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 445; Grogan, *Isaiah*, 308.

⁵²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 442.

⁵³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 415.

Isaiah 54:3 provides a missionary thrust for the new covenant people of God that was not present for Israel under the old covenant. A distinction between Israel's and the church's mission may be made in the following manner: Israel's mission was centripetal (attracting the surrounding nations toward incorporation), while the new covenant people's mission is centrifugal (going to the nations to proclaim the message of the Davidic king to the surrounding nations).⁵⁴ That is not to say that the new covenant people of God are not to be attractional.⁵⁵ As I will argue, the church maintains the centripetal (attractional) witness of mission to be the people of God whose mother is the heavenly Jerusalem and who display the heavenly kingdom on the earth, while also fulfilling the centrifugal missionary call (missional) to go and gather the nations to God through the verbal proclamation of the gospel.⁵⁶ To be sure, there is debate as to Israel's missionary thrust under the old covenant.⁵⁷ Walter Kaiser, for example, argues that Israel did have a cross-cultural missionary call.⁵⁸ Kaiser suggests that Israel's priestly status (Exod 19:6) reveals

⁵⁴Contra Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 523. Wright agrees with this distinction to a certain degree but believes "it is not entirely adequate" because he sees "centrifugal elements in the Old Testament vision also."

⁵⁵There is some debate as to whether the church is to be either attractional or missional. The seeker-sensitive movement sought to make the church attractional in order to reach an un-churched generation. The missional movement was in many ways a reaction against seeker-sensitivity and its attractional model. However, as one will see, the New Testament church is to be both attractional and missional. For an introduction to the debate between proponents of missional church versus proponents of attractional church, see Url Scaramanga and Andy Rowell, "Missional vs. Attractional: Debating the Data," December 16, 2008, accessed November 21, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/parse/2008/december/missional-vs-attractional-debating-data.html>.

⁵⁶Wright, *The Mission of God*, 523-34. Here I am in agreement with Wright.

⁵⁷Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter Thomas O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 35.

⁵⁸Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Israel's Missionary Call," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: The Notebook*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), A25-A33. Also, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

its missionary role.⁵⁹ “The whole nation,” argues Kaiser, “was to function on behalf of the kingdom of God in a mediatorial role in relation to the nations.”⁶⁰ Christopher Wright also argues that Israel’s priestly role “included both centrifugal and centripetal dynamics.”⁶¹ Köstenberger and O’Brien argue, “This common assertion, however, is unsatisfactory both exegetically and theologically.”⁶² In fact, Köstenberger and O’Brien assert that “there is no suggestion in the Old Testament that Israel should have engaged in ‘cross-cultural’ or foreign mission.”⁶³

“Broadly speaking,” suggests Charles Scobie, “Israel [under the old covenant] relates to other peoples in the Old Testament in two ways: *historically*, through *incorporation* and *eschatologically* through *ingathering*.”⁶⁴ Historically, anyone could become incorporated into Israel; they simply had to become a Yahweh worshipper and keep the covenant. Scobie notes such examples as the Egyptians (Exod 12:38), Rahab (Jos 6:25), and foreigners within the Davidic kingdom (2 Sam 11:3; 15:19-23).⁶⁵ As

⁵⁹Kaiser, “Israel’s Missionary Call,” A29.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Wright, *The Mission of God*, 331. However, Wright ultimately agrees with Charles H. H. Scobie, “Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 43, no. 2 (1992): 504, that Israel’s mission was not one of “going somewhere but of *being* something.”

⁶²Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35. For the literature in this debate which argues against Kaiser, see Scobie, “Israel and the Nations.” Also, contra Kaiser, see Graeme L. Goldsworthy, “The Great Indicative: An Aspect of a Biblical Theology of Mission,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 55, no. 1 (1996): 2-13.

⁶³Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35.

⁶⁴Scobie, “Israel and the Nations,” 286. So also Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35.

⁶⁵Scobie, “Israel and the Nations,” 286-87. So also Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35.

Scobie admits, however, “while historically, incorporation into Israel was always possible, in practice it had severe limitations.”⁶⁶

Isaiah 54 reinforces the expectation of an eschatological ingathering that would include peoples from all nations and be accomplished by a Davidic king.⁶⁷ Köstenberger and O'Brien argue, “Israel’s history, which was marked by disobedience and division within, and by subjection to a series of foreign nations, led to the increasing recognition that Israel’s hope rested solely on the future action of God.”⁶⁸ Isaiah 54-56 point forward to this eschatological restoration of Zion under a Davidic king.⁶⁹ Thus, unlike the old covenant people of God whose mission was to display the kingdom of God to the nations so that the surrounding nations would see Israel’s God and be attracted to him and possibly be incorporated into Israel, the new covenant people of God are to be a missionary people who go out and gather the foreign nations to God.⁷⁰

As to the nature of this future eschatological ingathering, G. K. Beale ties the missionary thrust in Isaiah 54:3 with the original Adamic commission to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28).⁷¹ Since Beale is a maximalist when it comes to seeing Old Testament allusions and echoes in the New Testament,⁷² and since his

⁶⁶Scobie, “Israel and the Nations,” 288. So also Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 35-36, who note intermarriage as one of the limitations.

⁶⁷Scobie, “Israel and the Nations,” 288-92; William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 98, 100.

⁶⁸Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 36.

⁶⁹For a treatment of the concept of the New Jerusalem throughout the Old and New Testaments but particularly from Isaiah, see Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning*, 1-34.

⁷⁰Contra Walter Kaiser, who argues that Israel’s mission under the old covenant was also outward and evangelistic. See Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*.

⁷¹Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 129-33; Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 751-55.

⁷²G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers

arguments often gain cumulative strength when they are all seen together,⁷³ it is not feasible to restate all his arguments here.⁷⁴ Instead, it will be more helpful to quote at length one of his summary statements:

The key to understanding why Israel was to expand the borders of its land to cover the earth rests in the fact that Israel was a corporate Adam, and just as he was to expand the borders of Eden, wherein was the divine presence, so Israel was to do the same. In particular, Eden was not a mere piece of land but was the first tabernacle, which Adam was to expand. Likewise, Israel's land was to expand because at its center in Jerusalem was the temple, in which was the holy of holies, where God's presence dwelled. . . . The purpose of the [Eden] symbolism [in the tabernacle and temple] was to point to the end time, when God's special revelatory presence would break out of the holy of holies and fill the visible heavens and the earth. Accordingly, there are prophecies that describe how God's presence will break out from the holy of holies, cover Jerusalem (Isa. 4:4-6; Jer. 3:16-17; Zech. 1:16-2:11), then expand to cover all of Israel's land (Ezek. 37:25-28), and finally cover the entire earth (Isa. 54:2-3; Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45).

Isaiah 66:18 also speaks of the eschatological ingathering promised by the Old Testament prophets which, as just mentioned, was one of the ways in which Israel under the old covenant was to relate to the nations.⁷⁵ Although the immediate context is one of judgment (66:15-17), verse 18 explains that the Lord will gather all "nations and tongues" to see his glory.⁷⁶ Verse 19 refers to a sign that God will put in their midst. Gentry explains that this sign is what will draw the nations in to see his glory, and adds, "Since

Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 24. For a brief introduction to Beale's theological method, see *ibid.*, 22-35.

⁷³Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 26.

⁷⁴For his comprehensive and cumulative argument that Eden was a garden sanctuary in which Adam was a priest whose mission was to expand the borders of the temple garden and populate the earth with image bearers until the whole earth was filled with his glory, and that after his failure/rebellion other Adamic figures received the same temple building mission, though with some differences, to fill the earth with the glory of God, a mission finally completed in the last Adam, Jesus, see Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*.

⁷⁵The two ways in which Israel under the old covenant was to relate to the nations was incorporation and eschatological ingathering. See Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 283-305.

⁷⁶Gentry admits that "verse 18 is difficult because apparently some words are missing. . . . The question is whether this gathering of nations is negative or positive, i.e., will God gather them for judgment or for salvation?" Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 458.

this passage refers to the gathering of the nations into the new Jerusalem, we can see and understand from our vantage point that the sign probably refers to the cross.”⁷⁷

While, as I have argued, under the old covenant Israel was to be a model kingdom as a light to the nations, Isaiah 66:19-21 confirms the clear shift within the new covenant toward a focus on missionary outreach.⁷⁸ First, God sends “survivors” to the nations whom he says “have not heard my fame or seen my glory” (66:19b).⁷⁹ Though some of the place names are difficult to identify, Gentry acknowledges that “all of these places represent those countries on the edge of the map as far as geography in Isaiah’s time is concerned.”⁸⁰ Second, the survivors sent out by God possess a message to proclaim; “they shall declare my glory among the nations,” for there exist those who have neither heard of God’s fame, nor seen God’s glory (66:19c). Third, there is the expectation that those who hear the message proclaimed and receive it will be brought back to Zion as an offering to God (66:20). And finally, even from these God will take some to be priests and Levites (66:21). Clearly, the mission has changed from the old covenant to the new. Added to the task of being a light to the nations as a model kingdom, the new covenant adds the missionary task of going to the nations, having been sent by God to proclaim the fame of God and gather the peoples to God. The difference is that, as Gentry notes, “Normally in the Old Testament, all the nations come to Israel to learn about her God and the right way to treat each other.

⁷⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 458.

⁷⁸Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 541-43.

⁷⁹Motyer states that “in context, [the survivors] are those who have escaped the manifestation of the Lord in fire and sword (16; cf. chapters 24-25, where the same idea lies behind the procession of nations to Zion; they too have escaped world overthrow).” *Ibid.*, 541-42.

⁸⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 459.

In the New Testament, Jesus sends his disciples out to the far ends of the earth.”⁸¹ This missionary task is confirmed by the apostle Paul, who, in Romans 15:16-17, declares he is “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Thus, “all flesh shall come to worship before” God (66:23). When this mission is completed, the kingdom of God will have been restored on earth and the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God as all God’s people image God faithfully and worship him truly.

The New Covenant People of God: Eternally Secure in Covenant Love

As the imagery shifts away from Sarah, the barren wife (Isa 54:1-3) to Israel, the deserted wife (Isa 54:4-10), the command to rejoice gives way to a command to fear not, a command that is grounded in numerous assurances (Isa 54:4)⁸² ultimately rooted in God himself (Isa 54:5).⁸³ Israel, God’s wife, had every reason to fear, for she had broken the covenant and God had abandoned her, bringing about her shame (54:4). Yet, God, her maker and husband, would also be her kinsman redeemer, the one who would buy her back (54:5; cf. Ruth; Hosea 1-3).⁸⁴ So Israel, the deserted wife, is encouraged to fear no longer because the desertion (judgment) was only temporary (54:7-8).⁸⁵

The reconstitution of the marriage will be everlasting just as was God’s covenant with Noah (54:9), for God swears in a new covenant of peace (54:10) that his steadfast

⁸¹Gentry goes on to say that “this text in Isaiah comes close to the Great Commission in Matthew 28.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 459.

⁸²Beuken, “Isaiah LIV,” 43; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 446.

⁸³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 419; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 446.

⁸⁴Ibid.; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 442-43.

⁸⁵Grogan, *Isaiah*, 309; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 446.

love will never again depart from his new bride.⁸⁶ The reference to the waters of Noah recalls both God's judgment against human rebellion and his oath to never again destroy the earth by flood (Gen 9:11). Motyer explains, "[God's] declaration of peace, the hanging up of his war bow as no longer needed (Gn. 9:13), was not an act of leniency but a consequence of justice satisfied."⁸⁷ Likewise, argues Motyer, in Israel's case (Isa 54:9), "judgment has fallen, the punishment that brought peace to us (53:5)."⁸⁸ God tells Israel that just like in the waters of Noah, judgment will come, but after judgment he will demonstrate his steadfast love in a new covenant that will bring forth peace (Isa 54:10).⁸⁹ "My covenant of peace," suggests Oswalt, "expresses God's commitment both to be at peace with his people and to secure the peace of his people."⁹⁰ That this peace will be secured by the Servant of the Lord is made evident in that in Isaiah the word "covenant" is found only here in 54:10 and 55:3 and both occur, notes Oswalt, "in the lyrical section following the climactic Servant passage."⁹¹ Thus, argues Oswalt, it is "possible for God to enter into a (new) covenant of peace with Israel and all the nations of the world . . . through the deliverance brought about by the self-sacrifice of 'my Servant,' who is the expression of the eternal love of God."⁹² Gentry well summarizes the implications of God's promises in Isaiah 54:9-10:

Israel may now benefit from the healing of a broken relationship in a new covenant. The new covenant renews and restores the broken old covenant. But it is more than that. It is a new covenant, different from the old one and superior to it, because it

⁸⁶Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 446; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 443.

⁸⁷Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 448.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 423.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., 424. So also Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 449.

depends not upon God's people but instead upon the everlasting kindness of God. Momentary wrath is contrasted with everlasting love and mercy.⁹³

While the word everlasting does not occur in Isaiah 54:10, the allusion to the Noahic covenant in Genesis 9 (v. 15-“never again”; v. 16-“everlasting covenant”) and the idea that the covenant of peace “shall not be removed” provide assurance of perpetuity. Motyer notes, “Just as the Noahic settlement was formalized into a perpetual covenant, so the work of the Servant leads to a covenant pledging peace in perpetuity.”⁹⁴ While the old covenant is nowhere referred to as everlasting,⁹⁵ the new covenant will not depart from the people of God, for it will be an everlasting covenant of peace (54:9-10; cf. 55:3; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26).⁹⁶

Adding to the idea that the (new) covenant is eternal is the fact that Isaiah 54:11-12, which speak of Israel as Zion, the eschatological city of God constructed with precious stones and jewels, explains the blessings of the covenant of peace mentioned in 54:10.⁹⁷ Geoffrey Grogan notes that “the marriage analogy is still present,” and God's protection as husband, implicit in the marriage imagery, is now explicitly described in imagery of a fortified city constructed of precious materials.⁹⁸ This very imagery of God's people as a fortified city built of eternal materials is utilized in Revelation 21 to describe the church as the heavenly Jerusalem.⁹⁹ Since eschatological Zion will be

⁹³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 443.

⁹⁴Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 449.

⁹⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 476.

⁹⁶The Noahic covenant is said to be everlasting (Gen 9:16; cf. Isa 24:5); the Abrahamic covenant is referred to as everlasting as well (Gen 17:7; cf. 1 Chr 16:17); and the Davidic covenant also is explained as everlasting (2 Sam 23:5). All the references cited refer to the new covenant as everlasting. Of special importance is Ezek 37:26 because there the covenant of peace is explained as an everlasting covenant.

⁹⁷Grogan, *Isaiah*, 309.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.; Also, Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 132-33.

established by God (Isa 54:11-12),¹⁰⁰ there will be no reason to fear. God's new covenant people will be free from terror and oppression (54:14); they will be free from strife (54:15); and no weapons shall come against it (54:17). Such were the expectations of God's people under the old covenant (Deut 28:1-14); however, because of their disobedience, Israel instead inherited the Deuteronomic curses (Deut 28:15-68; cf. 2 Chr 34:24). However, God promises that his righteousness will bring about a new covenant of peace that will not only reconstitute the broken marriage, it will also establish the promised blessings for God's people (Isa 54:4-17).

The New Covenant People of God: A Community of Believers Only

Linked to the entailment of supernatural birth, one unique aspect of the new covenant is that unlike the old which was a mixture of believers and unbelievers, the new covenant community will be composed of believers only; for "all your children shall be taught by the Lord" (54:13).¹⁰¹ While the imagery of the eschatological city communicates God's protection and his people's security and stability (Isa 54:11-12),¹⁰² Dumbrell observes, "The earlier material imagery [Isa. 54:1-10] is revived somewhat paradoxically [in Isa. 54:11-17] in a bewildering fusion of imagery, since this city is the possessor of offspring who in covenant language 'will be taught by the Lord.'"¹⁰³ The imagery of the city in Isaiah 54:11-12, then, is just another way to describe the people of God; in particular, it is another way to describe God's faithfulness toward his people.¹⁰⁴ God will

¹⁰⁰Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 488.

¹⁰¹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 444.

¹⁰²Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning*, 99.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

restore Zion, his supernaturally wrought eschatological people who were formerly “afflicted, storm-tossed and not comforted,” to glorious splendor (Isa 54:11-12).¹⁰⁵ God’s restoration of his people in a new covenant brings about their security,¹⁰⁶ and Isaiah 54:13-14 explain how God will bring about such restoration.¹⁰⁷

The restoration of which Isaiah 54:11-12 speak, and which now is explicated in verses 13-14, is a restoration to right relationship to God. This is the only restoration that brings security.¹⁰⁸ Throughout her history, Israel had refused to listen to the Lord (Isa 30:9), and God judged her by closing her eyes and ears (Isa 6:9-10; 29:9-10);¹⁰⁹ but as Gary Smith points out, “A few earlier prophecies also told of a future day when the people’s ears would be open and they would listen to God their teacher (29:18; 30:20–21; 32:3–4; 35:5; 42:17).”¹¹⁰ Isaiah 54:13 promises a new reality: all the children of the desolate one will be taught by God himself, just as the Servant of the Lord too was taught by God (Isa 50:4).¹¹¹ “The greatest wealth that Isaiah can imagine for Israel,” explains Oswalt, “is that her children could become disciples of (those who are taught by) the Lord.”¹¹² Oswalt argues, “Throughout the book [of Isaiah], and indeed, the Bible,

¹⁰⁵Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 449.

¹⁰⁶Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 427.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. Motyer argues that “this present ‘city’ passage, the third stanza of the poem, is linked with the first stanza by the theme of Zion’s *sons* (1, 13) and with the second stanza by the note of *peace* (10, 13). In this way it is a summary and conclusion to the whole. It is linked with the foregoing Servant Song by the concept of righteousness (53:11; 54:14, 17).” Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 449.

¹⁰⁸Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 427.

¹⁰⁹Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 489.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 450.

¹¹²Oswalt notes that the Hebrew word translated “shall be taught” (לָמַד) in v. 13 “appears three other times in the book: 8:16, where it refers to the disciples of Isaiah, and 50:4 (twice), where it refers to the Servant being taught by God.” Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 428. So also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 444.

[discipleship] is seen as the essence of a relationship with God.”¹¹³ Isaiah promises, then, that in the new covenant community all members will be disciples of the Lord. Thus, “all your sons will be taught by God” (Isa 54:13) means that all the spiritually wrought children of the barren woman, that is the heavenly Jerusalem, will be disciples of the Lord and know him intimately. According to Peter Gentry, this means that “in the new covenant community, the believing community and the covenant community will be coextensive.”¹¹⁴ Thus, while under the old covenant the people of God consisted of believers and their unbelieving children, the new covenant community will be composed of believers only (Isa 54:13).¹¹⁵ The make-up of the new covenant community as believers only is a unique and completely new aspect of the promised covenant of peace.

While one may be left to wonder how the promise of knowledge of the Lord will come about,¹¹⁶ Isaiah 54:14 answers, “in righteousness you shall be established.”¹¹⁷

Gentry summarizes the new covenant promises:

The new covenant therefore brings to fruition God’s promises and purposes in all the others: (1) it brings the numerous seed promised in the Abrahamic covenant, (2) it brings the righteousness between God and humans and among humans aimed at in

¹¹³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 428.

¹¹⁴Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 444.

¹¹⁵The make-up of the new covenant community is a strongly debated point between covenant theologians who retain the concept of the mixed community under the new covenant and thus argue for infant baptism and those who believe the new covenant community is a regenerate community and argue for believer’s baptism. For an argument from the covenants for a regenerate community and believer’s baptism, see Stephen J. Wellum, “Baptists and the Relationship between the Covenants,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B & H, 2006). For an opposing view which argues for a mixed community of believers and unbelievers under the new covenant and the application of baptism to infants of believers, see Gregg Strawbridge, ed., *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003).

¹¹⁶Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 450.

¹¹⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 444; Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 490; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 428.

the Israelite covenant, and (3) it establishes the city of God ruled by the Davidic King. All of this is as certain as the promises to Noah.¹¹⁸

Thus, it is the role of the Davidic messiah that must now be considered.

The New Covenant People of God: Constituted by a Davidic Messiah

Isaiah 54 provides a general picture of what the new covenant entails and how God structures his relationship with his people under that new covenant. Isaiah 55:3 also mentions an everlasting covenant. Yet, while in Isaiah 54 the new covenant is set in relation to the Abrahamic (Sarah, the barren wife) and the old Mosaic covenant (Israel, the deserted wife), in Isaiah 55 the new, everlasting covenant is related to the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7. There is considerable debate over the translation of Isaiah 55:3b.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, I am convinced by Gentry's argument that in light of the grammar of Isaiah 55:3b, the context of Isaiah's prophecy, the background of 2 Samuel 7 and other intertextual citations and allusions that Isaiah 55:3b speaks of a future Davidic king who initiates the new covenant by his acts of loving-kindness.¹²⁰ It is this future messianic king from David's line who, as the divine son in God's image, will be faithful in fulfilling

¹¹⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 445.

¹¹⁹Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 498. The consensus view takes *David* as an objective genitive in Isa 55:3b, i.e., the everlasting covenant is God's steadfast love *for* David. In other words, in the new covenant God confers his promises made to David on the new covenant community. For an argument for *David* as an objective genitive in Isa 55:3b, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Unfailing Kindnesses Promised to David: Isaiah 55.3," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 14, no. 45 (1989): 91-98. Peter Gentry challenges the majority view arguing that *David* should be interpreted as a subjective genitive in Isa 55:3b. Peter J. Gentry, "Rethinking the 'Sure Mercies of David' in Isaiah 55:3," *Westminster Theological Journal* 69 (2007): 279-304. Cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 406-21.

¹²⁰Gentry, "Rethinking the 'Sure Mercies of David,'" 279. Instead of the sure love (mercies) being for David, Gentry argues that they are performed by David: a future Davidic king. While I follow Gentry's interpretation of "David" as a subjective genitive, my argument is not contingent upon which interpretation one takes on Isa 55:3. For a fair treatment of the interpretive difficulties of Isa 55:3b, see Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 489-503. I am only arguing that the new covenant is initiated by the promised Davidic messiah through his faithful acts of loving-kindness, namely his substitutionary life and death and resurrection as the servant of the Lord (Isa 53). This point is borne out in the progressive revelation of the Old Testament and confirmed in the New Testament. I am merely arguing that this is the point of Isa 55:3b. Cf. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 25 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 246.

the obligations of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:14-15). Gentry notes, “In effect, what vv. 14-15 [of 2 Samuel] are saying is that the covenant will only be fulfilled not by a faithful father alone (i.e., Yahweh keeping his promises), but also by a faithful son (i.e., the obedience of the king to Yahweh’s Torah).”¹²¹ As the son who faithfully images God, Gentry argues, “Faithfulness on the part of the Davidic son would effect the divine rule in the entire world, much as God intended for humanity in the covenant of creation as indicated by the divine image in Gen. 1:26ff.”¹²²

Even if one may disagree with Gentry’s interpretation of Isaiah 55:3b, the fact remains that the new covenant is here linked with the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7, and the link to the Davidic covenant in 55:3b may be viewed as a messianic promise.¹²³ Gary Smith explains, “The past Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7 and Ps 89 are the sources of the promises that the Messiah will be the one who will ultimately reign eternally and finally bring peace and justice on the earth (9:1-7; 11:1-2).”¹²⁴ These Davidic promises are available to all who incline their ear and come to Yahweh and hear his word (55:3a-b). It is with these who respond to the word of Yahweh that he will make an everlasting covenant based on the Davidic covenant (55:3c-d).¹²⁵

The New Covenant People of God: A People from All Nations

Additionally, on the basis of the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7, Isaiah 55:4-5

¹²¹Gentry, “Rethinking the ‘Sure Mercies of David,’” 283. Gentry notes that while earlier theologians understood the Davidic covenant as unconditional or as a royal grant, the Davidic covenant clearly has stipulations for the son’s obedience (285).

¹²²Ibid., 288.

¹²³Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 502. So also Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 454; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 438-39; Grogan, *Isaiah*, 312. Contra Kaiser, “The Unfailing Kindnesses Promised to David,” 95, who rejects the idea that Isa 55:3b is speaking of “some second David or the Messiah who was to come.”

¹²⁴Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 502.

¹²⁵Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 437-38.

indicate that the Davidic Messiah will be a witness to the peoples of the world (Isa 55:4a).¹²⁶ Gentry proposes that “as the divine son, the Davidic king was to effect the divine instruction or torah in the nation as a whole and was, as a result, a mediator of the Mosaic Torah.”¹²⁷ Gentry further argues that the fact that God is sovereign over all the earth indicated that David’s rule “would have repercussions for *all* the nations, not just Israel.”¹²⁸ Thus, on the basis of the Davidic promises (2 Sam 7) the future Davidic messianic son would, like his father David before him, rule over the nations, not just Israel, instructing the world until God’s rule would be established universally.

Motyer agrees that “it is the Servant, with his prophetic task (42:1-4; 49:2-3; 50:4), who fulfills the role of Davidic witness to the world.”¹²⁹ The future Davidic king will call non-Israelite peoples (Isa 55:5a) and receive those who come to him (Isa 55:5b) and rule over them (Isa 55:4b).¹³⁰ In other words, argues Motyer, “The whole Gentile world is on the move to David.”¹³¹ What one observes in Isaiah 55:1-5, then, is that the new, everlasting covenant is based, at least in part, on the Davidic covenant, and as such it means the new covenant community will be ruled under a future Davidic king and his kingdom will include the peoples of the world, not just Israel.

Isaiah 56:1-8 restate the theme of Gentile inclusion in the new covenant community. Verses 1-2 highlight the kinds of persons whom the Lord will bless with his

¹²⁶Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 454-55. Motyer argues that “the idea of world testimony is rooted in the Davidic Psalms” and notes that “Psalm 18 is particularly relevant for providing a model for the present passage” (454). For the argument that the Davidic messiah is the witness and not David himself, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 413-15.

¹²⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 400.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 455.

¹³⁰Ibid., 415, 445, 455. So also Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 439-40; Grogan, *Isaiah*, 312.

¹³¹Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 455.

future salvation event yet to be revealed (56:1),¹³² i.e., those who perform social justice (56:1)¹³³ and who maintain covenant faithfulness (56:2). Motyer rightly cautions, “Isaiah is not inviting people to seek salvation by their own works of righteousness but urging (along with the rest of the Bible) those who belong to the Lord to devote themselves to the life that reflects what he has revealed to be right.”¹³⁴ This promised blessing for those who wait upon the Lord’s future salvation by doing social justice and keeping Sabbath is open to all humanity. Motyer explains,

The word for *man* in *Blessed is the man* is [עֲנוֹשׁ, 'enôš], man in his ordinary humanity with all its weaknesses; *the man who holds it fast* is [בֶּן-אָדָם, ben 'ādām], the “son of man,” the one who shares in the common humanity of all. Gone are the old boundaries of descent and privilege. Such thinking, of course, is inherent in Zion theology (2:2-4; Pss. 47; 87) and has its ultimate root in the Abrahamic promise of universal blessing (Gn. 12:3).¹³⁵

John Watts concurs that the words for “man” are generic: “They speak of persons in the most basic and universal sense possible.”¹³⁶ Thus, Watts concludes, “What distinguishes one person from another is whether one keeps justice or not, whether one does right or not. It has nothing to do with ethnic origins, economic power, or political status.”¹³⁷

¹³²Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 464. So also, Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 19B (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 132.

¹³³Gentry and Wellum *Kingdom through Covenant*, 446-47. Gentry states, “The first half of verse 1 gives a motive or reason for the command [to perform social justice]: ‘because my salvation is about to happen and my righteousness is about to be revealed.’ So the first half of verse 1 is a command to practice social justice and the second half of verse 1 bases the command on the sovereign work of God, who provides his righteousness as an act of deliverance and salvation” (446).

¹³⁴Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 464. So also Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 455.

¹³⁵Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 464. Gentry notes that “the blessing . . . is not directed specifically to Jews or Israelites. Instead, it is general.” Gentry further argues, as does Motyer above, that based on the use of generic “man,” “the invitation is not specifically for Israelites but for all who belong to the human race.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 447.

¹³⁶Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 248.

¹³⁷Ibid.

This inclusion of all humankind is precisely what verses 3-8 indicate:¹³⁸ the inclusion of foreigners who were not formerly permitted in the covenant community (Exod 12:43, 45) and the eunuch formerly excluded from the worshiping community (cf. Lev 21:18-20; Deut 23:1).¹³⁹ Of these it is said that they will no longer have reason to complain of being cut off (Isa 56:3), for God will receive eunuchs who keep covenant (56:4) and will give them an everlasting name within God's house, and they will never be cut off (56:5).

An international priesthood. As for the foreigner, those who join themselves to the Lord and keep the covenant, they will minister to God and be his servants (56:6). Gentry points out, "The verb 'to minister or serve' (שָׁרַת) is most commonly used in the Old Testament of the work of the Levites and priests in the temple. So these foreigners are not just permitted in the temple, they are involved like the Levites and priests."¹⁴⁰ So then, even within the new covenant the pattern of priesthood is maintained, but here it is universalized to include not just Jews but all those also formerly cut off from the people of God under the old covenant. The reality of the new covenant people of God composed of Jews and Gentiles serving as priests to God is further attested to in Isaiah 66:21.¹⁴¹

Thus, God will include in the new covenant community all outcasts, whomever keeps the covenant (56:8); he will bring them to his holy mountain and receive their priestly service and worship (56:7). Here one evidences the eschatological ingathering that had been promised, and the startling fact is that it includes "yet others" that God will

¹³⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 447.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 448. So also Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 467; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 459-60.

¹⁴¹Watt, *Isaiah 34-66*, 365; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 542-43; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 690. Contra Grogan, *Isaiah*, 353.

gather “to him besides those already gathered” (56:8). The identity of the people of God in the new, everlasting covenant is not merely genealogical; it is no longer merely ethnic and tribal; in fact, all who join themselves to the Lord regardless of their nation of origin will be included in the people of God. Thus, the ethnic, tribal makeup of the people of God under the old covenant will no longer exist in the new.¹⁴²

A spirit-filled priesthood. Moving beyond Isaiah 54-56, in Isaiah 59:21, the new covenant is equated with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Verse 20 promises a redeemer who will come to Zion to those who repent from sin. In this context, the repentant are promised God’s Spirit. Here one catches a glimpse that the new covenant includes the promise of the Spirit of God for all who repent. This theme will be expanded and clarified in Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

Isaiah 61:1-3 promises a messiah who would be anointed by the Spirit of God to announce the Jubilee.¹⁴³ What is significant for my thesis is that this language of a coming king who would bring a Jubilee is within the context of language of the new covenant (61:8), and it is in this context that Israel is called “priests of the Lord,” “ministers of our God” (61:6; cf. 56:6). John Davies admits that Isaiah 61:6 is “the most widely recognized as relating intertextually to Exod. 19:6 within the Hebrew Bible.”¹⁴⁴ There is a relationship between Israel as priests and the nations, for verse 5 indicates that the strangers and foreigners will serve Israel as shepherds and farmers and look upon Israel as the priests of Yahweh (61:6). Gary Smith explains that the Israelites “will have a spiritual role of ministering to the nations; thus, the nations will recognize the special

¹⁴²D. A. Carson, “Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church,” in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 359-61.

¹⁴³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 456.

¹⁴⁴John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 212.

status of those who were used by God to bring knowledge of the truth to these nations. As priests the Israelites mediate the riches of God's blessings to the nations."¹⁴⁵ In joyful response, notes Smith, "The nations will joyfully share their riches to supply the material needs (the food to eat) of those who minister to them."¹⁴⁶ Additionally, the Israelites inherit the double portion of the first-born son (61:7). Thus, present within this new covenant context, the language of priesthood, nations, and sonship exists. Gentry well summarizes this passage:

Israel's role as a royal priesthood, lost through violation of the Israelite covenant, is restored by the new covenant. Significantly, the text expressly states in verse 8 that in the new covenant it is the faithfulness of Yahweh that brings about or causes the giving of this reward: "in my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them." This is a clear reference to the new covenant, which is brought about by the faithfulness of Yahweh and entails a reward: the status (as priests) and the wealth mentioned in the context.¹⁴⁷

The language of royal priesthood continues in Isaiah 62.¹⁴⁸ Isaiah 62:3 reads, "You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God." John Davies comments that "both expressions used to describe Zion have priestly as well as royal overtones, as a priest is said to wear 'crowns' (Zech. 6:11), while the roots פֶּאֶר and צִנֹּף, as noted earlier, are both associated with the priestly headdress."¹⁴⁹ Isaiah 62 ends by declaring that this royal-priestly people "shall be called The Holy People" (62:12). Gentry concludes, "The designation 'holy people' here in 62:12 confirms the interpretation of 61:6: the renewed people of God are given in the new covenant what

¹⁴⁵Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 638.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 456.

¹⁴⁸Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 215.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

Israel lost in violating the Israelite covenant—the status as a holy nation and royal priesthood.”¹⁵⁰

It may be helpful to summarize what I have argued thus far in relationship to the new covenant in Isaiah. The pattern of the people as a royal-priesthood continues within the new covenant community which God promised to initiate by his own faithfulness. To be sure, the new covenant also brings about critical changes in the composition of the people of God. The new covenant community will no longer be merely ethnic and tribal but will include Gentiles and Jews, and within the covenant community all will be believers. The pattern of the people of God revealed in the image of God continues in the new covenant.

Additionally, the new covenant introduces a shift in mission focus. The mission of the old covenant people of God was to display the kingdom of God to the surrounding nations with an openness toward incorporation. Through his new covenant people, God will fulfill the promised ingathering of a people composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Other new covenant passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel will serve to confirm what this brief overview of new covenant passages in Isaiah has established.

The Promised New Covenant in Jeremiah

The best-known text explicating the new covenant is Jeremiah 31:31-34.¹⁵¹ This passage is quoted in its entirety in Hebrews 8:8-12 and again partially in Hebrews 10:15-17. While Jeremiah’s ministry was primarily one of demolition, his prophecy

¹⁵⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 456.

¹⁵¹J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 579. Thompson notes that this is the only instance in the Old Testament which mentions a new covenant. So also F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, The New American Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 281; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 434.

begins with the hope of rebuilding and replanting on a universal scale (Jer 1:10).¹⁵² In the words of Stephen Dempster, “The kingdom of God involves dominion and dynasty, whose scope is ultimately universal.”¹⁵³ The context of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 is within the book of Consolation (Jer 30-31), which Keown, Scalise, and Smothers acknowledge, “Stands as a refuge amid the storm of divine wrath that blows through the rest of the book of Jeremiah.”¹⁵⁴ Within the book of Consolation, God promises to restore Israel and Judah as his people and return them to the land of their fathers (Jer 30:2-3). Like the first exodus, God promises to deliver his people from foreign bondage and looks forward to a time when his people will faithfully serve him and the Davidic king whom he will raise up for them (Jer 30:8-9). God and people will once again dwell together in a covenant relationship (Jer 30:22; 31:31).¹⁵⁵ Though God’s people will come with weeping (Jer 31:9), this ingathering and restoration to fruitfulness will be a cause of great joy (Jer 31:12-14).

Yet, there is something different about the structure of the people of God pictured in Jeremiah 31, for the structure of the old covenant was representative and corporate, leading the people to say, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Jer 31:29). D. A. Carson notes that “the history of Israel under the Mosaic covenant has been characterized by the outworking of this proverb.”¹⁵⁶ Carson describes the structure of the old covenant as ethnic and tribal, explaining.

Designated leaders—prophets, priests, king, and occasionally other leaders such as the seventy elders or Bezaleel—were endued with the Spirit, and spoke for God to

¹⁵²Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 160.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁵⁴Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 27 (Dallas: Word, 1995), 83-87.

¹⁵⁵Note the covenant formula in its full expression in Jer 30:22.

¹⁵⁶Carson, “Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church,” 359.

the people and for the people to God (*cf.* Exodus 20:19). Thus when the leaders sinned, the entire nation was contaminated, and ultimately faced divine wrath.¹⁵⁷

Clearly, something new is being promised in the indefinite future, as indicated by the phrase, “Behold, days are coming” (30:3, 31:27, 31).¹⁵⁸ In the particular context of the book of Consolation (Jer 30-31),¹⁵⁹ the events being promised in the coming days are the reunification and restoration of Israel and Judah to the land (30:3), the repopulation of the land with the seed of Israel and Judah (31:27), and the cutting of a new covenant between the Lord and the reunified houses of Israel and Judah at the initiation of the Lord (31:31).¹⁶⁰ In this future time, there will no longer be a basis upon which to quote the proverb that indicated Israel’s present suffering was caused by a previous generation. Carson notes, “The time is coming, Jeremiah says, when this proverb will be abandoned. . . . this could be true only if the entire covenantal structure associated with Moses’ name is replaced by another. That is precisely what the Lord promises.”¹⁶¹

Israel had proven they could not keep the Mosaic covenant (*cf.* Jer 7:21-34; 11:1-17),¹⁶² so God forbade Jeremiah from interceding on their behalf and announced that he would no longer listen “when they call to me in the time of their trouble” (Jer 11:14).¹⁶³ As Keown, Scalise, and Smothers point out, “This command [forbidding Jeremiah to pray

¹⁵⁷Carson, “Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church,” 359-60.

¹⁵⁸This phrase, “Behold, days are coming,” is used throughout Jer (7:32; 9:25; 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 30:3; 31:27, 31, 38; 33:14; 48:12; 49:2; 51:47, 52). Gentry reminds that “the word ‘days’ is unarticulated or anarthrous,” meaning that “the days are indefinite.” Therefore, suggests Gentry, “we must not take this as a technical term in the eschatology of the Old Testament or in the writings of the prophets. It simply refers to an *indefinite* future.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 495.

¹⁵⁹Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 82-87.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁶¹Carson, “Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church,” 360.

¹⁶²Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 131.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

for the people of God] ruled out the possibility of covenant renewal.”¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, God graciously promised to initiate a new covenant with the unified house of Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31) that was distinct from the Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:32).¹⁶⁵ Unlike the Mosaic covenant, the promised new covenant in Jeremiah is one in which God promised to write his law on the hearts of the people (Jer 31:33). Yet, as seen before under each covenant, the result would be the same: God and people in covenant relationship as described in the covenant formula (Jer 31:33; cf. Gen 17:7, 8, 19; Exod 6:7). In other words, God promises to initiate a new covenant in which he would relate to his people in a father/son relationship, except in this new covenant God himself would make all the necessary provisions for his people’s obedience: the law written on the heart (Jer 31:33), individual/personal knowledge of God (31:34a), and forgiveness of sin (31:34b).¹⁶⁶ It is important to consider briefly each of these components of the new covenant in Jeremiah.

A New Heart: Regeneration

As argued in chapter 2, by definition all covenants contain stipulations or obligations.¹⁶⁷ The Mosaic covenant contained stipulations for obedience or keeping the covenant (Exod 19:5) as summarized in the ten words (Exod 20:1-17) and explicated in the judgments (Exod 21-23).¹⁶⁸ The difference between the old and new covenants is not

¹⁶⁴Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 131.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 130-31. The new covenant language of Jer 31:31 is the technical language of “cutting a covenant” (*kārat bērit*), indicating that a covenant is being initiated that did not previously exist. Note also that the unified houses of Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31) is simply referred to as “the house of Israel” (Jer 31:33). Cf. *ibid.*, 132.

¹⁶⁶Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 165-66. Cf. Paul R. House, “God Walks with His People: Old Testament Foundations,” in *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, ed. Kendell H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 26.

¹⁶⁷See Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 64.

¹⁶⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 307. Together, the ten words and the judgment comprise the Book of the Covenant (cf. Exod 24:7).

that one contains stipulations while the other does not. One main difference is that God will empower his people to obey by internalizing the law: i.e., writing the law on their hearts (31:33). As Paul House explains, “God’s new covenant people will serve him from their hearts. They will be willing to obey; they will not need external stimuli, such as laws written on tablets, lest they rebel.”¹⁶⁹

The word “heart” is used metaphorically in this instance, and as A. Bowling notes, it “became the richest biblical term for the totality of man’s inner or immaterial nature.”¹⁷⁰ J. A. Thompson aptly summarizes the new covenant empowerment:

Yahweh himself proposes to bring about the necessary change in the people’s inner nature which will make them capable of obedience. He will set his *law* (*tôrâ*) within them and write it on their hearts, that is, on their minds and wills. The old covenant was written on stone (Exod. 31:18; 34:28-29; Deut. 4:13; 5:22) or in a book (Exod. 24:7). . . . But there could be no obedience and no recognition of Yahweh’s sovereignty as long as the covenant was externalized. It needed to touch the life deeply and inwardly in mind and will. Then the covenant correlative could be realized: *I will become their God and they, on their part, will become my people.*¹⁷¹

Thus, one of the new aspects of the covenant God promises to cut with his people according to Jeremiah 31 is the promise of empowering obedience to the covenant by the provision of a circumcised heart,¹⁷² which is precisely what God declared through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:6. After predicting Israel’s failure to keep covenant and the subsequent exile (Deut 30:1), there is an expectation that upon repentance (Deut 30:2), God will restore his people and gather them back to the land of their fathers (Deut 30:3-4) and make them more prosperous than before (Deut 30:5). Yet, Deuteronomy does not picture a mere

¹⁶⁹House, “God Walks with His People,” 26.

¹⁷⁰Bowling suggests, “In biblical literature [heart] is the most frequently used term for man’s immaterial personality functions as well as the most inclusive term for them since, in the Bible, virtually every immaterial function of man is attributed to the ‘heart.’” A. Bowling, לֵב, in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr., and B. K. Waltke, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 466.

¹⁷¹Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 581.

¹⁷²Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 166.

return to the land as they are; it pictures the time of which Jeremiah predicts—a time in which God’s people will be empowered to obey, for God himself will circumcise the heart of his people for the purpose that they would obey and live (Deut 30:6, 8).¹⁷³

**All Will Know the Lord:
A Regenerate Community**

Additionally, the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31 is different from the old covenant in that while under the Mosaic covenant the priests who mediated God’s presence to the people were the ones responsible for teaching the people the knowledge of God. Under the new covenant, all God’s people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age or status, would have personal knowledge of him on the basis of forgiveness of sin (Jer 31:34).¹⁷⁴ This new covenant promise that they will no longer need teachers—“saying, ‘know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me” (Jer 31:34)—resembles the promise in Isaiah 53:14, that “all your children shall be taught by the Lord.” Thompson explains, “The verb *know* here probably carries its most profound connotation, the intimate personal knowledge which arises between two persons who are committed wholly to one another in a relationship that touches mind, emotion, and will.”¹⁷⁵ Thus, all of the people of God under the new covenant would know the Lord; there would be no need for mediatorial teachers. Carson cautions,

This does not foresee a time of no teachers; in the context, it foresees a time of no mediators, because the entire covenant community under this new covenant will have a personal knowledge of God, a knowledge characterized by the forgiveness of sin (31:34) and by the law of God written on the heart (31:33).¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 166.

¹⁷⁴Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 581.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Carson, “Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church,” 360.

Thus, in this new covenant, according to Jeremiah, God promised to circumcise the hearts of his people, empowering them for obedience. Additionally, all the people of God would have personal, individual knowledge of him.

Only for Israel and Judah?

Before considering the new covenant as explained in the prophecy of Ezekiel, one more question remains. Did this new covenant for the houses of Israel and Judah exclude the nations? If, as I am arguing, the new covenant changes include a shift in structure and identity of the people of God from tribal and ethnic to individual and international, then one should expect to see this covenantal shift in Jeremiah as well, though it appears not to be mentioned in this important passage. However, this is precisely what is encountered earlier in Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 3, though Yahweh had sent Israel away with a divorce decree (3:8), he calls “faithless Israel” (3:6, 8, 12) to repentance (3:12-14). If Israel returns, the Lord promises to provide them with faithful leaders (3:15). Though, it becomes clear that something different, new is going to take place. Utilizing the language of Genesis 1:28, Yahweh declares that “when they have multiplied and increased in the land” (3:16a), “in those days” they will no longer remember nor miss the Ark of the Covenant (3:16b). The Ark of the Covenant was a physical object (the footstool of Yahweh’s throne indicating God’s presence)¹⁷⁷ that pointed to a greater future reality, which, as Jeremiah records, is fulfilled “at that time” when “Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord” (3:17a).¹⁷⁸ “As the ark of the throne of Yahweh,” notes Dempster, “[Jerusalem] will become the focal point for the nations, which will flock to Jerusalem to be blessed. Everyone will have a new heart (Jer

¹⁷⁷See 1 Chr 28:2; cf. Pss 80:1; 99:1; 132:7; Isa 66:1.

¹⁷⁸Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 203. So also Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 166.

3:14-18).¹⁷⁹ Thus, Jeremiah 3:15-18 explain that the promised restoration and reunification of Israel and Judah does in fact include the nations. House well states, “Scattered as they are, Israel remains the focal point of Gods’ plan for the nations.”¹⁸⁰

Finally, Jeremiah 4:1-2 reveal the fact that if Israel does repent and return to Yahweh (4:1), the nations will also seek Yahweh’s blessing and exult in him (4:2).¹⁸¹ Gentry summarizes Jeremiah’s message:

If Israel returns to an unadulterated devotion and loyalty to Yahweh in the covenant relationship, then her use of the name Yahweh will demonstrate faithfulness and justice. This *in turn* would impact the nations to turn to Israel’s God—this is the plot structure of the Old Testament from Genesis 12 onward.¹⁸²

There is no exclusion of the nations, then, in Israel’s and Judah’s reunification and restoration to the land at the promised ingathering of God. Instead, as seen in Isaiah, one of the features of the new covenant is the shift away from an ethnic and tribal structure rooted in a genealogical identity of the people of God, toward the inclusion of Jews and Gentiles in the people of God, leading to an international identity for the new covenant people of God.

Further, Jeremiah 31 indicates that the new covenant people of God will have personal, individual knowledge of God. All the members of the covenant community will know the Lord, for God will write the law on their hearts and will forgive their sins.

¹⁷⁹Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 166; cf. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 203.

¹⁸⁰House, “God Walks with His People,” 26.

¹⁸¹The language in Jer 4:2, “the nations shall bless themselves,” reflects similar language used in Gen 12:3, though in Gen 12:3, the verb בָּרַךְ is in the *niphal* form and is interpreted as passive, while the verb בָּרַךְ in Jer 4:2 is in the *hithpael* form. See Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 213, though Thompson prefers the reflexive interpretation in Gen 12:3. For a brief consideration of the interpretive difficulties and options of the *hithpael*, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 484-87. For a thorough study of the use of the *niphal* and *hithpael* uses of בָּרַךְ, see Benjamin J. Noonan, “Abraham, Blessing, and the Nations: A Reexamination of the Niphal and Hitpael of בָּרַךְ in The Patriarchal Narratives,” *Hebrew Studies* 51 (2010): 73-93. Gentry argues that “the *hithpael* is declarative-estimative reflexive (‘they shall declare themselves as blessed’).” Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 486. So also Noonan, “Abraham, Blessing and the Nations,” 83.

¹⁸²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 487.

So, unlike the old covenant community that included a mixture of believers and unbelievers, the new covenant community, like the original people of God under the creation covenant, will all be believers, that is regenerate. Now it only remains to consider Ezekiel's contribution to the understanding of the new covenant.

The Promised New Covenant in Ezekiel

Ezekiel reminds the people of God under the Mosaic covenant that they find themselves in exile (11:16; 39:28) because they have broken the covenant (16:59; 36:19). Yet, even while in exile the Lord went with them; he was "a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone" (11:16). However, as promised, God will gather his people once again to the "land of Israel" (11:17; cf. 20:33-44; 34:11-16; 36:24; 39:25-29). Those whom God gathers will be a repentant people; they will remove all idolatry from the land (11:18). This new covenant people will be led, not by the ruthless leaders who took advantage of them but, by a faithful Davidic king for all eternity (34:17-24; 37:24-25). Daniel Block well captures the comprehensive nature of the promised restoration of Israel under the new covenant:

Viewed as a whole, Ezekiel's counterthesis provides a remarkably comprehensive summary of the nature and effects of Israel's restoration. In so doing, it highlights the fact that the exiles' deliverance will involve much more than merely reversing the effects of the judgment; it will mean the undoing of their past, including the causes that precipitated the judgment, and the establishment of an entirely new order. The promises also stress that just as the judgment had been the work of Yahweh himself, so the deliverance will be the result of his own direct intervention on their behalf.¹⁸³

Thus, Ezekiel presents the new covenant along the same themes already mentioned in Isaiah and Jeremiah.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 351. Block argues that the Israelite who remained in Jerusalem claimed God's special favor because they remained in the land: thesis (11:14-15). God's "counterthesis" is that he will gather the exiles back to the land (11:17-20). So also Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 35.

¹⁸⁴Block argues that Ezekiel proclaims "fundamental changes in Israel's relationship with their land and with their God." In particular, Block suggests five fundamental changes announced in 11:17-20:

Ezekiel's contribution to the understanding of the new covenant is the elaboration of Jeremiah's promise of a singularly focused heart—a new heart/spirit (11:19; cf. Jer 32:39; 24:7; 31:33),¹⁸⁵ along with the granting of God's Spirit (36:27), both of which will empower obedience and enable covenant faithfulness (11:20; 36:27).¹⁸⁶ Together, these three aspects of the new covenant highlight the newness of the this covenant and the reality that the new covenant people of God must be renewed or reconstituted if they are to be in relationship with God in the restored land where he will dwell with them (18:30-32).¹⁸⁷

Thus, the new covenant people of God must obtain a new, singularly focused heart/spirit. God commands as much in Ezekiel 18:30-31 (cf. Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4). Judgment awaits Israel for her covenant faithlessness (18:30), yet God extends mercy by

(1) gathering of exiles; (2) granting of land; (3) cleansing of land of all idolatry; (4) creation of a new people with a singularly devoted heart/spirit; (5) cutting of a new covenant which defines/structures the relationship between God and people. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 351-53. Ezekiel likewise contains the idea of Gentile inclusion in the new covenant promises. Citing Ezek 16:61, Gentry contends that "Jerusalem will be given both Samaria and Sodom, but not on the basis of the Israelite covenant (16:61). This statement hints at the fact that in the new covenant, the old divisions in Israel are healed and the Gentiles are included." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 476. Gentry and Wellum have since changed their interpretation of the *hequim berit* in Ezek 16:59-62; however, this change solidifies the distinction between *hequim berit*, which means to uphold a previous covenant and *karat berit* which mean to cut a new covenant. Yet, this clarification by Gentry and Wellum in no way denies the argument of Gentile inclusion. Gentry contends, "Ezekiel 16:59-62 is saying that the nations will be given to Israel on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant and not on the basis of the Mosaic covenant. Thus, when we get to the end of Ezekiel and see there a resurrected and renewed Israel (40-48), this renewed Israel must include the nations." Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, "'Kingdom through Covenant' Authors Respond to Bock, Moo, Horton," *The Gospel Coalition*, September 20, 2012, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/09/20/gentry-and-wellum-respond-to-kingdom-through-covenant-reviews/>.

¹⁸⁵Block states that "Ezekiel expands on Jeremiah's words further by describing the renewal in terms of a heart transplant." Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 353.

¹⁸⁶Note that the context of these promises in Ezek 11:19 and 36:26 are covenantal. Though the word *berit* is not present in 11:17-20 or 36:22-32, the covenant formula is present in 11:20 and 36:28, indicating a covenant context. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 474; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 354.

¹⁸⁷Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 352. So also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 477.

calling for repentance (18:31).¹⁸⁸ “The prophet’s appeal is dominated by three imperatives,” notes Block, “which when taken together provide another picture of the biblical understanding of repentance.”¹⁸⁹ Israel is to (1) “turn from all your transgressions” (18:30); (2) “cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed” (18:31a); and (3) “make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit” (18:31b). In other words, the repentance for which God calls and is a prerequisite for returning to the land involves a turning away from all sinful behavior and actions, but such a turning away from sin cannot occur without what Block calls “a mind/heart transplant.”¹⁹⁰

One first encounters the promise of a new, singularly devoted heart/spirit-mind in Ezekiel 11:19, where God declares, “and I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.” According to Ezekiel, Israel’s problem was that their hearts were idolatrous (Ezek 14:3; 20:16); their hearts were hard or stony toward God (cf. 2:4; 3:7).¹⁹¹ The promise of a new heart and spirit/mind is restated in Ezekiel 36:26.¹⁹² The Hebrew words for heart (לב, *lēb* or לבב, *lēbāb*) are essentially interchangeable.¹⁹³ Alex Luc suggests, “In

¹⁸⁸Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 588.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Block is surely right when he states, “What is promised elsewhere as a divine act and as a gift (36:26-27) is now recast as a command. The use of the imperative mood does not mean that Ezekiel believes his audience is capable of moral and spiritual self-transformation. The command *create a new heart and a new spirit for yourselves* is a rhetorical device, highlighting the responsibility of the nation for their present crisis and pointing the way to the future. The prerequisites for positive divine intervention are a wholesale reorientation of life *and* an internal change in disposition. The former will not happen without the latter.” Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid, 353.

¹⁹²Daniel Block suggests that “v. 26 is a virtual quotation of 11:19.” Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 355.

¹⁹³Alex Luc, “לב,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 749. In Ezek 11:19 the Hebrew word used is *lēb*.

the [Old Testament], the words have a dominant metaphorical use in reference to the center of the human psychical and spiritual life, to the entire inner life of the person.”¹⁹⁴ Block suggests that “as frequently elsewhere in Ezekiel, *lēb* designates ‘the locus of the moral will.’”¹⁹⁵ So then, “Yahweh’s intention,” states Block, “is to instill in his people a singleness of heart, which expresses itself in focused and exclusive devotion to him (Jer 32:39).”¹⁹⁶ God himself will perform this “heart transplant.”¹⁹⁷ God “will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh” (11:19; cf. 36:26).

Not only will God provide a new heart to his people under this new covenant, additionally, God will “put his Spirit within” his new covenant people (Ezek 36:26-27). As in Ezekiel 11:19, both “heart” and “spirit” are placed in a parallel construction in verse 26. Block notes that this might suggest that “heart” and “spirit” are synonymous as they were in 11:19.¹⁹⁸ Block warns,

“However, the synonymity is seldom exact in Hebrew parallelism, and here terms are associated with different prepositions. The new heart is given *to* (*nātan lē*) the Israelites, but the spirit is placed *within* (*nātan bēqereb*). . . . The new spirit placed inside Israel is identified as Yahweh’s *rúach* (v. 27), which animates and vivifies the recipients.”¹⁹⁹

Thus, what Ezekiel records is God’s promise that his Spirit will possess his people. The language of cleansing with water (Ezek 36:25) and the provision of a new heart (Ezek 36:26) and a new spirit (Ezek 36:27) is picked up by the apostle John in the New

¹⁹⁴Luc, “לֵב,” 749.

¹⁹⁵Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 353.

¹⁹⁶Block explains that “heart” and “spirit” are correlative, though “*rúach* as the seat of thought is not excluded.” It is on this basis that I am suggesting that the particular promise in Ezek 11:19 is that of a singularly focused new heart/spirit-mind. Ibid.

¹⁹⁷Block describes “the renewal in terms of a heart transplant.” Ibid.

¹⁹⁸Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 355-56.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 356.

Testament to indicate the new birth (John 3:3-8).²⁰⁰ Thus, Ezekiel confirms what was already seen in Isaiah 54:1 that the new covenant people will come about by spiritual birth, regeneration. Yet, in the new covenant God will not only provide a new heart that is singularly focused upon him, he will indwell his people by his Spirit, giving them new life as pictured in Ezekiel 37:1-14.²⁰¹

The consequence of receiving a new heart and God's Spirit is a life pleasing to God. John Taylor aptly summarizes this "change of heart" in Ezekiel 36:27:

The result of this psychological transplant will be that Israel will experience a real "change of heart" and will become, by God's gracious initiative, the kind of people that they have in the past so signally failed to be. The implanting of God's Spirit within them will transform their motives and empower them to live according to God's *statutes* and *judgments* (27).²⁰²

The idea of a heart change that led to obedience was already present in Ezekiel 11:19-20.

Block explains,

The only solution for a people like this is a radical surgery, the removal of the defective and fossilized organ and its replacement with a sensitive and responsive heart, 'a heart of flesh' (*lēb bāsār*). The goal of this operation is defined in v. 20: faithfulness to Yahweh expressed in wholehearted obedience to his covenant.²⁰³

In summary, then, what originated as a command to Abraham to "walk before [God], and be blameless" in order that God might make a covenant between Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:1), and to Israel to "obey [God's] voice and keep [God's] covenant" in order to be God's treasured possession (Exod 19:5), now becomes a promise under the new covenant. The new covenant people of God will obey; they will keep God's covenant and walk in his ways precisely because of the new covenant provisions of a new

²⁰⁰D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1991), 194. For the various attempts to interpret "water" and "spirit" in John 3:5, see *ibid.*, 191-94.

²⁰¹Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 356.

²⁰²John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1969), 232.

²⁰³Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 353.

heart and God's Spirit.²⁰⁴ Ezekiel 37:24-28 reminds that the new covenant promises will be accomplished under the rule of a king from the line of David.

Summary: The New Covenant People of God

I utilized Isaiah 54-56 as the primary investigative context in order to ascertain the structure of the new covenant in the Old Testament. Additionally, I completed the investigation by observing what Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 add to the understanding of the entailments of the new covenant. Now it is only left to synthesize the data and propose what the new covenant entails and how it informs the identity and mission of the people of God under that new covenant. As I have been arguing, the image of God contains the pattern of the people of God which informs the identity and mission of the people of God. This pattern is one of sonship, kingship, and priesthood within a covenant relationship for the purpose of establishing God's kingdom on the earth through a human king who would populate the earth with godly offspring who reflect the glory of God and rule over creation.

The Identity of the New Covenant People of God

While under the old covenant the people of God were composed of believers and their children; the new covenant community will be composed of believers only. New covenant Israel may be spoken of as a barren woman who has more children than the old covenant Israel who is able to give birth naturally (Isa 54:1). Thus, just as barren women in the Old Testament displayed God's sovereign power to raise offspring from barrenness, so too, under the new covenant God will raise up spiritual offspring who will have new hearts (Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26) and be indwelt with God's Spirit (Ezek 36:27). Another way of stating the same fact is that all new covenant people will have personal, intimate knowledge of God (Isa 54:13; Jer 31:34). Thus, the new covenant people of

²⁰⁴Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 356.

God will be a regenerate community, for all will know the Lord. They will be God's spiritual sons and daughters.

Those within the new covenant community who will be brought about by spiritual birth will include people from all nations (Isa 54:3; 66:18). So, while the old covenant community was composed of those born naturally and identified through genealogy, the new covenant community will be multi-ethnic, for it will include those spiritually born from all nations.

It is not only inclusion of the nations within the covenant community that is shocking. The new covenant will count all peoples within the covenant community as a royal priesthood. The new covenant people of God will serve as priests in his presence, but that service will not be limited to Levites or Jews only. The priesthood of God under the new covenant will include "foreigners who join themselves to the LORD" (Isa 56:6; cf. 66:21). Additionally, this priesthood entails royal language. As noted, John Davies suggests that priesthood language in conjunction with royal language, such as "crown of beauty" and "royal diadem" in Isaiah 62:3, has both priestly and royal overtones. Also, Gentry concluded that "the designation 'holy people' here in 62:12 confirms the interpretation of 61:6: the renewed people of God are given in the new covenant what Israel lost in violating the Israelite covenant—the status as a holy nation and royal priesthood."²⁰⁵

Such changes in covenant relationship for God's people reveal the newness of the new covenant. There exists significant discontinuity in the new covenant. However, the pattern of the people of God continues under the new covenant. The people of God under the new covenant will be a royal priesthood, composed of God's spiritual offspring under a covenant relationship. However, one aspect of the adamic pattern is left to consider: mission.

²⁰⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 456.

The Mission of the New Covenant People of God

Under the old covenant, Israel's mission as a royal priesthood and holy nation was to display the kingdom of God on the earth to the end that the surrounding nations might consider Yahweh as the only true God and be incorporated into the old covenant community by becoming a Yahweh worshiper and covenant keeper. Thus, Israel's mission was attractional or centripetal. In other words, Israel was not tasked with a centripetal missionary outreach; it was tasked to be a royal priesthood and holy nation that would attract other nations to Yahweh.

Yet, Israel herself failed to keep the covenant. Consequently, the prophets spoke of impending judgment through exile, but they also spoke of a future restoration that would include an ingathering of the people of God back to God. Thus, Isaiah 54:2-3 speak of a time when new covenant Israel would need to make room to gather in all the spiritual offspring she would bear. As seen, the new covenant included spiritual offspring from all nations (Isa 54:3). Thus, the new covenant community, the ingathering would include people from all nations. However, unique to the mission of the people of God is the fact that the new covenant people of God's mission is missional and centrifugal. As a royal priesthood, new covenant Israel will have a missionary outreach responsibility (Isa 54:3a). God will send them to the nations to "declare the glory of God among the nations" (Isa 66:19).

That is not to say that the new covenant community is not to be attractive. They are. The new covenant community, empowered with a new heart and God's Spirit, will walk in God's ways (Ezek 36:25-27) and continue to display the glory of God to the surrounding peoples of the world. Thus, the original mandate to be fruitful and multiply in order to fill the earth with godly offspring who display God's glory (Gen 1:28) will be fulfilled as the new covenant people of God gather God's spiritually born children back to God (Isa 66:18-20). Of course, this new covenant will be constituted by a Davidic messiah whom God promised would rule over his people (Isa 55:3; cf. 9:7; 11:1-2). In

the next chapter it will be argued that Jesus of Nazareth is the long-awaited messiah who inaugurates the kingdom of God on the earth through the new covenant and begins gathering God's people back to God through the gospel of the kingdom (Isa 61:1-3).

CHAPTER 5

THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD: JESUS AND THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Having argued from the Old Testament that the biblical concept of the image of God reveals the pattern for the people of God that discloses God's original intention to establish and display his rule on the earth through an Adamic king who would populate the earth with the divine image until the whole earth was filled with his glory (Gen 1:26-28), and having further witnessed that the ensuing Adamic figures (i.e., Noah, Israel) failed to fulfill God's original intention, in this chapter I argue that Jesus' mission as the Son of God from David's line to restore Israel on the basis of a new covenant reveals that Jesus is the true and faithful image of God who inaugurates the kingdom of God on the earth and begins populating it with the divine image. I will make this argument in three parts. First, I assume the biblical and typological language of the image of God applied to Jesus since it is accepted that Jesus is the image of God. Second, I argue that as the beloved Son of God (sonship), Jesus is the Davidic messiah (kingship) who truly images God and whom God had promised would restore and renew Israel. Third, I argue that Jesus restores Israel by gathering a people under God's rule (kingdom) on the basis of a new covenant (covenant/priesthood), so that this new covenant Israel would fulfill its mission to display life under God's rule to the world and begin the eschatological ingathering promised by the prophets (mission).

Jesus: The Last Adam and True Image of God

After the failures of the previous Adamic figures, the New Testament reveals Jesus as the last Adam, the true image of God, who fulfills the original creation mandate (Gen 1:26-28) by inaugurating the restoration of the divine kingdom on the earth and

gathering the people of God constituted on the basis of the new covenant as a corporate Adam. That Jesus is the image of God is not in question.¹ Clearly, the New Testament applies both the biblical language of the image of God to Jesus (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15),² as well as the typological language of Adam to Christ (1 Cor 15:45; Rom 5:12-21).³ With the use of the image of God language for Jesus connected to creation texts,⁴ and with the explicit typological correlation between Adam and Christ (Rom 5:12-18; 1 Cor 15:45), there is no escaping the conclusion that Jesus is the image of God, the last Adam.⁵ While

¹It is not necessary within the scope of this diss. to argue and apply every point of the image of God as established in chap. 2 to Jesus, for the identity of Jesus as the image of God is not in question. My thesis relates to arguing and applying the concept of the image of God to the church. However, what is important for my thesis is to show how Jesus, as the Last Adam, does what previous Adam's failed to do. In so doing, Jesus inaugurates the promised kingdom and begins to populate the earth with the kingdom community who is a corporate Adam. For a comprehensive argument of Jesus as the last Adam who restores the image of God in humanity, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 381-465. Beale argues, as I have in chapter 2, for the same pattern revealed in the image of God, though he defines the image as primarily in functional terms, while I have defined image in ontological terms with the function being a consequence of human creation as the divine image. See pp. 29-31 in this diss.

²For the biblical and theological connections between Paul's use of the image of God applied to Jesus (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) and Gen 1:26-27, see Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 68-78; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 155-56. Admittedly, the application of the image of God language to Jesus is beyond that used of Adam in Gen 1, for as it relates to Jesus it indicates he is of the same nature as God.

³On the typological relationship between Adam and Christ, the last Adam, see Schreiner, *Paul*, 152: "Adam introduced sin and death into the world by transgressing God's command. All human beings as descendants of Adam are under the dominion of sin and death. . . . The history of Israel shows that for God's promises to be fulfilled, a new humanity is necessary; and for a new humanity, we need a new Adam. Paul proclaims that Jesus the Messiah is the new Adam."

⁴Note how the inability for those to whom the gospel is veiled from seeing Jesus, who is the image of God, is rooted in the original creation (2 Cor 4:6). The reference to Jesus as the image of the invisible God, likewise, is rooted in creation (Col 1:15-16). Also notice the use of Ps 8:6 in 1 Cor 15:27. Ps 8 is clearly a creation hymn, and v. 6 points to the Adamic mandate of Gen 1:28. Finally, note how in the Adam-Christ typology of 1 Cor 15:45, there is an allusion to Gen 2:7: "The man became a living creature." Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 241n32.

⁵Ridderbos, *Paul*, 72-73. Douglas Moo likewise connects the image of God language applied to Jesus in Col 1:15 with Gen 1:26-28 and also with John 1:1-18 and Heb 1:3. Moo states, "The opening line of our hymn [Col. 1:15-20] may, then identify Christ as that original image in accordance with which human beings were created." Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 116-18. So also F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New

it is true that these Pauline uses of the image of God point to Jesus as the one in whom the divine glory is manifested in a unique way,⁶ redeemed humanity is said to be in the process of being transformed into the same image in order that it too may reflect the divine glory (2 Cor 3:18; cf. Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:10). This transformation, as will be seen, is part of the promised restoration of the kingdom of God and inauguration of the new creation.

While the concept of Jesus as the image of God, the last Adam, is not in question, what is important to consider is how Jesus fulfills the Adamic mandate and establishes the kingdom of God on the earth, inaugurating the new creation. In other words, in order to understand how the concept of the image of God clarifies the identity and mission of the church, one will first need to understand how Jesus fulfills God's original intention to rule the creation through a human king who would establish the divine kingdom on the earth and populate it with the divine image.

Jesus and the Restoration of Israel

As seen in chapter 3, Israel was a corporate Adam who was called to image God by displaying life under God's rule to the surrounding nations.⁷ Yet, like the first Adam, Israel too failed and was exiled. Nevertheless, God promised to restore Israel through a faithful son and Davidic king who would truly image God and restore Israel under God's rule on the basis of a new covenant. Once restored, this new covenant Israel would fulfill its mission to display life under God's rule to the world and begin the eschatological ingathering promised by the prophets.

Jesus is that promised faithful son and Davidic king whom the New Testament

Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 58.

⁶Ridderbos, *Paul*, 70.

⁷See pp. 75-94 in this diss.

reveals as the answer to Israel's exile. Matthew structures his genealogy in such a way as to make this very point; Jesus is the answer to Israel's demise (Matt 1:1-17). Matthew highlights the history of Israel from birth (Abraham, v. 2) to glory (David, v. 6), from glory (David, v. 6) to demise in Babylonian exile (v. 11), and from Babylonian exile (v. 12) to the birth of Jesus, whom Matthew identifies as the Christ, the Jewish messiah (v. 16).⁸ In the context of Israel's history, Jesus is both Abraham's seed (v. 1) who fulfills the Abrahamic promises to bring universal salvation and blessing and the promised Davidite who will sit on father's throne and fulfill Israel's hope of restoration.

As the son of David, Matthew identifies Jesus from the very beginning as the Davidic messiah (Matt 1:1, 16).⁹ Donald Hagner states,

“Son of David” had become by the first century, a title for the messianic deliverer who would assume the throne of David in accordance with the promise of 2 Samuel 7:4-17 (the Davidic covenant), thereby inaugurating a kingdom of perfection and righteousness that would last forever.¹⁰

This is the case that Matthew makes throughout his gospel—Jesus is the long-awaited messiah who will sit on David's throne and restore the kingdom to Israel.¹¹

⁸While there are some questions about the number of names in the three sets, Carson is certainly correct that “the symbolic value of the fourteen is of more significance than their precise breakdown.” D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 68. However, just what the fourteens are supposed to indicate is unclear. For an explanation of possible interpretations of the significance of fourteen in Matthew's genealogy, see R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 29-33. For an explanation of the seeming discrepancies and possible solutions concerning the lists of names in the genealogy and the fact that not all have fourteen names, see Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a (Dallas: Word, 1993), 5-9; also Dale C. Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 157-62.

⁹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 33-34. France states, “The opening verse is concerned with the ‘origin’ (genesis) of the Messiah, and thus serves primarily to introduce the pedigree which follows in vv. 2-17” (33). Additionally, France notes, “For Matthew [Christ] was clearly much more [than just a surname], as its repetition in vv. 16, 17, 18, 2:4 makes clear, and as is indicated here immediately by the addition of ‘son of David, son of Abraham.’ The colorless translation ‘Jesus Christ’ here and in v. 18 in many English versions does not do justice to the excitement in Matthew's introduction of Jesus under the powerfully evocative title ‘Messiah,’ the long-awaited deliverer of God's people, in whom their history has now come to its climax” (34).

¹⁰Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 9. Cf. Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15; 22:42.

¹¹Hagner argues, “The central emphasis of the book [of Matthew] is found in what is

So the genealogy is not merely an interesting list of names; it also serves as a royal document, establishing Jesus' legitimacy to David's throne; Jesus is the promised Davidic messiah who was to restore the kingdom to Israel and usher in an everlasting kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace (Isa 9:6-7). It is interesting that as Jesus begins his ministry, he withdraws to Galilee because of John the Baptists' arrest (Matt 4:12). This move is not lost on Matthew who suggests in verses 14-15 that it fulfills Isaiah 9:1-2. The context of Isaiah 9 is the promise of the end of gloom due to the birth of a child who will rule in peace (v. 6), sit on David's throne, and establish an everlasting kingdom of justice and righteousness (v. 7). It is at this initial point of his ministry that Jesus announces that the kingdom has arrived, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17).¹² By dividing salvation history in three important periods culminating with Christ, Matthew's genealogy and its summary in verse 17 emphasize that the history of Israel has reached its goal in the advent of Jesus, the anointed king whom God has placed on his throne (cf. Ps 2).¹³ In other words, in Christ, the hope of a renewed and restored Israel has arrived and the announcement of the promised everlasting kingdom has begun (Matt 4:17).

designated (uniquely in the Gospels) as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας, 'the gospel of the kingdom' (4:23; 9:35; 24:14; cf. 26:13), namely, the good news that the reign or rule of God has begun to be realized in history through the presence of Jesus Christ. Matthew may fairly be described as practically a demonstration of the reality of the presence of the kingdom through the words and deeds of Jesus." Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 9. Cf. Carson, *Matthew*, 25. Also, France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 9-10, who argues that the central theme of Matthew is "fulfillment." That the central theme of Matthew is the good news that the promised kingdom has begun to be realized in Jesus is evident, not only in that Matthew identifies Jesus as the Davidic messiah in his genealogy, but that he also ends his gospel with the resurrected king as one to whom all authority has been granted—the reign of the Davidic messiah has begun (Matt 28:18).

¹²Cf. Mark 1:14. Luke also records Jesus' ministry beginning in Galilee, Nazareth, in particular (Luke 4:16). In Luke 4:18-19, at the synagogue in Nazareth Jesus announces the arrival of the time of the restoration of Israel with the language of the year of Jubilee (see Lev 26) by quoting Isa 61:1-2. Jesus proclaims that Isa 61:1-2 are fulfilled in himself as he begins his ministry (Luke 4:21).

¹³France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 40; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 12.

However, there is evidence in the genealogy that Jesus, the promised king, does not come only to restore Israel to its former glory but to establish an entirely new creation, a new kingdom altogether. For example, Matthew begins his gospel with the same formula of origins (βίβλος γενέσεως) found in Genesis 2:4 and 5:1.¹⁴ βίβλος γενέσεως literally means “book of Genesis.”¹⁵ G. K. Beale argues that “the point [of using the phrase βίβλος γενέσεως] is that Matthew is narrating the record of the new age, the new creation, launched by the coming, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ Thus, as with Noah, God is initiating a new creation and as with Abraham, a new beginning. Schreiner notes, “The history of Israel shows that for God’s promises to be fulfilled, a new humanity is necessary; and for a new humanity, we need a new Adam.”¹⁷ The need for a new Adam is nothing new, for this is the pattern seen repeatedly throughout Scripture. After Adam’s fall, God initiated a re-creation with Noah and his family. After Babel, God created a new people from Abraham. In Matthew’s opening genealogy, he is outlining how Jesus, the promised anointed king, will restore what Israel lost in exile, but the result will be more than expected: a new creation and a new humanity.

¹⁴βίβλος γενέσεως may be translated a number of different ways, but it literally means “book of Genesis.” Gen 2:4, LXX uses βίβλος γενέσεως to introduce “the generations” of heaven and earth: so also Gen 5:1, LXX to introduce Adam and his “generations.” The Greek γενέσεως translates the Hebrew נְהִיָּה. Since these are the only two occurrences of βίβλος γενέσεως in the entire Old Testament, Beale argues that Matthew 1:1 “appears to be an intentional allusion to these two statements early in the book of Genesis.” Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 389. So also France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 26n41; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 9. Nolland argues that “the genealogy appears to have been built upon the basis of the Greek OT.” John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 70.

¹⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 27.

¹⁶Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 389. So also France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 27-28. There is question as to whether βίβλος γενέσεως refers to the entire gospel, as Beale seems to be taking it, or simply a portion, i.e., genealogy only, chaps. 1-2. Noting that the word γενεσις occurs again in Matt 1:18 to describe Jesus’ birth, Carson argues that βίβλος γενέσεως does not refer to the entire gospel, but it clearly “extends beyond the genealogy. Carson, *Matthew*, 61.

¹⁷Schreiner, *Paul*, 152.

As with Israel under the old covenant, the restoration of new covenant Israel and the new creation begins with a new exodus,¹⁸ a point Matthew makes explicitly in 2:13-20. In verse 15, Matthew relates Jesus to God as his son whom he calls out of Egypt. That Jesus is God's son is noted throughout Matthew's gospel,¹⁹ but that Matthew explicitly identifies Jesus with Israel by quoting Hosea 11:1, is initially startling.²⁰ As mentioned in chapter 3, God called Israel his firstborn son (Exod 4:22, 23).²¹ God created Israel to be a display people who would reestablish the sacred place and dwell there with God. In this sacred space they would display to the surrounding nations what it was to be God's people living under God's rule. Their mission was primarily one of being a display nation with the hope of incorporation of all who embraced their God (Exod 19:5-6).²² But the prophets also spoke of Israel as relating to the nations through an eschatological ingathering (Isa 60:1-3).²³ In order to enter the land promised to Abraham and begin fulfilling its mission, God would need to rescue Israel from Egyptian

¹⁸For others who argue this case in thorough fashion, see Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

¹⁹Matt 2:15; 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5; 26:63-64; 27:54. Of course, Matthew is not the only gospel that establishes the sonhood of Jesus. For a study of "Son of God" as a Christological title, see D. A. Carson, *Jesus The Son of God: A Christological Title Often Overlooked, Sometimes Misunderstood, and Currently Disputed* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

²⁰As most commentators point out, Matthew quotes the Hebrew text of Hos 11:1, which clearly refers to Israel as God's son (singular) whom God rescues from Egypt, rather than quoting from the LXX which translates "my son" as "his children." See France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 80; Carson, *Matthew*, 91; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 36; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 90. Clearly, Matthew intends to identify Jesus as God's son and as Israel in 2:15; yet whereas the Hebrew text of Hos 11:1 refers to Israel as the collective son of God in the singular, Jesus is the singular son of God who represents Israel. That this is so will be evident as Jesus retraces Israel's steps in order to undo what Israel has done.

²¹See p. 78 in this diss.

²²Cf. Isa 42:6; 49:6; 52:10; 60:3; Acts 26:23. See also Charles H. H. Scobie, "Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 43, no. 2 (1992): 286-88.

²³Scobie, "Israel and the Nations," 288-92.

bondage. However, Pharaoh objected; and because Pharaoh refused to release God's firstborn from captivity, God took Pharaoh's firstborn son (Exod 4:23, 11:5; 12:12, 29). Hosea recalls God's fatherly love for Israel, his child, from the time of the exodus stating, "out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos 11:1).²⁴ As seen in chapter 3, it was this call out of Egypt, this exodus, that led to the formation of Israel as the people of God at Sinai (Exod 19:3-6).²⁵ Yet, Hosea also recalls Israel's continuous rebellion against God and its consequential judgment and exile (11:5-7). Nevertheless, Hosea offers hope of restoration and the return of Israel (11:9-11).

Matthew identifies Jesus with this background arguing that Joseph's flight to Egypt and return to Israel out of Egypt was to fulfill Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt I called my son."²⁶ To be sure, as Hagner points out, "In the similarity of the son of God, Israel, and the Son of God, Jesus . . . Matthew sees Jesus as living out and summing up the history of Israel."²⁷ However, if I am correct that Matthew's genealogy reveals Jesus as the culmination and climax of Israel's history who would fulfill Israel's hope of restoration, then Matthew is doing more than merely identifying Jesus with Israel. Matthew is identifying Jesus as God's singular son, the true Israel, through whom restoration will

²⁴France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 80. Turner suggests, "Most [scholars] would agree that in its original context, Hos. 11:1 is not a prediction of the future but a reference to the exodus, God's past redemptive act of bringing the nation of Israel out of Egypt." Turner, *Matthew*, 90. Consequently, there is scholarly debate as to how Matthew is interpreting Hos 11:1 in 2:15b.

²⁵Not that Israel was not God's chosen son already. This fact is already evident in passages such as Deut 7:6-11; however, God structured his relationship with Israel as his people in Exod 19-24 under the Mosaic covenant. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 81.

²⁶Carson, *Matthew*, 109. So also Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 406-12. For fulfillment in Matthew, see Carson, *Matthew*, 92, 142-45. Carson argues that "the verb 'to fulfill' has broader significance than mere one-to-one prediction" (92). Rather, fulfillment in Matthew is to be understood in relation to the Old Testament themes and types which point forward to something or someone greater. Jesus fulfills Matt 2:15 and all the other Old Testament Scriptures which Matthew records in relation to Jesus in that they point to Jesus, "he is their fulfillment" (143). For a thorough treatment and defense of Jesus' fulfillment of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 406-12.

²⁷Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 36.

come via a new exodus.²⁸ Also, as Israel was formed into the people of God in the exodus under a covenant revealed by God at Sinai, so also Jesus, God's son, will lead a new exodus and form a new Israel on the basis of the promised new covenant. Jesus himself will serve as the mediator of this new covenant (Matt 26:26; cf. Heb 9:15; 12:24).²⁹

The connection with the new exodus and the new covenant is seen in Matthew as the parallels between the old exodus and the new continue in 2:16-18. Herod is cast as the new Pharaoh who kills all the male children in Bethlehem (v. 16).³⁰ Then the fulfillment formula in verse 17 points to a quotation of Jeremiah 31:15 in verse 18. The context of Jeremiah 31 is one in which God promises the restoration of Israel (Jer 31:1-7) and its future ingathering (Jer 31:8-14) after judgment and exile (721 BC).³¹ In this context where the northern tribes will participate in the restoration and ingathering (cf. 31:5, 8, 9), Jeremiah 31:15 records the spirit of Rachel, as Leslie Allen notes, "Inconsolably mourning her exiled children."³² Ramah is in Benjamite territory and is said to be one of the likely locations of Rachel's tomb.³³ Consequently, Jeremiah

²⁸For the hermeneutical issues related to Jesus' call out of Egypt as a fulfillment of Hos 11:1, identifying the first Exodus as pointing forward to a second exodus, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 406-12. So also Carson, *Matthew*, 91-93; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 80-81. On the biblical theological theme of the exodus, see R. E. Watts, "Exodus," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 2000), 478-87.

²⁹For an argument for the new exodus promised in Isaiah throughout Mark's gospel, see Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*. For an argument for the Isaianic new exodus in Acts, see Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*.

³⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 84.

³¹Leslie Allen notes, "Rachel was the ancestral mother of the Joseph tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, and also of Benjamin." Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 340. So also J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 573; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 87.

³²Allen suggests this is a vision of Rachel weeping for her exiled children. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 348. Cf. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 573. Thompson merely refers to this as the spirit of Rachel weeping for her exiled children.

³³The other possible location being Bethlehem. Cf. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 348; Thompson, *The Book*

understands the spirit of Rachel as inconsolably crying out from her grave for the loss of her children in verse 15. However, in verse 16 God consoles Rachel stating that she will be rewarded for her work and that her children “will come back from the land of the enemy.” God continues to recount to Rachel Israel’s restoration after their repentance (Jer 31:18-19).³⁴ God will establish a new relationship with Israel (Jer 31:17-20) and calls Israel to faithfulness (Jer 31:21-22). Then God paints a picture of the restoration of Israel and Judah (Jer 31:23-30) on the basis of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34).

Matthew takes up this background when he quotes Jeremiah 31:15 in verse 18. With Matthew’s genealogy encompassing Israel’s history and presenting Jesus as the hope for Israel’s restoration after Babylonian exile (1:1-17) in a new exodus (2:13-20), it is not difficult to see that Matthew’s reference to the spirit of Rachel weeping for her lost children, which is set in the context of a future restoration of Israel and Judah through a new covenant (Jer 31), is meant to point to Jesus as the one through whom this restoration will occur. Israel’s exile, which began in 721 BC with the exile of the northern kingdom, led to great sorrow, as indicated by Rachel’s tears. Though Ramah was not only the place of Rachel’s tomb; it was also the place where the exiles were gathered after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC (Jer 40:1).³⁵ Admittedly, it is difficult to discern whether Matthew is referencing the Assyrian or Babylonian captivity in his use of Jeremiah 31:15.³⁶ However, since Matthew announces that Herod’s infanticide fulfills Jeremiah 31:15, and since Matthew sees Jesus as the answer to the Babylonian exile, then it is likely that Matthew sees here a reference to the exile culminating in the Babylonian captivity.³⁷ In

of Jeremiah, 573.

³⁴Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 574.

³⁵France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 87.

³⁶Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 38; Carson, *Matthew*, 94.

³⁷Carson, *Matthew*, 94. Cf. Turner who states, “In light of this background, it seems that

other words, the killing of the infant males in Bethlehem culminates the inconsolable weeping of Rachel which began in 721 BC. This historical infanticide fulfills Jeremiah 31:15 in that the time of Rachel's weeping has now come to an end (Jer 31:16). Now that Jesus has come, deliverance will come for Rachel's children, and Israel and Judah will be restored on the basis of a new covenant,³⁸ which as Matthew will show, must come through Jesus' sacrificial death (Matt 26:26-29). As Carson sums up, in this quotation of Jeremiah 31:15 Matthew is indicating that "the heir of David's throne has come, the Exile is over, the true Son of God has arrived, and he will introduce the new covenant (26:28) promised by Jeremiah."³⁹

So, Jesus is the son of David (kingship) and the beloved son of God (true Israel), but he is also announced to be the son of Abraham (Matt 1:1). By identifying Jesus as a son of Abraham, Matthew points to Jesus as the one who fulfills the Abrahamic promises of universal blessing and salvation. Hints of this universal salvation and blessing are contained within the genealogy itself, for it includes four women who were in all likelihood Gentiles.⁴⁰ In addition, three of the four women had questionable sexual ethics: Tamar seduced her father-in-law, Rahab was a prostitute, and Bathsheba committed adultery. Jesus is not only the answer to Israel's exile; Matthew's genealogy prepares the reader to understand that Jesus is also the answer to human sinfulness that opens a way for the inclusion of Gentile sinners into the kingdom of heaven, a theme that unfolds throughout Matthew's Gospel.⁴¹

'fulfillment' here should not be viewed simplistically as the eventuation of a prediction." Turner, *Matthew*, 94.

³⁸Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 38; Carson, *Matthew*, 95.

³⁹Carson, *Matthew*, 95.

⁴⁰France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 37, who writes, "Probably all four of them were non-Israelite (Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth a Moabite, and Bathsheba the wife of a Hittite)."

⁴¹See Matt 8:5-13 (The Faith of a Centurion); 15:21-28 (The Faith of a Canaanite Woman); 21:33-44 (Parable of the Tenants); 22:1-14 (Parable of the Wedding Feast); 27:54 (The Confession of a

Luke emphasizes Jesus' divine sonship by tracing his genealogy beginning with Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, back to Adam and God (Luke 3:38).⁴² Just as Adam was God's son and Israel was God's son, so too, Jesus is God's son (sonship). Thus, Jesus is not only the promised seed of Abraham and David, he is the promised seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). By identifying Jesus as son of Adam, Luke emphasizes that Jesus is the hope of all humanity, not just Jews (cf. Acts 26:23).⁴³ By identifying Jesus as God's son, Luke acknowledges that Jesus had a unique relationship to God as did Adam and Israel.⁴⁴ However, unlike Adam and Israel, Jesus is the beloved son who is faithful to all that God commands and thereby pleases the Father (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Thus, Jesus announced that he had to be baptized by John in order to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15).⁴⁵ While it is tempting to see the fulfillment of righteousness in Pauline terms, that is, that Jesus' baptism points to his death which "secures 'righteousness' for all,"⁴⁶ scholars agree that Matthew uses the term righteousness differently than Paul. For Matthew, righteousness indicates doing God's will, that is, what is right in God's sight.⁴⁷ Thus, it is in being baptized by John that both

Centurion and Roman Soldiers); 28:18-20 (The Great Commission).

⁴²Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 8.

⁴³Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 142; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 359-60.

⁴⁴Stein, *Luke*, 138.

⁴⁵This statement is only found in Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism.

⁴⁶Carson, *Matthew*, 107.

⁴⁷Most scholars point to Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*, Society for New Testament Studies, vol. 41 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) as the study which has "firmly established this meaning." See France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 119n15; Carson, *Matthew*, 107. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 56, who acknowledges Przybylski's work but argues that the semantic range of "righteousness" must not be so limited. Hagner prefers to see the "fulfilling of all righteousness" in Matt 3:15 as pointing toward a salvation-historical fulfillment rather than merely doing God's will at the moment of Jesus' baptism. However, Hagner introduces a false distinction. The fact that John and Jesus are doing God's will in the event of Jesus' baptism does not negate that what they are doing

Jesus and John begin fulfilling all righteousness.⁴⁸ The question, then, is how do John and Jesus fulfill all righteousness in the event of Jesus' baptism?⁴⁹

In the context of Matthew 3, John the Baptist fulfills the role of the messenger who prepares the way for the messiah as had been prophesied by Isaiah (3:3; cf. Isa 40:3). At the very least, in his baptism by John, Jesus is identifying with John's preparatory ministry and embracing the identity of the promised messiah.⁵⁰ Additionally, since John's baptism was one of repentance, and since Jesus had no sin of which to repent, Jesus is identifying with the repentant Israelites who had come to receive John's baptism in order to enter into the promised kingdom (Matt 3:2).⁵¹ Consequently, having identified with repentant Israelites and having publicly embraced his role as messiah, Jesus is anointed with the Spirit of God in order to fulfill his ministry.⁵²

Jesus' role is confirmed by the declaration of the Father, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17).⁵³ The descent of the Spirit on Jesus (3:16; cf. Isa 42:1), along with the declaration of the Father's delight in the son, indicate that Matthew is, at the very least, alluding to Isaiah 42:1.⁵⁴ Carson likewise argues that

(baptism of Jesus) has redemptive-historical implications: i.e., in Jesus' baptism, the fulfillment has begun as Jesus embraces John's ministry of preparation for him, identifies with the people he has come to restore and redeem, and begins his public ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁸France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 120; Carson, *Matthew*, 108.

⁴⁹Carson notes that "here interpretations are legion" and summarizes the various options under three explanations. Carson, *Matthew*, 107-8. Likewise Turner, *Matthew*, 118-19, also discusses the options under three categories.

⁵⁰Turner, *Matthew*, 119.

⁵¹Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 57; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 120.

⁵²Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 57. Also see France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 121, who reminds that the descent of the Holy Spirit also points to the identity of Jesus as the promised messiah, for God has prophesied that he would "place his Spirit upon his chosen servant (cf. Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1)."

⁵³Note parallels in Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.

⁵⁴France acknowledges, "The words of the [Father's] declaration are usually understood to be

the saying in Matthew 3:17, “this is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” “reflects Isaiah 42:1 . . . and has been modified by Psalm 2:7.” Carson calls these results “extraordinarily important,” for they link Jesus with the Suffering servant (Isa 42), as a Davidic son (cf. Ps 2). The Father’s voice from heaven, then, acknowledges Jesus as his Davidic son (Ps 2:7) and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah who is both Israel and the one who rescues Israel by dying on their behalf.⁵⁵

As the faithful son and true Israel, now filled with the Spirit and standing in representation for God’s people, Jesus retraced Israel’s history in order to succeed where Israel had failed.⁵⁶ As the leader of a new exodus, Jesus crossed the Jordan River in his baptism, where God declared him to be the beloved son who pleases the Father (Matt. 3:17);⁵⁷ then he retraced Israel’s wilderness wanderings for forty days and nights (4:1-11). Like the first Adam, Jesus was confronted by the devil; and like Israel, the corporate Adam, wandering in the wilderness for forty years, Jesus was tempted to test God. So, the devil urged Jesus to test God’s faithfulness to him as God’s son (4:3, 6), but Jesus combated the devil’s offers by quoting passages from Deuteronomy.⁵⁸ In the first temptation when the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread after forty days of fasting, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. Deuteronomy 8 records God’s exhortation to

derived from one or more of Gen. 22:2; Ps. 2:7; and Isa. 42:1.” France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 123.

⁵⁵Carson, *Matthew*, 109. So also Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 58-59. Hagner proposes similar conclusions to Carson’s related to Jesus as “son of God.” Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 157, also agrees but suggests an allusion to Exod 4:22-23. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 124, however, rejects all allusions and takes the words at face value—God is simply acknowledging the son whom he loves.

⁵⁶Carson, *Matthew*, 91-92. So also Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 406.

⁵⁷Regarding the use of “beloved,” Carson suggests, “The term may mean not only affection but also election, reinforced by the aorist tense that follows (lit., ‘with him I was well pleased’), suggesting a pretemporal election of the Messiah (cf. John 1:34 [Gr. Mg.].)” Carson, *Matthew*, 109. This would add to my argument that God elects an Adamic figure through whom he intends to establish his kingdom rule on the earth and populate the earth with the divine image.

⁵⁸Jesus’ quotations of Deuteronomy give credence to the fact that he was retracing Israel’s steps. The context of the quotations is God preparing the second generation to enter the Promised Land and warning them of the punishment for disobedience and idolatry.

obey all God has commanded, “That [Israel] may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give your fathers” (8:1). And so, while God tested Israel for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness in order to see whether or not they would obey him (Deut 8:2), the devil likewise tested Jesus (Matt 4:1-4). Unlike Israel who continually grumbled and eventually disobeyed and turned to other gods, however, Jesus trusted the Father’s provision and remained faithful (Matt 4:4).

The devil then sought to tempt Jesus to test God’s presence with him (Matt 4:5-7). Quoting from Psalm 91:1, which promises that “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.” Specifically, the devil quotes verses 11 and 12, which promise that God will send his angels to guard his faithful ones, keeping them from even striking their foot on the rocks. But Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16—a warning to Israel not to test the Lord as they had at Massah. In Exodus 17, Israel is encamped at Rephidim, where there is no water. Israel quarrels against Moses because there is no water, and Moses responds, “Why do you test the Lord” (Exod 17:2)? The telling verse is verse 7, where the event is summarized: “And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’” Unlike Israel, who questioned God’s presence because of a lack of water on the way to the Promised Land, Jesus is the faithful Son of God who has no need to test God’s presence with him, so he does not have to test whether or not God will deliver him.

In one final attempt to provoke Jesus to test the Lord (Matt 4:8-10), Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and promises them to Jesus if he would simply bow down to him. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:13. In Deuteronomy 6:10-11, God explains to Israel the glory of the land they are about to enter and warns them not to forget the Lord who delivered them and turn to other gods when they experience all the prosperity promised them in the land (Deut 6:12). Then in verse 13, God warns, “It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve.” The reason: God is a jealous God—

“lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth” (Deut 6:15). That is precisely what happened to Israel. God wiped them off the face of the earth because they bowed down to other gods. The devil offers Jesus a way to receive what he is already promised if he will simply bow down, worship him. It is a way to receive the promised kingdoms without the cross, but Jesus proves to be the faithful Son of God who obeys Deuteronomy 6:13. He will not bow down to other gods; and he will receive his inheritance after the cross, not before it. So Jesus is the faithful Son of God who retraces Israel’s steps and obeys where Israel failed.

Finally, it is important to note that while Jesus is identified as the son of David, the son of Abraham, and the son of God, he preferred to refer to himself as the “Son of Man.”⁵⁹ Though there is much debate as to how “Son of Man” is used by Jesus, at least in certain contexts Jesus identifies himself with the “Son of Man” in Daniel 7:13-14.⁶⁰ As such, Jesus is the “Son of Man” to whom is given an eternal kingdom to rule over all the world.⁶¹ S. R. Miller explains,

Since the “son of man” was “given” a kingdom and authority to rule, this scene [Dan 7:14] evidently describes the coronation of the “son of man” by the Ancient of

⁵⁹France notes that Son of Man “is always used by Jesus himself, not by others about him, and it functions as a self-reference.” France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 326-27.

⁶⁰Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 394. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 214, admits that “‘Son of Man’ has been a *crux interpretum* in twentieth-century NT scholarship.” Though there is much disagreement related to the source of the saying and how Jesus is using it in reference to himself, it cannot be denied that in certain contexts, at least, Jesus is referring to himself as the “Son of Man” in Dan 7:13-14. Carson proposes that the ambiguity of the term allowed Jesus both “to reveal as well as conceal. . . . While ‘Son of Man’ captures both authority and suffering, it is ambiguous enough that people who did not think of the Messiah in this dual way would have been mystified till after the Cross.” Carson, *Matthew*, 212-13. Carson suggests, “Only when under oath and when it no longer mattered whether his enemies heard his clear claim to messiahship did Jesus reveal without any ambiguity at all that he, the Son of Man, was the messianic figure of Daniel 7:13-14 (Matt 26:63-64 and parallels); and then his opponents did not realize that an essential part of his messiahship was suffering and death” (213). For treatments on the “Son of Man,” see Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 214-215; Carson, *Matthew*, 209-13. For a survey of “Son of Man” in relation to Dan 7 and its connection with Jesus as the Adamic son of man, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 393-401.

⁶¹France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 326.

Days. According to the text, therefore, this individual will be crowned as the sovereign ruler of the world. His reign will never end.⁶²

Miller identifies the Danielic “Son of Man” with Jesus.⁶³ Consequently, Matthew displays Jesus’ authority over all things: to teach and interpret the Law (5-7), over disease (8:1-17), over creation (8:23-27), over demons (8:28-33), over sin-to forgive (9:1-8), over men-to call them to himself (9:9-13; 10:1-4), to judge (25:31-46), over death (28:1-10).

Beale suggests,

The application of the Dan. 7 “Son of Man” to Jesus also carries with it echoes of an Adamic eschatological rule. . . . That Daniel 7:13-14 is among a number of other reiterations ultimately of the Adamic commission of Genesis 1:28, though most directly [it is] an allusion to the Gen. 22:17-18 prophecy of an end-time king in Abraham’s line, which is also one of the Adamic reiterations.⁶⁴

Beale argues,

If these Adamic associations are present in Daniel 7:13-14, then Jesus’ repeated application of the Danielic Son of Man to himself is another example of the numerous connections between Adam and Jesus. . . . In this case, the link highlights Jesus’ Adamic kingship.⁶⁵

In other words, Jesus is the faithful Adamic son of God who came to establish God’s rule on the earth. As true and faithful Israel, Jesus, God’s beloved son, came to lead a new exodus in order to bring the people of God back to him and restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus would restore Israel by leading a new exodus and retracing the steps of unfaithful Israel in order to fulfilling all righteousness, ultimately in his own substitutionary death for their sin as the Suffering Servant. As seen next, Jesus reconstitutes this new Israel on the basis of a new covenant.

In summary, then, Jesus, the beloved Son of God (sonship), is the true and faithful Israel who restores repentant Israel by retracing the steps of unfaithful Israel and

⁶²S. R. Miller, *Daniel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 18 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 207.

⁶³Ibid., 209.

⁶⁴Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 400.

⁶⁵Ibid., 401.

obeying God where it had failed and leading a new exodus. Jesus is the promised Davidic son (kingship) who inaugurates God's everlasting rule of righteousness and peace on the earth. And Jesus is the Abrahamic son through whom universal blessing and salvation will come to the world (mission). As seen next, Jesus accomplishes the restoration of Israel by cutting the new covenant in his blood and gathering the new covenant people of God, newly reconstituted Israel back to God.

Jesus and the Reconstitution of Israel: The Twelve

Jesus came to restore Israel on the basis of the promised new covenant as announced in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The foundation of this newly restored Israel will be twelve Jewish men, called apostles. Only after new covenant Israel is reconstituted and restored, may it fulfill its mission to display life under God's rule to the world and begin the eschatological ingathering promised by the prophets (mission).

After having established that he is the beloved Son of God, the true Israel, who faithfully obeys the Father in all things, Jesus begins his public ministry by announcing the kingdom and calling Israel to return to God in repentance (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14-15). Immediately, Jesus began gathering a group of followers or disciples from among the Jews (Matt 4:18-22; 9:9).⁶⁶ After praying, Jesus chose twelve of these whom he called apostles (Luke 6:12-16).⁶⁷ To be sure, one must be cautious not to jump to theological conclusions regarding the number twelve, but neither can one simply dismiss it by denying it has no significance whatsoever.⁶⁸ While Darrell Bock is careful not to make

⁶⁶Cf. Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-14; Luke 5:1-11, 27-28; John 1:35-51. Cf. Stein, who states, "The main Lukan contribution to this account is found in his additions 'to pray, and spent the night praying to God' in Luke 6:12 and 'whom he also designated apostles' in 6:13." Additionally, notes Stein, "There are four lists of the disciples in the NT: Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Acts 1:13; and the present passage. No two lists are identical, not even the two in Luke-Acts." Stein, *Luke*, 191. However, all lists contain the same twelve names, except Acts 1:13, where the traitor Judas Iscariot is excluded. He is replaced by Matthias in Acts 1:21-26.

⁶⁷Cf. Matt 10:1; Mark 3:13.

⁶⁸Scott McKnight argues, "Without overstating the case, we can affirm today that Jesus

too much of the number twelve, he admits, “It is clear that in the larger Gospel tradition the twelve are designed to parallel Israel, for Luke 22:29-30 and Matt. 19:28 show the relationship between the Twelve and Israel in the future.”⁶⁹ So then, what is the significance of the twelve?

The number twelve recalls the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen 35:22; 42:13). These formed the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 49:28) and were the foundation of the nation of Israel (Exod 1:1-7; 19:3-6).⁷⁰ Consequently, on many occasions, the whole of Israel was represented by an individual from each tribe, such that, the twelve represented all of Israel as a whole.⁷¹ In addition, there were occasions when twelve objects represented each of the tribes of Israel.⁷² McKnight acknowledges that when one considers the word

scholarship has come to this confident conclusion (among others): the number ‘twelve’ signifies a category already in existence during the life of Jesus, and most scholars think that Jesus chose the number ‘twelve’ with fundamental intention. Which intention, or which set of factors shaped this intention, however, has not yet been confidently concluded.” Scot McKnight, “Jesus and the Twelve,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11, no. 2 (2001): 203. Thus, McKnight makes my point—we cannot jump to theological conclusions regarding the number ‘twelve’ in relation to the number of apostles, but neither can we simply dismiss it. McKnight provides three major approaches to interpreting the number “twelve” in relation to the apostles. First, “most scholars conclude that the choice of the twelve was symbolic but had only one motive: *to inaugurate the restoration and reunification of the twelve tribes as promised in ancient Jewish traditions, most notably in Isaiah and Ezekiel*” (212, emphasis original). Secondly, notes McKnight, “Others, without denying the eschatological dimension, center on the Twelve as a nucleus of the remnant or as leaders of a new movement within Israel. . . . A combination of the two above views, extending the view of those who emphasize the ecclesial dimension, suggests both a continuity and a discontinuity: the old Israel is now fulfilled” (213). Finally, McKnight notes, “Others have suggested that the term ‘twelve’ is to be interpreted more simply: as no more than a claim on the nation *as a whole*. In other words, ‘twelve’ was a symbol, *a general evocation* of all Israel, rather than an embodiment of *a specific* hope for restoring Israel by reuniting the twelve tribes” (213-214, emphasis original).

⁶⁹Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 541.

⁷⁰Note the correlation in Exod 19:3 identifying the house of Jacob with the people of Israel and the promise of becoming a holy nation in Exod 19:6.

⁷¹McKnight, “Jesus and the Twelve,” 215. McKnight’s contribution to this debate is the use of twelve in the Joshua tradition in relation to covenant renewal (215). Thus, he concludes that the choosing of the twelve is directly related to this covenant renewal tradition and that God is raising up twelve who represent the whole of Israel in a covenant renewal that leads to the restoration and reunification of Israel and that these twelve will be the eschatological leaders of that restored and reunified Israel (231).

⁷²Ibid. McKnight offers the following examples: “twelve pillars (Exod 24:4); twelve stones on the breastplate (39:14; compare with Sir 45:11); twelve bowls (Num 7:84); twelve bulls, rams, lambs, goats (7:87; 1 Esdr 7:8; 8:65-66); twelve staffs (Num 17:17[2]); cutting a prostitute into twelve pieces, one for

“tribe” in the prophetic literature, there is an eschatological expectation of the restoration and regathering of the twelve tribes of Israel.⁷³ While I agree with Bock’s concern regarding those who see the “twelve” as the reconstitution of Israel in order to argue that the church replaces Israel,⁷⁴ I am arguing that what is taking place at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry is the restoration of repentant Israel through Jesus himself, the true Israel and beloved Son of God, and he chooses twelve apostles that become the foundation of this restored Israel. In this sense, I would say that in calling twelve apostles, Jesus is reconstituting the new Israel promised with the new covenant. That this is so is immediately evident in the fact that Jesus calls the twelve “apostles.” Coming from the verb ἀποστέλλω, which simply means to send out,⁷⁵ an apostle is someone sent out with a special message.⁷⁶ Mark’s Gospel confirms this understanding, for Mark states that Jesus “appointed twelve (whom he also called apostles) so that they might be with him *and he might send them out to preach* and have authority to cast out demons” (3:14-15).

Yet, there is more to this apostolic ministry than preaching. Certainly, Donald Hagner is right when he notes, “The fundamental object of the mission is the proclamation of the dawning of the kingdom of heaven” (cf. Matt 3:2; 4:17).⁷⁷ Nevertheless, with the dawning of the kingdom came accompanying signs, evidences. Therefore, Jesus commands the twelve to “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons” (Matt 10:8a).

each tribe (Jdg 19:29); and Ahijah’s cutting of the robe into twelve pieces, ten for Jeroboam, when the kingdom was split (1 Kgs 11:30-31; see also *Jos. Asten.* 5:6).”

⁷³Ibid., 218. Consider, Isa 11:11-12; 49:6; 63:17; Jer 3:18; 29:14; 30:3; 31:7-10; 32:36-41; Ezek 36:8-11; 37:19.

⁷⁴Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 541.

⁷⁵William Arndt and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 120.

⁷⁶J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 541.

⁷⁷Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 271.

It is true, as Hagner notes, that “the four imperatives of v 8 are subordinate to the proclamation of the kingdom.”⁷⁸ Nevertheless, their importance rests “as a part of the good news of the kingdom—it is that which they exemplify and signify.”⁷⁹ While the message of the coming kingdom was central to the mission of the twelve, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and exorcism were all signs that the kingdom had, in fact, broken in. Consequently, Jesus authorized the twelve accordingly (Matt 10:1), so that the message of the dawning of the kingdom would be verified by the signs of the coming kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-21).

Jesus begins the promised restoration of repentant Israel and the eschatological ingathering by sending out the twelve apostles only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:6) to announce the arrival of the promised kingdom with the same message: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (v. 7).⁸⁰ In fact, Jesus prohibits the twelve saying, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans” (v. 5). The context of Jesus’ commission to the twelve is Jesus’ compassion on the Jewish crowds “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt 9:36). Such imagery calls to mind Ezekiel 34. There, God calls Ezekiel to prophecy against the shepherds of Israel because they have fed themselves off of Gods’ sheep (v. 2) and have scattered them (v. 6). Ezekiel announces that God will seek out his scattered sheep and bring them back to himself (vv. 11-16), and he will set over them a Davidic shepherd who will guide and feed them (vv. 22-24) within the structure of a covenant of peace (v. 25) that will restore the house of Israel to Edenic blessing (vv. 26-31).⁸¹ Thus,

⁷⁸Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 271.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Cf. Mark 6:8-11; Luke 9:2-5. Only Matthew explicitly locates the mission of the apostles to Israel only.

⁸¹Cf. Ezek 16:60, which introduces the idea of Israel’s restoration and an everlasting covenant. Note also, Isa 54:7-10, which speak of Israel’s restoration and regathering on the basis of an everlasting covenant of peace (v. 10). Cf. Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, The New International

Jesus is the compassionate shepherd of Israel (Matt 9:36) who will regather the lost and scattered sheep of Israel (cf. John 10:1-18). Jesus sends out the twelve to begin regathering the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:6) and only them (Matt 10:5). And as the Jewish Messiah, Jesus’ mission was first of all to the Jews (cf. Matt 15:24),⁸² though evidence exists for the inclusion of Gentiles (Matt 8:5-13) and after the Jew’s rejection of their Messiah (Matt 21:33-44) and after Jesus’ death, a mission that includes all nations (Matt 28:19-20), just as Jesus had taught (Matt 22:1-13).

That the twelve serve as the foundation upon which Jesus gathers his messianic community is evident in Matthew 16. There, Peter confesses that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). Jesus acknowledges that Peter’s confession has been revealed to him by the Father (v. 17) and that “on this rock” Jesus will build his ἐκκλησία (v. 18).⁸³ Peter (Πέτρος) and rock (πέτρα) are a play on words indicating that Peter is

Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 301-9. Block compares the idyllic language of Ezek 34:25-30 to the language of the Jubilee in Lev 26:4-13, and he explains the nature of the peace promised in this covenant of peace in Edenic language.

⁸²Turner, *Matthew*, 269. The apostle Paul affirms this redemptive-historical understanding when he says that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

⁸³It is premature to equate Matthew’s use of ἐκκλησία in 16:18 with a fully developed idea of an institutional church. Cf. R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 243. For a lexical analysis and definition of ἐκκλησία, see Lothar Coenen, “ἐκκλησία,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1:291-307. Coenen states that in the classical literature “*ekklēsia* [is] derived via *ek-kaleō*, [to call out, from *kaleō*, to call] which was used for the summons to the army to assemble. . . . It was the assembly of full citizens, functionally rooted in the constitution of the democracy” (291). In the LXX, *ekklēsia* exclusively translates the Hebrew, *qāhāl*, though *quāhāl* is not always translated as *ekklēsia*. Coenen adds that *quāhāl*, probably related to *qōl*, voice, means a summons to an assembly and the act of assembling and is perhaps most accurately translated as mustering” (292). This lexical background is supportive of my argument that Jesus is restoring Israel as promised in the prophets, and he is building this new covenant Israel on the foundation of the apostles who have received the gospel message that opens and shuts the door to the kingdom as it is preached. This proclamation or calling out is what creates the *ekklēsia*, this assembly which is mustered on the basis of repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, *ekklēsia* in Matt 16 need only refer to those whom will call out and gather or muster as the messianic community. As I will show, this *ekklēsia* will include Gentiles as well through the mission of renewed and restored Israel and its Christ.

likely the foundation rock upon which Jesus is building his ἐκκλησία⁸⁴ Except that it is not Peter as an individual apostle that is the foundation of the church. Jesus asks all the disciples, “Who do you [Ἰμεῖς] say that I am?” (v. 15).⁸⁵ Peter responds on behalf of the disciples, as a representative of the twelve. It is true, as Carson notes, that “what the NT does show is that Peter is the first to make this formal confession and that his prominence continues in the earliest years of the church (Acts 1-12),”⁸⁶ but he is merely one of the twelve to whom the revelation of the Christ has been granted. Thus, in one sense one may say that the foundation of the messianic community is the revelation of the Father about the Christ, the Son of the living God (v. 16), and in another sense one may say that it is Jesus himself who is the foundation (1 Cor 3:11). Peter and the apostles serve as the foundation for Jesus’ ἐκκλησία as those first to receive the revelation of the Father about the Christ, those first to confess Jesus as the Christ, and those first sent out to proclaim the message of Jesus as the Christ.

The apostles as the foundation of the New Testament church is also evidenced in Revelation 21. In verse 2, the new Jerusalem is identified as “the bride adorned for her husband,” and in verse 9, the bride is identified as “the wife of the Lamb.” Throughout the Bible, the people of God are identified as the bride/wife of God (Ezek 16; Hos 1-3), but in the New Testament, it is the church, the new covenant people of God, that is the bride/wife of Christ (Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7-8).⁸⁷ Thus, in Revelation 21, the new Jerusalem is the bride of Christ; and the bride of Christ is the new covenant people of

⁸⁴Turner, *Matthew*, 406-7. Carson notes, “If it were not for Protestant reactions against extreme Roman Catholic interpretation, it is doubtful whether many would have taken ‘rock’ to be anything or anyone other than Peter.” Carson, *Matthew*, 368.

⁸⁵Second person nominative plural of “you.”

⁸⁶Carson, *Matthew*, 368.

⁸⁷Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 382.

God who are receiving the promises of the eternal kingdom. Verse 14 records that the twelve apostles of the lamb serve as the foundation of the new Jerusalem.⁸⁸ The city (new Jerusalem) has twelve gates, and “on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel” (Rev 21:12; cf. Ezek 40:5-43; 48:31-34). Together, the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel (the gates) and the twelve apostles (the foundation), make up the new Jerusalem. In other words, the new Jerusalem, that is, the bride of the Lamb, is built on the foundation of the twelve apostles; it is composed of both Jews and Gentiles: all who confess Jesus as Lord. That this is eschatological Israel is strongly suggested by the connections with Ezekiel’s temple vision (cf. Ezek 40-48; see especially 48:30-35).⁸⁹ Thus, the church, built on the foundation of the apostles, does not replace Israel; it is the fulfillment of the promises of a new Israel on the basis of a new covenant inaugurated by the Christ.⁹⁰

As those to whom the revelation of the Christ has been entrusted, the apostles have received the “keys to the kingdom” (Matt 16:19). Again, much controversy exists as to the identity and nature of the keys.⁹¹ Yet, regardless of how one interprets “keys of

⁸⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 391. Mounce rightly notes, “‘Twelve apostles’ is obviously a corporate reference to the disciple group without specific attention to Judas.” Mounce further explains, “In 1 Cor 15:5 the resurrected Jesus appears to ‘the Twelve’ although Judas has already committed suicide” (391fn17).

⁸⁹Ibid., 390-91. See also George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 280-81; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 750-51; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1068-71.

⁹⁰Beale adds, “Noteworthy is the observation in 21:14 that the apostles are part of the foundation, whereas the tribes are part of the gates in the wall built on the foundation. One might have expected the opposite portrayal since Israel preceded the church in redemptive history. But the reversal figuratively highlights the fact that fulfillment of Israel’s promises has finally come in Christ, who, together with the apostolic witness to his fulfilling work, forms the foundation of the new temple, the church, which is the new Israel (so also Eph 2:20-21). Specific reference to historical Israel in the OT is not in mind here. Rather, the apostles are portrayed as the foundation of the *new* Israel, which is the church. This is consistent with 7:4-8 and 7:9ff., where the tribes of Israel in the new age are interpreted to be none other than innumerable multitudes from the nations.” Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1070, emphasis original.

⁹¹For the issues involved in interpreting what the keys of the kingdom are, see Carson,

the kingdom,” at the very least there can be agreement that it relates to entrance into the kingdom.⁹² As such, Peter and the rest of the twelve have been given such authority: the authority to open the door of the kingdom to some people or shut the door of the kingdom to other people.⁹³ In the context of Matthew 16, then, Peter and the apostles serve as the foundation of the messianic community because not only have they been entrusted with the revelation of Jesus as the Christ; they are also granted the authority to open and shut the door to the kingdom through the preaching of the gospel.⁹⁴ This apostolic proclamation is evidenced throughout Acts, beginning with the apostle Peter (Acts 2-12), by which the door of the kingdom is opened or shut to individuals. Those who come to Christ through the preaching of the gospel are those who have been appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48), and those who come to Christ through the preaching of the gospel are those who respond in repentance and faith (Acts 2:37-39). Those who reject the gospel message are shut out of the kingdom. Thus, Jesus builds his messianic community on the foundation of the revelation of himself as the Christ entrusted to the twelve. As such, they serve as the foundation upon which he is building or gathering his messianic community.

Matthew, 370-74; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 625-27.

⁹²In Scripture, keys open and shut doors. In Isa 22:22, the key of “the house of David” is granted to a steward, and only he can open and shut. Isa 22:22 is quoted in Rev 3:7, and it is revealed that Jesus is the steward who has the key to the house of David. In Rev 1:18, Jesus, because of his resurrection, has the keys to Death and Hades, indicating that death no longer has a hold on him and that he now has the ability to open the gates of death and Hades for others. Cf. Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 186n23.

⁹³Again, there is much difficulty in interpreting this passage. Here, there are questions regarding the “binding and loosing” and the verb tenses. See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), 472-74.

⁹⁴Whether the tense of the verbs “binding and loosing” are interpreted as future periphrastic perfects “shall have been bound/loosed,” indicating that Peter and the twelve are carrying out decisions already made in heaven, or whether the verbs are translated as simple future presents “shall bind/loose,” the fact that the keys open or shut the door of the kingdom to people, along with the context of Peter’s confession regarding Jesus as the Christ seem to indicate that the keys are related to the preaching of the gospel. Cf. Carson, *Matthew*, 370-74; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 186n23.

Finally, as to the argument that Jesus is reconstituting new covenant Israel on the foundation of the twelve apostles, we Matthew 19:28 must be briefly considered.⁹⁵ The context is one in which Jesus announces the impossibility of entering the kingdom apart from God's work (v. 26). This difficult teaching leads Peter, on behalf of the twelve again, to ask Jesus about their own reward, for they have left everything to follow him (v. 27). In Jesus' response, he refers to himself as the Danielic Son of Man (cf. Dan 7:9, 13-14) in reference to the time "in the new world" when he will "sit on his glorious throne" (v. 28a). The reference to the new world and the time of Jesus' enthronement point to the time of the consummation of the kingdom.⁹⁶ Jesus tells the twelve that at that time "you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (v. 28b). "The remarkable new dimension in this saying," notes France, "is that Jesus' kingship will be shared."⁹⁷ In particular, the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones participating in judgment⁹⁸ over ethnic Israel.⁹⁹ Since the most natural way to understand

⁹⁵Cf. Luke 22:28-30.

⁹⁶The world translated new world is *palingenesia* (regeneration). Carson translates this word the "renewal" of all things." Carson, *Matthew*, 425. He reminds that this word is only used one other time in the New Testament, in Titus 3:5, where the ESV Translation translates it as regeneration. In this context, notes Carson, it relates to the consummation of the kingdom, the new world (425). So also Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), 565; Turner, *Matthew*, 475; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 742-43.

⁹⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 743.

⁹⁸While there is some debate as to whether or not Matthew uses *krinontes* in v. 28 in the sense of "rule" or "judge," Turner, *Matthew*, 475, admits that "Matthew does not use κρίνω with this nuance elsewhere." Likewise, France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 744, notes that "in NT Greek there is no other example of the verb 'judge' being used in the sense of 'rule,' so that the normal sense of the verb should probably be understood here."

⁹⁹Carson suggests three ways in which the reference to the "twelve tribes of Israel" may be understood: (1) physical, ethnic Israel, (2) "over the church, symbolized as 'Israel,'" or (3) "the twelve represent the entire assembly of Messiah, who will exercise a juridical role over racial Israel." Carson, *Matthew*, 426. Carson dismisses the third option as it has "no scriptural parallel." The most natural way to understand the twelve tribes of Israel is to refer to ethnic Israel. Thus, I would rule out number 2 above. In addition, understanding κρίνοντες in v. 28 in the sense of judgment also rules out number 2 above. Thus, I would argue that the twelve apostles will in some sense judge ethnic Israel in the consummation.

κρίνοντες in verse 28 is judgment, rather than ruling, and since the most natural way to understand the “twelve tribes of Israel” is ethnic Israel, Matthew seems to be indicating that the twelve apostles will have a special place of authority in the new world/creation. At the very least, that authority will include judging over Israel. Taken in this negative sense, it may be that they will stand in judgment over “old Israel” who rejected its messiah.¹⁰⁰

In order to begin the restoration of Israel, Jesus set apart twelve of his disciples whom he designated as apostles. These twelve Jesus sent out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel only in order to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and muster repentant Israel back to its messiah. As those who received the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Jewish messiah, they serve as the foundation of the messianic community. Jesus gave them authority to open and shut the door of the kingdom to their hearers through the proclamation of this gospel. Having forsaken everything to follow Jesus, they will be rewarded in the new world/creation with sharing in Jesus’ rule, judging ethnic Israel for its rejection of Jesus, messiah. It does seem Jesus is reconstituting a newly repentant Israel beginning with the twelve; they are its foundation. However, this new Israel will be restructured on the basis of the promised new covenant.

Jesus and the Reconstitution of Israel: The New Covenant

The restoration and reconstitution of Israel by a Davidic messiah on the basis of a new covenant was predicted by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.¹⁰¹ The New Testament reveals that Jesus is the promised Davidic messiah who initiates the promised new covenant by his own blood. It is on the basis of this new covenant that the

¹⁰⁰So Carson, *Matthew*, 426; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 565; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 744.

¹⁰¹Cf. Isa 55:3; Jer 23:1-8; 33:14-22; Eze 34:17-24; 37:24-25. See also chap. 4 in this diss. where I establish this argument.

relationship between God and the restored new covenant Israel is restructured.

Jesus explains the initiation of this new covenant when he institutes the Lord's Supper on the night of his last Passover meal with the twelve (Matt 26:26-29).¹⁰² In all the parallel accounts, the cup of wine is linked to "the covenant."¹⁰³ Both Luke (22:20) and Paul (1 Cor 11:25) link the cup with the new covenant, and Matthew (26:28) and Mark (14:24) quote Jesus explaining that the cup "is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." The only other time "blood" and "covenant" are found in the Old Testament is in Exodus 24:8, when the Mosaic covenant is instituted and the nation of Israel is formed, and Zechariah 9:11.¹⁰⁴ The context of Zechariah 9:11 is noteworthy because Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey on the week of his death fulfills Zechariah 9:9 (Matt 21:1-6).¹⁰⁵ Zechariah prophesies a day when Zion would rejoice to see its king coming in peace sitting on a donkey (9:9). At that time there would be no more war; and the king's rule would be from "sea to sea" (9:10). Zechariah then prophesies that on the basis of "the blood of my covenant with you" God would set "your prisoners free from the waterless pit" (9:11). It is not clear whether or not the reference in Zechariah 9:11 looks back to the Mosaic covenant (Exod 24:8) or looks forward to a future covenant.¹⁰⁶ The language of the restoration of Zion in 9:9-10, fulfilled in Jesus'

¹⁰²Cf. parallels in Mark 14:25; Luke 22:15-20; also 1 Cor 11:23-25. Cf. John 6:51-58. For an explanation of the Lord's Supper in relation to the last supper, see Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, eds., *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 26-62.

¹⁰³Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; cf. 1 Cor 11:25.

¹⁰⁴Carson, *Matthew*, 537.

¹⁰⁵Cf. parallels: Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:12-15.

¹⁰⁶Old Testament commentators are divided. Kenneth Barker proposes that Zech 9:11 is a reference to the Mosaic covenant. See Kenneth L. Barker, *Zechariah*, in vol. 7 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 666. However, Thomas McComiskey argues that it cannot be because "it must be a covenant ratified by blood that unconditionally guarantees the continued existence of God's people," whereas the Mosaic covenant had been broken. Consequently, Israel was in exile. See Thomas Edward McComiskey, *Zechariah*, in vol. 3 of *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids:

triumphal entry into Jerusalem, seems to link “the blood of my covenant with you” with a future covenant which is the basis of the restoration of Zion. Yet, even if Zechariah 9:11 only points back to the Mosaic covenant, it references the time when Israel was formed on the basis of a covenant ratified with blood (Exod 24:8).

Jesus too inaugurates the new covenant in his blood, which adds further evidence to the fact that he is forming a new people on the basis of the new covenant in his blood. Matthew adds that the cup is “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28). The forgiveness of sins is one of the explicit promises of the new covenant (Jer 31:31ff.).¹⁰⁷ Thus, in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus explains his death as that which inaugurates the new covenant in his blood, just as the old covenant was ratified with blood (Exod 24:8). The new covenant will restructure the relationship between God and repentant Israel, for in his death Jesus will accomplish the forgiveness of sins just as Jeremiah had promised (Jer 31:34). Jonathan Pennington proposes, “Jesus and the Evangelists understand the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah to be the fulfillment of the Passover and the corresponding inauguration of the new exodus.”¹⁰⁸ I have argued already that Jesus came to lead a new exodus. By eating a final Passover meal with his disciples and taking all that it represented and infusing it with new meaning in the Last Supper, Jesus fulfills the Passover and exodus,¹⁰⁹ initiating the promised new covenant that forms repentant Israel as the reconstituted and restructured new Israel.¹¹⁰

Baker, 1998), 1170.

¹⁰⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 994. Cf. Jer 33:7-8. Jeremiah links the promise of forgiveness of sin with the restoration of the fortunes of Judah and Israel. Cf. also Jer 36:25.

¹⁰⁸Jonathan T. Pennington, “The Lord’s Last Supper in the Fourfold Witness of the Gospels,” in *The Lord’s Supper*, 43.

¹⁰⁹David G. Peterson, *Transformed by God: New Covenant Life and Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 57.

¹¹⁰It is important to distinguish between the Last Supper between Jesus and his disciples and the Lord’s Supper which the church practices today. The Last Supper was a unique Passover meal which Jesus used to infuse new meaning into in order to picture the new covenant in his blood. The church does

Pennington notes, “Even as the Passover-Exodus was the calling out and forming of the people of God, their liberation from bondage, and the (re-)establishment of their covenant with God, all through the picture of blood sacrifice, so too was Jesus’ Last Supper.”¹¹¹

Thus, Jesus initiates the new covenant with the twelve, forming the foundation of the new covenant community. This meal points forward to the eschatological banquet that will be celebrated in the future kingdom (Matt 26:29).¹¹²

The new covenant promised in Jeremiah indicates continuity with ethnic Israel. After all, it promises the restoration and reunification of Israel and Judah (Jer 30:1-31:26). Yet, Jeremiah emphasizes radical discontinuity with the past when he says this new covenant is “not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (Jer 31:32). Additionally, God charges Israel with breaking that covenant (v. 32), and as evidenced in chapter 4, the new covenant promises are better than the old promises and bring about radical change in the individual members of the covenant community (31:33-34).¹¹³ The writer to the Hebrews confirms the radical newness of the new covenant (Heb 8) and Jesus’ once for all sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin (9:1-10:18), declaring him the mediator/priest (priesthood; 7:1-28) of a new and better covenant (8:6; 9:15).

As seen in chapter 4, while the old covenant community was based on genealogy (ethnicity), the new covenant community would be composed of a people of

not observe such a Passover meal but an entirely new celebration in the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is a new covenant ordinance that indicates that the old covenant has been fulfilled in Jesus’ death and that now, under the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus’ blood, we look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb when we will eat once again in the presence of Jesus (Rev 19:6-9). For an explanation of the distinction between the Last Supper and the Lord’s Supper, see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 386-88; Pennington, “The Lord’s Last Supper,” 31-67, especially 65-67.

¹¹¹Pennington, “The Lord’s Last Supper,” 44.

¹¹²France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 994-95; Peterson, *Transformed by God*, 57.

¹¹³For the arguments for newness in the new covenant in Jeremiah leading to radical discontinuity, rather than just renewal, see Peterson, *Transformed by God*, 29-31.

supernatural birth (Isa 54:1). Unlike the people of the old covenant who were located in the center of their world to display God's kingdom, new covenant Israel would be a missionary people to the nations (54:2-3). Further, new covenant Israel would be constituted by a Davidic messiah (55:3) and would include people from all nations (55:5) whom the Lord would permit to serve as priests in his house (56:6-8; 1 Pet 2:9).

While old covenant Israel had an external copy of the Law to guide them, the new covenant people would have the Law written on their hearts (Jer 31:31), possess intimate knowledge of God (31:34), and have their sins forgiven (32:34). Ezekiel expands on Jeremiah's language and explains that God will give his new covenant people a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26). This is the language of regeneration. Unlike old covenant Israel upon whose leaders the Holy Spirit rested, under the new covenant all God's people would have God's Spirit (Ezek 36:27; cf. Isa 59:21) and would be empowered to obey all God's commands (Ezek 11:20; 36:27). Thus, while there is continuity between the Israel of the old covenant and the Israel of the new, the primary emphasis of Old Testament Scripture is on the radical newness of the new covenant. Jesus is doing something entirely new (Isa 42:9; 43:19). Such an understanding of how the new covenant people of God is related to the church will begin to illuminate how the new covenant community is called by Jesus to fulfill the mission of eschatological ingathering.

Jesus and the Reconstitution of Israel: Mission

On the basis of the new covenant, Jesus reconstitutes Israel beginning with the twelve in order to begin the restoration of Israel. Once Israel is reconstituted, the restoration may begin and the new Israel may begin to fulfill the mission for which God created it. Israel's mission had been to be a display nation to the surrounding nations. As a royal priesthood and holy nation (Exod 19:4-6), Israel was to represent God's rule on the earth by showing what it was like to live under God's rule. They would display their God, his character, and his ways to the surrounding nations. While their mission was not

one of outreach missionary activity, there was a place for incorporation into the old covenant community. In addition, the prophets looked forward to a time when Israel would relate to the nations via eschatological ingathering. New covenant Israel retains the mission of being a display people to the surrounding world; however, the time of eschatological ingathering has come. So new covenant Israel has a new, distinct mission. Now, as the new covenant people of God, new Israel is to go out, announcing the message of the kingdom in order to gather all the nations to God.

A display people. As Israel was to be a display nation, showing the surrounding nations what it was to live as God's people under God's rule with the hope of incorporation, so too, the new Israel was to do the same. Perhaps the clearest example of this fact is found in Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt 5-7).¹¹⁴ In the sermon Matthew highlights the fact that the people of the kingdom are "the light of the world" (5:14a). Light cannot be hidden; therefore, neither can Jesus' kingdom disciples hide their light. The purpose of shining their lights is "so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (5:16). In other words, "good works" is tied to "let your light shine." Consequently, citizens of the heavenly kingdom are to live life in this world in such a way as to display that the kingdom has invaded by their changed lives, leading to good works. "To let one's light shine," suggests Hagner, "is to live in such a way as to manifest the presence of the kingdom."¹¹⁵ Or as Carson concludes, "Thus the kingdom norms (vv.3-12) so work out in the lives of the kingdom's heirs as to

¹¹⁴For issues related to the application of the Sermon on the Mount, see Carson, *Matthew*, 122-28; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 82-84; France, *Matthew*, 160-65. I take the Sermon on the Mount to be Jesus' explanation of what life in the kingdom is to look like. Since Jesus has inaugurated the kingdom now, Christians are to display this kingdom ethic until he returns.

¹¹⁵Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 100. So also France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 177.

produce the kingdom witness (vv.13-16).”¹¹⁶ These works are displayed in order that, as France suggests, “those outside the disciple community” would glorify God.¹¹⁷

Eschatological ingathering. The new covenant idea of an outreach mission is confirmed in all four Gospel narratives. In Matthew, the resurrected Jesus announces that he has received all authority in heaven and on earth, then sends disciples to go to all nations, baptizing those who respond and teaching them all Jesus has commanded (28:18-20). Mark records Jesus’ command to “go into all the world and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the whole creation (16:15); he explicitly links baptism with a response of faith (16:16). And John records Jesus sending out the disciples as he has been sent by the Father, and links their mission with the granting of the Holy Spirit and the authority to forgive sins (20:21-23). But Luke, in his commission, directly connects Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection as fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures (24:44), and links the mission with the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name “to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (24:47). The outset of the mission attested to in all four Gospels is narrated in Acts, but it is important to note Luke’s connection of the mission with the question of the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6).

Pao argues that the language of restoration is summed up in the phrase, “the hope of Israel,”¹¹⁸ the idea of which is already found throughout Luke.¹¹⁹ Thus, believing that the hope of the restoration of Israel had died with Jesus, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus say, “We had *hoped* that he was the one to redeem Israel” (v.21).¹²⁰ Yet, Pao

¹¹⁶Carson, *Matthew*, 140.

¹¹⁷France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 177.

¹¹⁸Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 122.

¹¹⁹Cf. 1:16, 54-55, 68; 2:25-32, 36-38; 24:21.

¹²⁰Emphasis added.

suggests that “in Luke 24:44-49, the final saying of Jesus points forward to the narrative of Acts as the fulfillment of this hope.”¹²¹ Consequently, in Luke 24:48, Jesus declares, “You are witnesses of these things,” and calls on the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Spirit (v. 49).

Pao also argues for two components to the theme of the restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts: a concern for the twelve tribes of Israel, and a reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms.¹²² The concern for the twelve tribes is addressed in the completion of the twelve as the foundation for the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:15-26). Early in Acts the fact that the twelve has been reduced to eleven is significant. In Acts 1:13, the remaining eleven disciples are named; they were gathered in prayer “together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers” (1:14), awaiting in prayer for “the promise of the Father” (1:4): the outpouring of the Spirit. David Peterson suggests, “If this narrative is read in the light of 1:15-26, it could be argued that the leadership status and authority of the apostles needed confirming after the betrayal of Judas.”¹²³

In 1:15-20, Peter affirms that Judas’ death took place in order to fulfill the Scriptures. Since Peter quotes from Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 (v. 20), this is likely the reference he has in mind in verse 16;¹²⁴ for the reference to “David” as the author of the particular Scripture is most likely the Psalms.¹²⁵ Regardless, in Psalm 109:8 David states, “May another take his office.” Since Judas had been “numbered among” the twelve and

¹²¹Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 122.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 123-29.

¹²³David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 118.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 122.

¹²⁵C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles: Preliminary Introduction and Commentary on Acts 1-14*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 96-97.

“was allotted his share in this ministry” (v. 17), it was necessary to replace Judas with one, who like him, had been present with Jesus during his ministry: “A witness to the resurrection” (vv. 21-22). So, “they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven disciples” (v. 26). The twelve are complete again. Pao suggests that the “significance of this pericope is highlighted by the fact that Matthias does not reappear in the rest of the Lukan narrative.”¹²⁶ Clearly, the emphasis is not on Matthias but on the necessity to complete the twelve who serve, as I have argued already, as the foundation of the new Israel that is restored on the basis of the new covenant. As to the question of the new Israel’s ethnicity, it is true that the twelve are Jews. However, as Pao notes, “The fact that the twelve apostles themselves are not physically related to the twelve different tribes should prevent one from denying a certain symbolic value to the term ‘Israel.’”¹²⁷

The concern for the reunification of Israel begins to be addressed in Acts 1:6-8. However, in order to understand this text, one must first understand the new exodus language behind it, particularly as it is expressed in Isaiah 40-55.¹²⁸ Since Isaiah 40:1-11 serves as a prologue to chapters 40-55,¹²⁹ I will treat those verses briefly in order to understand the context behind some of the principal themes in Acts before addressing Acts 1:6-8, which speak directly to the question of the restoration of Israel.

In Isaiah 40:1-11, God announces to his heavenly court that the period of divine judgment will come to an end and calls on them to “comfort my people” (v. 1).¹³⁰ They

¹²⁶Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 123.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 126.

¹²⁸Pao argues, “The prominent themes in Isaiah 40-55 become the organizing principles for the second volume of Luke’s writings.” Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 37.

¹²⁹Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 294-95; 302-3; Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 37.

¹³⁰Childs, *Isaiah*, 295, 297.

are to “speak tenderly to Jerusalem” and tell her that (1) her military service has come to an end,¹³¹ (2) her sins will be forgiven, and (3) she has received from the Lord the full punishment due for her sins (v. 2). Then a voice cries out from the heavenly council and shouts: “Prepare the way of the Lord” (vv. 3-5). All the Gospel writers see this preparatory mission as the role that John the Baptist fulfilled (Matt 3:3).¹³² The one who prepares the way is a precursor to the glory of God being revealed to “all flesh” (v. 5). Childs notes, “In chapter 40 a sign of the inbreaking of the new age of salvation is the glory of God” (cf. John 1:14-18).¹³³ Thus, verses 1-5 announce that judgment is complete and a new age of comfort and salvation is dawning in Jerusalem. Consequently, the disciples’ mission of witness must begin in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8), and this is precisely what is observed in Acts 2-7.

In Isaiah 40:6 a voice from the heavenly council says, “Cry!” And another voice responds, “What shall I cry?”¹³⁴ After all, God’s judgment has destroyed everything: “All flesh is grass and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are like grass” (v. 6b).¹³⁵ In other words, in the midst of such hopeless desolation, what possible message can be shared?¹³⁶ In verse 8 a voice answers that while the grass does wither and the flower

¹³¹Smith notes that “warfare” is a good translation, rather than hard labor. Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, The New American Commentary, vol. 15B (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 93-94. Cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 297, who translates the phrase, “her term of service is over.”

¹³²So also Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23.

¹³³Childs, *Isaiah*, 299. Childs sees Isa 35 as an intertextual connection standing behind Isaiah 40. “When 40:3-5 is read in light of chapter 35,” argues Childs, “then the prologue signals not just a general expectation of a coming redemption, but points explicitly to the end of God’s judgment upon Judah, symbolized by its blindness and inability to see: ‘Then the eyes of the blind will be opened’ (35:5)” (299).

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 300.

¹³⁵Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 97. For the issues related to identifying the voice speaking see, Childs, *Isaiah*, 295-97.

¹³⁶Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 97. Cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 299. Noting the language of Zion and the return to it by the highway of holiness and all the verbal parallels, Childs sees Isa 35 standing behind this text as

does fade, “the word of the Lord will stand forever.”¹³⁷ It is, after all, the word of the sovereign God as revealed in Isaiah 40-55. His Word will accomplish all that he purposes it to do (55:8-11). God’s Word will accomplish the restoration of Israel (55:1-4, 6-7, 12-13) and the inclusion of the Gentiles (55:5; 56:6-8) on the basis of the everlasting (new) covenant (55:3). It is no accident, then, that the Word of God seems to take on a character of its own in the Acts narrative. The gospel is the Word of God concerning the Christ (cf. Matt 16:16-17), and this is what Peter begins preaching in Acts 2 (cf. vv. 22, 41). It is this Word, that when believed, brings salvation (Acts 4:4; 5:20). It is this Word to which new Christians devote themselves (Acts 2:42). And, as if it has the power to grant life to the church in and of its own, the growth of the early church is described in the following manner: “The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (Acts 6:7; cf. 12:24; 19:20).

The announcement of this good news will go forth from Zion/Jerusalem. In fact, Zion/Jerusalem (personified) is the messenger that brings this good news (Isa 40:9).¹³⁸ It is to announce to all the cities of Judah “Behold your God,” that is, your Lord comes bringing salvation and judgment (vv. 9-10). And the Lord himself will come and shepherd his people (v. 11). Thus, Isaiah 40-55 sets the background for the Isaianic new exodus in Acts. With this background in mind, one is now in a better position to understand the restoration of Israel and the unfolding mission in Acts.

In Acts 1:6, the disciples ask Jesus, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel.” While some commentators take the question as an indication that the

an intertextual link.

¹³⁷Childs, *Isaiah*, 295-96. Against the traditional interpretation that takes the response to the question in 6a as beginning in 6b-8, I agree with Childs that the tension between v. 7 and v. 8 should lead to a different conclusion. So, I take vv. 6b-7 as an explanation of the desolation of God’s judgment, and v. 8 is the response to the question in v. 6a and a resolution that indicates the time of judgment is complete and the dawning of the age of salvation will be accomplished by God’s word (v. 8).

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 301.

disciples still misunderstand Jesus and hope he will restore Israel to political power,¹³⁹ Jesus does not reject their question; he simply informs them it is not granted to them to know such “times and season” (v. 7). Rather, they are to receive the promised Spirit that will empower them for witness to all the world beginning “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (v. 8). The fact that Jesus says, “You will be my witnesses” (v. 8) gives additional evidence that Jesus affirms the concept of the restoration of Israel. The language of “witness” is taken from Isaiah 43:10, 12.¹⁴⁰ The context of Isaiah 43 is that of a court scene where God calls on blind and deaf Israel to be his witnesses against the false gods of the surrounding nations (43:8-9).¹⁴¹ “Israel, the blind servant,” notes Brevard Childs, “is called forth as witness for Yahweh’s claims.”¹⁴² Nevertheless, the context of Isaiah 43 is also one of the promise of a new work by God. So God asks Israel to forget “the former things” and not to “consider the things of old” (v. 18). The reason is that God “will do a new thing” (v. 19). This new thing is cast in the language of a new exodus.¹⁴³ Pao posits, “Isaiah 43:10-12, therefore, signifies the presence of a reversal, one that is possible through the introduction of the new work of the God of Israel.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, Jesus’ declaration that his disciples will be his witnesses signals that the dawn of salvation has come upon Jerusalem; the new exodus has begun.

¹³⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 35; John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 41.

¹⁴⁰Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 93. So also Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 109; Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 36.

¹⁴¹J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 333.

¹⁴²Childs, *Isaiah*, 335.

¹⁴³Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 335-37.

¹⁴⁴Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 93.

The apostolic mission, then, begins in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), then moves roughly to what was the northern kingdom (8-12), thus reuniting Israel. And finally, the mission goes out to the end of the earth as the eschatological ingathering includes the nations (13-28). However, one must heed the caution of Köstenberger and O'Brien:

Although the references to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria correspond roughly to the development in Acts 2-9, some significant omissions occur if the whole expression is interpreted simply in *geographical* terms. . . . Accordingly, the stages of witness are to be interpreted *ethnically* and *theologically*, as well as geographically.¹⁴⁵

While many commentators take Acts 1:8 to provide a geographical and, likely, ethnic outline of the mission of the disciples,¹⁴⁶ Pao, like Köstenberger and O'Brien, argues that Acts 1:8 represents the "three stages in the program of the Isaianic New Exodus:" (1) the dawning of salvation in Jerusalem, (2) the reconstitution and reunification of Israel ("and in all Judea and Samaria"), and (3) Gentile inclusion ("to the end of the earth").¹⁴⁷ Such an interpretation accounts for the geographical, ethnic, and theological interpretations of Acts 1:8.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 130, emphasis original.

¹⁴⁶Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 67; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 43; Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 36-37.

¹⁴⁷Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 93. So also Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 130-31.

¹⁴⁸Köstenberger and O'Brien argue, "The first stage [of the mission outlined in Acts 1:8] is Jerusalem, where Jesus finished his work and where Israel was to be restored in the remnant of Jews who believed in him as Messiah. The second stage is Judea-Samaria – the two places are linked with a single article in the Greek of verse 8 – referring to the area of the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Israel. This fulfills the ancient promises of the restoration of the *whole* house of Israel under one king (e.g., Ezek. 37:15-22). Finally, the apostolic witness will extend to the 'ends of the earth', a key expression which comes from Isaiah 49:6 (see the direct quote in Acts 13:47) and indicates that God intends his salvation should reach all peoples. Geographically, the phrase denotes the end of the world in a general sense. Ethnically, it refers to the Gentile world. If the gospel is for the Jew first, then it is also for the Gentile (Rom. 1:16-17)." Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 130-31, emphasis original.

As seen, in the new exodus Zion/Jerusalem is personified as the witness/evangelist that announces the good news of God's coming salvation to all the cities of Judah (Isa 40:9-10). Thus, the reference to Jerusalem indicates that salvation has dawned in Jerusalem.¹⁴⁹ The reference to "all Judea and Samaria" may signify the reunification of Israel since geographically that is roughly the area that encompasses what was once the southern and northern kingdoms.¹⁵⁰ And finally, the reference "to the end of the earth" (v. 8; cf. 13:47) is an allusion to Psalm 49:6,¹⁵¹ which signifies the inclusion of the Gentiles. So, then, Acts 1:8 sets the expectation for the restoration of Israel in order that its witnesses would fulfill its mission. As the one who came to restore of Israel, Jesus had to begin the mission of eschatological ingathering with the Jews. However, as already noted, the Gospels also show that Gentile inclusion was expected (cf. Matt 8:5-13). Therefore, as the Gospels close, and as the Acts of the Apostles open, the Holy Spirit is poured out in fulfillment of the new covenant promises, and the eschatological ingathering begins as the Spirit and the gospel Word create the new covenant people of God.

Summary: Jesus, The Image of God

Jesus is the last Adam who, unlike the previous Adamic figures, truly and faithfully imaged God. Jesus is God's beloved Son who faithfully obeyed where other Adams failed (sonship). Jesus is the Davidic king who is the rightful heir to David's throne (kingship). As the beloved Son of God from David's line, Jesus came to restore Israel on the basis of the new covenant (covenant, priesthood). As God's image, Jesus

¹⁴⁹Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 95.

¹⁵⁰Quoting Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 95, Peterson proposes that "Pao rightly notes that the phrase *en pasē tē (in all)* links Judea and Samaria grammatically and evokes 'the theopolitical connotation of the two regions.'" Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 113n42.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 112; Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 92. The phrase, "to the end of the earth," is understood in a variety of ways. For a brief explanation of the various interpretations, see Bock, *Acts*, 64-66. The use of the same phrase in Acts 13:47 as a quotation of Ps 49:6, along with Paul's admission of turning to the Gentiles would seem to indicate that the reference is generally to Gentiles, as Bock suggests, "inclusive of all people and locales" (65).

will populate the earth with the divine image through the gospel. It is this new covenant people of God whom he calls to image him as an earthly display of his rule on the earth and the instrument by which he fulfills his mission: the eschatological ingathering promised in the Old Testament.

CHAPTER 6
THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD:
THE CHURCH

In the previous chapter I argued that Jesus is the last Adam who, as the faithful son of God from David's line, came to restore Israel. I argued that the restoration of Israel is expressed as a new or second exodus led by Jesus in which he reconstitutes Israel on the foundation of the twelve apostles and begins the restoration of Israel on the basis of the promised new covenant by his life, death, and resurrection. Jesus then pours out the Holy Spirit at his ascension, indicating that the promised new age of salvation has dawned in Jerusalem (cf Isa 40-55). Thus begins the new covenant Israel's mission of eschatological ingathering, reunifying Israel as the gospel goes out from Jerusalem, to all Judea and Samaria. Yet, the new covenant also promised the inclusion of the Gentiles, so the mission expands beyond the borders of Israelite territory to include all nations. Consequently, new covenant Israel is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The new covenant people of God are no longer identified on the basis of genealogy; they are those who are Abraham's offspring by supernatural birth. In other words, the members of the new covenant community are those who have responded to the gospel of the kingdom with repentance from sin and the faith of Abraham.

Historically, the new covenant community beginning at Pentecost (Acts 2) has been designated as "the church." While there is ongoing debate as it concerns the relationship between Israel and the church, in this chapter I will argue that the New Testament applies the language of Israel to the church because it is the new Israel constituted on the basis of the promised new covenant, created to serve as a corporate Adam for the purpose of mission. As a corporate Adam, the church is called to image

God on the earth and fulfill the mission of eschatological ingathering until the return of Christ. I will make this argument in two parts. First, I consider the language of the image of God as applied to individual members of the new covenant community as evidence of God's original intention to populate the earth with the divine image. Second, I look at 1 Peter 2:9-11 and its surrounding context as an ecclesiological test case for the church as new covenant Israel and a corporate Adam for the purpose of mission. It is in this text that the language of Israel is most clearly and directly applied to the church, and it is set in a covenantal context similar to Exodus 19-24 in which old covenant Israel was chosen by God to be a corporate Adam that would display God's rule on the earth. I further interact with other pertinent New Testament passages utilizing the structure of 1 Peter 2:9-11, which clarify both the identity and mission of the church.

The Image of God and New Covenant Believers

As the true image of God, Jesus is fulfilling the original Adamic mandate to populate the earth with the divine image (Gen 1:28; 2:15) by renewing and restoring the image of God in new covenant humanity as first established at creation (Gen 1:26-28) in order that this new covenant people of God would rightly display the glory of God on the earth. Accordingly, the New Testament reveals that Jesus is renewing the divine image in those individuals who make up the new covenant community.¹ Since Jesus is the true image of God (Col 1:15), the goal of the election and predestination of the new covenant

¹In the New Testament, the Hebrew *צֶלֶם*; *śē-lem* is primarily translated with *εἰκών*; *eikōn*. It retains the idea of physical representation and is translated as "image" in English. In the LXX, *εἰκών* translates *צֶלֶם* ("image") in Gen 1:26. Otto Flender, "Image," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 2:286-87. The Hebrew *דְּמוּת*; *dēmūt* ("likeness") in Gen 1:26 in the LXX is translated by the Greek, *ὁμοίωσις*; *homoiosis*. Erich Beyreuther and Günter Finkenrath, "ὁμοίος," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 2:502. While it is true that all humanity bears the divine image (cf. 1 Cor 11:7—man as the "image" and glory of God; Jas 3:9—with the tongue we curse those created in the "likeness" of God), the divine image in man is distorted after the fall (Gen 3). The emphasis of the New Testament is on the renewal and restoration of the divine image in new covenant believers: Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10; Eph 4:24.

people of God is conformity to his image (Rom 8:29).² As C. E. B. Cranfield notes in reference to Romans 8:29, “Behind the words συμμόρφος τῆς εἰκόνοσ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ there is probably the thought of man’s creation κατ’εἰκόνα θεοῦ (Gen. 1:27) and also the thought (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Col.1:15) of Christ’s being eternally the very εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ.”³ Thus, through Christ, the true image, God is restoring the divine image as intended in creation.

While Romans 8:29 points forward to the completion of the conformity to the image of Christ at “the believer’s final glorification”⁴ or future resurrection,⁵ Robert Jewett argues that the concept of present, ongoing transformation, leading to the goal of future glorification is present based on the “significance of the aorist verbs and the context of the current suffering” (cf. 8:28).⁶ This progressive transformation is consistent with

²C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 432.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. Cranfield proposes that “the believer’s final glorification is their full conformity to the εἰκὼν of Christ glorified.” So also James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word, 1988), 483.

⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 453. Schreiner connects the promise of conformity with future resurrection on the basis of understanding πρωτότοκος in relation to Jesus’ resurrection. In 1 Cor 15:49, Paul uses the word *eikōn* differently, though there is a correlation with Rom 8:29 as it points forward to the future resurrection/glorification. In 1 Cor 15:48-49, Paul’s argument is that as those in Adam, we “have worn” the *eikōn* of the man of dust: that is, a corruptible body. However, as those in Christ, we “will wear” the *eikōn* of the man from heaven, Christ. In other words, just as Adam died, so all who are in Adam die in corruption. Yet, just as Christ has been raised bodily, so also, those who are in Christ share that same hope of future bodily resurrection. See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1288-90; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 793-95. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 377-78.

⁶Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, vol. 59 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 529. Like Jewett, Schreiner admits that Paul’s emphasis on conformity to the Son’s image at the future resurrection “does not mean that all reference to the present era should be excluded.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 453.

Paul's theological emphasis: the ongoing restoration of the divine image in the new covenant believer who is no longer in Adam, but is now in Christ, the last Adam (2 Cor 3:18).⁷ Since the eschaton has already broken in to this age, Paul can speak of the believer as having "put off the old self (union with the first Adam)" and having "put on the new self (union with Christ-last Adam)" (Col 3:9), which is "being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col 3:10). The context of this renewal is that the believer is no longer identified with or united to Adam (the old self) but that now, through faith, the believer is identified with or united with Christ (the new man).⁸ Yet, because the new age has not been consummated, Paul must also command the believer to "put off your old self (first Adam)" (Eph 4:22) and "put on your new self (Christ-last Adam), created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24).⁹ In other words, on the basis of God's work in the believer, he or she must now by faith live as one who is united with Christ, the last Adam and not as one who is united with the first Adam. This communicates the believer's present position before God.

On the believer's identity and standing before God, Paul commands believers to be who they are. Peter O'Brien suggests, "The new person has been created 'like God'; it is therefore *to be like him*."¹⁰ Jesus is restoring the image of God in individual new covenant believers. The purpose of this renewal is that God's people would "do

⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 453. Schreiner argues, "The genius of Paul's theology is that the *eschaton* has invaded the present evil age. The transformation into the image thus begins in this age (cf. 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10) but is completed and consummated at the resurrection."

⁸Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 269-70; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 191-92.

⁹Andrew Lincoln explains, "On the basis of what God has accomplished in Christ, this new identity must be appropriated—'put on'—in such a way that its ethical dimensions become apparent. The notion of the new creation is explicit in the description of the new person as 'created in God's likeness.'" Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 287. O'Brien suggests that "the new person has been created 'like God'; it is therefore *to be like him*." Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 332.

¹⁰O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 332.

everything in the name of the Lord” (Col 3:17) and would “be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph 5:1). In other words, the purpose of the renewal of the divine image in the new covenant believer is that he or she may faithfully image God on the earth. In order to do that, the new covenant believer must put off the old ways of fallen Adam and put on the new ways of Christ, the last Adam. However, the restoration of the image of God in order to faithfully represent God on the earth is not merely an individual concept, for the new covenant community is being restored as a corporate Adam through Christ for the purpose of mission.

The Church in 1 Peter: A Corporate Adam and Image of God

In the survey of the pattern of the image of God from Adam to Israel in chapters 2 and 4, I highlighted degrees of continuity, and to a lesser extent degrees of discontinuity, in the identity of God’s people and their mission. In the New Testament, there continues to exist some degrees of continuity with the identity and mission of the new covenant people of God, the church. As I argued in chapter 3 that Israel is a corporate Adam chosen to image God to the surrounding nations (Exod 19:4-6), so too the church is a corporate Adam chosen to image God to the surrounding world. This corporate image is most clearly and succinctly summarized in 1 Peter 2:9-11. There, in verse 9, Peter describes the identity of the church with the language of Israel who was to image God as a royal priesthood and holy nation (Exod 19:4-5)¹¹ in order to fulfill the creation mandate (Deut 7:13; Exod 1:7; Josh 23:1-6, 14).¹²

Nevertheless, in the survey of the new covenant promises in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in chapter 4, I indicated that the promises of a restored and renewed Israel under a new covenant inaugurated by a descendant of David would be radically new; it

¹¹G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 120-21.

¹²*Ibid.*, 94-95.

would be a new exodus (Isa 43:18-21). On the basis of the work of Jesus, who led the new exodus and inaugurated the new covenant, the church is now called to image God faithfully under the new covenant that promises forgiveness of sin, a new heart, and God's Spirit (cf. Isa 54:1-56:8; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:25-27). In addition, while there is continuity between the mission of Israel and the church in that the church too is to be a display people to the surrounding world, there is radical discontinuity in that the new covenant people of God do not gather at a central sanctuary but are scattered throughout the world and participate in the eschatological ingathering of the nations to God. It is consistent, then, to view the church as a new covenant corporate Adam commissioned to fulfill the Last Adam's mandate as his instrument by which he is displaying his divine rule on the earth and gathering the scattered new covenant community back to God. Thus, 1 Peter 2:9-11 provides a covenantal context that will help clarify both the identity and mission of the church.¹³

The Covenantal Context of 1 Peter

By calling the recipients of his letter "the elect exiles of the dispersion" (1:1) and concluding the letter with a greeting from "Babylon" (5:13),¹⁴ Peter associates his readers with Old Testament Israel in Babylonian captivity during their exile from their homeland.¹⁵ That does not mean that Peter identifies his readers as ethnic Israel; he is not

¹³I assume Petrine authorship of 1 Peter. For arguments for Petrine authorship, see D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 421-24; Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 730-35.

¹⁴Karen Jobes admits, "There is virtually unanimous agreement among modern interpreters that the referent of 'Babylon' is actually Rome." Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 322.

¹⁵Jobes suggests, "Given the several echoes of the greeting of 1:1-2 found here [in 1 Pet. 5:13], the reference to Babylon is clearly to be read in parallel with 'Diaspora' in 1:1. . . . Most likely 'Babylon' forms an inclusion with 'Diaspora' in the opening verse and thus functions 'to identify both the author and his Christian community as sharing with the readers such exile status' (Achtmeier 1996: 354)." *Ibid.*, 322-23.

writing only to Jews. In fact, several clues throughout the letter lead away from this conclusion.¹⁶ For example, Peter speaks of his audience as being “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (1:18). This is not the way a Jewish background believer would speak of his or her Jewish heritage. Peter also acknowledges that the Gentiles “are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery” (4:4). This seems to indicate that those to whom Peter writes freely participated in this Gentile debauchery before coming to faith in Christ.¹⁷ Peter uses the language and background of dispersion, exile, and Babylon to place his readers in a similar but distinct covenantal context. Like Israel in Babylonian exile, Christians too live in this world as “sojourners and exiles” in a foreign land (2:11).¹⁸ Yet, while Israel was dispersed because they broke the Mosaic covenant, the church is dispersed because they are chosen out of the world to be a part of the new covenant people of God.

The clearest indication in 1 Peter that God enters into a new covenant with believers through Jesus Christ is found in the phrase, “For obedience to Jesus Christ and

¹⁶For a brief summary of arguments for and against a Jewish audience, see Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 50-51. While the Old Testament background and citations “have led scholars from the earliest times to the conclusion that the readers were Christians of Jewish origin, . . . adds Achtemeier, “references also abound in 1 Peter that clearly assume a gentile origin for its readers.”

¹⁷Achtemeier adds, “References to the unholy state of their preconversion life (e.g., 1:14, 18; 2:10, 25; 4:3-4; cf. 3:6) are, in the view of many commentators both ancient and modern, decisive in indicating a gentile background for its readers.” Achtemeier concludes, “Perhaps the most careful conclusion is to posit a mixture of both gentile and Jewish readers, although some evidence, especially 1:14; 4:3-4, points rather clearly to a vast preponderance of readers who, prior to their conversion, took part in the social and religious observances of the Greco-Roman world.” *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁸For a novel theory as to the recipients of 1 Peter, see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 23-41. Jobes posits a theory that the recipients of 1 Pet were in Asia Minor as a result of Roman colonization. Jobes’ primary concern is to answer the question of “Diaspora” in a literal sense. The recipients were likely Jewish Christians, who along with Gentile converts, were sent by Claudius to populate Asia Minor (cf. Acts 18:2). While Jobes’ theory answers many questions, such as the Jewish emphasis of 1 Peter, along with the evidence of Gentile inclusion, she admits that the “surviving historical evidence is too meager to confirm this or any other proposal advanced thus far about the origin of 1 Peter” (41). In addition, she admits that “perhaps the greatest weakness of this theory is that 1 Peter itself makes no direct reference to such an event, as might be expected. . . . We must therefore content ourselves only with possibilities and probabilities” (41).

for sprinkling with his blood” (1:2c).¹⁹ The initiation of the Mosaic covenant (Exod 24) stands in the background of Peter’s language here.²⁰ Given the covenantal background of Exodus 24 where, as Jobes notes, “The newly formed people of Israel first pledge their obedience (24:3, 7) and then are sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice,”²¹ “obedience to Jesus Christ” and “sprinkling with blood” in 1 Peter 1:2, like the initiation of the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 34, represent the obligations of both parties entering into a covenant.²² As Jobes summarizes, in the initiation of the Mosaic covenant “the people pledge obedience to God, and the blood of the covenant is applied to them.”²³ Referencing 1 Peter 1:2 she concludes, “Thus, the phrase ‘obedience and sprinkling of blood’ can serve as a hendiadys to refer to God’s covenant relationship with his people.”²⁴ While Israel failed to obey God under the old (Mosaic) covenant that was powerless to transform, through the new covenant, with its promises of a new heart, a new spirit/Spirit, and the forgiveness of sins initiated through Christ’s blood, believers are empowered to obey.²⁵ With this language (1:2), Peter begins his first letter assuring

¹⁹Admittedly, this phrase is difficult to interpret. For the various possible interpretations, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 56-57; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 71-72.

²⁰See Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 49. So also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 56-57; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 72. With all the connections Peter has already made with Israel by calling new covenant Christians God’s chosen people who live as exiles in this world, he now looks back upon the initial covenant when Israel was set apart as God’s people (cf. Exod 19-24). There at Mt Sinai, God called upon Moses to set apart Israel as God’s covenant people by confirming the covenant and sprinkling the blood of the animal sacrifices on the people. Moses “took the blood and threw it on the people and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words’” (Exod 24:8).

²¹Jobes, *1 Peter*, 72.

²²For binding obligations and covenantal signs and/or oaths as characteristic of a covenant, see Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 64.

²³Jobes, *1 Peter*, 72.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.* Jobes also links the promises of the new covenant together (Ezek 36:24-28) with the

his readers by reminding them of their entrance into the new covenant community.²⁶ So, whereas God's election is by grace, he offers the promises of Christ in a new covenant through the gospel. The stipulation for entrance into the new covenant is "obedience to Jesus Christ" (1:2) or faith in receiving the gospel offer of Christ.²⁷ Those who believe the gospel receive the new covenant promise of forgiveness of sins or as Peter explains, "Sprinkling with his blood." By these words, those who respond to the gospel message in the obedience of faith are not only assured they are elect; they are assured that their sins are forgiven and that they are elect members of the new covenant community, the church.²⁸

diaspora: "When Peter refers to 'Diaspora' followed by a reference to the foreknowledge of God, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the obedience and sprinkling, he may be echoing Ezekiel's prophecy to indicate that God is fulfilling that promise of the Diaspora through the gospel of Jesus Christ" (73).

²⁶ Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 49.

²⁷ For obedience in 1:2 as faith related to conversion, see Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 55-56; Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 48-49; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 11-12. Cf. n24 in this chap. The covenantal background of initial obedience to the Mosaic covenant in Exod 24 stands behind 1 Pet 1:2c. Nevertheless, that is not to say that this initial obedience does not have implications for ongoing obedience. In fact, this is one of Peter's concern throughout the letter—Christians are to live a life of obedience as a display people that God may be glorified (see 1:13-17, 22-23; 2:1, 4-5, 11-12, 13-3:17; 4:1-11).

²⁸ I agree with Schreiner, who proposes that "the church of Jesus Christ is now the true and new Israel. It does not displace ethnic Israel but rather fulfills it, so that Jewish Christians are also members of the true Israel." Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 603. This new Israel is none other than Israel reconstituted, reunified, and restored on the basis of the promised new covenant. As I argued in chap. 5, Jesus reconstituted new covenant Israel on the foundation of the twelve apostles and began its restoration on the basis of the new covenant in his blood. See also Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 174; D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 93; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 63. To be sure, there is much debate as to the relationship between Israel and the church. For a summary explanation of the positions of continuity (covenant theology) versus discontinuity (dispensational theology), see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 82-89. Allison argues for a position of moderate discontinuity. He acknowledges that "the church and Israel are part of the one people of God" (88) but also recognizes significant dissimilarities between Israel and the church. Cf. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 683-85. With Allison, Wellum agrees that "there is only *one* people of God (elect) across time" (685) and admits that "affirming this point does *not* entail that Israel and the church are basically the same kind of community" (686). Admittedly, Allison and Wellum differ on how Israel and the church are different, Allison seeing the future Abrahamic promises of land for Israel yet to be fulfilled in the future, and Wellum seeing the Abrahamic promises

With this covenantal background, Peter encourages the “strangers and exiles” in Asia Minor by reminding them that they are the new covenant people of God. In election, the Father set his covenant love on them before the creation of the world. By his sacrificial death, the Son inaugurated a new and better covenant, not with the blood of animals but, with his own blood (cf. Heb 9:11-14). This new and better covenant promised to establish an intimate relationship between God and a people who would not only be forgiven and cleansed from sin; they would also be empowered to obey God because they would possess new hearts and God’s indwelling Spirit (cf. Ezek 36:25-27 and Jer 31:33-34). Individuals enter into this new covenant as the gospel, which testifies of the life, death, resurrection of Jesus, is preached and the Holy Spirit sets them apart for conversion. Here is the great salvation planned, accomplished, and applied by the triune God. The Father elects a people for salvation; the Son accomplishes their salvation; and the Spirit applies that salvation to all who believe the gospel. This is the covenantal context of 1 Peter, and it is this salvation that grants the new covenant people of God a special identity and status.

Likewise, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews identifies his readers with the new covenant by reminding them of the covenant initiation at Sinai (Exod 19:16-20; 20:18-21). However, he explicitly contrasts the frightful experience of Israel at Sinai (Heb 12:18-21) with the joyful experience of Christians under the new covenant. Peter O’Brien explains,

fulfilled in Christ and inherited by all believers in the new creation. Regardless of these differences, I agree with both that there is only one people of God over all time, though the church is the new people of God constituted by Christ under the new covenant in which, as Wellum notes, “The language applied to Israel as God’s covenant people is also applied to the church” (685). So then, just as Christ is the new and better Moses, he is the new and better Israel, and through faith in Christ, believers become members of the new covenant community, united by faith to the new and better Israel, as Abraham’s offspring (Gal 3:27-29) and the new “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). For the church as “the Israel of God,” see Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Identity of the ἸΣΡΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ (Israel of God) in Galatians 6:16,” *Faith and Mission* 19, no. 1 (2001): 3-18. For “the Israel of God” as ethnic Israel, see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 85-86.

In contrast, Christians have not come to a sacred mountain which can be touched physically but to the heavenly dwelling place of God, the true and eternal Mount Zion. This is no place of terror but one of joyful festivity (v.22). Believers have access to God, and they are enrolled along with angels in the heavenly assembly (v.23), while their participation in this gathering and the basis of their joyful confidence is Jesus, the new covenant that he mediates, and his sacrifice by which that covenant was inaugurated (v.24).²⁹

While God spoke to the Israelites when they came to Mount Sinai, revealing his fearful glory, God has spoken to new covenant believers through Jesus' sprinkled blood (Heb 12:24) by which they have come to Mount Zion, God's heavenly dwelling place.³⁰

Through this contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, the writer to the Hebrews distinguishes the superiority of the new covenant over the old.

The Identity of the New Covenant People of God

The apostle Peter envisions God building the church as a temple on a new foundation (1 Pet 2:4-8).³¹ Consequently, all who "come to him" (v. 4), that is Jesus the living stone, "like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house" (v. 5).³² In this way, Peter describes the new covenant people of God as those who, by faith in the resurrected (i.e., living) Christ,³³ are the living stones of a new spiritual temple (i.e., a

²⁹Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 478.

³⁰O'Brien notes, "The speaking at Mount Sinai (*a voice speaking words*, v. 19) is extensively elaborated in vv. 19-21, while in v. 24 Jesus' *sprinkled blood speaks* more loudly than Abel's." Ibid., 478-79, emphasis original.

³¹Michaels argues, "In 1 Peter, as in Ephesians, the metaphor of growth [1 Pet 2:1-3] is closely associated with the metaphor of building [1 Pet 2:4-9]. In Ephesians, both metaphors describe the church in its corporate existence (Eph 2:21; 4:12, 16), but because the image of the church as the body of Christ is not found in 1 Peter, the shift from the growth metaphor to the metaphor of building is at the same time a shift from an individual to a corporate focus. Having spoken of individual spiritual growth in vv 1-3, Peter now turns his attention to the church as a community of believers (although without using the word *ἐκκλησία*)." Michaels, *1 Peter*, 93.

³²Schreiner acknowledges, "The passive of the verb signifies that God is the one building the church (cf. Matt 16:18)." Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 106. For the connection of "living" in 2:5 to Jesus' resurrection life, see *ibid.*, 105; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1969), 88; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 149.

³³Summing up "coming to him" as coming to Jesus by faith, Jobes explains that "Peter

temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit)³⁴ that is being built on the foundation of Jesus, the living stone.³⁵ Peter makes a distinction between those who believe in Christ and those who do not. Those who “do not believe” (v. 7) are those who “disobey the word” (v. 8).³⁶ It is clear from 1 Peter that the new covenant community, which God is building into a spiritual temple, is composed only of those who believe, for it is only those who come to Jesus, the living stone, by faith (v. 4) who have the honor of inclusion in God’s spiritual house³⁷ and vindication on the last day (v. 7).³⁸ Not surprisingly, one of the characteristics of the new covenant community promised in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel is that it will be a community of regenerated believers who are indwelt by the Spirit of God. Those who do not believe are said to be those who “disobey the word, as they were destined to do” (v. 8). They were the builders who rejected the stone that became the cornerstone”

considers the tasting already to have occurred in the lives of his readers when they experienced the Lord in and after their conversion (1 Pet. 2:3). He now [in 1 Pet. 2:4] applies the idea of seeking and coming to the Lord as suggested by Ps. 33:5-6, saying that it is realized in the lives of his readers as they come to Jesus Christ and are built as living stones into God’s grand building project for redemption. For Peter, the exhortation of Ps. 33:5 LXX to ‘come to God’ is achieved through coming to Jesus Christ through faith.” Jobes, *1 Peter*, 146.

³⁴Schreiner adds that “the house is ‘spiritual’ (*pneumatikos*) because it is animated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 105.

³⁵First Pet 2:4-8; cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:19-22; Heb 3:6. For the argument that “house” in 2:5 is a referent to temple, see Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 104-5. While admitting that the term “house” can refer to dynasty, “nevertheless,” Jobes concludes, “The references to both building stones and a cornerstone in 2:4, 6 make it difficult to avoid seeing a structure as the primary image (as also Achtemeier 1996:159; Best 1969:280; McKelvey 1969:128; Schlatter 1999:58; Seland 1995: 119).” Jobes, *1 Peter*, 149-50. Yet Jobes suggests that “the double meaning of *oikos* suggests a metonymy that allows an easy shift from the temple image to the community it houses, ‘a holy priesthood’ (2:9) and ‘the people of God’ (2:10).” Ibid.

³⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 11-12. Michaels argues that in 1 Pet 1:2, “Obedience is used absolutely in the sense of a willing acceptance of the gospel” (11). So also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 55-56. As mentioned, throughout his first letter, Peter associates obedience with the reception of the gospel by faith (1:2, 14, 22) and disobedience with unbelief or rejection of the gospel (2:7; 3:1; 4:17).

³⁷Jobes argues, “For Peter, the exhortation of Ps. 33:5 LXX to ‘come to God’ is achieved through coming to Jesus Christ through faith.” Jobes, *1 Peter*, 146.

³⁸Michaels, *1 Peter*, 104; so also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 110.

(v. 7b; cf. Ps 118:22).³⁹ In fact, the cornerstone has become a stumbling block to them (v. 8; cf. Isa 8:14). It is in contradistinction to these who do not believe, who have rejected Christ, that Peter identifies the new covenant people of God as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (2:9a).

A chosen race (γένος ἐκλεκτόν). The idea of the church as God’s chosen people begins in 1 Peter 1:1. Like the reference to “exiles of the dispersion,” the reference to God’s “elect” also points back to Israel. Like Israel, God’s chosen people under the old covenant (cf. Deut 7:6-8), the Christians in Asia Minor too, the new covenant people of God, are a people related to God by divine choice (2:9). At the beginning of the letter Peter explained the ground of their election: “According to the foreknowledge of God” (1:2a); that is, like Israel (Deut 7:1-11), they are not chosen according to any intrinsic value or meritorious quality.⁴⁰ The word foreknowledge in 1:2a does not simply mean that God foresaw who would respond to his offer of salvation in faith;⁴¹ it has covenant

³⁹Carson notes, “Jesus himself quotes this verse from Ps. 118 and applies it to the rejection that he suffered (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17); Peter also refers to the passage in Acts 4:11.” D. A. Carson, *1 Peter*, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 1027-28. Paul Achtemeier notes that “while those who reject the stone in the other NT passages are the Jewish authorities, here those who reject Christ are not the Jews but the unbelieving neighbors and authorities in the Roman provinces who are engaged in a kind of social harassment of the Christian communities that has provoked this letter.” Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 161.

⁴⁰Jobes, *1 Peter*, 69. Jobes is quoting, M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 55.

⁴¹In 1 Pet 1:2, it is the Greek noun πρόγνωσιν from πρόγνωσις that is used and is found only in Acts 2:23 and 1 Pet 1:2. In Acts 2:23, the noun is used together with another word that means “that which has been purposed or planned” (βουλῆ καὶ προγνώσει). See J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 356. In Acts 2:23, foreknowledge is linked with God’s intended purpose in the death of Christ. As to the use of the noun πρόγνωσιν in 1 Pet 1:2, William Arndt and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 867, translate it as “predetermination” in relation to “God’s omniscient wisdom and intention.” They further translate 1 Pet 2:1 following the *New Revised Standard Version*: “destined by God the Father” (emphasis original).

implications.⁴² Foreknowledge indicates that God freely chose to set his covenant love on certain individuals before the creation of the world and foreordained that those whom he foreknew would come to salvation at the appointed time. And as already noted, God's initiative in unilaterally establishing a relationship is one of the clear indicators of a covenant.⁴³ Peter uses the same word when speaking of Jesus Christ being "foreknown before the foundation of the world" (1:20).⁴⁴ God the Father was in intimate relation with Jesus before the foundation of the world, and he foreordained that at the appointed time when the Son would be revealed and accomplish the salvation that was planned from all eternity. The concept of foreknowledge is not one of simple knowledge before the fact, but one of covenantal knowledge before time.

Additionally, Peter refers to the God who elected believers as their Father (1:2a).⁴⁵ That God structures the relationship between him and believers as a father/son relationship is a further indication of a covenant.⁴⁶ While it is true that God is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," (1:3a), the believer's relationship with God exists through Christ (1:3; 2:4a). As Jobes notes, "God's fatherly relationship to Christ is the theological foundation for his fatherly relationship to believers in Christ."⁴⁷ Therefore, Peter acknowledges that believers may call on God as Father (1:17), knowing that they have been purchased with the blood of Christ (1:20). Jobes notes, "With this prepositional

⁴²Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 53-54.

⁴³Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

⁴⁴Schreiner argues, "Probably the most important verse for Peter is 1 Pet 1:20, where it says that Christ 'was chosen before the creation of the world.' The term translated 'chosen' by the NIV is actually 'foreknown' (*prognōsmenou*)." Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 53.

⁴⁵Michaels, *1 Peter*, 11. Michaels admits that Peter may be linking God as Father of Jesus (cf. 1:3b), but since it is Jesus' Father who has given us birth (1:3c), "it is likely that in v 2 both relationships are already presupposed."

⁴⁶Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 64.

⁴⁷Jobes, *1 Peter*, 69.

phrase, ‘chosen according to the foreknowledge of God,’ Peter reminds his readers that the God who took the initiative in their lives has drawn them into an intimate, loving, and redemptive relationship with him.”⁴⁸

By calling Christians a “chosen race” (2:9), Peter indicates that the church, not ethnic Israel, is the new covenant people of God who participate in the promised Isaianic second exodus led by Jesus, for he applies to them the words of Isaiah 43:20: “My chosen people” (2:9a).⁴⁹ The fact that God is their Father by election, indicates the nature of the relationship (sonship). Yet this sonship is not one of genealogical or ethnic descent, for it creates an entirely new race (γένος) of people.

The background of Isaiah 43 is pertinent for an understanding of what it means to be “a chosen race” in 1 Peter 2:9a. Isaiah 43:24-25, recalls that old covenant Israel’s disobedience resulted in exile. Nevertheless, God promised to rescue and restore her, “my chosen people” (τὸ γένος μου τὸ ἐκλεκτόν, Isa 43:20, LXX)⁵⁰ in order that “that they might declare my praise” (v. 21). Race (γένος), generally referencing biological relation or ethnicity⁵¹ in verse 20, clearly refers to Abraham’s physical descendants.⁵² Thus, in the context of Isaiah 43:20-21, God promises to do something completely new for his “chosen

⁴⁸Jobs, *1 Peter*, 69.

⁴⁹Ibid. Davids argues that the church’s privileged position “is described by transferring to the church the titles of Israel in the OT (for the church is the true remnant of Israel, as the use of Israel’s titles from 1:1 on indicates), in particular the titles found in the Septuagint of Exod. 19:5-6 (cf. 23:22) and Isa. 40:20-21 (cf. Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 10:15; 14:2).” Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 90. For my arguments for the restoration of Israel as a second exodus (cf. Isa 40-55) fulfilled by Jesus on the basis of the new covenant, see chap. 5.

⁵⁰Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta: With Morphology*, electronic ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979).

⁵¹Γένος, “a relatively large group of persons regarded as being biologically related—’race, ethnic group, nation.”” Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 111. See for example Mark 7:26; Acts 7:9; 13:26; 2 Cor 11:26; Gal 1:14; Phil 3:5. Yet, γένος may also be translated as “family” or “offspring.” See Acts 4:6; 7:17; 17:28-29 (of Greeks); Rev 22:16 (of Jesus as a “descendant” of David). In a few cases in the New Testament is simply means kinds (Matt 13:47; Mark 9:29; 1 Cor 12:10, 28; 14:10).

⁵²Carson, *1 Peter*, 1030.

race,” ethnic Israel (43:19-20). Brevard Childs notes that there are two images standing behind this new thing God will do. One is “the merciful intervention of God for Israel’s sake to shatter Babylon’s power and to free the prisoners” (43:14),⁵³ and the second image “is a conscious allusion to the former deliverance from the captivity of Egypt: ‘who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out chariots and horses’ (Isa. 43:16-17).⁵⁴ Yet Israel is told to forget their prior deliverance, the first exodus, for God is “doing a new thing’ (43:19a). The new thing God promises is a second exodus which I already treated in chapter 5, arguing that the restoration of Israel occurs through Jesus, the leader of the new exodus, on the basis of the new covenant and inclusive of Gentiles (43:19-20; cf. Isa 40-55).⁵⁵

The structure of 1 Peter 2:9 reveals that the church is the people of God who are led through the second Isaianic exodus and receive the new covenant promises. I have already shown that Peter uses the Sinaitic covenantal background (Exod 24) to highlight that the church is the people with whom God initiates the new covenant in the blood of Christ (1:1-2). Now Peter uses the language of Israel as a royal priesthood and holy nation (Exod 19:4-6) to highlight that the church, like Israel, is also a royal priesthood and holy nation, but it is the people of the second exodus and the new covenant (2:9). The Old Testament background behind verse 9 looks as follows:

Isaiah 43:20—“My chosen people.”

Exodus 19:5, 6—“You shall be my treasured possession . . . and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Isaiah 43:21—“The people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.”

⁵³Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 336.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 114. The words Peter uses in 1 Pet 2:9a, “a chosen race,” are the same words used in LXX of Isa 43:20. See Jobes, *1 Peter*, 159.

Peter envelops the language formerly used of ethnic Israel in Exodus 19:4-6 in the middle of allusions of Isaiah 43:20 and 21. As noted, the context of Isaiah 43 is the promise of a new, second exodus in which God will provide water for his “chosen people” (v. 20) and his people will “declare [his] praise” (v. 21). The church, then, is the people of God created by the second exodus that is led by Jesus. It is God’s chosen race (2:9a; cf. Isa 43:10), new covenant Israel, who is “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God’s own possession” (2:9b-e; cf. Exod 19:5-6).⁵⁶ It is this new covenant people of God who are set apart “to proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (2:9f; Isa 43:21). So, while old covenant Israel was a chosen race in a genealogical sense,⁵⁷ the church, recipients of the new covenant promises, is a new race (γένος), elected by God and composed of both Jews and Gentiles on the basis of faith.⁵⁸ The emphasis of 1 Peter 1:2 is that one becomes a part of this new race (γένος) having entered into the new covenant community by faith (“obedience to Jesus Christ”) and receiving forgiveness of sin (“sprinkling with blood”). Peter’s point is that Christians have this status as they sojourn in this strange world, regardless of this world’s rejection of them.

It is not surprising, then, that Peter views the church, believing Jews and Gentiles, as an entirely different γένος. Peter calls on those who were formerly Gentiles to “keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable” (1 Pet 2:12), for as a part of a new

⁵⁶ Davids rightly notes that “the emphasis throughout [1 Pet. 2:9] is collective; the church as a corporate unity is the people, priesthood, nation, etc., rather than each Christian being such. This emphasis is typical of the NT in contrast to our far more individualistic concern in the present. The West tends to focus on individuals relating to God, while Peter (and the rest of the NT; e.g., Paul’s body-of-Christ language) was more conscious of people’s becoming part of a new corporate entity that is chosen by and that relates to God.” Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 91. Note Peter’s emphasis on how the elect of God are set apart by the Spirit to become a part of the new covenant community in 1:2.

⁵⁷ Note how ethnic Israel is referred to as a race (γένος): Acts 7:19; 13:26; 2 Cor 11:26; Gal 1:14; Phil 3:5.

⁵⁸ In Acts 17:28, 29 all of humanity is said to be the “offspring” (γένος) of God in the creational sense. Paul is speaking to Greeks in Athens at this point.

race, they are no longer Gentiles. Additionally, Peter calls on these former Gentiles to no longer do “what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry” (4:3). Because formerly they were Gentiles participating in such debauchery, the Gentiles “are surprised when you do not join them” (v. 4), says Peter.

But the idea of the church, the new covenant people of God, as an entirely new race, is not limited to 1 Peter. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul explains the union of Jew and Gentile as “one new man in place of the two, so making peace” (2:15). After describing the grace of God in the salvation the Ephesians have experienced (2:1-10), Paul reminds them of their pre-Christian past.⁵⁹ They, “the uncircumcision” (v. 11), were formerly alienated from Israel: “The circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands” (v. 11). As Gentiles, they “were separated from Christ,” the Jewish messiah, excluded from citizenship in Israel,⁶⁰ strangers to the covenants of promise,⁶¹ without hope, and without God (v. 12). In other words, before Christ, these Gentiles, notes Peter O’Brien, were “outside God’s people, Israel, and his saving purposes.”⁶² “But now in Christ Jesus” reconciliation has taken place (vv. 13-18). Consequently, believing Gentiles

⁵⁹O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 185.

⁶⁰“Commonwealth” is *πλιτεία*, the right to be a member of a sociopolitical entity, *citizenship*. Arndt and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 845, emphasis original. So also Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 356.

⁶¹O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 189, states that “here the plural *covenants* suggests a series of covenants with Abraham (Gen. 15:7-21; 17:1-21), Isaac (Gen. 26:2-5), Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15), Israel (Exod. 24:1-8), and David (2 Sam. 7), while the genitive ‘of the promise’ probably refers to the foundation promise made by God to Abraham.” Hoehner concludes that the covenants of promise are the unconditional covenants of Scripture: the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the New. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 357-59. As I have argued, the new covenant looked forward to Gentile inclusion. The context of Ephesians is one in which Gentiles were separated from ethnic Israel and its promises, but that now through Christ, they are included in those promises.

⁶²O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 187.

have been “brought near by the blood of Christ” (v. 13) on the basis of Christ who himself is

our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (vv. 14-16).

The “law of commandments and ordinances” refer to the Mosaic Law which was used by Jews to emphasize a separation between themselves and Gentiles, which Harold Hoehner suggests, “Often led to a hostility of Jews towards Gentiles and was a cause of Gentile hatred of the Jews.”⁶³ Thus, by fulfilling the Mosaic Law in his death, Jesus removed the barrier separating Jews and Gentile for the purpose of bringing them together as one.

As the one new covenant people brought together by Christ’s sacrificial death (Eph 2:13-18), Gentiles now participate in all of Israel’s privileges (vv. 19-22). Before, Gentiles were excluded from the citizenship of Israel (v. 12), but now, in Christ, they are fellow citizens with the holy one and members of the household of God (v. 19). God is building this new man on the apostolic foundation of which Jesus is the cornerstone (v. 20; cf. Matt 16:18; 1 Pet 2:4-8). This new people, this new race composed of Jew and Gentile, is being built into a holy temple in which the Spirit dwells (vv. 21-22). It is these who are chosen for sonship on the basis of the Father’s predetermined love (1 Pet 1:2).

Paul goes so far as to say that Gentile inclusion was a part of God’s eternal plan. He explains that the coming of Christ “in the fullness of time” revealed God’s eternal plan to “sum up” (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) all things in heaven and earth in Christ.⁶⁴

⁶³Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 371. For the argument for “the dividing wall of hostility” as the Mosaic Law, see *ibid.*, 368-71. Also, O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 195-200.

⁶⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 65, agree that ἀνακεφαλαιώω, means “to sum up, or recapitulate,” and interpret Eph 1:10 as “to bring everything together in Christ.” So also O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 111, who argues that “the increasing consensus among modern scholars is that the unusual verb used here derives from a word meaning the ‘main point,’ ‘sum,’ or ‘summary’ (cf. Acts 22:28; Heb. 8:1) rather than ‘head’, and that its basic meaning is ‘to bring something to a main point,’ or ‘to sum up.’” Likewise, Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 261.

Christ is the locus of the reconciliation of the cosmos (cf. Col 1:20). The first Adam rebelled against God and introduced sin, death, and chaos into the created order, but the last Adam is the one in whom all is being reconciled. “The mystery which God has graciously made known,” states O’Brien, “refers to the summing up and bringing together of the fragmented and alienated elements of the universe (‘all things’) in Christ as the focal point.”⁶⁵ And that includes reconciling formerly hostile parties, Jews and Gentiles, and making them one.

Paul describes his own ministry as having a role in this reconciliation of Jew and Gentile. He tells the Ephesians of the mystery that was formerly hidden but now revealed, that the Gentiles, through Christ, now participate in all the blessings promised to Israel; they are “fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). As a minister of this gospel that announces Gentile inclusion to the Israelite promises, Paul received the grace to preach to the Gentiles “the unsearchable” wealth of Christ (vv. 7-8). He then suggests that as he preaches this good news to Gentiles, he is bringing to light the eternal plan of the creator God that was formerly hidden but now revealed (v. 9). I take Paul to be saying that as he preaches the gospel to Gentiles, and they repent and believe and enter into the community of new covenant Israel as fellow heirs and members of the same body, he is privileged to take part in showing God’s eternal plan unfold to sum up or reconcile all things in Christ, including Jew and Gentile. The purpose of Paul’s ministry is “so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known” to the cosmic powers (v. 10). Since the language of “rulers and authorities,” along with the idea that they are in “the heavenly places” is used again in Ephesians 6:12 in reference to the demonic realm, I take Paul to be saying that by bringing formerly hostile ethnic groups, Jew and Gentile,

⁶⁵O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 112.

into one body, one chosen race, God displays the wisdom of his eternal plan to unite all things in Christ to the demonic realm.

Paul is consistent throughout his letters concerning the status of those who are incorporated into the church. On the basis of faith in Christ (Gal 3:26), having been baptized into Christ (v. 27), Paul states,

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (vv. 26, 28-29)⁶⁶

Further, Paul encourages the Corinthians to express love to all by welcoming all and deferring to their ethnic and cultural backgrounds for the sake of the advancement of the gospel. As a Christian, though a Jew by birth, Paul himself can say that “to the Jew I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews,” though he was no longer under the law: i.e., a Jew (1 Cor 9:20). The church, then, is the chosen people of God under the new covenant, a new race, composed of Jew and Gentile.

A people for His own possession. The fact that Christians are chosen by God and set apart by the Spirit “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (1 Pet 1:2) indicates that they are chosen out of the world and incorporated into the people of God on the basis of the new covenant. In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter communicates the privileged status of the church as the new covenant people of God. Just as Israel's status as God's special possession was inherent in the covenant relationship (Exod 19-24),⁶⁷ so too the church's status as God's special possession is inherent in the covenant

⁶⁶The context of Gal 3:28 is one in which Judaizers were arguing for circumcision and law observance as requirements to be a part of the people of God. Schreiner argues, “Hence, the children of Abraham in [the Judaizer's] view, were essentially Jewish. Paul moves in a radically new direction. The children of Abraham are those who belong to Christ, who is the only true offspring of Abraham (3:16). Those who are incorporated into Christ (3:26) by faith and who are clothed with Christ through baptism are his children.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 258.

⁶⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 313.

relationship, the new covenant. New covenant believers are God's people by divine choice; therefore, they belong to God. They are his special possession out of all the humanity in the world (2:9). However, they relate to God now on the basis of the new covenant initiated by Christ.

In Exodus 19:5-6, the background for 1 Peter 2:9, the image of Israel as God's "treasured possession among all peoples" (Exod 19:5) controls the identity of the people of God under the Sinaitic covenant.⁶⁸ "Royal priesthood" and "holy nation" further explain what it means for Israel to be God's special treasure.⁶⁹ Jobes argues, "In 1 Peter 2:9 the same point is made with different syntax and a shift in verb tense: 'You are . . . royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for [eis] [God's] special possession.'" ⁷⁰ While in Exodus 19:4-6, the privileged status of Israel as God's treasured possession is communicated in conditional language, in 1 Peter 2:9, the privileged status of the new covenant people of God is merely stated. They are God's special possession by virtue of God's saving initiative in the sprinkling of Jesus' blood (Jesus' sacrificial death) and having been set apart by the Spirit to receive the benefits of the new covenant (1 Pet 1:2).

Not only are the people of God under the new covenant a new race, having been chosen out of the peoples of the world, but they are God's special possession in distinction from all other peoples in the world. The people of God under the new covenant belong to God and serve him only. As Jobes rightly explains, "The holy and priestly character that the people of the covenant of Christ collectively exemplify defines what it means for them to be God's special possession in a way the rest of humanity is not."⁷¹ Therefore, I now

⁶⁸John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 51.

⁶⁹See pp. 85-90 in this diss.

⁷⁰Jobes, *1 Peter*, 162.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 163.

turn to clarify these terms that explain what it means for the church to be God's special possession.

A royal priesthood (βασιλειον ιεράτευμα). In chapter 2 I argued that the image of God reveals an adamic pattern: sonship, kingship, and priesthood within a covenant relationship for the purpose of mission. In this chapter I have already shown the covenantal context of 1 Peter, and in discussing "chosen race" I indicated that one aspect of election is relation to God as Father (sonship). The kingly and priestly aspects of the adamic pattern are present in the identity as "royal priesthood." Both "royal priesthood" and "holy nation" are from Exodus 19:6. In the LXX, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἕσσεσθέ μοι βασιλειον ιεράτευμα καὶ ἔθνος ἅγιο,⁷² looks forward to the covenant ratification when ethnic Israel will be (ἕσσεσθέ) a royal priesthood (βασιλειον ιεράτευμα) and a holy nation (ἔθνος ἅγιον). In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter declares that as a result of God's saving initiative in Christ and the Spirit's setting apart to receive the new covenant promises (1:1-2), the new covenant believers are now what Israel had hoped to be.

In chapter 3 I argued that in Exodus 19:6, the notion of "royal priesthood" contained both the concept of special privilege of access to God's presence and of serving a mediatorial function.⁷³ With special access to God's presence, Israel was to display to the surrounding nations who their God was and what it was like to live under his rule. This is, at least in part, the mediatorial function it was to serve. It seems likely that this same idea lies behind Peter's application of Exodus 19:5-6 LXX to new covenant believers: special access to God's presence and a mediatorial function before the world.

One of the unique aspects of special access to God's presence for Christians is the new covenant promise of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers (Ezek 36:27). In this

⁷²Peter seems to be quoting the LXX for the language is identical. See Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 163-64.

⁷³See pp. 95-100 in this diss.

sense, Christians are referred to God’s holy temple, both individually (1 Cor 6:19) and corporately (1 Cor 3:16-17).⁷⁴ Since there is no more physical temple where God’s presence resides, God is building this new temple on a new foundation.⁷⁵ The foundation of the new temple is Jesus himself, the living stone (1 Pet 2:4-8), but the foundation may also be described as the apostles (and New Testament prophets) who had received the revelation of God regarding Jesus as the Christ (Matt 16:18; Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14).⁷⁶ Consequently, declares Peter, all who “come to him” (1 Pet. 2:4), that is Jesus the living stone, “like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house” (v. 5).⁷⁷ The new covenant people of God, then, are those who by faith in the resurrected (i.e., living) Christ⁷⁸

⁷⁴In 1 Cor 3:16, the references to “you” are plural: οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. And while “body” is singular and the references to you are in the plural in 6:19 (ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματός), the context calls for an individual interpretation. See David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 120, 239.

⁷⁵Michaels argues, “In 1 Peter, as in Ephesians, the metaphor of growth [1 Pet. 2:1-3] is closely associated with the metaphor of building [1 Pet. 2:4-9]. In Ephesians, both metaphors describe the church in its corporate existence (Eph. 2:21; 4:12, 16), but because the image of the church as the body of Christ is not found in 1 Peter, the shift from the growth metaphor to the metaphor of building is at the same time a shift from an individual to a corporate focus. Having spoken of individual spiritual growth in vv 1-3, Peter now turns his attention to the church as a community of believers (although without using the word ἐκκλησία).” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 93.

⁷⁶There is a general evangelical aversion to the apostle Peter as the rock upon which Jesus builds his church (Matt 16:18). However, the “you” is plural in Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?,” and Peter responds as a representative of the disciples. Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Church According to the Gospels,” in *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, ed. Kendell H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 44; Carson, *Matthew*, 368. Additionally, the apostle Paul likewise references the foundation of the church as the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the corner stone (Eph 2:20).

⁷⁷Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 106. Schreiner acknowledges that “the passive of the verb signifies that God is the one building the church (cf. Matt 16:18).” For the connection of “living” in 2:5 to Jesus’ resurrection life, see *ibid.*, 105; Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 88; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 149.

⁷⁸Summing up “coming to him” as coming to Jesus by faith, Jobes explains, “Peter considers the tasting already to have occurred in the lives of his readers when they experienced the Lord in and after their conversion (1 Pet. 2:3). He now [in 1 Pet. 2:4] applies the idea of seeking and coming to the Lord as suggested by Ps. 33:5-6, saying that it is realized in the lives of his readers as they come to Jesus Christ and are built as living stones into God’s grand building project for redemption. For Peter, the exhortation of Ps. 33:5 LXX to ‘come to God’ is achieved through coming to Jesus Christ through faith.” Jobes, *1 Peter*, 146.

are the living stones of a new temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit (i.e., spiritual)⁷⁹ being built on the foundation of Jesus, the living stone (vv. 4-8).⁸⁰ It is only those who come to Jesus, the living stone, by faith (v. 4) who have the honor of inclusion in God's spiritual house⁸¹ and vindication on the last day (v. 7).⁸² Not surprisingly, this is one of the characteristics of the new covenant community promised in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel: a community of regenerated believers who are indwelt by the Spirit of God. As those indwelt by the Spirit of God, they have special access to the divine presence; they are God's temple.

But as a royal priesthood, the new covenant people of God also serve a mediatorial role. The new covenant people of God are to be a corporate priesthood with royal or kingly status; they are to be priest-kings.⁸³ "The focus here," notes Schreiner, "is on the church corporately as God's set-apart priesthood in which the emphasis is likely on believers functioning as priests."⁸⁴ Jobes acknowledges that "1 Peter is the only

⁷⁹Schreiner adds that "the house is 'spiritual' (*pneumatikos*) because it is animated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit." Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 105.

⁸⁰For the argument that "house" in 2:5 is a referent to temple, see Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 104-5. While admitting that the term "house" can refer to dynasty, "nevertheless," Jobes concludes, "The references to both building stones and a cornerstone in 2:4, 6 make it difficult to avoid seeing a structure as the primary image (as also Achtemeier 1996:159; Best 1969:280; McKelvey 1969:128; Schlatter 1999:58; Seland 1995: 119)." Jobes, *1 Peter*, 149-50. Yet Jobes suggests that "the double meaning of *oikos* suggests a metonymy that allows an easy shift from the temple image to the community it houses, 'a holy priesthood' (2:9) and 'the people of God' (2:10)." Ibid..

⁸¹Jobes argues, "For Peter, the exhortation of Ps. 33:5 LXX to 'come to God' is achieved through coming to Jesus Christ through faith." Jobes, *1 Peter*, 146.

⁸²Michaels, *1 Peter*, 104; so also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 110.

⁸³For the grammatical arguments for taking βασιλειον as adjectival rather than substantive, see Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 164-65. As Achtemeier rightly points, "that the author of 1 Peter understood it in an adjectival sense is indicated by the fact that it is one of four phrases in which each of the others has a noun that is then further modified" (164).

⁸⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 106. So also J. N. D. Kelly, who argues that Peter's "conception of the Christian life is through and through corporate, not individualistic." J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1969), 89.

epistle to give this magnificent title to the Christian community, indicating ‘the collective pedigree and role of the people of God as being royal and priestly,’”⁸⁵ though as seen next, the language of the church as a kingdom and priests to God is used again in Revelation. In 1 Peter, the mediatorial role of the church is first evidenced in 2:5, where the purpose of being built into a spiritual house is said to be in order “to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” The concept of priesthood, whether for Israel under the old covenant or for the Christians in Asia Minor in the first century, would have been understood to entail a mediatorial component.⁸⁶ Priests mediate between deity and people and between people and deity. One of the ways in which priests fulfill their mediatorial role is by offering sacrifices. In verse 5, the church as a holy priesthood also is said to offer sacrifices. Since both the physical temple and the old covenant sacrificial system have become obsolete through Jesus’ inauguration of the new covenant,⁸⁷ the holy priesthood of the new covenant is to offer “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5).

Peter does not define what the spiritual sacrifices are that the holy priesthood offer. C. E. B. Cranfield notes two different ways in which the concept of sacrifice is used in the New Testament when referring to Christians:

(i) Sometimes it is something other than the Christian’s self which is likened to the sacrifice offered—for example, his praise or his good actions (e.g., Phil 2:17f; Heb 13:15f); . . . (ii) Sometimes as [in Rom. 12:1], it is the Christian’s self which is thought of as being offered as a sacrifice.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Jobs, *1 Peter*, 160. Jobs herself assumes that *basileon* is adjectival (161).

⁸⁶The same may be said of the pagans in first-century Rome. Priesthood entails mediation between deity and people, and such mediation usually entailed offerings and sacrifices.

⁸⁷One of the main points the letter to the Hebrews makes is the obsolescence of the old covenant. Jesus is the once for all sacrifice, and the old priestly and sacrificial system has become obsolete (Heb 7-10).

⁸⁸C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 599.

A number of passages in the New Testament may help identify the spiritual sacrifices of which Peter speaks; these passages speak of the Christian's "acceptable" (εὐπρόσδεκτος) sacrifices, that is, sacrifices that are pleasing to God (Rom 12:1; Phil 4:18; Heb 13:16). Perhaps the idea closest to Peter's is expressed by Paul in Romans 12:1. There, Paul speaks of presenting "your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."⁸⁹ This falls within Cranfield's second category, and here Paul calls on the Christian to offer the entirety of his or her life to God as a sacrifice. As Doug Moo so aptly suggests, "It is not only what we can give that God demands; he demands the giver."⁹⁰ The sacrifice of the whole person is further described with three adjectives: living, holy, and acceptable. While "living" may or may not have a theological sense, the concept of holy is clear enough; it means set apart for service to God, as I have shown. Such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Moo summarizes Paul's point: "Paul is making a special point to emphasize that the sacrifice we are called on to make requires a dedication to the service of God in the harsh and often ambiguous life of this world."⁹¹

Not surprisingly, Peter is concerned in his first letter with the Christian's whole life as strangers and aliens in this world. In the context of 1 Peter 2 and coming at the heels of Peter's declaration that the new covenant people of God are to be a "royal priesthood" (v. 9), Peter calls on his readers to abstain from evil, and he urges them to "keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evil doers, they may see your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation" (v. 10). Throughout this letter Peter emphasizes the Christian's life before the pagan world. They are not to be "conformed to the passions of their former ignorance, but as he who called

⁸⁹While "acceptable" in 1 Pet 2:5 is εὐπρόσδεκτος, and in Rom 12:1 it is εὐάρεστος, both words fall within the same semantic range. See, Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 298-99.

⁹⁰Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 750.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 751.

you is holy, you also be holy” (1:14). Peter goes on to emphasize how Christians are to live before the very people who may oppress them (2:13-3:7) and how they are to suffer as Christians in order that they may be faithful witnesses in order “that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (5:11). Such a life is surely pleasing to God. But it is not only a life pleasing to God that is to be offered; the new covenant people of God are also called as a “royal priesthood” in order “that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (2:9).

The idea that the new covenant people of God are royal not only communicates honorific status, it also indicates that the church has a certain kingly authority (kingship). To be sure, it is a derived authority, but it is an authority, none the less. The apostle Paul alludes to the fact that Christians will judge angels (1 Cor 6:3). Even more explicit, though, is similar language used in Revelation of the new covenant people of God (1:6; 5:10; 20:6). In Revelation 1:6, the apostle John records that Jesus, by his blood, “has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ). It is likely that Exodus 19:6 also stands behind this reference.⁹² Yet, what both Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9 hold together (“a royal priesthood”), Revelation emphasizes distinctly as a “kingdom” and a “priesthood.”⁹³ Grant Osborne states,

They are a “kingdom” in the sense not only of inhabiting God’s kingdom (i.e., the realm within which God reigns) but also of ruling with Christ in it (i.e., royalty); in

⁹²G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 193-95; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 64-65; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 50; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 27.

⁹³The distinction is first implicit, then ultimately explicit. Rev 1:5 (βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς); 5:10 (βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς); and finally 20:6 (ἀλλ’ ἔσονται ἱερεῖς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ).

other words, the abstract “kingdom” (taking the singular noun in the corporate sense) stands also for the concrete “king.”⁹⁴

While some may argue against Christians ruling in the kingdom, George Ladd rightly points out that the “question appears to be settled in [Revelation] 5:10,”⁹⁵ where Jesus has “made them a kingdom and priest to our God and *they shall reign on the earth.*”⁹⁶

Osborne raises the point that “the concept of the saints participating in God’s rule occurs frequently (2:26, ‘authority over the nations’; 3:21, ‘sit with me on my throne’; 5:10, ‘reign on the earth’; 20:4, ‘authority to judge’; 20:6, ‘reign with him’).”⁹⁷

One evidence of the church’s ruling authority is seen in the fact that the church, like the apostles, has been granted by Jesus the authority of the keys of the kingdom (Matt 18:18). In Matthew 16:19, the keys are explicitly mentioned as being given to Peter. There, the authority of the keys is tied to the authority of binding and loosing. While the keys are not mentioned directly in Matthew 18:18, the authority to bind and to lose is. When addressing 16:19 I argued that the keys were related to the authority of opening or shutting the door of the kingdom to people and that it was related to gospel proclamation and a person’s response. In other words, the proclaimed gospel opens the door of the kingdom to some and shuts it to others, which is what the apostles did when they preached the gospel in Acts. In 18:18, the authority of the keys is explained in the context of a passage on church discipline. Specifically, the church together has the authority to treat a professing Christian who continues in unrepentant sin as a “Gentile and a tax collector,” that is, as one who is outside the believing community.⁹⁸ The church has the authority to

⁹⁴Osborne, *Revelation*, 65.

⁹⁵Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 27.

⁹⁶Emphasis added.

⁹⁷Osborne, *Revelation*, 65.

⁹⁸To the Jews, Gentiles were clearly outside the believing community. Likewise, tax collectors were considered outsiders because they cheated their own people. The context of the keys is that the sinner has refused to repent of sin; therefore, he or she is brought before the entire congregation.

exclude members from the church because they are not living according to their profession of faith in Christ; they prefer to continue in unrepentant sin. Consequently, the church decides to treat him as an outsider, for this is the will of God. They are merely acknowledging what God has already declared in heaven.

Thus, as a royal priesthood, the new covenant people of God are to serve him as priests who have special access to his presence and who serve in a mediatorial role as they display to the surrounding world who their God is and what it is like to live under his rule. In addition, they will display God's rule on the earth by participating in it now in the church. It will become evident later how this Adamic identity prepares the church for mission in the world.

A holy nation (ἔθνος ἅγιον). As I mentioned in chapter 3,⁹⁹ for Israel, becoming a nation was a fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham: "And I will make of you a great nation" (Gen 12:2). For Israel, nationhood indicated a structured socio-political nation-state with a governmental head.¹⁰⁰ As a holy nation (Exod 19:6), Israel was to be separate or distinct from the other nations. This separation was implicit in the fact that God had chosen Israel out of all the nations of the world as his personal treasure. Consequently, I argued that the concept of holiness indicates consecration to or devotion to God.¹⁰¹ Israel was to express their holiness, their distinction from the other nations, by devoting themselves to God wholeheartedly and keeping the covenant (cf. Exod 19:5; 24:3-8). As a holy nation, then, Israel was to live out the covenant as God's people on earth, displaying the rule of God as a light to the nations.

⁹⁹See pp. 89-90 for my discussion of Israel as a holy nation.

¹⁰⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 321.

¹⁰¹I provide this definition of nation on pp. 89-90. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 129, state that a nation (ἔθνος) is "the largest unit into which the people of the world are divided on the basis of their constituting a socio-political community—'nation, people.'" Cf. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 325.

Under the new covenant, the people of God are “a holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9c). They have a king and are under his government, but they are not a socio-political entity. The New Testament reveals that Jesus is the promised king from David’s line who leads a second exodus and establishes God’s rule on the earth.¹⁰² Yet, Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world. The kingdom that Jesus has inaugurated is not an earthly nation-state as was Israel’s; it is, instead, a heavenly kingdom that has broken in wherever God’s people are now (1:3-4), but it will one day be consummated at the revelation of Christ at the last time (1:5, 7). It is this already-not yet tension in which new covenant people of God exist, and it is for this reason that Peter declares Christians are strangers and aliens in a foreign land (1:1; 2:11). So, the church is to stand firm now, knowing that she will receive her future inheritance (1:4), and on that day, God himself will “restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (5:10). Peter declares, “To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (5:11). The new covenant people of God are citizens of God’s kingdom, living under his dominion, making them sojourners on this earth.

The new covenant people of God are a holy people in that they have been separated from the world and consecrated for service to God. The manner in which Peter describes salvation in his letter makes this fact clear. As Peter explains, the Spirit “sanctifies” those whom the Father has chosen for “obedience to Jesus Christ” and “for sprinkling with his blood” (1:2). The word translated “sanctification” means to set apart for or dedicate to.¹⁰³ While the idea of sanctification in the Spirit may be associated with the on-going, progressive work of the Spirit to conform Christians to the image of Christ, the context of 1:2 points to “the sanctification of the Spirit” as the Spirit’s work in conversion when, through the proclaimed gospel, the Spirit consecrates the elect to God

¹⁰²In chap. 5 I argued for Jesus’ identity as the Davidic king who leads the second exodus.

¹⁰³Arndt and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 10. ἁγιασμός, οὗ, ὁ, “personal dedication to the interests of the deity, holiness, consecration, sanctification” (emphasis original).

out of the world.¹⁰⁴ Jobes describes the work of the Spirit described by Peter in verse 2: “It is the Spirit who first stirs in the heart a reaching toward God, quickens one’s understanding of the gospel, convicts of sin, reassures of pardon, and transforms the character by his fruit of virtues.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, by the Holy Spirit that is promised as a blessing of the new covenant, God is separating for Himself a people out of the world for his service. Thus, the fact that believers corporately are a holy nation summarizes what Peter has already declared of them individually: they are the elect exiles “in the sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Pet 1:2b).¹⁰⁶ Holiness speaks of the believer’s separation from the world and consecration to God for service.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, having been chosen out of the world for service to God, they are “a people for [God’s] own possession” (2:9d), “which,” Davids notes, “indicates that they belong particularly to him (indeed he has bought them, 1:18).”¹⁰⁸

While the primary focus of “a holy nation” (v. 9c) is separation from the world and consecration to God for service (cf. 1:2b) for the purpose of witness (2:11-12), holiness carries with it moral implications as well (1:14-16). Michaels notes, “They are a ‘nation’

¹⁰⁴Michaels, *1 Peter*, 11. For “the sanctification of the Spirit” in 1 Pet 1:2 as referring to the Spirit’s work in conversion, see Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 54-55; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 70-71. So also Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 89. Though Kelly unnecessarily includes water baptism, along with faith in Christ, as the point in which the Spirit’s consecration became real in the believer. Jobes better explains the work of the Spirit when she states that “the electing purpose of God is made real by the faith of believers, but that faith is itself a completely gracious act of the Holy Spirit.” Jobes, *1 Peter*, 70.

¹⁰⁵Jobes, *1 Peter*, 70. The word “obedience” coupled with “sanctification” may also point to the Spirit’s progressive work in the believer, but Peter uses the words “obey” and “obedience” as that initial obedience in the truth of the gospel (cf. 1:2, 22) and “disobey” and “disobedience” with the rejection of the gospel (cf. 2:8; 3:1, 20; 4:17). So then the elect of God are set apart by the Holy Spirit for repentance from their sin and faith (obedience) in the gospel.

¹⁰⁶Michaels, *1 Peter*, 109.

¹⁰⁷Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 91.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 92.

set apart for God by the Spirit (cf. 1:2), to be like him in all their conduct (cf. 1:15).”¹⁰⁹ In this sense, God’s people are to be different than the world in which they reside. Hence, Peter urges those who have embraced Christ in faith to “not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance” (1:14). It is no surprise, then, that Peter continually emphasizes the conduct of the new covenant people of God throughout his letter.¹¹⁰ The church is to “keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evil doers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (2:12). As a holy nation, it is essential for the church to be different than those in the world out of which they were chosen in order to represent God and his rule faithfully on this earth.

New covenant believers are a holy nation because they belong to the heavenly kingdom and are called to display the glory of their king and the joy of his sovereign rule on this earth. Yet, while Christians are dispersed throughout the world (1 Pet 1:1), they gather together in local assemblies. Since their citizenship is in heaven, I propose that each local assembly may be considered to be an embassy of the heavenly reign. Thus, as a holy nation, Christians display the rule of God on this earth as they live life together as a church in holiness and in love.

Identity: A summary. By applying to the church the honorific titles of Exodus 19:4-6, enveloped in the promises of a second exodus in Isaiah 43:20-21, Peter indicates that the church is the people of God created by the second exodus on the basis of the new covenant promised in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The age of salvation has dawned, beginning in Jerusalem, and under the new covenant, Gentiles are now included in the covenant community. The church, then, having been chosen by God the Father, set apart for God’s holy service by the Spirit, and sprinkled with the blood of the new covenant

¹⁰⁹Dauids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 92.

¹¹⁰See 1 Pet 1:13-19, 22-23; 2:1-3, 11-12, 13-24; 3:1-7, 8-12; 4:1-11; 5:1-5, 6-9.

(1:2), is a corporate Adam with whom God relates in a father/son relationship (sonship-chosen race) and whom he has called out of the world as royal sons and daughters (kingship) in order to serve in his presence as priests to mediate his glory to the world (priesthood) by displaying life under the divine rule and proclaiming the good news of God's king (mission).

The Image of God and the Mission of the Church

The purpose of the church's election as a corporate priesthood and holy nation is that they "may proclaim the excellencies (τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε) of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (2:9d).¹¹¹ As this language comes from Isaiah 43:21 (ἀρετὰς μου δηγεῖσθαι - LXX), it forms an inclusio with "chosen race" from Isaiah 43:20. Thus, as mentioned, the identity of the new covenant people of God from Exodus 19:5-6 is placed in the context of the promised second exodus of Isaiah 40-55. Isaiah 40 begins with a cry to comfort God's people, telling Jerusalem that war has ended and her sins pardoned. One will come to prepare the way of the Lord (Isa 40:3-5), then the Lord's chosen servant will come (Isa 40:42) and will gather God's people (Isa 43:1-15), leading them in a second exodus (Isa 43:16-21). The purpose of this salvation in a second exodus is that "the people whom I formed myself, that they might declare my praise" (Isa 43:21). By placing the Exodus 19 passage in between Isaiah 43, verses 20 and 21, Peter indicates that the new covenant people of God are the people of the promised second exodus.

As those who have taken part in the second exodus led by Jesus, the new covenant people of God are tasked with a mission of verbal proclamation.¹¹² The content

¹¹¹Achtemeier, *I Peter*, 166.

¹¹²καταγγέλλω; ἐξαγγέλλω: "To announce, with focus upon the extent to which the announcement or proclamation extends—to proclaim throughout, to announce, to speak out about." Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 410.

of their proclamation is “the excellencies” (τὰς ἀρετὰς) of God. The word translated “excellencies” (ἀρετὰς) refers to “a manifestation of power characterized by excellence—‘wonderful act, powerful deed, wonderful deed.’”¹¹³ Thus, God’s new covenant people are to proclaim God’s excellencies displayed in his wonderful deed(s). Specifically, Peter links God’s excellencies with his saving work in calling them out of darkness and into “his marvelous light.”¹¹⁴ Achtemeier explains,

Such a contrast was familiar in the OT and in Judaism, where darkness symbolized ignorance and sin, and light symbolized the presence of God as well as eschatological salvation. . . . This contrast was subsequently taken into Christian tradition, where, as in Judaism, it could also be used to describe the act of conversion.¹¹⁵

Thus, one purpose of election may be described as saving a people who will engage in the proclamation of the glorious work of God. In other words, God has chosen a people for his own possession on the basis of the new covenant, in order that they may proclaim the excellencies of him and his saving work.

This mission of proclamation is in keeping with Jesus’ command to his disciples to be his “witnesses” (Acts 1:8; cf. Isa 43:10, 12).¹¹⁶ As witnesses of his life, death, and resurrection (Luke 24:48), Jesus told his disciples “that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning with Jerusalem” (v. 47; cf. Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). Peter engages in this mission when he begins proclaiming the salvation of God in Jesus Christ, calling all people to repent and believe (Acts 2). This same mission unfolds throughout Acts: the proclamation of the mighty

¹¹³Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 681.

¹¹⁴Achtemeier, *I Peter*, 166.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 166-67.

¹¹⁶Interestingly, “my witnesses” is an allusion to Isa 43:10. As discussed, Peter applies the language of Isa 43 to the church, indicating that Jesus is Israel’s redeemer and that he fulfills Isa 43 by rescuing the church out of exile. Peterson acknowledges the allusion to Isa 43:10 and suggests that “Jesus fulfills the divine function of appointing his own witnesses to the nations.” David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 111.

saving act of God in Jesus Christ, made available to all who repent and believe.

This mission of proclamation also indicates a radical discontinuity with the previous idea of mission in the Old Testament. At creation, God tasked Adam and Eve, as husband and wife, to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). As image bearers, the husband and wife were to produce godly offspring and populate the earth with the divine image, expanding the boundaries of the sacred space until the entire earth was filled with the glory of God. Of course, God’s judgment on Adam’s sin was exile from the sacred space, but God continued his plan to rule the earth through a human king and populate the earth with the divine image. As God’s instrument in a new creation, Noah was also to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). Now, however, the survival of the godly offspring would be threatened by the existence of the offspring of the serpent (Gen 3:15). In Abraham, God’s command to be fruitful and multiply becomes a promise (Gen 12:1-3) that is fulfilled in his descendants, Israel (Exod 1:7). Throughout Israel’s history, the idea of producing godly offspring is in continuity with the original creation mandate given to Adam. God’s institution of marriage is central to fulfilling this mandate (Mal 2:15). However, a shift takes place in the New Testament. The Old Testament anticipated this shift with the language of God as a faithful husband and his people as a faithless bride (Ezek 16; Hos 1-3). The apostle Paul notes that the original marriage (Gen 2:24) was established with a view to the final marriage between Jesus and his church (Eph 5:31-32; cf. Rev 19:6-10).¹¹⁷ Thus, while under the creation, Abrahamic, and Sinaitic covenants, God produced godly offspring through human marriage, under the new covenant, the imagery of the church as the bride of Christ points

¹¹⁷When quoting Gen 2:24 in Eph 5:31, Paul explains in v. 32, “This mystery is great.” I understand Paul to be saying that “this mystery” refers to the relationship between Christ and the church as a type for human marriage. Human marriage, then, is to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church. By quoting Gen 2:24 and pointing to “this mystery,” Paul seems to be indicating that this was already in God’s mind when he established the first marriage. See O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 429-35. So also N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 53-54.

in the direction that now God produces godly offspring through Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.¹¹⁸ This fact is consistent with the understanding that under the new covenant family identity is radically different. It is those who believe who are called brothers and sisters (Matt 10:37-39; 12:46-50; 19:29-30); the church is the household/family of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:5). Consequently, in the New Testament, the language of “bearing fruit and increasing” (Col 1:6) is applied to the spread of the gospel (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20).¹¹⁹

However, one cannot say that there is complete discontinuity with the idea of mission under the old covenant because underlying this proclamation mission is the mission of being a display people. In other words, the new covenant people of God are to proclaim the excellencies of God and his saving act in Jesus, and, as a “royal priesthood and holy nation,” are to display the glory of God and his kingdom. By virtue of the fact that believers have been set apart by the Holy Spirit, they are now “sojourners and exiles” in this world (1 Pet 2:11a).¹²⁰ Because of union with Christ, the church is distinct from this world; it is not of this world. Like Israel under the old covenant, the people of God under the new covenant are set apart to display God’s kingdom on this earth. Jonathan Leeman’s language of the church as an embassy of the kingdom of heaven is useful in this regard.¹²¹ The identity of the church as sojourners and exiles indicates that it exists in a hostile world, which is Peter’s emphasis throughout his first letter. The Christians in

¹¹⁸Note the references to the spiritual children of Abraham by faith (Rom 4:13-17; Gal 3:7-29; Heb 2:16).

¹¹⁹Moo acknowledges, “The language *bearing fruit and growing* is reminiscent of the Genesis creation story, where God commands human beings to ‘be fruitful and increase in number’ (Gen. 1:28; see also 1:22). . . . Paul may, then, be deliberately echoing a biblical-theological motif according to which God’s original mandate to humans finds preliminary fulfillment in the nation of Israel but ultimate fulfillment in the worldview transformation of people into the image of God by means of their incorporation into Christ, the ‘image of God.’” Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 88.

¹²⁰Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 119.

¹²¹Jonathan Leeman, *Don’t Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism* (Nashville: B & H, 2016).

Asia Minor are suffering at the hands of those who oppose the gospel. Consequently, the reality of suffering in this world simply because of identity with Christ should give pause to the idea of mission simply as redeeming culture. The sinful world in which the church exists opposes the gospel. Nevertheless, as faithful ambassadors, new covenant believers are to display the glorious life of a kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace.

Since they are set apart (holy), then, believers are no longer to pursue their former sinful passions; instead, they are to reflect the holiness of their heavenly Father (1:14-15), for believers have been “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (v. 18). The purpose of abstaining from the former “passions of the flesh” (2:11) and keeping “your conduct among the Gentiles honorable,” (v. 12a) is to provide a testimony to the pagan world, “so that when they speak evil against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12c). Here is a clear missional mandate: to display the glory of the king and life under his rule for the purpose of witness. The purpose of the Christian’s witness is to live life together as a royal priesthood and holy nation in order that unbelievers may observe their transformed lives and glorify God at final judgment.¹²² This aspect of the church’s mission is in continuity with Israel’s under the old covenant, for Israel too was to live together as a royal priesthood in order to provide a witness to the surrounding nations so that they may see that Yahweh alone is the true God. However, while Israel was a nation-state located in the geographic center of their world, the new covenant believers are scattered throughout the world in local congregations. Thus, in this sense each local congregation, to the degree that they faithfully reflect God’s glory, functions as an embassy of the heavenly kingdom.

The concept of Christians displaying the divine kingdom on the earth is not isolated to Peter’s first letter. After all, Peter is likely alluding to Jesus’ teaching related to the kingdom ethic believers are to embrace in the newly inaugurated kingdom (Matt 5-

¹²²Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 178.

7).¹²³ In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus declares that those who have entered the kingdom by faith are to be “the salt of the earth” (5:13) and “the light of the world” (5:14). As salt in this world, Jesus calls on Christians to “slow the decay” of this world as a preservative by remaining “salty,” that is, keeping the kingdom ethic.¹²⁴ As light, kingdom citizens are to shine in such a way that they provide a witness to the world that may turn unbelievers to the Father, through Christ (Matt 5:16).¹²⁵ As Carson suggests, “Thus the kingdom norms (vv. 3-12) so work out in the lives of the kingdom’s heirs as to produce the kingdom witness (vv. 13-16).”¹²⁶ This living testimony, Peter explains, must be displayed in all quarters of the Christian’s personal life: in relationships of authority and submission (1 Pet 2:13-17); between servants and masters (1 Pet 2:18-25); in marriage relationships (1 Pet 3:1-7); and even within the believing community (1 Pet 3:8-12).

Summary: The Church’s Identity and Mission

The church is not merely composed of individuals who image God; the church itself is a corporate Adam created to image God as royal sons and daughters who have been separated by the Spirit from this dark world and consecrated to God for service as priests. As a royal priesthood and holy nation, the church is to display to the surrounding world life under God’s rule as a corporate testimony of the authority of its king. As the church displays this holy witness, it attracts unbelievers who inquire and embrace Jesus the king, and become incorporated into the new covenant community.

¹²³Carson, *Matthew*, 128.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 138-39. So also France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 174-75.

¹²⁵ France rightly argues against the idea that this passage presents the universal fatherhood of God. This idea is contrary to Matthew’s use of Father as France notes, “(5:45, 48; 6:1, 9, 14, 26, 32; 7:11; cf. ‘your Father’ also in 6:4, 6, 8, 15, 18).” France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 177. The implication is that unbelievers will turn to God so as to be saved at the day of visitation, a point which Peter makes explicit in 1 Pet 2:12.

¹²⁶Carson, *Matthew*, 140.

The new covenant people of God have a mission that flows from its identity. This mission is both continuous with Israel's mission and discontinuous. Like Israel, the church is to be a display people. However, it is to display the glory of God and his rule, not as an earthly nation-state, but as Christian churches scattered throughout the world. Christians gathering together in particular locales represent embassies of the heavenly kingdom, displaying to the world what the king and his kingdom is like. However, there is a newly added mission component that Israel did not have. Israel's mission was limited to being a holy witness to the surrounding nations as a display of God's rule on the earth;¹²⁷ the gospel proclamation/outreach mission of the church is an entirely new covenant reality (cf. Isa 54:2-3).

¹²⁷Contra Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Israel's Missionary Call," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: The Notebook*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), A-25-33.

CHAPTER 7

THE IMAGE OF GOD AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD: A THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

The present cultural challenges facing the church in North America have forced it to evaluate its identity and mission. Unfortunately, laments Darrell Guder, “The typical North American response to our situation is to analyze the problem and find a solution. These solutions tend to be methodological.”¹ Though such ecclesiological proposals seem innumerable, I acknowledge that evangelicals are concerned to construct ecclesiologies that are biblically rooted, historically informed, and culturally applicable. I also recognize that at the heart of such proposals lies a genuine motivation to safeguard both the church’s identity and mission.²

My contention is that an ecclesiology that is rooted in Scripture, specifically within the biblical storyline of Scripture, will be faithful both to the church’s identity and mission. In this dissertation I argue that in a day of ecclesiological confusion among evangelicals over the nature and mission of the church, the biblical concept of the image

¹Darrell Guder suggests that these methodological approaches “arrange all the components of the church landscape differently, and many assume that the problem can be solved. Or use the best demographic or psychological or sociological insights, and one can redesign the church for success in our changing context. All it takes, it would seem, is money, talent, time, and commitment.” Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2. To observe Gruder’s point, simply consider all the books published in the late twentieth century with “church” in the title. Perhaps two of the most popular and influential such proposals have been Lynne Hybels and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), and Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

²Consider two of the most recent careful and thoughtful ecclesiological proposals by evangelicals: Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), and Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

of God interpreted in its textual, redemptive-historical, and canonical contexts reveals a common pattern for the people of God that serves as an interpretive key to understanding the identity, nature, and mission of the church.

After initially setting the context for contemporary ecclesiological questions related to the identity and mission of the church, I have advanced this argument in five parts. I began by arguing that the creation of Adam as God's image reveals God's purpose to create a people with whom he would relate in a father/son relationship (sonship) under his rule and care (covenant), in order to serve in his presence as priests (priesthood) and represent his sovereign rule on the earth by exercising dominion over the creation (kingship), extending the borders of the sacred garden space, and reproducing the divine image through godly offspring until the whole earth would be filled with the glory of God (mission). It is this pattern established at creation that I propose will begin to illumine an understanding of the nature and mission of the people of God throughout the Old and New Testaments. I then argued that after the first Adam's failure to establish the kingdom of God on the earth, the pattern of the people of God revealed in the image of God at creation continues in Abraham and his descendants, whom God raised up as another Adam through whom he would display his sovereign rule on the earth. Thus, God relates to this new people (Abraham, Israel, David) in a father/son relationship (sonship), and they will live under his rule and care (covenant) to serve as a royal priesthood (kingship and priesthood) in order to exercise dominion over the world by conquering God's enemies and taking possession of Canaan, the new Eden, in order to establish the boundaries of the sacred space of God's dwelling and display a model of the kingdom of God on earth as a light to the nations (mission). Third, I argued that while Israel's failure to display the kingdom of God on the earth ended in exile, through the prophets, God promised to restore Israel to its former glory on the basis of a new covenant initiated by a Davidic messiah. This new covenant restructures the relationship between God and people in a radically new way. Fourth, I argued that Jesus' mission as the Son of God from David's line to restore Israel

on the basis of a new covenant reveals that Jesus is the true and faithful image of God who inaugurates the kingdom of God on the earth, reconstituting Israel on the foundation of the twelve apostles and gathering a new Israel for the purpose of mission. Finally, from 1 Peter 2:9, I argued that the church is the new covenant people of God who are created by the second exodus led by Jesus and constituted on the basis of the promised new covenant in order to serve as a corporate Adam called to image God on the earth and fulfill the mission of eschatological ingathering until the return of Christ.

I am now prepared to synthesize the biblical data from my biblical-theological survey and present my proposal. I will present my theological synthesis in four parts. First, I propose a three-part working definition of the church, beginning with (1) the ontological ground from which (2) the functional roles flow toward (3) God's intended goal. Second, I interact with various definitions of the church proposed by others. Third, recognizing that the definition of mission has broadened over the last decades, I interact with four differing definitions of mission in order to distinguish them from my proposed functional role of the church that flows from my ontological definition. Fourth, I summarize my theological proposal and conclude with areas for further research.

The Image of God and the Identity of the Church

One of the implications of Adam's creation as God's image, as I have explained, is that the image is to be understood ontologically, or, as David Clines prefers, existentially.³ That is not to say Adam was a bodily representation of God, such that Adam looked like God or God looked like Adam; rather, it is to say that, just as Israel's neighbors' gods had physical representations (images/idols), so also Adam was created to be God's physical representative on the earth.⁴ As such, Adam was created as God's son

³D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 101.

⁴J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 25, acknowledges a "virtual consensus" among Old Testament scholars on the acceptance that the semantic range of "image" (צלם) includes idol— physical, bodily representation. Middleton bases

to be a royal priest. It is because of who Adam *was*, as priest-king, that he was to *function* as God's viceregent over creation. Adam's *function*, dominion, flows out of his *ontology*, a priest-king. Beginning with Adam, then, this biblical concept of the image of God reveals a pattern for the people of God that helps to illuminate the identity and nature of the people of God throughout redemptive history. The pattern established in Adam as God's image is one of sonship, kingship, and priesthood, structured in a covenant relationship initiated by God for the purpose of mission. It is this pattern that, as God's image, humanity retains throughout redemptive history with various aspects of continuity and discontinuity. From this pattern, I propose a three-part working definition of the church.

The Church: A Three-Part Working Definition

The church is the new covenant people of God, a community of regenerate believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, whose sins have been forgiven by God on the basis of the last Adam's faithful work. The church, then, is the people of God, constituted by Jesus Christ through the new covenant. By virtue of relation to Christ, the church is composed of those individuals who have been regenerated by the work of the Spirit, and who are being renewed in the divine image. Yet, the church is a corporate Adam, constituted to glorify God through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as a royal priesthood and holy nation (1 Pet 2:9). Therefore, I propose that the church is (1) the people of God, constituted by Jesus Christ on the basis of the new covenant (covenant) to be royal (kingship) sons and daughters (sonship) with whom God dwells, by his Spirit (priesthood). Individuals are incorporated into this new covenant community through water baptism upon repentance from sin and faith in Christ. Furthermore, the church is (2) called to display the divine rule on the earth (mission-A) and proclaim the gospel of

this scholarly consensus on two factors: exegesis of Gen 1:1-2:3, and "attention to the ancient Near Eastern background of the *imago Dei*" (26, emphasis original).

the kingdom to the world (mission-B), to the end (3) that God would be glorified as unbelieving peoples repent and believe, thereby entering the kingdom and multiplying the divine image on the earth.

Definitions of the church. Wayne Grudem defines the church as “the community of all true believers for all time.”⁵ Similarly, John Frame maintains that “essentially the church is the people of God in all ages.”⁶ Interestingly, while Grudem comes from a Baptist tradition and Frame a Presbyterian, they pose virtually the same initial definition. Both Grudem’s and Frame’s definitions rightly see the church as a people. Additionally, they both rightly identify that throughout redemptive history there is only one people of God.⁷ The problem with both definitions, however, is that they fail to account for the new covenant realities that bring clear changes to the relational structure between God and people. I have argued that the church is a corporate Adam constituted under the new covenant by Christ. The new covenant promises realities to its participants that are radically distinct from the old covenant, namely, a regenerate heart, the indwelling of the Spirit, and forgiveness of sins. The new covenant is clearly a new reality, and as Wellum notes, “The church is the community of the *new* covenant.”⁸

Unlike Grudem, however, Frame believes that the church, like Israel, is

⁵Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 853.

⁶John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 1019.

⁷Except for classic and revised dispensationalism, there is broad consensus on the fact that there is only one people of God. See Bruce A. Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 68-97. Cf. Stephen J. Wellum, “Beyond Mere Ecclesiology,” in *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, ed. Kendell H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 195.

⁸Wellum, “Beyond Mere Ecclesiology,” 194, emphasis original.

composed of a mixed community of believers and unbelievers.⁹ This idea leads to the notion of a visible church composed of the elect and non-elect and an invisible church, which is the true church known only to God. While Frame and Grudem both agree on the notion of a visible/invisible church distinction,¹⁰ for Grudem that mixture occurs unintentionally. For Frame, the mixture of elect and non-elect occurs intentionally. That is, Frame's view of the church as including believers and their children naturally leads to a mixed community. This is the confessional standard of the Presbyterian Church of America to which Frame belongs. On the article on the church, *The Westminster Confession* states that the universal church which consists of "the whole number of the elect" is invisible; whereas the visible church "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children."¹¹ I do not find the categories of visible and invisible church defined in this way to be helpful, for they confuse the composition of the church by including in its definition those whom Jesus does not, the unregenerate.

The New Hampshire Confession, 1833 is clearer on this point: "[We believe] that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel."¹² This Baptist confession acknowledges the new covenant realities. By linking faith with the gospel and calling the church a congregation of baptized believers, *The New Hampshire Confession* acknowledges the new covenant reality of regenerate membership, which can only come about through the promises of the new covenant.

Likewise, Gregg Allison's definition of the church is even more helpful with

⁹Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1019.

¹⁰Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1019. Cf. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 855.

¹¹*The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian, 2001), 106-7. Article 25:1, 2.

¹²*The New Hampshire Confession of Faith 1833*, in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Chicago: Judson, 1959), 365.

its additional detail: “The church is the people of God who have been saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and have been incorporated into his body through baptism with the Holy Spirit.”¹³ Allison recognizes the newness of the new covenant as applied to the new covenant community. Thus, the church is the new covenant community composed of those who have been incorporated into the body of Christ. In union with Christ, the church has a special status. As Jesus is the true image of God, the church is being conformed to that image (royal sons and daughters). By saying that the church is composed of those incorporated through baptism with the Holy Spirit, Allison acknowledges that new covenant believers are baptized with and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This corresponds with my understanding of priesthood as, at least in part, it includes special access to God’s presence and indwelling. Though Christ is exalted to the right hand of the Father in heaven, he now dwells with new covenant believers by his Spirit, for the Spirit is “the guarantee of our inheritance” (Eph 1:14). Christians long for the day when they will dwell in God’s presence for ever (Rev 21:3).

Thus, the church is (1) a corporate Adam, constituted by Jesus Christ under the new covenant (covenant) as royal sons and daughters (kingship/sonship) with whom God promises to dwell (priesthood). From this ontology flows the church’s function or mission: (2) in order to display the divine rule on the earth (mission-A) and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the world (mission-B) to the end (3) that God would be glorified as unbelieving peoples repent and believe, thereby entering the kingdom and multiplying the divine image on the earth. Now consider part (2) of the definition, which leads to the mission of the church.

What Is the Mission of the Church?

While disagreements among evangelicals related to the identity and nature of the church are more motivated by intramural hermeneutical debates and preunderstandings

¹³Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 29.

rooted in systems of theology, evangelical debates related to the mission of the church are motivated by a genuine desire by evangelicals of all stripes to reach non-Christians in the present cultural climate. Keith Ferdinando has helpfully explained the recent broadening of the definition of mission beginning with the broadest definition to the narrowest. However, by working from the narrowest definition of mission to the broadest, one is better able to see the how the gradual broadening of the definition of mission over time has clouded present evangelical understanding of the mission of the church.¹⁴

Disciple-Making as Mission

The narrowest definition of mission in Ferdinando's arrangement is "the making of disciples as the essential and exclusive content of mission."¹⁵ Until recently, he suggests, this was the predominant understanding of mission.¹⁶ Ferdinando rightly warns that "in view of some evangelistic strategies, seeing this approach in terms of evangelism risks serious distortion, as if what is in view is just the making of converts—the eliciting of decisions or commitments."¹⁷ In response to the potential truncation of mission as disciple-making to mere "decision-making," Ferdinando proposes,

¹⁴David Bosch admits, "Since the 1950s there has been a remarkable escalation in the use of the word 'mission' among Christians. This went hand in hand with a significant broadening of the concept, at least in certain circles." David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniv. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), introduction, Kindle.

¹⁵Regarding this view and social concern, Ferdinando warns that "it need in no way imply that Christian engagement with the world in general ([his] second circle) and social concern ([his] third circle), are invalid." Keith Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," *Themelios* 33, no. 1 (2008): 54. Ferdinando explains his four definitions utilizing concentric circles with the inner circle representing the most narrow definitions and going out from there to the most broad: *mission dei*.

¹⁶Ibid. Bosch argues that such an understanding of missions (i.e., "(a) propagation of the faith, (b) expansion of the reign of God, (c) conversion of the heathen, and (d) the founding of new churches") is fairly recent. Rather, he suggests, "Until the sixteenth century the term [mission] was used exclusively with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, that is, of the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son." Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, introduction. Yet, there are those who are seeking to recover the concept of *mission dei* for today. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 62-65.

¹⁷For all intents and purposes, Southern Baptists place a strong emphasis on the number of baptisms recorded as a gage for evangelism/mission faithfulness. See Ed Stetzer, "SBC 2011 Statistical

The preferred term here—rather than evangelism—would be discipling, or making disciples, which signifies the process not only of bringing people to faith but of fostering their spiritual growth in terms of relationship with God and his people, and of obedience in all areas of life: “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 20:19).¹⁸

This narrow definition of mission as disciple-making has seen a recent resurgence as a number of evangelicals have sought to recover it against other recent broadening definitions of mission.¹⁹

I agree that disciple-making is a better concept than mere evangelism, but the church has a two-fold mission that cannot be separated. As a royal priesthood and holy nation, the church is a display people, showing the world what God is like and what it is like to live under his rule. Consequently, mission must also include the attractational component of mission of a royal priesthood and holy nation. Thus, to mission as disciple-making, I would add that such disciple-making must take place in a context where the church as the new covenant people of God is faithfully displaying the life of the kingdom. The church has a responsibility to show the world now what life should be like under King Jesus. As Peter writes, the purpose for which God separated the new covenant people of God and made them his possession as a royal priesthood and holy nation was to proclaim his excellencies (1 Pet 2:9) *and* to maintain a holy conduct to the watching world so that “they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (2:12). Peter then explains, in part, what such conduct entails: submission to governing authorities (2:13-17),

Realities—Facts Are Our Friends But These Are Not Very Friendly Facts,” *The Exchange* (blog), June 13, 2012, accessed February 09, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/june/sbc-2011-statistical-realities--facts-are-our-friends-but.html?paging=off>. For an example of how decisions are reported as successful evangelism, see Tiffany Jothen, “5 Million Decisions for Christ: BGEA’s Online Ministry Hits Milestone,” Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, November 13, 2014, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://billygraham.org/story/5-million-decisions-for-christ-internet-evangelism-nears-ministry-milestone>.

¹⁸Ferdinando, “Mission: A Problem of Definition,” 54.

¹⁹For example, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). From a popular perspective, see Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); David VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

submission of servants to masters (2:18-25), submission of wives to unbelieving husbands (3:1-6). Peter also urges the church to live together in love and unity (3:8), serving one another with the gifts God has given them (4:7-11). They are not to repay evil for evil but instead, they are to bless their persecutors (3:9-17) and prepare themselves to suffer faithfully (4:1). But such conduct as a display people includes abstaining from the evils of this world (2:1; 4:2-6).

However, Peter is not alone in urging Christians to provide a faithful witness in the world that includes faithful living. The apostle Paul speaks of how he ministered the gospel to the Thessalonians, describing his love for them as that of a nursing mother: “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thess 2:8). The holding together of gospel proclamation with a holy life and a Christian love that is evidenced in good deeds is evident from the very beginning of the life of the church. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus not only commanded his followers to go out to the nations baptizing; he also commanded them to teach those who respond to the gospel and are baptized, that is incorporated into the church, everything he commanded. The early church responded to the gospel, was baptized, and devoted itself to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42). But their witness did not end there: “They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” (2:45). As a result of their faithful witness, they gained “favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (2:47). In Galatians 6:10, the apostle Paul well summarizes the church’s responsibilities as a display people in this world: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” The good that Christians do for others as they may have opportunity is all that God may be glorified both now and “on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12).

Social Action as Mission

Another approach to missions broadens the definition of mission as disciple-making to include “social action.”²⁰ Ferdinando explains that “while social action is rarely given precise definition, it refers to the alleviation of human suffering and the elimination of injustice, exploitation, and deprivation.”²¹ Throughout the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, evangelicals were likely to be involved in social action in addition to pursuing disciple-making as the mission of the church.²²

However, according to Ferdinando,

In the early part of the twentieth century, various factors produced a retreat from the social engagement that characterized evangelicalism through the nineteenth century, including evangelical reactions against liberalism and the “social gospel,” and a profound pessimism generated by the carnage of the First World War and dispensational theology.²³

By the mid to late twentieth century, Ferdinando notes that evangelicals had once again regained “a renewed awareness of the social dimensions of discipleship.” He writes that this renewed awareness is “expressed in [in such documents as] the Wheaton Declaration (1966) which urged ‘all evangelicals to stand openly and firmly for racial equality, human freedom, and all forms of social justice throughout the world.’”²⁴ To be sure, this new social awareness did not replace evangelism. On the contrary, those who

²⁰Ferdinando, “Mission: A Problem of Definition,” 52.

²¹Ibid.

²²As an example of a nineteenth-century evangelical who enthusiastically embraced evangelism/disciple-making, while also caring for the poor and weak, consider Charles Spurgeon. See Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1985), 125-30. Consider also William Wilberforce, who, before Spurgeon, fought to abolish the slave trade in England. See John Wolfe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 193-227.

²³Ferdinando, “Mission: A Problem of Definition,” 52.

²⁴Ibid., 52-53.

embraced this new social awareness emphasized that evangelism should not be separated from social justice.²⁵

Perhaps the most well-known advocate of the definition of mission as disciple-making *and* social action was John Stott.²⁶ Stott argued against two extremes in mission. At one end is “the unbiblical concept of mission as evangelism” and at the other “the standard ecumenical view point.”²⁷ However, it is important to appreciate that Stott was not against evangelism; he was against the definition of mission as merely evangelism. He sought to find a better way between the two extremes: “A more balanced and more biblical way of defining the mission of the church, and of relating to one another the evangelistic and social responsibilities of the people of God.”²⁸ Stott argued that while initially he espoused a definition of mission as only disciple-making, he later became convinced “that not only the consequences of the [Great] Commission but the actual Commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are guilty of distorting the words of Jesus.”²⁹

Stott and others who seek to promote Christian social action are to be commended. As a royal priesthood and holy nation, the church is to do good to all as it has opportunity, beginning with its own members (Gal 6:10). The church should concern itself with the suffering, the weak and helpless, and those who do not have a public voice; however, three clarifications need to be considered. First, Scripture prioritizes the church caring for those within the covenant community. This priority is evident in both the Old

²⁵Ferdinando, “Mission: A Problem of Definition,” 53.

²⁶John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, IVP Classics (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁷*Ibid.*, loc. “Two Extreme Views.”

²⁸*Ibid.*, loc. “A Biblical Synthesis?”

²⁹*Ibid.*

Testament (Lev 25:8-55) and the New (Matt 25:31-46).³⁰ Such a priority is in keeping with being a display people to the surrounding world, showing the world how God cares for his people and how the people of God care for one another. Christians are not to neglect the alleviation of suffering and injustice in society at large, and they are to love neighbor as opportunities arise, but the priority of Scripture is the care for one another in the church. This was the example of the early church (Acts 2-4), and this is the testimony the church ought to provide as a display people—God cares for his own through his people.

Second, assuming Ferdinando’s brief definition of social action as “the alleviation of human suffering and the elimination of injustice, exploitation, and deprivation,”³¹ the church should identify and prioritize how to alleviate human suffering and injustice, and it should distinguish what the church can and should do as the church and what the church can and should do as individual Christians in the world. Social action means many things to many people, and each Christian may be tempted to favor seeking

³⁰Lev 25:8-55 and Matt 25:31-46 are not the only texts which emphasize the priority of the church to care for its own, but these important texts highlight such an emphasis. For an explanation of the year of Jubilee and its implications for a holistic mission (evangelism and social action), see Wright, *The Mission of God*, 289-323. Wright argues that the Jubilee is a model of restoration that has implications for a holistic mission of the church today. Matt 25:31-46 is important in that it is often used to make a case for Christian social action; it is used to justify general Christian care for the hungry, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned, for Jesus declares, “As you [cared for] one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (v. 40). Those who neglect such care (v. 45) will receive eternal condemnation (v. 46). Yet, the key to understanding this passage lies in the identification of “the least of these my brothers.” Hagner rightly suggests, “The use of τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου, ‘my brothers,’ makes it almost certain that the statement refers not to human beings in general but rather to brothers and sisters of the Christian community.” Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), 744. Added to this is the fact that in Matthew Jesus refers only to his disciples as “my brothers” (cf. 12:48-49; 28:10). And then, Matt 10:40-42 contains some similarities to the Matt 25 passage. After sending the disciples out on the mission to the Jews, Jesus speaks of the reward of those who receive them. Whoever receives the disciples receives Jesus (v. 40). “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is my disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward” (v. 42). The parallels between Matt 10 and 25 are striking. In Matt 10, the disciples are “these little ones” (μικρῶν). In fact, this is one of the ways in which Jesus refers to the disciples (cf. 18:6, 10, 14). While not the same as “the least of these” (τῶν ἐλαχίστων), it is similar in that it is its superlative. See DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 162-65, who attempt to correct misunderstanding over who “the least of these” are. For the various opinions regarding interpretation of the least of these, see Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 744-45.

³¹Ferdinando, “Mission: A Problem of Definition,” 52.

to alleviate one form of suffering or injustice to the neglect of another, perhaps even more important, social justice issue. For example, it is right to seek an end to human trafficking; it is compassionate to feed the hungry and seek to eradicate poverty; it is admirable to place orphans with good, even Christian, families; it is helpful to bring potable water to villagers in West Africa. All these actions are noble and commendable. And yet, some human suffering and injustice may be considered too controversial or too political to address. Consider the suffering of unborn children or the inhumane treatment of those at the end of life. Think of the injustice of racism and ethnic discrimination, a topic that may not be welcome in some churches in the Southern United States. Until recently, those who suffered from mental health issues had been relegated to suffer alone because the topic of mental illness remained unmentionable in public, including the church. It is not just the United States that faces the realities of those fleeing oppressive governments or religious terrorists who, either by direct or indirect action, have caused serious refugee and immigration issues as those suffering under such regimes flee for the safety of their own lives. There is much suffering in the world. The church must consider how to address the greatest sufferings and injustices for the good of its neighbors and for the sake of the gospel in spite of the fact that such issues may not be politically correct or may cause Christians to be mocked, discriminated against, shamed, and even imprisoned. Nevertheless, the church must guide its membership to distinguish what the church can do as church and what its members can do. Some of the most difficult social issues of the day may be better addressed by individual Christians either in public service or in private industry.

Third, the church must beware that in its effort to alleviate temporal human suffering and injustice that it does not neglect the disciple-making mission that offers alleviation of eternal suffering. In the present cultural climate in the West, it is easier to engage in social action than it is to proclaim the exclusivity of Christ and call unbelievers to repent from their sin and believe the gospel. History has shown how an understanding

of mission that sought to hold together disciple-making and social action devolved into a “social gospel.”³² The church is a royal priesthood and holy nation that is to display the character and nature of God on this earth, which includes displaying God’s goodness in good deeds (Matt 5:13-16; cf. 1 Pet 2:11-12). However, that display mission is incomplete apart from the ministry of gospel proclamation: announcing to all who are broken, hurt, oppressed, and abused, that king Jesus has come to end all injustice and will return again to consummate a kingdom of righteousness and justice and peace (Luke 4:18-19).³³ All who repent and believe in Jesus may enter the kingdom and become a part of the new covenant community now, praying for and waiting for the kingdom to come (Matt 6:10). In addition, I would argue that while it is important to hold together disciple-making and social action in the conception of mission, they are not equal partners. The proclamation mission must take priority because apart from explicit faith in Christ, there is no salvation. However, that does not free the church from concern for human suffering and injustice. As a royal priesthood the church mediates God’s blessings to the world, and as a holy nation, the church displays God’s love to the world and expresses God’s love to its neighbors (Matt 22:34-40). Such love should move Christians to want to alleviate human suffering, both temporally and eternally, but when viewed from the perspective of eternity, the priority of alleviating eternal suffering becomes obvious.

³²Ferdinando, “Mission: A Problem of Definition,” 52.

³³In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus takes up the language of the year of Jubilee and announces that the age of salvation has arrived in his coming: i.e., the year of Jubilee. Christopher Wright confirms scholarly agreement on the connection of Luke 4:18-19 with the Jubilee of Lev 25. Luke 4:18-19 cites Isa 61:1, 2, which, as Wright notes, “Was strongly influenced by Jubilee concepts.” Nevertheless, Wright uses this passage to highlight more of a holistic mission embedded in Jesus’ announcement. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 301. For an interpretation of Luke 4:18-19 that does not neglect holistic mission but emphasizes that this passage relates to what Jesus as the Messiah was anointed to do, see Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 404-10. Bock summarizes, “the citation in Luke, then, is not a call to fulfill literally the legal requirement of Jubilee. Rather, the passage takes that picture of freedom to show what God is doing spiritually and physically through the commissioned agent, Jesus. Jubilee, by analogy, becomes a picture of total forgiveness and salvation, just as it was in its prophetic usage in Isa. 61” (410).

The Cultural Mandate as Mission

Reacting against evangelicals' dichotomy between the secular and religious realms,³⁴ Kuyperian neo-Calvinists³⁵ or transformationists³⁶ argue for a definition of mission that is closely tied to, if not equated with, the cultural mandate (Gen 1:26-28).³⁷ "The church's mission, then," proposes Ferdinando, "encompasses everything that Jesus sends his people to do into the world to do."³⁸ Ferdinando writes that mission is "the *church's* action in the world."³⁹ Keller summarizes this model, saying that it "engages culture largely through an emphasis on Christians pursuing their vocations from a Christian worldview and thereby changing culture."⁴⁰ McIlhenny suggests that Kuyperian neo-Calvinism "offers four critical features in what is often referred to as the grace-restores-nature scheme: the cultural mandate, sphere sovereignty, common grace, and the antithesis."⁴¹ The antithesis, as McIlhenny explains it, is the idea that "the world is divided between two diametrically opposed belief . . . systems that inform and interpret every aspect of life."⁴² However, God is sovereign over the entire universe; this is sphere

³⁴Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," 51.

³⁵Ryan McIlhenny, "A Third-Way Reformed Approach to Christ and Culture: Appropriating Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism and The Two Kingdoms Perspective," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 20 (2009): 76, 80-83, refers to this perspective as Kuyperian neo-Calvinism. Keller notes that the transformationists are "heavily indebted to the work and thought of the Dutch theologian and political leader Abraham Kuyper." Keller, *Center Church*, 196.

³⁶Keller, *Center Church*, 195-201. Keller refers to neo-Calvinists as "transformationists."

³⁷Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," 50.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*, emphasis original.

⁴⁰Keller, *Center Church*, 195.

⁴¹McIlhenny, "A Third-Way Reformed Approach," 80-81. For an introduction to Kuyperian neo-Calvinism, see Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴²McIlhenny, "A Third-Way Reformed Approach," 81.

sovereignty. Thus, God rules over all creation, including unbelievers, though necessarily through common grace, for he deals with believers with saving grace. But neo-Calvinists, notes McIlhenny, “Dispute the idea that the goal of redemption is limited to the task of a particular sphere or institution (viz., the church).”⁴³ After all, God, through Christ, is reconciling the whole universe to himself (Col 1:20). McIlhenny argues, therefore, that “drawing on the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28, KNC [Kuyperian neo-Calvinism] promotes the idea that Christians have a responsibility to renew a fallen world through cultural activity.”⁴⁴

Because the neo-Calvinist perspective views God’s mission as the reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth, and since they believe Christians are called to join God on his mission, the clear implication is that the definition of mission must be broadened to include the reconciliation of creation as well as human beings. Ferdinando describes the implication:

The implication must be that mission would embrace all areas of human life and work—every realm in which God’s people live for the glory of their Creator by consciously exercising stewardship over his Creation—including commerce and government, industry and agriculture, service and education, and indeed with no legitimate sphere excluded.⁴⁵

Of course, the New Testament reminds the new covenant people of God that it is to do everything, in word or deed, in the name of Christ and with thanksgiving (Col 3:17). Even eating and drinking is to be done to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). When missions is viewed as the cultural mandate, then every Christian, as a human fulfilling the mandate, has missional purpose for everything they do: vocation, recreation, procreation, creating culture, etc. Additionally, one benefit of the definition of mission as cultural mandate is that it permits all Christians to participate in mission through the daily activities

⁴³McIlhenny, “A Third-Way Reformed Approach,” 84.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ferdinando, “Mission: A Problem of Definition,” 51.

of life, and when the cultural mandate is connected directly to the human's responsibility for the creation, it leads Christians toward faithful environmental stewardship. Mission as the cultural mandate also provides two important theological contributions. First, it removes the dividing wall between what may be termed the "sacred" and the "secular," for God is sovereign over the entire universe. Therefore, Christians may glorify God in all vocations: business, media, politics, economics, the academy, marriage, parenthood, art, entertainment, etc. Second, it provides a framework for worldview thinking: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

And yet, one inherent danger of interpreting the cultural mandate along these lines is that mission may not necessarily be a Christian task. Nancy Pearcey admits as much when she suggests,

Even unbelievers carry out the Cultural Mandate: They "multiply and fill the earth"—which is to say, they get married, raise families, start schools, run businesses. And they "cultivate the earth"—they fix cars, write books, study nature, invent new gadgets.⁴⁶

If both Christians and non-Christians may be engaged in the same God-mandated missional tasks, how is the church any different than the world? In what sense is the church a royal priesthood and holy nation?

In addition, transformationists are too optimistic regarding human nature and institutions. Tim Keller suggests, "Transformationism tends to be triumphalistic, self-righteous, and overconfident in its ability to both understand God's will for society and bring it about."⁴⁷ Adam's sin has truly affected every aspect of creation.

Transformationists acknowledge as much in their emphasis on the need for restoration. However, while it is true that God is in Christ reconciling all things to himself (Col 1:20), there is the present reality that the creation is groaning awaiting the revelation of the sons

⁴⁶Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 48.

⁴⁷Keller, *Center Church*, 211.

of God because when Adam sinned it too was subjected to futility (Rom 8:18-20). The reason the creation eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God is because it is at that time that it will “be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the sons of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). That is not to say that Christians should not fulfill the cultural mandate by building culture/civilization, which is not limited to “Christian activity.” However, Christians must humbly admit that the mission mandated to the new covenant people of God is not to change the world. That does not mean God has not used individuals throughout history, both believers and unbelievers, to change the world. Yet, history provides a humbling perspective by exposing the fact that some of the cultural changes brought about by individuals were short-lived.

However, that does not mean Christians are simply to neglect involvement in the world with a view to influence and change. Christians may be sojourners and exiles on this earth because their citizenship is in heaven, but for now, as a royal priesthood and holy nation, they are to live faithfully in this world, displaying what it is like to live under God’s rule. Therefore, individual Christians should be encouraged to pursue and find purpose in a variety of vocations: business, law, medicine, service industries, academia, sports, entertainment, art, literature, journalism, politics, marriage, parenthood, etc. For too long, the church has neglected to acknowledge the purposeful place of work in the Christians’ life and has, either intentionally or unintentionally, communicated that faithful Christians should pursue fulltime ministry as a vocation. Rather than complain about the movie industry, Christians should encourage faithful Christians to train for and enter into that industry, and Christians should be encouraged to fulfill that vocation to the glory of God by faithful diligence and ethical practices. Rather than complain about governing officials, Christians should encourage faithful Christians to pursue public office. Christians may undertake any number of vocations that are pleasing to God and provide a platform for influence.

Nevertheless, Christians must understand the original context of the creation

mandate to Adam (Gen 1:28). Adam was given the mandate as God's viceregent in the sacred space of God's presence. As a priest-king, Adam was to exercise dominion over the creation and serve as a priest in God's presence, keeping and guarding the sacred space (Gen 2:15).⁴⁸ As God's image, the creation mandate tasked Adam with expanding the borders of the garden space and filling it with the divine image through procreation.⁴⁹ Adam failed in this mission, but the biblical storyline points to Jesus as the Last Adam who fulfills the original creation mandate to establish God's kingdom on the earth. Jesus inaugurated God's rule on the earth, and he is gathering for God a line of godly offspring, thus fulfilling the original Adamic mandate. By his Spirit, Jesus is renewing the divine image in individual believers and causing them to be a corporate Adam through which he continues the eschatological ingathering of reconstituted and restored Israel.

Transformationists take the cultural mandate (Gen 1:28) in its original form and fail to account for the discontinuities that exist whenever it was restated to Noah (Gen 9:1-7). After the fall, work is now arduous, procreation painful (Gen 3:16-19). As for Noah, the next Adam, he will rule over an animal creation that will fear him and which he will eat (Gen 9:2-3). After Jesus, the last Adam, the church now participates in Jesus' eschatological ingathering through gospel proclamation by calling unbelieving people to repent from their sins and believe the gospel. It is through this proclamation ministry that Jesus is producing godly offspring and filling the earth with the divine image.

***Missio Dei* as Mission**

The most broad definition of mission is *missio Dei*. Ferdinando explains, "In its literal sense the Latin expression simply draws attention to the fact that all Christian

⁴⁸See pp. 36-38 for my argument for Adam as a priest in God's presence.

⁴⁹See pp. 38-40.

mission is God's: he alone initiates, empowers, directs, and blesses all true mission."⁵⁰ Such a view emphasizes the fact that God is the one on mission, and the church participates in his mission. Christopher Wright summarizes the idea of *missio Dei* when he suggests that "it is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world."⁵¹ Wright acknowledges the history of the terminology and admits to its abuses; yet, he argues, "The expression can be retained as expressing a major and vital biblical truth."⁵² By retaining the terminology of *missio Dei*, Wright seeks to communicate that "the God revealed in the Scriptures is personal, purposeful and goal-oriented."⁵³ As with the transformationist definition of mission, Wright proposes that God's purposes may be seen in the framework of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration, or in his words, future hope.⁵⁴ For Wright, such a definition of mission permits him to interpret all of Scripture through the lens of a missional hermeneutic.⁵⁵

The problem, notes Ferdinando, is when the concept of *missio Dei* is stretched to include "everything God wills to do in the world, whether through the church or outside it."⁵⁶ Consequently, mission may potentially include any good work that any one, religious or irreligious, may do in the world.⁵⁷ If it is the case that believers and unbelievers may participate in the *missio Dei*, once again, it raises the question of the distinction of the

⁵⁰Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," 49.

⁵¹Wright, *The Mission of God*, 62.

⁵²Ibid., 63.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., 64.

⁵⁵Ibid., 17-18, 64, 68-69.

⁵⁶Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," 49.

⁵⁷Ibid.

people of God as a royal priesthood and holy nation, and it raises the question of the place of the church in the world for the purpose of mission. More importantly, however, what are the implications for the doctrine of salvation if mission is simply all that God is doing in the world? Is the church's mission, then, "identical to God's mission?"⁵⁸ Does God save persons apart from explicit faith in Christ and repentance from sin? Does the church need to call unbelievers to repent and believe? How does one enter the kingdom of God? Ferdinando rightly warns,

There is indeed a distinction between history and salvation history, between world and church, between God's providential rule over the earth and his redemptive intervention within it: the notion of *missio Dei* as used by some collapses these pivotal distinctions, and thereby not only loses a word but also the very distinctiveness of Gods' work in Christ.⁵⁹

These are just some of the influences upon the church as it considers the mission for which it was constituted as a corporate image.

The Image of God and the Mission of the Church

Specifically, I have argued that as a corporate Adam, Israel was to display the rule of God on the earth as it dwelt in God's presence as a distinct nation, set apart to serve God and mediate his presence to the world. This mission is consistent with the original mandate given to Adam in the garden. The creation mandate (Gen 1:28; 2:15) represented the first Adam's mission: Adam and Eve were to serve in God's presence as priest-kings ruling over the creation, expanding the boundaries of the sacred space (2:15), and populating the sacred garden-space with the divine image until the sacred space covered the earth and was populated with the divine image.⁶⁰ Adam's failure (Gen 3) did not terminate the creation mandate. The command to be fruitful and multiply was

⁵⁸DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 41.

⁵⁹Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," 50.

⁶⁰G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 81-87.

reiterated to other Adamic figures, though it underwent various changes depending on the redemptive historical context in which it was restated.⁶¹

As the last Adam, Jesus fulfilled the creation mandate, subduing the serpent and inaugurating the kingdom of God on the earth. Now, through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has constituted a new corporate Adam on the basis of the new covenant who, likewise, is to display his kingdom rule on the earth to the surrounding world (1 Pet 2:9, 11-12; cf. Matt 5:13-16). I return to my proposed definition of the church (part 2). As a corporate Adam, the church is called to display the divine rule on the earth (mission-A) and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the world (mission-B), to the end (part 3) that God would be glorified as unbelieving peoples repent and believe, thereby entering the kingdom and multiplying the divine image on the earth. This mission is most clearly evident in 1 Peter 2:9, where the corporate Adamic language, describing Israel's identity and mission, is applied to the church. Clearly, not everything is mission. Neither has the church been tasked with redeeming society. Instead, the church has both an attractational and outreach mission, and one flows out of the other. As a royal priesthood and holy nation, the church is to be a display people who show the world what God is like and what it is to live under his rule, while also inviting the world to enter into the kingdom of God through repentance and faith. The attractational life serves the outreach mission.

A Royal Priesthood and Holy Nation: Mission A

As a royal priesthood, Israel was set apart from all the other nations of the

⁶¹The context of the original Adamic mandate must be taken under consideration. Adam was given the mandate, which may be summarized as establishing the kingdom of God on the earth by expanding the boundaries of the garden space, populating the divine space with the divine image through procreation, and ruling over the creation as God's priest-king. See pp, 33-34 of this diss. for my argument regarding Adam's task as vice-regent in the sacred space of the garden. After Adam's sin, the reiteration of the Adamic mandate was to be carried on in a sinful world, and it would be arduous (Gen 3:16-19). Nevertheless, the mandate to establish the kingdom of God on the earth was fulfilled by Jesus, the last Adam. See pp. 153-70 of this diss. for my arguments for Jesus as the last Adam who was faithful where both Adam and Israel failed.

world for service to God (Exod 19:4-6). On the basis of its corporate priesthood it had special access to God and was to serve in a mediatorial function to the surrounding nations. It was to display the character and glory of God, their king, to the world, showing them what it was like to live under his rule, providing an attractive witness of the kingdom of God while in the land. As a royal priesthood and holy nation, the church retains this attractational component of Israel's mission. Yet, the church functions as a corporate priesthood under an entirely new covenant.

If the church is to serve faithfully as a royal priesthood and holy nation that displays the glory of the king and the worth of his kingdom to the world, then it must clearly define the distinction between the new covenant people of God and the world. From a divine perspective, God has chosen the new covenant people of God out of the world (1 Pet 1:1), but how does the church distinguish itself from the world? Water baptism is the public initiation rite that marks out an individual as having been set apart by the Holy Spirit for membership in the new covenant community (1:2). It pictures the believers union with Christ in his life, death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:5-11) and the safe passage through God's judgment leading to death (1 Pet 3:21-22).⁶² In water baptism, the candidate publicly professes that he or she has been united with Christ by faith and pledges faithful obedience to Christ (3:21). As those indwelt by the promised Spirit,⁶³ Christians are empowered to obey God's Word and keep his covenant, thereby

⁶²Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 192-93.

⁶³Cf. Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 1 Cor 1:13-17. In the New Testament, water baptism was closely linked with Spirit baptism. At conversion the Christian is baptized in one Spirit into the one body (1 Cor 12:13; cf. Eph 4:5). Speaking to the Galatians, the apostle Paul reminds them that they did not receive the Spirit by work of the law but "by hearing with faith" (3:2). Schreiner notes, "The gift of the Spirit is the mark of induction into the people of God (Gal 3:1-5)." Thomas R. Schreiner, "Baptism in the Epistles: An Initiation Rite for Believers," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 72.

being a faithful witness to the world of God's character and what it is like to live under his rule.

Thus, if the new covenant community is composed of those who are granted a new heart and God's Spirit, as promised in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, then church membership should reflect that reality. In other words, it is important to identify who is a part of the church, who belongs to the royal priesthood and holy nation. Because I have argued that the new covenant community is composed of those who have experienced supernatural birth and are believers only,⁶⁴ I propose that church membership should be limited to those who give a credible profession of faith, indicating that they are regenerate, and it is only those who are to be marked out in baptism. If a church is to pursue regenerate church membership and administer baptism only to those who give a credible profession of faith, then it must take care how it admits members into its fold.

While there is no prescribed method for marking out members of the new covenant community outside of baptism, the church and its leaders may take prudential steps to pursue regenerate church membership. Many churches have adopted membership classes where prospective members are informed of the gospel, the church's doctrine, the church's practices, and the church's expectations of one another. In addition, some church's leaders practice membership interviews where member candidates explain how they came to faith in Christ. It may also be helpful in such interviews to ask the member candidate to explain the gospel in brief fashion. No membership process will guarantee that all of its members will be regenerate, but if a church fails to distinguish between itself and the world, it is likely that it will eventually forfeit its ability to serve as a royal priesthood and holy nation to the surrounding world.

⁶⁴The concept of regenerate church membership and believer's baptism are debated subjects between evangelicals. I have argued that the promised new covenant community is composed of people who have experienced supernatural birth (see pp. 110-15) and only believers (see pp. 126-29).

As a chosen race, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, the church is also to live on this earth as salt and light (Matt 5:13-16), providing a distinguishing example of life under God's rule. One of the distinguishing marks of the church should be love for one another and Christian unity.⁶⁵ In a day of increasing personal hostilities and continued racial division, the church can display to the unbelieving world God's intention for humanity, living together in brotherly love and harmony under the headship of Christ. Consider the implications of the church as one race for what it does when it gathers together. Clearly, language can be a significant barrier to multi-ethnic gatherings, but churches in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural cities have important decisions to make if they are convinced of the opportunity to display the wisdom and glory of God through a multi-ethnic assembly: decisions regarding music, traditions, and cultural preferences. Following the homogeneous unit principle has led some churches to provide a variety of services for different language groups, ethnic groups, and even generational groups. However, if a church seeks to display the glorious wisdom of God's eternal plan to unite all things in Christ as it gathers (Eph 1:10), then it must consider what music to sing, what liturgy to follow, and what traditions to maintain. For example, should a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural church in the United States emphasize American Patriotism around July 4? Or might that offend those in the congregation who are of a different nationality? What style of music should a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural church sing? Should the church alternate musical styles each Sunday?

Yet, the desire to celebrate diversity is not uniquely Christian. What is uniquely Christian is the desire to display a unified diversity. God is glorified when diversity of peoples united by the gospel live together as family, as one body (Eph 4:1-6). Consider the powerful witness provided when a former member of the Black Panthers and a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, who have been incorporated into the one body, come to the

⁶⁵See 1 Pet 1:22; 3:8. See also 1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-21.

Lord's Table as brothers in Christ. When formerly hostile parties are brought together in Christ through the gospel, God is greatly glorified and the world is provided with a view to the glory of the king and what life is like under his rule.

However, the display witness of the church is not limited to what it does as it gathers. The new covenant community is called to live holy lives before a sinful world (1 Pet 2:11-12). To be sure, the distinction of the church from the world has implications for the Christian's moral conduct as Peter rightly emphasizes.⁶⁶ Christians are no longer to pursue their former sinful passions, instead they are to live for the will of God (1 Pet 4:2). This is especially true in light of the nearness of the end when Christ will return to judge all evildoers (4:3-5). As a holy nation, the church is to pursue holiness, utilizing all the means of grace available to it by the mercy of God: the Word of God, gospel community, pastors, the Lord's Supper, etc.

And neither is the church's display limited to pure moral conduct. As a holy nation, the church must still consider how it relates to this present world. While the church is a nation under the Lordship of Christ, as dual citizens of both a heavenly and an earthly kingdom, Christians are to live in such a way that they may provide a witness "by doing good" in this world (1 Pet 2:15). Christians provide such a faithful witness in the world by being good earthly citizens. The Christian's heavenly citizenship does not exempt her from the laws of earthly governments. Instead, Christians are to submit to governing authorities (Rom 13:1) and pay "taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed" (13:7); and as obedient, law-abiding citizens, Christians are to seek the welfare of the cities in which they live, doing good and promoting what is good for society.

Christians are free to "seek the welfare of their city" by involving themselves in earthly government, even serving in official capacities. Government is not evil in and

⁶⁶See n65 on p 259 of this diss.

of itself; it is ordained by God. One of the ways Christians can serve government is by taking a role in government, either at a local, regional, or national level. That may mean running for political office, or serving in government in an advisory position. It may include stepping into a particular role that addresses specific societal problems and concerns, such as human rights, healthcare, economics, foreign policy, national defense.

Christians are also free to influence government as earthly citizens. That may mean speaking for good policy and against bad policy. Often times, Christians have had to speak out against unjust policy. In democratically elected governments, Christians are free to influence government by voting during elections. To be sure, Christians should not deceive themselves by thinking that if they elect the right candidate to public office, then they can usher in “heaven on earth.” There is only one new heavens and earth, and there is only one heavenly king. Only he will usher in the new heavens and the new earth at the appointed time. Christians now await his return when he will establish a government that is righteous, just, and peaceful. Until that day, however, Christians are to seek justice for those suffering in this world, to the degree that they are able and may have influence.

Finally, as dual citizens of a heavenly and an earthly kingdom, Christians may provide a faithful witness by pursuing a variety of vocations. Unless sinful, no vocations are off-limits to Christians. Christians should be encouraged to serve this world through business and law, art and entertainment, literature and music, academia and public service. Then as Christians pursue such vocations, they are to pursue them as if working for the Lord. This is just a small sample of what it means for the church to be a display people in this world, however, the mission of the church is not merely one of being a display people.

A Royal Priesthood and Holy Nation: Mission B

Unlike old covenant Israel, whose primary mission was to be a light to the nations, the new covenant people of God is now engaged in the eschatological ingathering through the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to the end that unbelievers may

repent and believe and enter into the kingdom, multiplying the divine image on the earth. As a royal priesthood and holy nation, the church is the instrument by which Jesus is gathering the nations to God through the gospel. The church is to proclaim the gospel to all peoples everywhere, calling all peoples to repentance and faith.

The church participates in this proclamation mission, both individually and corporately, through evangelism. Evangelism is the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ with unbelieving persons with a view to conversion. In other words, when Christians proclaim the gospel, there should be a call to repentance and faith. Evangelism is a great privilege. As the church participates in the spreading of the gospel, it displays to the world the eternal plan of God to submit all things to Christ (Eph 3:9), and it displays to the demonic realm the glorious wisdom of God in saving sinners (3:10).⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the church has complicated evangelism to the degree that most Christians feel inadequate to share the gospel. Instead, the church must make evangelism normal again, and that begins by emphasizing that evangelism is simply having a conversation, except that the topic is the good news of Jesus and his kingdom.

Making evangelism normal begins by clarifying the gospel: what it is and what it is not. There are a number of ways in which to explain the gospel, but at its most basic level, the gospel is good news, and it is good news concerning Jesus. However the church explains the gospel, it must communicate the nature of God, the sin of mankind, the saving actions of Jesus, and the necessity for a response of repentance and faith. The church must equip its members to explain this gospel in simple terms. Again, this is one reason for requesting that candidates for membership explain the gospel in brief fashion during their member interview. Church leaders should continually clarify this gospel, even making sure it is present in their regular preaching when the church is gathered.

Having clarified the gospel, the church would do well to encourage regular,

⁶⁷Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 243-48.

ongoing conversations with unbelievers. Of course, prayer is vital, for it is the Holy Spirit who sets apart persons to Christ; but the church must do more than just pray for unbelievers. Everyone has conversations. People talk to one another about sports or politics or life. Evangelism is simply having a conversation, except that the topic is Christ. Then, when the church gathers, it is helpful to celebrate such conversations. Churches rightly celebrate when unbelieving persons repent and believe. Baptism is an appropriate time to celebrate such conversions, but the church should also celebrate gospel conversations. This celebration may take place during a Sunday evening gathering or during a prayer meeting. Hearing from other Christians about gospel conversations encourages the church, and it provides an opportunity for the whole church to pray for one another's evangelistic efforts.

As shown, mission may not simply be defined as evangelism. Mission includes evangelism, but it does not end there. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commands his followers to make disciples of all nations as they go, baptizing them in the name of the triune God and teaching them to obey all Jesus has commanded. In the Great Commission, the evangelism is implicit in the going. Baptism points to the incorporation of an individual into the church, and teaching all Jesus has commanded indicates ongoing growth. I propose this summarizes the proclamation mission of the church, and the attractional mission as a display people serves this proclamation mission. The Christian's message and the Christian life go together.

As Jesus said, the church is to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19), which means that the proclamation mission must include sharing the gospel with peoples from other cultures. Whether or not Christians agree on a definition of mission, a church must clarify what is means by missions. I distinguish missions from evangelism in that missions indicates leaving the culture and entering into a different culture in order to share the gospel of the kingdom and call those peoples to repentance and faith. In this dissertation I argued that the church has a two-fold mission. As a royal priesthood and holy nation,

the church is to be a display people in the world, and it is to announce the good news of the kingdom. The two components of mission stand together, but the display mission serves the proclamation mission.

Having defined mission, the church must prepare and plan for mission. While the whole church participates in evangelism personally, not every Christian is called to cross a culture to share the gospel. Yet, the whole church can be involved in cross-cultural missions through prayer and through generous giving. A church may engage in cross-cultural mission in various ways, but the church does not have the option to neglect it, for as a royal priesthood, the church is called to mediate the blessings of God to the surrounding world. The greatest blessing the church can mediate is the offer of salvation to repentant sinners. As the church speaks the gospel and as unbelieving people repent and believe, God is glorified as the divine image is being multiplied on the earth.

The church, then, is (1) the people of God, constituted by Jesus Christ on the basis of the new covenant (covenant) to be royal (kingship) sons and daughters (sonship) with whom God promises to dwell by his Spirit (priesthood). Individuals are incorporated into this new covenant community through water baptism upon repentance from sin and faith in Christ and (2) are called to display the divine rule on the earth (mission-A) and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the world (mission-B), to the end (3) that God would be glorified as unbelieving peoples repent and believe, thereby entering the kingdom and multiplying the divine image on the earth.

Considerations for Further Research

Admittedly, each interpreter brings his own philosophical, historical, cultural, and experiential presuppositions to the interpretive task. If left unchecked, these assumptions will, to varying degrees, determine his exegetical conclusions.⁶⁸ The current

⁶⁸William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 87.

debates among evangelicals over ecclesiology highlight the fact that they continue to speak past one another in large part because of such personal preunderstandings.⁶⁹ If evangelicals are to make any progress in their ecclesiological disagreements, they must acknowledge their preunderstandings and their potential effects on the theological task. However, merely acknowledging assumptions is not sufficient to correct erroneous theological conclusions; once admitting assumptions, evangelicals must also employ a theological method that is able to correct personal biases⁷⁰ and assist in producing a biblically faithful doctrine of the church.

Thankfully, both dispensational and covenant theologians are doing just that. Progressive dispensationalists have sought to address some of the interpretive shortcomings of previous dispensational theologians.⁷¹ As a result, both dispensationalists and covenantalists agree there is only one people of God. Recently, Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum have proposed a new covenant *via media* which rejects the strong continuity of the Reformed covenantal tradition.⁷² Also, Gregg Allison has done an excellent job

⁶⁹In an essay sketching various factors that determine current hermeneutical debate in cross-cultural contexts, D. A. Carson lists “five critical problems with substantial hermeneutical implications and offer[s] some reflection on how the manner in which we treat these problems will to a substantial extent determine our exegesis.” The first factor Carson addresses is that of preunderstanding. D. A. Carson, “A Sketch of the Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate in Cross-Cultural Contexts,” in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 12. For more on preunderstandings and their relation to the hermeneutical task, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 103-14; Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 98-116; and David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 104-10.

⁷⁰Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 110, 112, 114; Clark, *To Know and Love God*, 110; Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith: Understanding the Heart of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 18.

⁷¹See Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*; Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought*, A BridgePoint Book (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993); Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

⁷²Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological*

bringing to fruition an ecclesiology that establishes a position of moderate continuity.⁷³ These theologians are to be commended for their willingness to allow the Scriptures to shape and reshape their theological systems. They are a model for theological construction and dialogue.

Yet, more work needs to be done, particularly in the area of mission. There is much confusion within evangelicalism as to what missions is. I have sought to contribute to this conversation by applying the Adamic pattern of the people of God established in the Garden in Eden to the church. Within the Adamic pattern, the people of God were created to be priest-kings who serve in God's presence and display the rule of God on the earth. Under the new covenant, an outreach mission for the purpose of eschatological ingathering is added to the display mission. It seems that much of the disagreement in evangelical mission today relates to the overemphasis of one of these aspects over the other. Having merely introduced the concepts of Adamic mission with brief applications, there needs to be further development of the idea of mission as outreach that flows out of being a display people. First, there exists a need to explore in detail what this mission looks like in a local church in the United States, for example. More specifically, what does this mission look like in rural America, and what does it look like in urban America. Next, there is also a need to explore what this two-fold mission would look like in a cross-cultural context. What does it look like among an unreached people group, for example?

Finally, I would propose further work on a complete ecclesiology from the progressive covenantalist or new covenant perspective. To be sure, there is much that evangelical theologians from both covenantalist and dispensationalist streams would agree. Nevertheless, since Gentry and Wellum's proposal is so new, the ecclesiological

Understanding of the Covenants (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

⁷³Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*.

conversation would be aided by such a comprehensive ecclesiology.

Conclusion

I sought to bring clarity to the conversation regarding the identity, nature, and mission of the church. While much work has been done on the identity of the church, the rapid cultural changes taking place in the United States have challenged how the church has thought about evangelism and missions. I pray that my contribution will not only be helpful in this context but will also encourage a high view of the church in a day when the church seems marginalized. In addition, I pray that this dissertation may encourage Christians regarding the importance of being a display people on this earth, showing the world the glory of King Jesus and the joy of his kingdom. It is from this context that the proclamation of the gospel goes out and calls all peoples everywhere to repent from their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God.

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ABSTRACT

THE PEOPLE OF GOD: TOWARD AN EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

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This dissertation argues that in a day of ecclesiological confusion among evangelicals over who belongs to the church and what the mission of the church is, the biblical concept of the image of God interpreted in its textual, redemptive-historical, and canonical contexts reveals a common pattern for the people of God that serves as an interpretive key to understanding the identity, nature, and mission of the church. Chapter 1 recounts much of the confusion over the doctrine of the church within evangelicalism and exposes the need for such a proposal.

Chapter 2 proposes that the creation of man as God's image reveals God's purpose to create (1) a people with whom he will relate in a father/son relationship (sonship) under his rule and care (covenant), (2) a people who will dwell in his presence to serve him as priests (priesthood) and (3) a people who will represent his sovereign rule on the earth (kingship) by exercising dominion over creation by extending the borders of the sacred space and reproducing the divine image through godly offspring until the entire earth is filled with the glory of God (mission). Thus, it establishes the foundation for the thesis that the concept of the image of God communicates sonship, kingship, and priesthood within a covenant relationship in which God's people serve as God's instruments by which he establishes his kingdom on the earth.

Chapter 3 shows how the pattern for the people of God established in the garden continues in Abraham and Israel. It also shows that king David is a prototypical

image bearer who points to a future messianic Adam who will ultimately establish God's kingdom on the earth.

While Israel failed to keep covenant and image God faithfully, judgment is not the final word. Instead, the biblical storyline looks forward to a new covenant yet to be established by a faithful Davidic messiah. Chapter 4, then, investigates the new covenant passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel by utilizing Isaiah 54-56 as a structure for understanding what the new covenant entails.

Chapter 5 addresses the New Testament data related to Jesus as the last Adam. The chapter shows that Jesus is the Son of God from David's line who came to restore Israel on the basis of a new covenant. This messianic mission reveals that Jesus is the true and faithful image of God who inaugurates the kingdom of God on the earth and begins populating it with the divine image by gathering a people through the gospel.

Chapter 6 shows that the pattern of the people of God established in Genesis 1 and 2 is also found in the church: sonship, kingship, priesthood, and mission within a covenant relationship. This chapter argues that the New Testament applies the language of Israel (Exod 19:4-6) to the church (1 Pet 2:9) because it is the new Israel constituted on the basis of the promised new covenant, created to serve as a corporate Adam for the purpose of mission. As a corporate Adam, the church is called to image God on the earth and fulfill the mission of eschatological ingathering until the return of Christ.

Chapter 7 provides theological conclusions from the biblical data in the previous chapters and proposes a definition of the church that helps to clarify the identity and mission of the people of God under the new covenant. And finally, it proposes a path toward constructing an ecclesiology that is biblically faithful and culturally appropriate.

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