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TEACHING THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE TO THE
GREAT LAKES BIBLE CHURCH OF HOLLY, MICHIGAN

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TEACHING THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE TO THE
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OF HOLLY, MICHIGAN

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I dedicate this project to my dear wife, Susie, who has partnered with me in ministry over the course of our lives together.

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PREFACE

I am astoundingly chosen by God's grace to participate in God's eternal plan for his glory. I am in awe of the overriding sovereignty and grace of God, his glory, his purposes, and his salvation of my soul. Beyond offering me salvation, God has called me to preach and teach of him and his plan through the sacred Scriptures. It is with a sense of wonder and humility that I participate in the gospel ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for my parents, Paul and Jeane Vanaman, who profoundly impacted me for the cause of Jesus Christ. My father was a preacher, but the symmetry of his personal life with his ministerial life provided a model of consistency for me to emulate. He was the same in the barn or garden as he was in the pulpit. My mother prayed for me regularly, as well as counseled me through many of life's passageways. These counseling sessions often took place "unofficially" as she gave me hair cuts.

My wife, Susie, has been a bedrock of stability throughout our years together. She keeps me modest and refined at times when, by nature, I would be outlandish and silly. She has provided a wonderful home in which to raise our five children and is a true helper suitable for my ministry and for every aspect of life.

Several individuals encouraged me to pursue further ministerial training. Without the influences of Dr. Edgard Traboulsi, Dr. Les Ollila, Dr. Jim Newcomer, and Rod Phillips, my journey into continuing education may never have occurred. I appreciate the excellent Graduate Studies program provided by Dr. Brent Belford, the staff, and teachers at Northland International University.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary graciously accepted all my transfer credits and allowed me to complete my degree with them. I am humbled to be part of the SBTS family and to receive my degree from this highly esteemed institution.

I am extremely appreciative of Dr. Oren Martin, who served as my faculty supervisor for this project. He spent numerous hours working with me on theological issues and on writing clearly; he faithfully answered my many emails. He has come alongside me and disciplined me with integrity, honesty, and much patience. I appreciate him as a supervisor, mentor, and friend.

Finally, I am deeply grateful for the congregation of Great Lakes Bible Church, who hired an uneducated man to be their shepherd, and then happily sent him off to school. Through their patience, prayers, and financial support in this endeavor, all of us in this family have grown in the faith. It is my prayer that we faithfully continue to learn of, love, worship, and serve our great God, and that we will glorify him together as we persevere to the end.

Tigg Vanaman

Holly, Michigan

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project was written in conjunction with Great Lakes Bible Church (GLBC) in Holly, Michigan. For this project, I assessed the strengths and weaknesses of our church. I then targeted one specific weaknesses for which I was particularly concerned and proposed a method to strengthen this weakness.

Context

Great Lakes Bible Church was born out of adversity in 2001, and the original members came from a difficult situation in another nearby church. Five years later there were more choppy waters regarding the direction and leadership of the church. Then, in August 2015, the church family experienced two surprising deaths that caused great sorrow and consternation. Dotted between these have been the typical human experiences of pain and suffering. Our church has not been unique in these incidents, but these experiences did establish the need for teaching and encouraging our saints to persevere.

Strengths of Ministry Context

Since being forged through adversity, the members of GLBC have always enjoyed a spirit of unity, love, and care for one another. For the first several years there was a spirit of revival and we saw tremendous blessings from the Lord. The revival spirit developed into an authentic spirit of sincerity towards God and others.

Members of GLBC have an admiration and respect for God's Word and attend worship with hungry hearts. Our people have an appetite for biblical exposition. This eagerness has transitioned out of a diet of topical preaching and the people have come to value the deeper study, meaning, and application of the Scriptures.

Another strength of GLBC is the spirit of enthusiasm and sincerity in our worship. Since I became the pastor in May 2007, I have emphasized that worship is not a spectator sport done for entertainment or self-gratification, but rather an expression of our love and admiration for who God is and thanksgiving for what he has done. We practice corporate Scripture readings and catechisms, as well as incorporating Scripture readings into the songs we sing. Since the congregation recognizes God is our audience and his Word is central, we are truly able to worship in spirit and in truth.

The sum of these strengths is that this is a teachable congregation. When the truth of Scripture is explained, the people are willing to apply and obey what it teaches. It is in this learning environment that I anticipated walking our people through the doctrine of perseverance and seeing their faith grow.

Weaknesses of Ministry Context

Several weaknesses within the ministry of GLBC made this project relevant. First, a large percentage of our people have had either a narrow or uninformed understanding of the end times, or eschatology. Many have attended church for years and been taught only the pre-tribulation view—that the church will be raptured out of the world before a seven year tribulation begins. Thus, these people have relegated the concept of perseverance to the back burner because they believe the church will not have to endure the prescribed trials of the tribulation period.¹

Second, church members have grown up in an era of freedom and affluence within the United States of America, where they have experienced little persecution. Only a handful of our oldest members were children during the difficulties of The Great

¹It is not the aim of this project to go into great depth to discuss the differing eschatological views, or to disregard entirely the pre-tribulation view. However, the consideration on this topic will be to recognize that no one theological system understands eschatology perfectly; thus, we cannot be dogmatic on any one view. Rather, we need to be prepared to endure until Christ's return no matter what the events may be leading up to his return. For more information regarding different views of the end times, consult John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), and a pamphlet by Timothy Paul Jones, *Four Views of the End Times* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2010).

Depression and World War II. Since then, they, and those who were born later, have lived through the prosperous latter half of the twentieth century—where not only business was big, but also the church. Add to this the pre-tribulational view, and many sensed they would ride the apex of American culture right into heaven without suffering persecution or tribulation. Additionally, our membership needed to be protected against the false teachings of the Prosperity Gospel which teaches if an individual gives of his resources to God, then God will bless him with material wealth and prosperity.² However, God’s call for his children to persevere inherently implies that there are difficulties, not blessings, through which to endure. Our congregation has not fallen subject to this influence, but if they did it would be further detrimental to their understanding of perseverance.

Third, I had not taught our congregation the doctrine of perseverance. As a relatively newer church (established in 2001), other doctrines needed to be taught as we established the mission and purpose of our church. Another reason is that I wanted our people to understand God’s people are called to suffering. Also, they needed to realize additional views of eschatology exist which hold that the church will continue to suffer until Christ’s coming, but instill confidence in them that Christ will return victoriously regardless of world conditions leading up to his coming. Because of these factors, I felt compelled to preach on perseverance in order to equip our saints in this area.

Rationale

Due to the aforementioned weaknesses within GLBC, I sensed the burden to prepare our people to have a faith that will endure to the end. Since eschatology is not an exact science, our people needed to be prepared for whatever scenario the end game presents. For example, if the rapture of the church is actually *after* the tribulation (Historic Millennial View) rather than before the tribulation (Dispensational Millennial

²For more information on the Prosperity Gospel, consult David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010).

View),³ I would not want them to say, “Well, Pastor Tigg told us that we would not be here for the tribulation—I wonder what else he taught us that is not true.” Under such circumstances, they would be disheartened and their faith would be shaken. It is imperative we recognize God’s eternal plan will prevail no matter whether we understand the specific details of how that plan culminates. We must hold to the prevailing power of Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah and the Root of David, who has conquered in spite of Satan’s attempts throughout history to defeat God’s plan (Rev 5:5). Therefore, it was necessary to teach the prevailing plan of God for believers to have faith in the Christ who prevails rather than faith in their understanding of the last days.

Second, it was incumbent our people understand the prosperous state of the church in the United States of America is atypical to the general status of the church throughout the centuries.⁴ Our country has traditionally enjoyed religious freedom with little interference from government. Until recent years the moral fabric of the majority of our culture reflected a Judeo-Christian ethic and has thus been accepting of Christianity. However, the culture in America is changing and hostilities against Christianity have increased.⁵ The Bible teaches repeatedly that God’s people will encounter tribulation in

³Jones, *Four Views of the End Times*, 2, 4. Jones defines Historic Millennialism as “the belief that Christians will remain on the earth during the great tribulation. The tribulation will purify the churches by rooting out false believers, and the second coming of Christ will precede the millennium” (4). Jones describes those who hold to Dispensational Millennialism “believe the rapture and second coming of Jesus are *two separate events*. The rapture comes *before* the great tribulation, and the second coming occurs *after* it” (2).

⁴One can read the book of Acts and the NT epistles to see how Christians in the first century were persecuted. For Christian persecution throughout church history, consult John Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1997). For a contemporary publication which documents believers still being persecuted throughout the world, see “The Voice of the Martyrs” newsletter, accessed January 6, 2016, <https://www.persecution.com/>.

⁵The moral digression of American culture is observed in rulings by the US Supreme Court that allows for abortion—*Roe v. Wade*, 70-18 (1973), and the acknowledgement of homosexual marriages—*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 14-556 (2015). Moral decline in culture is seen in the rise in crime, sexual promiscuity, drug abuse, suicide, gang activity, fraud, child abuse, and apathy towards God, religion, and church attendance—See “100 Facts about The Moral Collapse of America That are Almost Too Crazy to Believe,” accessed January 6, 2016, <http://thetruthwins.com/archives/100-facts-about-the-moral-collapse-of-america-that-are-almost-too-crazy-to-believe>. To consult the Christian response to the digression away from the Judeo-Christian ethic, see Albert Mohler, *Culture Shift: Engaging Current Issues with Timeless Truth* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2008).

the world (John 15:20; 16:33; Mark 10:30; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; 1 Thess 3:3; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 5:10). Believers need to understand God has called us to suffer and we are to persevere. Also, this project was to be proactive against the false teachings of the Prosperity Gospel. Understanding our journey is one of sharing in sufferings with Christ dispels the notion of a merely “prosperous” Christian life. Thus, this project was necessary to equip our people with the truth of God’s call to endurance, and with discernment to insulate them from the spurious teachings of the Prosperity Gospel.

Third, other than referencing it on occasion, I had not taught the very important doctrine of perseverance to our congregation. Due to the newness of our church, other foundational doctrines have taken primacy in the teaching ministry, such as Names and Attributes of God, How We Got Our Bible, Evangelism, What is the Church?, Meaningful Membership, and Worshiping in Spirit and Truth. Now that these core doctrines have provided the groundwork for a healthy church, it became necessary to address the doctrine of perseverance.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to instruct and equip the membership at Great Lakes Bible Church in Holly, Michigan in the doctrine of perseverance.

Goals

In order to equip the members of GLBC and accomplish the purpose of this project, four goals were necessary. These goals reflected the steps that were taken to train members of GLBC in their understanding and application of perseverance:

1. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge of the doctrine of perseverance among members of Great Lakes Bible Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a ten-week sermon series on perseverance entitled, “The Prevailing Plan of God.”
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of perseverance among members of Great Lakes Bible Church.

4. The fourth goal was to develop an eight-lesson study guide curriculum to equip our people and/or to use as a discipleship tool. This curriculum grew out of the first three goals.

The four goals stated above required a defined means of measurement and standard of success to ensure their completion.⁶ The following section details the research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each consecutive goal, which in turn contributed to the successful completion of the project.

Research Methodology

Four goals were set to determine the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and resolve of our people regarding perseverance. This goal was measured by administering the Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance to assess the individual's scriptural knowledge of perseverance.⁷ Further questions assessed the individual's resolve to persevere by examining how they would respond to trials and suffering. This goal was considered successfully met when twenty members had completed the questionnaire, and when the results were analyzed to yield a clearer picture of their understanding of biblical perseverance.⁸

The second goal was to develop a ten-week sermon series entitled The Prevailing Plan of God. The first half of the sermon series was to demonstrate that God's plan in creation has prevailed in spite of all Satan's attempts to destroy it and will continue to prevail into eternity. This would establish the theological basis for the second half of the series which would be personal application regarding perseverance of individual saints who are part of God's prevailing plan. The first half of the series was a biblical theology of Revelation 5:5 where Christ has conquered and is worthy to open the scrolls of judgment. The titles given to Jesus, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the

⁶All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁷See appendix 1.

⁸See appendix 2.

Root of David,”⁹ connect back to the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. I traced the enmity of Satan against this promised offspring to see how God’s plan prevailed on every occasion.¹⁰ For the second half of the series, I taught the biblical doctrine of “The Perseverance of the Saints,” primarily out of the gospel of John, in order for our people to understand the Scriptural promises and blessings of perseverance. The series concluded with examples of individuals throughout church history until the modern day who have prevailed in the faith. The people of GLBC needed to realize they must have faith in Christ rather than comforts, and determine to prevail in light of increasing hostilities towards Christianity in our culture. The objective of this series was to increase our people’s understanding of the magnitude of God’s plan, how that plan has unfolded within redemptive history, how God’s people have prevailed throughout history, and how our individual lives fit in to God’s eternal plan. This goal was measured by the elders of GLBC who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series.¹¹ This goal was to have a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficient level (marked 3 or 4 on the scale).

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of perseverance among the members of GLBC. This goal was measured by re-administering the pre-sermon series Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance and was considered successful when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post-series results. A *t*-test for dependent samples “involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores.”¹²

The fourth goal was to develop an eight-lesson curriculum that our people

⁹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

¹⁰See appendix 3.

¹¹See appendix 4.

¹²Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

could reference, give to others, or use as a discipleship tool.¹³ This curriculum grew out of a refinement of the material covered in the sermon series, the elder's evaluation of the sermon series, and the assessment of the pre and post-series questionnaires. The curriculum was evaluated by our team of elders using a rubric as the instrument of measurement.¹⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Biblical theology. This project looked at a biblical theology of Revelation 5:5 to understand that the elder in heaven used for Jesus the titles “The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” to link to Genesis 3:15. In this context, Hamilton provides a good working definition, “The interpretive perspective reflected in the way the biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses. . . . To learn to read the Bible is to learn to understand this world from the perspective of the biblical authors, which is to learn a divinely inspired perspective.”¹⁵

Creation/created history. These terms refer to God's creation of time, space,

¹³See appendix 5.

¹⁴See appendix 6.

¹⁵James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 16-20. Rosner gives a broader and helpful definition: “Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole and, to achieve this, it must work with the mutual interaction of the literary, historical, and theological dimensions of the various corpora, and with the interrelationships of these within the whole canon of Scripture. . . . Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.” Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 3-10.

matter, and all things in them (Gen 1; Acts 4:24; Neh 9:6; Rev 10:6). The timeframe runs from the original creation (Gen 1) to the new creation (Rev 21-22). This history is distinguished from the perspective of the eternal God, who knows no limits of time, space, or matter and exists outside of and beyond his creation (Ps 90:1-4; Job 36:26; John 17:24; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 1:8).

Enmity. This term comes from Genesis 3:15 and is defined by Eastman as “deep-rooted hatred.”¹⁶ This hatred exists in the heart of Satan and lays the foundation for the age-long battle of Satan against God’s promised Messiah. Mathews says, “‘enmity’ has the intensity of hostility experienced among nations in warfare (e.g., Ezek 25:15; 35:5) and the level of animosity that results in murder (e.g., Num 35:21). The language of the passage indicates a life-and-death struggle between combatants.”¹⁷

Eschatology. Myers defines this as “the biblical perspective concerning events to take place in the last days.”¹⁸ A broader view understands eschatology to be the consummation of the whole biblical story, thus, a lens through which to understand all of Scripture. Beale posits, “The OT storyline [is] the basis of the NT storyline, [and] . . . the goal of the NT storyline is God’s glory, and that the main stepping-stone to that goal is Christ’s establishment of an eschatological new-creational kingdom and its expansion. . . . The definition of *eschatology* should be refined as the movement toward the new-creational reign, . . . toward a regaining of what was in Eden before sin.”¹⁹

Prevailing Plan of God. The eternal plan of God is to be glorified and make himself known within the arena of creation (Ps 67; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17; Rev 4:9-11).

¹⁶M. G. Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), s.v. “enmity.”

¹⁷Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 245.

¹⁸Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), s.v. “eschatology.”

¹⁹G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 16-23.

The means by which God will be glorified is the sending of his Son, Jesus, into the world as a human offspring to pay the penalty of man's sin and to offer salvation from God's wrath to the human race (John 3:16-21; 17:20-24; 1 Pet 1:18-21). Satan will endeavor to defeat God's Son from coming into the world and being the Savior of men, but God's plan will prevail (Gen 3:15; John 1:1-5; Rom 16:20; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8).²⁰ God's plan will culminate in victory when he judges Satan and his followers to eternal damnation, and gathers the redeemed of God to live with him forever (Rev 19–22). Just like in the original creation (Gen 1-2), God's people will once again dwell with God in perfection for all eternity (Rev 21:7).²¹ God's plan will prevail in spite of every one of Satan's attempts to destroy it.

Redemptive history. This refers to the same timeframe as "creation history" but emphasizes God's *purposes* in creation history to redeem mankind from the curse upon creation through his Son, Jesus Christ, unto the glory of God, and to judge all who oppose God (Rev 4-5; 20:10–22:21).

Type; typology. Myers gives a basic definition, "A relationship in which something occurring in the past is a copy or pattern of something in the present or future. . . . Persons, events, or things in the Old Testament, while possessing true historical validity in themselves, also function as divinely appointed illustrations of what was yet to come."²² Hamilton gives a more academic definition, "canonical exegesis that observes divinely intended patterns of historical correspondence and escalation in significance in the events, people, or institutions of Israel, and these types are in the redemptive historical stream that flows through the Bible."²³ These two definitions agree by stating

²⁰See appendix 3.

²¹See appendix 7.

²²Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "typology."

²³James M. Hamilton, Jr., "Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah? Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus," accessed October 12, 2016, <http://jimhamilton.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/was-joseph-a-type-of-the-messiahbjt-formatted.pdf>.

that God uses people, themes, and events in the OT to pattern and foreshadow significant redemptive people, themes, and events that are later unfolded in the NT.

Two delimitations were placed on this project. First, the project addressed members of GLBC eighteen years of age and older. This delimitation allowed GLBC members to grow in understanding of and preparation for perseverance. Second, the project was confined to a fifteen-week timeframe. The full completion of the fifteen-week project included pre-assessment, preparation and preaching of the sermon series, post-assessment, and curriculum development.

Conclusion

The Scriptures teach that true believers will persevere to the end. God promises his eternal plan will prevail, and Christ exemplifies prevailing power in his earthly ministry and in his eschatological role. Chapter 2 of this project focused on a biblical theology of God's prevailing plan to bring Messiah in spite of Satan's efforts to destroy it. Chapter 3 taught the doctrine of the saint's perseverance and how God's plan prevails through his faithful people. The objective for the members of GLBC was for them to recognize their lives as also being part of God's victorious, prevailing plan, and be encouraged to persevere in their faith to the end.

CHAPTER 2
THE PREVAILING PLAN OF GOD:
A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF REVELATION 5:5

One of the most spectacular passages recorded in all of Scripture is Revelation 5, where John receives a vision of God’s throne room in heaven. In this chapter, many themes of redemptive history¹ converge—Jesus as Messiah, salvation, judgment, victory, worship, and the glory of God.² John witnesses heavenly beings hailing Jesus Christ as God’s Lamb slain to redeem mankind, the one qualified to judge sinners, and the only one worthy of worship. Verse 5 is the key verse of the chapter which declares why Jesus is so laudable: “And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.’” It is significant that the elder introduces Jesus by the names “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” when he could have used any other designation: Messiah, the Alpha and Omega, the Good Shepherd, Judge of the living and the dead, or Son of God. Here towards the culmination of Scripture, the elder in Revelation 5:5 uses the royal titles, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,” to connect Jesus Christ back to the beginning of creation and identify him as the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15, who has prevailed in spite of all Satan’s attempts to destroy his coming.

¹See the definition of “redemptive history” in chap. 1 of this work, under “Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations,” 10.

²Schreiner recognizes this chapter as perhaps the most important in the entire book of Revelation explaining, “Even though Revelation emphasizes the sovereignty and glory of Christ, his death is the fulcrum of all history. . . . John is informed that the ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David’ can open the sealed book (Rev 5:5). And yet when John actually looks to see the conqueror, he sees not a mighty lion but rather a slain lamb (Rev 5:6). The key to all history and the outworking of God’s promises is the death of the Lamb. Victory over evil comes not through a military triumph but rather through the suffering of the Lamb. However, the slain Lamb is also the one who achieves victory and conquers, and so here John merges the Jewish traditions of the slain lamb and the conquering lamb.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 429.

This study is a biblical theology of Revelation 5:5.³ John’s initial reaction may have been one of confusion (Rev 5:4), but once he processes the storyline of redemptive history, he comprehends this vision and all its implications. Several vital components of redemption history are alluded to in this scene but not specifically addressed. Therefore, it is best to consider John’s knowledge according to biblical theology, as Hamilton describes:

One of the primary aims of biblical theology is to understand and embrace the worldview of the biblical authors. In order to do this, we have to know the story they take for granted, the connections they see between the events in that story, and the ways they read later parts of the story by the light that emanates from its earlier parts.⁴

An overarching study in biblical theology identifies what John already understood about God’s eternal plan,⁵ and why this particular scene in Revelation 5:5 is so momentous.

John recognizes that before the foundation of the world, God chose to facilitate his plan of salvation and judgment through his eternal Son (John 1:1-5; 17:24; Rev 13:8).⁶ Early in Genesis, God promises to bring his Son as an offspring (“seed”) from mankind. The promise of God’s coming offspring becomes refined from the general human population (Gen 3:15), to one specific nation (Gen 12:1-3), to one tribe within that nation (Gen 49:8-10), to one family within that tribe (2 Sam 7), until it finds fulfillment in precisely one individual, the God-man, Jesus Christ (Matt 1; John 1:1-5; Gal 4:4). Now

³See the definition of “biblical theology” in chap. 1 of this work, under “Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations,” 8.

⁴James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 12.

⁵See appendix 7.

⁶James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 39. Hamilton argues that God’s glory revealed in salvation through judgment is the “center” of the Bible story. This is a valid claim when it is considered that God is holy—totally separate from evil. If God allowed evil to exist, he would cease to be holy. Therefore, in the judgment of sin God maintains his holiness and his glory. Additionally, if there is no judgment on evil, there is nothing from which to be “saved.” Thus, God is glorified in both the salvation of repentant men and the judgment of unrepentant men.

in Revelation 5, John realizes the one whom the elder presents is this promised offspring of Genesis 3:15, come through human lineage (Lion of Judah, Root of David), and the one to culminate God's eternal plan.

Furthermore, the elder declares this Lion of Judah, Root of David *has conquered*. Throughout creation history,⁷ God's glory is stunningly revealed as his plan triumphs in the face of seemingly certain defeat.⁸ God's plan to produce this offspring (Christ) has prevailed against all Satan's offensives against it. When God's children comprehend God's eternal prevailing plan, they are encouraged to prevail through God's plan for their own lives. Though beset by temporal battles and afflictions, Christians can rejoice knowing their weeping will be turned to joy and their death to victory (Ps 30:5; Rom 8:18; 1 Cor 15:51-58; 2 Cor 4:7-18; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 5:10-11; Rev 20:10–21:8).

Revelation 5:5 Expresses the Fulfillment of God's Prevailing Plan Established in Genesis 3:15

The elder in Revelation 5:5 tells John that there is one in heaven who has conquered and is worthy to pour out God's judgments. But what has been conquered? Who is the conqueror? What has been the battleground?

The implied conflict which has been conquered harkens back to the beginning of creation. God makes all things by his own will and for his glory (Gen 1-2; John 1:1-5;

⁷See the definition of "creation history" in chap. 1 of this work, under "Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations," 8-9.

⁸Time after time throughout the Bible's drama, God reveals his power in such a timely fashion so as to accentuate his overcoming dominance and his prevailing glory. From the human perspective, just when it seems Satan has the upper hand and God's plan could never succeed, God valiantly steps onto the stage to win the victory and overcome against all odds. In addition to the accounts that are highlighted in this project, this dynamic is also seen in the stories of the flood (Gen 6-9), the Tower of Babel (Gen 11), Joseph (Gen 37-50), Elijah against the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18), David and Goliath (1 Sam 17), the returns from Babylonian captivity (2 Chr 36; Ezra; Neh), and the preservation of the Jewish people in Esther. In reality, God and his plan have never been in jeopardy of failure. God is omnipotent and sovereign—he reigns victoriously and supremely. However, when God astonishes mankind with a "surprise victory," this simply adds to man's opinion of the grandeur and majesty of Almighty God. One of the recurring nuances of God's plan is that he takes that which appears to be dead and resurrects it by infusing new life. Abraham and Sarah giving birth in their old age (Gen 21:1-7), Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel being preserved from seemingly certain death (Dan 3, 6), the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11), and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Matt 27) are examples of this truth. When God brings victory from defeat and life from death, man stands aghast and marvels at God's wondrous power and ultimate glory.

1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17; Rev 4:9-11). Man is made in God's own image and is thus the pinnacle of God's creation (Gen 1:26-27). God commands man to "be fruitful and multiply" in order to reproduce God's image and fill the whole earth with God's glory (Gen 1:28).⁹ Into this drama steps God's enemy, Satan, in the form of a serpent (Gen 3). Satan's desire is to rob God of his glory and possess all glory for himself (Matt 4:1-11; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 12). To accomplish this, Satan attempts to steal from creation the precise image of God's glory—man. Satan seduces Adam and Eve to disobey God and follow him. Man's sin introduces the curse of death upon creation and interrupts man's perfect fellowship with the eternal, holy God.

Man's fall does not catch God by surprise. In a way that only the sovereign God could do, he had planned before creation to glorify himself by having his Son be the conqueror of sin through his own substitutionary death for mankind (Eph 1:3-14; 2:4-7; 3:7-11; 1 Pet 1:18-21). Piper writes,

The revelation of the glory of God's grace was planned before creation and came to its climax in *the death of Christ for sinners*. In conceiving a universe in which to display the glory of his grace, God did not choose "Plan B." The death of Christ was not an afterthought or adjustment. For this the universe was planned. Everything leading to it, and everything flowing from it, is explained by it.¹⁰

In Genesis 3:15, God pronounces to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." This verse introduces the "offspring/seed conflict" which will run throughout time. Satan is not a physical being who reproduces children, so the offspring/seed of Satan is his followers.¹¹ The offspring/seed that comes from the woman

⁹Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 25-26, 52.

¹⁰John Piper, "My Glory I Will Not Give to Another," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 635.

¹¹Alan P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 145. Ross correlates Satan's seed of Genesis 3:15 to those in the first century who rejected the Lord and opposed his kingdom, and who are "of your father the devil" (John

is a singular noun and refers to one who will descend from mankind to crush (“conquer”—Rev 5:5) Satan and punish his followers. Mathews observes, “Eve and her adversary are the progenitors of a lifelong struggle that will persist until a climactic moment when the woman’s offspring will achieve the upper hand.”¹² Genesis 3:15 is called the *protoevangelium* because it is the “first good news” of a coming and conquering Savior.¹³

The battleground is Satan’s “enmity”¹⁴ against God and God’s plan to bring this offspring into the world through the seed of the woman. This cosmic conflict between the two seeds is traceable throughout the ages of redemptive history. When man sinned, God graciously postpones the punishment of death until man can produce offspring (life coming out of death), which will lead to the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. Once this promised offspring has come and conquered the enmity against him, he is prepared to restore God’s creation, redeem all who follow God, and judge all who oppose Jehovah—and this is exactly what John sees in Revelation 5. The elder declares the Lion of Judah, the Root of David has conquered all Satan’s assaults, brought salvation, and is worthy to open the seals of God’s judgment on Satan and his offspring.

Genesis 3:15 lays the foundation of redemptive history, and Revelation 5 announces its soon culmination. However, several scenes are inserted into this drama between Genesis and Revelation. Frequently the actors find themselves, like John, weeping and wondering if God and his plan will ever succeed, but in each instance God prevails. Man is awestruck. God is glorified.

8:44).

¹²Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 245.

¹³Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 27.

¹⁴See the definition of “enmity” in chap. 1 of this work, under “Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations,” 9.

God’s Plan Prevails through Human History, as Seen in the Genealogical Line of Israel.

As the storyline of the coming offspring develops through Genesis, the roots of this family tree become discernable. Alexander posits that the central focus of Genesis is the tracing of this promised seed coming through a unique family line which enjoys a special relationship with God.¹⁵ This lineage begins with the broad scope of humanity and narrows to one specific nation.

The Offspring to Prevail through Mankind in General

In obedience to God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28), Adam and Eve begin to have children. When Cain is born, perhaps Eve is professing her belief in the promised offspring by declaring, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD” (Gen 4:1).¹⁶ But rather than being the conqueror of the serpent, Cain proves to be “of the evil one and murdered his brother” (1 John 3:12). How soon the prophesied enmity is fulfilled—righteous Abel is dead and Cain is a murderer. Hope that this trend might be reversed is curbed by Cain’s descendant, Lamech, who also murders (Gen 4:23-24).

From this episode of death, God graciously gives Adam and Eve new life through the birth of another son, Seth (Gen 4:25). In contrast to the wicked descendants of Cain, Seth produces a lineage which actually calls upon the Lord and walks with God (Gen 4:23-26; 5:21-24). Genesis 5 traces Seth’s descendants to Lamech, the father of Noah. Lamech professes faith in the promise of Genesis 3:15 by naming his son “Noah” in hopes that he may be the offspring of the woman who brings “relief” from the curse upon creation (Gen 5:28-29).

¹⁵T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 101.

¹⁶James M. Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 250.

However, the battle rages on as the seed of Satan continues to wreak havoc among the human population. Whatever the method, Genesis 6:1-4 mentions the proliferation of ungodly offspring which increases man's contention against God (Gen 6:3 NIV). Satan's influence is so pervasive that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). Satan has such a stranglehold on mankind that God declares catastrophic destruction of the earth with a flood (Gen 6:5-7). At a time when it appears Satan has polluted the seed line and defeated God's glory in creation, there is a sliver of hope: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8). Noah is obedient to the promises of God, and God graciously puts his favor on him. Noah and his family alone are preserved in the judgment of the flood (Gen 6-9; Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20). The battle is not over. God's glory is still viable. God's redemptive plan is preserved. God has prevailed.

The Offspring to Prevail through a Specific Nation

Noah's descendants fail to replenish the earth with God's glory (Gen 9:1, 7) and instead unify to develop the rebellious, man-centered society known as Babel (Gen 11). God brings another judgment on man by confusing his language and the different nations of the world are born. From these different nations God chooses one man, Abram, from Noah's son, Shem (Gen 11:10-26), to begin God's chosen nation (Gen 12:1-3). God will implement several major elements of his redemptive plan through this nation called Israel: first, to proclaim God's name and God's glory to all the earth (Gen 12:3; Num 14:21; Pss 1; 2; 67; 72; Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14); second, to demonstrate that those who follow Jehovah are blessed and those who rebel are cursed (Exod 20:3; Deut 7; 11:26-28; 28; Ps 2); third, to designate a people to receive and record God's revelation (Deut 4:7-8; Ps 147:19-20; John 4:22; Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2); and fourth, to provide a lineage through whom the promised offspring/Messiah will come (Gen 3:15; Matt 1; 17:5; Gal 3:8, 16). God promises Abraham that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him (Gen

12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:3-5; 28:13-14). This promise directly links Abram to God's created purpose of filling the earth with his image and glory (Gen 1:27-28; 9:1, 7) and to bring the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. Mathews makes this connection: "As the two parts of an hourglass are joined by a slender neck, the role of this one man connects the universal setting of [Genesis] 1-11 and the worldwide vista of the promissory call."¹⁷

However, Abram's wife, Sarai, is barren. In their human wisdom, this couple conspires for Abram to have a child with their servant, Hagar, and Ishmael is born (Gen 16). God makes it clear, however, that he will accomplish his purposes through the miraculous birth of Isaac, who is born to Abraham¹⁸ and Sarah in their old age (Gen 17:15-21; 21:1-13). The bitter rivalry that ensues between Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 21:10) harkens back to the seed conflict of Genesis 3:15. Eventually, when Abraham passes the test of faith in sacrificing Isaac (which is a type¹⁹ of the subsequent Messiah), further affirmation is given that it is through Isaac that God's chosen offspring will come (Gen 22:15-18). God has magnified himself by choosing to build his nation from a childless couple. In the face of impossibility, God produces life within the dead womb of ninety-year old Sarah, and the seed line continues by God's prevailing power.

With a desire to preserve the godly line, Abraham sends Isaac away to marry a woman from his family rather than a Canaanite. God leads Isaac to marry Rebekah and they have two sons, Esau and Jacob (Gen 24-25). God prophesies the younger Jacob will be the one to continue the promised lineage, and Esau will serve him (Gen 25:23). The sibling rivalry that results is another display of the enmity of Genesis 3:15 (Gen 25-27). Just as his father had done with him, Isaac instructs Jacob to take a wife from Abraham's

¹⁷Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27—50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 105.

¹⁸God emphasizes his covenant with Abram by changing his name from Abram, meaning "exalted father," to Abraham, meaning "father of a multitude" (Gen 17:5).

¹⁹See the definition of "type; typology" in chap. 1 of this work, under "Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations," 10-11.

family (Gen 28:1-5). However, the nations that descend from Esau become enemies against Jacob/Israel, God's chosen lineage (Gen 15:18-20; 27:46; 36:1-43; Exod 23:22-23; 34:11-16) and continue to this present day.

The Offspring to Prevail through a Specific Tribe

Jacob marries his uncle Laban's two daughters and their concubines (Gen 29:1-30). From these four women come the twelve sons of Jacob, which ultimately become the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 29:31-30:24; 35:16-18). Jacob and his family eventually settle in Egypt where Joseph, Jacob's eleventh son, is vizier (Gen 37-50). As Jacob nears death he pronounces blessings upon his twelve sons (Gen 49). The first three sons are disqualified from family leadership because of sin, Joseph receives the actual birthright (1 Chr 5:1-2), but the right to rule comes down to the fourth son, Judah (Gen 49:8-10).

Judah, however, is not sinless. The Joseph narrative is found in Genesis 37-50, but an interesting insertion is made of Judah's story and his sin in Genesis 38. Judah's only daughter-in-law, a Gentile named Tamar, is twice widowed without any descendant for Judah. Later on, Judah hires a prostitute not knowing it is Tamar, and twins (Zerah and Perez) are conceived from the union. In spite of this sin, Judah is designated as family leader (Gen 49:8-10).²⁰ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown state of the insertion of Genesis 38:

This chapter contains details, which probably would never have obtained a place in the inspired record, had it not been to exhibit the full links of the chain that connects

²⁰Possible explanations for this exception with Judah include the following: (1) This is another example of God's sovereignty in election (Deut 7:6-8; Rom 9). (2) Perhaps the sins of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were more public and brought shame on the family name (Gen 34:30-31; 35:22), but Judah's sin was private and personal. (3) Perhaps Judah demonstrated repentance (Gen 38:26), but his three elder brothers did not. (4) Judah had taken a leading role in sparing Joseph's life (Gen 37:26-27). (5) Judah proved himself to be the spokesman and leader of the brothers when he offered himself as the scapegoat in place of Benjamin, which he did out of respect to his father, Israel (Gen 34:14-34). (6) Eventual truths of salvation are evidenced in this story, such as: God's inclusion of sinners, women, the childless, the hopeless, and Gentiles into his family.

the genealogy of the Saviour with Abraham; and in the disreputable character of the ancestry who figure in this passage, we have a remarkable proof that “He made himself of no reputation” [Php 2:7].²¹

This significant story is later linked to God’s overall plan in the story of Ruth (Ruth 4:11-12, 18-22) and in Jesus Christ’s lineage in Matthew 1:1-6, and Luke 3:31-34.

Returning to Jacob’s blessings on his sons, and specifically upon Judah to be the kingly line, Genesis 49 records:

[8] Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you. [9] Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? [10] The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

The prophecy, “Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies” (v. 8), ultimately bridges the span from the serpent crusher of Genesis 3:15 to the conquering “Lion of Judah” in Revelation 5:5. Verse 9 is the first mention of the title “lion” in relation to Judah. Verse 10 foreshadows a promised descendant from Judah who will rule with a scepter and all people will be obedient to him.

Genesis is foundational to John’s biblical theology and understanding of the title given to Jesus in Revelation 5, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Alexander states the importance of Genesis to the rest of the Bible’s story:

The book of Genesis not only intimates that this lineage will eventually give rise to a royal dynasty, but also anticipates that a future member of this line will conquer his enemies and mediate God’s blessing to the nations of the earth. Such expectations are clearly important for appreciating how the book of Genesis contributes to the NT understanding of Jesus Christ.²²

With God’s promise to Abraham, and passed on to Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, the promised messianic lineage narrows from the nation of Israel down to one tribe which God has

²¹Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1:39.

²²T. D. Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (1997): 367.

chosen for this task. The promised seed line of Genesis 3:15 has been developing throughout biblical history, but so has the enmity against it. As God focuses his attention on this lineage, Satan focuses his attack.²³ Yet, God’s plan remains intact regardless of the opposition.

The Offspring to Prevail through a Specific Family

As the storyline progresses, the offspring’s lineage has been refined from the broad scope of humanity down to one nation—Israel, then to one tribe within that nation—Judah. Now that focus becomes even clearer as the offspring is prophesied to come through one specific family within Judah—the house of David.

Israel’s history spans from the exodus, the wilderness wandering,²⁴ the conquest of Canaan, to the time of the judges. Out of virtual unimportance and dismal circumstances, the messianic lineage remains unbroken through the story of Ruth. God sovereignly orchestrates the marriage of Ruth, a Moabitess proselyte to Jehovah, to an honorable man of Judah named Boaz. The elders of Bethlehem-Judah affirm this marriage by pronouncing the fruitful blessing of the house of Jacob/Israel and of Judah (Ruth 4:11-12; Gen 29; 30; 35:16-18; 38:29-30). Boaz enacts the salvific overtones of the kinsman redeemer, and he and Ruth become ancestors of the great King David (Ruth 4:18-20). Regarding this segment of the lineage, Duguid says,

This genealogy links the events of the story with the line that would build the house

²³See appendix 3.

²⁴Hamilton observes, “Genesis leads readers to expect Yahweh’s defeat of evil to be accomplished through a seed of the woman, seed of Abraham, seed of Jacob, and perhaps seed of Joseph or Judah. Unexpectedly, however, the seed of the woman in the book of Exodus [Moses] is raised up from the house of Levi (Ex. 2:1). This sets an important pattern, as the one who leads Israel to deliverance is from the tribe of the priests and serves as a prophet. Moreover, he is raised in the royal house of Egypt. In a sense, the seed of the woman through whom the seed of the serpent is crushed in the book of Exodus, bringing salvation for the people of God . . . is a prophet, a priest, and a king.” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 107. In the choice of Moses as leader of God’s people, God is unfolding different layers of his plan. Rather than being restrained to a strict genealogical line, God brings forth a deliverer who represents the “offices” of the Messiah.

of Israel more than any family since the time of Jacob, the line of David. . . . The themes of blessing, name, offspring, and the building of a house of Israel resonate with deep chords in the history of God's people. These themes go all the way back to God's promise to Abraham of a great name and a great nation that would come from his offspring, so that all the peoples on earth would find a blessing for themselves in him (Gen. 12:1-3).²⁵

Through famine, death, barrenness, and bitterness in the story of Ruth, God's plan prevails.

Israel moves into its era of human kingship. Upon the shameful reign of King Saul (1 Sam 8-15), God "sought a man after his own heart" (1 Sam 13:14). David, from the prescribed tribe of Judah (1 Sam 16:1-2; Gen 38:24-30; 49:8-10; Ruth 4:17-22), becomes king of the Jews. In another display of God's sovereign intervention, David ascends the throne out of relative obscurity. David is the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, and an irrelevant shepherd (1 Sam 16). With God's blessing, David becomes king and leads the kingdom of Israel to its largest extent to date (2 Sam 5-10). God establishes his covenant with David (2 Sam 7). This covenant transcends David's life span and promises that one will not fail to sit on David's throne, and his kingdom will be established forever (2 Sam 7:12-16). The Davidic Covenant directly incorporates the messianic offspring of Genesis 3:15 into David's posterity. In his psalms and prayers of gratitude, David recognizes God has graciously included him in the overarching plan for God's name to be magnified forever (2 Sam 7:18-29; Pss 2; 67; 89; 110; 132). Bergen shows how the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7 is connected with the promise made to Judah:

The Lord's words spoken here demonstrate him to be the promise-keeping God; having prophetically placed the scepter in Judah hundreds of years earlier (Gen. 49:10), he here secured its place within that tribe "until he comes to whom it belongs." Through the prophetic pronouncements of this chapter David is made the founder of the only royal family the Lord would ever sanction in perpetuity; not only would he become the source of all Israel's uniquely favored dynastic line, but he would become the standard by which his descendants would be judged.²⁶

²⁵Ian M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 186.

²⁶Robert Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 336-37.

God's promised offspring will come through David, who is linked with Judah, Judah to Abraham, Abraham to Noah, Noah to Adam, and Adam to Genesis 3:15.

The serpent rears its head in enmity against God's king and the kingly line by luring David into adultery and murder (2 Sam 11). David pays four-fold for his sin which manifests itself in the deaths and/or rebellion of four of his sons (2 Sam 12-18; 1 Kgs 1). Yet through these calamities, the lineage endures through David's son, Solomon.

The Offspring to Prevail through the Divided Kingdom

Before his death, God had told David to appoint Solomon as the successor to his throne (1 Kgs 1; 1 Chr 22:6-10). Under Solomon, Israel experiences the zenith of its empire (1 Kgs 10:23). But in his old age, Solomon's heart was turned toward other gods and this began a downward spiral for the Davidic dynasty (1 Kgs 11). God decrees to take the kingdom of Israel away from Solomon, yet leaves him one tribe for David's sake (1 Kgs 11:9-13). Solomon's son, Rehoboam, rules foolishly and the ensuing revolt tears the kingdom from the house of David (1 Kgs 12). Ten of the twelve tribes rebel against the Davidic kingship and establish their own kingdom in northern Israel. Jeroboam becomes king of the ten tribes and institutes a system of idolatry from which northern Israel never recovers (1 Kgs 12:25-33). Eventually, God will send the Assyrians to deport the ten northern tribes and they will never again be a recognizable entity (2 Kgs 16-17). In the meantime, the tribe of Judah and a portion of Benjamin continue as a lamp to David in the southern kingdom known as Judah (1 Kgs 11:34-36; 12:20-24; 2 Kgs 18-23).²⁷ Through the chaos of civil war and the sin of apostasy, God's promised lineage

²⁷The tribe of Benjamin was nearly extinguished towards the end of the judges (Judg 20-21). Their tribal territory overlapped what became the dividing line between the northern and southern kingdoms in Israel. The city of Bethel, where Jeroboam set up one of his golden calves, belonged to Benjamin (Josh 18:11-14; 1 Kgs 12:28-29). Yet, Rehoboam gathered some Benjamites to fight with him against Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:21-24). Thus, the tribe of Benjamin was split between north and south. The Levites originally were spread throughout all the tribes of Israel but returned to the kingdom of Judah once Jeroboam in the north had cast them out and appointed his own priests (2 Chr 11:13-16). The grouping of these three tribes as part of Judah is also seen in their return from Babylonian captivity (Ezra 1:5).

through the Davidic line is still alive and God's plan is sustained.

Another dark chapter in Judah's history is the near extinction of the kingly line under Queen Athaliah approximately 100 years into the divided kingdom (2 Kgs 8:16-29; 9:27-28; 10:12-14; 11). With the deaths of both her husband and her son as the rightful kings of Judah, Queen Athaliah assumes the throne and attempts to secure her crown by massacring all potential heirs (2 Kgs 11:1). God intervenes in the midst of this carnage and a single baby boy named Joash (Jehoash) is rescued (2 Kgs 11:2-3). When Joash is seven years old, he is brought out of hiding to become king, and Queen Athaliah is overthrown (2 Kgs 11:4-20). Wiseman notes, "By such a narrow margin the lamp of David (see 1 Ki. 11:36; Ps. 132:17) was almost extinguished. But God had promised that he would never fail to provide an heir to David (Ps. 89:36)."²⁸ Satan's seed had reduced the messianic line to just one male child, but God's plan and covenant with David prevail.

The prophet, Isaiah, comes on the scene some 200 years into the divided kingdom. He uses the "root of David" terminology to vividly prophesy God's dealings with the line of David at this stage. Isaiah's ministry begins under King Uzziah, and although Judah experiences material prosperity, she is in further decline spiritually (Isa 1-5). In the year King Uzziah dies, God calls Isaiah to preach repentance to people who will not listen (Isa 6:1-10), and because Judah will persist in idolatry, Jehovah will cut her off (Isa 6:11-12). It appears the last thread of the messianic line through David is about to be severed. But in this dismal state of being cut off God declares a "stump" remains and, "The holy seed is its stump" (Isa 6:13).²⁹ In the midst of this judgment there is still salvation, as Oswalt indicates:

²⁸Donald J. Wiseman, *1, 2 Kings*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 9 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 231.

²⁹This sheds light on Ezra 9. Upon return from Babylonian captivity to Judah, Ezra is grieved at the intermarriage of the Jews during captivity. The people respond to Ezra's instructions to divorce their Gentile spouses in order to preserve the remnant of holy seed. See Ezra 9:2 as a key verse.

Utter desolation is sure, but that desolation is not the end. There will be offspring holy to the Lord, for the Lord is not finished with Israel. God's promise to Abraham to bless the nations through his offspring is not to be forgotten (cf. 49:19, 32).

In this sense, the chapter is much like the book of Amos, which, while filled with judgment, nonetheless ends on a hopeful note. This is not to deny or in any way to mitigate the force of the judgment, but it is to say that in God's overall purposes judgment is never his last word.³⁰

Under the subsequent reigns of Jotham and Ahaz in Judah, not only is Assyria emerging as a world power, but also northern Israel and Syria threaten to invade Judah (2 Kgs 15). In these dark days God gives the sign of Immanuel (Isa 7:10-17) and reiterates the promise of a divine child to be born who will give light, defeat enemies, and sit on David's throne forever (Isa 9:1-7).

But before these promises of Messiah are realized, Judah will indeed bear judgment for her sins. Judah will be "cut off" from the head (leaders) to the tail (the lowly) fulfilling God's warning to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:36-44 (Isa 9:13-17). From the human perspective, this being cut off must look like the end. Man is too sinful and is a lost cause. Surely, Satan must win. But the story is not over, for in Isaiah 11 God declares:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, . . . They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. (Isa 11:1-2, 9-10)

New life will issue from this apparently dead stump of David. Consistent with his promise in Isaiah 6:13, the holy seed will sprout from this stump of Jesse to be the ultimate king who leads his people into God's righteousness.³¹ This holy seed will not

³⁰John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 191.

³¹Jeremiah records the judgment of Babylonian captivity upon Judah and the curse upon King Coniah (Jeconiah/Jehoiachin - 2 Kgs 24:6-17; 2 Chr 36:9-10) which declares none of his descendants will sit on David's throne (Jer 22:24-30). Upon this decree which makes an end of Judean kingship, God gives Jeremiah the same promise of a righteous Branch to sprout from David and execute justice (Jer 23:5-8). Luke records Christ's right to the Davidic throne through the bloodline of Mary, but going back to Solomon's brother, Nathan, rather than through Solomon, thus bypassing this curse (Luke 3:31-32). Jesus

only be a descendent of David, but Isaiah 11:10 states it is also his “root,” or ancestor. This passage demonstrates Messiah’s humanity as a human descendant of David, but also his divinity as being pre-existent to David.³² Furthermore, Isaiah reiterates God’s purpose in creation that all nations of the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. This purpose was declared to Adam (Gen 1:28), Noah (Gen 9:7), Abraham (Gen 12:3), and Judah (Gen 49:10). God’s purposes may be threatened, but still survive through the Davidic line.

The Offspring to Prevail through Suffering

In the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 53, Messiah, as the root of David, will rise up out of the dry ground only to be cut off through suffering (v. 2) and Messiah will be led like a lamb to the slaughter (v. 7). But this lamb’s death is the supreme sacrifice for the sin of mankind (v. 8) and completely satisfies the wrath and justice of God (vv. 10-11). And just when one thinks this is the end for a noble martyr, Jehovah promises to raise him from the dead—Messiah will see his offspring and his days will be prolonged (v. 10).

Here the significance of Revelation 5 comes back into play. Beale and McDonough link the significance of Isaiah 53 to Revelation 5:

The Isa. 53 background especially highlights the atoning aspect of the lamb’s sacrificial death and also applies the metaphors of “root” (cf. Rev 5:5) and “lamb” to the sacrificial victim. In fact, “root” occurs also in Isa. 11:1, 10 (alluded to in

circumvents this curse by being conceived of the Holy Spirit rather than Joseph, who was a descendent of Coniah (Luke 1:30-35; Matt 1:11-16).

³²Easley comments, “In Isaiah 11:10, the coming Messiah is called the *ancestor* or ‘root of Jesse,’ who was King David’s father: ‘In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples.’ (In Isaiah 11:1, the same Messiah is called the *Branch or descendant* of Jesse. How the Messiah could be both *Root* and *Branch* of Jesse was a mystery until it was fulfilled in Jesus.) On the basis of Isaiah 11:10 we understand that the ‘Root [ancestor] of Jesse’ is also the Root [ancestor] of David. The two titles of Jesus, then, point in the direction of both his deity (as the ultimate divine source of David) and his humanity (as the royal lion from Judah).” Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 12 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 92. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus directly declares, “I am the root and the descendant of David,” which fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy.

Rev. 5:5), which may have inspired attraction to the same metaphor in [Isa.] 53:2. . . . The sacrificial victim's prophesied sinlessness in Isa. 53:9 partly underlies the "worthiness" of Jesus in [Rev.] 5:9 ("worthy are you . . . because you were slain").³³

In Revelation 5, John's mind races across the annals of history and traces the thread of the suffering Messiah who satisfies God's wrath. As it occurs so often throughout the story, just when it seems God's plan has been cut off, a Root is resurrected to maintain the vitality of that plan. For John, when it seemed no one was found worthy, Jesus is brought forward as the conquering Root of David and Lamb slain to redeem us to God (Rev 5:5-12).

The Offspring Is Identified as Jesus throughout the New Testament

Overviewing redemptive history, God's plan in Genesis 3:15 has progressed from mankind in general, to a specific nation, to a specific tribe, and to a specific family. Now moving into the first century, God's offspring comes as one individual, the person of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3 specifically attaches Jesus Christ to Abraham, and to the singular offspring of the woman of Genesis 3:15. In Galatians 3:8 and 3:14, Paul fixes Jesus as the fulfillment of Genesis 12:3 by identifying Jesus as the offspring of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed. Verse 16 emphasizes the potential blessing of salvation comes to all peoples through a singular offspring from Abraham, "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ." Fung demonstrates Paul's understanding of the comprehensive nature of this fulfillment:

Paul is speaking from the standpoint of fulfilled prophecy in the conviction that the

³³G. K. Beale and Sean McDonough, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1101.

“issue” [or, “seed”] of the original promise can, in the event, refer only to Christ. According to Paul’s reading of history, then, Christ “is the true Heir of the promise, of the universal inheritance, and He determines the fellow-heirs”—as vv. 26-29 will show.³⁴

The overarching plan for God to bring the promised offspring into the world is pinpointed upon the person of Jesus Christ.

Definitive connections are made between Jesus, Abraham, and David in the Gospels. The purpose of Matthew’s letter is to convince a Jewish audience that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the promised Son of David and, hence, the Christ. It is of no minor import he begins with the genealogy which directly relates Jesus to David and to Abraham (Matt 1:1, 6-7, 17, 20). Roberts points out,

At first sight we may feel that a genealogy is an uninspiring way to start the New Testament, but, if we remember God’s promises, we will be on the edge of our seats as soon as we read the words: ‘a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Matthew 1:1). He is the one who fulfills the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 and to David in 2 Samuel 7.³⁵

At Jesus’ baptism God the Father announces Jesus with the term, “my beloved Son” (Matt 3:16-17). This affirmation links Jesus to God calling Israel his son (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1), to God’s reference of David as his son (Ps 89:26-29), and to the Messianic prophecies of God’s Son in Psalm 2. Matthew also records the many people Jesus healed who recognized Jesus as the Son of David (Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30), and the crowd who hailed him as Son of David at his triumphal entry (Matt 21:9). Similarly, Luke connects Jesus to David at the announcement of his birth (Luke 1:27, 32-33), Zechariah’s praise (Luke 1:69), Mary and Joseph’s taxation (Luke 2:4, 11), Jesus’ genealogy (Luke 3:31), and healing of the blind man (Luke 18:38-39). Each of the synoptic gospels records Jesus challenging the religious leaders as to the meaning of

³⁴Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 156.

³⁵Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 107.

Psalm 110 regarding how the Christ can be called both David's Lord and his son (Matt 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44).³⁶

The link between David and Jesus is also emphasized throughout the remainder of the New Testament. At the establishment of the Church, an essential part of the apostle's message was that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Son of David (Acts 2:29-36; 13:22-23; 15:12-18). Paul pens the same in his epistles (Rom 1:3-6; 15:8-13; 2 Tim 2:8). At the close of inspired revelation, Jesus identifies himself as the fulfillment of both Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10, "I, Jesus, . . . I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star" (Rev 22:16). And in Revelation 5, the elder concretely affixes the title "Root of David" to Jesus, the only one worthy of the accolade.

With all the inspired writings as biblical proof, this "Lion of Judah, and the Root of David" is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain, is the only one eligible to be "worthy . . . to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev 5:12).

God's Plan Prevails through the Earthly Ministry of Christ

It is inherent that to prevail, there must be something or someone over which to prevail; to have a conqueror, there must be the conquered; to have salvation, there must be a judgment from which to be saved. One of the great mysteries of God in creation is, "Why does evil exist?" This is a noteworthy and lengthy study for another occasion, but suffice it here to say that in order for God to be glorified in salvation, he has to punish evil and those who commit it.³⁷ The brightness of God's glory in salvation is magnified

³⁶This question is answered with an understanding of Isa 11 regarding Messiah being both the "Root" and "Branch" of David. (See pp. 26-27 of this project.)

³⁷God is completely holy; therefore, evil did not originate with God (Gen 1:31; Lev 19:2; Isa 6:3; Hab 1:13; 1 Pet 1:16). God did allow for created beings to have a free will and choose between good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). Therefore, evil, pain, suffering, and death are the results of Satan's and man's rebellion against God (Gen 3; Jas 1:13-18). Ultimately, the question of "Why did God allow evil?" remains

against the dark backdrop of his judgment on sin. Hamilton states,

Salvation always comes through judgment. Salvation for the nation at the Exodus came through the judgment of Egypt, and this pattern is repeated throughout the Old Testament, becoming paradigmatic even into the New. When God saves his people, he delivers them by bringing judgment on their enemies. This is not limited to the Old Testament enemies such as the Philistines. At the cross, the ruler of this world was cast out (John 12:31). At the consummation, Jesus will come to afflict those who afflict his people (2 Thess. 1:6).³⁸

God's eternal purpose in creation is to glorify himself in the salvation of repentant men and the judgment of the wicked. Should anyone question God's character in judgment, his defense comes when God's own Son bore God's judgment against sin; thus, he is acquainted with our sorrows (Isa 53; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:9-10). This story has developed throughout redemptive history and reaches a fulfillment in Jesus Christ and his earthly ministry—namely, his life, his death, and his resurrection. Christ became a man to live the perfect life and satisfy the demands of God's law (Rom 5:18-21; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 4:14-16). Next, he became subject to death in order to pay the penalty of man's sin (Rom 3:20-26; 5:1-11; 6:23; 2 Cor 5:14-21; Heb 10:1-14). Then he defeated death by resurrecting to life again, proving that death has no power over him (John 10:17-18; Acts 2:23-24; Rom 6:9). This story of God reclaiming his glory from fallen creation begins to culminate in Revelation 5. Since the promised offspring has come to fulfill God's plan and has conquered death and Satan at the cross, the elder encourages John, "Weep no more." This study has shown the many times God has prevailed in the Old Testament, and that refrain continues into the New Testament.

God's Plan Prevails through the Life of Christ

Jesus, the Messiah, is born to humble, yet royal parents (Matt 1). The Genesis

a mystery. Scripture does teach, however, that God will glorify himself by defeating evil and providing victorious salvation to mankind. Even though evil exists, God does offer himself as the sacrifice to conquer evil, and God remains a sovereign, loving, saving, and good God (John 3:16; 19:28-30; Phil 2:5-11; 2 Cor 5:21; Titus 1:1-3; Heb 2:14-15; Rev 20:10-15; 21:1-7).

³⁸Hamilton, *God's Glory In Salvation through Judgment*, 57.

3:15 enmity is seen in Herod's attempt to kill the newborn Jesus, which mirrors Pharaoh's efforts in the days of Moses (Matt 2; Exod 1:15-22). Matthew and Luke list only three temptations against Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), but these seem to be only three categories of temptation (Gen 3:6; Matt 4:3, 5-6, 8-9; Eph 2:3; 1 John 2:16). The probability is that once Satan is one-on-one with the offspring who has been prophesied to crush him, he unleashes all the forces of hell against Jesus, but Jesus effectively resists (Luke 4:13; 22:52-53; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5-8). Jesus' ministry is fraught with conflict against demons. Begg and Ferguson state,

The reason there is so much demon possession in the time period recorded by the Gospels is not—as is sometimes assumed—that demon possession was commonplace then. In fact it was not. Rather, the land then was demon-invaded because the Savior was marching to the victory promised in Genesis 3:15. And all hell was let loose in order to withstand him.³⁹

Jesus endures doubt from his own siblings (John 7:2-5), entrapment by scribes and priests (Luke 20:19-20), Pharisee's plots (Mark 2:23—3:2), hostile crowds (Matt 27:20-26), and a friend's betrayal (Matt 26:14-16). Throughout every encounter, Christ prevails (Heb 4:15).

God's Plan Prevails through the Death of Christ

Satan finally maneuvers men into the betrayal, arrest, trial, false accusations, and crucifixion of Jesus (Matt 26-27; John 13:2). Though ordained by God, human responsibility and enmity are involved in Jesus' death (Luke 22:3-6, 52-53; Acts 2:23, 36). Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46), may have given the serpent subtle hope. Then Jesus proclaims, "It is finished" (John 19:30), which, rather than a death cry in defeat is actually a shout of victory. God's judgment against sin is paid in full and God's wrath has been forever satisfied by the

³⁹Alistair Begg and Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Name above All Names* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 28.

substitutionary death of Christ (Isa 53:10-11; Col 2:13-15; Heb 10:1-18). Hamilton says,

Salvation for all believers of all ages is made possible by the judgment that falls on Jesus at the cross. The cross allows God to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:24-26). The cross of Christ, the climactic expression of the glory of God in salvation through judgment, is the turning point of the ages.⁴⁰

The price of sin now paid, salvation is available to all who respond to God's calling and put their faith in Christ. Those who believe and receive Christ's death as payment for their own sin are reconciled to God and become sons of God (John 1:12; Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1-2). From this one offspring, Christ, multitudes of men become God's offspring—spiritual offspring (Rom 8:9-14; Eph 2:11-22; Gal 3:28-29; Rev 5:9-10).

Duguid observes,

The result of Jesus' sacrifice is abundant seed, spiritual seed. . . . He has also been given a people for himself, a family of God's people that stretches across the continents and down through the centuries. Though he had no physical offspring of his own, the end result of his suffering and death was numerous spiritual offspring (Isa. 53:10). He is the King, not just of Israel, but of all nations, whose people come into his kingdom from north and south and east and west, redeemed by his blood, to the glory of God the Father.⁴¹

Romans 4 and Galatians 3 point out that becoming a child of God through faith connects the believer to Abraham and fulfills Genesis 12:3. The death of Christ has not terminated God's lineage, but rather proliferated it.

God's Plan Prevails through the Resurrection of Christ

Jesus' dead body is laid in the tomb. The disciples are perplexed. Satan sits in nervous anticipation. But the anxieties last only three days. Jesus rises from the dead, conquering death with life (Matt 28:1-6; 1 Cor 15:1-8). Satan may have perceived Christ's death to be a victory, but it was actually a divine reversal intended for his defeat

⁴⁰Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 57.

⁴¹Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, 189-90.

(John 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:9-15; Heb 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8). Christ's resurrection has always been in the eternal plan of God and is the axis of history (John 1:4-5; 17:1-5; Eph 1:3-14). His resurgence to life ushers in the beginning of the "last days" (John 5:25-29), and progresses towards a new creation in the culmination (Rev 21-22). Beale links Christ's resurrection between Genesis 49 and Revelation 5:5:

We will see . . . that the earliest interpretation of Gen. 49:10, . . . understands it to be an eschatological event in which an Israelite king gains victory over foes. . . . Likewise Rev. 5:5 ("the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah . . . has overcome") applies Gen. 49:9 to Jesus's resurrection, which inaugurated the end-time prophecy of the final resurrection.⁴²

Christ has risen from the dead. Sin and death are defeated. Weep no more.

At Pentecost, Peter preaches that Christ's resurrection and the coming of the Spirit mark the dawning of God's new day of salvation and reclamation of creation as prophesied (Acts 2:32-36; Isa 26:19-21; Ezek 37:13-14; Dan 12:1-2; John 3:5). Manson writes,

The supreme sign of the Eschaton is the Resurrection of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church. The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a sign which God has granted in favour of His son, but is the inauguration, the entrance into history, of the times of the End. . . . What had been predicted in Holy Scripture as to happen to Israel or to man in the Eschaton, has happened to and in Jesus. The foundation-stone of the New Creation has come into position.⁴³

The NT teaches Christ's resurrection was prophesied in the Scriptures (Acts 13:33-35; 26:22-23; 1 Cor 15:3-4, 20), and is the blessed hope of every believer (John 6:39-40; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:20-22; 2 Cor 4:14-17; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:1-3).

The significance of Christ's resurrection being the basis for the ultimate victory of God's people cannot be overstated, as Schreiner explains:

⁴²G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 99.

⁴³William Manson, "Eschatology in the New Testament," in *Eschatology: Four Papers Read to the Society for the Study of Theology*, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers 2 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1953), 6.

The promised resurrection of the age to come (i.e., the new creation) has dawned in Christ's resurrection. His resurrection is the first in history and also signals his sovereignty over death. . . . He once was dead, but he has conquered death and is now "the living one" who has triumphed over death forever (Rev. 1:18). . . . Jesus has not merely conquered death personally; he also holds "the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18). Death has not prevailed over Jesus, but rather Jesus has overcome death, so that it is now subjugated to him.⁴⁴

The powers of sin, death, hell, and Satan are defeated by Christ's resurrection. God's plan is prevailing and moving towards a new creation where he will rule victoriously.

God's Prevailing Plan Is Understood by the New Testament Authors

It is significant in Revelation 5:5 that the elder introduces Jesus by the names "Lion of Judah, Root of David." These titles connect Jesus as the promised "offspring" of Genesis 3:15. God's plan to bring Jesus as Messiah through human lineage has prevailed in spite of all Satan's enmity to destroy it. The NT plentifully identifies Jesus as the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. God's plan prevails through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The NT authors emphasize the significance of Jesus' redemptive work as the foundation for the ultimate victory in God's prevailing plan.

God's prevailing plan is understood by John. John gives considerable attention to the theme of victory in his writings. In the preamble of his gospel, John gives the magnificent introduction of Jesus as the eternal Word and agent of creation, and then overtures the theme of Christ's victory, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5). Michaels comments,

Right from the start it is clear that a confrontation between light and darkness has taken place once and for all, and that the light has emerged victorious. The light shines on in the darkness, and the writer will now proceed to narrate how this all came about.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 426-27.

⁴⁵J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 57.

In what is perhaps the most recognizable passage in all of Scripture, John 3:16 shows Messiah came so that those who believe in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. John records Jesus' words to his disciples to be of good cheer because he has overcome the world (John 16:33). In his first epistle John declares, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). He then admonishes his audience to likewise persevere, "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5). In the apocalypse, John records God's ultimate victory when the devil, Death, and Hades are cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever and ever (Rev 20:10-15). In the new creation, all former things are passed away, all things are made new, and there is no more death (Rev 21:1-7).

God's prevailing plan is understood by Paul. Victory through Christ is a dominant subject in Paul's epistles. In the prelude of Romans, Paul lays the foundation of his gospel treatise. In Romans 1:3-5, the apostle distinctly identifies Jesus Christ as the human descendant of David, the divine Son of God, and the descendant of Judah from Genesis 49:10 whom all the nations will obey. Not only is Jesus' identity important, but so is his resurrection—which saturates the gospel with victory. Boa and Kruidenier mention,

Paul said, the Lord who by the power of God conquered death and the grave. What good news would there be in a gospel that is based on "bad news"—the news that the promised Messiah was killed, and his kingdom apparently with it? It is therefore the resurrection of Christ that puts the "good" in the good news.⁴⁶

In Romans 8, Paul instructs that all things will work to God's good for the elect, that nothing can separate the elect from God's love, and that they too are conquerors through

⁴⁶Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 24.

Christ (Rom 8:28-39). Colossians 2:15 proclaims God wrought victory through Christ's death on the cross, "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." Even though the believer wrestles against Satan's forces, he is assured to overcome (Eph 6:10-20). Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection and ultimate victory of each believer (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:50-58; 2 Cor 4:14-18). Paul anticipates rewards given to believers who, like Christ, persevere to the end (Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Tim 4:8).

God's prevailing plan is understood by the other New Testament authors.

Peter encourages his suffering Christians that Christ's resurrection guarantees them an eternal inheritance reserved for them in heaven and being guarded by God's power, and the outcome of their faith will be the salvation of their souls (1 Pet 1:3-9). Peter then exhorts believers to endure through suffering because Christ has also suffered in order to bring believers to God. Christ has secured victory through his death and resurrection so that every power is subjected to him (1 Pet 3:18-22). In his second epistle, Peter assures believers as they supplement their faith there will be a richly provided entrance into Christ's kingdom (2 Pet 1:3-11). The author of Hebrews reassures that Christians are being helped by the same power by which Christ destroyed the works of the devil (Heb 2:14-18). James speaks of the crown of life given to all who overcome temptation (Jas 1:12), and to be patient and steadfast like Job, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (Jas 5:7-12).

The melody line of victory can be heard throughout redemptive history and is underscored in the New Testament. Hamilton writes,

It's almost as though God repeatedly gives a head start to the opponent who will never outrun him. Satan always *seems* to have the upper hand. The seed of the serpent are always impressive by worldly standards, and they don't shrink from draconian tactics: Cain kills Abel; wicked Israelites reject Moses; Saul persecutes David; the Jewish leadership crucifies Jesus; and the world has treated Christians the way it responded to Jesus. But God raises the dead, and if something is

impossible with man, all things are possible with God. So in the face of what appears to be the triumph of the wicked, all the weakness and folly of love and humility and joy and hope show the power and wisdom of the true and living God, against whom no foe can prevail.⁴⁷

That melody reaches a crescendo in Revelation 5 as God nears his final and decisive victory. Just when it seems no one can be found worthy and God's judgment on unbelievers may have to be suspended, the elder cries out, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5). Jesus Christ is God's only Son, the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15, the Lamb of God slain to satisfy God's wrath and redeem mankind unto God. Because of these designations, Jesus Christ is worthy to cast judgment against the wicked. Patterson notes,

[Jesus Christ] has triumphed and here the word is once again *nikaō*, the very same word used for overcomers in the letters to the seven churches in chaps. 2 and 3. The reference is surely to the atonement and resurrection; and because of those accomplishments he has been deemed entirely able and worthy to loose the seven seals.⁴⁸

No doubt John's weeping turns to rejoicing as he recognizes and records the significance of these titles. Because Jesus is the Lion of Judah, and the Root of David, and has overcome every possible flaming dart of the devil to preserve God's salvation and judgment, every believer should "weep no more."

Conclusion

The elder in Revelation 5 identifies Jesus as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" for very specific reasons. As in a bridge, these two titles are the support cables which link Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 5:5. To blend these two titles together shows that Jesus Christ incorporates all the essential designations to be the conquering

⁴⁷Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 36.

⁴⁸Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, The New American Commentary, vol. 39 (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 166.

hero of God's transcendent drama. Emlet says,

If you read the Bible from cover to cover you realize that it narrates (proclaims!) a true and cohesive story: the good news that through Jesus Christ God has entered history to liberate and renew the world from its bondage to sin and suffering. This is the story of God, who pursues the restoration of his creation at the cost of his own life. He is making all things new (Rev.21:5)! That's the simple and yet profound, life- and world-altering plotline of the Bible.⁴⁹

Jesus is worthy to open the scrolls of judgment because he has satisfied the requirements for salvation and judgment in the face of overwhelming opposition. Christ has overcome all Satan's assaults and will redeem all who believe in Christ. Believers are reconciled to live with God in perfect fellowship—exactly like God intended from before the foundation of the world. Through the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, God will finish what he started.⁵⁰

Why does this study matter? Because when the ungodly have seized our society, and when it seems all hope is gone, Christians can hold on to the faith—Christ will prevail. Köstenberger and O'Brien state this is the spirit of the book of Revelation:

[Revelation] may best be described as a call for 'patient endurance on the part of the saints' (14:12). Notably, it is Jesus, the crucified, risen and exalted Lord, who reveals the prophecies of this book to the suffering church. The Jesus who overcame suffering, even death, the Lamb who was also the Lion, is now encouraging his suffering saints from heaven to persevere until the end and to preserve purity and faithfulness in an unclean society characterized by compromise.⁵¹

Today, the offspring of Satan manifests itself against the people of God in a variety of ways. The ungodly of the world in general, and of our community specifically, make life difficult or dangerous for the people of God. We struggle to maintain an eternal perspective—we fear; we doubt; we weep. Yet it is at times like this, when all hope seems

⁴⁹Michael Emlet, *Cross Talk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro NC: New Growth Press, 2009), 41.

⁵⁰See appendix 7.

⁵¹Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 244.

gone, that God steps into the scene and seizes the victory. Let us take heart—our faith is in the overcoming Lion of Judah, and Root of David.

In the essence of biblical theology, Paul instructs,

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 15:4-6)

Paul assures believers that it is with much tribulation we will enter the kingdom (Acts 14:22), but we will enter. Jesus himself confirms that we will have tribulation, then adds, “But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). We know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Rom 8:35-39). The Christian can confidently face death because the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will also raise the believer (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:20-23; 2 Cor 4:14-17; 1 Thess 4:14).

Therefore, believers are not to grow weary (Gal 6:9). All who suffer with Christ will be glorified with him (Rom 8:17). Let us run the race with endurance, looking unto Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2). Let us remain steadfast under trial and receive the crown of life (Jas 1:12). Let us not be surprised by suffering, but rejoice that we share in Christ’s sufferings, and entrust our souls to our faithful Creator while doing good (1 Pet 4:12-19). Very soon, the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet (Rom 16:20). Very soon, the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever (Rev 11:15). Let us overcome and let us conquer (Rev 2-3) that we may obtain God’s precious promise with which he closes his revelation, “The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Rev 21:7). It is to this end we strive. Press on. Weep no more. Prevail to the end.

CHAPTER 3
THE PREVAILING PLAN OF GOD
THROUGH HIS PEOPLE

God is omnipotent and sovereign and will accomplish every one of his purposes in creation in spite of Satan's enmity against him. Yet, God is implementing this eternal plan through fickle, sinful men. God's plan will prevail through men whom he has chosen from before creation and who remain faithful to him. From this reality emerges discussion on the perseverance of the saints. Different dimensions of perseverance exist. The *ethical* sense of perseverance explains man's responsibility to endure, which Unger defines as "the duty and privilege of a Christian to continue steadfastly in obedience and fidelity to Christ, this is not in order to inherit eternal life, but to demonstrate love and gratitude to Christ for His great salvation (1 Cor 15:58; 1 Pet 1:10; Rev 3:2)."¹ Chapter 17 of The Westminster Confession defines a *theological* sense of perseverance:

This perseverance of the saints depends, not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.²

In other words, God's elect will persevere because their position in Christ assures their eternal salvation. Berkouwer shows a correlation between the ethical and theological dimensions of perseverance:

We will never be able to understand these words if we see the divine preservation

¹Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), s.v. "perseverance."

²"On the Perseverance of the Saints," in The Westminster Confession, accessed on November 1, 2016, <http://www.creeds.net/Westminster/c17.htm>.

and our preservation of ourselves as mutually exclusive or as in a synthetic cooperation. Preserving ourselves is not an independent thing that is added paradoxically to the divine preservation. God's preservation and our self-preservation do not stand in mere coordination, but in a marvelous way they are in correlation. One can formulate it best in this way: our preservation of ourselves is entirely oriented to God's preservation of us.³

Election and salvation are from God, and all those chosen by God will respond to God in saving faith and prevail in that faith which God provides.⁴

How God's sovereignty and man's free will work together may never be fully understood until the eternal state,⁵ but God is indeed incorporating his plan through his people, and God's chosen people will prevail in spite of Satan's attempts to destroy them. The perseverance of the saints is taught throughout Scripture and exemplified in the lives of believers in the New Testament, in church history, and in the modern era.

Perseverance of the Saints

Grudem defines perseverance of the saints as "all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again."⁶

Perseverance of the saints has several components, and four of them will be discussed here. The saints of God faithfully persevere unto the end of their lives or until Jesus returns because (1) they have been chosen for salvation unto God's glory, (2) they are

³G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Perseverance*, trans. Robert D. Knudsen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 104.

⁴It must be recognized that in no way does the believer's efforts in faith or perseverance earn merit with God—this would be salvation by works in addition to God's grace. Men are saved by God's grace alone (Eph 2:1-10).

⁵For further reference on God's sovereignty and man's free will, consult John Feinberg, et al., *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 788-89. Grudem clarifies, "It should be noted that this question is one on which evangelical Christians have long had significant disagreement. Many within the Wesleyan/Arminian tradition have held that it is possible for someone who is truly born again to lose his or her salvation, while Reformed Christians have held that that is not possible for someone who is *truly* born again. Most Baptists have followed the Reformed tradition at this point; however, they have frequently used the term '*eternal security*' or the '*eternal security of the believer*' rather than the term '*perseverance of the saints*.'"

indwelt by the Spirit of God, (3) they possess the gift of faith which prevails, and (4) they heed God's warnings against falling away.

Saints Prevail Because They Have Been Chosen for Salvation unto God's Glory

Chapter 2 of this project established that God's eternal plan is to glorify himself by redeeming fallen creation through his Son, Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3-14; 2:4-7; 3:7-11; 1 Pet 1:18-21).⁷ In a way that God divinely orchestrates, those who have been chosen by God are written in the book of life, respond to God's call, are born again unto eternal life, are preserved by God, and persevere faithfully to the end—all of which redounds to the glory of God (Rom 8:28-39; Eph 2:10; Phil 1:6; 1 Thess 5:23-24; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:1-3; 1 Pet 1:1-5; Rev 3:5; 4:9-11; 13:8; 21:27). The Puritan Thomas Watson says,

Here is a sovereign elixir of unspeakable comfort to those who are the called of God. Their salvation rests upon God's purposes. . . . They who are built upon this rock of God's eternal purpose, need not fear falling away; neither the power of man, nor the violence of temptation, shall ever be able to overturn them.⁸

In addition to the above Scripture references, John records several key passages which teach that the saint, chosen in God's eternal plan before the foundation of the world for God's glory, will persevere.

In teaching on the Bread of Life in John 6, Jesus shows God's sovereignty in election and man's response to God's call. Of particular emphasis are Jesus' words:

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. . . . No one can come to me unless the

⁷The whole of chap. 2 addresses this truth, but for an overview refer to pp. 14-16.

⁸Thomas Watson, *All Things for Good* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), 126-27.

Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:37-40, 44)

The Father chooses men, draws them, and gives them to the Son for salvation. Jesus carries out the Father's will and does not lose one whom the Father has given. Everyone who is drawn "will come" and "looks on the Son and believes" (John 6:37, 40). These individuals receive eternal life, will be raised on the last day, and will never be cast out.⁹ From before creation, this is the purpose the Son came down from heaven. It is evident that salvation is initiated, carried out, and secured by the Godhead. The sovereignty of God in salvation is the security of the saint. Since God will accomplish all his purposes for his glory, chosen souls are safeguarded within the Father's eternal plan.

In John 10:22-30, Jews gather around Jesus in the temple and urge him to declare plainly if he is the Christ. Jesus explains the reason they do not believe in him is "you are not among my sheep" (John 10:26). Then Jesus gives one of the most emphatic statements of the believer's eternal call and perseverance:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. (John 10:27-30)

Jesus is teaching the same truth here as in John 6:37-40. The Father has given specific sheep to the Son. The sheep respond by hearing his voice and following the Shepherd. Christ knows his sheep and gives them eternal life. The result is these sheep will never perish or be snatched from the hand of the Father or the Son. Sheep chosen by the Father and given to the Shepherd are securely sheltered in God's flock for eternity.

John 17 clearly demonstrates God's eternal purposes for his glorification through man's salvation. The setting is the eve of Christ's crucifixion. Jesus prays to the

⁹Later in the same chapter, many of Christ's disciples, including Judas, abandon Jesus (John 6:66-71). Jesus refers to Judas as "a devil," demonstrating that he was not chosen by God for salvation, but rather an offspring of the serpent working enmity against the promised Messiah. Later, while washing the disciples feet, Jesus clearly mentions Judas was not chosen for salvation (John 13:18-20). Even though one may walk within the circle of Christ and other disciples, unless he is born again he will pursue the expected course of his deprived nature, which is to rebel against and deny God.

Father declaring he has completed the Father's eternal will by securing all men whom the Father has given him so that they may share in the glory of the Father and the Son which existed before the world began (vv. 1-5, 10, 22). In addition to being chosen by God, Jesus declares these individuals have "kept," "received," and "believed" Christ and his words (vv. 6, 8). The salvific work Jesus fulfilled in John 17 is connected to his culminating work which John sees in the vision of Revelation. In Revelation 5, the celestial hosts praise Jesus, the Lion of Judah and the Root of David, because he has fulfilled God's plan of salvation and is worthy to judge the unrepentant. Harmon summarizes these key passages from John and Revelation:

[These and] other texts (John 10:18; 12:49-50; 14:30-31) testify to the redemptive agreement between the Father and the Son. But the texts considered above are sufficient to show not only that such an agreement exists, but also that it is the overarching framework in which the incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension must be understood. The ultimate goal of this agreement was to display the glory of the Father to all creation so that he would be worshiped. The Son executes this plan by redeeming those whom the Father has given to him through his life, death, resurrection and ascension. Because the Son accomplishes all the work that the Father sent him to do, his people will be one with the Father and the Son, seeing the glory that they share. As a result, both the Father and the Son receive unceasing praise in heaven now in anticipation of the day when all creation will acknowledge the glory of God displayed in the redemption of his people dwelling in a transformed cosmos.¹⁰

The eternal plan of God is to reveal his glory within the arena of creation. The means by which God will be glorified is the salvation of men. Therefore, those who have been chosen by God and given to the Son respond to God's call, receive new birth unto eternal life, are preserved by God, and persevere faithfully to the end—all of which redounds to the glory of God. The saint will persevere because he is interwoven into the fabric of God's eternal, prevailing plan.

¹⁰Matthew Harmon, "For the Glory of the Father and the Salvation of His People: Definite Atonement in the Synoptics and Johannine Literature," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 274.

Saints Prevail Because They Are Indwelt by the Spirit of God.

At creation, God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living creature (Gen 2:7). When man sinned, he incurred the penalty of spiritual death—the soul living in eternal separation from God (Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 20:12-15). But before creation God had determined to provide salvation from spiritual death through the vicarious death of his Son (Eph 1:3-14; 3:7-11; 1 Pet 1:18-21) and new life through God’s Spirit (John 3:3-5, 36). The restoration of spiritual life through God’s Spirit has always been in the plan of God and was prophesied throughout the OT (Isa 25:8-9; 26:19-21; Ezek 36:22-28; Dan 12:1-3) and realized in the NT (John 20:22; Acts 2).¹¹ God gives his Holy Spirit to believers to generate new birth, maintain obedient faith, and be a guarantee for their inheritance in God’s kingdom.

The Holy Spirit generates new birth in the believer. Men are dead in their sins and cannot respond to God’s calling unless they are revived (Eph 2:1-10). The Holy Spirit infuses spiritual life into dead men which causes them to be “born again,” or “regenerated,” and enables them to respond to God (John 1:12-13; Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 6:11; Titus 3:4-7). Puritan William Gurnall comments,

When a soul believes, then God’s eternal purpose and counsel concerning him (whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world) is brought to term. Can you imagine the love God has for a child He has carried so long in the womb of His eternal purpose? If God delighted in His plan before He spoke the world into being, how much greater is His delight to witness the full fruition of His labor: a believing soul! Having performed His own will thus far, God will surely raise all the power He has in that believer’s behalf, rather than be robbed of His

¹¹Much discussion exists as to how Jesus breathing the Spirit on his disciples John 20:22 relates to the filling of the Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2, and whether these texts describe two different endowments of the Spirit. Borchert answers this question with John’s overarching perspective of his gospel, “the evangelist views the life of Jesus as a whole. Therefore chronological sequences are not of primary concern to him. . . . John viewed the resurrection, the gift of the Spirit, and the ascension of Jesus as a unified event. . . . To view events holistically means that the story is told in such a way that the end is already part of the beginning. That also means that time sequences are not as important as meaning sequences. . . . Yet the one thing that becomes absolutely clear is that the Spirit is not merely given by the Father but also by the Son.” Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25B (Nashville: B & H Publishers, 2002), 308-09.

glory within a few steps of home. God showed us how much a soul is worth by the purchase price He paid. It cost Him dearly, and that which is so hard won will not be easily given up. He spent His Son's blood to purchase you, and He will spend His own power to keep you."¹²

This new birth is foreshadowed in Ezekiel 36 where God promises to return Judah from captivity with the blessing of a new heart and God's Spirit that causes them to obey God's rules (Ezek 36:22-28). In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that in order to see life and inherit the kingdom of God he must be "born again" (John 3:3, 36), which is to be born of "water and spirit" (John 3:5). Beale makes a connection between these two passages:

The idea of being "born again" in John 3 is likely tied to the OT concept of resurrection and thus to new creation. . . . Jesus responds [to Nicodemus' question] by explaining that the meaning of being "born again" is to be understood as a fulfillment of the prophecy from Ezek. 36. . . . Jesus appropriately terms the resurrection/new creation of the prophecy in Ezek. 36 as being "born again."¹³

New life through the Spirit is also called "eternal life" (John 3:16; 10:28; 17:2; 1 John 2:25; 5:11) and indicates the eventual resurrection of the believer. Sin brings physical death to every man (Gen 3:19; Rom 5:12; Heb 9:27), but man's eternal soul will live forever. Believers will be resurrected from physical death unto eternal life with God while unbelievers will be raised unto eternal separation from God (John 5:24-29). God's eternal Spirit within the saint assures him of future resurrection unto glory (Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 4:14). God's desire since the original creation has been for man to dwell with God. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit at regeneration is a foretaste of God dwelling with man in glorification at the culmination. Those who possess new, spiritual life through God's Spirit will prevail into eternity.

¹²William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 1:48.

¹³G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 235-36.

The Holy Spirit helps the believer maintain obedient faith. Souls dead in sin have no ability to know or obey God because they do not possess the Spirit of life (Ps 10:4; 1 Cor 2:1-16). Ezekiel 36:27 prophesied that God’s Spirit will empower God’s people in obedience. Jesus taught that the Spirit would be the “Helper” to assist disciples in keeping his commandments (John 14:15-17). Boice states, “The desire to do good comes from receiving the life of the Lord Jesus Christ within, which is regeneration.”¹⁴ The Holy Spirit empowers the believer in this new life to know, love, and obey God.

In Romans 5:1-2, Paul writes of the blessed standing believers have with God through salvation, which includes justification, peace, access, and joy. In verses 3-5, Paul adds that believers have the power to obey through suffering because the Holy Spirit provides no shame of the gospel and hope of eternal glory:

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom 5:3-5)

Lloyd-Jones comments on these verses and the importance of the Spirit’s role in perseverance:

But what is it exactly that enables us to [persevere]? . . . What is it that gives us an ultimate assurance of the blessed hope which will never fade away? The Apostle answers that question in his next assertion, . . . “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” . . . The whole idea of “shed abroad,” meaning “poured out,” is one of profusion and of abundance and of overflowing—torrents. . . . It is something that the Holy Spirit does to you. He sheds abroad in the heart the love of God, and this leads to certain inevitable results. . . . In other words, this is the highest form of assurance possible to the Christian.¹⁵

The Holy Spirit saturates the believer with the love of God, which results in the believer’s rejoicing, endurance, character, and hope. With Holy Spirit pouring into the believer to

¹⁴James M. Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 543.

¹⁵D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, An Exposition of Chapter 5: Assurance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 78-81.

produce this blessed hope, the believer will prevail to the end.

The ability to obey via the indwelling Spirit is also mentioned by Paul in Romans 8:9-11. Believers walk in the Spirit, which is “life because of righteousness.” Beale explains the importance for believers to live in obedience under the Spirit in order to persevere:

Paul and other writers emphasize the readers’ participation in eschatological realities in the midst of exhorting them to obedience to God. Those who merely profess to be saints, but are not truly regenerate, have no persevering desire to do God’s will because they do not have the power of the new creation to obey. Genuine eschatological saints have both the desire and the ability to obey and please God.¹⁶

Likewise, the Holy Spirit is the power behind each spiritual gift in the body of Christ, enabling the Christian to serve Christ through the church (1 Cor 12:1-13). New life and obedience through the Holy Spirit are two inseparable graces God has given the believer which allow him to persevere to the end.

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the believer’s inheritance in God’s kingdom. The Holy Spirit resides within the believer, thus the Christian becomes the temple/dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:14; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16). As such, the believer presently possesses eternal life, yet the fullness of God’s blessings in salvation are not entirely realized until the culmination (Rom 8:18; Phil 3:21; 2 Cor 4:7-18; 1 John 1:1-3).

In Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul instructs that those who have heard and believed the gospel “were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” Anders emphasizes that to be “sealed” with God’s Spirit indicates authority, authenticity, security, validation of ownership, and that the believer is under God’s protection.¹⁷

¹⁶Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 962.

¹⁷Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 93.

Additionally, to seal something signifies a completed transaction. The word “guarantee” is a legal and commercial term that means “first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge” and represents “a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments.”¹⁸ “Guarantee” is used exclusively by Paul in the NT, and only with reference to the Holy Spirit (also in 2 Cor 1:22; 2 Cor 5:5).¹⁹ Ephesians 1:13-14 demonstrates the saint belongs to God through a finished transaction, and the indwelling Spirit is an absolute certainty that the believer will be reclaimed by God in the culmination. The believer has union with Christ through the Holy Spirit; neither the third person of the Trinity, nor the redeemed human the Spirit indwells, will be left out of God’s inheritance. Hence, the believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit is guaranteed he will prevail to inherit God’s eternal kingdom.

Saints Prevail Because They Possess God’s Gift of Faith

It is vital to understand that man’s response to God is engineered by a faith which God provides. The believer possesses the divine gift of faith and, with the help of Holy Spirit, perseveres in that faith through obedience.

God provides a faith that saves. Saving faith is a gift from God to those whom he has chosen (John 6:44-47; 1 Cor 2:1-16; Eph 2:8; Phil 3:9). The object of Christian faith is the person of Jesus Christ and his death, resurrection, and ascension (Acts 20:21; 26:18; Rom 3:20-26; Gal 2:16). Not until God initiates faith can an individual come to the Father and believe (John 6:35-44).

¹⁸Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 109.

¹⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 266. Bruce also notes the word “guarantee” is a derivative from Hebrew and is used in Genesis 38:17-18, where Judah gave items of his possessions to Tamar until he could deliver the fully agreed price.

God provides a faith that obeys. Hebrews 11:6 states, “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” However, no one can believe God exists or seek God until he is first drawn by God to this faith, as John 6:44-45 teaches. So, this definition of faith which God supplies includes confidence in God’s existence combined with a diligent, life-long pursuit of him—these two components are inseparably linked.²⁰ Hebrews 11 goes on to reveal how OT saints acted on their faith in God’s promises: Abel sacrificed, Noah constructed, Abram offered Isaac, Moses chose, etc. These saints so passionately embraced the promises of God’s King and kingdom that they endured tremendous adversity and faithfully obeyed. Schreiner and Caneday explain,

God’s grace gives birth to our faith, and this faith governs the pattern of our behavior, so that by faith God purifies our hearts unto holiness (Acts 15:9; 26:18). Therefore, when Hebrews 11 recites the registry of those whom God commends, what the author mentions in every case is the behavior and conduct for which God commends them. God commends them for their faith, which shows itself in their faithful words and conduct (cf. Heb 11:39). All behavior is conceived in the womb of our beliefs.²¹

Romans 1:5 declares the universal scope of the gospel of God, “through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.” The gospel provides eternal life for those who believe, those who believe demonstrate their faith through obedience, and obedience glorifies God among the nations. Paul praises the Thessalonian believers for their “work of faith” which had endured many afflictions, been a far-reaching example to others, and glorified God (1 Thess 1:1-10). True faith is empowered by God’s grace, authenticated by active obedience, and fulfills God’s purposes in creation by bringing glory to God.

²⁰Grudem states, “God’s sovereign protection is consistent with human responsibility and guarantees that we will respond by maintaining the faith that is necessary to persevere.” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 791n6.

²¹Thomas R. Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 96.

God provides a faith that endures. Hebrews 12 makes the application to NT saints, “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (v. 1). In verse 2, Christ is given the titles “founder and perfecter of our faith,” signifying he is the originator and finisher of that faith he has placed within the believer. When God calls a man unto his salvation, God does not call him to a salvation that is incomplete and needing to be filled out by the individual. God is calling him to a perfectly finished salvation, paid in full, and complete in him (Col 2:9-10). Christ will take his faith within the believer and carry it through to perfect completion. Additionally, Christ is the example of enduring the hostility of sinners and death on the cross because he had faith in the joy that was set before him (vv. 2-3). Christ’s endurance was rewarded with the joy of sitting at the Father’s right hand in glory. Likewise, as believers consider Christ’s example, they themselves do not grow weary or fainthearted in their trials (v. 3). Believers must also recognize that some trials are actually disciplines God is using to refine them unto holiness and righteousness (vv. 5-11). Tying back in to Hebrews 11:6, the author teaches that those who believe in God, look to Jesus, and follow his example of endurance, are rewarded with an inheritance in God’s unshakeable kingdom (vv. 25-29). Authentic believers are given faith in the existence of God, the redeeming work of Christ, the establishment of God’s kingdom, and they enact that faith through obedience over the duration of their pilgrimage (Heb 10:23, 39).

God provides a faith that inherits. First Peter 1:1-9 teaches that God has initiated his great mercy towards the saints in causing them to be born again, and Christ’s resurrection assures the believer’s own resurrection unto an unfading inheritance (vv. 3-4). The child of God is kept by God’s power “through faith” (v. 5). This faith is the gift of God and is an active element within the believer that allows him to persevere. Grudem says,

God’s power does not work apart from the personal faith of those being guarded,

but through their faith. . . . The parallel examples of God working ‘through’ someone or something in Peter’s writings (1 Peter 1:3, 23; 2 Peter 1:4; and probably also 1 Peter 1:12; 2:14; 3:1) suggest that the believer’s personal faith or trust in God is the means God uses to guard his people. Thus we might give the sense of the verse by saying that ‘God is continually using his power to guard his people by means of their faith,’ a statement that seems to imply that God’s power in fact energizes and continually sustains individual, personal faith.²²

Furthermore, saints are promised all these blessings until they reach their imperishable inheritance “in the last time” (v. 5) when their faith produces the salvation of their souls (v. 9) and results in “praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 7). God is guaranteeing he will accomplish his purposes in and through saints whom he has elected (v. 1), sanctified (v. 2), given new birth (v. 3), promised an inheritance (v. 4), kept (v. 4), and guarded (v. 5).

Faith is the gift of God to those whom he has called unto eternal salvation from before the foundation of the world. Believers receive this gift of faith and, by God’s power, exercise and maintain this faith obediently unto the end. As such, the child of God inherits eternal life, fulfills God’s eternal purposes, and God is glorified through it all.

Saints Prevail Because They Heed God’s Warnings against Falling Away

No study on the perseverance of the saints would be complete without at least a brief mention of the “Warning Passages” in Hebrews. The author of Hebrews includes five passages that warn about falling away from faith in Christ: Hebrews 2:1-4; 3:1-4:16; 5:11-6:20; 10:19-39; 12:1-29. Abundant discussion on these texts and various interpretations exist as to their meaning.²³ Allen even states, “Hebrews 6:4-6 is

²²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 792.

²³For defense of the Arminian view, consult Scot McKnight, “The Warning Passages of Hebrews: A Formal Analysis and Theological Conclusions,” *Trinity Journal*, n.s., 13 (1992): 21-59. For defense of the Calvinistic view, consult Wayne Grudem, “Perseverance of the Saints: A Case Study of Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Other Warning Passages in Hebrews,” in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 133-82. For another in-depth treatment and a response to McKnight and Grudem, consult David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 344-77.

considered by many to be the most difficult interpretative passage in all the book of Hebrews, and some would say in the entire New Testament.”²⁴ From understanding the epistle’s audience, purpose, and language, it appears that Hebrews is written to Christians encouraging them to mature in Christ, live obediently, and persevere to the end.²⁵ Hence, the emphasis is that God’s warnings are the means God uses to encourage genuine believers to cling to God’s promises and endure in the faith.

Each of these warnings is framed by both an introduction and a conclusion to persevere. Schreiner and Caneday contextualize these passages well by identifying their *function*. They focus on how God’s warnings to the saint work in conjunction with God’s promises:

We believe that God’s promises of assured salvation have their proper function to ground our faith in God and to assure us that God faithfully keeps his promises to his children. We also believe that God’s admonitions and warnings have their distinctive function to evoke faith that perseveres in holy devotion to God’s heavenly call on us in Christ Jesus. Thus, God’s warnings do not conflict with God’s promises. His warnings serve his promises, for his warnings elicit belief and confidence in God’s promises.²⁶

These authors exemplify this function with cautionary signs on the highway. Warning signs are not on the road for the driver to question his ability to drive or to frighten him about crashing, but to warn where hazards commonly occur and to appeal to his imagination of the consequences should he not heed the warnings. Thus, the warning signs encourage him to avoid the dangers and keep from “falling away” into the ditch.²⁷ The point is that God’s warning signs in Hebrews are the means by which the Christian is prompted to trust God’s navigation and stay on the right road until he arrives safely at his

²⁴David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 344.

²⁵So D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 391-407.

²⁶Schreiner and Caneday, *The Race Set before Us*, 143.

²⁷Schreiner and Caneday, *The Race Set before Us*, 208.

final destination.²⁸

Hence, God's warnings stimulate saints to believe in God, cling to his promises, engage in obedience, grow towards maturity, and faithfully persevere until the kingdom believing God rewards those who seek him (Heb 2:3; 3:6, 12-14; 4:1-16; 6:1-6; 10:35-39; 11:6; 12:14-17, 25-29).

Conclusion

The saint has been chosen for salvation unto God's glory, is indwelt by God's Holy Spirit, receives God's gift of faith, and heeds God's warnings of falling away. The child of God espouses and interacts with these gifts to produce a life of faith, obedience, and endurance. Through God's gracious gifts and the saint incorporating them into his life, the saint will persevere.

Examples of God's Plan Prevailing through Saints Who Persevere

Throughout created history, God and his people have prevailed in spite of Satan's attempts to destroy them. Chapter 2 of this project has shown how God's plan has prevailed through OT saints. Likewise, God's plan has persevered through his saints in the New Testament, in Church History, and in the modern era.

God's Plan Prevails through Saints Who Persevere in the New Testament

Jesus taught his disciples, "'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). If the master must endure through suffering, persecution, and death, so must his servants. By God's grace, all

²⁸Allen differs here in his view of "falling away." Allen posits that since the author of Hebrews is addressing authentic believers, to "fall away" would not refer to denying Christ, but would be inactive service and a failure to mature in Christ. This falling away will incur God's discipline, lack of blessing, or even loss of kingdom rewards, but not a loss of salvation (Heb 10:23-39; 12:5-11). Allen, *Hebrews*, 377. Schreiner and Caneday hold that to "fall away" is to actually deny Christ and remain under the wrath of God. Schreiner and Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us*, 193-213.

Christ's disciples (except Judas) persevered in this role as faithful servants.

God's plan prevails through Christ's disciples who persevere in Matthew

10. Matthew 10 foreshadows the prevailing ministry of saints into the Church Age.²⁹

Here, Jesus commissions and empowers his twelve disciples to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. As they break forth the light of truth, Jesus warns that they will encounter the darkness of the long-existent enmity. Christ's messengers will be as sheep among wolves and will face betrayal, flogging, accusation, hatred, persecution, and death (vv. 16-23).

In the face of such opposition and danger, Jesus admonishes, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (v. 22). Not all who profess Christ are sincere, thus, they will not endure to the end (cf. Matt 7:21-23; John 15:1-2, 6). Jesus illustrated this point with the seed sown on rocky ground—it is received with joy, but falls away under persecution (cf. Matt 13:20-21). God does not reward a person for a single act of faith in the past, but only for a faith that finishes the race.

The Father's Spirit is promised to servants who are called before magistrates to bear witness of the faith (vv. 17-20). This promise does not permit the minister to be apathetic or lack preparation, rather it gives realization that the servant is the vehicle through which God is making himself known to the magistrates during such inquisition. Therefore, the preacher's faith is upheld by the Spirit as he endures the temporal distress. In light of the Spirit's empowerment, God's ambassadors are to "have no fear" in challenging times (v. 26).

²⁹R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 380-82. France states that the restriction for the apostles not to go to the Gentiles but only to the house of Israel is more of a geographic limitation for the short-term mission. France indicates that beginning in Matt 10:16, these instructions expand to a worldwide commission which is in keeping with Matthew's overriding theme of the Great Commission commenced after Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 244. Carson says the restriction was to hold down opposition to Jesus' claims, but that the ultimate aim of Jesus' mission was worldwide. Of course, the reality of the apostle's mission to the whole world was realized in the book of Acts.

Jesus' warnings and promises here provide incentive for the ministers to persevere, for at the end of the road is reward. One reward Jesus offers is to have partnership with him as the master teacher, for no student is exempt from enduring what his master endures (vv. 24-25). Of course, Jesus here is foreshadowing his own suffering and death. He will have his foot bruised in the cosmic battle, but he will ultimately gain the eternal victory (cf. Gen 3:15). Second, the believers' reward is the preservation of their souls (v. 28). Third, they will be under the watchful care of God Almighty who even cares for a sparrow that falls in the woods and a hair that falls from their heads (vv. 29-30). Fourth, Christ will acknowledge them before the Father (v. 32). Lastly, the invitation to take up one's cross is a call to a death march, but losing one's life in this world yields eternal life in the next (vv. 38-39). Blomberg summarizes the outlook Christ's ambassadors are to have in light of temporal suffering and God's eternal judgments:

If Christians had to look forward only to a life of suffering and persecution, they might well despair or, more likely, abandon all Christian commitment. . . . But the future holds much more for the believer. Judgment Day is coming when God will eternally compensate his people for their suffering and punish their enemies forever. Then the injustices of this world will disappear before the grandeur and glory of life in God's presence (Rom 8:18). . . . A clear perspective of a person's finitude, of God's coming justice, and of the expanse of eternity should encourage believers in the worst of circumstances.³⁰

Jesus did not paint a pretty picture for His servants. But with an eternal view, Christ's followers know their heavenly Father takes note and will justify all things; therefore, they must prevail.

God's plan prevails through the apostles who persevere in Acts. After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the apostles participate in making God known in all the earth. As they spread the gospel to all nations, they demonstrate faith, obedience, and perseverance in spite of Satan's efforts to destroy them. Polhill notes,

³⁰Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 177-78.

There were abundant obstacles from without—imprisonments, beatings, martyrdoms, storms at sea and angry mobs on land. But the faithful witnesses continued their testimony. The word of God grew, bearing ever more fruit among both Jews and Gentiles. The Spirit of God was behind it all, and the gospel triumphed.³¹

It is fascinating to see how God's plan to establish his church prevails through men who persevere in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:47; 4:4, 29-31; 5:12-14; 6:7; 8:1-8; 9:31; 10:44-48; 11:18, 21-24; 12:24; 14:27; 16:5-10; 18:25; 19:20; 21:17-20; 23:11; 28:23-31).

Peter and John are endowed with the Spirit to remain constant in the face of threats from the religious leaders (Acts 3-4). The religious leaders follow through on their threats and beat the disciples, after which the disciples rejoice in their suffering and do not cease to preach that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 5:40-42). Stephen triumphs in the faith while being stoned to death (Acts 6-7). When a great persecution arises, the disciples are scattered, but faithfully continue to preach the gospel wherever they go (Acts 8:1-8). Philip emerges victorious in spiritual warfare against Simon, the magician (Acts 8:9-25). After Saul (Paul) is converted, he has to overcome skepticism from other disciples and death threats from the Jews to remain persistent in his mission (Acts 9:10-30). James is killed and Peter is imprisoned (Acts 12:1-5), but the church continues to grow and is edified. From his experiences of suffering, Peter is eventually able to address other suffering believers in his first epistle and encourage them to persevere unto their reward and God's glory.

Paul begins his missionary campaigns in Acts 13. At conversion, the Lord forecasted that Paul's mission to carry Christ's name before Gentiles and kings would involve suffering (Acts 9:15-16). On Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas contend against a magician, Elymas (Acts 13:4-12), as well as face opposition from their own countrymen (Acts 13:44-52). In Lystra, they had to subdue their pride when they were worshiped as

³¹John B. Polhill, *Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 71.

gods (Acts 14:8-18). Upon surviving being stoned by a mob, Paul continues the following day preaching in the next town (Acts 14:19-20). As they circuit back, Paul and Barnabas instruct the new converts, “encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Matthew Henry comments on Acts 14:22:

[Tribulation] is so appointed. They must undergo it, there is no remedy, the matter is already fixed, and cannot be altered. He that has the sovereign disposal of us has determined it to be our lot. . . . But this is encouraging, that we shall get through it; we shall not be lost and perish in it. . . . We shall not only get through it, but get through it *into the kingdom of God*; and the joy and glory of the end will make abundant amends for all the difficulties and hardships we may meet with in the way. It is true *we must go by the cross*, but it is as true that if we keep in the way, and do not turn aside nor turn back, we shall *go to the crown*, and the believing prospect of this will make the tribulation easy and pleasant.³²

Paul continues on two more mission trips and perseveres through afflictions in every city (Acts 20:23). In 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, Paul summarizes a list of these sufferings in order to prove the sincerity of his apostleship. A major theme in his epistles to these churches is encouragement for believers to persevere, trusting in the faithfulness of God to deliver and reward (Rom 8:18, 35-39; 2 Cor 1:7; Phil 1:6, 20-21; 2:12-13; 3:8-16; 1 Thess 3:3; 2 Thess 1:5; 1 Tim 4:1-10; 2 Tim 2:12; 3:10-17). God used Paul and his faithfulness through suffering to establish numerous churches and fortify the faith of countless believers to this very day.

Eventually all Christ’s disciples, except John and Judas Iscariot, face martyrdom for Christ. Scripture and church history record how the apostles did indeed drink the cup of the Lord (Matt 20:17-23). After surviving being placed into a pot of boiling oil, John was exiled to the isle of Patmos (Rev 1:9). After being released, he returned to Ephesus where he died peacefully about AD 98.³³ James, the son of Zebedee,

³²Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, Logos, 1994), 2128.

³³John Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1997), 10.

was killed by Herod's sword (Acts 12:1-2). Jesus' prophecy of Peter's death (John 21:18-19) was fulfilled when Peter was first forced to watch his wife's crucifixion, then he requested to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die as Christ.³⁴ Andrew took the gospel northward, perhaps even into Russia. Then in Achaia, Greece he was lashed to a cross instead of nailed so as to prolong his suffering. During the two days he hung there, Andrew exhorted passersby to trust Christ.³⁵ Matthew carried the gospel to Ethiopia where, as one account states, he was pinned to the ground and beheaded.³⁶ Philip is believed to have been stoned in Asia Minor, and Thomas was run through by a spear in India.³⁷ Traditions hold that Jude was crucified at Edessa near AD 72, Matthias was stoned and beheaded at Jerusalem, and Mark was dragged to death in Alexandria.³⁸ Nathanael, or Bartholomew, took Christ's message into Persia, India, and as far as Armenia. One tradition says Nathanael was tied up in a sack and thrown into the sea, while another states he was crucified.³⁹ After writing 2 Timothy from a prison cell in Rome, Paul was beheaded in AD 66 (2 Tim 4:6-8, 18).⁴⁰

Throughout the spread of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, the apostles faced threats, court trials, imprisonment, scourging, stoning, mob riots, and eventually martyrdom. Satan utilized numerous devices to defeat the apostle's message and the founding of the church. Nonetheless, Christ founded his church through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in obedient men who would not quit in the face of

³⁴John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants To Do with You* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2002), 60.

³⁵MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, 74.

³⁶Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 6.

³⁷MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, 133, 164.

³⁸Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 6-8.

³⁹MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, 147.

⁴⁰Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 8.

torture and physical death. Indeed, God's plan, God's message, and God's church have prevailed, and continue to prevail through his faithful people.

God's Plan Prevails through Saints Who Persevered in Church History

The examples of perseverance unto death by Christ and his apostles set the course for succeeding generations of faithful servants. The institution of the church and her history are speckled with the blood of her saints. Throughout church history, faithful Christians have prevailed through various forms of tribulation and persecution.

God's plan prevails through saints who persevered under persecution by Roman emperors. History records that Nero (AD 54-68) had animal skins sewn around Christians and then let ferocious dogs attack them. Other incidents record how Christians were put into wax covered shirts and then set on fire to serve as lamps for Nero's parties.⁴¹ Nevertheless, these blessed saints endured suffering and death rather than renounce their true King.

Ignatius (AD 110) suffered under Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117). While being delivered to Rome for professing Christ, Ignatius wrote to the church at Rome not to deliver him, for it was truly his goal to imitate Christ in death. Nearing his death he declared, "Now I begin to be a disciple. . . . Let fire and cross, flocks of beasts, broken bones, dismemberment . . . come upon me, so long as I attain to Jesus Christ."⁴²

Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (AD 162-180) exacted brutal persecutions against Christians. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John and overseer

⁴¹Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 12. This book provides much of the information in this second level heading. The stories of these martyrs have blessed and strengthened the church for centuries, but are unfamiliar to the congregation of Great Lakes Bible Church. Therefore, many of these accounts are recorded here with the desire to educate, encourage, and fortify the faith of the members of GLBC.

⁴²Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 359.

of the church in Smyrna. After being sentenced by Antoninus to be burned, Polycarp confidently prayed:

O Lord God Almighty, . . . I give Thee thanks that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, in the cup of Thy Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before Thee as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as Thou, the ever-truthful God, hast fore-ordained, hast revealed beforehand to me, and now hast fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen.”⁴³

A Christian woman named Blandina also suffered severely under Antoninus. On two different occasions she was tied to a stake for lions to eat, but the lions did not touch her. She was brought back later and the lions ripped upon her. After this she was whipped, put into a net and tussled about by a wild bull, then seated naked into a red-hot metal chair. When her torturers saw that her faith in Christ remained steadfast, they terminated her earthly life by running her through with a sword.⁴⁴ Ponticus, a boy of fifteen years, would not renounce Jesus even though he encountered severe cruelties.⁴⁵

Suffering and persecution of Christians continued into the third century. A beautiful, yet godly woman named Agatha refused to be drawn into prostitution so that the local governor of Sicily, Quintain, could fulfill his lustful desires against her. Therefore, Quintain had her scourged with sharp hooks and thrown naked upon a bed of hot coals and glass, but Agatha retained her profession of Christ. Upon returning to prison, she died of her wounds on February 5, 251.⁴⁶

⁴³Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, “The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 42.

⁴⁴Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, 18.

⁴⁵Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 55.

⁴⁶Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, 24.

God’s plan prevails through saints who persevered under persecution by popes of the Roman Catholic Church. Followers of Christ were persecuted by secular authorities up to the twelfth century, then ironically, persecution began coming from other so called “Christians” within the Roman Catholic Church. Bold individuals discerned truth from Scripture and confronted the many false teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, such as: papal authority, transubstantiation, purgatory, and indulgences. To justify the use of force against their challengers, the Roman Catholic Church utilized a twisted interpretation of Luke 14:23, “And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’”⁴⁷

Around the year 1140, Berengarius began preaching the truths of Scripture in contrast to the falsehoods of Rome. Pope Innocent II took notice and encouraged the local authorities to drive Berengarius and his followers out of their territories.⁴⁸ Then, papal measures against so called “heretics” began to intensify. In France in 1184, Peter Waldo was excommunicated by Pope Lucius III for his stance against purgatory, masses, prayers for the dead, and his use of vernacular translations of Scripture. Waldo’s followers, the Waldenses, were widely disbursed over Europe due to persecution. In 1545, some three to four thousand of them were massacred in Provence, France.⁴⁹ Pope Innocent III conducted what he called a Holy War from 1209-1229 against a similar group in France known as the Albigenses.⁵⁰ These leaders battled ultimately against the father of lies (John 8:44) and blazed a trail for others to follow the Scriptures, and God’s truth prevailed.

Pope Gregory IX formally organized the papal Inquisition in 1231. This was a

⁴⁷Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, 55-56.

⁴⁸Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, 56.

⁴⁹Howard Frederic Vos, *Exploring Church History*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), chap. 15, “Forerunners of the Reformation.”

⁵⁰Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, 57-59.

medieval court established to prosecute those who opposed teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Accused heretics would be arrested by local governmental authorities, stand trial before the ecclesiastical court, and if convicted, their property would be seized for church use and the individual would be burned at the stake. Horrific methods were used in attempts to get them to renounce the faith, as Foxe describes,

Every method of physical torture known or that can be imagined was used—such as stretching limbs on the rack; burning with live coals or heated metals; breaking fingers and toes; crushing feet and hands; pulling out teeth; squeezing flesh with pincers; inserting hooks into fleshy parts and pulling the hooks out through the flesh; cutting off small pieces of flesh; sticking pins into the flesh; inserting pins under fingernails or toenails; tightening ropes around flesh until they cut through to the bone; scourging with rods or various kinds of whips; beating with fists, rods, and clubs; twisting limbs and dislocation joints. The methods used by the sadistic inquisitors are too numerous and horrendous to list.⁵¹

Spain was home to the most severe brutalities of the Inquisition. It is estimated that nearly 32,000 were horrendously tortured and burned alive. In addition to these, there were some 339,000 who were physically punished, plundered, and/or condemned. The most heinous inquisitor was Tomas de Torquemada whose reign of terror lasted from 1487 to 1498. Even Pope Sixtus IV recoiled at the report of cruelties carried out by Torquemada.⁵² Foxe summarizes the extent of the Spanish Inquisition:

But there are no records of the multitudes who died in dungeons from the torture; from being confined in filthy, diseased, rat and vermin infested holes; from broken bodies or broken hearts; or the millions of lives who were dependent upon them for their survival, or who were hurried to the grave by the death of the victims. That is a record that is known only in heaven for the Day of Judgment.⁵³

Thousands of faithful Spanish Christians steadfastly gazed past their torturers to look unto Jesus, the founder and perfecter of their faith (Heb 12:1-2).

Saints continued to persevere under persecutions throughout Europe. In

⁵¹Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 62.

⁵²Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 63-65.

⁵³Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 64.

England, Oxford scholar, John Wycliffe (AD 1377-1384), had numerous conflicts with and threats from the Roman Catholic Church because of his stance on biblical truth. Wycliffe did die of natural causes without being sentenced to death, but even that is not the end of his story.⁵⁴ Followers of Wycliffe were known as the Lollards, and they held to Wycliffe's teachings into the sixteenth century. Schaff states,

The Wycliffite movement was suppressed by a rigid inquisition, set on foot by the bishops and sanctioned by parliament. . . . The 15th century furnished a great number of Lollard trials and a number of Lollard martyrs, and their number was added to in the early years of the 16th century. Active measures were taken by Archbishop Courtenay; and under his successor, Thomas, earl of Arundel, the full force of persecution was let loose. The warlike bishop of Norwich, Henry Spenser, joined heartily in the repressive crusade, swearing to put to death by the flames or by decapitation any of the dissenters who might presume to preach in his diocese.⁵⁵

In Bohemia, John Huss (AD 1372-1415) embraced the writings of Wycliffe which also put him in constant opposition with the Roman Catholic Church. Huss was eventually brought to trial at the Council of Constance in 1415. Before trying Huss, the council exhumed the body of Wycliffe, burned it, and threw his ashes into the Rhine River so as to erase any memory of Wycliffe. The council then turned on Huss, essentially scalping him and mockingly placing a paper bishop's miter on his head. On the way to his execution, Huss was led past a blaze in which his books were being burned.⁵⁶ Seeing he was not going to receive a fair hearing, he cried out, "I appeal to Jesus Christ, the only judge who is almighty and completely just. In his hands I plead my cause, not on the basis of false witnesses and erring councils, but on truth and justice."⁵⁷ At the stake, he rejected one last chance to recant, where he prayed, "Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee to have mercy on my enemies."⁵⁸

⁵⁴Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 67-77.

⁵⁵Schaff and Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 350-51.

⁵⁶Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 84.

⁵⁷Galli and Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*, 371.

⁵⁸Galli and Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*, 371.

Huss sang a song of praise until his rejoicing voice was choked out by smoke and flames. Huss's courage gave birth to the Hussites who continued to follow his teachings of the true doctrines of Scripture.⁵⁹ In attempts to suppress biblical truth, the enemies of the cross actually promulgated it. God's plan prevailed through his people in the face of persecution and martyrdom.

God's plan prevails through saints who persevered under persecution by kings and queens. William Tyndale (AD 1494-1536) was the first to translate the Bible from Latin into English in 1525. In violation of a decree from Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and in agreement with King Henry VIII, Tyndale was sentenced to be strangled and burned.⁶⁰ He was imprisoned for a year and a half before his death, in which time he led the prison keeper, the keeper's daughter, and others of his household to Christ. At his execution in 1536, Tyndale declared, "Lord! Open the king of England's eyes!"⁶¹ John Foxe (AD 1516-1587), a friend of Tyndale, had to flee the horrific persecution under the five year reign of "Bloody" Mary I (AD 1553-1558). Foxe escaped to Basel, Switzerland where he wrote his *Book of Martyrs*. Upon Mary's death, Foxe returned to England and his book found acceptance and distribution under Elizabeth I (AD 1558-1603).⁶² The Bible in English and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* have gone on to be abundantly disseminated and have instructed and encouraged the church for centuries. God's truth and God's people have not only prevailed, but thrived.

⁵⁹Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 79-85.

⁶⁰Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 133.

⁶¹Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 380.

⁶²DC Talk and The Voice of the Martyrs, *Jesus Freaks: Stories of Revolutionaries Who Changed Their World Fearing God, Not Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 2:185-88.

God's Plan Prevails through Saints Who Persevere in the Modern Era

Since the enmity declared in Genesis 3:15 will not be settled until the culmination, the spiritual warfare rages on. The faithful witness of previous martyrs has inspired perseverance in succeeding generations of Christians into the modern era.

Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand were faithful servants of Christ in Romania during the World War II period. As the Russian armies invaded their country, the Wurmbrands and their church passed out gospel booklets to Russian soldiers who entered by train and tank. After the war, the church had to exist underground to avoid persecution, and the Communists used drugging, threats, and blackmail in attempts to get believers to report on their brothers. The Wurmbrands encouraged true believers to infiltrate the police in order to inform the underground church of planned opposition. Believers also became undercover medical professionals to minister to imprisoned Christians. For these undercover Christians, bearing spite as one of the perceived enemy was often as difficult as bearing suffering as a convicted Christian. Between 1940-1960, Richard Wurmbrand spent fourteen years in prison, yet utilized his imprisonment to minister to fellow prisoners and to witness to the guards. Eventually, he founded the ministry, The Voice of the Martyrs, which continues to this day to report on and support persecuted Christians worldwide.⁶³

Rosa testified what it has cost her to be a Christina in communist Cuba in 1999. Both Rosa's parents were atheists, heavily involved in the communist government, and prohibited speaking the word *God* in the home. But Rosa's great-grandmother prayed for years for Rosa and she finally accepted the Lord. After Rosa became a Christian, her mother started beating her and her father disowned her. When Rosa went away to school, she sowed the gospel and three friends received Christ. They met secretly under a tree to share God's word and prayed that others would come to know Christ. Through it all,

⁶³DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 8, 23, 218-19.

Rosa declares, “Our parents are blind in this atheistic system and do not understand that we grow and make our own personal decisions. Mine is Jesus Christ. I will be faithful even at the price of death!”⁶⁴

Christ continues to build his church in Africa. Upon visiting Liberia and Sierra Leon, Keesee reports,

Remarkable Christians in both those countries are leading, serving, discipling, and multiplying themselves in the lives of others. All this in countries wounded by war, steeped in demon worship and Islam, and divided a hundred ways—a patchwork of people groups barely stitched together by bad roads and worse governments.⁶⁵

In Liberia during the civil war of the 1990s, Dennis saw his father beheaded, his brother shot in the back, and his house burned. Yet, Dennis has overcome these difficulties and is today a faithful pastor to his own people, the Loma. One of Dennis’s disciples is a carpenter named Washington who came to Christ out of devil worship. Dennis and his team follow the mission strategy of the apostles in Acts: before going into a new village, they pray, fast, and then send evangelists two-by-two. They target the village leaders most hardened to the gospel so that once they receive Christ, the rest of the people have no fear of becoming Christian. The village of Malawu was known as the center of Satan worship, but after prayer and fasting, God miraculously opened the people’s hearts to salvation. Where Satan was once worshiped, a church now stands.⁶⁶

God’s plan continues to persevere through his people in Asia. Pastor Li Di Xian of China has been arrested eighteen times in recent years for working with hundreds of Chinese believers in the “illegal” house churches. He keeps a small suitcase packed in preparation for the next time he is arrested.⁶⁷ In Vietnam, evangelist To Dinh Trung has

⁶⁴DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 87-88.

⁶⁵Tim Keesee, *Dispatches from the Front: Stories of Gospel Advance in the World’s Difficult Places* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 160.

⁶⁶Keesee, *Dispatches from the Front*, 159-68.

⁶⁷DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 8.

refused to accept early dismissal from prison and return to his family because he is seeing many prisoners receive Christ.⁶⁸

God's Plan Must Continue to Prevail through Us Today

The aforementioned are but a few of the thousands who have persevered in the Christian faith throughout the world and in every age. This list of steadfast saints is like a modern day addendum to the OT heroes of Hebrews 11, and time would fail to tell of them all (Heb 11:32).⁶⁹ In an effort to squelch God's plan, Satan's offspring has actually fortified the faith of thousands and continued the growth of God's offspring. As these servants were empowered by the Holy Spirit and faith to remain staunch in their loyalty to Christ, so our generation is now called to the frontline of this battle. Lloyd-Jones connects the perseverance of saints throughout every generation when he writes,

Read the story of the martyrs in every age throughout the centuries, and in each case you will find that their secret was that they knew exactly where they were going. They had had such views of the glory to which they were going, such glimpses of it, that they were certain of it. "Hope maketh not ashamed;" rather it makes us certain. It makes us "more than conquerors," and as we are enabled to look steadfastly at it we can even glory in the things that normally produce depression, the things that normally defeat us.⁷⁰

It is our turn to hold the truth, fight the enmity against Christ, and proclaim Christ's name before the world. In so doing, we fulfill the purpose for which we were created and redeemed—God's glory (Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet 2:9-12). As we have inherited this testimony of perseverance from saints of old, let us in our generation also prevail in the

⁶⁸DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 8.

⁶⁹For more testimonials of salvation and perseverance, consult WashedRed.com, "Changed Lives: Testimonies of Lives Changed by Jesus Christ," accessed December 5, 2016, http://www.washedred.com/changed_lives/; About.com > About Religion and Spirituality > Christianity, "Real Life Testimonies," accessed December 5, 2016, <http://christianity.about.com/od/testimonies/>; J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://grace-ebooks.com/library/J.%20C.%20Ryle/Light%20from%20Old%20Ties.pdf>.

⁷⁰Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, 77.

cause of Christ and so influence future generations to endure until God's eternal plan is culminated. By God's Spirit, God's Word, and faith, we must remain steadfast for Christ in spite of every one of Satan's attempts to destroy us—to the glory of God.

Conclusion

God is omnipotent and sovereign and will accomplish all his purposes in creation. God created all things by his will and for his glory (Rev 4:9-11). The means by which he will be glorified in creation is the salvation of men and the reclamation of creation. To accomplish his glory through salvation, he has chosen men from before the foundation of the world to be saved. Those whom he has chosen he has drawn to him and given them the gift of faith to respond to his calling. The Holy Spirit generates new birth in believers, indwells them, aids them in faithful obedience, and is the guarantee of their inheritance. The true believer will prevail to the end because he is integrated into God's eternal plan for his glory. Thus, God's plan prevails through his people.

CHAPTER 4

PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

In order to increase the knowledge of God's prevailing plan through redemptive history and to instill in the members of GLBC the will to persevere in their own lives, a fifteen-week project was implemented. The project unfolded in three phases: the preparation period of three weeks, the implementation period of ten weeks, and the follow-up period of two weeks. The preparation period involved giving the Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance as a pre-test and preparing sermons one through three. The implementation period involved preaching the ten-week sermon series and preparing the study guide curriculum beginning in week eight. The follow-up phase involved giving the Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance as a post-test and utilizing a *t*-test for dependent samples to measure the effectiveness of the sermon series. Also, the elders of the church evaluated the sermon series and contributed in the development of the curriculum.

Phase 1: Preparation

The first goal of this project was to finalize the Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance and develop a ten week sermon series on The Prevailing Plan of God.

Week 1: Knowledge Assessment

The Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance,¹ which employed a six-level Likert scale, was originally developed during the proposal of the project, but was reviewed in week 1. The questionnaire was the primary instrument to measure the

¹See appendix 1.

member's knowledge of and resolve in perseverance. For the purposes of the project, church members eighteen years of age and older were asked to participate in the questionnaire. Out of these adults, forty-one people took the pre-survey with the goal of sustaining twenty people to take the post-survey and be evaluated as the survey group. Each person was given the low risk informed consent statement in accordance with the Assessment of Risk to Human Subjects in Research protocol. In addition, I had the people put a four-digit code in the top right corner on page one of their survey. They were to use the same four-digit code on the post-survey to be able to match the pre and post-surveys anonymously. The survey group agreed to listen to every sermon in the project before taking the post-survey.

The first section of the questionnaire gathered demographic information. It affirmed whether or not the individual professes to be a Christian, asked the marital status, if children are in the home, and the individual's age.

The second section consisted of twelve questions that assessed how that individual perseveres. Questions ranged from how a person typically responds to difficult situations in life, what his attitude about God is in the midst of difficulty, how he may respond to persecution, and how he treats others who are going through trying times.

The final segment was the biblical knowledge portion consisting of thirteen questions. Each question was designed to measure comprehension of biblical concepts and characters regarding perseverance. The final question was to evaluate to what extent that person understood that his life fits into God's overall prevailing plan.

Week 1: Sermon Preparation

The goal of the first half of the sermon series was to demonstrate that God's plan in creation has prevailed in spite of all Satan's attempts to destroy it and will continue to prevail into eternity. This would establish the theological basis for the second half of the series which would be a personal application regarding the perseverance of

individual saints who are part of God's prevailing plan. The first three sermons presented a general overview of God bringing Messiah through human lineage. This lineage descends from mankind in general (Gen 3:15), then through the genealogical line of Israel (Gen 12; 49; 2 Sam 7) in spite of Satan's attacks to derail that lineage. Sermons four through six discussed how the New Testament identifies Jesus as the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15, how Jesus prevailed in his earthly ministry, and that Christ's prevailing power signifies victory for his followers. Sermon seven taught the perseverance of the saints, and sermons eight through ten showed how saints throughout church history have prevailed against Satan's enmity against them.

A benefit to this stage of the project is that so much of the research and writing had already been done. Therefore, the sermon preparation was merely a refinement of my study. I divided the fifty-nine pages of material in chapters 2 and 3 by ten sermons, resulting in each sermon being between five and six pages of material taken from my research. The first three weeks allowed for three sermons to be prepared in advance of beginning to preach the sermon series.

My strategy for refining each sermon came from these five or six pages of written study material. I modified the information into outline format. I prefer to preach from an outline so that I can easily spot and discuss the points rather than having to find pertinent information within a paragraph. Since listening to a sermon is different from reading a theological paper, some information had to be edited or withdrawn. I chose to withdraw many of the quotations from theological sources. For an oral presentation, it seemed better to summarize these concepts than to read long quotes. Once arriving at week 4, the benefit of having study material done and three sermons prepared allowed for work on two sermons per week. Starting week 4, I would make up a rough draft outline for the next sermon to be organized, and the sermon being preached that Sunday was reviewed and refined.

With this strategy in place, I began the rough outline for Sermon 1. The goal of

the first sermon was to introduce the concept of “biblical theology” and to demonstrate how John’s biblical theology allowed him to rightly understand the vision he received in Revelation 5. My approach was to show that John connected the elder’s wording, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has conquered” as the fulfillment of the offspring promised in Genesis 3:15 who would crush/conquer the serpent, Satan.

Week 2

I prepared the second message entitled “The Offspring to be the Lion of Judah.” This sermon was an overview of the genealogical line of Messiah through the book of Genesis. Beginning in Genesis 3:15, I traced how the offspring came from the seed of the woman—mankind in general. With God’s call to Abram in Genesis 12, the lineage narrowed to one nation—Israel. From Israel, the lineage was promised to come from the tribe of Judah in Genesis 49, where the first mention of “lion” is associated with Judah. Furthermore, emphasis was given to the enmity from Satan at each phase of this lineage.² I prepared a PowerPoint presentation and a sermon handout for the congregation.

Week 3

Early in the week I developed a rough draft of Sermon 3, “The Offspring to be the Root of David.” This sermon was an overview of the offspring’s lineage in relationship to David. The stories of Ruth and Boaz were quickly referenced in order to provide background. A larger portion of material dealt with the Davidic Covenant from 2 Samuel 7. The next main point underscored how the lineage prevailed through the Divided Kingdom of Israel with specific attention given to the story of Joash (2 Kgs 11). Finally, I demonstrated how Isaiah 11 prophesied Messiah was to be both the Branch and Root of David, which gives significance to both the humanity and deity of Messiah.

²See appendix 3.

At the conclusion of the week, on the Sunday prior to filling out the Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance and initiating the sermon series, I previewed with the congregation how to respond to a six-level Likert scale. I presented general and humorous questions and asked them, “To what extent to you agree with this statement?” This rehearsal seemed to familiarize the congregation so they could more accurately answer this pre-series questionnaire. Additionally, I asked the congregation to read Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 4-5 in preparation for Sermon 1, which was to be preached the following Sunday.

Phase 2: Continued Preparation and Implementation

Week 4

Preparation began on Sermon 4, “The Offspring Identified as Jesus in the New Testament.” The objective was to demonstrate how the NT authors recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15; hence, Jesus was the Messiah of God.

Later in the week, I reviewed and sharpened Sermon 1 from its rough draft done in Week 1.³ I prepared a PowerPoint presentation which helped me sharpen my wording and thoughts. In addition, a sermon handout was prepared for the congregation. The handout had blank spaces to fill in key words for key points. The PowerPoint presentation highlighted the words to fill into the blanks of the handout.

The Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance was distributed during the Sunday morning worship time. Forty-one adults were present to take the survey. The session began with an explanation that the survey was for my ministry project, so they needed to think through each answer and not look on another person’s survey. The participants were asked to commit to listening to all ten sermons in the series so they could effectively

³See appendix 8.

answer the post-series questionnaire. In case someone missed a sermon, they were told that they could access it on our church's website.⁴ The website administrator was asked to have the sermons placed on the church's website and he uploaded them after each Sunday morning service. The survey took approximately fifteen minutes to administer.

The first message, "A Biblical Theology of Revelation 5," was preached to the congregation to begin implementation of the sermon series. The thrust of this message was to define "biblical theology" and how John's biblical theology helped him understand the significance of the titles, "Lion of Judah, Root of David," in the scene he was beholding in Revelation 5. At the close of the sermon, I asked the congregation to read Genesis 1-12 in preparation for Sermon 2.

Week 5

Sermon 5, "God's Prevailing Plan in the Ministry of Christ," was outlined in the first half of the week. The emphasis was on how Jesus prevailed over Satan in each phase of his earthly ministry: his life, his death, and his resurrection. During his lifetime, Jesus overcame Herod's attempt to murder him, Satan's temptations, demons, hostile crowds, Pharisee's plots, and a friend's betrayal. Though Satan could potentially perceive Christ's death as a victory, in reality the crucifixion fulfilled God's eternal plan of salvation and redemption for mankind. The resurrection of Jesus connotes many points of victory in God's prevailing plan.

I reviewed, honed, and then preached Sermon 2, "The Offspring to be the Lion of Judah."⁵ I had to remember that this was an overview of Messiah's prevailing genealogical line through Genesis so as not to go into too much detail for each individual story. Therefore, I had to set aside additional notes and quotes from the original

⁴The sermons can be accessed at glbcholly.com under the "Sermons" tab. Accessed July 17, 2017.

⁵See appendix 8.

preparation done in Week 2. Again, a PowerPoint presentation and sermon handout aided in making my points and comments more succinct. At the close of the sermon, I asked the congregation to read 1 Samuel 16; 2 Samuel 7; 2 Kings 8-11; and Isaiah 6-11 in preparation for Sermon 3 to be preached the following Sunday.

Week 6

Early in the week, I prepared Sermon 6, “God’s Prevailing Plan Signifies Victory.” I addressed how the various NT authors underscored God’s plan prevailing unto victory. The application was that since believers have union with Christ, they too can cling to this hope of victory throughout their own trials. After each author’s treatment of victory, I repeated the elder’s refrain from Revelation 5:5, “Weep no more!”

Towards the end of the week I reviewed, edited, and then preached Sermon 3, “The Offspring to be the Root of David.”⁶ In my introduction, I made sure to include a review of the highlights from the previous two sermons to help maintain the continuity of God’s plan from Genesis to Revelation. Before moving into the “Root of David” segment, I reviewed John’s biblical theology of Revelation 5, and Messiah’s genealogical line from Genesis 3:15 to Judah. A PowerPoint presentation and sermon handout were prepared to accompany the message. At the close of the sermon, the congregation was asked to read Matthew 1-3 and Galatians 3:1–4:7 as preparation for the Sermon 4.

Week 7

I was now ready to begin preparing the second half of the sermon series (material from chapter 3 of my project). Sermons 1-6 treated how God had prevailed to bring the offspring of Genesis 3:15 in spite of Satan’s enmity against it. Now, I was moving to God’s plan prevailing through his people. I prepared a rough draft outline for Sermon 7, “The Perseverance of the Saints.” I was careful to begin with some definitions

⁶See appendix 8.

of “perseverance of the saints” to make sure the congregation understood the term. Although I researched and wrote on four points that teach perseverance, I utilized only two for the sermon: (1) Saints persevere because they have been chosen for salvation unto God’s glory, and (2) Saints persevere because they are indwelt by the Spirit of God. In the first point, I used the gospel of John quite heavily, reading through the texts of John 6, 10, and 17. These passages explain that saints prevail because God has chosen them to prevail for his glory. On the second point, the Holy Spirit generates new birth in the believer, helps him maintain obedient faith, and is the guarantee of the believer’s inheritance. Perseverance of the saints exists in the will and work of God, and true believers respond to and cooperate with God’s will and work.

In preparation for preaching on Sunday, I reviewed and fine tuned Sermon 4, “The Offspring Identified as Jesus in the New Testament.”⁷ In addition to the various NT authors proving factually that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15, another emphasis emerged—the absolute centrality of Jesus Christ in God’s plan for creation. This teaching helped explain and clarify the exclusivity of Jesus Christ for redemption and reconciliation with God. I was able to give a strong and clear presentation of the gospel in this sermon.

Week 8

Preparation began on Sermon 8, “The Perseverance of the Apostles.” First, I walked through Christ’s instruction to the apostles being sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom in Matthew 10. Here, Jesus warns the disciples they will be as sheep among wolves as they encounter the darkness of the long-existent enmity. They will face betrayal, flogging, accusation, hatred, persecution, and death. However, Jesus encourages them that they will have the power of the Spirit and the promise of eternal reward.

⁷See appendix 8.

Second, I laid out the opposition the apostles had throughout the book of Acts and showed how the different apostles persevered through adversity to preach the gospel and establish the church. Then I closed using Scripture and church history to teach how the different apostles suffered martyrdom.

Nearing Sunday, I improved and meditated on Sermon 5, “The Prevailing Plan in the Ministry of Jesus Christ.”⁸ I preached that Christ conquered Satan through his death, his burial, and his resurrection. As with all the sermons, a PowerPoint presentation and sermon handout were prepared. A sincerely worshipful spirit came over me as I preached these truths, and it seemed the congregation shared in that spirit.

Week 9

I was able to sketch out a rough draft outline for Sermon 9, “Perseverance of Saints in Church History.” The bulk of this material came from John Foxe’s, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick. It dawned on me that I was actually developing a sermon with more historical data rather than Scripture. However, church history is vital for our congregation to know, and they are fairly unfamiliar with many of these martyred saints who have preceded us. I prayed about this tension and had peace realizing this history is how post-apostolic Christians applied Christ’s commendation that “‘a servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20; Matt 10:24). So although church history is not inspired Scripture, it is the story of God’s people living out the call to persevere, not deny Christ, and glorify God in life and in death. A history lesson is atypical as a sermon, but within this context I felt it was appropriate.

I reviewed and finalized Sermon 6, “God’s Prevailing Plan Signifies Victory.”⁹

⁸See appendix 8.

⁹See appendix 8.

This was a tremendous sermon to preach as it was the application of Sermons 1-5. The preaching was virtually a celebration of the victory we are guaranteed as chosen saints incorporated into God's eternal plan. One of my emphases was that the first five sermons were intended not just for academic growth, but to also fortify our will to persevere. We must engage the mind and the will in our quest to persevere to the end.

Week 10

I prepared the outline for Sermon 10, "Perseverance of Saints in the Modern Era." This information addressed the era from World War II up to modern day. I featured Richard Wurmbrand, founder of The Voice of the Martyrs, as well as others from *Jesus Freaks*¹⁰ and *Dispatches from the Front*.¹¹ Again, the goal for this message was to stimulate the will of our people to persevere in their generation, and to have an influence on the next generation. Since this was to be the final message of the series, I also considered several points of application. In the conclusion, I challenged our people to recognize our lives and our church are part of something bigger than ourselves, and that it is our privilege and duty to persevere to the end for the glory of God.

Sermon 7, "Perseverance of the Saints," was then reviewed and polished.¹² During this preparation, I was moved to simply read large portions of the texts of John 6, 10, and 17, and let the Word of God speak for itself. Then on Sunday during our pre-sermon worship, I included corporate Scripture reading of Ephesians 1 to prepare our minds toward the sermon. In another segment of our worship we recited The Apostles Creed. We utilized the song, "In Christ Alone" which contains the verse:

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me. From life's first

¹⁰DC Talk and The Voice of the Martyrs, *Jesus Freaks: Stories of Revolutionaries Who Changed Their World Fearing God, Not Man*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002).

¹¹Tim Keese, *Dispatches from the Front: Stories of Gospel Advance in the World's Difficult Places* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

¹²See appendix 8.

cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand, till he returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I stand.¹³

When it came time to preach, I read the texts and followed up by highlighting points within the text which emphasized the saints prevailing within God's eternal plan. These highlights were displayed on the PowerPoint and included in the sermon handout. My heart was stirred while I preached as I became overwhelmed with the magnitude of God, his power, and his plan.

Week 11

Having prepared all ten sermons in the series, I began work on the eight-lesson curriculum that grew out of the sermon series. I utilized the material from the sermon outlines, handouts, and PowerPoint presentations to synthesize this curriculum, which I entitled, "A Study Guide Curriculum on the Prevailing Plan of God."¹⁴ Each lesson was to have selected Scripture readings, study questions, and commentary. It was designed for a student to read selected Scriptures and answer related questions or fill in blanks from the Scripture passages. The student was to also read the commentary which covered key theological concepts or summarized larger Bible passages. During week 11, I wrote Lessons 1-3 of the curriculum.

I reviewed and sharpened Sermon 8, "Perseverance of the Apostles."¹⁵ Preparation of a PowerPoint presentation and sermon handout aided further in becoming more concise in my thoughts and words. On Sunday, I preached Sermon 8. We closed by singing in response, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?"

¹³Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, "In Christ Alone" (2001), Kingsway ThankYou Music. Lyrical reference, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://www.gettymusic.com/in-christ-alone/>.

¹⁴See appendix 5.

¹⁵See appendix 8.

Week 12

Throughout the week I developed Lessons 4 and 5 of the Study Guide Curriculum.¹⁶ Again, I noted key passages of Scripture for students to read, followed up with study questions, and integrated commentary to fill in the gaps.

I reviewed and refined Sermon 9, “Perseverance of Saints in Church History.”¹⁷ The material covered persecuted believers from the first century up through the Spanish Inquisition of the fourteenth century. The atmosphere during the preaching was quite sober as the congregation heard (many of them for the first time) the testimonies of the brutalities and martyrdom suffered by our Christian ancestors. In response, we again sang “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?” in an effort to challenge our personal resolve to persevere.

Week 13

I wrote Lessons 6–8 to finish the rough draft of the Study Guide Curriculum.¹⁸ Also I sent an email to the congregation asking if anyone would volunteer to help analyze the upcoming pre and post-survey results. I received three positive responses, and chose a lady who works with statistical information in her regular job.

I reviewed and refined Sermon 10, “Perseverance of Saints in the Modern Era.”¹⁹ This information covered from William Tyndale and John Foxe in England in the sixteenth century up to believers of today who are still being persecuted. The worship was intentionally crafted to support the theme of perseverance. Our singing included “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” and “O Church Arise.” Scripture readings were from Hebrews 12:1-2 and John 17:14-22.

¹⁶See appendix 5.

¹⁷See appendix 8.

¹⁸See appendix 5.

¹⁹See appendix 8.

At the conclusion of preaching Sermon 10, the last sermon in the series, I had the congregation fill out the post-sermon series Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance.²⁰ The participants were told to put the same four digit code on this post-survey that they had used for the pre-survey. In case anyone may have forgotten their code from the pre-survey, I made up a PowerPoint slide with all the codes used on the pre-survey for the congregation to reference. Of the forty-one members who took the pre-series survey, only twenty members were able to fulfill the post-series survey requirements. This difference was due to members being on vacation, absent, sick, or unable to listen to all ten sermons of the series either in person or online. Nonetheless, the twenty matching surveys were enough to fulfill the desired survey group of twenty members.²¹ I gave both pre and post-surveys to the lady who had volunteered to analyze them. Also, we shared a meal and held an interactive discussion where our members shared what they had learned from the sermon series, how they were challenged or encouraged, and addressed any questions that had arisen in their minds from hearing the sermons. I took personal notes from this discussion so that I could address any concerns or bolster any points in the Study Guide Curriculum.

Week 14

A portion of this week was spent analyzing the pre and post-sermon series surveys with the lady who had run the analysis on them.²² I had my team of elders fill out the Sermon Series Evaluation rubric.²³ I also gave the elders the rough draft of the curriculum for their review along with the Study Guide Curriculum Evaluation rubric.²⁴

²⁰See appendix 1.

²¹See the first goal under “Research Methodology,” p. 6.

²²See appendix 2.

²³See appendix 4.

²⁴See appendix 6.

I then wrote chapter 5, “Evaluation of the Project.”

Week 15

Our team of elders had read through the Study Guide Curriculum and filled out the Study Guide Curriculum Evaluation rubric. I discussed with the elders in person their observations about the curriculum, as well as read through their written comments on the various pages of the curriculum. I made adjustments to the curriculum based upon the elder’s recommendations until it met the satisfactory 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators.

I proofread my entire project to check grammar, spelling, and logical flow, and to strengthen my arguments. I also double checked that I had all the necessary information and appendices included.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The evaluation of this ministry project provides helpful insights for improving the project and writing the Study Guide Curriculum. To this end, this chapter presents an evaluation of the purpose and goals of the project. Additionally, the strengths and weaknesses of the project are discussed, as well as aspects of the project that could have been done differently. Finally, I reflect upon the theological foundation of the project and provide personal reflections and a brief conclusion.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The stated purpose of the project was to teach the congregation of GLBC about God's prevailing plan and the doctrine of perseverance. This teaching proved necessary because members had either a shallow understanding of eschatology and/or American culture in relationship to eschatology. In the ten years as pastor, I had not yet taught the congregation on perseverance. Additionally, members had little knowledge of how believers throughout church history have exemplified perseverance, and that now we are in line to hold unwaveringly to God's truth. Furthermore, the amount of work it would take to increase people's knowledge of perseverance and resolve to endure required a project of this size and scope. Thus, the objective of teaching the sermon series was to increase our people's understanding of the magnitude of God's plan, how that plan has unfolded within redemptive history and prevailed against all Satan's opposition against it, how God's people have prevailed throughout history, and how our individual lives fit in to God's eternal plan.

The project successfully increased the members' overall knowledge of God's

prevailing plan and of perseverance of the saints. The data collected from the pre and post-sermon series surveys reflected an increase in their knowledge. Out of 150 points total, the mean score of the participants increased 9.9 points, from 125.65 on the pre-survey to 135.5 on the post-survey.¹ The data indicated a 5 point increase to question 20, “I understand many details of *how* God’s eternal plan prevails.”²

The project also demonstrated an increase in the member’s resolve to persevere in their own faith. Although moderate, the data from the pre and the post-course surveys revealed an increase in strength of positive response to the statements, “While being intimidated for holding to biblical truth, I would still hold to it,” and “If threatened with violence for admitting I was a Christian, I would admit it.”³

Evaluation of the Project’s Goals

The project set out to accomplish four goals. These goals were effectively measured through the employment of evaluation tools that provided data showing that the project was successful overall.

The first and third goals were to assess and increase the congregation’s knowledge of the biblical doctrine of perseverance and their personal resolve to persevere. To meet these goals, I prepared a pre and post-sermon series Questionnaire Regarding Perseverance. I preached the ten sermons on ten consecutive Sundays. This goal was measured by administering pre and post-sermon series surveys. The pre-survey was administered on May 14, 2017, and the post-survey was administered on July 16, 2017. Forty-one members took the pre-survey, but only twenty members were used to serve as the control group. These twenty had listened to all the sermons between the two

¹See table A1 in appendix 2.

²See table A4 and figure A4 in appendix 2.

³See tables A2 and A3, and figures A2 and A3 in appendix 2.

surveys. A *t*-test for dependent samples was used to determine if there had been a positive, significant, statistical difference between the pre-course survey and the post-course survey. The survey was designed to discern whether the congregation's knowledge of the doctrine of perseverance and their personal resolve to persevere had increased. The sermon series made a statistically significant difference resulting in an increase of their knowledge and resolve ($t_{(19)} = 4.901595934$, $p < .000099$). The results of the *t*-test revealed that the participants' knowledge of perseverance and their resolve to persevere had increased as a result of the sermon series.⁴ Therefore, the goal of increasing knowledge and resolve was met according to the measurements used in this project.

The second goal was to preach a ten-week sermon series on "The Prevailing Plan of God." This goal was measured by our team of elders who used a rubric to evaluate the sermon series.⁵ The rubric scale for each category was between 1 to 4 points, with 4 being the highest score. There was an additional column for comments related to each category. The elders evaluated fourteen questions that rated the sermon's faithfulness to the text, use of the best sources, pertinent topics, clarity, and practical application. The goal was to have a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficient level (marked 3 or 4 on the scale). All scores on the evaluation reached the 90 percent sufficient level. Therefore, the goal of creating an instructional sermon series was met. Some comments from the elders were incorporated into the development of the curriculum.

The fourth goal was to develop the eight-lesson "Study Guide Curriculum on the Prevailing Plan of God"⁶ that our people could reference, give to others, or use as a discipleship tool. This curriculum grew out of a refinement of the material covered in the

⁴See table A1 and figure A1 in appendix 2.

⁵See appendix 4.

⁶See appendix 5.

sermon series, the elder's evaluation of the sermon series, and the assessment of the pre and post-series questionnaires. The curriculum was evaluated by our team of elders using a rubric as the instrument of measurement.⁷ The curriculum evaluation by the elders met or exceeded the minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators, thus meeting the sufficiency level.

Strengths of the Project

The strengths of this project are represented by objective and subjective observations. Objectively, per the *t*-test results, the members' knowledge of God's prevailing plan and personal resolve to persevere increased. The Sermon Series Evaluation⁸ demonstrated that the subject matter was successfully preached and explained, and the Study Guide Curriculum Evaluation⁹ reflected a curriculum that would be a successful tool to utilize into the future.

Subjectively, church members made comments throughout the sermon series as to how much they were learning and being encouraged. The group discussion following Sermon 10, the last sermon in the series, was encouraging and provided considerations to strengthen the curriculum. Many stated how they were impressed with the greatness and power of God, his plan, his conquests, and his sovereignty. One gentleman mentioned that his favorite message was Sermon 7, "The Perseverance of the Saints," and that his spirit became enthusiastically worshipful upon hearing the Westminster Confession on Perseverance and the reading of John 6, 10, and 17. Ultimately, time will tell—the measure of success in this project will be if those exposed to this study will indeed persevere in their faith.

⁷See appendix 6.

⁸See appendix 4.

⁹See appendix 6.

Weaknesses of the Project

I am realistic enough to recognize weaknesses within this project. An evaluation of this project revealed weaknesses in the following areas: the broadness of the subject matter, other research already done on the subject matter, and the small size of the control group.

First, the prevailing plan of God is a broad subject. Due to time constraints and space limitations, the wealth of this topic cannot be fully mined in this project, if ever in any project. Spanning the Bible's history from Genesis to Revelation, I could not comment on some stories or go into great depth on others. I attempted to choose the accounts most vital to support my thesis. I have learned a great deal, but would never assume to think I know every detail about every story in God's eternal plan.

Second, the prevailing plan of God is not a new subject. Numerous authors who are much more capable than I have written on the genealogical line, Satan's enmity, fulfilled prophecy, and perseverance of the saints long before I had. This project does not necessarily offer anything new to the world of academic theology. In spite of this weakness, this study was good for me personally and for the membership of our local church.

Third, the control group of twenty people was relatively small. We have approximately fifty to sixty adults in regular attendance on any given Sunday, and forty-one of them took the pre-survey. It would have been a better representation of the congregation to have a control group of closer to thirty people instead of the twenty.

What I Would Do Differently

While I was satisfied with the project overall, I would make at least three changes to the project.

I would lengthen the sermon series over a course of fourteen or fifteen weeks. In preaching this material over ten sermons, I felt rushed, giving more of an overview than an in-depth study of God's plan. My congregation, however, is probably grateful that my time

was limited. Having ten sermons did force me to be more precise, but I felt I had to compromise other passages due to the this constraint.

I would schedule the implementation of the project during a time of year when more people would be in attendance. Preaching from May to July hit the vacation season, and not as many people were able to hear the whole series to qualify to fill out the post-survey. From the fifty to sixty adult members in regular attendance, I would have preferred a control group larger than twenty in order to get a broader scope of how the project impacted more of the overall church.

I would have learned how to use Zotero, or a similar program, before the project began. Once I started the project, I sensed I did not have enough time to learn this program. I did navigate through Zotero a bit, but I could not figure it out right away. Therefore, I typed in all my footnotes and bibliography. It would be nice to have the database that Zotero offers for reference.

However, by the response of our people on the survey and in conversation, I believe the project has educated, informed, and encouraged our congregation more than confused them or raised more questions.

Theological Reflections

Doctor of Ministry projects are designed to cultivate the pastor's knowledge of Scripture, God, and his church. This project certainly cultivated and enhanced this knowledge for me. Several theological truths stand out to me as I review this project.

The story of Joash seems buried within the history of Israel's kings (2 Kgs 8-12), yet stands as an integral scene in God's overall drama. I had read this story before and was vaguely familiar with it, but its significance had never occurred to me until I studied it. The promised lineage had been reduced to just one male child, yet God secured his plan in the rescue of this little baby. Against the enmity of Satan through Queen Athaliah, God's plan prevailed. The story of Joash has become one of the most

fascinating stories in all Scripture to me.

I had never seen the significance in Isaiah 11 regarding the Messiah being both the Root and Branch of David. If it had not been for my supervisor, Dr. Oren Martin, dropping the hint that I should study this out, I may have overlooked it again. This thread ties so much of Scripture together (Ps 110; Matt 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44; Rev 22:16). I am blessed to have been pushed to study this truth.

Perseverance of the saints was a new study for me. I had always known a few verses on assurance and trusted in the security of the believer, but now I have a broader Scriptural basis for my belief in this area. I am absolutely confident of the security of the believer in God's hand and that he will prevail in spite of all Satan's attempts to destroy him.

The study of martyrs throughout biblical and church history was humbling. I had read portions of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* as an assignment in high school and was impressed then. But the edition I had was difficult to read, and I did not pursue it. I appreciate the updated version I used from Chadwick. I was encouraged how these saints were faithful unto death. I became emboldened by their understanding of the value of a good commendation from Christ, and the glories of heaven that await.

I am amazed how immense, glorious, powerful, and loving God is. A few years ago when I first read that the chief purpose God does anything is for his glory, I did not comprehend the full scope of it. Even though it was explained, it still sounded too selfish and egotistical for the God I thought I knew. But continuing in theological studies, and more so with this project, this truth has crystalized into a glorious understanding for me of God and the purposes of his glory. Also, God's sovereignty in election has become wonderful to me. The only answer to "Why did God choose Abram, Jacob, Judah, Peter, Paul, or me?" is in God's sovereign election—he wills it to be so for his glory. And God is gracious enough to include me in his plan. Furthermore, I became impressed that God's plan is unstoppable. God is all-powerful and will accomplish all his will, and Satan and

all the forces of hell will not prevail against it. Indeed, God is sovereign, majestic, and awe-inspiring.

Personal Reflections

I am astonished that I have arrived at this point in my life and ministry. I never thought I would ever go back to school once I graduated from college. But after twenty years of maintaining a theological status quo and then assuming the responsibilities of a senior pastor, I realized the absolute necessity for me to receive more biblical training. I began graduate school in 2008 with the motivation that I simply want to learn more of the Bible so that I can be the best pastor I can be. I carried that motivation with me throughout every step of my post-graduate education. Along the way I have studied enough to earn a Master of Ministry, and am now preparing to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree. As satisfying as they are, these degrees are only secondary to the theological knowledge I have gained. Receiving this degree will not automatically make me a super pastor, but it has equipped me to be a better one than I was ten years ago.

With any accomplishment or respectability that may come with a degree comes the greater responsibility to live it out in my personal life. Rather than feeling liberated, as I foolishly felt at high school graduation, I actually feel the weight of responsibility of this privilege God has afforded me. So it is with a sense of deep appreciation and great humility that I conclude this project and degree program.

I realize it is my turn to be faithful—even unto death. As the OT saints, NT saints, and saints throughout church history have been faithful, so it is now my turn in my generation to hold on to the faith and proclaim the name of Jesus to the world. I stand on the shoulders of great men and participate in God's eternal cause. Because I am chosen in him before the foundation of the world, purchased by his blood, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and supplied with his faith, I will prevail. I do not need to worry about being brave enough to prevail, I just have to be obedient. I cannot deny him. I will not deny him.

I am humbled at the grandeur of God and his plan. My life, my salvation, my calling, nor my church is not about me. Therefore, I need to participate in all these areas with that perspective. I need to please him who has called me rather than pleasing myself. My life is not about my comfort, but about his sacrifice. I need to live my life and minister to others with the mind of Christ. I need to shepherd the church according to his instructions and not my own wisdom. I need to minister to people in the fear of God rather than in the fear of man. I need to stand for truth and not be ashamed of it. I resolve to live my life in light of God's eternal plan.

Conclusion

This project presented a clear purpose and measurable goals, and by those measurements, it was a success. But more than it being a project, God has used the power of his word in this study to strengthen my own personal faith and confidence in my amazingly powerful God. I wish I could have done more, but I have done my best within the guidelines set before me. I trust that this project may encourage the members of Great Lakes Bible Church and anyone else that may come across it. As is true of everyone in God's will, we never fully know the future impact of our present actions. I do not know how God may use these pages, but it is my prayer they will edify and encourage saints to persevere and prevail to the end. Therefore, I trust in the power and wisdom of a prevailing God to have his way with this project and use it in his divine economy for his glory.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING PERSEVERANCE

All of the research All of the research instruments used in this project will be performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee for a low risk survey prior to use in the ministry project.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify your current understanding of the doctrine of perseverance. This research is being conducted by Tigg Vanaman for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

Part 1

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?
 A. Yes
 B. No

2. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ alone for salvation?
 A. Yes
 B. No

3. Are you married?
 A. Yes
 B. No

4. Do you have any children age 18 or younger living in the home?
 A. Yes
 B. No

5. What is your age in years?
 A. 15-18
 B. 19-24
 C. 25-34
 D. 35-44
 E. 45-54
 F. 55-64
 G. 65 or over

Directions: Give your opinion using the following scale: (Circle your answer.)

SD = strongly disagree **D** = disagree **DS** = disagree somewhat
AS = agree somewhat **A** = agree **SA** = strongly agree

“*PERSEVERANCE*” - to endure or prevail in a course of action in spite of difficulty or with little sign of success.

6. I understand what perseverance looks like in the course of my life.

SD D DS AS A SA

7. When difficulties arise, I do not blame God.

SD D DS AS A SA

8. When difficulties arise, I do not ask God why.

SD D DS AS A SA

9. When difficulties arise, I trust God rather than work it out on my own.

SD D DS AS A SA

10. When difficulties arise, I am discouraged and want to quit.

SD D DS AS A SA

11. I do not struggle to understand why God allows pain and suffering.

SD D DS AS A SA

12. I do not dwell on things I don't understand.

SD D DS AS A SA

13. While being intimidated for holding to biblical truth, I would still hold to it.

SD D DS AS A SA

14. If threatened with violence for admitting I was a Christian, I would admit it.

SD D DS AS A SA

15. I am optimistic about my purpose in this world.

SD D DS AS A SA

16. I encourage others when they are having difficulty.

SD D DS AS A SA

17. I am willing to overcome setbacks to achieve a higher goal.

SD D DS AS A SA

18. I understand what the Bible teaches about personal perseverance.

SD D DS AS A SA

19. I understand *that* God's eternal plan prevails.

SD D DS AS A SA

20. I understand many details of *how* God's eternal plan prevails.

SD D DS AS A SA

21. I understand how the story of Genesis 3:15 fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

22. I understand how the story of Abraham fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

23. I understand how the story of Judah fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

24. I understand how the story of Ruth fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

25. I understand how the story of David fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

26. I understand how the story of Joash fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

27. I understand how the story of Job fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

28. I understand how the story of the disciples in Acts fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

29. I understand how the story of Revelation fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

30. I understand that my story somehow fits into God's prevailing plan.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2

KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT AND T-TEST RESULTS

Table A1. *t*-Test: Paired two sample for means

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>Pre-Course</i>	<i>Post-Course</i>
Mean	125.65	135.5
Variance	155.0815789	78.57894737
Observations	20	20
Pearson Correlation	0.692515231	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	19	
t Stat	-4.901595934	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000049539	
t Critical one-tail	1.729132812	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000099078	
t Critical two-tail	2.093024054	

Figure A1. Total responses of all questions

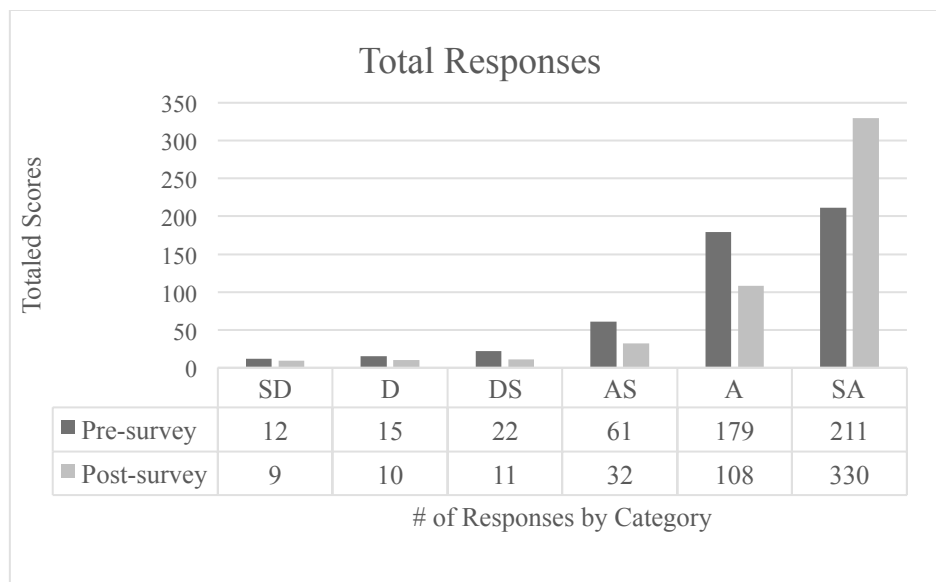


Table A2. Results for question 13: “While being intimidated for holding to biblical truth, I would still hold to it.”

<i>Score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>DS</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
Pre-survey	0	0	0	1	8	11
Post-survey	0	0	0	2	6	12

Figure A2. Results for question 13: “While being intimidated for holding to biblical truth, I would still hold to it.”

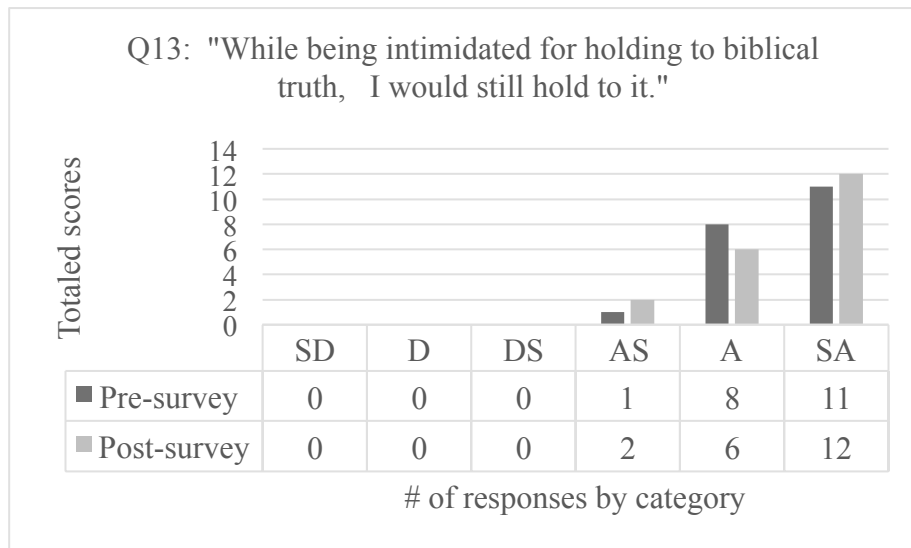


Table A3. Results for question 14: “If threatened with violence for admitting I was a Christian, I would admit it.”

<i>Score</i>		<i>D</i>	<i>DS</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
Pre-survey	0	1	1	1	8	9
Post-survey	0	0	1	3	5	11

Figure A3. Results for question 14: “If threatened with violence for admitting I was a Christian, I would admit it.”

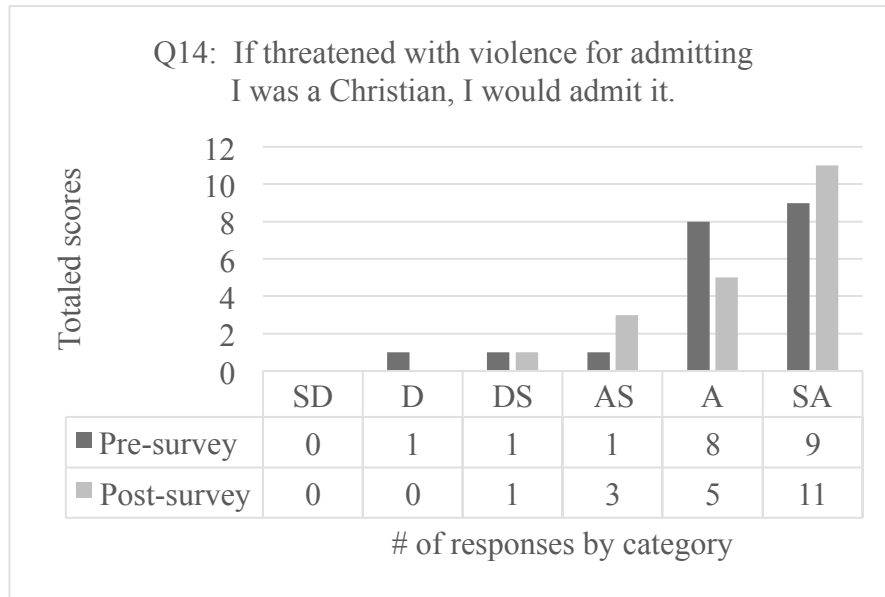


Table A4. Results for question 20: “I understand many details of how God's eternal plan prevails.”

<i>Score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>DS</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
Pre-survey	0	0	0	2	8	10
Post-survey	0	0	0	0	5	15

Figure A4. Results for question 20: “I understand many details of how God's eternal plan prevails.”

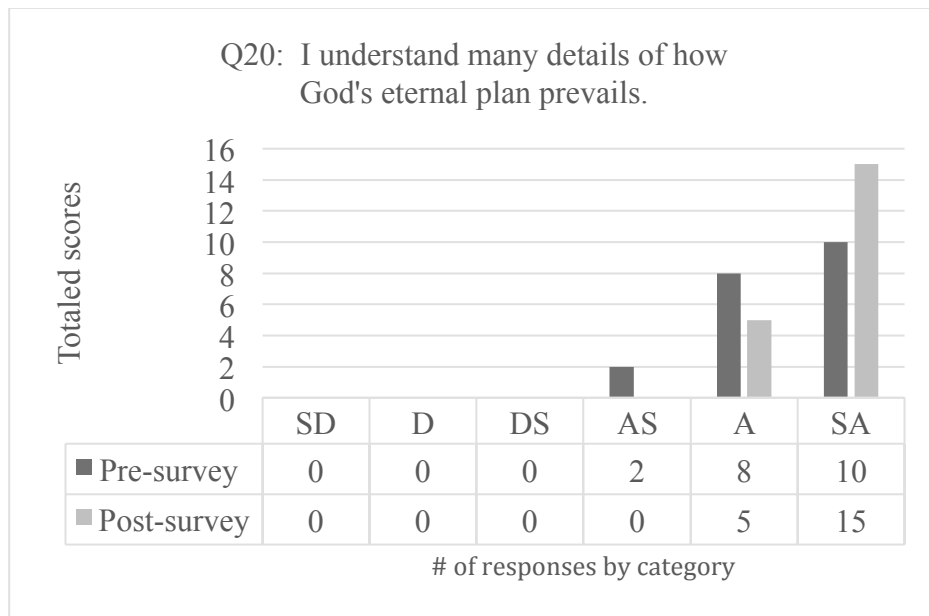


Table A5. Results for question 30: “I understand that my story fits into God's prevailing plan.”

<i>Score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>DS</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
Pre-survey	0	0	1	2	6	11
Post-survey	0	0	0	0	4	16

Figure A5. Results for question 30: “I understand that my story fits into God's prevailing plan.”

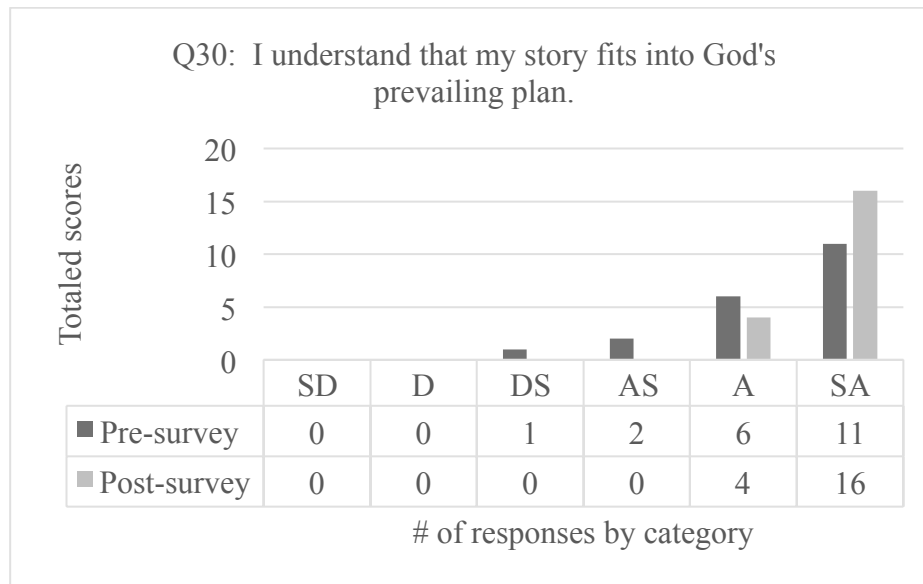
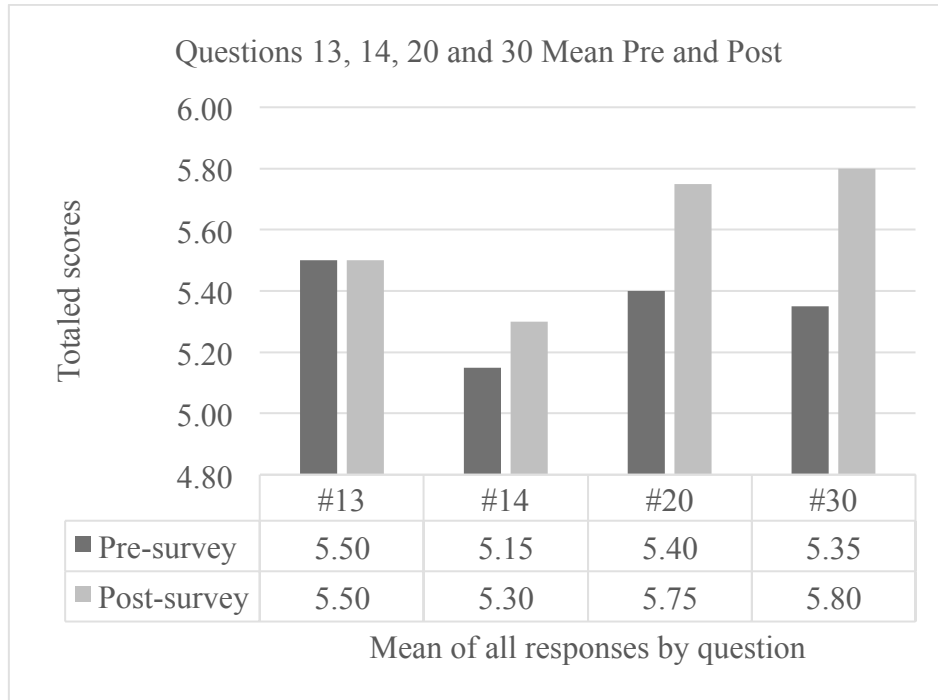


Figure A6. Mean responses for questions 13, 14, 20, and 30



APPENDIX 3

SATAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD'S PROMISED OFFSPRING

Genesis 3:15 prophesies, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." This is a general list of how the offspring of Satan exercised enmity against God's promised offspring. However, God's plan has prevailed against all Satan's efforts to destroy it.

Offspring of Promise	Offspring of Satan
1. Abel (Gen 4; Heb 11:4)	1. Cain (Gen 4; 1 John 3:12)
2. Descendants of Seth (Gen 5)	2. Descendants of Cain (Gen 4)
3. Noah (Gen 6:8; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5)	3. Wicked generation (Gen 6:1-7, 11-13)
4. Noah (Gen 9:18-21)	4. Ham, father of Canaan (Gen 9:22-27)
5. Descendants of Shem (Gen 10:21-31)	5. Descendants of Ham/Canaan (Gen 10:6-20; 12:6; 24:1-4)
6. Abram (Gen 12:1-3)	6. Pharaoh (Gen 12:10-20)
7. Abram (Gen 15:1)	7. Eliezer (Gen 15:2-6)
8. Isaac (Gen 17)	8. Ishmael (Gen 16; 17:15-21; 21:1-14; Gal 4:28-29)
9. Jacob (Gen 25-27)	9. Esau (Gen 25-27)
10. Descendants of Jacob/Israel (throughout the remainder of the OT)	10. Descendants of Esau (Gen 15:18-20; 24:34-35; 27:46; 36:1-43; Exod 23:22- 23; 34:11-16)
11. Judah (Gen 38; 49:8-10)	11. Physical difficulty and sin producing offspring from Judah (Gen 38)
12. Boaz (Ruth)	12. Famine, death, childlessness (Ruth)
13. David (1 Sam 16)	13. Saul (1 Sam 18-31) Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12) Son dies (2 Sam 12)

14. David	14. Amnon's incest & murder (2 Sam 13) Absalom's revolt (2 Sam 13-18) Adonijah's revolt (1 Kgs 1-2)
15. Solomon (1 Kgs 10)	15. Idolatry (1 Kgs 11)
16. Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12)	16. Foolishness, rebellion, idolatry (1 Kgs 12; 14:21-24)
17. Ten Northern Tribes / Israel (1 Kgs 12)	17. Apostasy & Assyria (1 Kgs 12; 2 Kgs 15:28)
18. Joash (2 Kgs 11)	18. Queen Athaliah (2 Kgs 8-11)
19. Isaiah's ministry (Isa)	19. Apostasy (Isaiah)
20. Jesus	20. Herod's attempt at murder (Matt 2) Satan's temptations (Matt 4; Luke 4) Demons Pharisees plots, hostile crowds, Judas' betrayal (Luke 22:1-6, 47-53) Agony in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46) Crucifixion (John 19)

APPENDIX 4

SERMON SERIES EVALUATION RUBRIC ON:
 “THE PREVAILING PLAN OF GOD”

D.Ed.Min Project Evaluation Tool					
Sermon Series Evaluation					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Does the title clearly and concisely describe the doctrine of perseverance?					
Was the purpose statement clearly and succinctly stated?					
Was it clear how the series supported the thesis statement?					
Did the preacher address the most pertinent issues(s) / texts?					
Has the preacher relied upon the strongest biblical and theological writers for the topic?					
Was the sequence of sermons intuitive? - was the flow logical and appropriate to the topic?					
Overall, was there a clear progression and flow of thought throughout the sermon series?					
Was the material preached clearly and easy to understand?					
Was the material broad enough to appeal to many?					

Was the material specific enough to challenge individuals to persevere?					
Was the material specific enough to encourage individuals to persevere?					
Did the material prompt intellectual growth on the subject of perseverance?					
Did the material prompt spiritual growth on the subject of perseverance?					
Did the preacher move in a definitive way to a climax of the discussion?					

APPENDIX 5

A STUDY GUIDE CURRICULUM ON THE PREVAILING PLAN OF GOD

This study will walk you through the “Big Picture” of the Bible and teach how God’s plan for creation has prevailed against all of Satan’s attempts to destroy it. Sometimes, you will read selected Scripture portions and answer study questions from that passage. At other times questions come from a singular text of Scripture and can be answered by reading the passage which appears in parenthesis after the question. Along the way, commentary will be provided to help you fill in the gaps and better understand God’s prevailing plan.

Lesson 1: A Biblical Theology of Revelation 5

One definition states, “Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole . . . maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.”¹ Biblical theology can also be similar to asking, “What does this scene mean in the overall storyline of the play?”

In Revelation 4 and 5, God takes John to heaven and gives him a vision of future events. To make sense of this vision, John uses biblical theology—how does this scene in heaven fit into the big picture of God’s story.

1A: Read Revelation 4 and 5 and answer the following questions.

*God is holding a scroll in his hand which contains the final judgments of God upon the earth (Rev 5:1).

1. At first, who was found worthy to open the scroll of judgments? (Rev 5:3)

2. What is John’s reaction to this? (Rev 5:4)

3. What three-word command does the elder tell John? (Rev 5:5a)

¹Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 3, 10.

4. What titles does the elder give the person whom he is introducing? (Rev 5:5)

6. To what do you think these titles could possibly refer?

5. What has this individual done that makes him able to open the scroll? (Rev 5:5)

It is significant that the elder introduces Jesus by the names “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” when he could have used any other title: Messiah, the Alpha and Omega, the Good Shepherd, Judge of the living and the dead, or Son of God. The elder in Revelation 5:5 uses the royal titles, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,” to connect Jesus Christ as the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15.

Back to the beginning of creation: God makes all things by his own will and for his glory (Gen 1-2; John 1:1-4; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17; Rev 4:9-11). Man is made in God’s own image and is thus the pinnacle of God’s creation (Gen 1:26-27). God commands man to “be fruitful and multiply” in order to reproduce God’s image and fill the whole earth with God’s glory (Gen 1:28).² Into this drama steps God’s enemy, Satan, in the form of a serpent (Gen 3). Satan’s desire is to rob God of his glory and possess all glory for himself (Matt 4:1-11; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 12). To accomplish this, Satan attempts to steal from creation the precise image of God’s glory—man. Satan seduces Adam and Eve to disobey God and follow him. Man’s sin introduces the curse of death upon creation and interrupts man’s perfect fellowship with the eternal, holy God. In Genesis 3:15, God declares one will descend from mankind who will conquer Satan and sin and eventually reconcile all things to God.

1B: Read Genesis 3:1-19 and answer the following questions.

7. In Genesis 3:14-15, who is speaking? _____ *This is the “I.”

8. To whom is he speaking? _____ *This is the “you.”

9. What did God say he would put between Satan and the woman? _____

“*enmity*” - strife, conflict, hatred

²Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 25-26, 52.

10. What will the offspring of Satan do to the offspring of the woman?
(Gen 3:15 - “you shall . . .”)
11. What will the offspring of the woman do to the offspring of Satan?
(Gen 3:15 - “he shall . . .”)

Conclusion:

The battle ensues of Satan’s “enmity” against God and his plan to bring this conquering and saving offspring into the world through the offspring of the woman. Thus, God’s promised offspring will come from human lineage. Since God promised this offspring will crush Satan, Satan will wage war (“enmity”) to prevent this offspring from being born. This cosmic conflict between the two offsprings is traceable throughout the Bible’s story.³

Even after man sinned, God graciously postpones the punishment of death until man can produce offspring, which will lead to the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. Once this promised offspring comes and conquers the enmity against him, he is prepared to restore God’s creation, redeem all who follow God, and judge all who oppose Jehovah. *And this is exactly what John sees in Revelation 5—the culmination of this drama which began in Genesis 3.* God’s plan to produce this promised offspring (Christ) has prevailed against all Satan’s enmity against it.

Genesis 3:15 lays the foundation of redemptive history, and Revelation 5 announces its soon culmination. However, several scenes are inserted into this drama between Genesis and Revelation. Frequently the actors find themselves, like John, weeping and wondering if God and his plan will ever succeed, but in each instance God prevails.

When God’s children comprehend God’s eternal prevailing plan, they are encouraged to prevail through God’s plan for their own lives. Though beset by temporal battles and afflictions, Christians can rejoice knowing their weeping will be turned to joy and their death to victory (Ps 30:5; Rom 8:18; 1 Cor 15:51-58; 2 Cor 4:7-18; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 5:10; Rev 20:10 - 21:8).

12. Have there been times or events in your life where you thought all was lost and there was no more hope? Do you wish to write about them and how this study so far can give you hope in those difficult times?

³God is completely holy; therefore, evil did not originate with God (Gen 1:31; Lev 19:2; Isa 6:3; Hab 1:13; 1 Pet 1:16). God did allow for created beings to have a free will and choose between good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). Therefore, evil, pain, suffering, and death are the results of Satan’s and man’s rebellion against God (Gen 3; Jas 1:13-18). Ultimately, the question of “Why did God allow evil?” remains a mystery. Scripture does teach, however, that God will glorify himself by defeating evil and providing victorious salvation to mankind. Even though evil exists, God does offer himself as the sacrifice to conquer evil, and God remains a sovereign, loving, saving, and good God (John 3:16; 19:28-30; Phil 2:5-11; 2 Cor 5:21; Titus 1:1-3; Heb 2:14-15; Rev 20:10-15; 21:1-7).

Lesson 2: The Offspring to be the “Lion of Judah”

In Revelation 5:5, the elder introduces “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Biblical theology informs us that this individual is the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15.

As the storyline of God’s coming offspring develops through Genesis, the roots of this family tree become discernable. This lineage begins with the broad scope of humanity, narrows to one specific nation, and to one tribe within that nation.

2A: Read Genesis 4:1-8 and 6:5-8 and answer the following questions.

1. What do you think Eve may have in mind when she says, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD”? (Gen 4:1).
2. First John 3:12 shows that Cain proves to be which: the offspring of promise, or the offspring of the serpent?
3. How is the enmity between the two lines of offspring seen here in Genesis 4?
4. Through whom does God’s plan prevail in Genesis 4? (Gen 4:25-26)
5. In Genesis 6:5-8, how does the enmity show itself?
6. What does God pronounce upon mankind? (Gen 6:7)
7. Through whom does God’s plan prevail? (Gen 6:8)

2B: Noah’s descendants fail to replenish the earth with God’s glory (Gen 9:1, 7) and instead unify to develop the rebellious, man-centered society known as Babel (Gen 11). God brings another judgment on man by confusing his language and the different nations of the world are born. From the different nations resulting from Babel, God chooses one man to begin God’s chosen nation (Gen 12:1-3).

8. Whom does God choose to begin a new nation of God’s people? (Gen 12:1-3)
9. What is the key promise God gives him in Genesis 12:3c?
10. How do you think this promise relates to God’s overall plan in creation?
(See second paragraph of the commentary in Lesson 1A.)

2C: Abram, later called Abraham, gives birth to Isaac (Gen 21), Isaac gives birth to Jacob (Gen 25), and Jacob has twelve sons. Of the twelve, the blessing to rule comes down to one son.

11. In Genesis 49:8-10, which son receives the blessing of leadership?

12. To what animal is Judah compared? (Gen 49:9)

13. What will not depart from Judah? (Gen 49:10)

Conclusion:

The lineage of the promised offspring in Genesis 3:15 has narrowed from mankind in general (“offspring of the woman”—Gen 3:15) to one specific nation among mankind (the nation to come from Abram—Gen 12:1-3), and down to one tribe within that nation (Judah—Gen 49:8-10).

Genealogical Line of the Promised Offspring of Genesis 3:15

⇒ Mankind in General (Gen 3:15)

⇒ Nation of Israel (Gen 12)

⇒ Tribe of Judah (Gen 49)

Next we will see the lineage continue to narrow from one tribe down to one specific family, the family of David.

Lesson 3: The Offspring to be the “Root of David”

The book of Ruth is a fascinating story of God’s providential care to preserve the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. This book is worthy of an entire study in itself, but we will only overview it here.

You do not have to read the whole book of Ruth, but simply refer to the references in Ruth at the end of each question.

3A: Various study questions from Ruth:

1. In what era of Israel’s history does the story of Ruth occur? (Ruth 1:1)
2. In what city does the story of Ruth occur? (Ruth 1:1-2, 19, 22; 4:11)
3. Which tribe possessed this city? (Ruth 1:1-2)
4. Therefore, this whole family was of the tribe of _____ (Ruth 2:1; 3:2).

The elders of Bethlehem-Judah affirm the marriage of Boaz and Ruth by pronouncing the fruitful blessing of the house of Jacob/Israel and of Judah (Ruth 4:11-12. See Genesis 29-30; 35:16-18; 38:29).

5. Boaz and Ruth become ancestors of the great King _____.
(Ruth 4:18-20)

*Through famine, death, barrenness, & bitterness in the story of Ruth, God’s plan for his offspring to come through the tribe of Judah continues to prevail.

3B: Israel moves from the era of judges into its era of human kingship. Upon the shameful reign of King Saul (1 Sam 8-15), God “sought a man after his own heart” (1 Sam 13:14). David, from the prescribed tribe of Judah (1 Sam 16:1; Ruth 4:17-22; Gen 38:24-30), becomes king of the Jews. In another display of God’s sovereign intervention, David ascends the throne out of relative obscurity. David is the youngest of Jesse’s eight sons, and an irrelevant shepherd (1 Sam 16). With God’s blessing, David becomes king and leads the kingdom of Israel to its largest extent to date (2 Sam 5-8). Then God establishes his covenant with David (2 Sam 7).

6. Fill in the blanks from 2 Samuel 7 of God's covenant to David.

2 Sam 7: ¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your _____ after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his _____. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom _____. ¹⁴I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵but my steadfast love will not _____ from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure _____ before me. Your _____ shall be established _____.' ”

God's covenant with David transcends David's life span and promises that one will not fail to sit on David's throne, and his kingdom will be established forever. The Davidic Covenant directly incorporates the messianic offspring of Genesis 3:15 into David's posterity—the only one worthy to rule and reign forever from the tribe of Judah is the Messiah. This directly relates to Israel's promise to Judah in Genesis 49:10. In his psalms and prayers of gratitude, David recognizes God has graciously included him in the overarching plan for God's name to be magnified forever (2 Sam 7:20-29; Pss 2; 67; 89; 110; 132). God's promised offspring will come through David, who is linked with Judah, Judah to Abraham, Abraham to Noah, Noah to Adam, and Adam to Genesis 3:15.

3C: Read 1 Kings 11-12 and answer the following questions.

7. Which son of David was the rightful heir to the throne? (1 Kgs 1:28-30)

8. Solomon ruled well (1 Kgs 10:23), but what problem did he have in his old age? (1 Kgs 11:1-4)

9. God decrees to take the kingdom of Israel away from Solomon, yet leaves him how many tribes? and for who's sake (1 Kgs 11:11-13).⁴
10. When Solomon's son, Rehoboam, rules foolishly and does not listen to the people, what do the people of Israel do against the Davidic dynasty? (1 Kgs 12:16)
11. Ten of the twelve tribes rebel against the Davidic kingship and establish their own kingdom in northern Israel called Samaria. Jeroboam becomes king of the ten tribes and institutes a system of _____ from which northern Israel/Samaria never recovers (1 Kgs 12:25-33).
- Because of their sin, God eventually sends the king of _____ to deport the ten northern tribes and they will never again be a recognizable entity (2 Kgs 17:6-7).
12. Nonetheless, which tribes remains faithful to the house of David? (1 Kgs 11:34-36; 12:20-21; 2 Kgs 18-22).

Conclusion:

The Southern Kingdom of Israel becomes known as "Judah" since Judah is David's own tribe and they remain loyal to the Davidic kings. Through Satan's enmity of chaos, civil war, and apostasy, God's promised lineage through the Davidic line is still alive and God's plan prevails.

Genealogical Line of the Promised Offspring of Genesis 3:15

- ⇒ Mankind in General (Gen 3:15)
- ⇒ Nation of Israel (Gen 12)
- ⇒ Tribe of Judah (Gen 49)
- ⇒ Family of David (2 Sam 7)

⁴The tribe of Benjamin was nearly extinguished towards the end of the judges (Judg 20-21). Their tribal territory overlapped what became the dividing line between the northern and southern kingdoms in Israel. The city of Bethel, where Jeroboam set up one of his golden calves, belonged to Benjamin (Josh 18:11-14; 1 Kgs 12:28-29). Yet, Rehoboam gathered some Benjamites to fight with him against Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:21-24). Thus, the tribe of Benjamin was split between north and south. The Levites originally were spread throughout all the tribes of Israel but returned to the kingdom of Judah once Jeroboam in the north had cast them out and appointed his own priests (2 Chr 11:13-16). The grouping of these three tribes as part of Judah is also seen in their return from Babylonian captivity (Ezra 1:5).

4B: God’s plan continues to prevail during the time of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah prophesies 200 years into the divided kingdom. He uses the “root of David” terminology to prophesy God’s dealings with the line of David at this stage. Although Judah experiences material prosperity, she is in further decline spiritually (Isa 1-5).

Read Isaiah 6:1-13; 11:1-10 and answer the following questions.

1. Since Judah will not listen to Isaiah’s preaching, what does God say he will do with them? (Isa 6:8-13)
2. God will “cut off” Judah, but what remains? (Isa 6:13)
3. Who is the stump? (Isa 6:13)

In these dark days God gives the sign of Immanuel (Isa 7:10-17) and reiterates the promise of a divine child to be born who will give light, defeat enemies, and sit on David’s throne forever (Isa 9:1-7).

But before these promises of Messiah are realized, Judah will indeed bear judgment for her sins. Judah will be “cut off” from the head (leaders) to the tail (the lowly) fulfilling God’s warning to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:44 (Isa 9:13-17; 19:15). From the human perspective, this being cut off must look like the end. Man is too sinful and is a lost cause. Surely, Satan must win. But the story is not over.

4. Fill in the blanks of what God declares in Isaiah 11:

¹ There shall come forth a _____ from the stump of Jesse, and a _____ from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, . . . ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be _____ of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ In that day the _____ of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

5. Not only is there a root of Jesse (“the holy seed”), but there is also what? (Isa 11:1)

6. What do you think a root and a stem existing together in this stump of Jesse could imply?

Conclusion:

New life will issue from this apparently dead stump of David. Consistent with his promise in Isaiah 6:13, the holy seed will sprout from this stump of Jesse to be the ultimate king who leads his people into God's righteousness. This holy seed will not only be a *descendent* of David, but Isaiah 11:10 states it is also his "root," or *ancestor*. This passage demonstrates Messiah's humanity as a human descendant of David, but also his divinity as being pre-existent to David.⁶

Furthermore, Isaiah reiterates God's purpose in creation that all nations of the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. This purpose was declared to Adam (Gen 1:28), Noah (Gen 9:7), Abraham (Gen 12:3), and Judah (Gen 49:10). God's purposes may be threatened, but still survive through the Davidic line.

In Genesis 3:15, God promised an offspring that would come to crush the head of Satan. The lineage of the offspring would narrow down through humanity, Israel, Judah, and David. In the prophecies of Isaiah, we learn that this offspring would be both human and divine: "Immanuel"—God with us (Isa 7:14), "of his government there will be no end" (Isa 9:7), He will be both branch and root of David (Isa 11:1, 10). The serpent has reared its head in enmity against this offspring, but God's plan has prevailed in every case.

The OT will soon go silent, only to reawaken with the birth of the promised offspring: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5).

⁶Easley comments, "In Isaiah 11:10, the coming Messiah is called the *ancestor* or 'root of Jesse,' who was King David's father: 'In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples.' (In Isaiah 11:1, the same Messiah is called the *Branch or descendant* of Jesse. How the Messiah could be both *Root* and *Branch* of Jesse was a mystery until it was fulfilled in Jesus.) On the basis of Isaiah 11:10 we understand that the 'Root [ancestor] of Jesse' is also the Root [ancestor] of David. The two titles of Jesus, then, point in the direction of both his deity (as the ultimate divine source of David) and his humanity (as the royal lion from Judah)." Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 12 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 92. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus directly declares, "I am the root and the descendant of David," which fulfills Isaiah's prophecy.

Lesson 5: The Offspring Identified as Jesus in the NT

Overviewing redemptive history, God's plan in Genesis 3:15 has progressed from mankind in general, to a specific nation, to a specific tribe, and to a specific family. Now moving into the first century, God's promised offspring comes as one individual, the person of Jesus Christ.

Genealogical Line of the Promised Offspring of Genesis 3:15

- ⇒ Mankind in General (Gen 3:15)
- ⇒ Nation of Israel (Gen 12)
- ⇒ Tribe of Judah (Gen 49)
- ⇒ Family of David (2 Sam 7)
- ★ Messiah, Jesus Christ, is born. (Matt 1)

The writers of the NT specifically identify Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, or Messiah, in order to prove he is the promised offspring God promised to send. The following passages emphasize how Jesus is the promised descendent of this genealogical line.

5A: Various study questions from the NT:

1. To which key people does Matthew link the genealogy of Jesus in the opening verse of his gospel? (Matt 1:1)
2. Jesus is born to Joseph. How is Joseph linked to this lineage? (Matt 1:20)
3. What prophecy about Messiah's birth does Matthew 1:22-23 fulfill? (See commentary in Lesson 4B.)

Additionally, at Jesus' baptism God the Father announces Jesus with the term, "my beloved Son" (Matt 3:16-17). This affirmation links Jesus to God calling Israel his son (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1), God's reference to David as his son (Ps 89:26-29), and the Messianic prophecies of God's Son in Psalm 2.

4. The numerous people Jesus healed identified Jesus as the son of _____ (Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30).
5. Luke 1:26-33 - the angel Gabriel announces Jesus' birth. Verse 32 declares that Jesus is sent to fulfill what promise?

6. Luke 2:1-7 - which town did Mary and Joseph go to in order to be registered, and why this town?

7. Fill in the blanks from Peter's first sermon recorded in Acts 2:29-36:

Acts 2:29 "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch _____ that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his _____ on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the _____, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This _____ God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. . . . ³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for _____ that God has made him both Lord and _____, this _____ whom you crucified."

8. Fill in the blanks from Paul's sermon at Antioch of Pisidia in Acts 13:22-23.

Acts 13:22 And when he had removed him [Saul as king], he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' ²³ Of this man's _____ God has brought to Israel a Savior, _____, as he _____.

9. Fill in the blanks from Paul's introduction to Romans. Notice that Paul identifies Jesus as both God and man.

Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he _____ beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his _____, who was descended from _____ according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of _____ in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, _____ Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

10. Fill in the blanks from Galatians 3:16 where Paul emphasizes the singular offspring to come from Abraham.

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to _____, “And to your offspring,” who is _____.

11. At the close of inspired Scripture, in Revelation 22:16, Jesus identifies himself as the fulfillment of both Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10, saying, “I, Jesus, . . . I am the _____ and the _____ of David, the bright morning star” (Rev 22:16).

Conclusion:

With all the inspired writings as biblical proof, the “Lion of Judah, and Root of David” in Revelation 5:5 is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. Jesus, the Christ, is the only one eligible to sit upon the eternal throne. Jesus is the only one “worthy... to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev 5:12).

Lesson 6: The Prevailing Plan of God in the Ministry of Jesus Christ

It is inherent that to prevail, there must be something or someone over which to prevail; to have a conqueror, there must be the conquered; to have salvation, there must be a judgment from which to be saved. In order for God to be glorified in salvation, he has to punish evil and those who commit it. The brightness of God's glory in salvation is magnified against the dark backdrop of his judgment on sin.

God's eternal purpose in creation is to glorify himself in the salvation of repentant men and the judgment of the wicked. Should anyone question God's character in this, his defense comes when God's own Son became sin and tasted death for every man; thus, he is acquainted with our sorrows (Isa 53; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:9-10). This story has developed throughout redemptive history and reaches a fulfillment in Jesus Christ and his earthly ministry—namely, his life, his death, and his resurrection. Christ became a man to live the perfect life and satisfy the demands of God's law (Rom 5:18-21; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 4:14-16). Then he became subject to death in order to pay the penalty of man's sin (Rom 5:1-11; 6:23; 2 Cor 5:14-21; Heb 10:4-14). Then he defeated death by resurrecting to life again, proving that death has no power over him (John 10:17-18; Acts 2:23-24; Rom 6:9).

6A: List the person(s) from whom Jesus faces enmity during his life:

1. Matt 2:7-8, 13, 16-18 = _____
2. Matt 4:1-11 = _____
3. Matt 8:28-29 = _____
4. Mark 2:23—3:2 = _____
5. Luke 20:19-20 = _____
6. John 7:1 = _____
7. John 7:2-5 = _____
8. Matt 26:14-16, 47-50 = _____
9. Matt 27:20-26 = _____
10. Matt 27:27-31 = _____

6B: Christ's death is not a defeat, but a victory!

Satan finally maneuvers men into the betrayal, arrest, trial, false accusations, and crucifixion of Jesus (Matt 26-27; John 13:2). Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46), may have given the serpent subtle hope. Then Jesus proclaims, "It is finished" (John 19:30), which, rather than a death cry in defeat is actually a shout of victory. God's judgment against sin is paid in full and God's wrath has been forever satisfied by the substitutionary death of Christ (Isa 53:10-11; Col 2:14-15; Heb 10:1-18). Jesus then bows his head and surrenders his life (John 19:30).

11. Fill in the blanks from Hebrews 2:14-16:

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through _____ he might _____ the one who has the power of death, that is, the _____, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the _____ of Abraham.

12. Fill in the blanks from Colossians 2:13-15:

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made _____ together with him, having forgiven us _____ our trespasses, ¹⁴ by _____ the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the _____.

¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by _____ over them in him.

Jesus' death paid the full price of death for man's sin, and now salvation is available to all who respond to God's calling and put their faith in Christ. Hamilton says, "Salvation for all believers of all ages is made possible by the judgment that falls on Jesus at the cross. The cross allows God to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:24-26). The cross of Christ, the climactic expression of the glory of God in salvation through judgment, is the turning point of the ages."⁷ Those who believe and receive Christ's death as payment of their own sin are reconciled to God and become sons of God (John 1:12; Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1-2). From this one offspring, Christ, multitudes of men become God's offspring—spiritual offspring (Rom 8:9-14; Eph 2:11-22; Rev 5:9-10). Romans 4 and Galatians

⁷James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 57.

3:6-9 point out that becoming a child of God through faith connects the believer to Abraham and fulfills Genesis 12:3. The death of Christ has not terminated God's lineage, but rather multiplied it.

6C: Christ, the offspring of Genesis 3:15, defeats Satan through his resurrection.

13. Fill in blanks from 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 that tell the *fact* of Christ's resurrection:

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ _____ for our sins in accordance with the _____,
⁴ that he was _____, that he was _____ on the third day in accordance with the _____, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the _____. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than _____ brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the _____. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to _____.

14. What does Acts 2:24 have to say about Christ dying and resurrecting?

15. According to Romans 1:3-4, what title can Christ claim since he rose from the dead?

16. First Peter 1:3-5 teaches us that through Christ's resurrection, he has caused us to be _____, and to have an _____.

17. What significance does Christ's resurrection have for every believer? (1 Cor 15:22-23; Rom 8:9-11; 2 Cor 4:14).

18. How do 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 and Revelation 21:4 fulfill Genesis 49:8 regarding Jesus, the Lion of Judah?

Conclusion:

God's plan begins to culminate in Revelation 5:5. Because the promised offspring has come to fulfill God's plan and has conquered death and Satan (Col 2:14-15; Heb 2:14-16; 1 John 3:8), the elder encourages John, "Weep no more." In our struggle against the enemy, we who are in Christ are promised victory, resurrection, and everlasting life.

Lesson 7: God's Prevailing Plan Signifies Victory for the Believer

It is significant in Revelation 5:5 that the elder introduces Jesus by the names "Lion of . . . Judah, Root of David." These titles connect Jesus as the promised "offspring" of Genesis 3:15. God's plan to bring Jesus as Messiah through human lineage has prevailed in spite of all Satan's enmity to destroy it. The NT plentifully identifies Jesus as the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. God's plan prevails through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The NT authors emphasize the significance of Jesus' redemptive work as the foundation for the ultimate victory for God's people in God's prevailing plan.

7A: Various study questions from the NT:

1. How does John signify victory through Christ in the introduction of his gospel?
(John 1:1-5)

2. What does God promise to all who believe in his Son? (John 3:16)

3. Why does Jesus tell his disciples to be of good cheer even though they face tribulation? (John 16:33)

4. What can possibly separate us from the love of God? (Rom 8:35-39)

5. When we are strong in the Lord and his might, what are we able to do?
(Eph 6:10-11)

6. What does the Lord promise to all who love his appearing? (2 Tim 4:8)

7. What is promised to the believer who overcomes temptation? (James 1:12)

8. What is God guarding for believers that is ready to be revealed in the last time?
(1 Pet 1:3-5)

9. What is the reason the Son of God appeared? (1 John 3:8)

10. How is the Christian able to overcome the spirit of antichrist in the world?
(1 John 4:4)

11. What is the victory that overcomes the world? (1 John 5:4-5)

12. What will God do in the new creation? (Rev 21:1-4)

Conclusion:

Why does this study matter? Because when the ungodly have seized our society, and when it seems all hope is gone, Christians can hold on to the faith—Christ will prevail. Köstenberger and O’Brien state this is the spirit of the book of Revelation: “[Revelation] may best be described as a call for ‘patient endurance on the part of the saints’ (14:12). Notably, it is Jesus, the crucified, risen and exalted Lord, who reveals the prophecies of this book to the suffering church. The Jesus who overcame suffering, even death, the Lamb who was also the Lion, is now encouraging his suffering saints from heaven to persevere until the end and to preserve purity and faithfulness in an unclean society characterized by compromise.”⁸

Today, the offspring of Satan manifests itself against the people of God in a variety of ways. The ungodly of the world in general, and of our community specifically, make life difficult or dangerous for the people of God. We struggle to maintain an eternal perspective—we fear; we doubt; we weep. Yet it is at times like this, when all hope seems gone, that God steps into the scene and seizes the victory. Let us take heart—our faith is in the overcoming Lion of Judah, and Root of David.

⁸Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 244.

Lesson 8: Perseverance of the Saints

God is omnipotent and sovereign and will accomplish every one of his purposes in creation in spite of Satan's enmity against him. Yet, God is implementing this eternal plan through fickle, sinful men. God's plan will prevail through men whom he has chosen from before creation and who remain faithful to him. From this reality emerges discussion on the perseverance of the saints.

Chapter 17 of The Westminster Confession defines perseverance: "This perseverance of the saints depends, not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof."⁹ In other words, God's elect will persevere because their position in Christ assures their eternal salvation. Salvation and election are from God, and all those chosen will respond and prevail.

Several facets to the perseverance of the saints exist,¹⁰ but we will study only two of them here. The saints of God faithfully persevere unto the end of their lives or until Jesus returns because: 1) they have been chosen for salvation unto God's glory, 2) they are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

8A: Saint have been chosen for salvation unto God's glory.

8A:1 - Read John 6:37-44 and answer the following questions.

1. All souls that the Father has given the Son will do what? (John 6:37a)
2. What assurance does Jesus have for all who come to him? (John 6:37b)
3. What three elements does the Father's will for the Son contain? (John 6:39-40)

⁹"On the Perseverance of the Saints," in The Westminster Confession, accessed on November 1, 2016, <http://www.creeds.net/Westminster/c17.htm>.

¹⁰For further reference on sovereignty and free will, consult John Feinberg, et al., *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

4. Can anyone come to the Father on his own accord or on his own merits?
(John 6:44)

The sovereignty of God in salvation is the security of the saint. Since God will accomplish all his purposes for his glory, chosen souls are safeguarded within the Father's eternal plan.

8A:2 - Read John 10:22-30 and answer the following questions.

5. What are three characteristics of Christ's sheep? (John 10:27)
6. What three things does Christ do for his sheep? (John 10:28)
7. How does Christ gain possession of his sheep in the first place?
(John 10:29a)
8. What does the Father do for his sheep? (John 10:29b)

Sheep chosen by the Father and given to the Son are securely sheltered in God's flock for eternity.

8A:3 - Read John 17:1-19 and answer the following questions.

9. How has the Son glorified the Father? (John 17:1-4)
10. How long has the plan existed for God to be glorified through salvation that the Son would provide? (John 17:5)
11. What verbs in John 17:8 show the response of those who have been given by the Father to the Son?

12. How is the Son glorified? (John 17:10)

13. What is the Son's prayer for the believers? (John 17:11)

14. For what does the Son ask of the Father regarding believers in the world?
(John 17:14-19)

8B: Saints are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

15. What is the means whereby someone is "born again"? (John 3:1-8)

16. According to Titus 3:3-5, what work does the Spirit do in a believer?

17. What does God do for the believer who was dead in sin? (Eph 2:1-5)

18. The Holy Spirit resides within the believer, thus the Christian becomes the
_____ of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:14; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19;
2 Cor 6:16).

19. According to John 14:15-17, how does the Spirit help the believer?

20. Fill in the blanks regarding the significance of the Spirit in the believer's life.

Eph 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were _____ with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the _____ of our _____ until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

The language of this verse indicates the saint *belongs* to God through a *finished* transaction, and the indwelling Spirit is an absolute *certainty* that the believer will be reclaimed by God in the culmination.

21. What does God's eternal Spirit dwelling within the saint assure the saint of in the future? (Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 4:14).

Conclusion:

The eternal plan of God is to reveal his glory within the arena of creation (Gen 1-2; John 1:1-4; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17; Rev 4:9-11). The means by which God is glorified is the salvation of men (Eph 3:1-11). Therefore, those who have been chosen by God and given to the Son respond to God's call, receive new birth unto eternal life, are preserved by God, and persevere faithfully to the end—all of which redounds to the glory of God. The saint will persevere because he is interwoven into the fabric of God's eternal, prevailing plan.

The believer has union with Christ through the Holy Spirit; neither the third person of the Trinity, nor the redeemed human the Spirit indwells, will be left out of God's inheritance. Hence, the believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit is guaranteed he will prevail to inherit God's eternal kingdom.

APPENDIX 6

STUDY GUIDE CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRIC

D.Ed.Min Project Evaluation Tool					
Curriculum Evaluation					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Does the title clearly and concisely describe the curriculum?					
Is the purpose statement clearly and succinctly stated?					
Is it clear how the curriculum supports the thesis statement?					
In the biblical / theological section, has the writer addressed the most pertinent issues(s) / texts?					
Has the writer relied upon the strongest biblical and theological writers for the topic?					
Are the chapters intuitive? - is the flow logical and appropriate to the topic?					
Do the subheadings flow logically?					
Has the writer used good transitions between paragraphs and topics?					
Overall, is there a clear progression and flow of thought throughout the curriculum?					

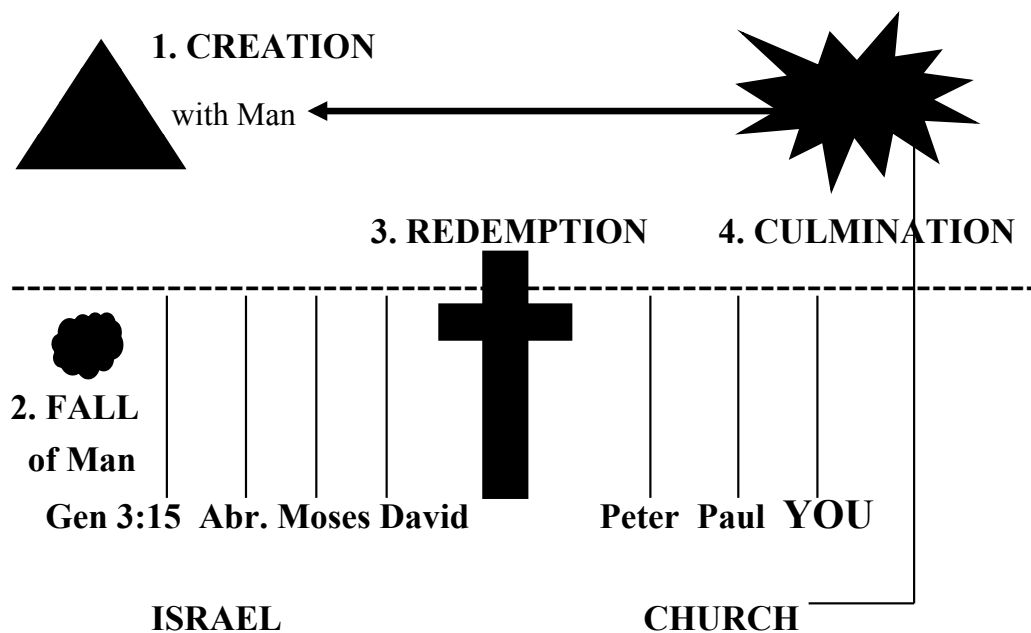
Has the writer used proper grammar, syntax, and diction?					
Is the material written clearly and easy to understand?					
Is the material broad enough to appeal to many people?					
Is the material specific enough to challenge individuals to persevere?					
Is the material specific enough to encourage individuals to persevere?					
Does the material prompt intellectual growth on the subject of perseverance?					
Does the material prompt spiritual growth on the subject of perseverance?					
Is the amount of the reading assignments appropriate?					
Is the amount of questions appropriate?					
Are the questions understandable?					
Do the questions elicit personal reflection?					
Do the questions encourage an honest response?					
Has the writer moved in a definitive way to a climax of the discussion?					
Is the curriculum helpful for personal reference?					
Is the curriculum appropriate as a gift?					
Is the curriculum useful as a discipleship tool?					

APPENDIX 7

STORYLINE OF THE PREVAILING PLAN OF GOD

**Note: The sequence of this chart runs counter-clockwise.*

Storyline of the Bible



The entire Bible Story can be summarized in 4 key features:

Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Culmination.

1. In the beginning, God **CREATED** to display his glory and to enjoy fellowship with man.
2. Satan desired the glory of creation, so he tried to steal God's image in creation—man. Man chose to believe a false interpretation of his purpose by listening to Satan. He disobeyed God, and we have the second element in the Bible story, the **FALL** of man into sin.
 - a. Sin took man from being in fellowship with God to a position of being separated from God. (Isa 59:2 "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.")

- b. However, God had already planned a remedy for man's sin. In Genesis 3:15, God declared that He would bring man back into fellowship with Him by sending a Savior who would be an offspring/descendent of man. This Savior/Messiah would battle Satan for the glory in creation, but the Messiah will eventually crush Satan's head in a blow of victory.
 - c. From Genesis 3:15, we see the third key element to the Bible story—the promise of REDEMPTION. So you see, Genesis 3:15 is tied directly to the overall storyline of God's glory in creation by the redemption of man from his sin.
 - d. The storyline of redemption is played out by several Bible characters—Abraham, Moses, and David. However, no matter how great these men and their stories are individually, we must realize they are attached to the much bigger plot—the story of Redemption.
 - e. The instrument through which God is bringing about the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15 is the nation of Israel.
3. Ultimately, Jesus Christ comes from the lineage of Israel and is God's promised offspring of Genesis 3:15. Jesus is the Lamb of God who dies to remove the barrier of sin that separates man from God, and thus redeem (buy back) man from his sin. This is accomplished through Jesus' death on the cross, his burial, and his resurrection—the good news we simply call the Gospel!
- a. Once Christ has accomplished the work of redeeming mankind to God, His followers are told to preach this good news of the gospel to all the world. Peter and Paul were among the first to preach Christ's gospel.
 - b. All who hear and believe in the work of Christ for themselves are saved from God's wrath and become God's people—the Church.
 - c. Now comes the significance of this story to you: as you hear of God's plan to save you from your sins, YOU can receive forgiveness and come back into fellowship with God, and become part of God's overall story of redemption which He has been planning for all eternity!
4. All the redeemed are awaiting the fourth element of God's story—CULMINATION!
- a. This is when God will finally punish all sin and evil, destroy sorrow, tears, sin, and death, and create all things new. This will be a state of eternal perfection.
 - b. Those who have been redeemed will once again live forever in perfect fellowship with God in the new heaven and new earth just like God had intended in the original creation.
 - c. God will fulfill all his purposes in creation. He will finish what he started!

APPENDIX 8

SERMON OUTLINES ON THE PREVAILING PLAN OF GOD

The following are the outlines of Sermons 1-10 used in the sermon series.

Sermon 1

A Biblical Theology of Revelation 5:5

One of the most spectacular passages recorded in all of Scripture is Revelation 5 where John receives a vision of God's throne room in heaven. Schreiner recognizes this chapter as perhaps the most important in the entire book of Revelation.¹

I. The Setting

A. Rev 4 - John is called up to heaven, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

- John sees God seated on the throne of heaven and being worshiped.

B. Rev 5 - Action begins to take place. God is moving towards the culmination of his plan for creation; the things that "must take place after this" (4:1).

READ REV 5.

1. God is holding a scroll in his hand which contains the final judgments of God upon the earth.
2. A search is conducted for someone worthy to open the scroll of judgments.

The phrase in verse 3, "in heaven or on earth or under the earth," emphasizes that the search was made throughout the entire universe and still no one was found worthy to bring judgment.

¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 429.

3. John weeps that no one is found worthy.

- a. The language of verse 4 tells us that this causes John to weep loudly and for an extended time.
- b. To John, God's eternal plan appears to be on hold as John observes the search yields no one worthy to culminate God's plan.
- c. We see John's reaction of weeping is from the human perspective.

- 1) Surely, the beloved disciple knows Jesus was the Christ—died, buried, and risen again. John has recorded these events in his previous writings.
- 2) But throughout the corridors of time, according to the human perspective, God's plan has taken unexpected twists. Even John and the other disciples did not understand elements of God's plan in Christ, specifically his death and resurrection (John 2:22; Luke 18:31-34; 24:6-8).
- 3) So is this what is going on here now in heaven? Is Jesus the Savior of all who believe and the judge of unbelievers (John 5:19-25)? Is there a new layer in God's plan?
- 4) Easley suggests that John regretted that God's righteous judgments against evil appeared to be postponed indefinitely.²

D. Then, the elder wonderfully declares, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5).

1. Since Rev 5 is viewed as the most important chapter in Revelation, I believe this is the most important verse in the chapter, and of the book.
2. John witnesses heavenly beings hailing Jesus Christ as:
 - a. God's Lamb slain to redeem mankind,
 - b. the one qualified to judge sinners, and
 - c. the One worthy of worship.

E. John's "biblical theology" helps him understand the significance of how this scene in Rev 4-5 fits into the big picture of the Bible's story.

1. Biblical theology connects each individual Bible story into the overall storyline of the Bible.³

²Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 12 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 91.

³This is a paraphrase of Rosner's fuller definition, "Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole . . . maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus." Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 3-10.

2. Hamilton explains, “One of the primary aims of biblical theology is to understand and embrace the worldview of the biblical authors. In order to do this, we have to know the story they take for granted, the connections they see between the events in that story, and the ways they read later parts of the story by the light that emanates from its earlier parts. . . . To learn to read the Bible is to learn to understand this world from the perspective of the biblical authors, which is to learn a divinely inspired perspective.”⁴
3. John’s initial reaction may have been one of confusion, but once the elder announces the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, John processes the storyline of redemptive history,⁵ he comprehends this vision and all its implications.
4. Several vital elements of the biblical story are alluded to in this scene but not specifically addressed.
 - a. It is significant that the elder introduces Jesus by the names “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” when he could have used any other title: Messiah, the Alpha and Omega, the Good Shepherd, Judge of the living and the dead, or Son of God.
 - b. The elder in Rev 5:5 uses the royal titles, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,” to connect Jesus Christ as the promised seed of Genesis 3:15.

II. Rev 5:5 Expresses the Fulfillment of God’s Prevailing Plan Established in Genesis 3:15

The elder in Revelation 5:5 tells John that there is one in heaven who has conquered and is worthy to pour out God’s judgments. But what conflict has been conquered? Who is the conqueror? What has been the battleground?

- A. The Conflict - The implied conflict which has been conquered harkens back to the beginning of creation.
 1. God makes all things by his own will and for his glory (Gen 1-2; John 1:1-4; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17; Rev 4:9-11).
 2. Man is made in God’s own image and is thus the pinnacle of God’s creation (Gen 1:26-27).

⁴James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 12, 20.

⁵The term, “Redemptive history,” emphasizes God’s purposes in creation to redeem mankind from the curse upon creation through his Son, Jesus Christ, unto the glory of God (Rev 4-5).

3. God commands man to “be fruitful and multiply” in order to reproduce God’s image and fill the whole earth with God’s glory (Gen 1:28).⁶
4. Into this drama steps God’s enemy, Satan, in the form of a serpent (Gen 3). Satan’s desire is to rob God of his glory and possess all glory for himself (Matt 4:1-11; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 12).
To accomplish this, Satan attempts to steal from creation the precise image of God’s glory—man. Satan seduces Adam and Eve to disobey God and follow him.
5. Man’s sin introduces the curse of death upon creation and interrupts man’s perfect fellowship with the eternal, holy God.

B. The Conqueror

1. Man’s fall does not catch God by surprise. In a way that only the sovereign God could do, he had planned before creation to glorify himself by conquering sin through the death of his Son (John 1:1-5; Eph 1:3-14; 1 Pet 1:20).

Piper states, ”The revelation of the glory of God’s grace was planned before creation and came to its climax in *the death of Christ for sinners*. In conceiving a universe in which to display the glory of his grace, God did not choose “Plan B.” The death of Christ was not an afterthought or adjustment. For this the universe was planned. Everything leading to it, and everything flowing from it, is explained by it.”⁷

2. In Genesis 3:15, God pronounces to Satan the “seed conflict” which will run throughout history. (Read Gen 3:15.)
 - a. Satan is not a physical being who reproduces children, so the “seed” of Satan is his followers.⁸
 - b. The seed that comes from the woman is a singular noun and refers to one who will descend from mankind to crush (“conquer”—Rev 5:5) Satan and punish his followers.
 - c. Mathews observes, “Eve and her adversary are the progenitors of a lifelong struggle that will persist until a climactic moment when the woman’s offspring will achieve the upper hand.”⁹

⁶Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 25-26, 52.

⁷John Piper, “My Glory I Will Not Give to Another,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 635.

⁸Alan P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 145. Ross correlates Satan’s seed of Gen 3:15 to those in the first century who rejected the Lord and opposed his kingdom, and who are “of your father the devil” (John 8:44).

⁹Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville:

- d. Genesis 3:15 is called the “Protoevangelium” because it is the “first good news” of a coming and conquering Savior.

C. The Battleground

1. The battleground is Satan’s “enmity”¹⁰ against God and his plan to bring this conquering and saving offspring into the world through the offspring of the woman.
2. Thus, the battleground is mankind in creation. This cosmic conflict between the two offsprings is traceable throughout the ages of redemption history.
3. When man sinned, God graciously postpones the punishment of death until man can produce offspring (life coming out of death), which will lead to the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15.

D. Once this promised offspring comes and conquers the enmity against him, he is prepared to restore God’s creation, redeem all who follow God, and judge all who oppose Jehovah.

1. And this is exactly what John sees in Revelation 5—the culmination of this drama which began in Genesis 3.
2. God’s plan to produce this promised seed (Christ) has prevailed against all Satan’s enmity against it.

Conclusion:

Genesis 3:15 lays the foundation of redemptive history, and Revelation 5 announces its soon culmination. However, several scenes are inserted into this drama between Genesis and Revelation. Frequently the actors find themselves, like John, weeping and wondering if God and his plan will ever succeed, but in each instance God prevails. Man is awestruck. God is glorified.

When God’s children comprehend God’s eternal prevailing plan, they are encouraged to prevail through God’s plan for their own lives. Though beset by temporal battles and afflictions, Christians can rejoice knowing their weeping will be turned to joy and their death to victory (Ps 30:5; Rom 8:18; 1 Cor 15:51-58; 2 Cor 4:7-18; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 5:10; Rev 20:10 - 21:8).

Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 245.

¹⁰Genesis 3:15 uses the term “enmity” and is defined by Eastman as “deep-rooted hatred” (M. G. Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893], s.v. “enmity”). This hatred exists in the heart of Satan and lays the foundation for the age-long battle of Satan against God’s promised Messiah. Mathews says, “‘enmity’ has the intensity of hostility experienced among nations in warfare (e.g., Ezek 25:15; 35:5) and the level of animosity that results in murder (e.g., Num 35:21). The language of the passage indicates a life-and-death struggle between combatants” Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26*, 245.

Sermon 2 The Offspring to be the “Lion of Judah”

As the storyline of God’s coming offspring develops through Genesis, the roots of this family tree become discernable. Alexander posits that the *central focus* of Genesis is the tracing of this promised offspring coming through a unique family line which enjoys a special relationship with God.¹¹ This lineage begins with the broad scope of humanity and narrows to one specific nation.

I. The Offspring to Prevail through Mankind in General - Gen 1-10

In obedience to God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28), Adam and Eve begin to have children.

A. Cain and Abel - Gen 4

1. In Genesis 4:1 Eve says, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” Perhaps here, Eve is professing her hope that this child is the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15.¹²
2. But rather than being the conqueror of the serpent, Cain proves to be “of the evil one and murdered his brother” (1 John 3:12).
3. How soon the prophesied enmity is fulfilled—righteous Abel is dead and Cain is a murderer.
4. Hope that this trend might be reversed is repressed by Cain’s descendant, Lamech, who also murders (Gen 4:23).

B. Seth - Gen 4-5

After Abel’s murder, God graciously gives Adam and Eve new life through the birth of another son, Seth (Gen 4:25).

1. In contrast to the wicked descendants of Cain, Seth’s lineage actually calls upon the Lord and walks with God (Gen 4:23-25; 5:21-24).
2. Genesis 5 traces Seth’s descendants to Lamech, the father of Noah. Lamech professes faith in the promise of Genesis 3:15 by naming his son, “Noah” in hopes that he may be the offspring of the woman who brings “relief” from the curse upon creation (Gen 5:29).

¹¹T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 101.

¹²James M. Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 250.

C. Noah and the Flood - Gen 6-9

1. In spite of the birth of righteous Seth, the enmity rages on as the offspring of Satan continues to wreak havoc among the human population.
2. Whatever the method, Genesis 6:1-4 mentions the proliferation of ungodly offspring which increases man's "contention" against God (Gen 6:3 NIV).
3. Satan's influence is so pervasive that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence." (Gen 6:5, 11).
4. Satan has such a stranglehold on mankind that God declares catastrophic destruction of the earth with a flood (Gen 6:5-7).
5. But God prevails.
 - a. At a time when it appears Satan has polluted the seed line and defeated God's glory in creation, there is a sliver of hope: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8).
 - b. By faith, Noah and his family alone are preserved in the judgment of the flood (Gen 6-9; Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20).

D. The battle is not over. God's glory is still viable. God's redemptive plan is preserved. God has prevailed.

II. The Offspring to Prevail through a Specific Nation

A. The Tower of Babel - Gen 11

1. Noah's descendants fail to replenish the earth with God's glory (Gen 9:1, 7) and instead unify to develop the rebellious, man-centered society known as Babel (Gen 11).
2. God brings another judgment on man by confusing his language and the different nations of the world are born.

B. God Choses the Nation of Israel - Gen 12.

From the different nations resulting from Babel, God chooses one man, Abram, from Noah's son, Shem (Gen 11:10-26), to begin God's chosen nation (Gen 12:1-3).

God will implement several major elements of his redemptive plan through this nation called Israel:

1. to proclaim God's name and God's glory to all the earth (Gen 12:3; Num 14:21; Pss 1; 2; 67; 72; Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14)
2. to demonstrate that those who follow Jehovah are blessed and those who rebel are cursed (Exod 20:3; Deut 7; 11:26-28; 28; Ps 2)
3. to designate a people to receive and record God's revelation (Deut 4:7-8; Ps 147:19-20; John 4:22; Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2),

4. to provide a lineage through whom the promised offspring /Messiah will come (Gen 3:15; Matt 17:5; Gal 3:8, 16).

C. God's Promise to Abram - Gen 12

1. God promises Abram, soon to be "Abraham," that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:3-5; 28:13-14).
2. This promise directly links Abram to:
 - a. God's created purpose of his glory (Gen 1:27-28; 9:1, 7; Rev 4:10-11),
 - b. bringing the promised Savior of Gen 3:15,
 - c. providing a plan of salvation for all people.

D. God's Plan Prevails through Isaac

1. Abram's wife, Sarai, is barren. This couple conspires in their human wisdom and Ishmael is born (Gen 16).
2. The bitter rivalry that ensues between Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 21:10) harkens back to the offspring conflict ("enmity") of Genesis 3:15.
3. However, God clarifies he will accomplish his purposes through Isaac (Gen 17:15-21; 21:1-14).
4. Eventually, when Abraham passes the test of faith in sacrificing Isaac (which is a typology¹³ of the subsequent Messiah), further affirmation is given that it is through Isaac that God's chosen offspring will come (Gen 22:15-18).
5. God has magnified himself by choosing to build his nation from a childless couple. In the face of impossibility, God produces life within the dead womb of ninety-year old Sarah, and the seed line continues by God's prevailing power.

E. Jacob and Esau

1. Abraham sends Isaac away to marry a woman from his family rather than a Canaanite.
 - a. Abraham desires to preserve the godly line.
 - b. God leads Isaac to marry Rebekah and they have two sons, Esau and Jacob (Gen 24-25).

¹³Myers defines "typology" as, "A relationship in which something occurring in the past is a copy or pattern of something in the present or future. . . . Persons, events, or things in the Old Testament, while possessing true historical validity in themselves, also function as divinely appointed illustrations of what was yet to come." Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), s.v. "typology." Hamilton defines it as "canonical exegesis that observes divinely intended patterns of historical correspondence and escalation in significance in the events, people, or institutions of Israel, and these types are in the redemptive historical stream that flows through the Bible. James M. Hamilton, Jr., "Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?: Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus," accessed October 12, 2016, <http://jimhamilton.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/was-joseph-a-type-of-the-messiahbjt-formatted.pdf>.)

2. God chooses the younger Jacob through whom to continue the promised lineage (Gen 25:23).
 - The sibling rivalry that results is another display of the enmity of Genesis 3:15 (Gen 25-27).
3. In time, Isaac also instructs Jacob to take a wife from Abraham's family (Gen 28:1-5).
4. The nations that descend from Esau become enemies against Jacob/Israel, God's chosen lineage (Gen 15:18-20; 24:34-35; 27:46; 36:1-43; Exod 23:22-23; 34:11-16) and continue to this present day.

III. The Offspring to Prevail through a Specific Tribe

A. The Twelve tribes of Israel

1. Jacob marries his uncle Laban's two daughters and their concubines (Gen 29:1-30). From these four women come the twelve sons of Jacob, which ultimately become the 12 Tribes of Israel (Gen 29:31 - 30:22; 35:16-18).
2. As Jacob nears death he pronounces blessings upon his twelve sons (Gen 49).
 - a. The first three are disqualified from family leadership because of sin, and Joseph receives the actual birthright (1 Chr 5:1-2).
 - b. The right to rule comes down to the fourth son, Judah (Gen 49:8-10).

B. Judah

1. Judah has 3 sons, but no grandchildren.
2. Judah's only daughter-in-law, a Gentile named Tamar, is twice widowed without any descendant for Judah (Gen 38:1-11).
3. Later on, Judah hires a prostitute not knowing it is Tamar, and twins (Zerah and Perez) are conceived from the union (Gen 38:12-30).
4. In spite of his own sin, Judah is still designated as family leader (Gen 49:8-10).¹⁴

Gen 49:8 Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you.
 [9] Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He

¹⁴Possible explanations for this exception with Judah include the following: (1) This is another example of God's sovereignty in election (Deut 7:6-8; Rom 9). (2) Perhaps the sins of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were more public and brought shame on the family name (Gen 34:30-31; 35:22), but Judah's sin was private and personal. (3) Perhaps Judah demonstrated repentance (Gen 38:26), but his three elder brothers did not. (4) Judah had taken a leading role in sparing Joseph's life (Gen 37:26-27). (5) Judah proved himself to be the spokesman and leader of the brothers when he offered himself as the scapegoat in place of Benjamin, which he did out of respect to his father, Israel (Gen 34:14-34). (6) Eventual truths of salvation are evidenced in this story, such as: God's inclusion of sinners, women, the childless, the hopeless, and Gentiles into his family.

stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? [10] The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

- a. The prophecy, "Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies" (v. 8), ultimately bridges the span from the serpent crusher of Gen 3:15 to the conquering "Lion of Judah" in Revelation 5:5.
- b. Verse 9 is the first mention of the title "lion" in relation to Judah.
- c. Verse 10 foreshadows a promised descendant from Judah who will rule with a scepter and all people will be obedient to him.

Conclusion:

- ◆ Genesis is foundational to John's understanding of the vision in Revelation 5.
- ◆ Alexander states the importance of Genesis to the rest of the Bible's story,

The book of Genesis not only intimates that this lineage will eventually give rise to a royal dynasty, but also anticipates that a future member of this line will conquer his enemies and mediate God's blessing to the nations of the earth. Such expectations are clearly important for appreciating how the book of Genesis contributes to the NT understanding of Jesus Christ.¹⁵
- ◆ The promised offspring of Genesis 3:15 began with mankind in general, then narrows to one nation, then to one tribe.
- ◆ The promised genealogical line of Genesis 3:15 has been developing throughout biblical history, but so has the enmity against it. As God focuses his attention on this lineage, Satan focuses his attack.
- ◆ Yet, God's plan remains intact regardless of Satan's enmity against it.

**In preparation for next Sunday's message you can read through 1 Sam 16; 2 Sam 7; 2 Kings 8-11; and Isa 6-11.*

¹⁵T. D. Alexander, "Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (1997): 367.

Sermon 3

The Offspring to be the “Root of David”

As the storyline of Scripture progresses, the offspring’s lineage has been refined from the broad scope of humanity down to one nation—Israel, then to one tribe within that nation—Judah. Now that focus becomes even clearer as the offspring is prophesied to come through one specific family within Judah—the house of David.

I. The Promised Offspring Prevails through Boaz and Ruth

Israel’s history spans from the exodus, the wilderness wandering,¹⁶ the conquest of Canaan, to the time of the judges. Out of virtual unimportance and dismal circumstances, the messianic lineage remains unbroken through the story of Ruth.

A. Ruth is a Moabitess proselyte to Jehovah.

B. God sovereignly orchestrates the marriage of Ruth to an honorable man of Judah named Boaz.

1. The elders of Bethlehem-Judah affirm this marriage by pronouncing the fruitful blessing of the house of Jacob/Israel and of Judah (Ruth 4:11-12; Gen 29-30; 35:16-18; 38:29).

2. Boaz enacts the salvific overtones of the kinsman redeemer,

3. Boaz and Ruth become ancestors of the great King David (Ruth 4:18-20).

C. Regarding this segment of the lineage, Duguid attests,

This genealogy links the events of the story with the line that would build the house of Israel more than any family since the time of Jacob, the line of David. . . . The themes of blessing, name, offspring, and the building of a house of Israel resonate with deep chords in the history of God’s people. These themes go all the way back to God’s promise to Abraham of a great name and a great nation that would come from his offspring, so that all the peoples on earth would find a blessing for themselves in him (Gen. 12:1-3).¹⁷

¹⁶Hamilton observes, “Genesis leads readers to expect Yahweh’s defeat of evil to be accomplished through a seed of the woman, seed of Abraham, seed of Jacob, and perhaps seed of Joseph or Judah. Unexpectedly, however, the seed of the woman in the book of Exodus [Moses] is raised up from the house of Levi (Ex. 2:1). This sets an important pattern, as the one who leads Israel to deliverance is from the tribe of the priests and serves as a prophet. Moreover, he is raised in the royal house of Egypt. In a sense, the seed of the woman through whom the seed of the serpent is crushed in the book of Exodus, bringing salvation for the people of God . . . is a prophet, a priest, and a king.” Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 107. In the choice of Moses as leader of God’s people, God is unfolding different layers of his plan. Rather than being restrained to a strict genealogical line, God brings forth a deliverer who represents the “offices” of the Messiah.

¹⁷Ian M. Duguid, *Esther and Ruth*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 186.

D. Through famine, death, barrenness, and bitterness, God's plan again prevails.

II. The Promised Offspring Prevails through King David

A. Upon the shameful reign of King Saul (1 Sam 8-15), God "sought a man after his own heart" (1 Sam 13:14).

B. David, from the prescribed tribe of Judah (1 Sam 16:1; Ruth 4:17-22; Gen 38:24-30), becomes king of the Jews.

1. In another display of God's sovereign intervention, David ascends the throne out of relative obscurity.
2. David is the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, and an irrelevant shepherd (1 Sam 16).
3. With God's blessing, David becomes king and leads the kingdom of Israel to its largest extent to date (2 Sam 5-8).

C. God establishes his covenant with David (2 Sam 7).

1. This covenant promises that David's kingdom will be established forever (2 Sam 7:12-16).
2. This covenant directly incorporates the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15 into David's posterity.
3. In his psalms and prayers of gratitude, David recognizes God has graciously included him in the overarching plan for God's name to be magnified forever (2 Sam 7:20-29; Pss 2; 67; 89; 110; 132).
4. Bergen shows how the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7 is connected with the promise made to Judah:

The Lord's words spoken here demonstrate him to be the promise-keeping God; having prophetically placed the scepter in Judah hundreds of years earlier (Gen. 49:10), he here secured its place within that tribe "until he comes to whom it belongs." Through the prophetic pronouncements of this chapter David is made the founder of the only royal family the Lord would ever sanction in perpetuity; not only would he become the source of all Israel's uniquely favored dynastic line, but he would become the standard by which his descendants would be judged.¹⁸

D. God's promised offspring will come through David who is linked with Judah, Judah to Abraham, Abraham to Noah, Noah to Adam, and Adam to Genesis 3:15.

¹⁸Robert Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 336-37.

E. The serpent rears its head in enmity against God's king and the kingly line by luring David into adultery and murder (2 Sam 11).

1. David pays four-fold for his sin which manifests itself in the deaths and rebellion of four of his sons (2 Sam 12-18; 1 Kgs 1).
2. Yet through these calamities, the lineage endures through David's son, Solomon.

F. Solomon

1. Solomon, succeeds David's throne and Israel experiences the zenith of its empire (1 Kgs 10:23).
2. But in his old age, Solomon's heart was turned toward other gods and this began a downward spiral for the Davidic dynasty (1 Kgs 11).
3. God decrees to take the kingdom of Israel away from the Davidic dynasty, yet leaves him one tribe for David's sake (1 Kgs 11:11-13).

III. The Promised Offspring Prevails through the Divided Kingdom

A. Rehoboam - the Kingdom Divides

1. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, rules foolishly and the ensuing revolt tears the kingdom from the house of David (1 Kgs 12).
2. Ten of the twelve tribes rebel against the Davidic kingship and establish their own kingdom in northern Israel.
 - a. Jeroboam becomes king of the ten tribes and institutes a system of idolatry from which northern Israel never recovers (1 Kgs 12:25-33).
 - b. Eventually, God will send the Assyrians to deport the ten northern tribes and they will never again be a recognizable entity (2 Kgs 16-17).
3. The tribe of Judah and what remains of Benjamin (Judg 20-21) continue as a lamp to David in the southern kingdom known as Judah (1 Kgs 11:34-36; 2 Kgs 18-22).
 - Through the chaos of civil war and the sin of apostasy, God's promised lineage through the Davidic line is still alive and God's plan is sustained.

B. Joash

Another dark chapter in Judah's history is the near extinction of the kingly line under Queen Athaliah approximately 100 years into the divided kingdom (2 Kgs 8-11).

1. With the deaths of both her husband and her son as the rightful kings of Judah, Queen Athaliah assumes the throne and attempts to secure her crown by massacring all potential heirs (2 Kgs 11:1).

2. God intervenes in the midst of this carnage and a single, baby boy named Joash is rescued (2 Kgs 11:2-3).
3. When Joash is seven years old, he is brought out of hiding to become king, and Queen Athaliah is overthrown (2 Kgs 11:4-21).
4. Wiseman notes, “By such a narrow margin the lamp of David (see on 1 Ki. 11:36; Ps. 132:17) was almost extinguished. But God had promised that he would never fail to provide an heir to David (Ps. 89:36).”¹⁹
5. Satan’s offspring had reduced the messianic line to just one male child, but God’s plan and covenant with David prevail.

IV. The Promised Offspring Prevails through the Prophets

- ◆ Isaiah prophesies 200 years into the divided kingdom.
 - ◆ He uses the “root of David” terminology to prophesy God’s dealings with the line of David at this stage.
- A. God calls Isaiah to preach repentance to people who will not listen, thus, Jehovah will cut her off (Isa 6:8-13).
 1. It appears the last thread of the messianic offspring through David is about to be severed (cf: Assyria with the Ten Tribes of N. Israel)
 2. But in this dismal state of being cut off God declares a “stump” remains and, “The holy seed is its stump” (Isa 6:13).²⁰
 3. In the midst of this judgment, God’s promises to Abraham still endure.
 - B. In these dark days God gives the sign of Immanuel (Isa 7:10-17) and reiterates the promise of a divine child to be born who will give light, defeat enemies, and sit on David’s throne forever (Isa 9:1-7).
 - C. But before these promises of Messiah are realized, Judah will indeed bear judgment for her sins. Judah will be “cut off” from the head (leaders) to the tail (the lowly) fulfilling God’s warning to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:44 (Isa 9:13-17; 19:15).
 1. From the human perspective, this being cut off must look like the end. Man is too sinful and is a lost cause. Surely, Satan must win.
 2. But the story is not over. God makes a declaration in Isa 11:1-2; 9-10:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon

¹⁹Donald J. Wiseman, *I, 2 Kings*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 9 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 231.

²⁰This sheds light on Ezra 9. Upon return from Babylonian captivity to Judah, Ezra is grieved at the intermarriage of the Jews during captivity. The people respond to Ezra’s instructions to divorce their Gentile spouses in order to preserve the remnant of holy seed. See Ezra 9:2 as a key verse.

him, . . . They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious (Isa 11:1-2, 9-10).

- a. New life will issue from this apparently dead stump of David.
- b. Consistent with his promise in Isaiah 6:13, the holy seed will sprout from this stump of Jesse to be the ultimate king who leads his people into God's righteousness.²¹

3. This holy seed will not only be a descendent of David, but Isaiah 11:10 states it is also his "root," or ancestor.

- a. This passage demonstrates Messiah's humanity as a human descendent of David, but also his divinity as being pre-existent to David.²²
- b. Furthermore, Isaiah reiterates God's purpose in creation that all nations of the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. This purpose was declared to Adam (Gen 1:28), Noah (Gen 9:7), Abraham (Gen 12:3), and Judah (Gen 49:10).
- c. God's purposes may be threatened, but still survive through the Davidic line.

Conclusion:

1. In Genesis 3:15, God promised an offspring that would come to crush the head of Satan. The lineage of the offspring would narrow down through humanity, Israel, Judah, and David.
2. In the prophesies of Isaiah, we learn that this offspring would be both human and divine: "Immanuel" – God with us (7:14), "of his government there will be no end" (9:7), He will be both branch and root of David (11:1, 10)
3. The Serpent has reared its head in enmity against this offspring, but God's plan has prevailed in every case.
4. The OT will soon go silent, only to reawaken with the birth of the promised offspring.

**In preparation for next Sunday, you can read through Matthew 1-3; Galatians 3:1 – 4:7.*

²¹God gives Jeremiah the same promise of a righteous Branch to come from David and execute justice (Jer 23:5-8).

²²Easley comments, "In Isaiah 11:10, the coming Messiah is called the *ancestor* or 'root of Jesse,' who was King David's father: 'In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples.' (In Isaiah 11:1, the same Messiah is called the *Branch or descendant* of Jesse. How the Messiah could be both *Root* and *Branch* of Jesse was a mystery until it was fulfilled in Jesus.) On the basis of Isaiah 11:10 we understand that the 'Root [ancestor] of Jesse' is also the Root [ancestor] of David. The two titles of Jesus, then, point in the direction of both his deity (as the ultimate divine source of David) and his humanity (as the royal lion from Judah)." Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 12 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 92. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus directly declares, "I am the root and the descendant of David," which fulfills Isaiah's prophecy.

Sermon 4 The Offspring Identified as Jesus in the New Testament

Overviewing redemptive history, God's plan in Genesis 3:15 has progressed from mankind in general, to a specific nation, to a specific tribe, and to a specific family. Now moving into the first century, God's promised offspring comes as one individual, the person of Jesus Christ.

I. The Offspring Identified as Jesus in the Gospels

A. Matthew

1. Purpose: to convince a Jewish audience that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the promised Son of David and, hence, the Christ/Messiah.
2. It is of no minor import he begins with the genealogy which directly relates Jesus to David and to Abraham (Matt 1:1, 6-7, 17, 20).

Roberts points out, "At first sight we may feel that a genealogy is an uninspiring way to start the New Testament, but, if we remember God's promises, we will be on the edge of our seats as soon as we read the words: 'a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1). He is the one who fulfills the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 and to David in 2 Samuel 7."²³

3. At Jesus' baptism God the Father announces Jesus with the term, "my beloved Son" (Matt 3:16-17).

This affirmation links Jesus to:

- a. God calling Israel his son (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1)
- b. God's reference to David as his son (Ps 89:26-29)
- c. the Messianic prophecies of God's Son in Psalm 2.

4. Matthew also records the many people Jesus healed who recognized Jesus as the Son of David (Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30), and the crowd who hailed him as Son of David at his triumphal entry (Matt 21:9).

B. Luke connects Jesus to David:

1. at the announcement of his birth (Luke 1:27, 32-33)
2. Simeon's praise (Luke 1:69)
3. Mary and Joseph's taxation (Luke 2:4, 11)
4. Jesus' genealogy (Luke 3:31)
5. the healing of the blind man (Luke 18:38-39)

²³Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 107.

- C. Each of the synoptic gospels records Jesus challenging the religious leaders as to the meaning of Psalm 110 regarding how the Christ can be called both David's Lord and his son (Matt 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44).

This question is answered with an understanding of Isaiah 11 regarding Messiah being both the branch and root of David.

II. The Offspring Identified as Jesus in the Remainder of the New Testament

- A. In Acts, an essential part of the apostle's message was that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Son of David (Acts 2:29-36; 13:22-23; 15:16).
- B. Paul pens that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Son of David (Rom 1:3-6; 15:8-13; 2 Tim 2:8).
- C. Galatians 3 and 4 poignantly attach Jesus Christ to Abraham, and to the singular offspring of the woman of Genesis 3:15.
1. In Galatians 3:8 and 3:14, Paul fixes Jesus as the fulfillment of Genesis 12:3 by identifying Jesus as the seed of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed.
 2. Gal 3:16 emphasizes the potential blessing of salvation comes to all peoples through a singular offspring from Abraham,
"Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ."

(cf: Gen 3:15 – *"her offspring . . . he shall bruise your head."*)
 3. Gal 4:1-4
[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
- D. At the close of inspired revelation, Jesus identifies himself as the fulfillment of both Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10, "I, Jesus, . . . I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star" (Rev 22:16).
- E. And in Revelation 5, the elder concretely affixes the titles "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" to Jesus, the only one worthy of the accolade.

Conclusion:

- With all the inspired writings as biblical proof, this “Lion of Judah, and Root of David” is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15.
- Jesus Christ is the only one eligible to sit upon the eternal throne.
- Jesus is the only one “worthy... to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev 5:12).

Sermon 5

God's Prevailing Plan in the Ministry of Jesus Christ

I. God's Plan Prevails through the Life of Christ

- A. God's plan prevails through Herod's attempt to kill the newborn Jesus - Matt 2.
- This mirrors the enmity of Pharaoh's efforts in the days of Moses - Exod 2.
- B. Christ prevails against Satan's temptations - Matt 4; Luke 4.
 - 1. These seem to be only three categories of temptation (Gen 3:6; Eph 2:3; 1 John 2:16).
 - 2. The probability is that once Satan is one-on-one with the offspring who has been prophesied to crush him, he unleashes all the forces of hell against Jesus, but Jesus effectively resists (Matt 4:4, 7, 10; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
- C. Jesus' ministry is fraught with conflict against demons.
Begg and Ferguson assert, "The reason there is so much demon possession in the time period recorded by the Gospels is not—as is sometimes assumed—that demon possession was commonplace then. In fact it was not. Rather, the land then was demon-invaded because the Savior was marching to the victory promised in Genesis 3:15. And all hell was let loose in order to withstand him."²⁴
- D. Jesus endures hostile crowds, Pharisee's plots, and a friend's betrayal.
- E. Throughout every encounter, Christ prevails.

II. God's Plan Prevails through the Death of Christ

- A. Satan finally maneuvers men into the betrayal, arrest, trial, false accusations, and crucifixion of Jesus (Matt 26-27; John 13:2).
- B. Though ordained by God, human responsibility and enmity are involved in Jesus' death (Luke 22:3-6, 52-53; Acts 2:23, 36).
- C. Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46), may have given the serpent subtle hope.
- D. Then Jesus proclaims, "It is finished" (Matt 27:50; John 19:30), which, rather than a death cry in defeat is actually a shout of victory.

²⁴Alistair Begg and Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Name above All Names* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 28.

1. God's judgment against sin is paid in full and God's wrath has been forever satisfied by the substitutionary death of Christ (Heb 10:1-18).
2. Hamilton states,

Salvation for all believers of all ages is made possible by the judgment that falls on Jesus at the cross. The cross allows God to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:24-26). The cross of Christ, the climactic expression of the glory of God in salvation through judgment, is the turning point of the ages.²⁵

E. Salvation is now available to all who respond to God's calling and put their faith in Christ.

1. Those who believe are reconciled to God and become sons of God (John 1:12; Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1-2).
2. Romans 4 and Galatians 3:6-9 point out that becoming a child of God through faith connects the believer to Abraham and fulfills Genesis 12:3.
3. From this one offspring, Christ, multitudes of men become God's offspring—spiritual seed, abundant seed (Rom 8:9-14; Eph 2:11-22; Rev 5:9-10).

F. The death of Christ has not terminated God's lineage, but rather proliferated it.

III. God's Plan Prevails through the Resurrection of Christ

A. Christ's resurrection has always been in the eternal plan of God and is the axis of history (John 1:4-5; 17:2; Eph 1:4-14).

*Note Peter's "biblical theology" of the resurrection - Acts 2:22-41.

B. His resurgence to life ushers in the beginning of the "last days" and progresses towards a new creation in the culmination (Jn 5:25-29; Acts 2:32-36; Isa 26:19-21; Ezek 37:13-14; Dan 12:1-2; Rev 21-22).

C. Christ's resurrection:

- fulfills the victory of the Lion of Judah in Genesis 49:8-10,
- defeats the work of the devil – Genesis 3:15; Heb 2:14; John 16:11; 1 John 3:8,
- shows that Christ has conquered death forever - Rev 1:17-18
 "‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’"
- guarantees the believer's resurrection – Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 15:50-58; 2 Cor 4:14,
- secures the conquest of Revelation 5:5.

²⁵Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 57.

D. Now that Christ has risen, God's plan is prevailing and moving towards a new creation where he will rule victoriously. *Weep no more!*

Conclusion:

- God's eternal purpose in creation is to glorify himself in the salvation of repentant men and the judgment of the wicked.
- Should anyone question God's character in this, his defense comes when God's own Son became sin and tasted death for every man (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:9-10).
- The New Testament abundantly identifies the offspring of Genesis 3:15 as Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God.
- With the coming of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection, the "last days" have dawned, and God's prevailing plan is moving towards its culmination.
- John is privileged to catch a vision of these last days when the elder introduces Jesus as, The Lion of Judah, the Root of David who has conquered and is worthy!

Sermon 6

God's Prevailing Plan Signifies Victory

Rev 5:5 *“Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals”*

- It is significant that the elder introduces Jesus by the names “Lion of Judah, Root of David.”
- These titles connect Jesus Christ as the promised “offspring” of Genesis 3:15.
- God’s plan to bring Messiah through human lineage has prevailed in spite of all Satan’s enmity to destroy it.
- The NT plentifully identifies the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15 as Jesus of Nazareth.
- God’s plan prevails through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- The NT authors emphasize the significance of Jesus’ redemptive work as the foundation for the ultimate victory in God’s prevailing plan.

I. God’s prevailing plan is understood by John.

- A. John 1:4-5 - In the preamble of his gospel, John overtures the theme of Christ’s victory,
“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”.

Michaels declares, “Right from the start it is clear that a confrontation between light and darkness has taken place once and for all, and that the light has emerged victorious. The light shines on in the darkness, and the writer will now proceed to narrate how this all came about.”²⁶

- B. John 3:16 shows Messiah came so that those who believe in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.
- C. John 16:33 - John records Jesus’ words to his disciples to be of good cheer because he has overcome the world.
- D. 1 John 3:8 - “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”
- E. 1 John 5:4 - “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

²⁶J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 57.

- F. Rev 20:10-15 - John records God's ultimate victory when the devil, Death, and Hades are cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever and ever.
- G. Rev 21:4 - In the new creation, all former things are passed away, all things are made new, and there is no more death.

***Weep no more.**

II. God's prevailing plan is understood by Paul.

- A. Rom 1:3-5 - Paul identifies Jesus Christ and shows the significance of his work.
1. Jesus is the human descendant of David.
 2. Jesus is the divine Son of God.
 3. Jesus is the descendant of Judah from Genesis 49:10 whom all the nations will obey.
 4. Jesus' resurrection saturates the gospel with victory.
 5. Through Jesus, believers have received grace unto obedience.
 6. The work of Jesus is "for the sake of his name among all the nations."
- B. Rom 8:11 - Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection and ultimate victory of each believer (also: 1 Cor 15:50-58; 2 Cor 4:14-18).
- C. Rom 8:28-35
1. all things will work to God's good for the elect,
 2. nothing can separate the elect from God's love,
 3. believers are conquerors through Christ.
- D. Rom 16:20 "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."
- E. Eph 6:10-20 - Even though the believer wrestles against Satan's forces, he is assured to overcome.
- F. Paul anticipates rewards given to believers who, like Christ, persevere to the end (Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Tim 4:8).

***Weep no more.**

III. God's prevailing plan is understood by the other New Testament authors.

- A. 1 Pet 1:3-9 - Peter encourages his suffering Christians:
1. Christ's resurrection guarantees them an eternal inheritance.
 2. This inheritance is reserved for them in heaven and being guarded by God's power.
 3. The outcome of their faith will be the salvation of their souls.
- B. 2 Pet 1:3-12 - as believers supplement their faith there will be a richly provided entrance into Christ's kingdom.

C. Heb 2:14-18 - reassures that Christians are being helped by the same power by which Christ destroyed the works of the devil (Heb 2:14-18).

D. James speaks of the crown of life given to all who overcome temptation (Jas 1:12), and encourages Christians to be patient and steadfast like Job, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (Jas 5:1-7).

***Weep no more!**

IV. The melody line of victory reaches a crescendo in Rev 5 as God nears his final and decisive victory.

A. Just when it seems no one can be found worthy and God's judgment on unbelievers may have to be suspended, the elder cries out,

"Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5).

B. Rev 5:6-14 - The heavenly beings proclaim Jesus to also be the Lamb of God slain to satisfy God's wrath and redeem mankind unto God.

C. Because of these designations, Jesus Christ is the only One worthy to cast judgment against the wicked.

D. No doubt John's weeping turns to rejoicing as he recognizes and records the significance of these titles.

1. Jesus is the Lion of Judah, and the Root of David, and has overcome every possible flaming dart of the devil to preserve God's salvation and judgment.
2. As in a bridge, these two titles are the support cables which link Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 5:5.
3. To blend these two titles shows Jesus incorporates all the essential designations to be the conquering hero of God's transcendent drama.
4. Believers are reconciled to live with God in perfect fellowship—exactly like God intended from before the foundation of the world. Through the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, God will finish what he started.
5. Emler says, "If you read the Bible from cover to cover you realize that it narrates (proclaims!) a true and cohesive story: the good news that through Jesus Christ God has entered history to liberate and renew the world from its bondage to sin and suffering. This is the story of God, who pursues the restoration of his creation at the cost of his own life. He is making all things new (Rev.21:5)! That's the simple and yet profound, life- and world-altering plotline of the Bible."²⁷

²⁷Michael Emler, *Cross Talk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro NC: New Growth

Conclusion: Why does this study matter?

1. When the ungodly have seized our society, and when it seems all hope is gone, Christians can hold on to the faith—Christ will prevail.
2. Today, the seed of Satan manifests itself against the people of God in a variety of ways.
 - a. The ungodly of the world in general, and of our community specifically, make life difficult or dangerous for the people of God.
 - b. We struggle to maintain an eternal perspective—we fear; we doubt; we weep.
 - c. Yet it is at times like this, when all hope seems gone, that God steps into the scene and seizes the victory.
 - d. Let us take heart—our faith is in the overcoming Lion of Judah, and Root of David.

3. In the essence of biblical theology, Paul instructs,

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 15:4-6).

4. Paul assures believers that it is with much tribulation we will enter the kingdom (Acts 14:22), but we will enter.
5. Therefore, believers are not to grow weary (Gal 6:9).
6. All who suffer with Christ will be glorified with him (Rom 8:17).
7. Let us run the race with endurance, looking unto Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2).
8. Let us remain steadfast under trial and receive the crown of life (Jas 1:12).
9. Let us overcome (Rev 2-3) that we may obtain God’s precious promise with which he closes his revelation, “The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Rev 21:7).

- It is to this end we strive.
- Press on.
- Weep no more.
- Prevail to the end.

Press, 2009), 41.

Sermon 7:
Perseverance of the Saints

Review:

- In Rev 5:5, The titles, “Lion of Judah, Root of David,” connect Jesus as the promised “offspring” of Genesis 3:15.
- God’s plan to bring Messiah through human lineage has prevailed in spite of all Satan’s enmity to destroy it.
- The NT plentifully identifies the promised offspring of Genesis 3:15 as Jesus of Nazareth.
- God’s plan prevails through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- The NT authors emphasize the significance of Jesus’ redemptive work as the foundation for the ultimate victory in God’s prevailing plan.

Introduction: Now we will see how God’s plan prevails through his people.

- God is omnipotent and sovereign and will accomplish every one of his purposes in creation in spite of Satan’s enmity against him.
- Yet, God is implementing this eternal plan through fickle, sinful men.
- God’s plan will prevail through men whom he has chosen from before creation and who remain faithful to him.
- From this reality emerges discussion on the “Perseverance of the Saints.”

1. Chapter 17 of The Westminster Confession defines,
This perseverance of the saints depends, not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable *love* of God the Father;
upon the *efficacy* of the *merit* and *intercession* of Jesus Christ;
the *abiding* of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them;
and the nature of the covenant of *grace*; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.²⁸

²⁸“On the Perseverance of the Saints,” in The Westminster Confession, accessed on November 1, 2016, <http://www.creeds.net/Westminster/c17.htm>.

2. Grudem defines perseverance as “all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.”²⁹

➤ The saints of God faithfully persevere unto the end of their lives or until Jesus returns because:

- 1) saints have been chosen for salvation unto God’s glory,
- 2) saints are indwelt by the Spirit of God,

I. Saints Persevere Because They Have Been Chosen for Salvation unto God’s Glory

A. In a way that God divinely orchestrates, those who have been chosen by God:

1. respond to God’s call,
2. are born again unto eternal life,
3. are preserved by God,
4. persevere faithfully to the end;
5. all of which redounds to the glory of God .

(Rom 8:28-29; Eph 1:3-6; 2:10; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:1-3; 1 Pet 1:2; Rev 4:9-11; Rev 13:8).

B. The Puritan Thomas Watson declares,

Here is a sovereign elixir of unspeakable comfort to those who are the called of God. Their salvation rests upon God’s purposes. . . . They who are built upon this rock of God’s eternal purpose, need not fear falling away; neither the power of man, nor the violence of temptation, shall ever be able to overturn them.³⁰

C. John 6:37-44 - shows God’s sovereignty in election and man’s response to God’s call.

1. It is evident that salvation is initiated, carried out, and secured by the Godhead.
2. The sovereignty of God in salvation is the security of the saint.
3. Since God will accomplish all his purposes for his glory, chosen souls are safeguarded within the Father’s eternal plan.

²⁹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 788-89. Grudem clarifies, “It should be noted that this question is one on which evangelical Christians have long had significant disagreement. Many within the Wesleyan/Arminian tradition have held that it is possible for someone who is truly born again to lose his or her salvation, while Reformed Christians have held that that is not possible for someone who is *truly* born again. Most Baptists have followed the Reformed tradition at this point; however, they have frequently used the term ‘*eternal security*’ or the ‘*eternal security of the believer*’ rather than the term ‘*perseverance of the saints*.’”

³⁰Thomas Watson, *All Things for Good* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), 126-27.

D. John 10:22-30 (Jesus is teaching the same truth here as in John 6:37-40.)

* Sheep chosen by the Father and given to the Shepherd are securely sheltered in God's flock for eternity.

E. John 17 - God's eternal purposes for his glorification through man's salvation

- The setting is the eve of Christ's crucifixion.

JUST READ THE TEXT, and maybe mention the following points.

1. Jesus prays to the Father declaring he has completed the Father's eternal will by securing all men whom the Father has given him so that they may share in the glory of the Father and the Son which existed before the world began (vv. 1-5, 10, 22).
2. In addition to being chosen by God, Jesus declares these individuals have "received," "believed," and "kept" Christ and his words (vv. 6, 8).

II. Saints Persevere Because They are Indwelt by the Spirit of God.

God gives his Holy Spirit to believers to generate new birth, maintain obedient faith, and be a guarantee for their inheritance in God's kingdom.

A. The Holy Spirit generates new birth in the believer.

1. Men are dead in their sins and cannot respond to God's calling unless they are revived (Eph 2:1-10).
2. The Holy Spirit infuses spiritual life into dead men which causes them to be "born again," or "regenerated," and enables them to respond to God (John 1:12-13; Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 6:11; Titus 3:4-7).
3. Puritan William Gurnall proclaims,

When a soul believes, then God's eternal purpose and counsel concerning him (whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world) is brought to term. Can you imagine the love God has for a child He has carried so long in the womb of His eternal purpose? If God delighted in His plan before He spoke the world into being, how much greater is His delight to witness the full fruition of His labor: a believing soul! Having performed His own will thus far, God will surely raise all the power He has in that believer's behalf, rather than be robbed of His glory within a few steps of home. God showed us how much a soul is worth by the purchase price He paid. It cost Him dearly, and that which is so hard won

will not be easily given up. He spent His Son's blood to purchase you, and He will spend His own power to keep you.³¹

4. New life through the Spirit is also called "eternal life" (John 3:16; 10:28; 17:2; 1 John 2:25; 5:11).
5. God's eternal Spirit within the saint assures him of future resurrection unto glory (Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 4:14).
6. Those who possess new, eternal life in God's Spirit will prevail into eternity.

B. The Holy Spirit helps the believer maintain obedient faith.

1. Souls dead in sin have no ability to know or obey God because they do not possess the Spirit of life (Ps 10:4; 1 Cor 2:1-16).
2. Ezekiel 36:27 prophesied that God's Spirit will empower God's people in obedience.
3. Jesus taught that the Spirit would be the "Helper" to assist disciples in keeping his commandments (John 14:15-17).
4. Boice states, "The desire to do good comes from receiving the life of the Lord Jesus Christ within, which is regeneration."³²
5. Romans 8:9-11 - Believers walk in the Spirit, which is "life because of righteousness."
6. New life and obedience through the Holy Spirit are two inseparable graces God has given the believer which allow him to persevere to the end.

C. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the believer's inheritance in God's kingdom.

1. The Holy Spirit resides within the believer, thus the Christian becomes the temple (dwelling place) of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:14; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16).
2. As such, the believer presently possesses eternal life, yet the fullness of God's blessings in salvation are not entirely realized until the culmination (Rom 8:18; Phil 3:21; 2 Cor 4:7-18; 1 John 1:1-3).
3. Eph 1:13-14 - believers "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."
The language of this verse indicates the saint *belongs* to God through a *finished* transaction, and the indwelling Spirit is an absolute *certainty* that the believer will be reclaimed by God in the culmination.

³¹William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 1:48.

³²James M. Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 543.

Conclusion:

- The eternal plan of God is to reveal his glory within the arena of creation.
- The means by which God will be glorified is the salvation of men.
- Therefore, those who have been chosen by God and given to the Son respond to God's call, receive new birth unto eternal life, are preserved by God, and persevere faithfully to the end—all of which redounds to the glory of God.
- The saint will persevere because he is interwoven into the fabric of God's eternal, prevailing plan.
- The believer has union with Christ through the Holy Spirit; neither the third person of the Trinity, nor the redeemed human he indwells, will be left out of God's inheritance. Hence, the believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit is guaranteed he will prevail to inherit God's eternal kingdom.

Sermon 8:

Perseverance of the Apostles

- Throughout created history, God and his people have prevailed in spite of Satan's attempts to destroy them.
- John 15:20 Jesus taught, "'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."
 - If the master must endure through suffering, persecution, and death, so must his servants.
- By God's grace, all Christ's disciples (except Judas) persevered in this role as faithful servants.

I. God's plan prevails through Christ's disciples who persevered in Matthew 10.

- A. Matthew 10 foreshadows the prevailing ministry of saints into the Church Age.³³
- B. Here, Jesus commissions and empowers his twelve disciples to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom.
- C. As they break forth the light of truth, Jesus warns that they will encounter the darkness of the long-existent enmity.
- D. Christ's messengers will be as sheep among wolves and will face betrayal, flogging, accusation, hatred, persecution, and death (vv. 16-23).
- E. In the face of such opposition and danger, Jesus admonishes, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (v. 22).
 - *God does not reward a person for a single act of faith in the past, but only for a faith that finishes the race.
- F. The Spirit is promised to servants who are called before magistrates to bear witness of the faith (v. 20). In light of the Spirit's empowerment, God's ambassadors are to "have no fear" in challenging times (v. 23).

³³R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 380-82. France states that the restriction for the apostles not to go only to the Gentiles but to the house of Israel is more of a geographic limitation for this short-term mission. France indicates that beginning in Matt 10:16, these instructions expand to a worldwide commission which is in keeping with Matthew's overriding theme of the Great Commission commenced after Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 244. Carson says the restriction was to hold down opposition to Jesus' claims, but that the ultimate aim of Jesus' mission was worldwide. Of course, the reality of the apostle's mission to Gentiles was realized in the book of Acts.

- G. The believer's reward is the preservation of their soul (v. 28).
- H. The invitation to take up one's cross is a call to a death march, but losing one's life in this world yields eternal life in the next (vv. 38-39).
- I. Jesus did not paint a pretty picture for His servants. But with an eternal view, Christ's followers know their heavenly Father takes note and will justify all things; therefore, they must prevail.

II. God's plan prevails through the apostles who persevered in Acts.

- ◆ After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the apostles participate in making God known in all the earth.
- ◆ As they spread the gospel to all nations, they demonstrate faith, obedience, and perseverance in spite of Satan's efforts to destroy them.
- ◆ Polhill notes:

There were abundant obstacles from without—imprisonments, beatings, martyrdoms, storms at sea and angry mobs on land. But the faithful witnesses continued their testimony. The word of God grew, bearing ever more fruit among both Jews and Gentiles. The Spirit of God was behind it all, and the gospel triumphed.³⁴
- ◆ It is fascinating to see how God's plan to establish his church prevails through men who persevere in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:47; 4:4, 29-31; 5:12-14; 6:7; 8:31; 9:31; 10:44-48; 11:18, 21-24; 12:24; 14:27; 16:5-7; 18:25; 19:20; 21:17-20; 23:11; 28:23-31).
 - A. Peter and John are endowed with the Spirit to remain constant in the face of threats from the religious leaders (Acts 3-4).
 1. The religious leaders follow through on their threats and beat the disciples.
 2. After the beating, the disciples rejoice in their suffering and do not cease to preach that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 5:40-42).
 - B. Stephen triumphs in the faith while being stoned to death (Acts 6-7).
 - C. When a great persecution arises, the disciples are scattered, but faithfully continue to preach the gospel wherever they go (Acts 8:1-8).
 - D. Philip emerges victorious in spiritual warfare against Simon, the magician (Acts 8:9-25).

³⁴John B. Polhill, *Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 71.

- E. After Saul (Paul) is converted, he has to overcome skepticism from other disciples and death threats from the Jews to remain persistent in his mission (Acts 9:10-30).
- F. James is killed and Peter is imprisoned (Acts 12:1-5), but the church continues to grow and is edified.
- G. From his experiences of suffering, Peter is eventually able to address other suffering believers in his first epistle and encourage them to persevere unto their reward and God's glory.

III. God's plan prevails through Paul's ministry.

- A. At conversion, the Lord forecasted that Paul's mission to carry Christ's name before Gentiles and kings would involve suffering (Acts 9:15-16).
- B. On Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas contend against a magician, Elymas (Acts 13:4-12), as well as face opposition from their own countrymen (Acts 13:44-52).
- C. In Lystra, they had to subdue their pride when they were worshiped as gods (Acts 14:8-18).
- D. Upon surviving being stoned by a mob at Lystra, Paul continues the following day preaching in the next town (Acts 14:19-20).
- E. As they circuit back, Paul and Barnabas instruct the new converts, "encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).
- F. Matthew Henry comments on Acts 14:22:

[Tribulation] is so appointed. They must undergo it, there is no remedy, the matter is already fixed, and cannot be altered. He that has the sovereign disposal of us has determined it to be our lot. . . . But this is encouraging, that we shall get through it; we shall not be lost and perish in it. . . . We shall not only get through it, but get through it *into the kingdom of God*; and the joy and glory of the end will make abundant amends for all the difficulties and hardships we may meet with in the way. It is true *we must go by the cross*, but it is as true that if we keep in the way, and do not turn aside nor turn back, we shall *go to the crown*, and the believing prospect of this will make the tribulation easy and pleasant.³⁵

³⁵Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, Logos, 1994), 2128.

- G. Paul continues on two more mission trips and perseveres through afflictions in every city (Acts 20:23).
- H. In 2 Corinthians 11:22-33, Paul summarizes a list of these sufferings in order to prove the sincerity of his apostleship.
- I. A major theme in his epistles to these churches is encouragement for believers to persevere, trusting in the faithfulness of God to deliver and reward (Rom 8:18, 35-39; 2 Cor 1:7; Phil 1:6, 20-21; 2:12-13; 3:8-16; 1 Thess 3:3; 2 Thess 1:5; 1 Tim 4:1-10; 2 Tim 2:12; 3:10-17).
- J. God used Paul and his faithfulness through suffering to establish numerous churches and fortify the faith of countless believers to this very day.

IV. Eventually all Christ's disciples, except John and Judas Iscariot, face martyrdom for Christ.

- ◆ Scripture and church history record how the apostles did indeed drink the cup of the Lord (Matt 20:17-23).

A. John

1. After surviving being placed into a pot of boiling oil, John was exiled to the isle of Patmos (Rev 1:9).
2. After being released, he returned to Ephesus where he died peacefully about AD 98.³⁶

B. James, the son of Zebedee, was killed by Herod's sword (Acts 12:1-2).

C. Peter (Jesus prophesied Peter's death in John 21:18-19).

1. Peter was first forced to watch his wife's crucifixion.
2. Then he requested to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die as Christ.³⁷

D. Andrew

1. He took the gospel northward, perhaps even into Russia.
2. Then in Achaia, Greece, he was lashed to a cross instead of nailed in order to prolong his suffering.

³⁶John Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1997), 10.

³⁷John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants To Do with You* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2002), 60.

3. During the two days he hung there, Andrew exhorted passersby to trust Christ.³⁸
- E. Matthew - carried the gospel to Ethiopia where, as one account states, he was pinned to the ground and beheaded.³⁹
- F. Philip is believed to have been stoned in Asia Minor.
- G. Thomas was run through by a spear in India.⁴⁰
- H. Jude - Traditions hold that he was crucified at Edessa near AD 72.
- I. Matthias was stoned and beheaded at Jerusalem.
- J. Mark was dragged to death in Alexandria.⁴¹
- K. Nathanael, or Bartholomew,
 1. He took Christ's message into Persia, India, and as far as Armenia.
 2. One tradition says Nathanael was tied up in a sack and thrown into the sea.
 3. Another tradition states he was crucified.⁴²
- L. Paul - After writing 2 Timothy from a prison cell in Rome, Paul was beheaded in AD 66 (2 Tim 4:6-8, 18).⁴³

Conclusion:

- Throughout the spread of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, the apostles faced threats, court trials, imprisonment, scourging, stoning, mob riots, and eventually martyrdom.
- Satan utilized numerous devices to defeat the apostle's message and the founding of the church.
- Nonetheless, Christ founded his church through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in obedient men who would not quit in the face of torture and physical death.

³⁸MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, 74.

³⁹Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 6.

⁴⁰MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, 133, 164.

⁴¹Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 6-8.

⁴²MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, 147.

⁴³Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 8.

- Indeed, God’s plan, God’s message, and God’s church have prevailed, and continue to prevail through his faithful people.

- Do you have the faith to persevere in the face of trial, difficulty, and persecution
 - “‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” - John 15:20.
 - The apostles proved faithful to Christ to the end.
Now it is our turn to pick up the torch and serve Christ without wavering!
 - God has chosen us to glorify himself through our salvation and called us faithful service.
 - We can; yea, we must persevere to the end!

Closing Hymn: “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?”

Sermon 9:

God's Plan Prevails through Saints Who Persevere in Church History

Intro: The examples of perseverance unto death by Christ and his apostles set the course for succeeding generations of faithful servants. The institution of the church and her history are speckled by the blood of her saints. Throughout church history, faithful Christians have prevailed through various forms of tribulation and persecution.

I. God's Plan Prevails Through Saints Who Persevered under Persecution by Roman Emperors.⁴⁴

A. Persecutions under Nero (AD 54-68)

1. Nero had animal skins sewn around Christians and then let ferocious dogs attack them.
2. Christians were put into wax covered shirts and then set on fire to serve as lamps for Nero's parties.
3. Nevertheless, these blessed saints endured suffering and death rather than renounce their true King.

B. Ignatius (AD 110) - suffered under Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117).

1. While being delivered to Rome for professing Christ, Ignatius wrote to the church at Rome *not* to deliver him, stating,

“Now I begin to be a disciple. I care for nothing of visible or invisible things so that I may but win Christ. Let the fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me; be it so, only may I win Christ Jesus.”⁴⁵

2. After being sentenced to be fed to lions, he proclaimed,

“I am the wheat of Christ: I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴John Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1997), 1-84. This book provides the majority of information in this section and has been either paraphrased or quoted throughout.

⁴⁵Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 14.

⁴⁶Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 14.

C. Polycarp - under Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (AD 162-180).

1. He was a disciple of the Apostle John and overseer of the church in Smyrna.
2. After being sentenced to be burned, Polycarp declared, "Eighty-six years I have served [Jesus], and he never once wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me?"⁴⁷

D. Blandina - A Christian woman, under Marcus Aurelius.

1. Twice she was tied to a stake for lions to eat, but the lions did not touch her.
2. She was brought back later and the lions ripped upon her.
3. After this she was whipped, put into a net and tussled about by a wild bull.
4. After this, she was seated naked into a red-hot metal chair.
5. When her torturers saw that her faith in Christ remained steadfast, they terminated her earthly life by running her through with a sword.

E. Agatha - a godly woman

1. She refused to be drawn into prostitution so that the local governor of Sicily, Quintain, could fulfill his lustful desires against her.
2. Therefore, Quintain had her scourged with sharp hooks and thrown naked upon a bed of hot coals and glass,
3. Agatha did not deny Christ.
4. Upon returning to prison, she died of her wounds on February 5, 251.

II. God's Plan Prevails Through Saints Who Persevered Under Persecution by Popes of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC).

- Followers of Christ were persecuted by secular authorities up to the twelfth century, then ironically, persecution began coming from other so called "Christians" within the RCC.
- Bold individuals discerned truth from Scripture and confronted the many false teachings of the RCC, such as: papal authority, transubstantiation, purgatory, and indulgences.

A. Pope Innocent II (1130 – 1143)

1. Berengarius (AD 1140) - began preaching the truths of Scripture in contrast to the falsehoods of Rome.
2. Innocent II took notice and encouraged the local authorities to drive Berengarius and his followers out of their territories.

⁴⁷Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 16.

Then, papal measures against so called “heretics” began to intensify.

B. Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216)

1. Peter Waldo (France, AD 1184) - was excommunicated for his stance against the RCC’s teachings.
2. In 1208, Innocent III organized an official crusade against Waldo’s followers, the Waldenses, and in 1211 eighty Waldenses were burned at the stake.
3. Innocent III also conducted what he called a Holy War from 1209-1229 against a similar group in France known as the Albigenses.
4. Waldo and the Albigenses battled ultimately against Satan’s enmity, the father of lies (John 8:44) and blazed a trail for others to follow the Scriptures, and God’s truth prevailed.

C. Pope Gregory IX formally organized the papal Inquisition in 1231.

1. This was a medieval court established to prosecute those who opposed teachings of the RCC.
2. Accused heretics would be arrested by local governmental authorities, stand trial before the ecclesiastical court, and if convicted, their property would be seized for church use and the individual would be burned at the stake.
3. Horrific methods were used in attempts to get them to renounce the faith, as Foxe describes:

“Every method of physical torture known or that can be imagined was used—such as stretching limbs on the rack; burning with live coals or heated metals; breaking fingers and toes; crushing feet and hands; pulling out teeth; squeezing flesh with pincers; inserting hooks into fleshy parts and pulling the hooks out through the flesh; cutting off small pieces of flesh; sticking pins into the flesh; inserting pins under fingernails or toenails; tightening ropes around flesh until they cut through to the bone; scourging with rods or various kinds of whips; beating with fists, rods, and clubs; twisting limbs and dislocation joints. The methods used by the sadistic inquisitors are too numerous and horrendous to list.”⁴⁸

D. The Spanish Inquisition

1. It is estimated that nearly 32,000 were horrendously tortured and burned alive.
2. In addition to these, there were some 339,000 who were physically punished, plundered, and/or condemned.

⁴⁸Foxe, *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, 62.

3. Foxe summarizes the extent of the Spanish Inquisition:

“But there are no records of the multitudes who died in dungeons from the torture; from being confined in filthy, diseased, rat and vermin infested holes; from broken bodies or broken hearts; or the millions of lives who were dependent upon them for their survival, or who were hurried to the grave by the death of the victims. That is a record that is known only in heaven for the Day of Judgment.”⁴⁹

4. Thousands of faithful Spanish Christians steadfastly gazed past their torturers to look unto Jesus, the founder and perfecter of their faith (Heb 12:1-2).

E. John Wycliffe, Oxford scholar, England (AD 1377-1384)

1. He had numerous conflicts with, and threats from, the RCC because of his stance on biblical truth.
2. Wycliffe did die of natural causes without being sentenced to death, but even that is not the end of his story.⁵⁰

F. John Huss, Bohemia, (AD 1372-1415)

1. Huss embraced the writings of Wycliffe which also put him in constant opposition with the RCC.
2. He was eventually brought to trial at the Council of Constance in 1415.
3. Before trying Huss, the council exhumed the body of Wycliffe, burned it, and threw his ashes into the Rhine River so as to erase any memory of Wycliffe.
4. The council then turned on Huss, essentially scalping him and mockingly placing a paper bishop's miter on his head.
5. On the way to his execution, Huss was led past a blaze in which his books were being burned.
6. After being chained to a stake, Huss cried out, “My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this one for my sake, so why should I be ashamed of this rusty chain?”⁵¹
7. Huss sang a song of praise until his rejoicing voice was choked out by smoke and flames.
8. Huss's courage gave birth to the Hussites who continued to follow his teachings of the true doctrines of Scripture.

⁴⁹Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 64.

⁵⁰Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 67-77.

⁵¹Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 84.

G. In attempts to suppress biblical truth, the enemies of the cross actually broadcasted it.

H. God's plan prevailed through his people in the face of persecution and martyrdom.

Conclusion:

- Throughout the spread of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, the apostles faced threats, court trials, imprisonment, scourging, stoning, mob riots, and eventually martyrdom.
- Nonetheless, Christ founded his church through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in obedient men who would not quit in the face of torture and physical death.
- Indeed, God's plan, God's message, and God's church have prevailed, and continue to prevail through his faithful people.
- Do I have the faith to persevere in the face of trial, difficulty, and persecution
 - "A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" - John 15:20.
 - The apostles proved faithful to Christ to the end.
Now it is our turn to pick up the torch and serve Christ without wavering!
 - God has chosen us to glorify himself through our salvation and called us faithful service.
 - We can; yea, we must persevere to the end!

Sermon 10:

God's Plan Prevails through Saints Who Persevere into the Modern Era

- Jesus told the disciples, “‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20).
- Jesus was crucified while adhering to the Father’s plan.
- The apostles proved faithful to Christ and his plan to the end.
- Early Church history is full of the blood of martyrs who did not waver from God’s prevailing plan.
- Testimonies of faithful saints continue into the modern era.

I. God's Plan Prevails Through Saints Who Persevered under Persecution by Kings and Queens.

A. William Tyndale, England (AD 1494-1536)

1. He was the first to translate the Bible from Latin into English in 1525.
2. In violation of a decree from Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and in accord with King Henry VIII, Tyndale was sentenced to be strangled and burned.
3. At his execution on October 6, 1536, Tyndale declared, “Lord! Open the king of England’s eyes!”⁵²

B. During this era in Germany, Martin Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation against the RCC in AD 1517. Luther had many battles against the RCC, but did die in peace at age 63 on February 18, 1546.

C. John Foxe, England (AD 1516-1587) - wrote, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*

1. Foxe, a friend of Tyndale, had to flee the horrific persecution under the five year reign of “Bloody” Mary I (AD 1553-1558).
2. He escaped to Basel, Switzerland where he wrote his *Book of Martyrs*.
3. Upon Mary’s death, Foxe returned to England and his book found acceptance and distribution under Elizabeth I (AD 1558-1603).⁵³

⁵²John Foxe, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1997), 133.

⁵³DC Talk and The Voice of the Martyrs, *Jesus Freaks: Stories of Revolutionaries Who Changed Their World Fearing God, Not Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 2:185-88.

D. The Bible in English and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* have gone on to be abundantly disseminated and have instructed and encouraged the church for centuries.

E. God's truth and God's people have not only prevailed, but thrived.

II. God's Plan Prevails through Saints Who Persevere in the Modern Era

- Since the enmity declared in Genesis 3:15 will not be settled until the culmination, the spiritual warfare rages on.
- The testimonies of faithful martyrs have inspired perseverance in succeeding generations of Christians into the modern era.

A. Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand

1. They were faithful servants of Christ in Romania during the World War II period.
2. As the Russian armies invaded their country, the Wurmbrands and their church passed out gospel booklets to Russian soldiers who entered by train and tank.
3. After the war, the church had to exist underground to avoid persecution, and the Communists used drugging, threats, and blackmail in attempts to get believers to report on their brothers.
4. The Wurmbrands encouraged true believers to infiltrate the police in order to inform the underground church of planned opposition.
 - a. Believers also became undercover medical professionals to minister to imprisoned Christians.
 - b. For these undercover Christians, bearing spite as one of the perceived enemy was often as difficult as bearing suffering as a convicted Christian.
5. Between 1940-1960, Richard Wurmbrand spent fourteen years in prison, yet utilized his imprisonment to minister to fellow prisoners and to witness to the guards.
6. Eventually, he founded the ministry, The Voice of the Martyrs, which continues to this day to report on and support persecuted Christians worldwide.⁵⁴

⁵⁴DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 8, 23, 218-19.

B. Rosa in communist Cuba in 1999.

1. Both Rosa's parents were atheists, heavily involved in the communist government, and prohibited speaking the word *God* in the home.
2. But Rosa's great-grandmother prayed for years for Rosa and she finally accepted Jesus.
3. After Rosa became a Christian, her mother started beating her and her father disowned her.
4. When Rosa went away to school, she sowed the gospel and three friends received Christ.
 - They met secretly under a tree to share God's word and prayed that others would come to know Christ.
5. Through it all, Rosa declares, "Our parents are blind in this atheistic system and do not understand that we grow and make our own personal decisions. Mine is Jesus Christ. I will be faithful even at the price of death!"⁵⁵

C. Christ continues to build his church in Africa.

1. Upon visiting Liberia and Sierra Leon, Tim Keese reports, Remarkable Christians in both those countries are leading, serving, discipling, and multiplying themselves in the lives of others. All this in countries wounded by war, steeped in demon worship and Islam, and divided a hundred ways—a patchwork of people groups barely stitched together by bad roads and worse governments.⁵⁶
2. In Liberia during the civil war of the 1990s, Dennis saw his father beheaded, his brother shot in the back, and his house burned.
3. Yet, Dennis has overcome these difficulties and is today a faithful pastor to his own people, the Loma.
 - One of Dennis's disciples is a carpenter named Washington who came to Christ out of devil worship.
4. Dennis and his team follow the mission strategy of the apostles in Acts: before going into a new village, they pray, fast, and then send evangelists two-by-two. They target the villages and leaders most hardened to the gospel so that once they receive Christ, the rest of the people have no fear of becoming Christian.
5. The village of Malawu was known as the center of Satan worship, but after prayer and fasting, God miraculously opened the people's hearts to salvation.
 - Where Satan was once worshiped, a church now stands.⁵⁷

⁵⁵DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 87-88.

⁵⁶Tim Keese, *Dispatches from the Front: Stories of Gospel Advance in the World's Difficult Places* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 160.

⁵⁷Keese, *Dispatches from the Front*, 159-68.

D. God's plan continues to prevail in Asia.

1. Pastor Li Di Xian of China has been arrested eighteen times in recent years for working with hundreds of Chinese believers in the "illegal" house churches.
2. He keeps a small suitcase packed in preparation for the next time he is arrested.⁵⁸
3. In Vietnam, evangelist To Dinh Trung has refused to accept early dismissal from prison and return to his family because he is seeing many prisoners receive Christ.⁵⁹

III. God's Plan Must Continue to Prevail through Us Today

- A. The aforementioned are but a few of the thousands who have persevered in the Christian faith throughout the world and in every age.
- B. This list of steadfast saints is like a modern day addendum to the OT heroes of Hebrews 11, and time would fail to tell of them all (Heb 11:32).⁶⁰
- C. In an effort to squelch God's plan, Satan's emissaries have actually fortified the faith of thousands and continued the growth of the true church.
- D. As these servants were empowered by the Holy Spirit and faith to remain staunch in their loyalty to Christ, so our generation is now called to the frontline of this battle.
1. It is our turn to hold the truth, fight the enmity against Christ, and proclaim Christ's name before the world.
 2. In so doing, we fulfill the purpose we were created and redeemed—God's glory (Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet 2:9-12).
- E. As we have inherited this testimony of perseverance from saints of old, let us in our generation also prevail in the cause of Christ and so influence future generations to endure until God's eternal plan is culminated.
- F. By God's Spirit, God's Word, and faith, we must remain steadfast for Christ in spite of every one of Satan's attempts to destroy us—to the glory of God.

⁵⁸DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 8.

⁵⁹DC Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, 8.

⁶⁰For more testimonials of salvation and perseverance, consult WashedRed.com, "Changed Lives: Testimonies of Lives Changed by Jesus Christ," accessed December 5, 2016, http://www.washedred.com/changed_lives/; About.com > About Religion and Spirituality > Christianity, "Real Life Testimonies," accessed December 5, 2016, ; J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times*, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://grace-ebooks.com/library/J.%20C.%20Ryle/Light%20from%20Old%20Ties.pdf>.

Conclusion

- God is omnipotent and sovereign and will accomplish all his purposes in creation.
- God created all things by his will and for his glory (Rev 4:9-11).
- The means by which he will be glorified in creation is the salvation of men and the reclamation of creation.
- To accomplish his glory through salvation, he has chosen men from before the foundation of the world to be saved.
- Those whom he has chosen he has drawn to him and given them the gift of faith to respond to his calling.
- The Holy Spirit generates new birth in believers, indwells them, aids them in faithful obedience, and is the guarantee of their inheritance.
- The true believer will prevail to the end because he is integrated into God's eternal plan for his glory.
- Thus, God's plan prevails in his people and through his people for his glory.
- It is to this end we strive.
- Press on.
- Weep no more.
- Prevail to the end
—for the glory of God.

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE TO THE GREAT LAKES BIBLE CHURCH OF HOLLY, MICHIGAN

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, December, 2017
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This project sought to equip the members of Great Lakes Bible Church of Holly, Michigan, with a knowledge and discipline of the Doctrine of Perseverance. Chapter 1 gave the context of ministry, demonstrating strengths and weaknesses, and why this project was necessary. Chapter 2 provided a theological basis for perseverance. This was a biblical theology of Revelation 5:5 and demonstrated how God's plan has prevailed throughout redemptive history in spite of Satan's efforts to destroy it. Chapter 3 discussed how God's plan perseveres through his people. This chapter dealt with the perseverance of the saints, and provided examples of individuals throughout church history and in our modern day who have prevailed in the faith through difficulty and death. The objective of this project was to increase our people's understanding of the magnitude of God's plan, how that plan has unfolded within redemptive history, that they are included in God's prevailing plan, and that they too can, will, and must prevail in God's eternal plan. Chapter 4 described the project itself, detailing the sermon preparation, teaching methodology, and curriculum development. Chapter 5 evaluated the effectiveness of the project based on a completion of specified goals. Ultimately, this project pursued the equipping of Christians with the knowledge of perseverance and a mind set to endure in their own faith.

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