



1 & 2 Samuel

RISE OF THE LORD'S
ANOINTED

KAY GABRYSCH

"Gracious and accessible, Gabrysch introduces her readers to the world of sound biblical interpretation." —Michael D. Williams

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R&R
P U B L I S H I N G
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To my husband Ray, whose support, patience,
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Introduction

WHEN WE OPEN TO the first page of the New Testament, we read in Matthew 1:18, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.” Yet Matthew does not let us come to that great verse nor does he begin to unfold his story of Jesus Christ without first giving us seventeen verses containing a list of names of the ancestors of Christ. It is as if Matthew is telling us that there is no way we will ever understand the story of Jesus Christ properly unless and until we see it in the light of the very long, very old story of the Old Testament, which had been unfolding for centuries and which Christ brings to completion.

From the beginning of Matthew’s gospel we are aware that he will demonstrate throughout his story that Jesus is the long-expected Messiah, the Anointed One who is the descendant of the royal line of David and who alone is the rightful heir to David’s throne. We can grasp the significance of that claim only if we understand the Old Testament pictures, patterns, and promises of the beginning days of the monarchy, which Jesus fulfills.

The entire Bible is Jesus’ story. The Scriptures, beginning with Genesis, tell the ongoing epic tale of God’s relentless grace in ransoming his creation through his Son, Jesus Christ. We see in the story of the Bible that God’s purpose from creation on was to have a people who would live under his overwhelming blessing in covenant with him. Because of humanity’s rebellion against him and man’s breaking of that covenant, restoration could only come through God himself. The Old Testament is the story of the people of God repeatedly breaking the covenant of God and God repeatedly coming back in grace to renew it until it is finally and completely fulfilled in his Son, Jesus Christ. Interpreted rightly, the Old Testament prepares us to understand the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ by showing us how he is the focus of the storyline and the fulfillment of every picture,

pattern, symbol, and role. Everything in the New Testament instructs us to see Jesus in the Old. When the risen Christ unfolds the Old Testament to his disciples after their encounter with him on the Emmaus road and shows them how the Scripture is all fulfilled in him, the only reaction they could have in response was to be astonished that they had not seen it before! Like them, we are to see that the central message of the Old Testament is to show us the gospel of Jesus Christ, his suffering, death, resurrection, and reign.

In the history books of 1 and 2 Samuel God establishes an everlasting covenant with David, promising David that one of his descendants will sit on an eternal throne. But despite this glorious promise, the story of David's life demonstrates that even the best of God's anointed earthly kings can sin against God and ignore his promises. This shepherd king who was responsible for defeating God's enemies, for the ongoing welfare of God's people, for establishing true worship of God in Jerusalem, this king rebelled against God in so many ways. It would not be until Jesus Christ came to truly bring his people ultimate good—not to be served as king but to serve, to give his life as a ransom for the true welfare of his people—that God's covenant with David would be fulfilled. Christ, the righteous King, brought lasting peace to his rebellious subjects. Christ is King of Kings, reigning now and forever on the throne of exalted glory. Christ will return from heaven to complete and claim the fullness of his kingdom and to live and reign forever with his people on the earth.

Finally and importantly, the stories of 1 and 2 Samuel are not just records of an inspiring hero king. They are not here to teach us moralistic universal principles of behavior that we can apply to our lives. David's primary function in redemptive history was *not* to model a life by which we could live. David demonstrates that even as he inhabits the role God has given him to further the advancement of God's kingdom on earth, he fails to live up to the righteous rule that God demands of his king. The stories of David's life and reign give us gratitude that our Good Shepherd King has come and truly fulfilled his kingly mission. We have a great privilege and a vast treasure to mine as we study the Old Testament. Jesus mined this same treasure as "morning by morning" he was taught from the Scriptures. The Old Testament was Jesus' Bible. Christopher Wright has said:

I find myself aware that in reading the Hebrew Scriptures I am handling something that gives me a closer common link with Jesus than any archeological artifact could do. For these are the words *he* read. These were the stories *he* knew. These were the songs *he* sang . . . This is where he found *his* insights into the mind of his Father God. Above all, this is where he found the shape of his own identity and the goal of his own mission. In short, the deeper you go into understanding the Old Testament, the closer you come to the heart of Jesus.¹

This is our glorious privilege as we study, to come ever closer to our King in adoration, love, worship, and obedience.

MINING THE TREASURE

As we study these Old Testament narratives together, we will look at basic literary elements that are common to all of them.

Characterization

Old Testament narrative writers use characterization to move the plot-lines of the story along. We will study these characters extensively. Who are they? How do they interact with each other? What is God's evaluation of them? These characters will be revealed both by the narrator's descriptions and by the character's own overt actions and words. Because the stories read like biblical soap operas, you will meet many dysfunctional people. The unvarnished truth about these ancient people is told so that when we see them we will recognize the deceit of our own hearts and see in every narrative how completely God is the hero of every story and how desperately humanity is in need of the righteousness that only God can provide.

Even though David was called "a man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14), he committed adultery and murder and saw his family torn apart by rivalry and chaos. David's story is not a morality play. It is the story of a king who sinned greatly but ultimately chose God's rule instead of his own autonomy. It is the story of a resourceful man who finally depended not on

1. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), ix.

himself but on the faithfulness of God's promise of an eternal King to fully satisfy on his behalf the righteousness that God demands. We know from David's psalms how aware he was of his need of a savior.

The characters of 1 and 2 Samuel encourage and strengthen us as they reveal God breaking into the lives of his people in new ways in response to their need of him.

Because we are part of the family of God made up of people of all times, these stories are memories of *our* past. They inform us, shape our understanding of ourselves, and give us vision and hope for the future. Our Christian faith grows out of confidence in God's dealings with his people in the past. We can rest assured that our unchanging God will act in kind with his people in the present.

Plot Conflict and Resolution

We will see thickening plots filled with tension and conflict throughout the historical narratives. As we read the developing conflict, it will cause us to ask, "How will this turn out?" Just like in any good book or movie, the conflict generates our interest and pushes us through to the resolution.

In every story the conflict will reveal something that is a result of the fall. What is wrong with this person or this situation because of the fall that God must address with grace in order for the wrong to be righted?

What do we see in these ancient peoples' situation as it unfolds that will ultimately require God's intervention and rescue?

God never just brings his people out of the chaos of their sin and then returns them to their former life. His divine resolution always transcends the former situations and keeps them moving forward toward his redemptive goals. That is what makes these stories more than just historical accounts of ancient events and people. The course of events found in 1 and 2 Samuel is placed in the light of an unfolding divine plan. *It is a plan for the rule and reign of God to be visibly established in his creation.*

Application

Because we are seeking not just information but transformation, we will apply these texts to our lives. The Old Testament narratives offer informative

and effective implications for our contemporary lives. All of us have misconceptions about God and about ourselves. Old Testament stories present us with proper perspectives on human nature and our sovereign God. It is our responsibility to receive this information and be transformed by the renewing of our minds as we study and apply the truths we will discover. There is one reality by which to interpret our lives and that is God's truth. As we grow in biblical wisdom, we will learn how to rightly apply the truths of Scripture to our lives, and live those truths out in godly ways. We must first ask the primary gospel questions of how is God's work being accomplished in his world, how are we seeing the sins for which Christ had to come and die, and so on, before we can ask, "How then does the gospel teach us to live in light of these truths?" In other words, now that I know the truths contained in this particular passage and understand the gospel better because of this passage, how do I live out of love and gratitude for what God has done? It will be so important to know that, even after we have applied biblical truth to our lives, we must still return to the gospel again and again as we realize that we will never live up to the standard of perfect righteousness that God demands and that only Christ has provided for us. It is because Christians are clothed in *his* perfect righteousness that we can stand before a holy God forgiven.

MEETING THE FAMILY

The two books of Samuel tell of the events in Israel's history from the period of Judges to David's last years. Originally one book, they recount first the story of Samuel, the last of the judges, the transitional figure raised up by God to lead Israel into the period of the monarchy. The stories of his birth and leadership then lead into stories of the first faltering steps of the monarchy under Saul and conclude with David's rise to the throne, along with all the stories of both his covenant failures and covenant faithfulness.

Many scholars believe that the audience for this portion of Scripture would most likely have been the nation of Israel in exile. The book probably reached its final form just prior to or during the exile. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings explain to the exiles why they are in captivity—because of the unfaithfulness of the Davidic monarchy. David's family had led the people of Israel astray many times, and the

blame for the exile fell largely on David's house (2 Kings 21:10–15). But despite the moral failure of the human kings, Israel's hope was and always would be in the ultimate Son of David, a Messianic King who would sit on the throne of a gloriously restored Israel. In expectation the exiles and all true Israelites after them listened, and in hope they clung to the stories of their covenant God and his promises to his people to have an everlasting king on David's throne.

REACHING THE GOAL

The Bible is God condescending to speak to his people in ways we can hear and understand if we will carefully and attentively listen. In hearing, comprehending, and responding there is great reward. It is not just God's Word. It is God's Word given for and to his people. If you listen and ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher, you have his promise that you will hear. The Scripture discloses God's will for us. It sheds light on and publishes God's norms for all of life in his world. It offers us a corrective lens and gives us warnings, commands, promises, callings, and comfort. But most importantly, it and it alone can bring us to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Scripture alone we are brought to faith in Christ. Through Scripture alone the Holy Spirit breaks through our confusion and clearly shows us the one true King. God does not leave us on our own to figure it out. He gives us his own Holy Spirit to read it to us and interpret it for us. Through Scripture alone our hearts are changed, and we respond to Christ in adoration, thankfulness, love, and obedience.

Overview

THE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

If you are doing this study as a member of a Bible study group, each week you will read, study, and answer questions on your own in your personal study time before coming to discuss the lesson as part of a discussion group.

This study has been designed to give us tools of biblical interpretation that will make us more careful readers of Scripture. You will find that as the weeks go by and you follow the format of the questions and interact with others, interpretive skills will begin to grow. You will become more comfortable each week with the lessons as you learn to become a more careful reader of Scripture. Focus on what you are able to do in the beginning and do not be discouraged by that which is left undone. Your study efforts will become more and more fruitful as you become more and more familiar with the method of this study, which calls for careful observation of the text, asking questions of the text, and meditating on the text.

YOUR APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY

The most important thing to do before you begin your lesson each day is to pray for the Holy Spirit to open your mind to what he has to teach you and to enlarge your heart with love for Jesus Christ through what you will learn. Many verses in the Psalms are helpful prayers for a teachable heart, such as Psalm 119:18: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” The Bible is not just God’s Word; it is God’s Word to his people, and he attends to it by his Spirit.

He *wants* us to hear what he is saying to his people. The Spirit teaches, illuminates, and penetrates our hearts with the Word. Set aside time each day to really study the passage, and you will be encouraged by the ways in which the Spirit of God will speak to you through his authoritative, powerful, and all-sufficient Word.

BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

Every week we will look at big-picture, general questions designed to be asked of each passage. These questions will not change from week to week. Always some—and often all—these questions will be applicable to every story in 1 and 2 Samuel. In the first lesson, you will be given explanations to guide you and stimulate your thought processes for each of these questions. You may want to refer back to the first lesson's explanations to inform your thoughts as you answer the questions in subsequent lessons. Each week you will also answer a limited number of questions that are exclusive to the particular passage being studied. These questions are designed to focus your thoughts on a main idea of the passage.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

Here are just a few things to consider about the kingdom then and now. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are concerned with a particular period of Israel's history—the rise of the monarchy. All the narratives relate events that took place during the period in which God was establishing what had always been a factor in his plans for his people—the earthly monarchy. The world for God's people changed with the monarchy, and their relationship with God would forever after be defined by their relationship with God's anointed king. The earthly monarchy, with all its weaknesses, was intended to clearly demonstrate the necessity of the perfect embodiment of God's king. The monarchy was a gracious gift of God to his chosen people that organized his kingdom under a human, earthly ruler. But it was so much more.

God's kingdom under David would point to and be a pattern for the coming kingdom that would be established by the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. David's establishment of a kingdom in which God's enemies were defeated, worship was at the forefront of life, and there was unity among the people of Israel was a type, a pattern, of the kingdom of the one true King who would eventually come and reign, putting all God's enemies under his feet and establishing peace forever. Everything about it was supposed to point to and prepare God's people to recognize his true King when he came.

But even though Israel hoped throughout the ages for the Messiah who would come to inaugurate God's kingdom, when Jesus finally came he was not the kind of king Israel was expecting. He was not the warrior-ruler David had been. He did not drive out the physical enemies of God and place himself on a physical throne in earthly Jerusalem. Instead he transformed lives and changed hearts by driving out the spiritual enemies of God's people; and instead of being enthroned in Jerusalem, he was nailed to a cross outside the city. He gave his life in payment for the sins of his people and rose from the dead for their justification. To all who would put their faith in him, he gave the gift of eternal life and the promise that they are spiritually secure until he comes again; they are protected, sealed, and defended by the Lion of Judah who is also the Lamb who was slain and who by his death and resurrection has victoriously overcome his enemy.

God's people are already kingdom citizens, living in the age between Christ's two comings, living in the kingdom that he has already inaugurated by his first coming. That kingdom has been ushered in and is growing in the midst of a hostile world while Christ sovereignly rules from his heavenly throne. While we live as kingdom citizens and wait for his return, we are to understand that our enemies are real and to see them in their true colors. But we are never to lose sight of our champion as he sits enthroned in his true glory, ruling every square inch of his universe. We are to trust, love, and serve him, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has defeated Satan at the cross and who will one day come back to send him into his eternal punishment. We are to worship and adore

him who is seated on God's throne in power, who like his father David went out in the name of the Lord to fight the enemies of God's people and conquered. Christ is the one who is right now the ruling warrior general of heaven's armies and who will come again in his holy wrath to destroy all that defiles his creation and sets itself up against his church.

The great heritage of the Old Testament narratives of David's reign gives us glimpses and pictures and patterns of who Christ is and what he came to do. Christ himself is the key to our interpretation of David's story. Over and over again David shows us why only God in flesh could ever be the answer to our deepest need. Jesus Christ is the true King who stepped into history and plunged headlong into the battle and poured out his life in order to have his people with him forever. May this study help you see him as victorious King and serve him as his loving ambassador in the midst of a hostile world until he comes and brings the glory of heaven to earth.



1 Samuel 1:1-2:10

MEDITATION AND DISCOVERY

1. Read the entire passage and, as you read, observe the details of the settings, situations, and crises of peoples' lives. Circle or write down repeated words that highlight the narrator's emphasis. The writers of Hebrew narratives use repetition to emphasize character traits, action, theological points, etc. Next, look for contrasting words like *darkness/light*, *strength/weakness*, etc. The words *but* and *yet* will often signal a contrast as well. Next, look for words that signal time and scene changes, such as *then* and *now*.

LESSON 1

2. Write down questions that come to mind that you expect or hope will be answered as you study. These might include but are certainly not limited to:
 - What does this particular thing mean?
 - Where is this happening?
 - Why are they doing this particular thing?
 - What surprises you in the story?

Good interpretation involves asking many questions of the text!

3. Next we will look at the context of the passage. What precedes and follows this passage, and what light do these “next-door neighbors” shed on the passage? Determine how this particular passage fits into the central idea of all 1 and 2 Samuel. Expand the context to the whole Bible. Where does the passage/book fit into the whole story of Scripture? What was going on historically at the time this was written? Who made up the original audience? Two very important keys to interpretation are (1) what was the author’s intent in writing to his audience? and (2) what would that original audience have understood?

Rule #1: Relax! Understanding a passage in its context is not something that can be done up front if you are not familiar with the Old Testament, but it is so important to understanding the text. It will become easier for you as you go along in this study and understand more and more the “one-story-ness” of the Bible.

Each book of the Bible is a link in the chain of the progressive, unfolding, larger story of redemption. God progressively and coherently tells his story over thousands of years. The Bible is not just a collection of truth statements. It is held together by a storyline. It is best understood as a narrative. It is the story of God, who has created a world in which the apex of his creation, humankind, has rebelled against him, thus creating the conflict for which God provides the resolution, his Son, Jesus Christ. It is a story of creation, rebellion, redemption, and re-creation. The beginnings of the monarchy have an important and specific part in that unfolding story.

4. After reading and rereading the passage, what do you think is the main idea or theme of this particular passage?

CHARACTERIZATION AND SCENES

Because the story of redemption begins with the Old Testament and is told from Genesis to Revelation, God makes himself known in the Old Testament stories in his covenant relationships to his people and in his relationships to all his creation. The God who redeemed Hannah, Samuel, and David is the same God of all grace who has redeemed those in the New Testament. The means by which God has worked in history has always been human beings living in time and space.

When we read the stories of God's ancient people, we are reading the stories of our own spiritual ancestors who have gone before us and played their parts on the stage of God's drama. How humbling to see how tiny our lives are in the enormous scheme of things, yet how dignifying to have a role to play in that scheme. When we belong to God through faith in Christ, we can know that we are enabled by his Spirit to walk like those who have gone before us and to take our place as a participant in the story as each of them did. As Dr. Michael Williams likes to say, "We are not the trees in the school play." We have a role to faithfully inhabit and a contribution to make to the establishing of Christ's kingdom as we live in these times between Christ's first and second comings.

When we study the characters of the historical narratives, we see that our relational God cares deeply about his people and is constantly involved in their lives for his glory and their good. Every character in the story is defined by his or her relationship to God. Notice that they are real people with conflicts, choices, sins, consequences, joys, and sorrows. They are people just like us who face each day not knowing what it will bring. Some will be grappling with suffering, some will be acting on the sin in their hearts, some will be living in accordance with the purposes of God. Be on the lookout for how God confirms the identity of those who are his—comforting, disciplining, and providentially working in and through them, always for their good and his glory. Conversely, identify how he confronts the many ways in which people turn away from the character and ways of God in complete rebellion.

The Bible is a story about what God has *done* to redeem his sin-sick world. He is not just the sum of attributes and names to be memorized and studied. He is always *acting* in relationship with his people. Consequently the fundamental question will always be: what is God doing in these people's lives and in his world in this part of the story to drive the story forward toward its ultimate goal—the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in his life, death, resurrection, and reign both in this age and the age to come?

1. Make a list of characters and identify habits, desires, emotions, overt actions, and speech of each that give clues to their relationship to God and the condition of their hearts. According to the narrator, what is God's evaluation of their conduct and character?

- Where do you see him acting in mercy for the guilty, strength for the weak, love for the unlovely and undeserving, provision for the needy, warning for those who are in error, punishment for enemies, and rescue of his people from enemies from whom they cannot rescue themselves?
 - Where do you see discipline that turns people back into God's arms and away from unsafe paths?
 - Keeping these examples in mind, what evidences of his grace and attributes of his character are predominately on display in this particular passage?
4. What inconsistency or error in your thinking about God is corrected by seeing his involvement with the characters in this story?
5. What are the prominent concerns and issues in these characters' lives with which you most identify? Why?

LESSON 1

6. Make two lists: one list of the issues involved in this ancient situation, and another list of what might be the contemporary equivalents of those issues.

ANCIENT ISSUE	CONTEMPORARY EQUIVALENT

QUESTIONS ON 1 SAMUEL 1:1–2:10

We must see this story in the context of Israel’s unfolding history and God’s plan to send the true and perfect King before we can understand the significance of the answered prayer of this humble, obscure woman. Hannah arrived on the scene when the nation was spiritually crumbling. The priesthood was corrupt, the people were indifferent to God and, as Judges reminds us over and over, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). All of a sudden, the biblical narrative zeroes in on the painful marriage and barren womb of one woman.

Look carefully at Hannah’s story and how God uses this insignificant, barren woman to bring about his redemptive plans. While we struggle to understand this God who seems to be withholding the very blessings we crave, he is using the struggle to reveal to us his greater purposes in our own life’s story and in his kingdom.

Chapter 1

1. Like so many women before her, Hannah finds herself in the heartbreaking condition of barrenness.

Read Genesis 25:20–21, 26; 29:31; 30:22–23. In light of the extraordinary promise the Lord made to the woman in Genesis 3:15 regarding her role in the redemptive plan, every Israelite woman knew that it was important and necessary to have children. One of the blessings of the Mosaic covenant was that “the fruit of your womb” would be blessed (Deut. 28:4). How would Hannah have been perceived within the Israelite community, as seen in Peninnah’s treatment of her?

LESSON 1

In light of the covenant promise of blessing, what is Hannah really yearning for?

2. As he often does, God chooses to begin the story of the next phase of redemptive history with what appears to be a hopeless situation. What other new chapter of redemptive history begins with a barren woman who has prayed for a child for many years? Read Luke 1:5–7.
3. What are the similarities between Hannah's story and Elizabeth's story and between the roles that Hannah's child and Elizabeth's child would play in God's unfolding plan? (See 1 Samuel 8:4–7; John 3:27–30.)
4. Who is responsible for Hannah's barrenness (vv. 1–8)? How does knowing that affect Hannah's confidence in God?

5. There is a well-known little phrase that says, “If you ask the wrong thing, God says, ‘No.’ If you ask the right thing at the wrong time, God says, ‘Go slow.’” Hannah has been asking for the right thing, but God has “gone slowly” for quite a while until the unique time God chooses to bring about his purposes. Read Luke 18:1–7. What is Jesus teaching about God in this parable that Hannah already seems to know?

6. Hannah’s logic in prayer is based on her assumption that God cares about an anxiety-ridden, afflicted woman in a stressful marriage. What does the faithful remnant of Israel, of which Hannah was a part, know about Yahweh that we also are to know? (See Exodus 3:7–8a.)

7. Once Eli determines that Hannah is not drunk, but desperate, he blesses her with an assurance that the God of Israel has heard her prayer. The true Israelite like Hannah would believe the word of God spoken through the mediation of a priest. What is her reaction to that assurance from God spoken through her mediator, Eli?

Chapter 2

10. In 2:1–10 Hannah sings of the One who brings to life and breaks the power of death. The overcoming, enemy-conquering God is the theme of the song that God's people sing then and throughout eternity.

Read Revelation 1:17–18; 5:8–10; 19:11–16; 21:1–9. What are the similarities between Hannah's song and the songs and visions John hears and sees at the end of the first century? How does that change your perspective of what is going on in the world and in your life right now?

Most scholars believe that Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 serves as the seed plot for Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46–55. Both Hannah's and Mary's songs are hymns of praise acknowledging not just personal events but assertions that God is doing something new concerning his covenant people. If God will create life in the midst of barrenness, there is no limit to what he might be doing in Israel for his people and no limit to what he is doing in your own life!

Where in your life do you need to be reminded that God can bring life from what appears to be dead or that he will ultimately overcome his people's enemies?

CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

In Scripture there is always an implicit truth running through the entire story—human beings have created a conflict that requires God’s intervention with a divine solution. When we read these stories, we see that there is a human condition that we share with those for whom and about whom these stories are written. Our sinful, fallen condition requires the grace of God on our behalf through the salvation that Christ alone provides. The Scriptures urge us to live in light of the biblical worldview that there is something wrong with the world and our lives, so that we will see our desperate need of God’s grace in Christ.

God created man and woman and commissioned them to rule and care for his creation as his image bearers. When they rejected his commission and rebelled against his rule, they introduced sin into the world. Because they were now unable to fulfill their mandate to rule on God’s behalf or free themselves from their own sin, their only hope was that God in his mercy and grace would redeem them and the world. That is what God did in his gracious redemptive acts that culminate in his sending his Son to bear the sins of the world. Greg Beale states, “The Bible begins with original creation which is corrupted, and the rest of the Old Testament is a redemptive-historical process working toward a restoration of the fallen creation in a new creation.”¹

There is something that we will understand more fully about the depth of humankind’s fallen condition because of each of these Old Testament narratives. Consequently there is something that we will understand more fully about Christ and the redemptive, restorative work that was necessary if we were to be saved and creation restored. We will become more aware of the storyline of the Old Testament, which has one objective—to tell the story of God’s ongoing quest to redeem his creation through his Messiah. And we will see that all the narratives’ plots and subplots fit into that storyline. As Christ told the disciples after his resurrection, every single page of the Old Testament is about

1. Greg K. Beale, “The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology,” in *Eschatology in Bible and Theology*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliot (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 44.

APPLICATION

The people in these ancient stories were struggling with the same things with which we are struggling, and God gave them hope through grace in their circumstances at just the right time. We have been given the grace of God’s Word so that we can take its truth to our circumstances and remember that the ultimate solution has been provided! Romans 15:4 says, “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.” Look for the grace of God poured out in these stories so that you will have hope in your life for endurance and encouragement.

We study Old Testament narratives and all Scripture on a spiritual battlefield. We are constantly pulled back and forth between sinful and righteous living, between self-effort and humble dependence on Christ in us. After studying this passage, ask God to cause you to see with heightened sensitivity what the Holy Spirit wants you to implement in your own life. The application questions we will answer bring us to the “so what?” question. *Why is this passage here? What does God want me to learn/change about me?*

1. What are the ways in which submission to God has taken place in this passage? Where in your own life does it need to take place?

5. What are the truths about God and his rule that you have learned that cause you to rejoice and trust him more?

6. Finally, always in application, ask yourself these three questions:

- *What* does God require of me as a result of having learned the truths of this passage?

- *Where* in my life do I need to do it? What specific area of my life needs this implementation?

- *Why* and *how* can I do it? We will answer this one together. The power of the resurrected, ascended Lord Jesus Christ indwells his people. It is by him, through him, and for him that you are enabled to obey. The compulsion of grace causes us to want to obey and grow in holiness. He sets us apart to holiness when he saves us by a powerful working of his Spirit in our lives that enables us to live for him. The Westminster Confession, chapter 16, says, “Good works done in obedience to God’s commandments are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith, but a Christian’s ability to do good works is not at all of themselves but wholly of the Spirit of Christ.”

We must recognize in some way every passage points not only to our need of redemption, but also to God’s provision of our redemption, including his enabling, powerful Holy Spirit. The Bible is not a self-help book. “Apart from me you can do nothing,” Jesus said (John 15:5).

Pray that the Holy Spirit will cause us to consider what to fight, where to fight, why to fight, and how to fight anything that comes against that growth in holiness.

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