

# The Biblical Metanarrative:

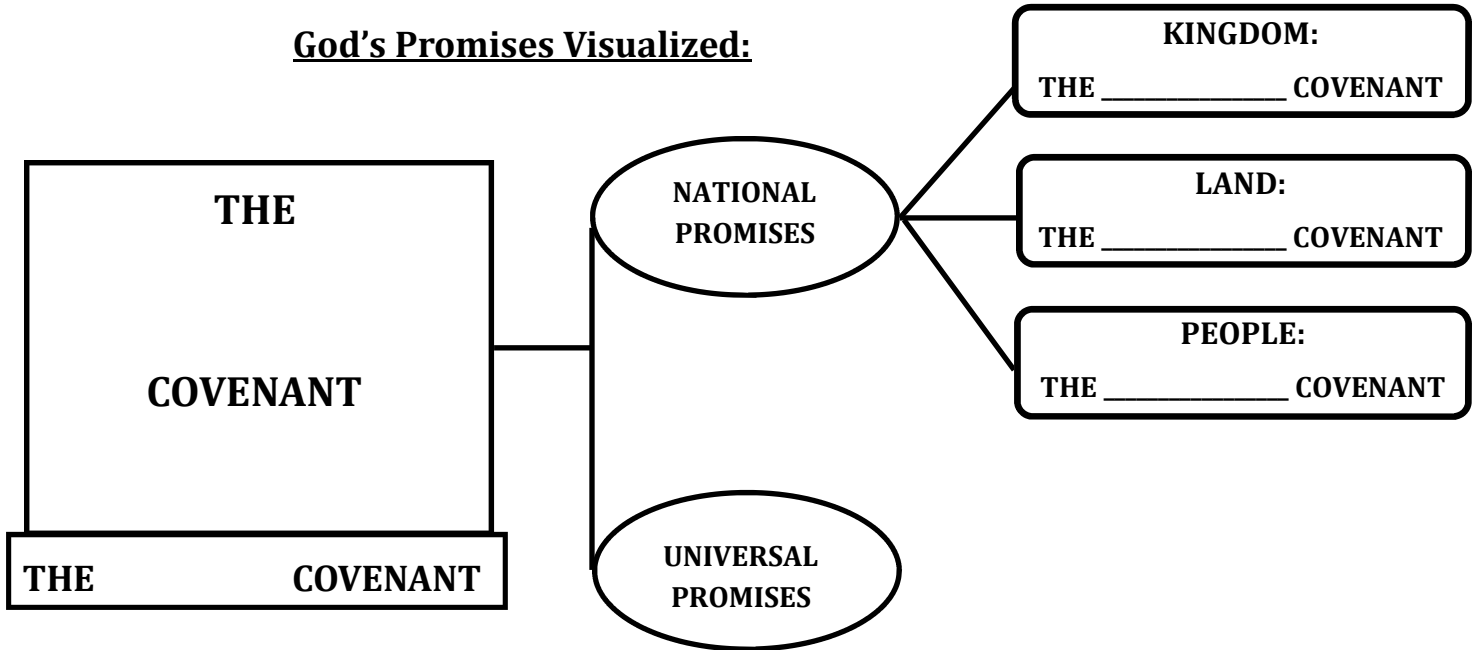
*"Knowing the story we are all a part of."*

## PART 5: GOD'S PROMISES TO THE NATION—The Mosaic Covenant

### Introduction:

God had made an unconditional covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3, 15:1-21) that included personal, national, and universal promises. God's fulfilling of these promises is the overall focus of the rest of the Biblical Metanarrative from this point forward.

### God's Promises Visualized:



### THE PATRIARCHS

\_\_\_\_\_ : GENESIS 26:1-5

After the death of Abraham, his son and his family faced a great famine. God appeared to him and made the same promises that He had previously made to Abraham. Notice that the basis of these promises to Isaac was the previous covenant with Abraham.

\_\_\_\_\_ : GENESIS 35:9-12

Isaac eventually had two sons. Through a series of events, the younger came to control his older brother's birthright and to receive his aging father's blessing. Despite Jacob's history as a liar, God chose to confirm His promises to Him as well as to change his name and identity.

### FROM CANAAN TO EGYPT

Despite Jacob's poor personal choices regarding women, the Lord used his fathering of multiple male children to be the beginning of His promised nation. As they grew older, they became exceedingly jealous of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph and sold him into slavery where he was taken to Egypt.

Joseph's rise from slavery to prominence in Egypt was used by the Lord (Gen. 50:15-21) and allowed him to provide for his father, brothers, and relatives to survive the great famine that came upon the land of Canaan. Their decision to remain in Egypt, while disobedient to the Lord's command to dwell in Canaan, was ultimately to fulfill part of the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-14.

## **THE EXODUS**

- After dwelling in Egypt for over 400 years, the population of Hebrews grew to well over a million people. The census taken at the beginning of the book of numbers mentions around 600,000 men, excluding women and children.
- The Book of Exodus begins by informing us that a Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph. This Pharaoh set task masters over the Hebrews to work them as slaves who made bricks and took part in great construction projects.

\_\_\_\_\_ : God's chosen deliverer of the people was a man who was a Hebrew, but was raised as an Egyptian. Despite being perfectly suited for this task culturally, he was insecure and afraid when the Lord originally called him.

Why did the Lord raise up Moses to rescue the people? EXODUS 2:23-25

⇒ On the basis of His \_\_\_\_\_. ➡ The \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant!

- God's command for His people was that they go into the wilderness to worship Him. (Ex. 3:18, 5:1, 7:16, 8:20, 9:1, 13:1)

WHY? —GENESIS 6:7-8

- Culturally speaking, the people were aware of the Patriarchs and God's promises to them, but in terms of their way of life, the people were very much assimilated into Egyptian culture (Ex. 16:1-3; Num. 11:4-6).

- The people lacked a \_\_\_\_\_ identity...they had no land of their own.
- The people lacked a \_\_\_\_\_ identity...their understanding of their relationship to God was not formalized. The institution of the Passover was the first step towards a codified Hebrew religious identity.
- The people lacked a \_\_\_\_\_ identity...they had no governmental structure or king.

**God was going to provide all of these. He would be their God and they would be His People!**

## **THE MOSAIC COVENANT**

EXODUS 19:1-8

- The initial offer is simple: Obey and keep God's covenant, and they would be God's treasured possession among the nations.
- A summation of the content of the Law was then given (Ex. 20:1-17)
  - ⇒ The focus of the Law would be on how to relate to God (20:1-11) and how to relate to other people (20:12-17).

The Book of the Covenant: EXODUS 20:1-23:19

This section includes: The 10 Commandments (20:1-12)  
Instructions for worship (20:22-26; 23:10-19)  
Rules & principles for community life (21:1-23:9)  
Instructions for entering the land of Canaan (23:20-33)

*These laws were put in place to completely overhaul Hebrew society and culture. The people would be given a new geographical identity by conquering the land of Canaan, a new religious identity through codified worship practices, and a new cultural identity through a new calendar as well as scheduled feasts and dietary requirements. All of these things together were to shape the Hebrew nation into God's treasured possession and set them apart among the peoples of the earth.*

## **THE COVENANT CONFIRMED — EXODUS 24:1-8**

Some helpful observations from The Promises of God by Christopher Cone:

*"Perhaps no other covenant in scripture has been so misunderstood or misapplied. It had a very specific purpose, and a very specific scope."*

*"The covenant was made specifically with Israel, and with no other nation. It was also made with Israel as a whole, not with the individual. National obedience would result in national blessing."*

*"Punishment and reward [based on this covenant] deal with Israel's ability to remain in the land, not with individual salvation or justification."*

### **SOME OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE MOSAIC COVENANT**

**I. The Covenant was \_\_\_\_\_.**

- This stands in sharp contrast to the previous covenants we have discussed.
- This covenant was based solely on Israel's choice to either obey or disobey God.

*"As evidenced by the subjunctive in Ex. 23:22 '...if you truly obey...and do all I say...' God's covenant with Israel through Moses was indeed a conditional covenant. It promised blessing upon the nation if the nation remained obedient to the law. The converse is thusly true: National disobedience would be a violation of this covenant, and therefore, since the covenant was ratified by both parties involved (God and Israel, Ex. 24:7-8), this same disobedience would invalidate the contract and make it null and void. Therefore, God would no longer be obligated by His word to bless the nation..."*

**- Christopher Cone**

**II. The Covenant was \_\_\_\_\_.**

- The choice of whether or not the people would follow and obey God's Law dealt directly with their physical rather than spiritual blessing.

*"The blessings and curses of the covenant were decidedly physical. They dealt with God's grace in leading the Israelites into the land...which also made it evident that [their] ability to dwell in the land was the key issue."*

**- Christopher Cone**

- The people of the nation were born (as all are) spiritually separated from God. Following the Law could do nothing to change that predicament.

**III. The Covenant was \_\_\_\_\_.**

*"The Mosaic Covenant never had the ability to bring redemption, only to point to it and therefore, built into this covenant was an intended inadequacy that would be compensated for in other covenants - specifically the New Covenant. God built this covenant to serve its purpose, and once its purpose was complete it was to be replaced, and thereby fulfilled...God made it very clear what He required, understanding the Law would not be difficult. Keeping it would be, however." - Christopher Cone*

The failure to keep the Law and the breaking of the covenant was almost instantaneous.  EXODUS 32:1-35

This pattern continued and led ultimately to the people's failure to trust God to bring them into the land and His ensuing judgment that the entire generation who were brought out of Egypt would die wandering in the wilderness. (Num. 13:1-14:38)

After the 40 years of wandering and as the people were about to enter the land, Moses pleaded with them to obey the Law that they might live and prosper as God's people (Deut. 30:11-20)

## **WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW?**

*“God had given the Israelites a Law that they would be unable to keep, and their failure—even though they were held individually and national responsible—plays a key role in the fulfillment of God’s other promises, the unconditional ones.” – Christopher Cone*

### **1. To reveal \_\_\_\_\_. ROMANS 3:9-20, GALATIANS 3:19-21**

*“The Law cannot give life. It kills. The Law does not justify a person before God; it increases sin. The Law does not secure righteousness; it hinders righteousness. The...Law of itself cannot save.”*

**- Martin Luther**

### **2. To show us our need for a \_\_\_\_\_. ROMANS 3:21-26**

*“In short, the Law served to demonstrate that man in all his efforts could not attain the holiness of God, and therefore, could not receive his deliverance by works. The Mosaic Covenant showed a degree of the true measure of the holiness of God, and man fell far short. Thus, the need for the substitutionary work of Christ becomes clear and the vague redemptive reference of Genesis 3:15 is unveiled a bit further.” - Christopher Cone*

## **A WARNING:**

It’s very easy for us to deal with this as purely a theological reality for us as Christians and to miss how an understanding of Law and the need for a savior manifests itself in the surrounding culture.

- As people, our hearts have a tendency to desire Law...not God’s Law specifically, but some set of rules or expectations that we can meet and be rewarded. These are everywhere present within our lives and can be referred to as \_\_\_\_\_ Law.

## **Comparing God’s Law and Cultural Law**

- ⇒ Cultural Law offers us some kind of \_\_\_\_\_.
- ⇒ Cultural Law rewards or punishes us based on \_\_\_\_\_.
- ⇒ Cultural Law creates \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.
- ⇒ Cultural Law points towards our need of a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.

## **JESUS FULFILLED GOD’S LAW & IS BETTER THAN OUR CULTURAL LAWS!**

**JESUS GIVES US A BETTER IDENTITY — Ephesians 1:3-14, Hebrews 2:11-15**

**JESUS RESCUES US FROM PUNISHMENT AND REWARDS US BASED ON HIS WORK, NOT OURS. — Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:8-9**

**JESUS CAME TO SAVE THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS & THE REBELIOUS — Luke 15:11-32**

**JESUS IS THE ONLY TRUE SAVIOR — Acts 4:12**