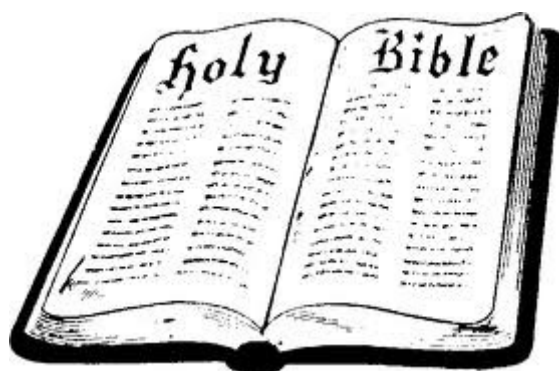


Old Testament Survey

By Joshua Stucki

Based off of *The Eternal Struggle* by George L. Faul, Rel. D.



From Genesis to Malachi

Charts, Outlines, and other Study Helps

For Reading or Reference

Introduction

How does one introduce the Bible?

The Bible is the world's #1 bestseller of all time.

Its chief character, Jesus Christ, is the centerpiece of all history (and our calendar).

Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, and Jehovah Witness are all major world religions that base themselves from the Bible (Islam considers Jesus a prophet, Mormonism considers the Bible the first revelation of Jesus Christ, and Jehovah Witness have their own translation of the Bible).

Judaism is based on the first 39 books of the Bible. Every major world religion either is based on it or utilizes it in some fashion. Even eastern religion has intertwined with it (although to undesirable results).

The Bible was written by over 40 authors, over 1500 years, on 3 continents. By comparison:

Comparison of "Holy Books"			
	Bible	Koran	Book of Mormon
Time span written	1600+ years	22 years	~10 years
Geographic span	3 continents	Middle East	North America
# of authors	40+	1 (Mohammed)	1 (Joseph Smith)
# of sections	66 Books (1189 Chapters)	114 Chapters	15 Books (239 Chapters)
<p>Conclusion: The Bible's geographic and time spans, authorship breadth, and coherency is unparalleled with any other "holy book". Absolutely nothing else compares.</p>			

In an age of pluralism and "religious tolerance", the Bible's superiority is overlooked – but not outdone.

The Basic Premise

How we know God:

- 1) In creation He has revealed His power
- 2) In the Bible He has revealed His purpose

3) In Jesus Christ He has revealed His person

Nature tells us naturally of God's immense power. It cannot tell us if God is good, bad, or indifferent. However, nature does tell us that God exists (Romans 1:20), and that we are fools for believing otherwise (Psalms 14:1).

In the written Word of God, we are told God's purpose for His creation and our role in it. The Bible alone is altogether true, accurate, and useful unto our personal instruction. However, we do not get to know the Person of God until we read about His Son and the Apostles' teachings about Him.

In learning about Jesus and enjoying a saving relationship with Him, we get to know God as loving, merciful, and interested in us, even to the extent of sending His Son to die for us. In exchange, He has provided us terms of pardon by which to receive that great salvation!

Jesus alone fulfilled the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. Jesus alone is Messiah, fulfilling all predictions of Jesus' coming. In fact, all of Jesus' teachings are proven by these facts alone and we can believe and live by them by that established authority.

Jesus was also the only perfect man, and therefore the only perfect priest, and thus the only perfect sacrifice. All of these things make Him qualified alone to be our King, Advocate, and Savior.

All of these things will benefit a wise man from becoming an atheist, agnostic, polytheist, fatalist, idealist, Darwinist, deist, materialist, pantheist, Hindu, Shintoist, Janist, Sikhist, Taoist, Zoroastrian, Confucianist, even a Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Animist, New Ager, Nihilist, or any other worldview, religion, philosophy, or belief system. Jesus alone saves (Acts 4:12) and His authority as King, His teachings as Prophet, and His sacrifice as Priest alone make Him our sole authority by which to believe and live.

In the Beginning – Chapter 1

God is Omniscient (all wise/known), Omnipotent (all powerful), and Omnipresent (everywhere present). "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). Indeed, we serve a great God!

God created the world exactly as He described He did it – in six literal days with no evolutionary process ever mentioned in Scripture or even proven by science. There was no pre-adamic world, no gap where angels lived on the earth before men did, and no gaps in the genealogies that God had inspired Moses to write down. The Word of God is perfect and complete, just as it is.

Evolution's Eternal, Stuck State of Being a "Theory" Forever	
"Any evolution of species into another is	No "live" example available of one organic

unobservable in a normal lifetime”	being reproducing into another kind of organic being
No account for origins of universe	Cannot breed organic beings of one kind with another in any case
Conclusion: it is these unchanging facts about evolution that will forever keep it in the world of being a “theory”, and a theory that cannot be tested objectively. This questions the legitimacy of evolution perpetually.	

Surely Satan has attempted to fill man’s mind with doubts since the beginning of time – gap theories, evolution, the big bang, cult-like explanations like a pre-adamic world, etc. Many of these false theories pervade man’s mind to this day.

God made man in His image, just as He intended to make them – they were not evolved from any other creature. Jesus Himself pointed out the historic nature of Adam, Eve, Noah, etc. These are not stories made up or stories of analogy. They were real people, and what happened to them is historical fact. To say otherwise is to make Jesus a liar.

Jesus Himself testified the earth was young. Since He was there when it was made (John 1:1ff), I say we can trust His testimony:

- i. Mark 10:6 – “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female.”
- ii. Mark 13:19-20, ““For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.”
- iii. Luke 11:50-51, “... so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.”

Satan – Chapter 2

In Genesis 3, Satan introduces his tricks he has been using on man since the beginning of time, and not surprisingly, they still work just as well today. The same basic sins and temptations that have befallen men still do, and always will, until Jesus’ return.

Then Satan is described by referencing various Scriptures, most notably Ezekiel 28:1ff and Isaiah 14:12ff. Some authors discourage the use of these Scriptures to describe Satan, but Satan is described in analogy in these passages in order to fully understand also the nature of the Kings of Tyre and Babylon.

In these passages Satan is called Lucifer, was in the Garden of Eden, a covering cherub, fallen from heaven, and planning to usurp God's throne. Nonetheless, each of these terms are used to describe the bad kings as a way of letting the reader and hearer know these kings were bad news. The kings had many similar traits, and thus were doomed to perdition and should not be followed.

Comparing Satan and the Kings of Tyre and Babylon			
#1-18 from Ezekiel 28:1ff, #19-38 from Isaiah 14:12ff			
By George L. Faull, Revised by Joshua Stucki			
#	Satan	King of Tyre (literally)	King of Babylon (literally)
1	Heart is lifted up (pride)	Heart is lifted up (pride)	Heart is lifted up (pride)
2	Wanting to usurp God	Thinking oneself to be a god	Thinking oneself to be a god
3	Created being, not god	A man, not a god	A man, not a god
4	Intelligent but evil	Intelligent but not wise	Intelligent but not wise
5	Pride from power	Pride from wealth	Pride from wealth
6	Fate is the pit (hell)	Fate is the pit (hell)	Fate is the pit (hell)
7	Talk against God is futile	Talk against God is futile	Talk against God is futile
8	Created good but chose bad	Created good but chose bad	Created good but chose bad
9	Literally in Eden	Born in good circumstances	Born in good circumstances
10	Was given every good thing	Was given every good thing	Was given every good thing
11	The anointed cherub	Providentially chosen as king	Providentially chosen as king
12	Sin ruined him	Sin ruined him	Sin ruined him
13	Sins were numerous	Sins were numerous	Sins were numerous
14	Violent	Violent	Violent
15	God will judge/destroy	God has judged/destroyed	God has judged/destroyed
16	Pride in beauty/splendor	Pride in kingly array	Pride in kingly array
17	Judged before all	Judged before others	Judged before others

18	End is certain	End has come	End has come
19	Oppressing will cease	Oppression has ceased	Oppression has ceased
20	Power decreasing then gone	Power gone	Power gone
21	Merciless	Merciless	Merciless
22	Will be prosecuted	Prosecuted and found guilty	Prosecuted and found guilty
23	Destruction to be celebrated	Destruction celebrated	Destruction celebrated
24	Earth at rest when gone	Country at rest when gone	Country at rest when gone
25	All evil ceases when gone	Evil decreases when gone	Evil decreases when gone
26	Hell prepared for him	Hell will receive him	Hell will receive him
27	Hell's occupants are equals	Hell's occupants are equals	Hell's occupants are equals
28	Hell will squelch pride	Hell has squelched pride	Hell has squelched pride
29	Literally fallen from heaven	Impenitent sin befell him	Impenitent sin befell him
30	Literally Lucifer	Metaphor as Lucifer	Metaphor as Lucifer
31	"Day Star" lost his position	Removed from kingship	Removed from kingship
32	Weakened the earth	Weakened his kingdom	Weakened his kingdom
33	Plans to usurp God failed	Plans to self-exalt failed	Plans to self-exalt failed
34	Will be humbled	Humbled before men	Humbled before men
35	Dishonorable end	Dishonorable death	Dishonorable death
36	Removed from citizenship in heaven	Removed from citizenship from their people	Removed from citizenship from their people
37	Name to be blotted out	Name to be blotted out	Name to be blotted out
38	No successor	No successors	No successors

One point that is immensely important to know is that Satan is not all knowing, all powerful, or everywhere (Satan is not God, and does not have god-like qualities; he is a created being, an angel, and has only those qualities). Therefore, he only knows what man knows, he is

limited in power (though much greater than our own), and his presence (though vast) does not make him as responsive or “available” as God is. This means, simply speaking, that we can expect Satan to always be steps behind God’s plan, no matter his attempts, but this does not stop him from trying nonetheless.

Adam and Eve – Chapter 3

We are not told of any previous sin of Satan before he tempted Eve in the garden. We know that God had made him, appointed him a covering cherub, named him Lucifer, and had plans for him besides his own. Nonetheless, Satan chose to disobey God instead of obey Him, and attempt to usurp His throne. We learn many of these details from Ezekiel 28:12ff and Isaiah 14:12ff (see chart in previous chapter).

Satan began his evil career in the Garden of Eden and targeted Eve. Paul mentions this as being the reason why women are not to be preachers in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, “I do not permit a woman to teach...Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” With this knowledge, we can understand why so many women are deceived today into thinking they can be preacher/teachers – “Eve” has been deceived again!

This author does wish to point out that while Satan did target Eve, and she was deceived, it is important to remember that man or the rest of creation was not called “very good” by God in Genesis 1 until after woman was made. Woman was the apex of creation! God put his “best card” out between the two people possible when he knew Satan would try to tempt mankind.

Satan called the Word of God into doubt by questioning it, contradicting it, and slandering God’s motive. Satan gets men to doubt in many ways by having them doubt God’s Word, goodness, love, veracity, wisdom, judgment, and authority.

Eve doubted God’s goodness, love, and judgment in her responses to Satan. These same reasons are the foundation for all denominational confusion today. The following chart compares the temptations of Eve and Jesus:

#	Eve’s Temptation	Jesus’ Temptation
1	Tempted in a lush garden full of food	Tempted in a wilderness with nothing to eat
2	Eve tempted by Satan’s three-fold lie	Jesus tempted by Satan three times
3	Tempted physically, spiritually, intellectually	Tempted physically, spiritually, and vocationally
4	Tempted by lust of flesh/eyes and pride	Tempted by lust of flesh/eyes and pride
5	Able to resist	Able to resist

6	Misquoted God	Quoted God's Word perfectly
7	Failed to resist	Succeeded in resisting
Chart sourced from information recorded in <i>The Eternal Struggle</i> by George L. Faull, Rel. D.		

Some causes for sin are listed, including lust of the eyes and flesh, and as well as pride (Satan's obvious downfall himself).

Temptation arouses itself unto sin via the following methodology: the outward object of attraction, the inward commotion of the mind, the increase and triumph of the desire, and the objective attained with sin (see James 1:14-15).

Satan tempts us physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. He has a broad toolbox, and it takes knowledge of Scripture, self-control, self-discipline, and a desire to please God to escape his multiple temptations. He attacks the faithful the most!

We can learn a lot from Adam and Eve's fall, and we would be remiss if we did not. If we hear God's Word being questioned, His goodness denied, or His motives slandered, we should flee! (James 4:7) Joseph was smart to flee his temptress; we should do the same!

If we do not resist the devil and flee, we will sin, tempt others, move away from God, and try to lie/cover our sin, blame others, be ashamed, and suffer the consequences. It's just not worth it!

Many authors hold to the position that Satan tempted Eve first and alone because she was the "weaker vessel" (see 1 Peter 3:7 in some translations). However, the context of 1 Peter 3 is the same as the context of Ephesians 5:22-23. Both passages speak of women obeying their husbands and husbands respecting and valuing their wives. Only Peter mentions the fact of the "weaker vessel". I am not sure an argument can be made from this passage that we are referring to a weaker person, in terms of intelligence, emotions, or spirituality. Instead, we may be referring to "weaker in authority", as the rest of the context of both passages suggest. This would be a true statement without inviting an additional element of controversy unnecessarily.

Also, historically, women have been more faithful attendees and servers in the church, comprising approximately 70% of all attendance in a "church" (this term used loosely) nationwide. Additionally, women are entrusted to the raising up of children (1 Timothy 2:15); if she really was weaker intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually, would it not be best for men to assume that role? No, she is sufficient to the task; there is no inherent weakness to men in that role (in fact, just about any man would agree that to children, their strengths far exceed men). Women are naturally weaker physically, but then again, this is no advantage to growing up small children.

Am I trying to say women can preach or teach? No! 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 state the opposite. However, the single point that a women may be “weaker” in emotion, spirituality, or intelligence may be less one piece of controversy we need to defend, but instead simply recognize the Bible in context of all places combined ensures us she is “weaker in authority”.

Back to the text at hand – Satan does target Eve first. We are not told why. However, her sinning first and falling for the deception of Satan is one of the reasons why women are not to teach (1 Timothy 2:11-14). Nonetheless, she is targeted first, and she falls for the deception.

Some argue that God’s rule in the Old Testament from Numbers 30:3-8 (more in context) concerning husbands and wives and fathers and daughters were in effect here as well, explaining that Eve’s sin would have been a null and void contract without her husband. This has two possible objections: 1) Adam and Eve’s story naturally far precedes the Law of Moses, and none of the other unique laws of Moses were in effect before that time, so why should this be? 2) Although it is true that the consequences of Eve’s sin were delayed until after her husband also sinned with her, there is no way to know if Eve’s sin would have truly been “annulled” had Adam resisted. These are assumptions, based on a later, out of context Scripture and our own cultures’ past policies. Nowadays, of course, women enjoy complete autonomy, even when married, with their own accounts, credit, etc. It’s possible her sin would have followed her solely had Adam not sinned, but we cannot be sure this author will admit.

One possible “pro” towards this view is that Adam and Eve were “married”, and thus were “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This potentially means that what one did had no effect on the other without their consent. However, a possible objection is that the bad part of the apple always affects the rest, and in the same way, Eve’s sin would have been counted towards Adam because they were one flesh. For this possibility alone a spouse should never believe their actions will not reflect on their spouse – who both spouses are matter.

Finally, God knows the future, and He knew the future after creation that Satan would tempt Eve. It seems far-fetched to think that if Eve really was emotionally, spiritually, or intellectually lacking, that God would not have rested all of humanity’s fate (and the terrible suffering of His Son) to “a weaker vessel”. Perhaps He positioned her thinking she had a better chance to resist Satan than man did but this is a speculation this author admits.

Satan violated every rule of ethical salesmanship: the women signed without her husband, Satan misrepresented God’s “product”, Satan did not reveal the disadvantages of his own product, Satan did not disclose all information pertaining to the transaction, and Satan oversold the advantage of having the knowledge of good and evil. It turned out to be a sour deal with immediate buyer’s remorse!

Sin’s Three-Fold Lie to Every Person

Lust of the flesh	Lust of the eyes	Pride of life
Chart sourced from information recorded in <i>The Eternal Struggle</i> by George L. Faull, Rel. D.		

There are many contrasts between Christ and Eve’s temptations including Eve misquoting God’s Word, but Christ’s quoting it accurately three times. As well, Eve failed in a perfect environment, while Christ succeeded in a wilderness, hungry, and alone. Eve had every advantage, Christ had every disadvantage, yet Christ did not sin and Eve did. Eve died, but Christ resurrected. Eve’s children all perpetually suffer to this day, but Christ’s children (1 John 3:1ff) all benefit from His faithfulness.

Sin brought a multitude of consequence, more than we can even name: sorrow, death, shame, separation, suffering, servitude, guilt, condemnation, and many others. Yet, man still falls for sin continuously.

When man is made aware of sin, he realizes there is something with him, he tries to hide his shame, he tries to remedy things himself, he feels alienation and separation from God and the object of his offense, and tries to blame others.

The fall brought many changes: man to God, man to each other, man with nature, and man with animals, man with regards to sex and work, and finally man would and finally did die.

There are many New Testament references to Adam as the originator of sin while Christ being its victor. Christ became cursed for us (Galatians 3:13), He became acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3), He suffered for us (Isaiah 53:4-5), He was pierced for our transgressions (John 19:34, Isaiah 53:5), and ultimately He died for us (John 3:16). Adam, in reverse, died to sin, blame Eve, suffered himself, knew only joy before sin came into his life, and was blessed beyond comparison before sin. Sin destroyed all of these blessings, but Christ defeated sin, offering His children eternal life!

Finally, man is cast out of the garden with the penalties stated in Genesis 3:16ff. We today still suffer the consequences of their sin in the form of earth’s difficulties towards us and our own physical deaths. We also suffer the consequences of our own sins! We definitely need a Savior, and thankfully since before the creation (Ephesians 1:4), we promised us one in Genesis 3:15, the topic of our next chapter.

Curses upon Satan, Adam, and Eve at the Fall – Genesis 3:14-19			
Chart by Joshua Stucki			
#	Satan	Adam (all men)	Eve (all women)

1	Doomed	Work will be difficult	Sorrow
2	Belittled	Must work for food	Conception increased
3	Humiliation to come	Lower quality food than Eden	Pain in childbirth
4	Destruction foretold	Physical decay and death	Subjection to man
5			Physical decay and death

The Messiah Promised (Genesis 3:15) – Chapter 4

This Bible passage is the inspiration for our book because it begins the story of our redemption. Therefore, we need to pay great attention to it. More importantly, it is the first promise of God to crush Satan and redeem mankind He had made. Thankfully, He had this plan since the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:14), so it was not a surprise to Him.

This author has often wondered why God would make man if He knew the terrible price it would cost Him. I can only surmise (and this is pure opinion here) that God had thought about every other kind of creation – including a creation without man – and that our creation was the only possibility that had the meaning and pleasure God was looking for. God made us in His own image, so we that we could have a relationship with Him, as He had with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He wanted that relationship restored to the extent He sent His Son to die for us (John 3:16). For that reason, we are compelled to surrender to His terms of salvation, and we are at His mercy for His grace and mercy! Thanks be to God for His Indescribable Gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

First, we learn from the fall that a personal hostility would be perpetually had between Satan and all mankind. Second, we learn from the fall that a moral hostility would exist between those Satan produces (the wicked, or later, like the Nephilim), and Eve produces (her seed, which is Christ). Third, we learn that a specific hostility would end with Christ through His sacrifice and resurrection would defeat Satan and death simultaneously.

We come to understand that there is a good possibility that Satan did not literally appear as a snake, but rather appeared as an angel of light and Moses/God was referring to Satan as a snake (much like the Kings of Tyre and Babylon were compared to Satan, so Satan is compared to a snake). This will be discussed further down in the notes.

Satan's fate as a result of his sin of tempting Eve was to be similar to a snake – 1) He would be cursed above all living things (this also convinces us that Satan is a literal, "living" being), he would eat dust all of his life (no blessings, just dust), and 3) he would be crushed in

the head (the only way to kill a snake effectively, and to mean a fatal blow to Satan via Christ's death and resurrection predicted here).

Several Scriptures refer to Satan's defeat as sure and final: 1 John 3:8, John 16:11, John 12:31, Colossians 2:15, and Revelation 20:2-3, all of which spell Satan's sure doom as a result of his sin. There is no salvation offered to Satan; thanks are to God He has offered salvation to us, sinners!

The Roman Catholic tradition growing out of the 4th century Latin Vulgate translation makes out Mary to be the destroyer of Satan from Genesis 3:15. Every other translation than the 4th century Latin Vulgate disagrees with this translation. Even Pope Leo the Great disagrees with this assessment. The Douay Version of the Bible, a Catholic Bible, even has in the notes that others read a male seed. The idolatry of Mary comes naturally from a celibate, or Catholic, priesthood.

Adam had faith that Eve would be the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20). This further proves the point that the seed would be male, and Mary does not play a special part in the salvation of Jesus, other than specifically the virgin birth – an essential doctrine – but one that does not elevate Mary to Jesus' level.

Eve gave birth to her first son, "Cain", or in Hebrew, "Striker"; she assumed Cain would be the Messiah, as in, "he will strike your head" (Genesis 3:15). Cain, growing up feeling entitled and "predestined" (a dangerous doctrine, even from the beginning), did not feel the need to worship God in His specified manner and displeased God by His inappropriate (non-blood) sacrifice (Genesis 4:5-7). Cain then went out and killed his brother Abel out of jealousy.

Cain then faced God's judgment and was cast out of from His presence (this could naturally lead into a study of God's omnipresence, but I digress). Eve recognized her error and when she gave birth to Seth, or "substitute", she saw him as a substitute for Abel (whom she named "useless"), not Cain (Genesis 4:25). Through Seth would come Noah, to whom God would save in the flood, and from his sons (specifically, Shem), the promise of Messiah would still come!

Every parent from that point on thought their child could or was the Messiah; even Lamech in Genesis 5:29, speaking of Noah. Indeed, God had a special purpose for Noah, but it was not to be the Messiah – but rather to serve two purposes: 1) to sustain Messiah's line as He promised in Genesis 3:15, and 2) to serve as a shadow of the type **in 1 Peter 3:18-22 of how our baptism also "saves" us, just as Noah and his family was "saved" through the water** – our baptism saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:22), just as Noah was saved by the ark in the water God had provided.

Was the Snake an Agent of Temptation? – Chapter 5

The Hebrew word for snake is “nachash”, the root of which means, “burning or shining one”. Moses made a “nachash” in Numbers 21 when God told him to make a “seraph”. Therefore, we can assume that “nachash” and “seraph” are used interchangeably. We understand from Isaiah and elsewhere that a “seraph” is a celestial being, as in, “above it stood seraphims; each one had six wings...” (Isaiah 6:2).

The snakes from Numbers 21 were called “seraphims” because their biting caused burning, or because the snakes themselves had shiny skin. Therefore, it is possible that “seraphims” could mean both “serpents” and “a celestial being”. Therefore, it is possible (though not dogmatically so) that Eve was tempted by an angel of light (Satan), not a literal snake.

Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 calls Satan a serpent, a tempter (same language used to describe Satan in Genesis 3). Elsewhere Satan is directly referred to as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:4). In Ezekiel 28:11-19, it is referred to that Satan, this fallen angel, was a cherub (again, a type of angel – not a literal, physical snake), was in Eden (which obviously Satan was and the King of Tyre was not), was “wise” in his own eyes, and he was “in brightness”. This could indicate that Satan appeared either as a shiny snake like was present possibly in Numbers 21, or more likely appeared “an angel of light”, as referenced elsewhere in Scripture.

Further reasoning might lead us to believe that God’s punishments for Satan was as follows: 1) “upon your belly you shall go” (referring to Satan’s humiliation and constant record throughout Scripture as a scoundrel), 2) “crush your head” (referring to Satan’s eventual destruction from the coming Messiah), and finally 3) “dust you shall eat” (referring to the fact that all of Satan’s plans will ultimately meet disappointment). This understanding helps understand Eve’s confrontation with Satan was like others’ experience, and not a unique experience in the form of talking to a snake. Paul himself warns that even if an angel gives us another Gospel (like Eve received false information), he should be accursed (just like Adam and Eve were accursed for receiving the false information from a fallen angel).

We know today that snakes do not speak, nor have the organs for it, and God did not curse the snake not to speak further. Thus, it’s again possible that we are not talking about a literal snake here. This is not a point worth getting dogmatic about – rather – it is an interesting study and possibility.

This author’s thoughts on this possibility are that it is likely true that Satan appeared as angel, but also – why did God not just say this? I feel God is usually very straightforward and easy to understand. One example is that Jesus in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16 says, “baptize”. So, clearly we have a command of Christ to baptize, and anybody who denies that denies a direct command of God (and like Cain, his alteration of it will not be received well). In this case, God chooses to use the picture of a literal snake, so it is possible – in how everything else is discussed literally – perhaps we should just accept it as it is. Again, this is a non-dogmatic possibility.

Cain & Abel – Chapter 6

Cain and Abel are already briefly discussed in chapter 4 above, as it relates to Adam and Eve's thinking of their sons, Cain and Abel. In this section, we will attempt to understand their story from a point of God's bringing about His promised seed His way (not Adam and Eve's presupposed method through Cain), and how Cain and Abel play into the understandings of animal sacrifice throughout the Old Testament.

Back in Genesis 3:21, we come to understand that the first animal died in blood "sacrifice" in order to provide clothes of skin for Adam and Eve. This is a shadow of the robe of Christ given to us at our baptism (Galatians 3:27), and then finally the robe of salvation mentioned in Revelation 6:11. God's first clothes of skin far exceeded the mere clothes of leaves Adam and Eve had sown for themselves (Genesis 3:7). This is typical of the fact that God's giving of the Mosaic Law was far superior to any sacrifice any Patriarchal father could offer, but neither compares to the sacrifice of Christ as the perfect lamb, the perfect priest, the sinless prophet, and our King.

Back to Cain and Abel – Abel offers a proper unblemished blood sacrifice, but Cain wants his fruits of the field to be equal. This is interesting because **Cain does "attend church", so to speak; he does tithes. How much more Cain does than so many so-called "Christian" in the world!** And yet God demands more than lip service (Isaiah 29:13). Cain *fails* in his worship. We should notice here that Cain is *not* an unbeliever; he is in fact a "faithful" church member as many understand it today! God demands a blood sacrifice and Cain does not deliver, and so God rejects Cain's sacrifice, much to Cain's dismay and anger.

God offers Cain another chance – to repent – and to offer the proper sin sacrifice (possibly what is meant by, "sin is at your door" – it could mean, "a sin sacrifice is at your door", as in God is right then and there possibly providing Cain a convenient way to do what is right). Nonetheless, Cain chooses not to repent, and also chooses to seek revenge on his fellow "church-goer", Abel. Abel is obviously deceived out into the field unarmed and killed out of jealousy. When faced with the charge of murder, Cain is not sad over his brother's death; he only is grieved by the fact that he has been caught red-handed.

Yet Cain is this way because his parents taught him that he "was" the Messiah; he was named the proper name ("striker"), he was male, he was the seed of Eve, and he had assumed there was no other way it was going to happen – that he was indeed predestined – and his behavior – even murderous behavior – would never be judged.

Let this be a warning of anyone who thinks they are part of the "elect" without consequence to their behavior – judgment comes to all! (2 Corinthians 5:10, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Matthew 12:36, Revelation 20:12) Cain was not exempt, and neither will we.

The New Testament even warns going the way of Cain leads to doom – Jude 1:11, "Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for

reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.” We should pursue God’s salvation via God’s terms and not think our substitutes will be accepted as Cain’s was not!

Abel’s blood “crying from the ground” was recognized by Jesus that Abel was the first prophet in Luke 11:50-51. His blood cried out for vengeance as did the other martyrs in Revelation 6:10ff, but just like those martyrs, vengeance was the Lord’s (Romans 12:19), and Abel and his martyred brethren await that vengeance.

Through all this God provides Abel’s substitute through Seth, to keep His promise of the coming Messiah (Genesis 3:15). While Cain’s descendants excelled in worldly things (Genesis 4:20-22), they did so to the forfeiting of their soul (Matthew 16:26, Mark 8:36, Luke 9:25). Seth’s descendants, though vast and mostly sinful (Genesis 4:26, chapter 5), Enoch would be a preacher (Genesis 5:21-24, Jude 1:14) to his contemporaries (this assumes his contemporaries were in need of repentance – both the other descendants of Seth and Cain’s), but it was through Enoch’s seed who would eventually come Noah, to restart the human race, and keep the promise of Messiah alive.

Some authors argue that Cain was a deist, a believer in an impersonal God. This author believes that is not quite accurate. Cain was a theist, but in a theist after his own imagination – the first liberal. I would not call a Disciples of Christ preacher a deist, but I would call him a liberal – specifically, a liberal theist – one who believes he can shape the reality of God after his own interpretation. This is how I view Cain.

A degree of inference is required for some conclusions. Inference, when used logically, is a sustainable argument, and it can offer some in-depth thoughts of these issues that are often either 1) passed over with little thought or 2) thought to be allegory, stripped them of all their inherent meaning and Jesus’ teaching on them as real, historic figures.

The Ways of Cain (see Jude 1:11) – Chapter 7

Cain’s worship was unacceptable in that it was of the wrong nature, a poor quality, an improper quantity, and served with a lack of “faith” (or, disobedience). Jesus would later speak of similar folk in Matthew 15:8-9 and John 4:23-24; we can see Cain’s nature of improper worship were not limited to him.

Cain’s mannerism, attitude, and action reflected almost every possible form of negativity: covetousness, rebellion, anger, pouting, envy, stubbornness, quarreling, murder, hatred, lying, griping, evil posterity, and a continued rejection of God’s will despite multiple opportunities to repent.

Cain says simply, as so many do, “I reject God’s revelation, will, blood atonement requirements, calls to repent, the reasons for His judgment, the obedient, responsibility, and God Himself.”

Abel, by comparison – even in death – says, “I accept God’s Word, will, the requirements for the blood atonement, and I’ll die for my faith in these things.”

Satan succeeded in turning this first son of Adam and Eve against God; in a way, he made Cain a son of himself, an equal rebel and murderer. He had also made sure Cain was not the promised seed, and hoped since he had managed to get both boys off the map, that was it, and God had failed. Instead, Seth was born, and the line of Messiah continued. Though Satan would successfully tempt most of the rest of Adam and Eve’s descendants (and we have no record of Adam and Eve living godly lives after the Garden either, so their fate is ultimately unknown), Enoch, and Noah after him would continue the line of the promised seed, keeping God’s promise – and humanity’s hope – intact.

Undeniably Satan also tried to attack Abel. Abel’s parents had already given him a terrible name (“useless”, or “vanity”), treated him like he was unnecessary, and watched his brother Cain be given the good name and a promise to be the restorer in the flesh. Yet, Abel through all of that mistreatment still chose to follow God’s way instead of their parents’ former mistakes or Cain’s present error in a bad sacrifice. This goes to show that Satan does not have control over man, but rather man makes a choice between God’s way and his own/Satan’s way each time. This choice is life-defining. Which choice will we make is possibly the most important question we will ever ask ourselves and each of us will answer it, one way or the other.

Seth – Chapter 8

The battle between Satan and God continues when Seth is born. God had still promised a seed to crush Satan and redeem man (Genesis 3:15), while Satan was still out to corrupt any man born in case he was the Messiah. Satan did not know who the eventual Messiah would be, only God did, and God only told specifics on a need to know basis throughout Old Testament history, in order to make the Messiah clear and knowable upon His arrival, and also to keep Satan guessing. Enough difficulty of mankind and plots by Satan would occur even with limited information; God in His wisdom revealed bit by bit to keep the promise of Messiah alive for all mankind to have hope.

Seth’s name means “substitute”, as Eve recognized him as a substitute for Abel who had died (Genesis 4:25). Eve realizes her error in putting faith in her firstborn son, Cain, and now sees him as lost, no longer recognizing the next-born to be Cain’s replacement, but rather Abel’s.

Seth’s descendants were more righteous than Cain’s, who became focused on worldly things (Genesis 4:20-22). Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5:24). Lamech (Seth’s descendant, not Cain’s) might very well have been righteous (Genesis 5:29) by naming Noah, “rest”. Methusaleh lived longer than any other man at 969 years, and this might have been a reward for righteous living, and was the father of Lamech, and the grandfather of Noah (Lamech likely being righteous, and we know Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord). Methusaleh did die in the year of the flood, however; we do not know whether from old age (like Methusaleh was

possibly a shadow of the fact that “this first age of man was done”) or also died in the flood itself (this author thinks this unlikely and rather coincidental, but recognizes the possibility, as Scripture does not say).

Adam lived 930 years from the creation of the world, and would have known Lamech, Noah’s father. Naturally, with Adam alive for that long, and so many descendants of Adam all over the earth, Lamech among others would all know the history of the world up to that point. Lamech named Noah, “rest”, hoping Noah would be the promised child (another sign of Lamech’s possible righteousness).

Adam and Eve, had many descendants (Genesis 5:4), on top of Cain and Seth, but we are not told specifically how many in Scripture. Tradition says thirty-three total sons and twenty-three total daughters. Since he lived 930 years, this is very possible, if not a very conservative number. We know by Genesis 4:26, and the flood itself, that most of those descendants had fallen away from God, of whom all of them were second-hand witnesses at the minimum.

Many people today believe that if they could “see” God they would change; not true, even Jesus said that even if Moses and the prophets were to appear and speak (Luke 16:27-31), it would make no difference. Each man chooses his own way or God’s, based on the ready evidence available. Adam and his descendants were no different than us today! (No evolution of man here!)

Enoch’s preaching as documented in Jude 1:14-15 tells us that man – by the time the flood came – would have known the following revelation clearly: the name of the one true God – Jehovah, the coming of the Lord in judgment, the existence of many angels (more than can be counted), the providence of God (as to both deeds and words), human responsibility and choice, a general judgment and conviction of any kind of evil, an execution of the wicked, and the attention God demands.

I would also add the many sorrows of sin, of whom they were all still afflicted, ready evidence from the fall of their near ancestors whom most of them personally knew (if not all of them).

Satan tried very hard to corrupt all of mankind; he succeeded with most of them. However, one descendant of Seth, Noah, would preserve the line of Messiah whom God had promised. All the rest perished, including all of Cain’s descendants (**which obviously means black skin was not nor part of Cain’s curse**). Only Seth’s descendants (and a very few number of those) survived the flood.

God’s use of a “remnant” was true in most of Old Testament history (a small group of faithful people maintained the Messianic line, and later, the church). Noah was the first of the many remnants.

Enoch and Elijah actually did die based on a variety of Biblical evidence. Their “translation” away from their present place did not mean “unto heaven” or “to be with God” but rather “move to another physical place.” This subject deserves further treatment but is out of context for our purposes here. This author refers the reader to Summit Theological Seminary’s free periodical (one the web, \$5.00 a year in print), *The Gospel Unashamed*, January, 2008 quarterly edition for more information on this subject.

As a final note, Enoch’s life does show that one, even before the law, even before Christ, even after the fall, man could enjoy fellowship with God, and God desired that fellowship. There was reward awaiting those who do walk with God, and Enoch’s translation (the first of its kind) shows a *shadow* of the resurrection God intended for man. Both Enoch’s and Elijah’s translations show that though God merely moved them to other, unknown locations, it was also a reward – to be removed from their previous duty and burden, either to be given a fresh, new assignment – or to be given rest (possibly both). Either way, neither Enoch or Elijah are mentioned again as being on this earth after their translation on purpose – this was again to be a shadow of the things to come that after resurrection, man’s life on this earth would be “translated away” from sin and their previous sorrows.

Satan of course tried to tempt Enoch, and it appears before fatherhood, Enoch did not walk with God (Genesis 5:21-22). Enoch lived 65 years before walking with God. As a 32 year old myself, that is a long time wasted not to walk with God. I was 17 before I became a Christian, even growing up in a Christian home in a Christian church (actually, two). Though I graduated at 22 from Bible College, I can say I was 26 before I really had my head screwed on straight. I do wonder if that is how Enoch felt as well.

The Sons of God – Chapter 9

This particular section has to be the most comprehensive study on this subject I have ever attempted on this subject; I was never fully convinced of any position before recently. Now I am convinced of who the Nephilim were, and believe it plays a definitive role in the rest of Old Testament Scripture. If **anything, many underplay the importance of this topic and have many false assumptions unawares.**

We learn that the “daughters of men” and the “sons of God” mentioned in Genesis 6:4 were likely the offspring of fallen angels (demons) and human women, resulting in these giant creatures, renown throughout the known world at the time.

Both Biblical and extra-Biblical sources of ancient notoriety share this view; it is only modern views that attempt to water it down to simply meaning “the sons of Seth” and the “daughters of Cain”. Intermarriage, though not a good idea at the time (and later, a sin, in the Law of Moses), would not have caused a race of giants. It would have just caused mixed children (perhaps of mixed skin color, like is often seen today). Mixed children have no inherent

advantage in size, height, intelligence, or anything else; it would not make sense that merely mixed marriages of Seth's and Cain's descendants would have caused this race of giants.

It is obvious from Genesis 6:4 and Numbers 13:33 (and other places in Scripture) **that the Nephilim were in existence both before and after the flood** (and since all of Cain's descendants died in the flood, again, there is no way the Nephilim are merely the intermarriage between the descendants of those two patriarchs). Their initial existence before the flood is not coincidentally right before God condemns the world to worldwide catastrophe. It is in fact that straw that breaks the camel's back, so to speak. The wickedness of men was already great, and the introduction of corrupted flesh (Jude 1:6-7) was simply too far. In order for Messiah to ever come, a restart was required, and that would come through Noah's sons, specifically Shem (Genesis 9:25).

This subject has Biblical importance; although it is not a test of fellowship issue or an issue that should be held to the levels of dogma, it is important in order to paint a coherent picture of some of the rest of stories in the Bible, especially Joshua and the children of Israel's conquering of Canaan.

When the twelve spies initially went out to check out Canaan, they reported giants in the land, and ten of the twelve spies said they could not be conquered. Yet God had commanded their utter obliteration, and both Joshua and Caleb believed God (this belief spared them the death that came to all their contemporaries because of their unbelief). Why would God order the complete destruction of a society, including the women and children, with naturally some innocents among them?

Often times we New Testament preachers speak against Calvinism because it paints God to be an obvious despot – that He would create creatures inevitably damned – with no way out for them. All the same, would God “create” the Nephilim, only to be utterly destroyed, or the people the Nephilim had mixed with?

I argue “no” for both, and here is why – if the Nephilim really were the children of fallen angels and women, they were not human. They were likely soulless, violent giants, who had no place in this world or the next. Their obliteration was not cruelty, as much as it was just, and just because they should never have been born to begin with, and we have no direct evidence they suffer in hell now. Rather, their obliteration from the earth was simply necessary to protect the genuine race of man, and especially the line of Seth at that time, and the race of Shem/nation of Abraham later. In the time of David, we come to understand the last mentions of the Nephilim and their descendants were eliminated from Biblical history. It is possible that such creatures have returned to earth since then, but it is not ultimately important. What we can understand from this is that if the Nephilim really were of corrupt flesh, giants, and not human, then their judgment without preaching of the possibility of repentance was not a condemnation of their souls, but simply an elimination of a corruption of Satan. God was not cruel here; He was

predestining anyone or anything to hell. He was eliminating a threat to those who did have souls, to those who could be saved through repentance and obedience unto God. Though few did, those that did were saved, unto the eventual hope of Christ (Hebrews 11:40).

I have another possible opinion: in virtually all ancient myth and legend about giants, they were almost always portrayed as giant in physical form, incredibly strong, having skin almost like armor, but also usually dull in the mind. This might explain why they were conquered relatively regularly in Scripture, even by races not necessarily obedient to God. They were undeniably intimidating, as they scared the twelve spies of the Israelites under Moses (Numbers 13:28-29). However, their actual threat did not seem to be unconquerable. This might have been because the mixing of fallen angel seed with human women seed would not result in anything normal – size or intelligence. It might have had similar effects incest often has, where the mixing of similar genetics causes many defects in children born to relationships of an incest origin. This is speculation on my part, but I do not find it entirely coincidental that the giants were conquered regularly, despite their great size and strength and reputation (Genesis 6:4).

Many more things could be said about the Nephilim, the reader is recommended to a more thorough outline that is available at www.callaochristianchurch.org.

Satan's attempts here were to truly "blitzkrieg" humanity with temptation, sin, and strange flesh. He nearly succeeded. We can overestimate Satan, but we can also severely underestimate him. Amazingly, everyone at this point in history would have had near-knowledge of Satan; either by word of mouth from a first-hand witness source, or a very strong family oral history passed down, preserved by God through inspiration, ultimately unto Moses' recording of it. Even with this knowledge, people turned away from God, to their doom. This is a depressing thought at times, but we maintain our hope in Christ, and the prize that is ahead (Philippians 3:14). May we snatch as many from the fire as possible before that last day (Jude 1:23).

Of all the survivors of the corruption and strange flesh of men and fallen angels, Noah had a clean pedigree (no genes of the Nephilim in his family), and found favor in the eyes of God (Genesis 6:8). This means he was righteous and faithful towards God. We will find out later, just like with Abraham and every other human character in the Bible, Noah was not perfect. Thank goodness God does not expect perfection from us to be saved! All the same, faithfulness implies a regular obedience, and sin being the exception, and repented of each time. Noah lived this way, and to his credit, he is listed in the book of Hebrews' hall of heroes (Hebrews 11:7).

Noah – Chapter 10

Noah's journey begins at 500 years old when his three sons were born to him – Shem, Ham, and Japheth. At 600 years old, the flood waters came. Sometime in between, God came to him and instructed him to build an ark to survive the flood. Later we learn in 1 Peter 3:18-22 that this was a shadow of the type to come of our baptism, how we too are saved "through the water", and our baptism has meaning because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:22), just like

the ark had the ability to save Noah and his family through the water by God's instruction and blessing. Noah's obedience in building the ark to God's specifications, and then entering the ark that God instructed, caused him and his family to survive the flood.

Noah's story is a shadow of how important baptism is – if Noah and his family had to get in the ark – then we have to get in the baptistery (or some source of water to be immersed in). Let's not delay! (Acts 22:16)

In the flood, God has had his fill with the hearts and imaginations of man, now fully corrupt (and indeed made complete in the Nephilim). Genesis 6:5-7 is God's inspired words on this effect of sin and corrupt flesh on the world. It is interesting that God does not point out man's deeds or words, but that is because a man's thoughts and imaginations condemn him fully before the inevitable words and deeds are even spoken (see Mark 7:21, Proverbs 4:23, and Luke 6:45).

God says he repents of making man (Genesis 6:6). This does not mean God made a mistake; no, it means that since man has not responded to his many preachers of righteousness (including Enoch and Noah in that time – 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 2:5, Jude 1:14-15), and His great mercy, then sin would have to meet its just end, even if this meant the destruction of mankind.

Thankfully, there was one righteous man, and his family, that God spared (Genesis 6:8) – Noah. Noah believed God, built the ark according to His instructions, and rode in the ark with his family to their safety, to the continuing fulfillment to bring Messiah into the world (specifically, through Noah's son Shem – Genesis 9:25), and to give us a picture of our salvation through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:18-22). Christ's resurrection gives our baptism meaning and power – we should not merely relegate it to a symbol when the Bible presents baptism as the time in which the precious blood of Christ, offered on the mercy seat of heaven, is offered to us!

Peter also uses the general judgment of humanity in the flood also applies to our time in 1 Peter 3:3-7. Indeed, the destruction of the earth, but this time by fire, is coming upon all impenitent men. In fact, this whole world, corrupted by sin in its death and entropy, will also be destroyed, and in its place a new heaven and new earth will be established (Revelation 21:11ff), never to be corrupt of sin again.

The flood changed the seasons (Genesis 8:22) because of the water canopy of the earth was now gone (Genesis 1:6-8), used in the flood, replaced with an atmosphere that would vary greatly and wildly, as we still know today. It also introduced greater ultraviolet light, greatly increasing the aging and disease process by which all living things would be affected. People could live so long before the flood before the water canopy provided near-ideal living conditions for all living things; with the canopy gone, the earth would be an even more hostile place for life, where man's lifespan was shortened by a factor of ten times, sometimes even more. All of our technology and medication has extended our lifespan by a decade or two over time, but we will

never again see multi-hundred year lives until our resurrection, where we will live forever (in one place or the other).

Interestingly, Methusaleh would have known Adam, and Shem would have known Methusaleh. Methusaleh would have known Noah and Lamech, Noah's father. Otherwise, there is very little gap between the origin of man and the timing of these events. The oral history would have been strong and easily verifiable, and we know from other ancient history that written language was common by this time. Obviously, with God's inspired assistance as well, Moses wrote a completely accurate account of these things. We have no reason to doubt the Scriptural record as literal, historical truth. Any denial of this is calling God a liar and Moses with Him. That is not a position I wish to be in!

Finally, God gives Noah's blessings, and his sons, and instructions (of which they would not altogether obey). God gave a pattern, protection, power, provision, prohibition (warnings!), a penalty if they disobey, principle, a pledge, and a prompter (the rainbow) and a remembrance as a result. God did not leave His people unequipped! Let's be honest, He never does. If God seems distant, it is because we wandered away. If God's Word seems confusing, it is because we do not want to obey the clear commands of Scripture, but instead want to remain muddled in an excuse to delay obedience. Whatever Scripture says to do, we should do, and anything unclear can wait for further clarification. Even what Peter writes that some things Paul writes are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16), that does not excuse us from obeying what is very plainly written.

Satan did tempt Noah unto the temptation of drunkenness and Noah fell for it. This created an awkward situation for his sons (Genesis 9:21-23). Unfortunately, this also gave an opportunity for sin to Noah's grandson Canaan of Ham, and his perverted behavior earned him a curse (Genesis 9:26). Satan likely hoped this would derail God's recent victory in the survival of Noah's family through the flood, but it did not. God blessed Shem, and later separated Shem's descendants at the tower of Babel when they did not spread out from his brothers' descendants (this was in order to protect the line of Messiah). Instead, God blessed Shem, cursed Canaan, blessed Japheth, and later blessed Ham's descendants as well in His universal blessing for all mankind given to Abram (Genesis 12:3).

Canaan's descendants were eliminated in the time of Joshua (Joshua 9:22-23). **This means their curse ended then as well, and we know therefore this again was not black skin.** Although black-skinned people are from Ham, they were *not* cursed by God or Noah. They were in fact blessed through the universal blessing given by God to Abram (Genesis 12:3).

White people actually came last chronologically, were of Japheth originally (not Shem), and were the last to receive the Gospel (Acts 10, with Cornelius and his household). This does not mean whites are inferior (though, just for fun, it can be argued that "white" is the most useless crayon color); it simply means that God had no preference for race now or then, but instead Messiah had to come through someone so prophecy would be fulfilled, God would be

held to be true for all time, and Messiah could come without blemish, just as He had predicted more and more as the Old Testament unfolded.

Thankfully, white supremacy is definitely a minority view now. If there is anything we can be grateful in this new “age of tolerance”, at least race is less of an issue than it once was. Christians should now not be and never should have been racist; it is unfortunate that Christians were not 100% behind equal rights, but instead small pockets of Christians led the movement. Had there been a more universal stance, possibly there might be more turning to God today than there is. But I digress, and that is ultimately speculation on my part.

Nimrod & The Tower of Babel – Chapter 11

Nimrod is an important character throughout all of history, including in the Bible. In Genesis 10:8-12, Nimrod is mentioned as the son of Cush, who was a son of Ham. Another grandson of Ham would cause a great deal of trouble for both his family and ultimately the world in Nimrod. This has been used an argument that there was something inherently wrong (or even worse, cursed) in Ham’s seed, but that is not the point the Bible makes. The point is Nimrod himself did wrong, and the sins of the father are not met upon the sons (Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:2-4, 20).

We too are held to our own sins (James 4:17), and not the sins of others. The consequences of sin may follow from generation (as they did from Adam unto even us today) – see Exodus 20:5. Thus, we will see that the sins of Nimrod have resulted in grave consequence worldwide, men have not lost their choice to choose godliness, and God still desires every man everywhere to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4). He has sent his preachers since the beginning (2 Peter 2:5), and he still sends them today (Romans 10:10-17).

Satan was naturally involved here: the introduction of self-worship, idol worship, sacrifice to idols, human sacrifice, among other sins was naturally of Satanic origin. From Nimrod and his wife Semiramis (“Easter”, as she is commonly known today comes from the Phoenician transliteration), came all these evils and corrupted many men unto temptation and sin. Even extra-Biblical literature like Josephus testifies to Nimrod’s evil and spread of evil influence throughout the world.

This was after the flood, and Nimrod reintroduces the corruption Cain’s descendants had been wiped off from the world. The Nephilim returned and undeniably dwelt also among those people as they would later turn up in Numbers by both their original and other names.

Nimrod built the cities of Babylon and Nineveh and started the nation of Assyria. Naturally, all of these cities were troublesome throughout Scripture, all being spoken of as homes of evil and corruption in their time. Nineveh is “the star city” of the book of Jonah, but not in a good way. Nineveh actually repents, and delays their judgment 150 years until Nahum speaks of their imminent and total destruction because they turned back against God. Assyria was used of

God to destroy the idolatrous northern kingdom of Israel when it was divided, and the mixing of seed would result in the ten northern tribes being lost to time. Babylon carried on its wicked scheme longer than any of the above, and is so famous to be allegorized to represent all sin (possibly) in Revelation 17, and then its total destruction at the end of time in Revelation 18. This is the student's interpretation of those events.

Nimrod was at the origin of the building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:4). He did not want the peoples to scatter, likely by Satan's influence, so the seeds would be mixed and Shem's race would be corrupt, preventing the coming of Messiah. From extra-Biblical literature, we understand that Semiramis, Nimrod's wife, falsely proclaimed she was mother of Messiah, and her seed was Nimrod reborn. Satan wanted to desperately to confuse God's promises, and nearly succeeded again through Nimrod and his ilk. Nonetheless, God confused the languages, scattered the people, as we will read in the next chapter.

Nimrod and his wife are the origin of all pagan "gods and goddesses" read about in antiquity. There was always a "daddy god" and a "mommy god" (the Mormons borrowed their idea of these concepts straight from Nimrod – they should be ashamed of this!) and the mommy god was always a goddess of fertility, and the daddy god was always sleeping around, and their children were always causing trouble for humanity, etc. This is basically Roman and Greek mythology and religion we know so well. Undeniably characters like Hercules were fashioned from their knowledge of the Nephilim (half divine, half mortal). Often, mythology is merely history badly garbled. Certainly, this was the case here.

It is truly unfortunate these topics are not preached on more in the churches today. All this talk of giants and ancient cities and peoples might seem "irrelevant" but when we see the world in the state it is in today, I am not sure how we can avoid it! It seems awful relevant in light of ISIS, Al Qaeda, present wars, etc.

God also took an extra move on "the chess board" and separated the lands at this time (Genesis 10:25). The events at end of Genesis 10 and Genesis 11 happened in parallel, as we will well learn in the next chapter. God's separation of the lands and languages was a double-move that would once again help keep Shem's descendants separate from the rest, so that Messiah could come just as God had promised!

Terah, Abram's Father – Chapter 12

The tower of Babel precedes Terah, and its background information is important to the story of Terah. As we read before, Nimrod – undeniably by Satan's leading – attempt to gather the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth at Babel to build a tower unto the heavens. This was to set themselves up, specifically Nimrod and his wife at the top to be worshipped as gods. God scattered the nations by land and language, to prevent this mixing, so Messiah could come.

From Shem, came of all people an idolater named Terah, who worshipped the moon (Joshua 24:2). Yet, his son Abram did not worship other gods like his father did, but rather worshipped and was faithful to the one true God of his faithful ancestor, Noah. This earned Abram God's favor (Genesis 12:1-3), which we will discuss in the next chapter.

Terah's idolatrous nature runs deep. He bought into the idolatry espoused by Nimrod and Semiramis. From Semiramis really came the proliferation of this false worship after her husband's death, raising him up to godhood. She saw to it that he was worshipped as Marduk, Bel (later Baal), and Merodach". She herself has many names, known as "the goddess of a thousand names." She may be called Astaroth, Nina (where Nineveh bares its name), Astarte, Ishtar, Diana, Isis, Semeniaris, or Easter, as we now commonly know her. Her pervasiveness idolatry even succeeds to this day, clinging its name to the precious of all Christian holidays, Resurrection Sunday!

Terah engaged in this idolatry by worshipping other gods, specifically the moon. Joshua 24:2 confirms this. Terah's name means "moon" in Sumerian, or "Delay" in Hebrew (and indeed, he delayed God's promises to Abram six years in Harran – which just so happens to mean "fruitless"). Yet, through Terah, could would sustain the promise of Messiah through his son, Abram.

Terah lived in "Ur" of the "Chaldees" which means, put together, "Fiery Destruction". Again, this makes sense, as God would call Abram out of fiery destruction to inherit Canaan, the Promised Land. Abram would take a sidestep to Harran, to see his father buried. God did not speak to Abram during this time as we will see in the next chapter, as this disobeyed God, and this time spent in Harran was truly "fruitless", as the name Harran means so.

Terah was a contemporary of Noah, and Noah was a preacher of righteousness, so there is a very good chance (and knowing our God, a likelihood) that Terah knew better than to worship idols. Nonetheless, the same lasciviousness that often captured Israel away to worship false gods likely also caught Terah. The flood would have been fresh in everyone's minds and yet idolatry still increased throughout the world, either by deception (Satan's style and part in this, undoubtedly) or by choice (man's call). Either way, it is ultimately man's call, and to his own consequence, if he obeys God or man. Terah chose wrong, and Abram chose right.

Abram – Chapter 13

God came to Abram because he recognized Abram's faithfulness to him, despite his family's idolatry. God gave Abram three promises as a result: 1) I will bless you, 2) out of you will come a great nation, and 3) through you the whole world would be blessed.

This means, subsequently, that God would take care of Abram (and indeed, he became well known and wealthy over time and spared death many times), would grow the nation of Israel out of him, and ultimately bring Messiah through him. What great promises! And God

would keep them all, fulfilling them in finality through the conversion of the descendants of Shem (the Jews and their proselytes) in Acts 2, conversion of the descendants of Ham (Ethiopian Eunuch) in Acts 8, and the conversion of the descendants of Japheth (Cornelius and his household) in Acts 10. Our God is great!

However, Abram also received instructions from God (of whom he would eventually faithfully keep, but did err and sin along the way many times): 1) renounce his country, 2) renounce his kindred, 3) renounce his father, and 4) go where God would lead.

These are indeed heavy requirements. I am not sure how many of us could leave our hometowns, abandon our families (even if they were idolaters), leave our parents, and follow God hence not going where we may end up. All the same, Abram got started with the first, and did leave Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 12:4). **However, he did not leave his family and father behind, but instead took them with him (Genesis 11:31; 12:4, 5). He also did not head straight to Canaan via God's prescribed path, but settled in Harran for awhile.** It says in Genesis 11:30 that Terah led them there, so Abram did not renounce his father, but instead of followed him instead of God. This resulted in God's plans for Abram (and the whole world) being delayed until Terah passed, which was about six years. God did not speak to Abram during this period of disobedience either.

Nonetheless, Terah did finally die (Genesis 11:32), and Abram finally moved on (Genesis 12:4-9). Now, without his father, and heading towards Canaan, he was obeying parts two and four of God's command, but part three he disobeyed, as Lot was still with them. Lot would cause Abram endless grief as we will see later. If Abram had not taken Lot or followed his father, and headed straight to Canaan, Messiah would have come faster, Abram's life would have been much less perilous, Satan would have had many less opportunities to try to kill Abram, and our salvation would have come onto the earth sooner! But as it is, God worked with Abram, just as He works with us, much to our gratitude unto Him!

Abram and Pharaoh – Chapter 14

Naturally, when Abram arrived in Canaan, Satan was all up in arms. God had promised Noah that through Shem Messiah would come, and here is a descendant of Shem in the Promised Land. So Satan caused a famine in Canaan, and worked through Abram's doubts (and possibly nagging family, also worried about the drought) to head down to Egypt instead of trust God. So Abram, bowing to both internal and external pressure, headed down to Egypt, not where God wanted him, but where Satan was directing him. Satan hoped for doom, but God planned yet another way out.

This brings up the subject of God's grace once again. So many times denominational preachers paint God as a God of wrath in the Old Testament but a God of mercy in the New Testament. However, we know from Scripture that God's character never changes (Hebrews 13:8), though sometimes how He has dealt with man has. So we know that God is both a God of

justice and grace *throughout the whole Bible*. How else could we describe the death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, or Simon the Sorcerer's predicted perdition in Acts 8? No, wrath existed in the New Testament, and grace existed in the Old Testament. Abram was one of God's heroes of old, the most popular human in the Bible in fact (mentioned in 27 books total, multiple times in most books), and yet Abram sinned multiple times, doubted God, lied, committed adultery, and disobeyed direct commands of God, which we will see more in detail as the following chapters unfold.

What is important however is what Abram did repent continuously, always did follow-up with obedience, and was able to be the vessel of God's promises through whom the whole world, including us, would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). Thanks be to God!

Satan naturally hoped down in Egypt that Pharaoh would take Sarai, kill Abram, and have a mixed Hamitic/Semitic child through the mixing of Pharaoh's seed with Sarai. God intervened however, sending a plague upon Pharaoh, and this Pharaoh – showing much more intelligence than his distant successor in Exodus – reprimanded Abram and let Sarai go. Abram's distrust of God to provide, Abram's lie to Pharaoh, and taking of Pharaoh's possessions, served him no good. God all along had to keep Abram safe and return Sarai unharmed. God would also protect Abram's kin and his own skin later in a battle. God is so gracious! How could anyone else say differently with any sense of objectivity?

Abram and Lot – Chapter 15

This is the first story involving Lot, and thus obviously not the last. All of them were trouble for Abram, and each of them an opportunity for Satan to try to get Abram killed.

In this specific story, the issue is simple: where Abram and Lot were living together, there was not enough room for everyone to live and the livestock to graze. So the servants fought and Satan hoped Abram would be killed in a struggle, or even possibly Lot would try to rise up and usurp Abram's patriarchal lead in the family.

This is also possible because Sarai was very beautiful, as Pharaoh had taken her into his harem (Genesis 12:14-16). Lot naturally would have wanted Sarai as any man would have. Nonetheless, this did not happen, as God protected Abram and Sarai, as He had predicted their son would part of the promise.

Abram also had wised up a little by now, and refused to engage in war with Lot and his servants. Instead, he asked Lot to come up with him and preview the land and pick what he wanted. This was very gracious of Abram, knowing his nephew would naturally choose the best land for himself and his servants. This happened to be near the Jordan, and eventually Lot would end up living in Sodom (Genesis 13:12-13). We can see right there that Lot was none too wise.

God provided for Abram in the land not so fertile as Abram was learning to trust God more and more for his security and livelihood. Every time we obey God, we avoid a battle. Every time we sin, we invite one. May we see Abram's life as an example of that! In the words of Dr. Faull, "A battle today may be the result of only partially obeying God yesterday!" Abram indeed "partially obeyed" God a lot but this was not good enough. Like Cain, may we not offer insufficient offerings, but our full lives as daily sacrifice as our acceptable worship unto God (Romans 12:1+2).

This story also reminds this author of how Cain took Abel out to the field. Cain obviously deceived Abel and murdered him out of jealousy. When Abram took Lot out to the field, he could have fallen to the same rage. Instead, Abram had good intentions for his nephew, only the best in mind, and let Lot choose the greater land (sort of like the greater sacrifice). God would honor Abram's sacrifice here, but would naturally not stop much of the calamity that would befall Lot's choice. We read in the very next verse of Genesis 13 that Sodom was very evil. The reputation of Sodom was sound, and yet Lot chose to live there because of the attraction to wealth in the area. The "love of money" (1 Timothy 6:10) has undeniably fallen many a man since Lot; Lot was shown much grace by God to be rescued!

Abram and Melchizedek – Chapter 16

Lot was in Sodom by his own choice, even though he knew the reputation of Sodom was publicly evil (Genesis 13:14). God brought judgment to Sodom in a way most forget – by first quelling a rebellion of the Canaanite descendants by the four kings of Shem of whom they were paying tribute to in fulfillment of prophecy made by God back in Genesis 9:26-27.

Lot was kidnapped when Sodom was taken over by the four kings descended from Shem. Abram now felt compelled to rescue his nephew! This naturally gave Satan another chance to try to have Abram killed in battle. Abram took down 318 servants and rescued Lot and his kinsman and recovered many goods from the battle. God kept Abram safe and allowed him to take the plunder from the battle. However, this plunder was not for him to keep. God had something greater in mind for Abram than mere material wealth!

On his way back from the battle, Abram met Melchizedek, Priest of the Most High God. Abram recognized Melchizedek's position and tithed to him from all that he had. This gift was overshadowed by receiving Melchizedek's blessing, a blessing from God by His priest.

Melchizedek was a shadow of the type later to come in our King and Priest, Jesus Christ. Melchizedek was not Jesus in a pre-incarnate form; instead Melchizedek was a shadow of Christ in many aspects of his life. Melchizedek was king of Salem, as Jesus is now King of the everlasting Kingdom (the church). Melchizedek was High Priest, as Jesus is our High Priest now. Melchizedek received a tithe from Abram, as Christians (priests today in the church) bring their tithes to Christ's church. Melchizedek's lineage had no beginning or end known to man, just as

Jesus has no beginning or end in time. All of this is laid out for us in detail in the book of Hebrews, specifically chapters 4 and 7.

Satan had one last trick of his sleeve for this part in Abram's life. Satan tempted Abram to keep the spoils of war like Lot valued wealth so much as to take up residence in the land of Sodom, but Abram growing in his wisdom instead gave back to the King of Sodom what he had received back from the battle with the Semitic kings who had captured Lot. This kept Abram from being obligated to the Sodomites whatsoever, so that the Canaanites present there would have no advantage over him. Abram trusted God more and more with time, and trusted Him this time instead of the riches in His hand. May we learn to do the same!

Abram and Hagar – Chapter 17

God appeared to Abram in a vision and promised him four things: 1) an heir, 2) to live to a good old age, 3) a peaceful death, and 4) the land He had told him of earlier.

Satan's attempt to kill Abram through Lot's circumstances failed. Satan's attempt at Abram's life through the Sodomites failed. Satan's attempt at killing Abram through Pharaoh failed. But if we have to give credit for *one* thing to Satan is that he is indeed persistent. He may have tried multiple times to kill Abram, but he's not done yet. Persistent he is even with us unfortunately!

Satan's latest attempt to defeat Abram was not a death-sentence; no, Satan would try to corrupt Messiah's seed by tempting Abram with Hagar through his barren wife Sarai. Abram took the bait, probably to please his wife, but also because Hagar was likely not hard on the eyes. This is speculation, but a man offered sex without penalty is a tempted man, nonetheless.

Indeed, Hagar had a child, Ishmael, and Abram obviously loved that child (Genesis 17:18). Abram in that same verse asks God to bless Ishmael, and God does (Genesis 17:20). Nonetheless, Ishmael would not be the Messiah, and could not be the Messiah (Genesis 17:21). The main reason for this is clear: Ishmael was a mix of Semitic and Hamitic blood, and therefore could not be the Messiah. Messiah had to come from Shem only, which would be Isaac.

Satan's attempt at Messiah through Hagar was really two-fold: 1) to get Messiah's seed corrupted (he did not succeed because God promised a child to Abram even after his sin of adultery with Hagar), and 2) now to cause great enmity between Ishmael's seed and Isaac's seed, which God predicted (Genesis 16:10-12). In this, Satan had hoped to kill the promised seed multiple times in the Bible: for example, Satan tried to kill Joseph many times, assuming he was God's promised seed since God took care of him throughout all of life, but Joseph married a Hamitic wife of Egypt, invalidating that possibility. This was really too bad, as Joseph is spoken of continuously as faithful unto God. Instead, God really threw a curve ball and chose the tribe of Judah for Messiah to come through; this was really something considering the relationship of incest Judah ended up having with Tamar (Genesis 38).

Satan's work with Ishmael's descendants has not ended to this day. The enmity between the Arab nations and the present-day Jews is ever-present and always will be. Arabs have continuously been at odds with their neighbors and there is no sign that has or will change. The sin of Abram's adultery has far-reaching consequence just like Adam and Eve's sin does. Satan continues to use this enmity to kill, main, divide people, and keep the Gospel from them.

Sometimes we may not realize how far our sin will affect others in the future! Surely Abram had no clue.

At the end of this section (Genesis 17), God changes Abram's name to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. This was because Abram was about to become a father of multitudes, which is what his new name means (through both Isaac and Ishmael, truly), and Sarai's new name means "princess", as she would forever held up as the mother of the promised seed (a foreshadowing of Mary with Jesus?).

Abraham and His Seed – Chapter 18

This section covers a great deal of the importance of Abraham's seed to the coming of Messiah. This point is often underestimated or at worst, ignored, but the Bible makes its importance plainly clear.

God had promised a Messiah back in Genesis 3:15. He then promised Messiah would be through Shem (Genesis 9:25). Then He promised Messiah would be through Abraham (Genesis 12:3). Now, we are learning that God promised Messiah through Isaac, and no other seed of Abraham (Genesis 17:21), even though Abraham asked God to bless Ishmael instead (Genesis 17:18). God did bless Ishmael and his descendants (Genesis 16:10-12; 17:20), but not to be Messiah's seed. Yes, the Bible makes a big deal out of whose seed Messiah would come through, and therefore it is important we establish this point ourselves.

Abraham had nine sons: Ishamel, Isaac, Esau, Zimram, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. From these would come a variety of nations:

Ishmael's descendants would be all the Arabs. Isaac's descendants would be all the Israelites. Esau's descendants would be all the Edomites. From Midian would come the Midianites.

Yet, Abraham gave all he had to only one son (Isaac), instead of the normal double-portion (Genesis 25:5). Because Abraham obviously had consideration for his other sons from the beginning (one example is Genesis 17:18), this must have been a command of God to give full assurance to the coming Messiah. God was not playing favorites, He was guarding against future, inevitable attacks by Satan to snuff out Messiah's line.

Sarah was chosen to the mother of all Messiah's nation (Genesis 17:15-16, 19-21).

Isaac, as it has been established, is the one chosen to be the one through whom Messiah would come (Genesis 21:12, later in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18).

Gentiles, who proselyted and were circumcised, were invited to be a part of the covenant people (Deuteronomy 23:6-9). Examples include Lot’s sons (Deuteronomy 23:3), Esau’s sons (Deuteronomy 23:7-8), the Kenites (Judges 1:16, 1 Samuel 30:29), and the women taken into captivity during the conquering of Canaan. However, those who did not complete proselyzation and circumcision were cast out from the assembly (Ezra 9:1-2).

The promised seed of Abraham however was through Isaac, but was not Isaac himself however (Galatians 3:16, Genesis 3:12). No, the Messiah would bless all nations, and this would not come until the cross, burial, resurrection, coronation of Christ as King, and finally the beginning of the kingdom (the church) in Acts 2, finally summing its blessings to all nations in Acts 10. We are a part of that blessing! Praise be to God!

How God Blessed <u>All Nations</u> via the Messiah			
	Semitic Nations	Hamitic Nations	Japheth Nations
Old	Hebrew nation chosen to bear Messiah; promise of salvation to come for rest	Promise of Salvation to Come	Promise of Salvation to Come
New	Acts 2 – Gospel preached to Jews	Acts 8 – Gospel preached to Ethiopian Eunuch	Acts 10 – Gospel preached to Gentiles
Chart sourced from information recorded in <i>The Eternal Struggle</i> by George L. Faull, Rel. D.			

Messiah’s Line narrowed down so far: A baby born born of a woman → Race of Shem → Nation of Abraham → Seed of Isaac

It is a most important question if we ask if we are Abraham’s true spiritual seed. Nowadays, being Abraham’s physical seed is meaningless and untraceable. It was even meaningless in the times of Jesus (John 1:13). All that matters is have we looked to the Messiah Abraham himself looked for, and have we believed on Him like Abraham did, and are we obedience to Him as Abraham was to God? That is all that matters to be a true, saved, spiritual descendant of Abraham (Galatians 4:22-31). Sin makes us a child of the bondwoman, but salvation through obedience to Christ’s terms of pardon makes an heir of the freewoman. Who shall we choose to be spiritual descendants of?

Abraham and Sodom – Chapter 19

Abraham might be seen to have overt kindness for the evil nations of Sodom and Gomorrah but in reality he was just that kind of a guy. In a way, he resembles God’s desire to see everyone repent (2 Peter 3:9) and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, just like God does not (Ezekiel 18:23, 33:11). Abraham’s heart was big, just like God’s, and actually attempted to contend for Sodom in the latter half of Genesis 18. However, Abraham could not make a justified case (as God already knew), and God sent judgment unto Sodom and Gomorrah just a little bit later.

Abraham’s Requests to God to Spare Sodom – Genesis 18:23ff		
Chart by Joshua Stucki		
#	Scripture Reference	Abraham’s Request
1	18:23-26	Spare the city for FIFTY righteous people
2	18:27-28	Spare the city for FORTY-FIVE righteous people
3	18:29	Spare the city for FORTY righteous people
4	18:30	Spare the city for THIRTY righteous people
5	18:31	Spare the city for TWENTY righteous people
6	18:32	Spare the city for TEN righteous people
<p>Conclusion: Not even ten righteous people were found. In fact, Lot and his family were only spared because of God’s kindness to Abraham concerning Lot and his family (Genesis 19:29). It can be well-argued that God waits until there is absolutely no good left in a place before destroying it. That seems to be the language of Joel 2 predicting the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.</p>		

Satan naturally had his paws all in this. He hoped that perhaps God would turn angry towards Abram for contending for Sodom and kill him. Satan hoped that the Sodomites would betray Abraham and kill him. Satan hoped that perhaps Abraham would be present when God’s judgment was rendered.

One this is for sure – Satan had well developed Sodom and Gomorrah. This is the first place homosexual behavior is referenced in Scripture, and not in a positive light. In Genesis 19:4+5, the men of the city (both young and old), come out seeking to rape the heavenly visitors of Lot. This indicates that the men had seen the angels and thought nothing extraordinary about them other than being attractive males (this helps understand that many angels look just like us

and are indeed sexual beings, as we also came to understand with the Nephilim in Genesis 6:1-4). Their evil behavior here first struck them with blindness (Genesis 19:11) but this did not stop their pursuit (the Hebrew renders, “they would not find the door”). That is how perverted these men were – they would even rape blind – unconcerned for their obvious judgment for their sin, but simply wanted to keep on sinning!

The angels warned harshly for Lot and his family to run and run they did (Genesis 19:12-23). However, Lot’s wife looked back in direct disobedience to God’s messenger and she was turned into a pillar of salt! (Genesis 19:26) May we learn to obey God fully, and not to look to the right or left, but straight on to the prize that we can have in Christ Jesus! (Philippians 3:14)

Sodom and Gomorrah’s story in Genesis 18 and 19 is not coincidence. Abram’s sin of bringing Lot with him originally (Genesis 12:4) caused him much grief and gave Satan many great opportunities, including this one. If Abram had left Lot behind, Abram would not have dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah at all, as Lot never would have lived there or got captured from there. Nonetheless, even though Satan had tried to use Sodom, God destroyed it (Genesis 19:24-29). Satan’s attempts at Abram’s life continued to fail and Abram naturally had to be comforted by God’s promises throughout his life. God is greater than Satan, and He demonstrates this continuously in the life of Abraham.

Abraham and Those of Gerar – Chapter 20

Abraham, though growing in wisdom and learned a lot of lessons, was still not a perfect man, as none of us ever are (1 John 1:8). Going south again, Abraham encounters Abimelech, king of Gerar (all the kings of Gerar bore the title, “Abimelech”, just like all the kings of Egypt bore the title, “Pharaoh”). Taking a play from his previous playbook (though it was a losing play, so it is unsure what besides fear motivated Abraham, if anything) and gave over his wife Sarah to him in order to be spared himself.

Abimelech’s other wives wombs were sealed by God, and God gave Abimelech the truth about Abraham and sin in a dream, so these events caused Abimelech to give Sarah back to Abraham and rebuke Abraham for his lie. Abraham gave his excuses in Genesis 20:11, but nothing excuses sin.

Naturally, Satan hoped would die by the hand of Pharaoh before, and now hopes again this would happen at the hand of Abimelech. However, both Pharaoh and Abimelech not only play it cool with Abraham, but even send him on his way with his wife with many possessions. Satan also hoped that Abimelech would bare a son through Sarah, who could not possibly the promised seed with mixed blood. However, God allowed none of that to occur, but instead graciously restored Abraham again. God shows Abraham grace continuously, just as He does us. Truly, we are the seed of Abraham, lost sinners saved by the grace of God by His terms of pardon!

Naturally, Satan was getting more nervous, as the promised plan of God to crush him continued to unfold in Abraham and now Isaac's pending birth. Nothing Satan does "sticks"; God always foils him. To this day, God foils Satan's plan to undo our relationship with Him, if only we remain faithful to the end! (Revelation 2:10)

This section ends with a reference to Psalm 105:13-15, showing how God continually protected the various families Messiah would come through to make sure that truly, one day, all of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). We know now God did this true Jesus Christ who became incarnate (John 1:1ff). Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Isaac and Ishmael – Chapter 21

The great enmity that has never ended was born in the story of Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael, being born first, was desired to be blest by his father, Abraham (Genesis 17:18). Indeed, God blessed Ishmael (Genesis 17:20), but the promised seed was to come through Isaac (Genesis 17:21), and this special relationship would result in the unusual situation where the only son that would inherit Abraham's great wealth at his death would be Isaac (Genesis 25:5). Obviously, this would have created some discord, and Satan tried to take advantage of it, but failed.

Ishmael did ask for trouble when he taunted Isaac after he was weaned. This caused Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael (undeniably, to his dismay – Genesis 17:18) by Sarah's request, and God allowed it (Genesis 21:13-21) and took care of Hagar and Ishmael independently, just as He had originally promised her (Genesis 16:10-12). God was faithful to Hagar and Ishmael before, and He was again faithful here. God keeps His promises, even when it will cause Him and his people problems, as the Arabs have inevitably caused in all time since.

Galatians 4:29 reports that just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, so we who are seeds of the promise are persecuted by those who are not. Naturally, this persecution lives on to this day, now more than ever in volume.

Satan naturally tried to get Hagar to try to seek revenge on Abraham, but since God provided for Hagar and Ishmael and given their own blessings, that motivation was taken away.

Satan did use the Ishmaelite descendants to persecute God's people relatively-shortly thereafter: they purchased Joseph, son of Jacob (a grandson of Isaac), they tried stopping the rebuilding of the temple in Nehemiah 4:7, and Psalms 83 lists them as enemies of God's people. In each of these attempts Satan failed to defeat God or destroy/tamper with the Messianic line (though there were some close cases, which we will study later on down in this study).

Even later when Christ is standing before Herod, he is being mocked by a partially-Ishmaelite man, partly also of Esau. Satan loved mixing blood not only to prevent Messiah, but because Ishmael's prediction of enmity with Israel would come true in every man who shared Ishmael's history.

We learn from all of this that rushing ahead of God, like Sarah did, did not help move along God's promises, but actually delayed them and made them more difficult for God's people to be protected from various corruptions. Satan tried to take advantage of every one of them. Though he did not succeed here, he obviously succeeds often, and we should be on guard not to give Satan any more opportunity than he already plainly has.

Abraham and Abimelech – Chapter 22

In Genesis 21:1ff, after Abimelech had rightly corrected Abraham over his lying to him about Sarah, Abimelech wanted a promise from Abraham that he would do him no harm. Abraham swore to deal honestly with him, but rebukes Abimelech over some wells that some of Abimelech's servants had stolen by force from Abraham's servants. Abimelech swears no wrongdoing by his knowledge of the situation.

Here, Satan hopes to ignite Abraham and Abimelech in a war over the wells (fresh water has always been a precious commodity, even today) that might result in Abraham being killed. A new thought occurred in my mind – Satan naturally would have liked to slay Abraham – but simply disabling him in whatever way that would prevent sex would have done the job as well. Satan could have hoped for or even tried to instill sterility in Abraham or even other people that God was going to bring Messiah through. This never worked, but it's a speculation of just how nefarious Satan could have been.

Abraham wisely gives seven lambs for payment as proof that the wells are his. Later on, Isaac would show similar behavior, undoubtedly learned from his father. A cool head (Proverbs 15:1) that does not count every penny wins the day here, and Abraham does in the sight of all men not to win their approval, but to demonstrate proof the wells had been paid for. This wisdom is reflected by Solomon in Proverbs 22:3 and by Paul in Romans 12:17.

Abraham and Isaac – Chapter 23

This is possibly one of the most beautiful stories in the Old Testament: after Isaac had grown up (Genesis 22:1ff), God instructs Abraham to take him up to a high mountain to slay him. This news is naturally devastating, but Abraham obeys, because he not only is faithful to God, but he *believed* God's promises that through Isaac His promised seed would still come.

Therefore, Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19). In this sense, we come to understand how complete this shadow and type of Christ's story is in Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac!

We have to ask ourselves why God asked this of Abraham. Did God really need to test Abraham – that seems to be the language of Genesis 22:12, "... for now I know that you fear God..." However, I personally believe this is more for us – that *we* can see how a faithful man lives. God's test was to complete Abraham, *not* so much so God's faith in Abraham was

complete. We can learn a great deal from Abraham and the recording of his life's story is for our benefit in learning to grow in faithfulness to God.

Also, this act of obedience was to fulfill a variety of necessary prophecy of the Messiah to come: a pre-named, miraculously born, only begotten son, to be slain of man. This picture would give us a perfect picture of Christ so when we see Him in the New Testament, we can be sure that whom God predicted really was the Christ without possibility of another.

God would also impute righteousness onto Abraham for this particular act of obedience, resulting in his "completeness" (Genesis 22:15-18). At this, God reiterated and amplified His promises to Abraham, and no fault of Abraham is mentioned of him after this point. Abraham has a prominent place in the Hebrews 11 hall of heroes specifically in verses 8-12 and 17-19. With his faith complete, no fault of his is mentioned anymore, just like once we have "put on Christ" in our baptism (Galatians 3:27), no fault of ours is recorded any more in the "books" (Daniel 7:10, Revelation 20:12).

While Abraham was taking Isaac up the mountain, he considered Isaac dead for those three days, just like for three days Jesus was in the tomb. However, like the faithful who believed Jesus, Abraham had faith that God would raise Abraham from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Surely Satan must have tempted Abraham not to obey; even if Abraham did believe God would raise Isaac from the dead, just the idea of being Isaac's murderer, and seeing his son dead – even for a moment – would be agonizing. This makes us think of Jesus' suffering on the cross and his cry of, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

Satan naturally would have hoped that God would smite Abraham if he did not obey, or possibly rescind the promises. Satan also could have tempted Isaac to resist, and surely as Isaac was a grown man, could have easily overpowered his father. This is why it is irrational to believe the Isaac resisted at all. Isaac willingly gave himself over, just like Christ did (John 10:17-18). You can imagine the tears from both father and son, both obedient to God despite all sorrow, pain, or fear. This reminds us of Jesus' tears of blood (Luke 22:44). Both were willingly obedient, both believing God would raise them from the dead. What a beautiful shadow of the Christ to come! How grateful we can be that we have never had to come close to obeying God in such an extreme manner!

Abraham was also a prophet, because Isaac at one point asked his father where the sacrifice was (Genesis 22:7). Abraham replied that God would provide the sacrifice (Genesis 22:8). Indeed, He did, just like He did for us through the cross! You can imagine such a question being asked of Abraham really throwing him off course. All Abraham can think about is the next step and Isaac asks such a relevant and yet poignant question. Abraham answers rightly and makes no excuse for God's plan. How we can learn to obey God so faithfully! No doubt this is the final act of obedience that "seals" Abraham in the "books" for all time.

Satan probably started out this story thinking, “Huh. God is going to do my job for me by having Isaac killed.” Then at the end of the story is scratching his head thinking, “Huh? What was God’s purpose in this story for bringing about this coming Messiah?” Satan, not being all-knowing, surely could not have known just how exact this story would play out nearly 1800 years later in Christ. When Christ did raise from the dead, Satan, undeniably already under incredible shock and disbelief (ironically), would undoubtedly look back at this story and realize his own short-sightedness. God’s wisdom and foresight far exceeds Satan’s – another reason to put our faith in God’s instructions, even when they do not make sense like they probably did not make sense in Abraham’s mind originally. Greater promises come from greater faith – surely Abraham realized the incredible blessings of obedience after all his previous sins just caused trouble – may we realize the same!

Abraham and Ephron – Chapter 24

This mostly-unknown story obscure to most commentators receives an overdue reception here. It details the story of Abraham and Ephron, and the wisdom it teaches is wisdom we need more and more today:

Abraham’s wife, Sarah, had died at the age of 127. Naturally, Abraham mourned his wife’s death and was in need of a burial plot for her so he went to Ephron the Hittite to purchase one. Ephron tried to just give Abraham the burial plot, but Abraham had learned of his experience with Pharaoh that anything “free” comes with a later, indeterminable cost that is likely much higher than any cash price. So, Abraham buys the plot for the equivalent of \$400 today with the witnesses of Ephron’s sons at the city so there could not possibly be any hard feelings between them later.

Abraham had learned to act preemptively to prevent problems and this is one such case, just like earlier when Lot’s servants fought with his own. Later, Isaac would learn this behavior and emulate it to his own benefit. Proverbs 16:7 says, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Romans 12:18 reiterates a similar instruction: “Whenever it is possible, live at peace with all men.” Abraham lived out these wise words well before they were even published! How much more we have the Word of God and therefore are responsible to follow it, and how much more we can benefit from it!

Satan naturally hoped to use this situation as an advantage to obligate Abraham to Ephron in the future or perhaps tap Abraham’s pride and try to forcibly take land out of Ephron’s hands because he had been promised it by God. Instead, Abraham wisely purchased it publicly with witnesses, preventing any possible future conflict. Truly, wise men anticipate the trouble Satan will try to bring about; Abraham was such a man.

We should also note that this event and others following all happen chronologically after Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. There is no fault of Abraham recorded after that event. This event, happening after that fact, demonstrated Abraham’s faithfulness to God in obeying His wisdom.

Satan would never again get a foothold on Abraham, and truly God would keep His promise to Abraham that he would live to “a good, old age” (Genesis 25:8).

Abraham and Rebekah – Chapter 25

In Genesis 24, we learn about how Abraham sought out a Semitic wife for Isaac so that that promised seed would come through the prophesied bloodline.

Some contend that this is prophecy coming true by self-fulfillment. Sure, some prophecies were made and then known by those who fulfilled them and they played a part in their fulfillment. That does not take away one iota from the fact that the prophecy was true and was fulfilled! While some prophecies were self-fulfilled and others were fulfilled by no other way than the hand of God, they all prove that God’s Word is infallible and we can trust it from beginning to end!

Abraham sends out Eliezer, his chief servant, to find a wife for Isaac from his own family (specifically, his brother, so Isaac would ultimately marry Rebekah, his cousin).

This brings up an interesting discussion of accusations of incest in the Bible. This issue is commonly colored with modern, 21st century “liberal” glasses, instead of examined in its original, historical context. It was not until the Mosaic Law that God forbade the marrying within immediate families. This was obviously because in the beginning, all there was to marry was close family, and then as time moved on, cousins and the like. It would well after the flood, well after Abraham, hundreds of years later, before the human genetic pool was diversified enough (and genetic problems developing over time developed enough – the law of entropy, genetic mutations, etc.), that incest was a problem and preference was given both culturally and doctrinally by God.

Naturally, we understand today the scientific requirement of healthy children to be from non-related parents. However, this same problem did not exist thousands of years ago before the Law of Moses. It is no accident that God in the Law of Moses prevents marriage within immediate families; He alone at that time was aware of the genetic developments and diversity now available in the world at that time and His intent was to “bring to light” these various realities as they unfolded in His plan. This was *not* due to the evolution of the human race on any level; this was because God’s plan shows God’s wisdom as His story unfolds throughout the Old Testament. Each step and stage had His intent behind it, accomplishing a purpose, ultimately bringing out Messiah Jesus. This cannot be underestimated or denied, for to do so is to take the Old Testament and call it irrelevant, which no New Testament writer ever does.

Eliezer himself must have been a selfless, righteous man himself to obey his master as he had done, even after the birth of Isaac and Ishmael, totally denying himself any kind of inheritance. This means Abraham must have been a kind master, and Eliezer always wanted to please his master a result. Apparently the trust between them was great, because Abraham has a

very important task for Eliezer: go find Isaac a wife from his family, of the Semitic race. Living in Canaan, the temptation to be lazy and find a local Hamitic wife would have been great. Instead, Abraham waits upon the Lord and trusts his long-time servant to find Isaac a proper bride. Indeed, he does, and brings back Rebekah for Isaac. Isaac is very pleased in Rebekah, and although she was barren for twenty years (like Sarah before her with Abraham), she eventually did birth to two sons (and two nations) – Jacob and Esau (respectively, Israel and Edom).

It is also interesting to note that Abraham did not send Isaac, though he was forty years old now, and completely able to operate independently. Though we typically frown on arranged marriages today, if our potential spouses were picked out (or at least pre-screened) by much wiser, older, and godly people today, I imagine we would have fewer divorces and happier, longer marriages! I say this is a divorced person, whose first wife was nothing more than mistake on my part, ignoring every red flag, and simply doing what my twenty-two year flesh wanted. What a mistake! God has been gracious to me, as He was continuously to Abraham, and Isaac after him.

Abraham did not want Isaac to both get lazy and pick out a local Canaanite wife (of the Hamitic race, of whom Messiah could not come through), or wander off to Ur of the Chaldees, and choose a wife from the land of “fiery destruction”, specifically where God had called Abraham out of (Genesis 12:1). Ur was where family was, and the temptation to stay with family is always great, but Abraham had greater plans for Isaac that God had prescribed, and so Abraham once again shows great wisdom in sending out his servant to pick out a wife for Isaac instead of leaving it solely in Isaac’s hands.

Satan naturally tried in many ways to corrupt God’s plans with the choosing of Isaac’s wife. Satan would have tempted Isaac to forego his father’s lengthier plan and pick out a local Canaanite wife, corrupting Messiah’s bloodline. Satan would have tempted Isaac to return home to Ur of the Chaldees and live with family in the land of “fiery destruction.” Satan would have tempted Isaac to refuse the arranged marriage from Eliezer, show him disdain, and simply do whatever he wanted (possibly even remain single?). Any way we see it though, Satan’s temptations and plans failed again. God was ahead here, and Isaac loved Rebekah and bore two sons (and nations) with her, of whom God already had plans for.

Abraham and Keturah – Chapter 26

Another relatively unknown story often dismissed (or often belittled of importance) is the story of Abraham’s wife after Sarah, Keturah. From Keturah would come many sons who would also become many nations. God had renamed Abram to Abraham in Genesis 17, which resulted in the meaning of his name changing from “exalted father” to “father of a multitude”, which is exactly what happened with each of his sons.

Undeniably Satan would have attempted to get Keturah's sons to fight with Isaac (and Ishmael likely, just to keep things on edge), but God protected Isaac, and provided Isaac a wise and temperate spirit, often warding off potential battles before they would even occur.

Also, Satan would have wanted very much tried to instill jealousy in Keturah's sons, as Isaac received the sole inheritance (Genesis 25:5). But Abraham, old and full of years and wisdom at this point, still manages to give substantial, satisfying gifts to each of his sons, warding off jealousy, and sent them away from Isaac, to prevent later conflict. This was shortly before Abraham's death. Satan tried so many times to kill Abraham, or at least maim him, or even try to get God angry enough to kill, but though some battles were lost and consequence (sometimes severe!) rendered, God's grace and faithfulness saw all of His promises fulfilled, and Abraham lived long enough to see old age, his sons succeed in every way that mattered, and thus the war won. Our God is faithful, just like He was Abraham, to us today! His character never changes (Hebrews 13:8).

Isaac and the Philistines – Chapter 27

The famous Philistines make their debut in Genesis 26. At the time, they were ruled by the Abimelech of the Philistines (Abimelech was a title like Pharaoh, shared by the various rulers of Gerar all the same).

Isaac had gone down to Gerar because of a famine. This story is similar to Abram's flight to Egypt in Genesis 12. Isaac would also make the same bad judgment in lying to Abimelech about his wife in fear for his own life instead of trusting God. It can be argued easily that Isaac should never have gone down to Gerar and stayed in Canaan, because God told him that He would take care of Him in Genesis 26:3-4. Instead, Isaac in his early days would act much like his father in his early days, and make similar mistakes (though cumulatively not as many).

In a way, Isaac is just downright foolish because he is caught "sporting" with Rebekah his wife, after she had come into possession of Abimelech. Truly, Isaac knew his father's past mistakes, and this successor to the previous Abimelech had likely known his predecessors' run-in with Isaac's father, but nonetheless both men fall into foolishness. Certainly, fornication and sexual temptation in general is still the same old temptation for men it always has been, and neither man here can seem to control themselves initially.

Naturally, this was Satan's plan all along – to hopefully corrupt Rebekah's future children with the seed of a Hamitic man – or to get Isaac killed for lying to a king. Abimelech catches Isaac with Rebekah, and rebukes him for his deception. Isaac excuses his behavior in front of Abimelech, and Abimelech justifies himself by saying that nobody could even touch Isaac or Rebekah without a sentence of death.

Ironically, Isaac grew so wealthy while in Gerar that the Philistines through Abimelech pleaded for Isaac to go, so he did. Isaac did have a good temper throughout his life, and in this

case shows sense by going through the trouble of moving out of a desire to have peace. May we be so giving!

Naturally, as Isaac's wealth grew, Satan would have tried to tempt Isaac in becoming king of the Philistines himself. Undeniably, this was a fear of Abimelech when he asked Isaac to move out of Gerar. Power and esteem often puffs up a man along with wealth to make him think that he deserves power and authority and can make up his own destiny. Surely many men of history have fallen into this trap! Instead, Isaac is content with God's blessings and returns back to Canaan as God had promised him protection and blessings there (Genesis 26:3-4).

Isaac's sojourn to Gerar (which obviously lasted some time for his wealth to accumulate as it did) delayed the coming of Messiah because God did not tell him to go there. This could have been the twenty years Rebekah was barren, but that is speculation on this author's part. Instead, God had told him to stay in Canaan and trust in God's protection (Genesis 26:3-4). But like his father, he delayed Messiah by going down to Gerar, delaying Rebekah's conception of Jacob and Esau, through whom God's promises would be fulfilled.

Isaac and the Herdsmen of Gerar – Chapter 28

In this particular story of Genesis 26, we learn of Isaac's great wisdom and patience even at a relatively young age. He definitely learned from his father's experience with the herdsman of Lot.

The herdsman of Gerar kept claiming that Isaac's wells were really theirs. Instead of fighting the herdsman, and possibly giving Satan an edge to kill him with, he lets the herdsmen have the wells and digs others until they arrive at a place the Lord had provided, free from conflict.

Isaac had right to these wells; his father had dug them and paid for them. Nonetheless, Isaac would rather have peace than his rights, and he trusted God would provide for him. What if today men were more interested in peace than rights! What a peaceful world we could be in! We can see therefore that Satan still uses our "rights" to actually "wrong" others, just like he tried to but failed in Isaac.

Proverbs 16:7 deserves repeating here, in memory of Isaac and this story: "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with them."

In my last Sunday morning sermon (as of this writing – 11/03/2014), I preached from this passage demonstrating how the life of a Christian should be one that makes peace with others, even when there is a cost for that peace, as there is a great personal and spiritual benefit to making and having peace, as well as unto salvation of both ourselves and the others we have peace with. I also used the story of Abram and Lot, and how Abram too sought peace above war

at a price, even with the promise of God that He (Abram) was to have that land. Colossians 3:1-4 was my base text, with these two stories as backdrops.

Esau – Chapter 29

Satan had narrowed down the Promised Seed to Jacob. This makes sense concerning the prophecy concerning Esau and Jacob's birth ("the older will serve the younger") and how God always works everything out for good to those who love him (Romans 8:28). Jacob loved the Lord, despite his multiple failings, and God would be faithful to Jacob as well as to Isaac and Abraham before him, who lived exemplary lives.

Jacob in a way resembles the old saying, "Wealth rarely survives 3 generations." Jacob was Abraham's grandson, and Jacob's life was not the string of fortune that Abraham and Isaac often enjoyed. Jacob summed up his own life to Pharaoh in saying, "My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." (Genesis 47:9) Indeed, Jacob's "supplanting nature" (his name in Hebrews means "supplanter") would cost him again and again in grief, and his sons were more trouble still. Nonetheless, even through Satan's many successes with Jacob and his sons, God was faithful, and saw through to keep His promise of the coming Messiah through Jacob, and then his son Judah.

All of this begins with the conflicts between Jacob and his older brother Esau. Because of the prophecy given to Jacob's mother Rebekah, she favored Jacob. But Isaac, his father, favored Esau, because Esau was a "man's man", a hunter, and a good cook of wild game, specifically here venison.

This favoritism would cause great grief in the family (as it would to this day): Esau came in from an unsuccessful hunt, very hungry, feeling like he might die (Genesis 25:32). So Esau sold Jacob his birthright for a bowl of stew, after Jacob made that the price for the stew. Esau did not care for his birthright, as indicated in Hebrews 12:16, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright..."

One speculation this author has had is that perhaps Esau was secretly intimidated by his birthright and actually wanted out of it. I say this because Esau apparently did want his forthcoming blessing (Genesis 27:36-38), but despised his birthright. The two were quite different: the blessing would contain the inheritance, but the birthright carried responsibility with more distant and spiritual promises, such as Messiah's seed. I think it is possible that Esau, like Cain, figured he was "predestined" to his position, and all he really wanted was the blessings of being the son of Isaac (or in Cain's case, the son of Adam, the supposed "striker" against Satan's head).

I believe many today are deceived by this common temptation of Satan – anticipate the blessing, but shed the responsibility and greater, more distant and spiritual promises of salvation. Many people today want their parent's physical inheritance, but despise their spiritual

heritage. Indeed, “wealth rarely last three generations.” This is true for both physical and spiritual wealth in many cases.

Jacob naturally wanted the birthright, as it was one step closer to getting the blessing. Interestingly enough, however, Jacob’s parents do not seem concerned about Esau selling his birthright to Jacob, but Scripture is very much concerned with it (Hebrews 12:16). Isaac and Rebekah too might have been wrapped up in their wealth and favoritism with their preferred children, and forgot for a time the promise of Messiah (and how much more important a promise that was!). May we all be penitent of valuing our physical possessions greater than our spiritual treasure with Christ in heaven! (Matthew 6:20)

Esau also goes out and marries two heathen women, not of the race of Shem. This mixes his seed, guaranteeing Esau is not who Messiah would come through. Instead, Esau’s descendants would become the Edomites, while Jacob’s became the Israelites. The Edomites are mentioned throughout Scripture, sometimes even used of God to accomplish His purposes, but not as a holy or distinct people. Often times, they are enemies of the Israelites, and are engaged in multiple battles with them over time, most of the time in defeat except when Israel was unfaithful to God.

It is interesting to note that there are shadowy characters in Jesus’ line (see Matthew 1 and Luke 3 for examples), so Esau’s sinful nature was not necessarily his disqualification for carrying Messiah’s seed. No, it was a combination of giving up his birthright, the marriage to heathen women, and his blessing also being given to Jacob. The first made him a profane man, the second a prophecy breaker, and the third a man passed over.

Through all of the above and much else, Satan had indeed narrowed the line of Messiah to Jacob, naturally setting his sights on him for the remainder of his life. This seems particularly obvious in that Esau eventually learns to forgive Jacob and meet him on friendly terms. Outside of the influence of Satan, Esau lightens up and recognizes his brother, even as a supplanter, as family to love instead of hate (as was his original plan – Genesis 27:41).

Satan also succeeded in separating Jacob from the protection of his father’s wealth as his mother told him to run away to escape Esau’ wrath (Genesis 27:43). Esau’s description in Scripture means he likely could have easily overpowered and killed his brother, and we would have a repeat of Cain and Abel all over again. Satan really hoped for this, as the blessing had already been given to Jacob concerning Messiah (Genesis 27:29), so if Satan could get Jacob killed, God would be made out to be a liar. Thus, the only solution was separating Jacob from his parents permanently (he would never see them again). Satan naturally could also use this opportunity to try to kill Jacob while on his own, which he attempted many times, but thankfully by God’s grace never succeeded!

It is both interesting (and looking back, a little frightening) how close Satan got to destroying the Messianic line. With Jacob separated and exposed, the promise laid with him. One

kill, unprotected by his family, could render God's promises mute and humanity doomed. God had incredible skill and power never missing once in protecting His seed-bearers. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Jacob and Rebekah – Chapter 30

The drama of Jacob and Esau unfolds in even greater detail in this chapter, exposing Satan's many successes in causing the people of God to sin and very nearly succeeded in destroying Messiah's line.

Isaac also seems here to be a little bit of a dramatist himself – he says he is about to die (Genesis 27:4) – when he actually lives another forty-three more years! (Genesis 35:29)

Isaac also seems to have lost some of his godliness later in life – he favored Esau, despite the prophecy concerning Jacob – because he loved Esau's personality and especially his hunting and cooking! Undeniably, Esau was a daddy's boy, probably making his father proud among the local people for being a good hunter and a "man's man." All the while, Jacob was a momma's boy, and not looked on with much favor as Esau. Thus, the favoritism brews, and introduces sin on multiple parties. Satan was having a hey-day!

First, Satan tempted Isaac and Rebekah with favoritism, each with one son. This lay in place not only opportunities for destroying Messiah's seed in a present conflict, but guaranteed conflicts between the boys and their descendants for generations to come.

Second, Satan tempted Rebekah and succeeded in getting her to run ahead of God, instead of trust in the prophecy, and trust as she had done before (Genesis 25:22). She convinced Jacob to lie to Isaac, which he did. She also falsely claimed she could take any curse that might fall upon him (it is clear that later on Jacob's many sins had consequences to him). The curse for Rebekah's sin was severe – after Jacob ran away after he stole the blessing – she would never see Jacob again. She died without him (Genesis 49:31).

Third, Satan tempted Isaac to give the blessing to Esau despite the fact that he had already despised his birthright and had married foreign women. He tried to do so, but was supplanted by the "supplanter" (Jacob).

Truly, through this whole mess, and the consequences that came as a result, God had to work through some terrible sins (favoritism, Rebekah running ahead of God, Jacob lying, etc.) to still have Messiah's line come through. The scorecard was definitely on Satan's side, but God came in at the last inning, so to speak, to win the round!

This chapter, however, focuses on Jacob and Rebekah's relationship, and unfortunately it was unhealthy one from the beginning that Satan used to breed a lot of unneeded animosity, greed, betrayal, and ultimately loneliness. Also mention the break this caused in Isaac's and Rebekah's relationship – a relationship that started out happy (Genesis 24:64-67), that now was

at a point of betrayal due to favoritism with their preferred children. Satan would have loved nothing more than Isaac and Rebekah to separate, further embittering their children, and causing even more strife in the family!

Jacob and Laban – Chapter 31

Jacob ran away to Laban just as his mother had told him to do (Genesis 27:43). While fleeing, God appeared to Jacob in the famous dream of the angels ascending and descending into and from heaven (commonly called, “Jacob's Ladder”), where God gives Jacob the same promises He gave to Abraham and Isaac before him. It is this promise that cements the old phrase in Jewish religion, “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”.

This place was called “Bethel” by Jacob (“The House of God”) after this dream and its corresponding promises were made. He went on to live with Laban and fell in love with his younger daughter, Rachel. Jacob worked for seven years for Rachel, but was tricked by Laban and received his older daughter Leah instead. Jacob, who was the trickster, was now tricked. His sin had followed him and rendered its consequences!

Truly, we learn from this story (and countless others) how Satan is very crafty – the sin he tempts us with commonly does not have immediate consequences – so we think we have escaped them entirely! Indeed, not true! Like Dr. Faull says, “Perhaps a battle we are fighting today is because we only partially obeyed God yesterday!”

We should also recognize at this point Satan’s common lie to us that wealth or fame equate to approval from God. There were plenty of famous (they are in the world’s #1 bestseller, after all!) and wealthy people in the Bible, both good and bad. Their wealth had nothing – absolutely nothing – to do with whether they were faithful to God. This author fears that many preachers today equate their degrees, wealth, or fame with approval of God. Instead, the consequences of their pride will be evident to them at the judgment!

This is also true of how Satan has used higher education to persuade many preachers to pride, professors to liberal and false doctrine, and churches to seek their leadership from places of such apostasy. This author has learned how accreditation is often a barrier to maintaining everything from integrity to strict Scriptural obedience to affordability. Satan has confused many churches into thinking that skilled preachers only come from secularly-accredited schools, that “real preachers” are “pastors”, that titles like “reverend” make a man more than he is (a sinner saved by grace), or that a famous school will make a better preacher unto a better church. Anathema! It is unfortunate that the church has so mixed with the world as to accept its standards, its judgments, and ultimately its deceptions to give Satan great leverage in keeping the church tepid and dying by its own poor choices! If only the church stood in judgment of the world instead of the other way around!

Back to Jacob and Laban: Jacob worked another seven years for Rachel, and then another seven years to finally be in a financial position to be independent of Laban. Rebekah sending Jacob to Laban was very much like sending her favorite son into indentured servitude! This is what sin purchases! In exchange for being protected of his brother's vengeance, he would endure 21 years of forced labor, only to come out with two bitter wives!

Rachel was barren, and Leah taunted her as a result (Leah was able to have children and did), so Rachel gave her maidservant to Jacob to sleep with and produce sons. Leah did the same, so she would be in no way outdone by her younger sister. Satan naturally used each of these opportunities to continue to make Jacob bitter (forced labor at the hands of an unfair taskmaster), his wives bicker, fornicate with women other than his wives, and simply cause endless strife, hoping of course to cause Laban and Jacob to possibly struggle and Jacob to be killed, or perhaps to see his wives seek vengeance on him irrationally, or any other number of possibilities to see the end of the Messianic line. Surely, Jacob's life was full of trouble as he said! (Genesis 47:9)

Because God blessed Jacob despite his sins, and although Laban tried to consistently change Jacob's wages (latter half of Genesis 30), the wealth continued to flow from Laban to Jacob. This caused Laban's sons to rise up against Jacob; surely this was Satan hoping to cause Jacob's assassination! So God intervened and told Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and relatives, and I will be with you." (Genesis 31:3)

So Jacob would take his wealth and wives and depart without even informing Laban. He did this to prevent Laban from stopping him, possibly violently; Jacob feared Laban and his sons at this point (Genesis 31:1-2). So Jacob did, but his problems would not end here. In fact, Jacob suffered much – much more later with Joseph's disappearance – and would only have relative peace towards the end of his life. Satan would try Jacob to the bitter end, but God was faithful, and Jacob ultimately endured!

Jacob and Rachel – Chapter 32

Continuing on in Genesis 31, Jacob and his wives and their wealth had departed Laban. Laban did not notice for three days, and then pursued Jacob. Jacob was much slower moving having to take everything and everyone he had, so Laban did catch up, apparently in force! (Genesis 31:29) Satan naturally had high hopes at this point for Laban and his sons to slay Jacob; you can imagine some of them were seething at the mouth!

But God appeared to Laban in a dream the night before they were to catch up to Jacob's traveling party and warned him not to speak good or bad to Jacob.

To this author, this sounds like God is telling Laban to say nothing at all, basically a command to head back home. Nonetheless, Laban does pursue Jacob, and rebukes him (seems to speak bad). He also accuses Jacob of stealing his gods (again, seems to speak bad). So Jacob

retorts angrily and says, “Search my camp and if you find your gods, may the person who took them not live!” (Genesis 31:32)

Now Jacob did not know that his favorite wife, Rachel, had stolen her father's gods (it's pretty sad when a mere mortal – anyone – can steal your gods!). She did this for a range of possible motivations (maybe all of them): 1) whoever had the gods of her father upon his death would receive his wealth, 2) to possibly prevent superstitiously (she obviously grew up under Laban's idolatry) her father's consulting the gods to come after Jacob or to curse him from afar, or 3) to consult them herself, hoping to draw on their power to keep them safe or at least save her own skin!

This brings up another tool of Satan he commonly wielded in those times – obviously Rachel was a believer in the one true God (Genesis 25:22); however, she also possibly possessed a belief in the pagan idols of her childhood. This would be an apostasy the Israelites commonly fell for; in their same lands, they would worship God in His tabernacle in His way, and then they would also go worship idols in their way!

This may seem like nonsense to us today (even to a non-believer, polytheism of any kind in our culture is virtually nonexistent), but happened constantly in ancient times, later in Rome, and finally even in many oriental countries today. Many missionaries report that a conversion to Christianity might still cling to ancestor worship in China, or to spirit worship in Thailand, or to worship of the dead in Mexico. Old habits die hard! Or, in this case, old religion dies harder! Satan loves to mix our “good religion” with “false religion”; to him, it's almost as good as unbelief! Naturally, I am sure he would prefer not have any of the “good religion” at all, but he seems more than content in times past and now to make use of apostate mixing of religions whenever that is the only tool available to him!

Rachel very well may have been polytheistic in taking her father's gods. She also did them quite a disgrace by sitting on them, claiming to her father it was her time of the month when he came into her tent looking for them (Genesis 31:31-35). Could you imagine 1) hiding your “gods”, 2) sitting on them, and 3) claiming to do so when you are experiencing an “unclean” time of the month? (Genesis 31:35) What respect did Rachel have for her “gods”? Apparently, very little!

This brings up one final point of Satan's work in this chapter: Satan is unconcerned with a lack of respect for him or any other false “god” he has setup, as long as there is no respecting of the one true God or His commands! Satan has it a lot easier in this epic struggle – yet he still loses. God has to keep people on a narrow road, Satan has a wide road to play with. God has to keep people believing and following only Him, the one true God; Satan has a multiplicity of false beliefs and tempting behaviors to choose from. Satan does not demand worship or require it; he is merely content to take children away from God and suffer as he will (“misery loves

company”); God requires worship and is not content with anything else – our God is a jealous God! (Exodus 20:5, 34:14).

Jacob finally demands Laban justify his actions or leave. Laban, still “god-less”, instead makes his case and instead of arguing further, wisely decides to make peace with Jacob. Satan must have been floored! How could Laban suddenly desire peace after pursuing him, having the ability to harm him, and then not follow through? Would not the temptation to take back his daughters, wealth, and accumulate even more wealth be very tempting to him?

Amazingly, Laban makes a vow with Jacob, they sup together, sleep over night, and then says goodbye with blessings in the morning. Then he and his sons leave. Though this author is certain his sons were likely very unhappy with their fathers' decision, at least they knew with Jacob permanently out of the picture (and their sisters), they would have a share in what is left, and it would not shrink.

God provided for all, protected Jacob, and even his idol-keeping wife. All for us, if we really think about it – Messiah was to come through Jacob, and God was going to see His promise through! What a faithful God we serve!

Jacob and Esau's Reunion – Chapter 33

Laban has left, and Jacob is obeying God (so far) to return to the land of his fathers and relatives in Canaan, specifically Bethel. On his way, he realizes he is about to meet his older brother, Esau, who he had tricked years ago, and assumed was on a war path to avenge Jacob as he originally said he would (Genesis 27:41). Jacob knew of this promise, and had originally taken it seriously, as did his mother (Genesis 27:43-44).

Therefore, Jacob sent great gifts to his brother in hopes he would forgive him. He sent a total of 580 beasts, an incredible gift, obviously sending the message of either great sorrow or a great bribe!

This sounds more like something Satan might do, but Jacob here was also being crafty – he was hoping to either appeal to Esau's old greedy spirit, or possibly a spirit of Esau of forgiveness perhaps developed in their absence? Either way, Jacob was giving a great deal towards that effort.

That night the Lord wrestled with Jacob and as a result, changed his name to Israel (“a Prince of God”). He limped from that point forward in his life, likely as a reminder that when one faces God, he is to walk differently in his life from then on! In this same event, God promised him safety.

Therefore, by God's hand, Jacob had no need to send such a marvelous gift to Esau. God had worked Esau to change his heart, and Esau greeted his brother gladly! Satan must have been confounded that Esau of all people would not seek vengeance on Jacob. God was wiser than

Satan, however. God had given great wealth to Esau as well (Genesis 33:9). This helped Esau from being in need, or possibly even in want. Some men do have their fill, and God had apparently blessed Esau this way.

We should see again here however that wealth does not equal God's salvation imparted to a man! In Hebrews 12:16, the New Testament only ever describes Esau as a profane man. His material blessings here were to actually protect and preserve Jacob, not Esau; God was looking out for Jacob by keeping Esau content! God is again several steps ahead of Satan here. Satan naturally does not think to bless another to protect another; his head is always in the gutter, just thinking about how to make men miserable. God uses both punishment and blessings, curses and good things, to have his plans go about! Satan's purely evil nature limits his toolbox; God wins again!

Jacob did press for Esau to accept the gift, and indeed Esau did. Surely this was to really make the point of Jacob's repentance, and to assure Esau no matter the future that he too benefited ultimately benefited from his father Isaac's blessings. This was wise of Jacob, as just like his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac, to foresee evil and prevent it as much as possible. There is much wisdom here in living in peace with all men, even if it costs us something (Romans 12:18). Satan naturally desired that Esau might change his mind, but with both Esau's now-softer heart, and a huge blessing to remember Jacob's sorry heart by, that opportunity never came directly through Esau.

Jacob and Esau's Parting – Chapter 34

With Jacob and Esau on good terms, Esau even invited Jacob to come home with him (Genesis 33:12). Jacob said he would catch up, but he was lying (again), unbeknownst to Esau. Esau then said he would leave some of his men behind to help (Genesis 33:15). Jacob said no, that Esau's favor was enough. Indeed, it was, but there was no point in lying to Esau at this point. Jacob, however, was such in the habit of lying, it was probably just natural at this point.

Either way, Satan had failed in getting Jacob and Esau to war, but Satan surely worked on his descendants (Numbers 20:21 and Obadiah 1:10-12). The Edomites, Esau's descendants, never showed Israel favor again after Jacob never returned with Esau, obviously had lied (and they assumed he lied instead of possibly surmising something else came up – we do tend to think the worse, do we not?). Esau never sought his brother again (this indicates Esau may have either remained soft-hearted or finally just got tired of Jacob and swore him off – we will not know until heaven), and Jacob never sought Esau again. They were of their separate ways now, as Jacob headed the opposite way to Sukkoth, where he built a house, and lived several years.

This was not where God had told Jacob to settle! God had told Jacob to settle in Bethel (Genesis 31:13), where Jacob had originally received the promises from God (in the dream of “Jacob's ladder”). This disobedience caused Jacob further grief living near the heathens, and gave Satan yet more chances to try to kill Jacob or corrupt the Messianic line. Even better than

that, as we will read in our next section, Satan would cause major death, destruction, rape, and other evil to come upon Jacob for his disobedience yet again.

Through all of this, God stuck with Jacob and kept His promises. God works with some difficult characters in Scripture; this author wonders why God chose these characters. It is possible, I suppose, that in that early world where evil lingered too, possibly the men chosen were actually the best available! Lest we not think too much of ourselves though; God uses us, despite our faults!

Dinah – Chapter 35

As Genesis 34 starts out, a daughter of Jacob wanders about to see about possibly making friends with the other local women (Genesis 34:1). The prince of the land saw her beauty, stole her away, and raped her (Genesis 34:2). After doing such a reprehensible thing, he decided them to seek her hand in marriage (Genesis 34:3-4). He did not ask Jacob, however; he asked his father, Hamor, assuming that his father would give his spoiled son whatever he wanted!

Satan naturally hoped to use the hapless wanderings and result thereof to Dinah to incite Jacob to war. Instead, Jacob held his peace, undoubtedly tired of constant previous battles (Genesis 34:5), at least for a time. Besides, his sons were out on business, so he had no real way to handle the situation with retaliation even if wanted to at the moment.

Later, Jacob's sons returned, as did Hamor to bargain for his son's potential bride. Shechem was of the Canaanites, Ham's descendants, so Satan naturally was hoping to mix the seed of the Shechemites and Jacob's descendants. If he could make this arranged marriage work, then the rest might follow suit. Since Jacob had so many sons (twelve total, eleven by this point), Satan needed “an army” of foreign women to make this happen. Who better than the Shechemites, so ready to give a great price for even just one sister? (Genesis 34:8-23)

Surely, the temptation had to be great, because Simeon and Levi devised an even more evil way to acquire the property promised by Hamor and the prince: they said if all the men of the area would be circumcised, then they would allow the marriage. So the men of Shechem did as Simeon and Levi said, but on the third day after their circumcision, when all of the men of the area were incapacitated because of the pain, Simeon and Levi drew swords and slayed all the men of the area, and took their women and idols and property for themselves.

Jacob was not pleased at all by the actions of his sons, but mostly because he now feared the other nearby peoples might seek vengeance on them (Genesis 34:30). Simeon and Levi, not sorry at all, simply defended their spoil by abusing their sister's name (Genesis 34:31). Dinah had not been “sold” for sex; she was no prostitute. She was raped; she did not consensually sleep with the prince. Her brothers merely used her to get what they wanted without having to bargain whatsoever with Hamor or the prince.

Jacob was in a crisis situation now, and not by his own doing, for once! Satan must have relished in Simeon and Levi's bloodlust, hoping perhaps that they would usurp their father, whom they undoubtedly viewed as meek and weak at this point. Instead, God in His ever-present wisdom, spoke to Jacob and reminded him to go to Bethel, where He would be under His protection (Genesis 35:1). Had Jacob went there originally, all of this bloody mess could have been avoided, as well as Simeon and Levi's sins. Yet God intervened and put fear into all the surrounding people, so they would not attack Jacob's family or possessions (Genesis 35:5).

In order for this to work though, the remainder of idolatry and heathenism needed to be shed from Jacob's camp. So in the first verses of Genesis 35, Jacob gets rid of Laban's gods among other remnants of idolatry and superstition and sets out for Bethel. For this, God blessed Jacob, and he was able to settle in Bethel, as was God's original plan.

Naturally, in all of this Satan had hoped to mix the seed of Jacob's sons, take advantage of their greed (which he did succeed in), possibly usurp Jacob's authority, get Jacob killed by the surrounding peoples' taste for vengeance, and to stop Jacob from reaching Bethel, the place of God's blessing. Satan also hoped to utilize God, if possible, to smote Jacob or his sons for their disobedience and violence. God had destroyed man before for their evil and disobedience (Genesis 6:1ff), so why not again? Yet God remained faithful and merciful, for through Levi would God even establish his future priesthood under the Mosaic law. Surely, God is merciful, and thankfully Satan cannot catch a break!

Reuben – Chapter 36

In Genesis 35, Jacob finally arrives at Bethel after being separate from it for thirty years. God appears to Jacob and again gives him the promises He had given him before.

After this promise, however, Satan influenced Reuben to sleep with his father's concubine, Bilhah. Bilhah was also two of his brothers' mother (Dan and Naphtali). Therefore, Satan was attempting to get rid of Jacob's firstborn through vengeance by either his father or his brothers, but instead Jacob did not take blood vengeance nor did his brothers. However, consequences did come, as in Jacob's prophecies regarding his sons starting in Genesis 49:3 and following.

The inheritance of the firstborn was denied Reuben, Simeon, and Levi all because of their past misdeeds. Therefore, Judah, the fourth born, would carry on Messiah's lineage. Judah would have his own serious problems later, as we will shortly read, but as usual God came through to defeat Satan at every turn and anticipate his every move. Yet, it can be said for Satan that he is determined and does not give up easily. It is so unfortunate that this creation of God would use his determination for nothing but pure evil for the entire duration of humanity!

Isaac's Death – Chapter 37

In Genesis 35, Isaac dies. Esau returns to bury his father with Jacob. Jacob, knowing he had lied to Esau earlier about returning to his land with him eventually, is naturally nervous to have Esau around again.

Also, if we remember back in Genesis 27:41 that Esau claimed that he would kill Jacob upon his father's death. Surely, Jacob had not forgotten this threat, and Satan hoped to capitalize on it.

Instead, they have peace, bury their father, and go their separate ways.

Satan naturally hoped to stir up old feelings in Esau, or to cause a classic Abraham/Lot, Isaac/Herdsman of Gerar-like potential for war, but nothing came of it.

God had anticipated this move by giving Esau the land of Mt. Seir (Deuteronomy 2:5). This meant that Esau would profit little or nothing from Jacob's perishing, so God anticipated any murderous feelings because potential jealousy or past anger.

Also, it is potentially possible that like Abraham sent Keturah's and Ishmael's sons and descendants away from Isaac, so it is possible that Isaac did the same with Jacob and his brother.

Satan would have at least to mixed Esau's descendants seed (now mixed with Hamitic blood from foreign and heathen women in his youth) with Isaac's descendants, but by God anticipating this move by keeping Esau content in Mt. Seir, this possible temptation by Satan was again thwarted.

God was intent to keep His promise to us and so He did!

Joseph – Chapter 38

Joseph is a character in the Bible that is always spoken of highly. It is interesting that God did not choose Joseph that Messiah's line would come through him, especially considering his righteousness and many chapters in the Bible his story occupies. Nonetheless, almost like John the Baptist, Joseph was to be more of a forerunner, but instead of for the Messiah directly, rather to eventually protect the one who would carry Messiah's line. Simply put, God sent Joseph to Egypt to be sure Jacob's family would survive the coming severe famine that Satan had planned. To do this, Joseph would have to go to Egypt, live in Egypt, and stay there. This would result in him marrying a Hamitic woman and fathering children after her. This by default meant he could not carry Messiah's seed, but God had an alternative plan as a result – the Messiah would come through Jacob's brother – Judah.

This author has found it to be incredibly refreshing to review Genesis in this matter, and it has strengthened my resolve further to regard Genesis very highly, and see each story as critical to building up to Jesus' coming. His presence is seen at points, but His coming is virtually foretold in every page! Likewise, we cannot and should not see any part of Genesis as mythical,

allegorical, or anything at all other than literal history. To do so, makes Jesus out to be a liar and a false Messiah. This cannot be!

This author believes a lot of people's approach to Genesis is unintentionally attempting to harmonize its content with so-called secular history. This is ultimately pointless, as the Bible records history, and secular revisionists naturally approach it purposefully to get away from the Bible. Any harmony with the Bible is naturally seen by the world, influenced by Satan to this day, as against their philosophy of life, as much as it is ever-varying.

We are told in Scripture not to fold to these ever-changing ideas (Luke 7:24, Matthew 11:7). No, we should stand like John the Baptist, firm on Scripture's truth, and let them argue with God. On His authority, they will have no ground by which to base a claim. If we attempt to speak on our own authority, we will fail. If we stand on the solid rock of Christ, and His teachings throughout the whole Bible, we cannot fail, even if the world chooses to otherwise (influenced still by that old enemy, the devil).

Needless to say, as it is common knowledge with student of the Bible, that Joseph was Jacob's favorite son by his favorite wife, Rachel. Joseph was the first-born son of Rachel, and thus in Jacob's mind, despite being the 11th born of his seed, as the heir-apparent. This can be seen in how he placed Rachel and Joseph at the rear of his presentation to the coming force of Esau in Genesis 33:2. Also, Jacob had given Joseph a "coat of many colors" (KJV). The Hebrew here really means, "a long sleeved coat". This coat, regardless, was Jacob's way of telling all the family that Joseph would be the primary heir, to receive a double-portion of the inheritance, and put in charge of Jacob's house when he passed.

As anyone can imagine, this did not sit well with Reuben, who was the actual first-born son to Jacob, nor to his other brothers, also by other mothers and feeling unimportant next to their youngest sibling (at the time), Joseph. So they devised a plan to kill him, but some resisted (most notably Reuben and Judah). Instead, they decided to sell Joseph (why kill when one can make a profit?). For twenty pieces of silver, they sold him to a caravan obviously sent of God to rescue Joseph from his murderous brothers' hands. This caravan consisted of descendants of Abraham's other sons, of Keturah and Hagar. They would take him away to Egypt, a Hamitic land, but God's purpose in this horrific state for Joseph would be made greatly apparent later.

In all of Scripture, Joseph's attitude and behavior is always painted brightly. God knew He would need a very tough and disciplined individual to endure all of the injustices Joseph would face in life, and indeed He chose the right man for the job. Joseph reminds of Job, of whom God said, "Have you seen my servant Job? In all the land there is no one like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." Like Job, Satan would test Joseph to the limits, but also like Job, God would elevate Joseph to great status, wealth, and protection for his faithfulness to God even in spite of great trial.

Back at home, Jacob was lied to by his jealous sons and deceived by goat's blood on his favorite son's coat. The man who deceived his own father with goat's hair would now be deceived by goat's blood! Jacob's consequence for sin was delayed many years here. Surely, we cannot know what battles we may face for present sin! May be repent, and ask for God's protection! Jacob suffered greatly here, and his sons saw his despondence daily for years, and eventually grew remorseful for their terrible sin (Genesis 42:21-22, 45:15).

Satan had many plans for Joseph – to kill him, enslave him, embitter him, and possibly turn him into a fornicator or murderer himself. Instead, Joseph remained faithful to God, and resisted the devil (James 4:7). God blessed Joseph greatly as a result, and Joseph played a key part in Jacob's family survival, ultimately to the survival of Messiah's line through Judah, all to our benefit even today!

Judah – Chapter 39

The story of Judah is one this author has long not understood until recently. In Genesis 38, Judah marries a Canaanite woman and bears him three sons, two of whom are verifiably useless. The first, Er, was so evil that God Himself killed him. However, Er had a Semitic wife chosen for him by Judah, through God's providence. His wife's name was Tamar. When Er died, Judah's second son, Onan, was obligated to father children after him with Tamar, and count those sons as Er's.

Instead, Onan spilled his seed instead of impregnating Tamar. Therefore, Onan did not fulfill his obligation, but very simply raped Tamar. This naturally embittered Tamar, and also made God angry, so God strung Onan down.

Judah is now down to one son, Shelah, but he was not yet of age. Judah told Tamar she must wait until Shelah comes of age, but Judah has no interest in having his last son killed (he falsely believed, as many parents do, that his sons had done no wrongdoing). So Judah keeps Shelah from Tamar, even when he comes of age. This keeps Tamar from bearing children, and likely poor while widowed.

Therefore, Tamar had a plan of revenge for Judah. She dressed as a prostitute and veiled her face. Judah was looking for a prostitute (Tamar must have known he trolled for them), and found Tamar, unbeknownst of who she was. She gave him a price, of whom he did not have the cash handy to pay, so instead he handed her various personal effects in exchange for sex.

Tamar became impregnated with twin boys as a result. Judah later sent a friend to redeem ("pay for") his items from the prostitute, but she could not be found. Instead, Judah found out Tamar was pregnant, and naturally he knew it was not Shelah who had slept with her, so he purposed to burn or brand her with fire. Judah was worried for being ashamed over the prostitute, but ironically, the Bible recorded forever his sin of fornication with Tamar!

When Judah was found out with regards to his fathering Tamar's children, he knew her no more, and she gave birth. The birthright was so advantageous that a scarlet thread was tied around the twin who stuck his hand out first. Although Pharez was born first, Zarah was given the birthright because he had the scarlet thread around his finger.

Satan did not know at this point that Judah was going to be who Messiah would come through. Satan did know, however, that one of Jacob's seeds would carry the line of Messiah, so he was systematically working through each. He successfully tempted Reuben into fornicating with his father's concubine and persuaded Simeon and Levi to murder the people of Shechem. Judah was next in line and Satan thought he had Judah when he kept Shelah from Tamar, and also when Tamar would fornicate with Judah. Surely, Messiah could not come from such a relationship!

However, God's thoughts were higher than Satan's thoughts, and God's ways were higher than Satan's ways (Isaiah 55:8): God knew Judah, from Shem, would also need to bear a son through a Semitic woman – hence, Tamar. Even through this relationship born of prostitution, resulting in fornication, the proper seed was born to Judah and Tamar as a result.

Satan must have been very frustrated coming to realize later that Judah and Tamar's offspring would successfully carry Messiah's seed! God would use the story of Tamar and Judah in Messiah's line to prove that the promised seed was ultimately conceived of grace, not merit.

Potiphar's Wife – Chapter 40

Satan, at this point, is not aware of whom the Promised Seed would come through, but he thinks the same as Jacob's sons did – it would likely be Joseph. So, Satan endlessly tries to kill Joseph. At this point in Joseph's life, he is in Egypt, and doing well serving in Potiphar's wife.

Satan stirs an unlikely helper in Potiphar's wife. We are not told her name, much to her fortune. Nonetheless, she finds herself being attracted to Joseph, and him being her slave, she feels entitled to him.

Joseph, a God-fearing man (even through all of his many trials), believe this would be a crime to God and to his master. He resists, and eventually has to flee from Potiphar's wife to stop any possibility of adultery.

Nonetheless, Satan stirs Potiphar's wife to revenge, and she seeks it by claiming that Joseph attempted to rape her. Potiphar burns with anger and has Joseph thrown in prison. Joseph, through near divine-patience, never skips a beat, and actually rises to be in authority *even while in prison*.

It is remarkable that God did not choose Joseph to be the son through whom Messiah would come through. Joseph does not have a negative thing spoken about him in Scripture, and he is revered throughout. However, Joseph's unique place in God's plan meant he would live out

his life in Egypt, and simply by default, would marry a Hamitic wife. This alone disqualifies Joseph from carrying Messiah's line, but Joseph's sons would enjoy land allotments when the twelve tribes later settle in Canaan. Nonetheless, Satan attacks Joseph, assuming up to the point of his marriage that he would still be the heir of Jacob, and the son through whom Messiah would come through.

Joseph, while in prison, interprets the dreams of the cupbearer and baker, and through this develops a reputation over time as being one capable of this remarkable ability. This later brings him before Pharaoh, of whom he interprets his dreams as well. For both interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and giving God the credit, God moves Pharaoh to place Joseph as second in command in Egypt.

This move by God kept Satan distracted and also kept Satan guessing after Joseph eventually marries a Hamitic woman. Satan did not anticipate that Joseph's place in Egypt was not about bringing the Messiah through him, but rather preserving the rest of Jacob's family in Egypt for the coming famine, through whom Messiah would eventually come through Judah's seed. Satan could not have seen God's providence forthcoming.

This author has often wondered why Satan keeps trying to thwart God when it is truly hopeless to do so. I speculate that either Satan is so proud, haughty, hateful, and evil, that he is simply content presently to take down as many with him as possible, or that perhaps he is so haughty to actually believe that he will somehow, someday win out over God. Or possibly both, I suppose. Either way, God anticipates every move of Satan, and has a plan for every contingency, much to Satan's constant disappointment.

Joseph and Pharaoh – Chapter 41

Undoubtedly God moved Pharaoh to have dreams his wise men could not interpret. Instead, Pharaoh's cupbearer would remember the favor his young friend in prison did for him, and he informed Pharaoh. Pharaoh acquiesced and sent for Joseph.

It is hard to believe here that Pharaoh would listen to a lowly, previously-imprisoned cupbearer without providential influence. Just as Satan was always working in the background to destroy Messiah's line and corrupt the world with sin and evil, God was always working to make sure the right conditions and the right people were in place to see His purposes through. To this day, He does this through us (Romans 8:28).

So God made Pharaoh's dreams so intense, so disturbing, and confusing enough to make his own wise men confounded, that Pharaoh got desperate. At this point, listening to a lowly, previously-imprisoned cupbearer tell him of an imprisoned slave with a supposed gift seemed like as good of an idea as any. Surely, God put this desperation in Pharaoh's heart by making the dreams so intense and disturbing.

God had a plan for Joseph, but more importantly, a plan for Jacob's family as a whole. By giving Joseph power in Egypt to prepare for the coming famine brought by Satan, He also would provide food for Jacob's family, preserving Messiah's line through yet an undisclosed son.

Satan naturally hoped that Pharaoh would slay the cupbearer for even speaking to him, or to make such a preposterous statement than a lowly, imprisoned slave could actually be of use to him. Satan also hoped that perhaps Pharaoh would reject Joseph's interpretation and slay him on the spot. However, in all of this, God had paved the way, and Satan had been confounded again!

Joseph's brothers came to Egypt during the famine (just like Abraham, but this time, by God's providence), and eventually Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, and supplied them grain. More than that even, Joseph forgave his brothers with the following words: "But as for you, you brought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to save many people from dying" (Genesis 50:20).

Joseph was truly a remarkable person. Satan had tortured him his entire adult life, and yet Joseph never lost faith in God. How much more are our failings to trust in God with so much less temptation and difficulty! Nonetheless, God did not bring Messiah through Joseph, possibly as the greatest trick or decoy he ever played on Satan. God instead chose a far less than righteous man, Judah, to bring Messiah's seed through.

God's unfolding plan revealed that it would never be about man's merit but his grace, and by keeping Satan guessing, he was able to deal with Judah's weaknesses as it was without too much additional interference with Satan as he was distracted with Joseph. Even with Jacob's reunion with Joseph, Jacob still would not bless Joseph as the one through whom Messiah would come, but instead God chose Judah.

Satan would only know to expect the unexpected after Jacob's predictions to his sons! Surely Satan learned that he would really have to up his efforts even from his previous heinousness to have any hope of killing off Messiah's line. However, he would never succeed, thanks be to God!

Jacob in Egypt – Chapter 42

Joseph was now royalty to his brothers, as he had originally dreamed and told his brothers about. Even Jacob's rejection of Joseph's dreams did not stop them from coming true. These predictions that came true did not make Joseph proud, however. Instead, Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 50:20), and even warned them not to quarrel on the way home to retrieve their father, Jacob.

Satan would have loved to see Joseph's brothers quarrel over their past evil dealings with Joseph, but Joseph foresaw this potential evil, and warned his brothers in advance. With the

obvious power and prestige Joseph had in his new position, and the obvious predictions of Joseph's dreams come true, they listened much to their advantage.

Jacob, upon hearing the news, did not at first believe his sons. This is interesting, as surely Satan was hoping to instill a permanent depression in Jacob and have him simply refuse to reopen an old but still painful emotional wound. What if his sons were lying to him, or playing the world's cruelest joke? Surely, these things flashed into Jacob's mind by the hand of Satan.

This also interestingly brings up the point that a lie invoked an emotional response in Jacob, when his sons lied to him about Joseph's passing. Then, when he is presented with truth, that Joseph was alive, he had no emotional reaction. This goes to show how frail our hearts are when it comes to judging truth. We cannot rely on how we feel to make a determination of truth! Satan still uses this tool to fool many people, even believers, into false belief or sinful behavior. Instead, we must instead obey God, and not make judgments based on our feelings.

Instead, Joseph and Jacob were reunited, much to Satan's chagrin. Surely, Satan would be thinking, now Jacob would give his powerful, elevated son the birthright! Fascinatingly enough, Jacob did not do this. God had other plans, and Satan likely is sitting there thinking, "Now what?"

Also interesting, Abraham was not supposed to go to Egypt but trust God, but God let him go even to his own difficulties. Isaac was forbidden to go, but God now uses Egypt to provide for Jacob and his family. Jacob offered sacrifices to God for His faithfulness, and God blessed Jacob and his family in Egypt thereafter.

Jacob's testimony to Pharaoh that his life had been harder than his ancestors was certainly true. Naturally, this was due to Jacob's many bad decisions, lies, and sin. Nonetheless, God kept His promises to Jacob, and Jacob was able to live his last years in peace by God's grace.

Finally, Joseph – surely by God's leading – tells his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds. Egyptians despised shepherds, so this means that Pharaoh would not allow intermarriage and also would keep them separate. This would set the stage for the Exodus, and also to keep the nation that started with Abraham still pure. Joseph was wise until the end, and trusted God, and was rewarded with a peaceful life under Pharaoh for him and his family the rest of his days.

Satan would have loved to intermarry the nation of Abraham with the Hamitic wives of Egypt. Joseph did marry a Hamitic wife, but since he was not the carrier of Messiah's seed, this was inconsequential.

Instead, God was ahead of Satan, and kept Jacob's family separate both in marriage and physical location going forward. God was also able to give Jacob and his family a respite, and Satan would be forced to sit on his hands largely speaking until the time he was able to raise up a

Pharaoh that respected not Joseph. This he would eventually do, but it would be hundreds of years later, well past any possibility to torture Jacob, Joseph, Judah, or any of the others substantially. They would die, and instead their very fruitful descendants would deal with Satan's new round of difficulties.

Jacob's Blessings – Chapter 43

This author has realized how little he had previously undervalued stories like Jacob's blessings to his sons. To the average church member, and even this previous Bible college graduate, I had never come to an appreciation of the many purposes of God and plots of Satan involved in this seemingly-peaceful section of Scripture.

Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years before his death. He called his sons to him and gave the patriarchal blessing.

Jacob's blessings to his sons are a planned affair. Isaac's blessing to Jacob definitely was not planned, as Jacob effectively stole it from his older brother Esau and against the will of his father. Abraham's blessing to Isaac was foretold by God and Abraham gave it exactly as he should. It is interesting here that God gives Jacob the opportunity to bless his sons without difficulty after the great difficulty he gave his father and brother. Nonetheless, we can see God's grace at work here, as after Jacob is brought to Egypt, he no longer endures any particular noted trouble.

Jacob starts out with blessing Joseph's mixed sons, basically bringing them into the Israelite fold. Interestingly enough, he blesses the younger above the older, despite Joseph's wishes, however they both inherit land in Canaan later on.

Jacob then lets Reuben know that he will not inherit the birthright, be the seed through whom Messiah would come, nor would he excel, for he slept with his father's concubine, and has shown repeated poor judgment. As we understand it in Biblical record, neither Reuben nor his descendants excelled going forward. None became anyone of high esteem.

Simeon and Levi were passed over to be Messiah's seed or to bear the birthright because of their sin of deceiving and murdering the Shalmites. Nonetheless, through grace, the priesthood was given to Levi, and Simeon still was given a land inheritance.

Joseph would receive the birthright, but Judah was given the promise of Messiah's seed and the tribe of the Kingship. In the famous prophecy, Jacob promises Judah that the Kingship would not pass from his descendants until Shiloh ("He whose right it is", or Messiah) would come (Genesis 49:10).

In the previous verses, Satan hears the threat that a descendant of Judah would be the Messiah. Target acquired! Truly, Satan caused much grief for the descendants of Judah from this point forward, naturally hoping to kill off the Messianic line. Satan would get very close many

times, but God was always one step ahead, keeping His promise ultimately to all nations, including you and me!

This prophecy had a profound impact even 1,700 years later when Christ would come, as Herod was sitting on David's throne, the first King not of Judah to do so. This was a very obvious sign that Messiah was among them! Also, when the Jews crucified Christ and confessed, "We have no king but Caesar" they were openly admitting that Judah's Kingship had been given to another, and Messiah's presence was obvious. Their only confession to killing the Christ would be the basis for Peter's sermon just a little while later in Acts 2, and their response would bring us the classic plan of salvation still recited to convicted sinners today!

Satan therefore would attempt at every turn to dethrone and kill Judah's descendants. What a quandary it must have been then when God gave Israel a king from Benjamin after the period of the Judges. But even confused, Satan attacked Saul anyway, and nearly got David in the process, a person obviously in the line of Judah. Nonetheless, at this point, Jacob's peaceful predictions are laid, and Satan knows his next target, and Judah now knows the responsibility, weight, and glory of what he carries within his loins.

Joseph Dies – Chapter 44

One last struggle with Satan occurs in Genesis: Jacob's death and the opportunity now for Joseph to take unrequited vengeance on his brothers if he so desired. Satan naturally hoped now with nothing to lose and revenge to gain that Joseph would slay his brothers, stopping the line of Messiah by seeing to the death of Judah, who participated in the profitable gain of selling Joseph to the caravan of slave traders.

Instead, Jacob blesses his brothers in Genesis 50:25, and commands (as he is in a place of authority, both in Egypt and with Jacob's birthright) that they bury him with his father, who was previously buried with Abraham and Isaac by his same request.

From beginning to end, Joseph was God's man. Not a single misdeed of Joseph was recorded in Scripture, making him a type of the Christ to come in over forty unique ways. An overview from Dr. Faull from his book "Typology" available at abarc.org details these specifics (highly recommended by this author – it's also free!).

Joseph also sets his family's eyes back to Canaan by promising them in Genesis 50:25 that God would carry them out of Egypt at a future time. Indeed, He would, in what may be the Old Testament's most popular and well known story – the Exodus.

Genesis begins with life in a garden and ends with death in a coffin. But Genesis is just the beginning of the celestial battle between God and Satan. Instead, God's plans to bring Messiah through the Semitic race, through the nation of Abraham, and the tribe of Judah, has Satan on edge knowing he has yet failed to prevent Messiah's seed from coming. The promised

one who would crush Satan's head and redeem man was still coming and Satan was ultimately powerless to do anything about it!

The study of Genesis ends here. A full-one quarter of this volume is based on Genesis alone; hopefully, this inspires the reader to reconsider Genesis as absolutely foundation, in a literal and historical sense, to the Bible's message. Surely, the whole point of any Bible study is to grow not only intellectually, but as a whole man to serve God more faithfully. May this author and his readers do just that!

Satan's attempts, though futile, would not end here. With a period of Scriptural silence, we can be sure neither God nor Satan was "taking a break." Instead, God was working on bringing up Moses out of Levi (as well as his brother Aaron) and Satan was watching God's every move, getting to ready on any opportunity, and as we will see, he does exactly that in great force with the birth of Moses.

The Egyptian Genocide – Chapter 45

Messiah was still to come through Judah (Genesis 49:10). Nonetheless, the Exodus begins with the birth of a Levite from two Levite parents, Moses. Moses would be God's key character to establish the Hebrew religion and start the process of bringing about a people through whom the Messiah was to come through.

Naturally, Satan would be very much against God having a whole nation by which to protect the line of Messiah, so he tries to stop the birth of Moses from the start. He works through Pharaoh to be afraid of the Hebrews as they had grown great in number and the new Pharaoh did not know Joseph and the promises made to him. Satan therefore moved Pharaoh to enslave the Hebrews, which he was obviously capable of doing at the time. The Hebrews, previously being free people, largely did not see this coming, even with the prophecy given to Abram before (Genesis 15:13-16). This indicates they were not large or militarized enough to resist this new oppression.

God foresaw the Hebrews' affliction, however, and moved to protect Moses, the other baby boys in Egypt, and raise up Israel to leave Egypt. Pharaoh, under Satan's influence, called for the death of every Hebrew baby boy born to be slain. He instructed the midwives to be present and be sure the boys were killed. However, they did not do as Pharaoh instructed and said the Hebrew women gave birth before the midwives showed up. God blessed them for them for standing up for the Hebrew babies' lives by giving them families of their own.

Satan tried to work through Pharaoh and the midwives. When that did not work, he called upon Pharaoh again to fear the Hebrew people who grew even more numerous, and simply demanded that every baby boy to be thrown into the Nile river. Satan failed again, as the Hebrews continued to grow in number.

God was building a nation by which to protect the line of Messiah against Satan's previous individual attacks to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons. This explains why Satan went after Moses after this point, but also every baby boy born in Egypt, because any of those boys born to the tribe of Judah could be Messiah, and Moses was obviously special to God's plan to protect Messiah's line by raising up a nation under him.

Some scholars propose a problem with the Bible's math with regards to the Egyptian captivity. There are also liberal scholars who claim that the Exodus never happened due to a "lack of evidence" for it. Let us quickly debunk both points: 1) God's prophecy in Genesis 15:13-16 about "four hundred years" is from the time Ishmael (of an Egyptian mother, married to an Egyptian woman) began to persecute Isaac (a Hebrew), and 2) any lack of evidence for something does not presume nor deny its existence. Many things in history are known only by their respective written accounts. Besides, there is extra-Biblical literature from the time period of Pharaoh Rameses II that indicates that the Israelite tabernacle shared similarities with the Egyptian temple setups and thus the presence of Israeli influence in Egypt is certain.

Moses, Pharaoh's Grandson – Chapter 46

As discussed previously, Pharaoh – under the influence of Satan – attempted to kill Moses. He failed because God's move on the checkerboard was to have Moses hidden away in floating basket, which providentially ended up at the river where the daughter of Pharaoh was. Miriam, an obviously brave little girl (and as we will learn about later, sometimes too brave/brash), approached the princess and asked if she would like one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby. The princess agreed, and Moses would grow up safe in Pharaoh's household, with his own mother!

This goes to show that Satan means to kill Moses was not only foolish, but greatly amplified his difficulty in getting to Moses now that he was a protected member of Pharaoh's household. How wise is our God! Moses received the full education and protection of his Egyptian upbringing, and no doubt excelled like Joseph before him. It would be nearly forty years before Satan had another chance at Moses, so in the meantime, Satan made life for the Hebrews as miserable as possible. God would take advantage of this situation as well.

When Moses was forty years old, he took up the cause of a fellow but stricken Hebrew and killed the Egyptian who was abusing him. The Israelites, in their usual cool and cooperative manner (sarcasm), replied to Moses' later preaching to them (this was really a foreshadowing of how later Moses really would be their preacher, and then would still be their predictable, difficult selves), "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" Being found out, Moses fled Egypt. He settled in Midian, where he married Zipporah and learned a whole new way of life – nomadic shepherding.

Moses would have learned from his upbringing that Egyptians looked down on shepherds (this is why Joseph told Pharaoh long ago that the Israelites were shepherds, to keep them

separated). Certainly, Moses never would have been a shepherd or been associated with one as a child. So, this was definitely a humbling and life-changing experience for him. God also showed him providentially the land of the wilderness where he would later lead the Israelites through to Canaan.

Satan was not worried about Moses while he was in exile. Just like Satan thought Jesus was defeated on the cross and took a break, so he took a break from Moses while he was in exile. He thought God's plans were ruined and Moses was no longer a player in God's plans. The exact opposite was brewing – God was preparing Moses – and Satan would not anticipate nor be ready for the incredible plans God had for all of Israel in Egypt.

It is not recorded that the slavery of the Israelites got worse until Moses reappeared and demanded the people be let go, so we can assume that Satan largely speaking took a break for these forty years, simply enjoying the affliction of God's people, and believing with Moses gone there was nothing else to worry about or plan for. When we understand Satan is not omniscient, we can see where he would come to believe all was well in his evil mind.

Moses and the Midianites – Chapter 47

There is one incident where Satan tried to kill Moses during his time with the Midianites, and that was at the very beginning (no doubt, just trying to make sure if there was an opportunity to “get at” Moses, he was not going to miss it):

Moses met the daughters of the priest of Midian at a well, where they were trying to water their father's flocks. Some shepherds came by and tried to drive them away, drawing Moses into the battle. Moses defended the women, and drove off the shepherds. Moses, at only forty, and undeniably with his Egyptian training in combat, was able not only to drive off multiple offending shepherds, but make himself naturally quite “the catch” for a particular daughter of the priest of Midian. Indeed, he would marry Zipporah, who would remind and perform for him of a particularly-important matter he would later neglect.

Moses, the Burning Bush, and Zipporah's Anger with Moses – Chapter 48

God speaks to Moses in a burning bush, explaining who He is and what His mission for Moses is. Moses has many excuses, but God answers Him each one, and equips Him all the same for the mission. When God calls, God equips. Moses did take Aaron with him to confront Pharaoh, and God permitted this.

Interestingly enough, Moses had not circumcised his son as a descendant of Abraham. Zipporah, angry with Moses because he had not done it, did it for Moses. This particular story is often ripped out of context by liberals to try to say the Bible is full of crazy people doing mean things to kids. Actually, Zipporah saved Moses from God's wrath, as an angel of wrath would have come to destroy Moses had it not been done. Zipporah is like all good mothers and wives

protecting their husbands and families – filling in the gaps – where he does not measure up. Throughout history, she has had to endure abuse by those who do not understand her. Satan, of course, revels in any opportunity to paint a faithful person in a bad light, both then and today.

Satan is “back in business” at this point with Moses now that he knows God has called him and Moses has agreed to go. God is already aware that Satan was back at Pharaoh’s court, readying Pharaoh to deny Moses his request, so God warns Moses that Pharaoh will not let the people go at first.

When Moses arrives in Egypt, he approaches the elders of Israel and tells them what God has shared with them. Moses also demonstrates the miraculous powers God has provided him, as proof that God had sent them. This was a foreshadowing of how again God always empowered his ambassadors at the beginning of each dispensation. The dispensation of the Patriarchs was coming to an end and the age of the Mosaic Law was imminent. This would also be true at the beginning of the Christian age, where God equipped His Apostles and their co-workers in the faith with miraculous signs to confirm the message. Miracles without preaching just produce confusion, but with preaching, cause even the ignorant to believe, as the Israelites did.

Naturally, this upset Satan greatly. Moses was not only called and obeyed, but was equipped with miraculous powers, and the people of Israel were behind him. Here was the nation God was using to protect the line of Messiah, ready to revolt! However, God would not use the great numbers of Israel to defeat Pharaoh’s army. He would not use force of arms or give any man that credit. No, God would be sure the Israelites for all time would recognize that He alone brought them out of Egypt. The entire Mosaic Law constantly reflects and is built on that truth.

Moses and Pharaoh – Chapter 49

Moses, now eighty, appeared in front of Pharaoh and demanded the Israelites be freed to hold a feast to their God in the wilderness. Pharaoh refused, instead asking, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” Pharaoh’s question would be answered most profoundly!

A funny aside relevant to the topic at hand - one of my professors at Central, Mr. Lloyd Pelfrey, became the interim minister of the Central Christian Church in Moberly, Missouri at eighty-three years old. He published in the college’s newsletter, “Moses began his career at eighty. I am just three years late.”

Pharaoh not only refused Moses’ request, but Satan also tempted Pharaoh to make the Hebrews’ lives even more miserable by denying them straw to make their mud bricks. Satan hoped not only to use Pharaoh against Moses, but his own people, and sure enough, the people upon the first prick of new persecution, rejected Moses once again.

This would be a theme of the Israelites, especially spelled out in the book of Numbers later on, that the Israelites were a fickle, whiny group of people whose allegiance would turn

towards anyone who made their life easier or promised them good things without hard work or obedience to God's Law. Certainly, the same is true here – the Israelites thought Moses and Aaron imposters now, and grieved Moses and Aaron as a result. No doubt, Satan was also hoping that perhaps Moses and Aaron would just give up – are these people really worth saving? On their own merit, no, but on the merit that all of mankind's salvation would come through their seed in Jesus, specifically through the tribe of Judah, yes!

God speaks to Moses again and reminds him that He is with them and that He would keep His promises that he made to the Hebrews' descendants. Moses then returned to the Israelites' leaders to tell them what God had said, but they rejected him. So Moses went to Pharaoh again and demanded he let the people go. Moses performed an array of miracles by God's hand to show up the wise men, priests, and sorcerers of Pharaoh's court. God providentially stayed Satan's abilities to make it clear to all of Egypt that God was in control. No doubt, Satan was frustrated at God's "heavy hand" here, and instead moved to keep the peoples of both Israel and Egypt discontent with the situation at hand.

Ten plagues were then sent upon Egypt, each specifically with the purpose of "defeating" the various false gods of Egypt (Numbers 33:4). Upon the final plague – the death of the firstborn – Pharaoh relented, sent away the Israelites, and asked Moses for his blessing also.

God had provided a way for the angel of death to "pass over" the homes of the Israelites – they were to kill a lamb and paint the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. Upon doing this, their firstborns would be spared the wrath of God. The Israelites did so, and their sons were spared.

Satan did not realize God's method to spare Israel would be a shadow of Christ's sacrifice to come. Just as it was possible for the people of Israel to enter their "rest" from slavery because of the Passover lamb, so we are able to enter our rest because of Jesus as the lamb sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

One of Satan's greatest lies is convincing people he does not exist. Satan could not "fight for" the gods of Egypt without revealing himself to them (and thus making it known to the idol-worshipping Egyptians they too needed to follow God). All the same, Satan could not see the purpose of the Passover Lamb until it was too late to stop it. Satan's helplessness here shows his frustration and therefore his re-invigoration of Pharaoh to pursue in the Israelites in the wilderness. This would result in Pharaoh and his army's destruction, as well as Satan's defeat in preventing the whole nation of God now protecting the Messianic line from coming together.

The Exodus – Chapter 50

Pharaoh let the Israelites go and the Egyptians gave all manner of things to the Israelites. Some of the Egyptians left with them, undeniably convinced that the God of the Israelites were greater than their gods. Even though this was intelligent of them, this mixed multitude would see

things were not all rosy in the wilderness, and would be the first to cause murmuring among the Israelites.

Let us examine further how Satan used the mixed multitude: the Egyptians that left with the Israelites were *not previously slaves*. Therefore, they had no memory of Egypt being bad before Moses showed up. Now, their lives (specifically speaking of the Egyptians that left with them) likely were a downgrade from their previous lives in Egypt.

It would not take long for the mixed multitude to stir up other discontent Israelites to take up their cause that the wilderness was actually worse than Egypt. Naturally, some really believed this; others were just using it as an excuse to try to get Moses to act on their behalf to their benefit.

It is the experience of this author that people both in business (personally, 14 years experience full-time) and church (in both volunteer and paid occupations) exaggerate, take sides, and murmur to try to get what they want. Very few people go straight to leadership, present their cause, and submit to the rulings that God has ordained would come through His designated human rulers. Instead, just like the children of Israel, gossip, murmuring, complaining, and exaggeration became the norm. Methinks there has not been an iota of evolution in the way humans deal with their complaints for 3500 years!

Satan naturally hoped to stir up God's wrath against His people because of their murmuring, and indeed He did many times (but not to their complete destruction, and always preserving the Messianic line). Satan hoped the murmuring people would intermarry with the Israelites, especially the tribe of Judah, to corrupt the Messianic line, but God protected it all along.

Moses (with God's permission) did graciously allow the mixed multitude to join but only if they swore to the covenant and were circumcised. This story reminds this author how God permitted Abram to take Lot with him, but all Lot did was cause him endless grief. All the same, God gives us "permission" for lots of things – gives us free will in fact – but the consequences are our own to bear!

Satan tempted Pharaoh and his army to pursue the Israelites in the desert and he did to his destruction. Israel (and the mixed multitude) was initially afraid, so they murmured against Moses. Moses reminded them that God would save them and fight for them, which He did. The Red Sea crossing was the Israelites' immersion (1 Corinthians 10:2), to their salvation, just as it was the destruction of the Egyptian army. Water can both nourish and destroy. God is the master of water, and Lord of all.

Exodus 14:13 says Moses affirmed for the Israelites that it was the God of their forefathers who had rescued them out of Egypt. Indeed, it was, and everyone (including the

Egyptians) knew it. Satan trembled at the knowledge that God's plan was coming true, just as He said!

Before the Law – Chapter 51

Satan, now fully activated after the Exodus, moves to destroy the people of Israel while they are exposed in the desert, still en route to wherever God was leading them (Satan did not know where at the time). He repeatedly tempted the Israelites to complain, and they did. Satan hoped God would destroy them for their ungratefulness, but God in His grace was merciful and endured their petty murmuring.

Satan also sent Amalek to make war with Israel, naturally hoping to kill many Israelites in the battle. God instructed Moses to hold up his rod, and Aaron and Hur held up his arms with him to be sure Amalek would be defeated. However, Amalek would come again upon Israel later; Satan is nothing if not persistent!

God's next move on the checkerboard was to give this newly-freed people a Law. That may sound very strange, especially to denominational folk who believe that "freed" people do not live "by works of law." No, God's people have always had a law, be it either in the Patriarchal dispensation, the Mosaic dispensation, or even the Christian dispensation. The difference is we cannot be saved by works of the old Law; it was not presented to be saving law, but instead a law that would point out the Savior that would rise up through it, be the only one to live it out perfectly, and then be sacrificed to complete it, ushering in the ministration of grace after it.

Satan to this day loves this confusion and has presently won a large chunk of "Christendom" through this lie. James, in his book, tries very hard to convince the Christians of his time that Paul was speaking not of works in general, but of the works of the Mosaic Law. Still, many people reject James' text (Lutherans), or reinterpret it to their flawed theology (Baptists). However, it is not hard to harmonize Paul, James, Jesus, and the law of Moses – the law of Moses was a temporary law to point to Christ – the one and only perfect Law-Giver, now King of His church, where we must certainly do live under His law, but it is a law whose yoke is easy and burden is light in comparison to the heavy-handedness of the law of Moses.

The Law of Moses was *designed* to be difficult, unattractive, and impossible. Paul teaches us in Hebrews that animals could not atone for sin (and Paul was a Hebrew, an educated one, and a Pharisee!). Jesus teaches us that He came to complete the law's purpose, not abolish it. Moses taught us to look ahead to one to come. And James teaches us that the law of Christ is works of faith instead of works of law. Yet, Satan continues successfully to use this deception to the destruction of many – even many sincere, "God-fearing" people.

The Law of Moses – Chapter 52

God gave the Law of Moses to the people of Israel to protect them from outside influence, specifically to safeguard the Messianic line. In times past, God had protected the Patriarchs through His direct intervention and now would protect them with a distinct law that would keep them separate from outside influence and intermarriage.

God protected his people from intermarriage for only one single purpose: to protect the line of Messiah so all of God's prophecies would be true, Jesus would be recognizable, and there would be no legitimate question of God's character or Jesus' legitimacy. God's protection from intermarriage had absolutely nothing to do with race or racial superiority. Indeed, God had promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham (Genesis 12:3). This would include all people groups, races, and geographic locations.

God's law was setup in such a way that would necessarily make Judaism unattractive to the outsider, intermarriage impractical, and even deals with outside nations to be difficult. God wanted Israel independent, self-sufficient, and obedient, so Messiah could come along, be recognized, and the whole earth saved from sin and Satan's influence.

Satan naturally had another idea entirely. He would do his best to make the many elements of following the law a burden – when he could not get Israel to worship idols and live immorally – he would tempt them with rule-mongering, making even the Sabbath a miserable experience by the time Jesus came.

Satan would tempt the teachers of the Law (much like our modern day college professors) to cleverly reinterpret the law to suit their own preferences. Jesus exposes the teachers of the Law at one point when they said Moses permitted a certificate of divorce to dissolve a marriage, but Jesus correctly pointed out that though this was permitted by Moses, it was not part of God's original plan for marriage and in fact caused much grief.

Satan would create sects inside of Judaism (the Sadducees, Pharisees, among others) to stir up the people, take sides, create their own traditions, and demand they be followed. People would be put above other people (instead of just people doing their jobs), prayers in public would be for their own gratification, and tithing would become show-boating.

Satan would try to corrupt the priests (and succeeded many times) or make them lazy. Satan would try to get the tribes to intermarry with each other to corrupt the Messianic line, but God set into place the Year of Jubilee and inheritance laws against that to make such a proposition impractical and undesirable by any family of stature.

Although Satan would in many ways succeed in the above, he still never managed to corrupt the Messianic line or smote out God's people entirely. There would be some close calls, but God always triumphed. Praise is to God, to be so faithful to us who are often so faithless!

The Law Kept Judah Distinct – Chapter 53

God foresaw Satan's desire to eradicate the Messianic line. Therefore, God also put laws into place to keep the tribe of Judah distinct from the rest. To emphasize that Judah, though it carried the Messianic line, was not "better" or superior in anyway, these laws applied to all tribe, and God even put Judah in the front of any battle line. That last part must have really made Satan smile, thinking perhaps that God would do the work of eradicating Messiah's line for him!

The laws kept intermarriage from being practical, work separate, census of battle-ready men recorded, genealogies kept, jurisdictions strict, sacrificial timing apart, and families in each tribe raising up seed internally.

All of the above anticipated Satan's possible moves. God knew to keep the Messianic line distinct and alive; He would need laws so the people would know how to live and keep within the bounds of mercy the Law provided. As we all well know, the Israelites bounced back and forth through much of their history as to how well they followed the law (or not followed it), but God always kept what order was necessary to see Messiah through.

Satan, from the beginning, has wanted to destroy God's beloved creation, man. God has always desired the salvation of his creation, and He has seen to it every step of the way. Thanks be to God!

Aaron and the Golden Calf – Chapter 54

Satan has always preyed on impatience and the opportunity for complaint. Some people just love drama and being in a constant state of turmoil. The people of Israel were no different.

While Moses was gone receiving the law from God, the people came to Aaron, his second-hand man, and asked him to make them a god to worship. They brought him their gold earrings and he melted them down to make a golden calf.

This author has always hated this story because my middle name is Aaron and this is the story I always think of when I consider the origin of my middle name. However, it has been pointed out to me that Aaron would later be appointed High Priest, but obviously not from merit, but as a showing of God's grace. Likewise, I can understand my name as one who has been forgiven in the past, as God still does for me to this day!

It is amazing that Aaron just went along with the request of the people. Satan obviously was using Aaron's vulnerability here without Moses to expose him to an unrighteous temptation. Aaron could have just wanted something to do, something for the people to do to get off his back, or because he too started to doubt that Moses was ever coming back. I'm sure the hours felt like days to Aaron, left alone in a leadership vacuum without Moses.

It is also amazing that God did not strike Aaron dead for his grievous error. Satan certainly wanted all of the people of Israel to die, including Moses and Aaron, but since Moses was busy with God, he took advantage of the rest by tempting the people into idolatry, and

tempting Aaron to give in. Though they both did sin, God showed great mercy on the people by allowing them to live and as well to still give them the law, continuing to honor His promises to us through them.

Paul tells us later on in the book of Hebrews that the Levitical priesthood began and continued always with imperfect men, giving up a sacrifice first for themselves, and then later for all the people. Jesus, instead, was the first and only priest, who offered himself up as the perfect sacrifice, once for all. The imperfect Levitical priesthood began with Aaron, with the memory of supporting idolatry fresh yet forgiven, but the perfect priesthood of Jesus after Melchizedek would be the only priesthood that could take away the sins of the world.

Moses Makes Intercession – Chapter 55

Satan was naturally full of glee that the Israelites had made a false god to worship. He hoped of course that God would smite His people, destroy the Messianic line, and just give up on the whole idea of redeeming man. God had stated before that he had regretted making man; why not finish the job and just consume them all?

So God puts the test to Moses: God states to Moses that He is going to go down and destroy the people who have so quickly betrayed him and instead make a great nation out of Moses.

Satan very much hopes here that Moses will take the bait. Moses would become the “new Abraham” so to speak. Instead of “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”, Moses would be immortalized in the phrase, “the God of Moses.” Of course, this phrase was used from time to time, but Abraham is the iconic Old Testament character (referenced over 100 times in 27 books of the Bible). However, Moses is not concerned for himself:

In fact, Moses says that he would rather be blotted out with his brothers, than be made into a great nation himself! (Exodus 32:32) Moses did not want to serve a God who would not keep His promises; what confidence could Moses have? All the same, Moses had spent his whole life, raised by his mother, to revere the Lord and his Hebrews brothers. He was not about to betray that whole life’s work now. Also, Moses expresses great concern for God’s honor and reputation among the Egyptians and other heathen nations, not desiring for them to have any reason to speak lowly of his God. Surely, Moses was faithful to the Lord, even to His own potential destruction!

God honored Moses’ intercession and preserved the Israelites as a whole, although 3,000 died for their transgression. Only the Levites did not participate in the idol worship, so they were made the priests, and Aaron was made High Priest, as a sign of God’s incredible grace even in spite of sin and betrayal. Also, we can compare the 3,000 saved in Acts 2 under the new ministration of life in contrast to the 3,000 that died that day in the wilderness. Surely, the ministration of death is inferior to the Gospel, and its temporary nature was a blessing as well!

Satan naturally hoped for Moses to exalt himself, for God to make Himself out to be a liar, and to destroy any chance of the Messianic line from mattering at all. Satan was hoping for a permanent vacation! However, God spoiled his plans again and again, and even men through God's help can overcome Satan's great temptations of power, money, and prestige, to instead look forward to a greater reward in heaven with God.

Nadab and Abihu – Chapter 56

Leviticus 10 teaches us a story that is not commonly known “in church” today. I will admit, as a Bible college graduate, as a preacher and youth minister for the past 14 years in various capacities, somehow this story had never captured my memory.

I believe this is because so many so-called churches today ignore the Old Testament for a variety of flawed reasons. Some non-instrumental Churches of Christ ignore it because they are so possessed with following New Testament church practices to the letter they ignore the hundreds of references the New Testament makes to the old to prove its points and illustrate its inner-workings. Baptists often ignore the Old Testament because they falsely believe that “works of the law” are really any kind of works, and they (“the elect”) are saved by God's choice, not by their faithfulness. Presbyterians often avoid the Old Testament, again believing that God has chosen them, and their knowledge of the Bible is secondary to their place as chosen people. So many others, and there are so many varieties (including Baptists and Presbyterians) they are too many to list. All the same, we can conclude with saying that the Old Testament matters because Jesus, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude all quote it and comment on it. As well, Paul specifically says in 1 Corinthians 10:6+11 that the Old Testament stories are there specifically “for our example.” It is relevant! It is not because we follow the Old Testament law; no, not at all, but rather because the Old Testament gives us the shadows of the types to come under the law given by Christ in the age of grace!

This particular story is a sorry one about two sloppy, lazy, and sinful priests who die for their offering of strange fire on the altar of God. These two priests happen to be two of the sons of Aaron (he had four total), and their sin was such that it offered an offering not commanded, at the wrong time, offered with common fire, offered incense, offered together, offered presumptuously, and possibly while they were drunk. Any one of these sins was enough to see to their death, but all of them together guaranteed them their doom.

God does not celebrate the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23). God did not want to destroy Nadab and Abihu. However, it was necessary to do so. God showed grace to Aaron for his building the Golden Calf, but justice to his sons who knew better in every category but still disobeyed God with irreverence expressed in multiple ways. This shows God is both a God of justice and mercy, but always fair. May we repent of our sin, and certainly not be proud in it – God has no means of sparing the impenitent!

Satan relished in the death of Aaron's sons. Maybe now Aaron would give up the priesthood, seeing God as unmerciful to his sons though He was merciful to him. Maybe Aaron's other sons would rebel or quit. Maybe Moses would grow tired of the constant family drama and give up. Maybe all of Israel would rebel.

I also imagine a scenario where so many people think because they go to church, put a little money in the offering plate, and then live their life anyway they want to is good enough to be a Christian. Christians are priests! (1 Peter 2:5) How we conduct our lives outside the weekly assembly is important, and as well, we should enter to worship in the spiritual tabernacle of grace in our church worship services today determined to worship God in the ways He has prescribed. So many "Christians" and "churches" today treat church as if it is something that can be made up along the way. Anathema! God has given us His instructions. Our following them is not to our destruction, but to our sustaining!

Just like that, Nadib and Abihu presumptuously thought that their half-baked worship, half-made up, was "good enough" for their purposes. It was not. In fact, it resulted in their deaths!

Now the priesthood was limited to just Aaron and two of his other boys. How I am sure they mourned, and Satan tempted them into similar action! Nonetheless, the rest of the priesthood of that generation endured, and God won the war of the first-generation priesthood.

Satan hoped possibly to overwork the priesthood, or make their duties burdensome and resentful instead of worshipful and meaningful. Instead, God sustained them to be able to perform their duties and keep the sins of the people covered year after year until Messiah would come!

The Mixed Multitude – Chapter 57

In Numbers 11, we are given more details on how the mixed multitude caused problems for Israel. The people murmured (as recorded in Exodus 16) and this time God showed them the proper payment for their complaining: He sent down fire at the edge of the camp and consumed some of them. Moses interceded for them (again, demonstrating the power of intercessory prayer) and God caused the fire to be quenched and His wrath upon them relented.

The number that left Egypt with the Israelites was significant. They were also significant complainers! After God provided for their escape, then gave them free, clean water and free manna (a name they gave it, which means, "a poor thing it is", showing their disdain for God's goodness), the people complained about not having meat. God, in His righteous indignation, sent meat via quail that flew only three feet off the ground, but upon the Israelites' consumption of it, God sent a plague to kill those who had complained. The name of the place where this happened was, "Kibroth Harraavah", or "the graves of lust". This author believes this means that those who

were buried there in those graves were those who lusted after the meat to begin with, instead of trusting in God for their provision.

Many people today believe if they could see a miracle from God, or speak to Him, or have some kind of a sign that is all they would need to have faith. The Israelites shows us that is certainly not the case. They had the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They had the fire come down from heaven everyday to consume their sacrifices. They had Moses' testimony. They had miraculous protection from their enemies. Yet, they still acted like people today – complaining about everything they can imagine complaining about. We can be sure at the end of days that God will see to their complaining, matched with equivocal wrath!

Satan naturally hoped the constant complaining of the people to Moses within earshot would result in their utter destruction. Did these people deserve to live, having been shown so much unmerited grace? Did Moses deserve to have a better people to oversee? Did Aaron need to contend with people suggesting he make unto them a foreign image? No, but God's mercy is greater than His wrath, and His promises are more faithful than our most unfaithful sins. God would keep His promise, despite the price it would cost Him. God stretches out also for us so deeply if only we would repent and experience His grace!

Satan naturally hoped that the Israelites would come up with even more to complain about. Why not technology or advanced weaponry by which to smote their enemies? Why not varieties of spice, fruits and vegetables? For all they were assumed to be entitled to, why not posh homes and unlimited money? Satan would tempt them with varieties of these temptations, just as he did Jesus when He was tempted. Nonetheless, though the Israelites failed continually, God always triumphed, and kept His promises, just as He does for us today!

Moses and Miriam – Chapter 58

This chapter represents a great deal of trouble even in the church today: Miriam stands up in front of the congregation and claims that her equality with Moses in terms of worth as a person also means she can assume his responsibilities and duties. How wrong she is!

For her sin of assumption, she is stricken with leprosy. For despising her sister-in-law's skin color, her skin is made as white as snow with leprosy. Her suspension of the camp for seven days delayed the whole camp, and sent a sharp warning message to all the Israelites – do not assume responsibilities and duties not given you.

Nonetheless, we see Saul later offering a sacrifice in absence of a priest, among other stories. The Israelites did not learn, and apparently many (most) churches do not either.

This author has learned over and over again the danger of women speaking as head of their households. It causes discord both internally and externally within their family and the church. Miriam here causes discord within her family and the Israelites, involving both her

brother and her brother-in-law in her false spat, and ultimately causing grief for the whole camp and especially her.

God Himself addresses Miriam, Aaron, and Moses and defends Moses' words and actions. When God speaks, Miriam listened and was punished. When God speaks, our churches should obey and listen! The order of creation and authority and duty has not changed from Old Testament to New Testament. A man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife and he becomes the head of the household, and he becomes her head. Equality in personhood does not mean equality in responsibility, duty, or authority!

This is really so plainly obvious in anyone's everyday lives. This author was self-employed for nearly fourteen years in the Information Technology field and had eight different employees during that time. My authority over them in the workplace in no way meant I was better than them or a higher-grade of human. Nonetheless, a successful relationship between us meant that I ran my business in the way I saw was right, and they followed my orders. In exchange, they were paid, encouraged, and looked after. Any good boss does those things. He does not consider himself "above" anyone, but if anything, the overseer and shepherd of the rest. One bad employee can spoil the lot, and indeed, my last five years in business my wife was my only employee. She was never below me at work or at home, but because of the business situation, she learned to work under my leadership cooperatively and to her advantage even. To this day, no longer self-employed, but I being a preacher in a Christian Church, she has learned to work under my leadership at both church and at home to her advantage. Not that she takes advantage, but rather it is to her advantage (and mine, and the families) that our home is ordered this way! We will be happily married seven years as of June 2015, with four kids.

Miriam's place as Moses' sister did not earn her special leniency. She questioned God's order, tried to humiliate Moses and get the congregation of the Israelites on her side, and she was punished equitably for it. All the same, we see here that God does not play favorites; He in fact defended Moses and his Cushite wife, a woman of black skin. Who Moses married was not particularly important; he was a Levite, without a land inheritance, and he was not of Judah, so his seed's mixing would not matter to the line of Messiah.

Nonetheless, Satan moved in trying to rebel women over men. This has been a classic tactic by him since the beginning of time, as we can tell. The feminist movement is not new! Solomon tells us there is in fact nothing new under the sun. In fact, we see here that women who get ideas in their minds of being an authority specifically where God has already placed an authority is asking for God's wrath. Indeed, Miriam endured God's wrath, as well as women today who presume to do the same!

The Twelve Spies – Chapter 59

God commanded Moses to send one man from each tribe to scout out the land that He had promised them. They returned forty days later, speaking of the land highly, as truly as God said, it flowed with milk and honey.

However, they also presented a faithless report. They reported that the sons of Anak, giants like unto them who were before the flood, were also in the land, and the spies felt like grasshoppers next to them. They stirred up the people not to enter the land for fear of their defeat at the hands of the giants.

Joshua and Caleb, however, tried to convince the people to enter the land, for the Lord would conquer the giants.

Instead, the people grumbled and foolishly said, “If only we had died in Egypt or the wilderness!” Indeed, they would! God would see to the death of every unbelieving Israelite twenty years or older, preserving the Promised Land only for Joshua, Caleb, and the next generation of Israelites. It would be at this point they would wander the desert for forty years as their punishment for their unbelief and each would die in their wanderings. Sixty-five battles would take place in those forty years. Not only were the Israelites homeless in their unbelief, but these sixty-five battles would see to their grimly demise before God would show mercy to their children.

Lesson from this Scripture: when complaining, be careful what you ask for: you may get it! The Israelites said they would have been better off dying. So, die they did, for their complaining.

When Israel heard their judgment from the Lord, they tried to take up the fight. However, God was not with them, and God told them so. Nonetheless, they tried to fight, but were defeated handily by the Amalekites and the Canaanites. Without God, Israel would experience defeat after defeat. With God, they had many great victories, especially under King David later on.

Satan was about to enjoy another forty year “vacation” while the Israelites wandered, as God promised that present generation’s death. Satan had enjoyed a previous vacation while Moses was in this same wilderness for forty years earlier. Satan would nonetheless try to work on the death of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb in other ways (especially further complaining of the Israelites), but largely had his work done for him during this time. It would not be until Satan’s temptation of Moses taking credit for water from the rock would keep him from the Promised Land that he would successfully cause Moses a permanent trouble (in this life, anyway), but Satan never did see to Joshua or Caleb’s demise, much to his chagrin.

Satan had successfully delayed the coming Messiah for forty years but this was just a battle lost, not the war won. God always win the war, hallelujah!

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram – Chapter 60

This story always makes this author sadly contemplate the state and number of our churches that “vote”. Presently, I am in a church that still votes on elders, deacons, and minister appointments. The folly of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram still resonates today with any member today who assumes authority where it has not been given him (or her).

Moses had a cousin named Korah (more family trouble!). Apparently Korah had not learned from Mariam’s rebellion, because he and two descendants from Reuben criticized Moses and Aaron for “assuming authority.” They had not “assumed authority”; God had given it to them! Ultimately, 250 others joined in, and stood in defiance to Moses’ and Aaron’s divine, God-given authority.

Dathan and Abiram, from Reuben, should have known from their forefather Jacob’s prophecy in Genesis 49:3-4 that they would not excel into positions of authority or the priesthood. Nonetheless, they assumed since they did not have these responsibilities or duties, that they were somehow lesser in their own eyes.

This author believes from his own experience that a man who needs the approval of another is a man who is likely not worthy of it. Self-respect, and having the righteousness that only comes from God, is the only kind of “approval” man needs (Galatians 1:10; Romans 4:3-5).

Undeniably, Satan realizes how easy it is to get God’s people to murmur after the issue with meat and Miriam did not teach them to stop. So, he is obviously behind Korah’s rebellion as well. He wanted God’s patience to run out so the Israelite people would just be wiped out and this whole Messiah business could just be forgotten about. For if there was no man to save, there would not be a need for a Messiah, and without a Messiah, Satan could not be defeated!

But, alas, God has a plan, one where any more internal rebellions of Israel would no longer escalate to this scale. He instructed Moses and Aaron to leave the congregation so He could smite them, but Moses and Aaron made intercession (again!) for the people. God showed mercy, and just had Moses separate Korah, Dathan, and Abiram from the congregation. Moses then had a contest of sorts – if God Himself did not punish those three for their usurping, then Moses would step down. If God did “a new thing” (as in, never done before) and swallowed up these men and all that belong to them, then it will be known that their usurpation provoked God.

Indeed, the earth did swallow them and all they had into the earth. Then, the 250 were consumed by fire as they offered incense (it was not their job to offer incense, but only priests after various rules and procedures had been followed). Their censors they offered incense on were made into a plate as a memorial (a remembrance, for the people’s sake) of their sins.

This story among many also proves that Satan’s continuous lie “of just being religious” is good enough. God has specific instructions; we are prone to follow them. If we do not, there is

not a lesser blessing in store for us; no, instead, there is punishment! We must be careful not only to believe in God and desire to serve Him, but serve Him in the way He commands!

Satan had his mischievous hands all over Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They fell for his temptation and suffered for it. Truly, no one sins like Satan, but whoa to all the men (and women) he has dragged down over the millenniums! His comeuppance is soon, and vengeance is the Lord's!

It is interesting to note that the "Sons of Korah" wrote many of the Psalms, and Samuel – the last judge and first prophet – was a descendant of Korah. God did not mistreat or curse the sons of Korah for his disobedience; instead, they served with honor because of their faithfulness. May each of us realize no grace or curse will be given us for being the descendant of any man – but the grace of God may be ours if we are faithful to His commands!

Aaron's Rod – Chapter 61

Unbelievably the people complained yet again! And about Korah – an evil man's demise!

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had all just been swallowed in the earth with all they had as a testimony that their questioning of God's authority was intolerable. All the people were witnesses. It is as if the people just saw God give a spanking, and then they still defended the one who received the punishment! Any of us who grew up with parents who did not spare the rod knew to *keep quiet* after a sibling had received a punishment, for fear the same would come to us for questioning their judgment!

Well, Israel talked back, and God's patience is truly wearing thin at this point. We can imagine how Moses and Aaron felt. Moses just watched his cousin die. Two descendants from Reuben had just died, whom he undeniably knew. Two hundred and fifty others also perished. Any of us could imagine the silence (and smoke) from the fire that had just come.

Instead, the people blamed Moses and Aaron by saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord." Satan had figured out the key to getting the Israelites in deep trouble with God to the point of their individual deaths: keep them discontent!

God's glory shown all around the people (this is proof that God's glory shown is not always a good thing!) and He told Moses and Aaron to run for their lives as He was about to consume the whole nation. Moses and Aaron prayed fervently; Moses told Aaron to run in to the tabernacle and make atonement for the sins of the people by offering incense. While Aaron was attempting to get this done as fast as possible, 14,700 men perished for their murmuring. Once Aaron offered the incense, God once again showed mercy for the sake of Moses and Aaron.

<p>Fact: 14,700 Israelites died for <u>complaining</u> in this one episode alone!</p>
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To seal the reality that Aaron and his kin were to be the only priests, God had each tribe to lay a rod before the Lord. He then had Aaron's rod bud and bloom while the others only remained sticks to show that God had chosen Aaron to be the only priestly leader. His rod was kept permanently, later in the Ark of the Covenant, as a constant reminder that God's instructions are the only ones that lead to safety and life.

So many parallels could be drawn to the present-day church's flaws and Israel's various failures in the book of Numbers. Complaining, "voting", usurpation of authority, "equality", etc. are all issues the Israelites questioned God and His chosen servants over, all to their doom. May we as a church repent and follow God's instructions which lead to life!

The Edomites – Chapter 62

In Numbers 20, Moses sent ambassadors to the King of Edom to ask permission to pass through their land in order to get to Canaan. The King of Edom refused. Moses asked for passage based on four principles:

- 1) We are distant relatives ("brethren"). Our ancestor was Jacob, and his brother was Esau, from whom you descend.
- 2) We have been enslaved in Egypt and are in need of your aid and pity.
- 3) The Lord is with us and His angels have aided us.
- 4) We will not disturb your land or people and we will purchase what we need from you, boosting your local economy. (This alone was a fantastic promise because the children of Israel were great in number and thus their purchases would have been enormous to the Edomites economically speaking)

Nonetheless, the King of Edom refused. You might say that other than the Egyptians obviously, the first "anti-Semites" were the Edomites, though they too were from Shem! That might make little sense, but in today's vernacular, "anti-Semitic" means to be anti-Jewish, but in fact Arabs are from Shem, and being anti-Arab is never referred to as being Anti-Semitic, although that is technically correct. Even more so, modern-day Jews are not even from Shem (they are mostly of a European origin of Japheth, like us), so "anti-Semitic" could only be accurately levied in favor of the Arabs, though this is never done! This goes to show how much modern language can hide truth and we must be careful not to adopt modern language just because it is "there".

All the same, the King of Edom refused because it was passed down from the sons of Edom (sons of Esau) on to hate the Israelites (or, in their minds possibly, Jacobites). These traditions pass on strongly from generation to generation typically, and the Edomites were no different. Although their patriarch Esau had forgiven Jacob, his sons never did, and it was their prejudice, not their namesake's prejudice, that denied Israel passage.

Even through all of this, Moses gave a law through God not to abhor an Edomite, even though they abhorred them. God was teaching Israel not to hold a grudge or wait for vengeance at anytime. Truly, “vengeance is mine, says the Lord” – Deuteronomy 13:35 and Romans 12:19.

Moses’ wisdom and patience in dealing with the Edomites kept Satan from engaging them in yet another war. This was especially important, because many Israelites had already died due to their unbelief and complaining; surely, Israel’s military might was weaker, and Satan wanted to take advantage of it. Nonetheless, God prevailed, Satan loss, and the Messiah was still on the way!

Moses’ and Aaron’s Sin – Chapter 63

To Satan, of course, the golden goose that had evaded him was getting Moses to sin against God and make Him angry against him. Satan already knew that when God’s wrath waxes hot, somebody is punished, and everyone but Moses had so far endured punishment. Well, Satan would have his way with Moses when the people of Israel (who have convinced this author that they possibly were out of their minds) would complain yet again and Moses had enough:

The people of Israel moved to the desert of Zin where there was no source of water. Naturally, they complained with great hyperbole again (Satan loves complainers) and wished they had died when the others had so they did not have to thirst to death. At this point, Moses is probably murmuring under his breath that they would probably do just that point, because Moses gets angry.

God had given Moses and Aaron instructions on how to get water in the desert. However, they changed God’s instructions:

- 1) They spoke to the people, not the rock, as God had commanded.
- 2) They assumed glory for themselves instead of God who provided the water.
- 3) They did not recognize God before the people.
- 4) They were angry, spoke in anger, and therefore misspoke.
- 5) They hit the rock twice, when they were only supposed to do so once.
- 6) They lacked faith and got impatient with the rock and the people.

This resulted in God keeping Moses and Aaron and Miriam from entering the Promised Land along with the rest of the (now older) people already kept from it. This probably made them smug, as the Israelites certainly seemed to be discontent people, and misery loves company.

Satan of course hoped for the death of Moses and Aaron and Miriam, to turn the people to complete chaos, and see to their utter destruction. However, God wisely saw to use this sin of

Moses and Aaron to make a point: Moses could never lead us into the Promised Land. The Law cannot save us. The Law only gives us a bird's eye view of what is to come in the Promised Land (i.e. the church).

Instead, God would have Joshua lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. And indeed, he did! Joshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus; this is no coincidence!

Satan still received a victory here but it was just a battle; the war was far from over, and he would lose!

The Brazen Serpent – Chapter 64

King Arad of Canaan went to war with Israel and captured many of them. Satan naturally hoped that the captives would marry their captors, and corrupt Messiah's line. Also, Satan hoped that perhaps Israel would lose the battles and perish. All the same, Satan hoped that Israel would curse God for their captivity, and God Himself would do the job (Satan had seen God's anger Himself before and many times at the hands of the Israelites; it was one of Satan's favorite tools).

Israel defeated King Arad and gained back their captives. Instead of glorifying God for their victory and enjoying peace again, they fell to murmuring. This author honestly is dumbfounded how many times the Israelites murmured and did not learn from their previous mistakes and punishments. As a father of four, I have some stubborn children, but none I know to this level! God was certainly patient as His "children" were stubborn beyond every thread of reason!

This time, they murmured again about a lack of water (i.e. lack of faith on their part) and once again exaggerated that they wished they had died instead of be left to thirst. God would grant them their wish. They also complained of the "light bread" God had given them in form of the manna (a name they gave it meaning, "what a poor thing this is"). Free bread and they complained! What a lesson we have for our welfare system today: no matter how much we give, they will complain and want more. Nothing is ever enough for complainers!

Up to this point, God had protected the Israelites from the deadly snakes that slithered around in the wilderness, but no longer. God released the snakes upon them, and their bites were deadly. The only cure was to look up on the brazen serpent that Moses erected in the wilderness and in their faith they would be healed.

Independently, this story seems very off-the-wall. However, if we consider that the brazen serpent on the pole is a shadow of Christ, Satan could not at the time see what God was painting for us today – a clear sign that our faithfulness to Christ is how we are saved.

Those who did not look upon the serpent were killed. Those who did look and believed were healed. Satan naturally had another battle won, with many Israelites dead. Satan was perfectly content wiping out a chunk of Israelites from time to time, hoping to weaken them for a

foreign army to destroy. In fact, Satan would muster up these foreign forces regularly, and sometimes they did indeed take Israel captive. Eventually, Israel would get down to just two tribes (“the remnant”), and sometimes the Messianic line would get down to just one single person. Satan would win many battles, get very close to winning the war, but thanks be to God, Messiah came and the victory is in Jesus!

Not coincidentally, more Israelites died here because of <u>more complaining</u> .
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Balak – Chapter 65

Satan continues his attempts at destroying Israel through the King of Moab, Balak. Moses tried to reason with the Amorites before him, but they would not listen, and as a result, God encouraged Moses and all of Israel to conquer the Amorites, and they did.

All the same, God encouraged war against Og, one of the last remaining giants, and Israel conquered Bashan.

Balak did not approach the situation intelligently, however; instead of try to reason with Moses (which Moses had tried to do twice before, so very likely would have considered again), he sent for the prophet Balaam and tried to bribe him into cursing Israel.

Obviously Satan wanted Israel cursed by a prophet of God and did not want Balak negotiating with Moses, who was likely to be reasonable. Of all things, God used a donkey in an attempt to correct Balaam, by having the donkey speak and even chastise his master.

This brings up a point to this author that even if miraculous events were to happen to people – like an animal talking – even that would not persuade them to believe properly. Balaam did not ultimately change his ways, but tried to curse Israel anyway (because the greed in his mind was greater than the reward of repentance). Only blessings came from Balaam’s mouth, as angel interfered with his speech!

Even prophecies concerning King David and the coming Messiah came out of Balaam’s mouth.

This goes to show another point that even if a man prophesies accurately, that does not mean in any sense he is a regenerated man. So many assume that if a man possesses a spiritual gift that is sign of his salvation. Most certainly, that is not true! The spirit “upon” a man does not mean The Spirit is “within” a man! This distinction is vitally important in both the Old and New Testaments.

This also flies in the face of Calvinism, who claims the Holy Spirit regenerates a man and gifts like prophecy are signs of his regeneration. Balaam prophesied, and his error, not any sense of righteousness, is what is ultimately recorded about him in Jude 11!

We must be careful not to fall for Satan's lies that both Balak and Balaam fell for. Satan here tried to convince Balaam that he was "chosen" of God, merely because He was a divinely-appointed prophet, and Balak assumed that bribery was greater than the power of God!

Balaam – Chapter 66

In Numbers 25, Balaam grieves at the fact that he cannot curse Israel despite all his attempts to do so. When he tried to curse, he spoke righteously. When he tried to earn Balak's promises of money in exchange for cursing the Israelites, all attempts failed. Finally, Balaam surmised an indirect plan to "curse" the Israelites: by acting as a consultant of wickedness, he advised Balak to tempt the men of Israel with the women of Moab.

The Israelites fell for it, and Balaam thought he had it made. Balak promised him wealth for his successful consultation, and so Balaam traveled to receive his reward from his wickedness. However, war broke out, and Balaam died in the scuffle (Numbers 31:8). His reward was not wealth, but death! His life is a type of those who pretend and even speak religious language, but practice ulterior evil; their undoing will be just like Balaam!

Satan obviously was victorious in getting the men of Israel to sin by fornicating with the daughters of Moab; God killed 24,000 Israelites by a plague for their sin. All the same, Satan killed an impenitent prophet, Balaam, before he had another chance to possibly change his ways. Satan of course hoped to kill even more Israelites, but this was a pretty solid win for him, all the same.

However, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, took a javelin and killed Zimri and a Midianite woman who were committing fornication right in the open. This appeased God's wrath on any further destruction of the Israelites. God, through appointing the right man, gave his people a way out. All the same, God appointed Jesus to give us a way out, namely our salvation.

We know from 2 Peter 2:15, Jude 11, and Revelation 2:14, that the "way" of Balaam, the "error" of Balaam, and the "doctrine" of Balaam are all specifically mentioned in the New Testament and their corresponding actions warned against. We would be wise to learn from Balaam's errors!

God preserved the Messianic line by not killing those who did not participate in the temptation offered by Balak and Balaam. Our salvation as promised was still on its way, despite every effort by Satan and even the victories he did enjoy from time to time.

A Census – Chapter 67

In Numbers 26, as the book begins to close, God orders another census to be taken since the 40 years of wandering in the desert are expiring. This census was to show that God's faithfulness to Israel was still apparent and strong and his promises true, even with the Israelites' many deaths due to their sins and the many wily temptations of Satan.

Judah, through whom the Messiah was to come, had led Israel into their battles; yet, even with all the battles fought, they numbered 1,900 more than the first census' accounting.

Manasseh, who had previously been the smallest tribe, was now the largest.

Ephraim, who had been the largest tribe, was now the smallest.

Simeon's tribe decreased by thousands because of Prince Zimri; he had led the men of Israel into whoredom with the women of Moab. The majority of the 24,000 who died were undeniably from this tribe. Reuben's tribe had also decreased greatly, no doubt in part by the sins of Dathan and Abiram.

The Levites gained 1,000 in number since the original census. They did not join in the rebellion of the golden calf, they did not go to war without God, and their tribe did not despise the report of the good spies. Nonetheless, even without suffering as the other tribes routinely did, they only grew modestly in number. It could be suspected that God did not need a priestly tribe too large a size in any circumstance so he limited their multiplication so as not to produce "idle" Levites.

When the census was complete, all that was left from the original generation was Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, Eliezer, and Ithamar, although not all of these would enter the Promised Land (like Moses did not).

Satan's attempts to kill off Israel simply resulted in a "cleansed" Israel; the old, unfaithful generation was largely gone, replaced by a generation who would follow Joshua into the Promised Land. Truly, as the Lord says in John 15:2, "He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit..."

Midianite Women – Chapter 68

In Numbers 31, God told Moses that he was to die and Joshua would lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. However, God still had one task left for Moses, a gruesome one:

Balak and Balaam had earlier used the women of Midian to seduce many of the Israelite men into whoredom. God wanted them eliminated, and their male children, to prevent Midian becoming the trouble Satan had led them to become. So Moses sent 12,000 warriors and Phinehas to war against the Midianites. They succeeded in their battle, but brought back the women as "prizes."

This is another case where “victory” is not a license to do what one wants! Moses was very angry that they had spared the women. God ordered the non-virgin women to die as punishment for their whoring with the Israelite men earlier. Their male babies were slain not because they were guilty, but because they were destined to be enemies of Israel if allowed to grow up as their fathers before them.

This kind of story makes a modern liberal scholar hiccup – what kind of “good” God would allow the slaying of babies? There was no condemnation for these babies; if anything, God gave them a “ticket to ride” to paradise whereas their ancestors were not as fortunate. God knew if allowed to grow up under their country’s influence and Satan’s persuasion, they would surely die in disfavor to God. God punished the women for their wrongdoing justly; God spared the babies an inevitably destructive life. There is always wisdom in God’s actions, and we should not think we can always understand them (Isaiah 55:18). When scholars ask these questions unwittingly, one day God will ask them better questions they cannot answer (Job 38:1ff).

Satan naturally hoped that Phinehas bringing back the Midianite women as “prizes” would result in the Israelites once again whoring with them and angering God to their destruction (again). However, God spares the Israelites their destruction, and punishes rightly the women who wronged the Israelite men who had already died as a result of their sin. They simply joined those men in their graves.

It should also be noted that although the Bible says the guilt of the father does not transfer to the child, the consequences can, and certainly here that is what happens to the male babies. The babies were not guilty; there is no indication they were. Instead, they were destined to paganism and Satan’s leading, and God was just not going to allow that to happen.

Reuben and Gad – Chapter 69

This author is consistently amazed at the repetitive nature of sin – Reuben and Gad would commit a similar mistake as did Lot – and people today commit the same basic sins they have since the beginning of time: the lure of wealth, sex, drink, quick gain, and power have dragged men down into oblivion.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad had managed to accumulate many cattle. We understand from Genesis 49 that Reuben’s tribe would not excel, and Gad’s tribe would be one attacked, and retaliate. The prophecy concerning Gad seems to indicate that his retaliation would be less than his aggressor’s damage against him. Indeed, we see from 2 Kings 15:29 that they were one of the first tribes to fall, and undeniably also because of the mistake they made in Numbers 32.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad saw the lush pasture lands of Jazer and Gilead and desired them for their own, even though they were outside the Promised Land. They asked Moses if they could stay on the east side of the Jordan, out of the Promised Land, so they could occupy the

land. This would mean they could avoid war, but also make their own judgment call instead of trusting God. This would prove fatal later on, as Reuben and Gad would be some of the first tribes to be conquered and drug away permanently from Assyria, never to be recovered.

Their decision also weakened Israel as a whole, spreading them out across the land beyond the protected borders (protected by God) of the Promised Land.

Moses chastised their request for trying to avoid war; indeed, there would be many battles in Canaan. However, Reuben and Gad denied this and agreed to go fight if they could return to their desired lands. Moses allowed this, although it would ultimately lead to a weakened Israel and less of God's blessings and protection for those tribes as a result.

The prophecies spoken to Reuben and Gad in Genesis 49 certainly came to full fruition upon the Assyrian's conquering of Israel: Reuben would not excel, to the extent of eventually going extinct, and Gad's predicted battles of deteriorating failure would ultimately also mean its demise. Not trusting God puts one in a temporary position, good or bad! Extinction is a type for those who avoid God's ways, just as the second death is coming for those who do not follow God' ways.

Satan naturally hoped to start a war internally, with Reuben and Gad possibly willing to fight to keep their desired lands out of the Promised Land. Possibly this is why Moses granted permission, despite it being an ultimately unwise move. Jacob had predicted in Genesis 49:3 that Reuben was "unstable as water"; Moses, since he wrote the book of Genesis, certainly was aware of this prophecy, and decided not to try to reason with that tribe.

Satan also hoped that the other tribes would jealous of Reuben and Gad's new lands, and fight for them. Or possible Satan hoped that the other tribes would also seek out other lands, and the Promised Land would never come to be.

It is this author's observation in ministry that often time's people choose to do something for no other reason than it is the opposite of what someone they do not respect wants. Certainly, with twelve tribes, there was some infighting and prejudice. It is surprising to this author that Israel was merely weakened through this foolish move of Reuben and Gad, and did not start a civil war of sorts. God must have tempered many brows and kept the people of Israel calm in the face of all this moving about.

Ultimately, half of the tribe of Manasseh also joined Reuben and Gad in the lands east of the Jordan. This weakened that tribe, and indeed, caused it later also to be carried away permanently into Assyrian captivity, never to be recovered.

Manasseh – Chapter 70

From Numbers 36, a very important rule in Israel was established because the inheritance of the land of Manasseh went to the daughters of Zelophehad because Manasseh had

no sons. There was nothing wrong with this inherently, except the descendants of that tribe was afraid the daughters of Zelophehad would marry outside their tribe, and the inheritance of their land would be absorbed into another tribe.

Moses saw that their concern was just and moved to command that all women must marry within their tribe or forfeit their inheritance. This also sealed the day of Jubilee, where every tribe's land would return to its original owner every fifty years. By keeping the tribes distinct and their inheritance's security rely on marrying within their tribe, he effectively made sure each tribe would remain distinct and self-sustaining.

This would also have the effect of keeping each tribe pure, so the Israelites could continue to carry out their specific tribal functions without question. For example, the Levite tribe could continue to be the priestly tribe, and the tribe of Judah would continue undeterred to be the tribe through whom Messiah would come.

The descendants of Joseph through Manasseh showed the patience and wisdom of their patriarch. They asked a just question to the right person and followed Godly advice. This resulted in their lands being secured and no unrest to develop as a result.

Satan had no angle here to exploit; obeying God has its benefits! Here, the tribe of Manasseh would ensure their survival for several generations. Although they would eventually be taken with the other rebellious ten tribes by Assyria several hundred years later, their years of prosperity were partially linked to this choice of Godly wisdom here.

The Giants – Chapter 71

Genesis 6:4 says, "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bear children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

The Nephilim were back, now residing in the land of Canaan. Some commentators remark that the Nephilim were not the result of the intermarriage of demons and women, but rather the descendants of Cain and Seth. This passage proves this is not possible; the descendants of Cain were completely eradicated in the flood; also that remained was the descendants of Seth. The descendants of Seth, not of any kind, were giants; therefore, the only conclusion left is the one suggested by the Old Testament Jewish commentators – these were indeed giants, products of demons and women.

In Deuteronomy 1 and 2 and following, Moses would command that the Israelites, under Joshua's command, eliminate all of the present occupants of Canaan. Satan had filled the Promised Land with the giants, hoping of course that Israel would once again back down from the challenge of warring against them, as they had done before. Satan also hoped that the tribes

would divide, with some willing to follow, and others not, and possibly causing internal strife or a civil war.

Although Israelites murmuring would not end completely in Deuteronomy, and some of the events happen in parallel with those things that happened in Numbers, they were improving somewhat. At least the frequency of the murmuring went down. Nonetheless, the murmuring would cause problems for the Israelites, and Moses' intercession for them would continually save them from the full potential of God's wrath.

The task of conquering Canaan was ahead for Abraham's descendants. Long before this, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all promised the Promised Land for their descendants, and what a long, arduous journey it had become! Nonetheless, the fulfillment of the promise was nigh, and God was with Israel. God had promised the Messiah for all people was coming through Israel, and He would be faithful in His promises, even when the Israelites were faithless. Thankfully, He shows us similar, if not greater patience, today!

God required that the peoples of Canaan be eliminated completely; nothing was to survive. Not even the gold of the people was to be kept; it was to be treated as an accursed thing.

Many a liberal scholar has taken exception to God's so-called cruelty here. However, let us look at the situation in context: the pagan people had intermarried with the demons, and their descendants the Nephilim, and their descendants were not human – they were soulless, inhuman, violent giants who had no place in earth or beyond. Therefore, their elimination was not unjust, but to protect human beings who had not intermixed with this cursed flesh.

Second, the foreigner was not kept from Israel if he or she was repentant and willing to follow the Law of Moses. This was demonstrated again and again with stories like that of Rahab and Ruth. If any of the Canaanites, who were well aware of the Israelites (having wandered in the desert for 40 years), wanted to join them, and follow the Law of Moses (also like the Egyptians who fled with Israel originally), they were welcome to do so. We know from Leviticus 19:33-34 that a foreigner was to be welcomed and not estranged; they were to be adopted and brought in if they would follow the Law of Moses. So we see here that God was not unjust in anyway.

Third, there is a bigger picture here – Satan was always trying to see to the destruction of mankind by destroying the promise of the Messiah. God had to preserve this line through the prophecies given in order for Messiah to be the perfect Lamb of God, offered up for the sins of the world. I think we can be confident that any collateral damage that did occur as a result of this epic war between God and Satan was not of an eternal consequence; God is perfectly just and perfectly merciful, and every man is judged according to what he has done (Revelation 20:13). No one in eternity will have been judged unfairly or be anywhere than where they are supposed to be.

However, the Israelites would not completely eliminate the Canaanites, Nephilim and others alike. They would make deals with some of them, or keep them as servants, or even let some of them somewhat subsist as they had before. This would result in the Canaanites being constant problems for the Israelites (sort of typical of Abraham taking Lot with him, which he should not have done, causing him consistent grief). Numbers 33:55 says, “But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it will come to pass that those which you let remain will be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and they shall be a curse unto you in the land where you live.” Indeed, it would come about for the Israelites just like that!

Rahab – Chapter 72

Exiting Deuteronomy we enter the book of Joshua, recording the Israelites’ journeys and conquests under his command. Moses died on Mount Nebo, after having previewed the Promised Land from the mountaintop. Moses then died, and God buried his body in an unknown place. Moses’ death is a type that teaches us that the Law of Moses can help us see the Promised Land (the church) from afar off, but it cannot get us there. Moses could not lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, but his successor Joshua (“Jesus” translated) could. The books of Hebrews was later written to preach this exact message – going back to the Law of Moses would be like leaving the Promised Land – God’s blessings are not outside the church in today’s age, just like God would not protect those who would not do what was necessary to enter the Promised Land in Joshua’s time.

Joshua 3:7 says, “This day I will begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel; that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”

God was determined to make sure the Israelites knew who their new leader was. Many times in the past, this had been a genuine problem. Korah, Abiram, Dathan, and even Miriam had tried to assume some kind of leadership in the past which was not rightly theirs. In our own time, we see rebellions in countries, sometimes even in churches, who will succeed whom in leadership positions. God wanted no such confusion then, and He wants no such confusion now.

God had established how leaders in the church today are to be chosen, though most “churches” ignore these commands to their own chagrin. All the same, Satan was trying to usurp Moses’ now vacant seat with some kind of troublemaker, but God made sure that Joshua was front and center, even “magnified” in the eyes of the Israelites.

Some in churches today feel it is overtly-important that everyone is “equal.” This term has been abused to mean not just equal in terms of being sinners saved by grace, but equal in all functions, that anybody can do anything. That has never been God’s pattern! He gave the Levites a special function as the priestly tribe, and within that tribe, only the descendants of Aaron could be the actual priests. Aaron committed idolatry, and was even the ringleader of it, so let us be clear that God’s appointment of Aaron was not from merit, but of grace. All the same, God’s appointment of qualified men to be elders, and qualified men to be deacons, and qualified men to

be preachers is not because men are “better” than women, but rather God from grace has assigned the roles He has. That is all that matters. This author believes many churches today suffer simply due to ignoring Biblical commands with regards to leadership, and many people in those churches are ignoring those commands to their own demise.

As Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan, it parted, just like the Red Sea had done for the generation before in leaving Egypt. Instead, now, they were entering a land, and one of its purposes was to “magnify” Joshua as leader of Israel. Joshua was a very capable leader, spoken of very highly throughout Scripture, and though was not perfect, led the Israel into a time of victory and prosperity that would not be known again until the time of King David.

When Israel had crossed the Jordan, their first task was Jericho. Jericho was conquered, and Rahab the harlot was used of God to secure its destruction. Rahab would be accepted into Israel, and actually the tribe of Judah itself to be part of Jesus’ direct lineage! This was God’s way of showing from the beginning that the Gentiles were to be included in salvation ultimately, and He had not forgotten the other peoples of the earth he had made. In fact, all the way back from Genesis 12:3 He said that all the peoples of the earth would be blessed through the Hebrews. Indeed, this happened, and we see the beginnings of this fulfillment of prophecy right here in Rahab!

Satan of course hoped that harlot blood would destroy the Messianic line. However, Rahab became a proselyte, and follower of the Law of Moses. She married a man named Salmon from the tribe of Judah and is celebrated in the book of Hebrews chapter 11, verse 31: “Rahab was a woman of faith, so that she perished not with them that did not believe.”

James 2:25 says that Rahab’s life is an example of one justified by righteous works. Surely, God’s grace is great, to anyone who would receive His message of grace, forgiveness, and purpose!

Some scholars say that Rahab’s position as a harlot might have just meant innkeeper. We can be sure she was a harlot because the New Testament in the Greek says so at Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25. In Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25, the Greek Word “porne” is used, which means in every other instance in the New Testament to mean harlot or prostitute, such as its use in Revelation 17:15 and 1 Corinthians 6:16. We can interpret the Old Testament by the New, so we can be sure that Rahab was indeed a harlot, but a forgiven one, and one celebrated later by God’s grace in Hebrews and James.

Satan naturally would have hoped that the Israelites would reject Rahab because she was not of Israelite blood. Racism has always existed among all people of all time, and the Israelites would be later well-known for the poor treatment of outsiders. This would be especially evident when Jesus would clean the temple courts twice of dishonest peddlers occupying the prayer space reserved for Gentiles. This was even predicted in the Old Testament at Psalms 69:9, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

However, Rahab was welcomed first by the two spies, then by Israel, then by Judah, and finally by her husband Salmon, of whom the two of them would produce Boaz, the future husband of Ruth.

It is this author's opinion that unfortunately not more emphasis has been explained by Bible teachers about the continuity of the Biblical story from book to book as well as its many lessons against racism. It is no accident that Rahab and Salmon would produce Boaz, and Boaz would willingly take on a godly, though Gentile woman, in the Moabitess Ruth. In fact, their intermarriage themselves and the intermarriage of their son with another proselyte would be the line Jesus would come through! Surely, God's grace extends to all races and all places, and He loves us. He welcomed people into the fold during the time of Israel, and He evangelizes them through His church now!

Achan – Chapter 73

In Joshua 7, we are told of God's command that no one was to keep any of the spoils of war; they were to be preserved unto God, consecrated to the treasury. If anyone kept anything, they would be cursed.

Satan naturally could not let an opportunity to exploit a curse go. He found a man named Achan to fall into temptation and kept some of the spoils for himself.

Joshua apparently assumed the Israelites would behave themselves (apparently, Moses had not stressed enough the general trouble these people were) and attacked Ai, assuming victory would be theirs. They were defeated, the people worried, and thirty-six fighting men died. Joshua was in agony, and asked God if He cared about His reputation. God thundered back that someone had kept spoils from the battle, and this man needed founded out and executed.

Some question Achan's and his families' death for his sin. Keep in mind that thirty-six families lost their father and husband that day, and Achan was to blame. As a result, Achan would see his family suffer, as he had caused the suffering of many other families. These were also tough times, and in war, there is no room for insubordination. Well-oiled armies are disciplined ones.

Also, it is likely that Achan was showing off the spoils of the war to his family, and they were enjoying the benefits thereof, although they all knew what God had warned. Whether guilty by direct disobedience or by being an accomplice, they were guilty, and suffered thereof. There is no indication Achan had any small children, so no "innocent" blood was slain. In fact, we know God abhors the shedding of innocent blood, so we can certain that God's character did not allow Himself to be unrighteous here (Deuteronomy 19:10, Proverbs 6:17).

With the help of the priests Urim and Thummin, Achan was found out, and he admitted his guilt. This was a case were "sorry" was not going to cut it, but Achan did die a man with a

clean conscious. Whether he was penitent or not is unknown, though God does not celebrate the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23), so perhaps he and his family were spared in the life to come.

Satan hoped of course even more would die or be scared as a result of Achan's treachery, but God and the Israelites moved on to further victories (though with some future difficulties due to sin again). This author could not imagine being Urim and Thummin at this point; it was not typically the priests job to oversee executions, or bring criminals to justice. It was not in their "job description." Satan, I would think, would attempt to have these men give up their priestly robes because they did not want to be involved in future accomplices. However, it is said they held their ground and did what was needed done in reporting Achan's sin.

Satan had some victory here, in the elimination of thirty-six fighting men, and the family of Achan's death. He also managed to instill some fear in the people. However, under Joshua's constant courageous leadership, and his encouragement and preaching, he would lead Israel through to their greatest victories until the time of King David. Satan had little angle with Joshua though he would try and try again.

The Gibeonites – Chapter 74

In Joshua 9, we read of a clever group of people called the Gibeonites. They had heard of the Israelites many victories, and did not let pride get in their way. They were also aware that the Israelites typically eliminated their foe, instead of allowed them to live in tribute, so they wanted to avoid extinction. Therefore, they dressed themselves in rags, carried moldy bread, wore worn shoes, and pretended to be poor and despondent. They basically groveled at the feet of the Israelites, and Joshua, and used pity to their advantage.

God had commanded Joshua and the Israelites to kill all the peoples of the land; allowing the Gibeonites to live, even out of pity, was not theirs to choose. Nonetheless, they made a vow with them, and allowed them to be their servants. This was in fulfillment of Genesis 9:26 that Canaan would serve the descendants of Shem (specifically, here, the Hebrews).

This put Joshua in a predicament where now he could not obey God fully by slaying all the peoples of Canaan and he could not break the vow the Israelite princes made with the Gibeonites. So Joshua put them to work as hewers of wood and drawers of water.

This fit the Gibeonite situation well; by making them slaves, they would not be temptations for Israelite intermarriage. They were of Nephilim blood, they were likely tall, strong, and capable of this work, relieving the Israelites from this chore. Finally, the Gibeonites would be given a chance to abandon their homeland's idolatry and learn to be proselytes of the Law of Moses. Nonetheless, this transgression would continue to cause Israel trouble down the road.

Satan naturally hoped that God's wrath would spill out on Israel for this transgression against God's express command. Satan also hoped that that the Gibeonites would intermarry with the Israelites, tempted to intermix their giant blood as the other nations had been before them.

Ironically, Satan's role here only resulted in the fulfillment of prophecy! This reminds this author of Romans 8:28 that God works out all things (even the bad things) for the good of those who love Him and follow His instructions.

The Five Kings – Chapter 75

Not everyone was happy that Gibeon had given themselves over to the Israelites and had made a treaty with them. The five kings of Canaan decided to attack Gibeon, partly out of punishment for their treason and partly out of fear. They too knew of Israel's many victories and the God who led them, and they were worried that Gibeon with Israel will result in them being the ruling land of all Canaan.

Now it is a fact that Israel's vow with Gibeon was born of deceit and poor decisions. But now the vow was made, and God expected Israel to follow through with it. For their honoring the oath made, God gave them the greatest victory they ever had! Hailstorms rained from heaven killing much of the enemy. "God fought for Israel" that day, making sure their victory was complete.

<p>"We can learn from this story that we should honor our vows, even the ones we made in foolishness. God honors an honest man!" – George L. Faull, Rel. D</p>

At this point, Israel had come to possess Jericho by faith, Ai by obedience, and Gibeon by surrender. Now the five kings of Israel had fallen! God's greatness showed again, and Satan had no victory here.

Naturally, Satan had hoped that Israel's vow with Gibeon would be their undoing. He had hoped that the five kings of Canaan would overwhelm Israel and that God would not protect Israel for their foolish alliance. In fact, God may have very saw this coming, because He did take a special place in the battle, "fighting for Israel" Himself that very day. God knew that Israel could not stand alone against five kings, so He fought for them – He interceded for them. All the same, we cannot conquer sin on our own, but God Himself came down and interceded for us!

Anak's Sons – Chapter 76

After having victory with Gibeon, Israel made no treaties with any other nation. Joshua and Israel sought out and killed all of the giants of Anakim in the land of Israel. By this time, the only Anakins left were in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. All in all, Joshua killed thirty-one kings and their cities.

Joshua was aged by this point, and appointed each tribe their land and told them to eliminate the remaining pagan cities in their land. They did not completely do this, ultimately to their demise.

Caleb, one of the original two good spies, and a man of Judah, received the land he had been promised for his faithful service. Joshua 14:14 says that Caleb followed the Lord completely; what a compliment!

Satan naturally hoped that the Israelites would not totally conquer the peoples of Canaan, and indeed, they did not. He hoped there would be intermarriage, especially with the tribe of Judah. He hoped there would be a genuine leadership problem after Joshua's death; indeed, there would be. Even in all the victory, Satan is looking for the next way to trip up a righteous man or people. May we ever be on guard!

The Land Possessed – Chapter 77

In Joshua 21, we read that God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of Israel – they did indeed possess the land that was promised to them. God is faithful! In Joshua 21:43-45, we are told that God accomplished all He set out to do, and honored His promises.

Later on in 1 Kings 8:56, Solomon affirmed again the faithfulness of God to his generation.

Satan had tried very hard to prevent this all along, and had some victories along the way, and he would not give up to try to cause further grief for Israel, and would come perilously close to stopping Messiah from coming from time to time. However, God was always a move ahead of Satan, and He is today! We do have to give Satan “credit” for one thing – persistence! He should have given up, but he kept trying, and still tries today, to trip up righteous men and people. This persistence on his part is futile, however, and ultimately only to his own destruction. So, “crediting” persistence to Satan is really just saying that he is consistently-foolish for thinking He could succeed against the one true and almighty God.

The Altar at Jordan – Chapter 78

Joshua 22 gives us an interesting story: with the warring over, Joshua dismissed the army and told the Israelites to settle in their own land. He gave Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh the land they desired east of the Jordan as they had originally requested under Moses. They went, happy to receive what they were promised.

However, on their way, they began to wonder if they would be outside of Israel's protection for going to this land (a reasonable possibility). So, to show their allegiance to God and to Israel, they built a visible altar, identical to the one at Shiloh, so outside nations would know they were aligned with Israel.

The other nine tribes did not initially see it that way – they thought they were building a foreign altar, to foreign gods, to offer foreign sacrifice – and this would bring disaster upon of Israel (another reasonable possibility). So the nine tribes sent ambassadors to find out what the new altar was all about. They also prepped arms, in case a civil war was necessary to remove the foreign worship and prevent God’s wrath!

When the three tribes now east of the Jordan heard of what the nine tribes’ ambassadors concerns were, they were appalled to have been thought of in this way. They explained that the altar was not for sacrifice, but merely a monument to show their allegiance to the one true God and to Israel. The three tribes were content to let God judge their motives. The nine tribes were content with this answer, and relieved, and returned home and reported that all was well, and a civil war was to be avoided.

This story shows us the danger of assuming another’s motives. The cool-headed response of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh avoided a civil war. Before assuming, go directly to the person(s) in question and ask!

Satan naturally hoped to spark a civil war based on false premises: he hoped Israel would fight one another out of paranoid fear, instead of trying to talk things out. Surely, Solomon’s wisdom was put to work here before it was even written down (perhaps this story was an inspiration for Solomon): “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1a).

Satan also hoped that the three tribes east of the Jordan would setup foreign religion and see to their own destruction. However, this did not happen, and peace was in the land. Satan had no edge here. Jesus would teach us later on that we should face our offenders directly (Matthew 18:15ff). This story shows us the wisdom of this advice!

Joshua’s Death – Chapter 79

Joshua’s death is recorded for us by Moses in chapters 23 and 24. Joshua was very old and had lived a faithful life. Nonetheless, he wanted to make sure that the Israelites knew who brought them to victory and settling in their flourishing land: the one true God. In Joshua 24:14-15, he tells Israel to choose that day what God they would serve: the old pagan gods, the gods of the land, or the one true God. Their choice would be their destiny.

All of Israel that day acknowledged the one true God and vowed to live for Him. During Joshua’s life and the elders that followed immediately after him, Israel did live faithfully for God. What a testimony unto Joshua’s life! The power of one man who lives for God greatly overwhelms any of Satan’s efforts.

Satan had managed to have some of Israel’s old false gods still around in idol form; Joshua knew this, so he told them to get rid of them. They did so! Satan tried so hard, but Israel

during the age of Joshua was successful in living faithful unto God. Satan can be hindered by one truly dedicated man consecrated completely to the Lord's will. This can still happen today if anyone follows God exactly as He instructs!

The Judges – Chapter 80

After Joshua and his elders passed away, Israel returned to idolatry. The old proverb that “wealth rarely survives three generations” also applies to religion. The grandchildren of Joshua's generation and beyond would enter a period known as the “Judges”, where Israel would fall away to idolatry and sin, is judged by God, punished, and then a judge would be sent by God to relieve them. This they did six times during the time of the Judges, and God sent a total of thirteen judges to Israel to keep His promise alive of a coming Messiah.

Judges 2:18-19 gives us divine commentary on how Israel sinned, was relieved, and then would fall back into idolatry even worse than before. By the end of the book, they had fallen deeply into sin, and had become worse than the murmurers of the first generation of Israelites that wandered in the wilderness. Although they had fallen so far, God kept Israel intact, in keeping with His promise originally to Eve, then Seth, Abraham, and finally Moses and Joshua. God always keep His promises! The period of the Judges was perpetually evil because “each man did what was right in his own eyes.” This phrase is repeated four times in the book of Judges alone, and certainly defines both that time period and our own!

The Bible warns repeatedly on how man should not look to his own wisdom to guidance – that only leads to destruction. Our own time shows us the wickedness of man when he leads himself – when the blind leads the blind – they fall into a pit. May God have mercy on this world so full of wickedness, selfishness, idolatry, lasciviousness, and hate.

Weak Things – Chapter 81

Dr. Faull elaborates here on the weak things God used in Judges to build back up Israel after it had fallen:

1) God used Ehud, a left-handed man (possibly meaning a man with only a left arm), to subdue a wicked enemy, King Eglon of Moab (Judges 3:15ff).

2) God used Shamgar who used an ox goad as a weapon.

3) God used Deborah, a woman, to fight for Israel.

4) God used Jael, who used a nail, against Sisera.

5) God used an unidentified woman to rid Israel of Abimelech.

6) God used pitchers and trumpets to destroy a wicked city by the hands of Gideon.

7) God used the jawbone of a donkey via Samson to defeat the Philistines.

8) God used a small band of three hundred soldiers to give Gideon and Israel victory.

9) Gideon was a weak man, from a poor family, from the smallest tribe. But God chose him over physical strength, because the victory was and is the Lord's!

This fact would be echoed later on in the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians 12:10, "For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Satan hoped to use all of these weak vessels for Israel to fail and fall. Instead, God used the weak things to tame the strong. Satan hoped that the final destruction of Israel would come for the continual disobedience, but God kept His promise to Israel for the sake of all mankind. Satan hoped that God's patience would wear then and just abandon the whole plan, but God never did.

Satan did have many victories in Judges, enabling the Israelites to fall from grace six times. Nonetheless, God's plan persevered, even putting Judah at the front of His armies. This was to show that even at the front of the battle, God would prevail to bring Messiah through. No physical or spiritual battle could hold back God's plan! This reminds this author of Romans 8:38-39; nothing can separate us from God's love!

Civil War – Chapter 82

After Gideon returned home victorious, this surprised all of the Israelites (and Satan!). How could the weakest man from the poorest family of the smallest tribe ever amount to anything?

It is amazing seeing how much the Israelites had known of God's power that they would be surprised by this. God was always using the weak things to tame the strong. God used Moses, a cast-off son of Egypt, hated by both his own people and his adopted people. God used Noah, though later he would be a drunk. God used Aaron, though he had sinned against God by leading up idolatry. God had used so many weak vessels; this was the business has always been in!

Nonetheless, they were surprised at Gideon's victory. Ephraim's tribe decided to be jealous about it, no doubt stirred up by Satan, and confronted Gideon about how great his victory really was. Gideon, wise and meek, responded to Ephraim that their victory of capturing the Midianite chieftains, Zeek and Oreb, was a greater victory than his own. Gideon desired peace above glory, and received peace for his kind words.

Satan did not succeed in tapping Gideon's pride, but he did succeed in tapping Jephthah's pride. Ephraim confronted him about his victory over the Ammonites. Jephthah responded that although God gave him the victory, Ephraim was of no use to him. This caused Ephraim to boil over in rage, and the civil war that commenced cost them 42,000 in their population. Naturally,

Satan enjoyed the fact that over some petty pride he was able to reduce Israel's strength by 42,000.

Satan was naturally involved on both sides of this war – tempting Ephraim and then Jephthah both to be proud. Then they both suffered as a result. Satan is like an arms dealer selling to both sides of a war; the only way to stop him is not to fight the war! May we be humble, and not proud, so as not to give Satan an edge with us!

Homosexuals in Benjamin – Chapter 83

A story not well known is the story of Judges 19 through 21 where a Levite and his concubine stay the night at Gibeah in the tribal lands of Benjamin. Homosexual behavior had been spreading throughout the land, to the extent, that the men of that city hunted down the Levite and demanded he come out so they could rape him. Instead, he handed over his concubine. They abused her all night, then slay her, and she lay dead the next morning. The Levite then took her body, divided it in twelve parts and sent a part to each tribe in Israel.

This horrid witness rose up all of Israel over Benjamin. The tribes rose up in civil war and attacked Benjamin. 65,100 men died in total, and Benjamin was reduced to only 600 soldiers. The wives of those who died were also killed in the destruction of their cities by fire. The men of Israel who remained then swore that none of their daughters would marry any remaining Benjamites. Carried out to its logical conclusion, this would have resulted in the extinction of that tribe. Ironically, later on, we learn that Benjamin is only one of two tribes spared along with Judah when the Assyrians come into permanently conquer and destroy Israel.

Israel did not want to see one of its tribes to go extinct, so they took the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead, killed the men of that city because they did not help fight the civil war, and gave them over to the remaining men of Benjamin. Thus the tribe was spared, but it would remain perpetually small throughout the remainder of Israel's history. Israel's first King, Saul, would come from Benjamin.

Satan hoped to corrupt Israel through homosexuality, which he is presently succeeding with today. Satan hoped to destroy all of Israel in its largest civil war ever, and he hoped God might just abandon this evil, violent people. Satan hoped that their continual failings would result in the line of Messiah being broken or corrupted, but God was faithful. The Canaanites who were not completely destroyed in Joshua's time continued to corrupt Israel, and it would not be until King David that they would finally be eradicated from the land as Moses had originally commanded many years before.

Ruth – Chapter 84

During the time of the Judges, there was a famine in the land of Israel (possibly a part of a punishment by God for their continual sin). During this time, Elimelech of Judah and his wife

Naomi went down to Moab. Elimelech was from Bethlehem in Judah, and his sons were Mahlon and Chilion. The two boys married two Moabite women. Later on, the three men died, and the women were left. Naomi took her daughter-in-law Ruth back to the land of Israel. The other daughter-in-law, Orpah, stubbornly remained in Moab. When Naomi returned, she called herself Mara, or bitterness, for she said, “the Lord has dealt bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20).

Ruth was able to marry Boaz after she met him while she was gleaning in his field. This gave Naomi rest as well.

Boaz’s parents, Rahab and Salome, obviously taught him to be kind to foreigners, for Rahab was a foreigner, and he was a half-breed. Nonetheless, Boaz was still from Judah, and marrying Ruth would not endanger that reality. From Boaz would eventually descend Christ!

Satan naturally hoped to inter-marry the men of Judah with the Moabite women. He actually succeeded, but he misunderstood the prophecy. Boaz was still of Judah, and so would Ruth be as a proselyte just as her mother-in-law was. Those foreigners who followed the Law of Moses were considered full members of their tribes, and Ruth and her descendants would be no different. No one has questioned whether or not Jesus was “pure Jew”; He certainly was not a Samaritan – and nobody argues that. That testimony alone tells us that what Satan thought was a victory, was in fact of no consequence.

Satan also hoped that perhaps Boaz would be bitter from his half-breed upbringing, but instead he was a godly man, and acted as such. He was humble, and not above marrying a Gentile woman, and certainly did not consider her less of a person than himself, just as his father before him had not considered his mother as less of a person. There is much to be learned from this story; although Satan still uses racism and prejudice to this day, it was never a problem for God and His faithful. Satan does not gain the victory here through hate. God wins it through love and grace and mercy!

Boaz – Chapter 85

Ruth and Naomi had returned from Moab to Judah, where a man named Boaz had a field. Ruth gleaned the field to feed her and her mother-in-law, and Boaz allowed them to do so. Ruth grew to love Boaz, although Boaz was an older man, and Naomi encouraged her love for him. Naomi also informed Ruth of the law of the kinsman redeemer, where if she would marry Boaz, he could raise up seed in the stead of her deceased husband.

So Ruth laid at the feet of Boaz one night at the end of barley season. Ruth asked Boaz to cover her with part of his coat, saying, “You are a near kinsman.” Boaz was overjoyed that she would choose him instead of a younger man. He redeemed the land of her husband, and took her to be his wife. From their union, came Obed, who begat Jesse, who begat David, the future second King of Israel.

In Deuteronomy 25:6 we learn the law of the kinsman redeemer that God had wisely instituted long before then. Boaz was happy to raise up seed for his kinsman Mahlon, for Ruth was a righteous woman he loved greatly. Her original redeemer was unwilling to take her as his wife, as it would have ruined an inheritance. That man valued money more than being in the line of Messiah!

The romance that Boaz and Ruth enjoyed would spoil anything Satan had in mind. There is no way he would know that not only would King David come from this unlikely union, but so would Jesus!

This unlikely union worked out because Ruth's original husband, Mahlon, was a purebred man from Judah. By Boaz rising up seed by him, his descendants' legal status as men from Judah was intact, regardless of his personal physical ancestry of Rahab. God had let two Gentile women into the line of Jesus by establishing wise laws in times past to make sure any Gentile influence into the line of Messiah could be properly attributed.

Satan hoped that Ruth's addition into the men of Judah would cause a corruption of the Messianic line, but the law of kinsman redeemer nullified that possibility. Satan had hoped that Boaz would reject Ruth for being of Moab, or that Ruth would reject Boaz for being an older man. However, God prevailed, and Ruth and Boaz's romance to this day is celebrated by many as one of God's providence in bringing two people together who were meant to be together for God's purposes.

Samuel – Chapter 86

With the period of the Judges ending, God saw fit to bring order to the chaos Israel had become and made. Eli, the present high priest, was a fat man from his lack of self-control, eating at the table of the sacrifice too often. He also had wayward sons who were bad men but appointed priests. The people were discontent with the priesthood, and its rule.

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were all from the tribe of Levi; Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim. The Judges varied in their tribal origin. However, the leadership returned to the tribe of Levi with the coming of Samuel. Samuel was raised with Eli, and would unfortunately learn poor parenting skills from him. Besides this, Samuel was raised up by God to be the last Judge, the first prophet, and a priest. Samuel would play a crucial role in putting Israel back in order, ultimately to prepare them for the first of their kings – Saul of the tribe of Benjamin.

Samuel was the son of Elkanah, descended from Korah, the man who had tried to usurp Moses. However, it was predicted that the sons of Korah would not suffer for his sin in Numbers 26:11, and indeed that grace passed on to Samuel.

Satan saw to it that the Philistines stole the ark of the covenant, slew 30,000 Israelites, the death of Eli and his sons, and had Israel in a state of chaos overall. Satan was having a heyday!

Samuel had a very large task in front of him tempering a nation of far-gone, unfaithful, impenitent, idolatrous, immoral, treacherous people. Nonetheless, from a very young age, Samuel would serve the people, and even as a child delivered his first prophecy of doom. People actually listened; they all recognized Samuel as a prophet in Israel.

Satan naturally hoped that Samuel would shrink away from such great responsibility, and undoubtedly tempted him to do so. Satan hoped that the death of Eli would be the end of the priesthood, and with no intercessor between the people and God, God would lose patience with Israel once and for all and abandon the plan for the Messiah. Satan also hoped that the ark's leaving Israel would result in the grace of God leaving Israel as well. I do not know if it is blasphemous to say that God was "tempted" to do just that, but certainly it would seem reasonable to abandon such a reckless, faithless people and just give up on the whole plan. Are people really worth all this effort?

Nonetheless, God was faithful! Samuel fulfilled his mission to its completion, and Israel would once again know order again, especially two generations under King David.

The Ark of the Covenant – Chapter 87

God did not waste time as the Philistines had the Ark of the Covenant. While it was sitting near their fish god Dagon, God caused Dagon to fall over and break into pieces. Also, the Philistines, as unimaginable as it sounds, worshipped golden idols shaped to look like hemorrhoids! So God struck them with hemorrhoids to show them the uselessness of worshipping an idol – any idol for that matter. We read about these things in 1 Samuel chapters 5-7.

Many ancient (and present day) foreigners believe if they worship an image of something, then that something will treat them with favor. This is also seen today with wafting smoke over an affected area, or worshipping ancestors (believing the ancestors are controlling the present-day situations), or giving sacrifices to beings that supposedly possess spirit houses (common even today in the orient).

It does not work now, and it did not work then. God struck the Philistines with the very thing they worshipped, but did show some wisdom in finally realizing their stolen "prize" of the ark had to be returned to Israel. So they put it on a cart, pulled by milk cows, and brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Israel. Foolishly, they also included golden images of mice and hemorrhoids as their offering to the Israelites. Apparently they still did not understand that their idols did not do them any favors.

However, the Philistines were not only the only foolish ones. Satan tempted the people of Israel to look into the Ark of the Covenant when they received it back. Perhaps, they reasoned, that the Philistines had opened it and removed Aaron's rod or the stone tablets? No matter, it was

not their place to even touch the ark, not to mention look inside of it! God struck 50,070 men down for this crime!

Satan had a victory here in killing off five-figure worth of Israelites. He also had a victory with the Philistines, getting them to take the Ark to begin with, and then foolish enough to still believe in their idols thereafter. Satan of course hoped to discourage the Israelites through this slaying, and also hoped that the Israelites would accept the foreign gods of the Philistines.

A common problem in ancient Israel is that although they would worship the one true God, they would also mix in the other foreign religions. The rationalization behind this remains to this day – why not take “the best” from every kind – to make a religion that suits us? Many people today rationalize this way with denominational theology, ideas, and church growth. Why not use denominational tools to grow our own churches? This is taking the “Philistine” way of church growth and health, and is ultimately destructive in the end.

The “Philistine” Way of doing Church will result in destruction just like it did for Israel.

This is the mixing other religions, tradition, trends/fads, denominational contradictions, etc.

- George L. Faull, Rel. D. as stated in the audio lectures of *The Eternal Struggle*

Satan wants us to adopt foreign ideas, denominational half-truths, and our own rationalizations to create a religion that suits us. To a large degree, he has succeeded. We must be careful to avoid this temptation of Satan, no matter how attractive the golden idols of our neighbors are!

Samuel’s Sons Rejected – Chapter 88

In Samuel 8, we read how Samuel was growing old, and thus the period of the Judges were coming to an end. The people, in their usual finesse (sarcasm), demanded a king like the other nations had instead of having God as their king, and another judge or prophet that God would appoint.

Samuel’s sons were wicked, like Eli’s before him. Samuel had apparently learned bad parenting skills from his mentor, and carried on this unfortunate trait into his old age. Also, Samuel had appointed his wicked sons to be judges, which displeased the people, as they were dishonest just as Eli’s sons were before him.

Samuel was sad that the people had rejected his sons as judges (but undeniably had some understanding as to why!). However, God did not see it the way that Samuel did. God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:7 that the people were not rejecting Samuel, but God. God could see that the people did not trust Him to raise up another prophet like Samuel, or another good Judge. The people also had “lust” of the nations around them who had kings, undeniably with the status of celebrities among them, ruling over them.

Satan of course was having a ball with all of this. The people of Israel had rejected Samuel, his sons, and wanted a king like the foreigners. God had warned his people all along not to want a king, as a king demands great things from people that God did not expect. A king would be nothing but a burden, but the people persisted anyway. God allowed kings, but they would be trouble continuously, and even the good and great kings like David, would have severe personality flaws and still commit many atrocities.

A lot of churches today want “pastors” that previously had ministers, preachers, or evangelists. The popular term today is “pastor”, and people want a “pastor” so they fit in with the celebrity-pastors they hear about on the radio and see on TV and in their local communities. Many independent Christian churches have even moved to this term, again, to fit it more with the popular modern concept of having a “pastor”. A church with a “minister” or an “evangelist” either sounds out of date or just weird. Truly, how many people know what an evangelist is at all? Even a minister sounds much like a political position commonly found in foreign countries today.

What about this? Is this something God approves? We know from Ephesians 4, Titus 1, 1 Timothy 3, and Hebrews 13 that God has a specific church polity he expects. There are elders, deacons, evangelists/ministers, and the priesthood (the church). A pastor, or the Greek word *poimen*, refers to elders universally in the New Testament. To make your minister or preacher an elder upsets God’s for church polity. And truly, if an evangelist/minister/preacher has any sense, why would he want the responsibility of the eldership on top of his already great work? Can one man truly do two jobs to God’s satisfaction, and by His definition?

No, this is again accepting the “Philistine” way of doing church. It could also be said it is the “rebellious Israelite” way of rejecting God as King, and establishing a “pastor” in His place. Equally so, denominational structures create corporate-style leadership with various names to serve as authorities in their churches. They have cardinals and councils and books of discipline and catechisms and clergy and a variety of other completely non-Biblical positions all designed to replace God as King (effectively speaking). God set up a very simple structure – Jesus Christ as King, elders appointed to serve as pastors/shepherds/overseers, and deacons to take responsibility for the various ministries in the church besides the eldership role. Ministers or evangelists are to preach the word, teach it, reach out to the community, minister to those in special situations, etc. He is not an elder, and does not benefit from that position. He is independent of the elders, subject to them, much as the deacons are, with a more full-time specialized service to the local church. Simply speaking, he is not a pastor, but an evangelist.

Satan has effectively used the pastor position to reduce the call for evangelism in our present-day churches. The last thing Satan wants is more evangelists! Satan wants evangelists to become pastors, to become office-dwellers, administrators, distracted from his true calling. The proliferation of celebrity-Christians and pastors has created a great temptation for people to be

sucked into thinking that if they are a pastor but not an elder that they have successfully created a new position in God's church. This is Satan, not God, tempting us with these ideas!

Satan used the Israelites to once again murmur against God's plan, not having learned from their ancestors' mistakes. Truly, this author realizes much more now how much the modern church has wandered and not learned from its ancestors' mistakes. Even our Bible College students are taught so much "practical ministry" and "worship ministry" and "children's ministry" that they are not taught much about the Bible except for "trivia" to be memorized for a test to be quickly forgotten. Papers are no longer written to digest deeply-studied Biblical concepts but rather man-made studies of church growth and so-called science and do-it-yourself "church" growth. The reliance on God and prayer, and trusting in His plan, is basically zero today. We need a revival, not based on man's ideas, but based on the Word of God, His plan, just like when Josiah found the Book of the Law, if we are truly going to be Jesus' bride appropriately dressed for her Husband!

Satan looked forward to having a single man by which to manipulate the whole Kingdom of God via a King. This is also what happens in a church when a single man, a "pastor", assumes control of a church. Then, through pride, Satan can tempt him into thinking he can do what he wants, when he wants, and it will be blessed of God. Even Balaam asked to die the death of a righteous man, but only pursued his own greedy lusts! May we not fall into the doctrine of Balaam, as we are warned multiple times in the New Testament. No good comes from it!

Satan would indeed manipulate the multiple kings of Israel – Saul with idolatry and witchcraft, David with adultery and murder, Solomon with idolatry and women, and the various kings following with idolatry, greed, and the like. Satan would have many victories in the ages of the kings of Israel, but God would keep His promise to be faithful to bring Messiah, even through all of that. God would tire of Israel many times, and many more times to come, but God always keeps His promises. God keeps His promises now, but we must be careful not to forsake so great a salvation (Hebrews 2:3) in exchange for worldly desires and modern trends doomed to fail.

King Saul – Chapter 89

In 1 Samuel 9-12, King Saul starts out alright: at first he is humble, obedient to God, and leads the Israelites to victory. God promises Saul that if he and all of Israel are obedient, he would bless Saul and the Israelites. If they were disobedient (as would happen again later on), then God would punish Israel (this is what is meant by "curse").

God gives Israel a king from Benjamin to show them that their promised Messiah from Judah would now be delayed by the rule of Saul (40 years). Also, He chose a king from Benjamin to show them that this king was again chosen of grace, not merit, as Benjamin was the smallest tribe, and previously cursed when they had given themselves over to homosexuality and

brutality, and the children of Israel turned on them harshly, almost ending the tribe permanently (see Judges 19-21).

This also brings up the point that forty years is the number of probation: here, the Israelites' Messiah would be delayed by 40 years. Beforehand, the Israelites had wandered in the desert for forty years. That's how long the rains came during the flood. That is how long Joseph was embalmed in Egypt after this death. It is also how long Jesus fasted in the wilderness before His temptation.

Therefore, we can be certain this was another probation period, even also the reign of King David and King Solomon, both of whom also reigned forty years. If Israel had not asked for a king, and pressed for it, the Messiah could have come more quickly. But as it was, God worked with imperfect man to bring about His perfect Prophet, Priest, and King!

Satan obviously did not like the fact that Saul was humble and obedient so he went right to work tempting Saul with idolatry, pride, and greed. Eventually, Satan succeeded in all three. Satan also hoped that by taking the throne from Judah as predicted in Genesis 49:10, that God's prophetic plan had been spoiled. No, this was merely a delay. There was never supposed to be a king; God was always supposed to be Israel's king. So the first king would show the stepping away from God's plan for a probationary period of forty years, but God's installation of David as King for forty years show that Judah was still God's plan, and the throne would not depart again until Herod, when Jesus came!

Saul's Presumptuous Sins – Chapter 90

King Saul started out humble, but it did not take him long for Satan to tempt him successfully with pride, wealth, and power. In Samuel 13-14 we read how Saul was waiting on Samuel the prophet to offer a sacrifice before a battle. Saul knew only a Levite priest could offer up the sacrifice, but Saul decided that the sacrifice was more important than obedience, and that his role as king allowed him to usurp God's plan. However, this was an incorrect rationalization, and when Samuel arrived and saw what Saul had done, Samuel told Saul that the kingship would be taken away from him, and given to a man after God's own heart (later to be revealed to be David).

God revealed only facts on a certain timetable – Satan could only act on what he knew, and he did not know more than what had been told man. Satan is not omniscient, and so now armed with the vague knowledge that someone else will be taking Saul's throne, and the only hint given is that it will be a man after God's own heart, Satan does not know who to target yet. Saul does not yet know who to target yet either. God knew Saul's heart, and that Saul's heart had grown selfish and even violent with old age, and would attempt to usurp the man who was to take his place if he knew the details. So those details were withheld, to protect God's man for the appointed time.

This is also how it worked with Jesus. Jesus did not come out immediately and declare His Godhood, or that He would raise from the dead in three days. He saved those facts for the opportune time, to keep His enemies and Satan guessing until it was effectively too late for them to stop God's plan.

As well, this story teaches us an old ploy of Satan – that religiosity can replace faithfulness. Saul here offers a sacrifice – many would interpret this as Saul just trying to worship the best way he knew how. However, this is simply false – Saul was waiting on Samuel for the very reason he knew that only Samuel could offer it. As well, we know from Isaiah 29:13 and repeated later in Matthew 15:8 that lip service (“sacrifice of praise”) means nothing without obedience; this has been taught since the beginning of time from God to His servants. Sitting in church does not make us a faithful believer anymore than sitting in a garage makes us a car!

Saul gave a sacrifice. This is good, right? **Wrong!**

Saul was not a priest, or even a Levite. He was presumptuous to assume another's role, even though he was King of all Israel! God took away his Kingship for his presumption.

Let us NOT “assume” a role we have not been given by God, regardless of who we are!

Obedience is greater than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Obedience is greater than power!

Jonathan's Faith – Chapter 91

Saul's son, Jonathan, comes into the limelight in Samuel 14. During Saul's reign, the Philistines still had much control over Israel, including denying Israel swords and spears to defend themselves. 1 Samuel 13:19 tells us that no blacksmith was found in the land of Israel because the Philistines had prevented them of it.

This is why Ehud had to make his own dagger, and why Jonathan and only a few others managed to have weapons. It is why Samson had to use the jawbone of a donkey, and Shamgar had to use an ox goad. In 1 Samuel 13:22, it is said at that time only Saul and Jonathan had swords. Surely, God was protecting Israel, because they could not protect themselves!

Satan kept tempting the Philistines to attack the “defenseless” Israelites, but they failed many times because God kept sending powerful judges to defend Israel and protected them providentially besides. One particular battle Saul had told no one to eat until evening; Jonathan thought this was silly, and told the people so. Jonathan himself ate some honey he found, but the people took this as a license to eat things they should not have – raw meat and the blood of slain animals. Possibly they did this because they were so famished their flesh overwhelmed them, but regardless, Saul was furious, and aimed to kill his own son. Jonathan, however, was protected by the people, as the people obviously favored his eating over no eating policy brought about by his father!

God proved through all of the above that it was swords or spears or even food that protected Israel, but God Himself. Jonathan's faith was rewarded, although a lesson in not letting others stumble because of our limited license is reiterated (see Romans 14). Satan hoped of course for Saul to slay his direct heir, Jonathan, or for Jonathan to get sick enough of his father to slay him, and then be guilty of murdering the king (a charge of treason in the highest degree, punishable by death). Satan also hoped to use the hunger of the people to drive them against their own king (ironically, the king they asked for), or to drive God to wipe out Israel because of their eating of raw meat and blood, which they were forbidden to do. Nonetheless, God preserved Saul's kingship until David was ready, and showed favor to Jonathan for bravely leading the people into battle, giving glory to God.

David is Chosen King – Chapter 92

In Samuel 16, we learn that King Saul has been ordered by God to kill the Amalekites and all their animals for their many grievous sins. They were practitioners of cannibalism, bestiality, immorality, and idolatry. Some commentators suggest that God was using the Israelites as a "sheriff nation" against the nations around it, but this author respectfully believes that God was solely trying to keep the Amalekites' influence from Israel. Israel had fallen into these traps before and it was time to eradicate the nearest persuasion of these sins.

However, Saul did not kill all of the Amalekites or the animals. In fact, he brought some of the animals to be sacrificed to Samuel. Again, Saul thought that sacrifice was better than obedience. It simply never is (1 Samuel 15:22). Samuel then rebuked Saul again, and said the kingship would be taken from him that very day (1 Samuel 15:28), so God sends Samuel to anoint the new king, David.

Again, Satan had used the old ploy that religiosity is important than obedience. Saul fell for it again, and Samuel's original prophecy that the kingship would leave Saul for his disobedience came to fruition. It seems to indicate that Saul was supposed to rule longer than that (and indeed, he did by usurping the throne by force for awhile), but this sin cut him short of any further official reign (at least in God's eyes). If one sin seals our fate, another might seal it sooner! May we learn from our mistakes and the mistakes of people before us, so as our fate be one of eternal life, and not the preventable second death!

This also happened to fulfill prophecy in Isaiah 11:1: "And there will come a rod out of Jesse, and a Branch will grow out of his roots."

God sent Samuel to anoint David although David was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons. Surely, Satan tried to use this opportunity to upset the family and we see evidence of this later on as his elder brother would speak harshly to David later on at a battlefield.

1 Samuel 16:13 shows that the Spirit of the Lord came upon David as a sign to Samuel and the others that David really was to be king. Again, this is an example of a miracle occurring

for the purpose of confirming the message. David did not seem to gain any miraculous ability from this event, just like when the Spirit of the Lord descended upon Jesus at His baptism, it was to show He was the Son of God, not give Him power (He already had the power as the Son of God, obviously).

1 Samuel 16:14+15 gives us an interesting bit of history about Saul. The Spirit of the Lord which had been with Saul left him at that moment, and an evil spirit came upon him instead. Saul's servants confirmed that this happened. What was this evil spirit "from the Lord?"

This author believes that we can assume that "the evil spirit from the Lord" was a sign, just as the Spirit of the Lord coming upon David was a sign. David did not receive any miraculous power from the Spirit of the Lord; Saul was not possessed (like a demon would) by this evil spirit from the Lord. Also, we can remark that "from" the Lord is different than "of" the Lord. "Of the Lord" tells us that the Spirit given is God in spirit form, like the Holy Spirit. "From the Lord" implies that God was using an evil spirit for a sign unto Saul that he was not king anymore in God's eyes. Neither "spirit" meant that either man was "saved" or "condemned"; they were signs (or testimonies/confirmations), as was typically the case with the Spirit in both Old and New Testaments.

This story would become a beautiful type of Jesus' reign today. Although Jesus is King, many things are not yet subject to Him. Satan, like Saul, still has unrighteous, misplaced authority over the people that have not submitted themselves to Jesus. However, the day is coming when Satan and his followers will be cast into the lake of fire, and all things will be underneath Jesus' feet. Interestingly enough, when that happens, Jesus will actually hand the Kingdom back over to the Father for all eternity and be in subjection to Him. All the same, this is what Saul should have done – He should have given the throne willingly back to Judah (via David), and been in willing subjection to him. This would have resulted in Saul's repentance and progress towards justification, but instead Saul chose to usurp David's authority for a few years longer, just like Satan assumes authority over people whom he has no right. The day of reckoning is coming, and just like Saul, Satan will fall!

This author believes it would be prudent to comment on "the Spirit of the Lord coming upon" someone. It is once again incredibly important to point out that "the Spirit coming UPON a man" is very different than "the Spirit WITHIN a man." The latter saves, the former is for a sign or another purpose of God. When Samson had "the Spirit of the Lord come UPON him", he had just left a whore's house! Samson was not a regenerate man – the Spirit was not "within" him – however, it often came "upon" him to serve God's purposes. We should not confuse these two subjects!

Charismatics often teach that if a man can speak in tongues, he must obviously be saved. However, the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" was never used to save anyone. It was used a sign, first for the people hearing the Gospel in their own language in Acts 2, and second as a sign to

Peter and his companions that the Gentiles really were not to be denied “the baptism that saves you also” (1 Peter 3:18-22 for full context). Also, we know that the indwelling (“within”) Holy Spirit is the seal of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13), received at our baptism (Acts 2:38). At no point does this involve the Holy Spirit “upon” us; in fact, it is safe to assume that no Christian today has the Spirit coming “upon” them with the Holy Word of God complete in His Word through the Bible, as Paul predicted (1 Corinthians 13:8-10) that when the “perfect” comes, those signs (or testimonies/confirmations) would disappear, replaced with the ultimate testimony – the Bible!

Saul Against David – Chapter 93

As 1 Samuel chapters 17-30 come into our view, we learn about the many attempts Saul would ultimately make to take David’s life. At first, Saul did not know that David was anointed, and actually had him play the harp for him to soothe him. God had this happen so David could learn the palace and some of the workings of the state (as a shepherd, his grasp of politics was naturally zero, so this was an informal training God planned in advance).

David also found a good friend in Jonathan, even as fully accepted he would not be king but his friend would be. This shows Jonathan’s great humility and desire to serve God and His plans, and not his own. It says that David’s and Jonathan’s hearts were woven as one in some translations; this shows that God had prepared Jonathan to help protect David and help show him what he would do as king. Jonathan was an informal adviser to David; this goes to show God’s great wisdom in how to prepare David for his role.

Satan naturally feared and hated David from the beginning. He knew that David was the rightful heir, so Satan would go after David **NINETEEN** different ways before he would even become king. This goes to show that Satan’s persistence was tremendous, but God’s providence was greater as God protected David through all of these difficulties.

In 1 Samuel 17, Satan would send a lion and a bear against David while he tended his sheep. David slew both of the beasts with the help of God.

In 1 Samuel 17 also, David slew Goliath although he was a boy of small stature and Saul, the king, was a man head and shoulders above anyone else in Israel. Whereas Saul believed that great strength of arms was necessary to defeat Goliath, David knew it was God all along who would bring the victory. Satan hoped to kill David in fighting this giant, but God gave David the bravery and skill to do so.

In 1 Samuel 18, David was praised for his many victories, as the people elevate him above Saul’s victories. This caused Saul to be jealous and from that day forward tried to slay David. Even while David kindly played the harp for him, Saul would throw a javelin at him. Satan now used Saul directly to attack David, but God would protect David, and thus the lineage of Messiah through him.

Saul, through Satan's influence, hatched a truly evil plan in the latter part of 1 Samuel 18 to get David killed. Saul offered David his daughter in marriage if he could obtain a hundred foreskins of the Philistines. Knowing this very well would require David to enter a battle and kill a hundred Philistines to accomplish this goal, it put David in great danger. Nonetheless, God was with David, David succeeded and won the hand of Saul's daughter, though not the one he was originally promised. Instead, he ended up with Michal, who would later cause problems for him, and he would (arguably) cause greater problems for her.

Jonathan was twenty-four years older than David, but loved him like a brother. It is this author's opinion that God had David an older friend who would not covet the throne. Surely Jonathan saw what the throne had done to his father, who at one time as a humble yet strong man, and had become over time an arrogant and defeated king. Jonathan even gave David his robe as a symbolic means of handing off who was to be the true heir of the throne. Although Saul would continue to hunt David, God would use Jonathan to protect David until his time to rule came.

In Samuel 19, David once again played the harp for Saul, even though Saul had previously tried to kill David with a javelin. Well, Saul tried the same thing again (this author can only assume Saul had not an ounce of creativity at this point), and David fled the palace safely.

Also in Samuel 19, Saul's servants tried to kill David, but his new wife, Michal, helped David escape. This goes to show that David and Michal's relationship started out right, but later, it would go horribly wrong (and both parties would be guilty).

David was in such danger at one point that he fled to Naioth in Ramah. Saul pursued them there, but Samuel was there as well, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, caused him to fall at Samuel's feet, and prophesied. This gave time for David to escape. This story once again shows that the Spirit of the Lord upon a man does not mean he is regenerate; it is again a sign, testimony, confirmation, or tool of God to accomplish His purposes – in this case, the safety of David. So we can safely assume here that the Spirit of the Lord that came upon Saul was not for Saul at all, but for David, to keep him safe. The confusion over the Holy Spirit in today's churches is largely because the Bible's context for such things is ignored greatly, much to Satan's chagrin.

The ninth attempt Satan made on David's life starts at the end of 1 Samuel 20 and goes through chapters 21 and 22. David fled to Ahimelech the priest. He and his companions were so hungry from their fleeing that the priest gave him and his companions the consecrated bread. Jesus later refers to this incident to prove that the Sabbath was for man, not man for the Sabbath (Luke 6:3-5). David nor the priest did wrong here, but Saul in his rage had all the priests (85 in total) slain as a result of their helping David. Abiathar the priest, however, escaped and ran to David. He brought with him the Urim and Thummin and gave David the insights he needed from there to make wise escapes from Saul from that point on.

The Urim and Thummin possibly have their New Testament equivalent in the casting of lots the Apostles did (Acts 1:26), but in this case the priest had these two stones that he could toss to discern the will of God when asked a question by an appropriate authority. Here, Abiathar recognizes David's kingship, and so believes he can help David with the stones. He reasons correctly, and David benefits from his counsel.

Some believe that the idea of staring into a crystal ball comes from this practice of the priests. That is a stretch, seeing how there was no trance-like state, and no divination involved. It was merely a cast of stones, that God would then put into place, to answers questions right there and then. Witchcraft, or divination through drugs, was strictly forbidden in Old Testament and New Testament times, so that is not what was happening here.

Satan succeeded in killing a great number of priests – good men – because of Saul's rage and David's perfect escapes. Satan of course hoped that by David eating the consecrated bread that God would smite him, or the priest's. However, Satan learned an important lesson that day – the rules are not there for the rules' sake, but for ours, which means that if God so chooses a rule can be suspended for His purposes, it can be. He made the rules, they are perfect; His character is perfect, so He cannot make mistakes or sin. Therefore, if God sees fit to temporarily suspend a rule for the sake of His purpose, then so be it. He is the law-giver; there is no questioning His judgments.

David then fled to Achish, the king of Gath, as recorded in 1 Samuel 21. He learned that they hated him (likely because David had killed Goliath, who was from Gath), so he feigned idiocy by letting his spittle run down his beard (and likely some other untold antics). Thinking he was then harmless, they let him escape unharmed.

In the latter half of 1 Samuel 22, David flees to a cave in Adullam, where 400 men made him captain over them. These men were in debt, distressed, and discontent. David's family joined him there for fear of Saul's wrath. David took his parents to Moab for asylum, but he himself lived in the cave and ruled as king over these 400 despised men. In time, these men would cross the river and possess the kingdom, but not yet. Gad, a prophet, told David to flee to the forest of Hareth.

Satan of course hoped that David stumbling into these 400 souls that they would rob him of what he had and leave him for dead. However, the men either knew who David was or was providentially aware of who he could be, so they made him captain over them. Satan also hoped that David might be foolish to take these 400 men and go to direct war against Saul and end the hunt once and for all, dead or alive. However, God stilled David, and kept him patient, and kept him running successfully.

In the twelfth attempt of Satan trying to kill David, he was at Keilah, and he used the Urim and the Thummin to ask the Lord if the men of Keilah would betray him. Now David had

just rescued these men from the Philistines, but that did not make them loyal. God told David through the stones that they would betray him, so David fled to the wilderness of Ziph.

This story teaches us that Satan will try to make us think that if we help someone, they “owe” us loyalty. Perhaps they do, but that does not mean they will give it. It is this author’s experience that the people who complain the most are the least grateful, and the people who cause the most trouble give the least. In this case, David liberated a people, but they were inherently selfish, and would have traded David without a second thought. David here is wise to consult God first and to follow His direction instead of try to “force” gratitude and loyalty from the people at Keilah. It would not have worked anyway, and David was wise enough not to try, but rather to consult God. May we be that wise! May we put our trust in God and not men at all times!

Finally, David is surrounded at Maon; it looked hopeless. However, Saul, right before the capture, received a message that the Philistines had invaded, so he had to pause his pursuit of David to protect his country. God once again providentially intervened and saved the line of Messiah though Satan was sure he had him that time. When all seems hopeless, God is still there, and still has a plan. May we trust Him like David did!

At En-Gedi, Saul had been pursuing David, but grew tired, and so he slept in a cave. In 1 Samuel 24, David found Saul and instead of killing him (as possibly any of us in David’s position would have done – and felt righteous for doing it), he cut off a piece of Saul’s clothing and then showed it Saul when he woke up. Saul then acted penitent and acknowledged David’s rightful place. Saul then returned home and David finally had rest for a few days.

Satan of course hoped that David would slay Saul, and then possibly Saul’s men in retaliation would have killed David. However, God stayed David’s hand, gave him patience, and David would not become a murderer (yet).

David came upon Nabal, an evil and stubborn man who refused to help David although David had helped him before. This angered David greatly, and initially he sought to have revenge upon Nabal for his wrongdoing. However, Nabal’s wife, Abigail appeared, and tended to David, and reminded David that his reputation as Israel’s king was at stake, and he should take spill blood when it can be spared. Abigail won David’s heart, and David relented. Nabal shortly thereafter died from a heart attack, and David took Abigail to be his wife.

Satan hoped to use Nabal to start a battle and hopefully see to David’s death in the fight. Satan also hoped the Abigail would take on the unrighteous attitude of her husband and spurn David as well. Certainly helping David was not popular, as Saul had made it clear that there was a price on David’s head. Nonetheless, God helped both Abigail and David keep their cool under this intense pressure, and they both then benefited from their good choices.

At the wilderness of Ziph, as described 1 Samuel 26, Saul once again tried to kill David. However, the Lord put both Saul and his general Abner in a deep sleep. David's friend Abishai wanted to kill Saul, but David would not allow it. By this point, God had taught David that vengeance was the Lord's, and David would listen at this point. Instead, David fled across the valley, and called out to them to let them aware he was there and had once again not harmed them. He taunted Abner for not protecting his "king's" life. Saul again pretended to repent, but David did not believe it. Saul continued to hunt for David; he would not let his evil "hobby" die.

Satan so very much wanted David dead. Saul and his general were both after David, but God directly intervened to put Saul and his general to sleep. Though this author is sure God did not want David taunting Abner, he still protected David from further encounters with Saul and Abner. God knew, though Saul, Abner, and certainly Satan did not, that Saul would die soon upon his own sword. David just had to be patient a little bit longer, and God would providentially provide for David in the meantime.

By this point, there have been sixteen attempts at David's life before he would sit on His rightful throne! Amazingly, there are still three more attempts; Satan is nothing if not persistent, and he would continue to try to kill God's anointed who carried the lineage of Christ.

In Samuel 29, there is an unfortunate circumstance where for awhile David decided to flee to the Philistines of all people for protection. David must have rationalized that he would be safe from Saul in the midst of the Philistines, since they were at war often with one another. However, David certainly was not trusting God, as he disguised himself, lied often, lived in compromise, and existed under a false pretense. All of Israel looked down on David as a result, his reputation at stake, and his own men fostered ill will against him. The allies of the king of Gath (ironically, where Goliath was from) did not trust David, however, so they did not join him in battle against Saul. This prevented David from warring against Israel any longer, which was God's providential move to get David out of Philistia. Satan hoped again and again that David would be slain in battle but God watched over him, even in David's foolish behavior here.

In the eighteenth attempt on David's life, Satan motivated a band of highwaymen to try to make an attempt on David's life. God delivered them into David's hand instead, as recorded in 1 Chronicles 12:21-23.

Shortly before David would become King, in 1 Samuel 30, the Amalekites had taken David's and his men's wives captive. This angered David's men greatly; they almost reached the point of stoning their leader (they were already frustrated with his living in Philistia and ordering them to live under his deception). Satan of course hoped, in a moment of rage, that David's life would come to an end under his own men's hands.

David wised up here and sought the Lord's direction through the priest Abiathar. Abiathar used the Urim and Thummin to determine God's plan for David. Abiathar interpreted the stones and told David that victory would be his if he would attack the Amalekites. So David and his

men did, and they rescued their wives. This all happened in the latter part of 1 Samuel 30, much to Satan's chagrin.

Finally, Saul and three of his sons are slain in a battle they were losing. Saul fell on his own sword in fear of what the enemy would do to him if captured (Saul had many personal enemies).

Although David could now take his rightful place as king over Israel, his troubles were not over, as Satan would continue to seek out every opportunity to tempt or harm David. Satan would actually succeed many times, and David would make many decisions that were sinful. Nonetheless, God worked to preserve the seed of Messiah through David, and to ultimately make David's name great, and keep His promises to David out of grace. David is mentioned in the Hebrews chapter 11 hall of faithful heroes ultimately, demonstrating his justification by grace through faith in the coming Messiah.

David, King of Judah – Chapter 94

Saul was dead, and an Amalekite shows up to tell David of Saul's death. He tells him that he slew Saul, and looked to gain David's favor in the slaying. Instead, David killed him. Why? For one, the Amalekite lied (Saul had fallen on his own sword). Second, David had the chance to slay Saul twice in the past, but did not take it; he loved Saul, despite Saul's hate for him towards the end of his reign.

Satan naturally hoped that the Amalekite might try to assume the throne – after all – he claimed to have killed the King of Israel! No, instead the Amalekite lied and looked to the approval of a righteous man – David – and that righteous man killed him for his lie and his assumption.

Finally, David heads to Hebron in 2 Samuel chapters 1 and 2 and is crowned king by a group of people from Judah. However, Abner, a general under Saul, had decided to crown a man named Ishbosheth king (Ishbosheth was one of Saul's sons). Abner and Joab, generals of the different nations, agreed first to some war-games, that then became a war. Undeniably Satan's doing, many men died in the conflict (20 of David's men and 360 Israelites besides). Abner had to kill Asahel, Joab's younger brother, because he would not retreat when asked. In the melee, Asahel died. This ceased the strife (apparently both sides figured this had gone on for long enough by the time Asahel passes). However, peace was not for long.

Ishbosheth betrayed the general that crowned him by accusing Abner of sleeping with Saul's concubine. Abner decided to leave Ishbosheth and join David instead. David welcomed him but Joab, in a fit of jealous rage over David's favor and his own brother's death (2 Samuel 3:27), killed Abner in secret. David had initially accepted Abner's defection upon receiving his first wife Michal back (which Abner delivered), but the defection was short-lived due to his death at the hands of Joab.

Interestingly, Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 7, Chapter 1) disagrees with the Biblical account by saying Joab did not kill Abner out of revenge for his brother's death, but rather out of the threat for Abner's rank as general. The Old Testament records both reasons, and for this author, that's good enough for me. It can only be assumed, that although Josephus was a Jew and a good historian, his accounts were not always 100% accurate. This is a good example.

David did not know that Joab had arranged for Abner's death, but those that actually did kill Abner showed up to David, expecting to be received gladly. They were apparently unaware of Abner's defection that David had accepted; David slew them promptly.

Israel celebrated the defense of Abner and peace entered the land again for a short time. David and the Israelites defeated the Philistines also at this time that had try to destroy the two nations when they were separated.

Satan naturally transformed the war games into real war, and hoped to kill as many Israelites as possible. He succeeded in a total of 380 of them dead. He also hoped that Abner and Joab's rivalry would catch David in the crossfire, or maybe one of them would be tempted to usurp David as King. Finally, since Saul hunted David down so often, perhaps one of them would finish the job Saul never could.

However, God kept David safe, still focused on bringing Messiah into the world.

Michal – Chapter 95

In 2 Samuel 6, two stories of interest occur: Uzzah and Michal. Satan would attempt to use them both to cause David harm, and in many ways he succeeded. This is another example of Satan occasionally winning a battle, but never the war against the line of Messiah.

Uzzah was walking along side the Ark of the Covenant as it was being returned from Philistia on a cart. As it seemed to falling off, Uzzah reached up his hand to steady the cart. When he touched the ark, he was struck dead.

Many people ask questions that deserve answering: what great wrong did Uzzah do? How can God be just for smiting a man who was trying to help?

There were three sins actually involved in the handling of the ark: 1) it was on a cart (it was supposed to be carried on the priests' shoulders), 2) it was being escorted by non-Levites (it was only to be taken care of the Levites), and 3) no one at all was to touch it (even the Levites had to use staves through inlets that held the ark up when carried). God had actually been kind for not striking David (and Uzzah) dead for their presumptuous sins in the first two measures. However, touching the ark resulting in death was actually only just, because all were aware what had happened to those who had looked into the ark earlier (they too had been killed – 1 Samuel 6:19). When we know something is wrong, and yet we habitually sin, we know that sin gives

birth to death (James 1:15). Uzzah here is a great example of the reality of this timeless principle!

David was very angry because of Uzzah's death, but the fear of the Lord caused him to instead reverence God's law. Throughout his life, he would ebb and flow on his precise loyalty to God's Word, but we know He was ultimately counted faithful, as he is listed as justified in the Hebrews' Hall of Faithful Heroes (Hebrews 11:32).

After awhile, David returned to bring the ark completely home. This time he put it on the Levites' shoulders, as it should have been. When it arrived, and he had heard about the blessings of the home where the ark had temporarily rested, he threw off his kingly robes and began to dance vigorously in celebration!

Many times this passage is used to justify dancing – “If David danced, why can't I?” Or, perhaps on a much more pungent level, this author has many times seen a t-shirt that read, “David danced in his underwear. Why can't I?”

This author does not think one can draw a conclusion about the merits of dancing from this passage (nor can he make a Biblical argument against it in general), however, this passage is not good for “proving” dancing's goodness!

When David danced in his skivvies, his first wife Michal, whom David had called back for (apparently he liked her up to this point), mocked him and was jealous for the praise and adoration he received while he praised God for the return of the ark.

David was very angry with Michal for her reaction (this author imagines that her attempt to humiliate David publicly was at the heart of his reaction). He told her that she would never be touched by him again for her attitude. Indeed, Michal's womb was barren for life, and she never again laid with her husband. What once was a marriage David enjoyed was now ruined by both Michal's attitude and actions, and David's reaction to her. Surely, the line between love and hate is awful thin in some cases, certainly here.

Satan naturally loved this! With Michal barren, who would father Messiah? God had another plan down the road, but in the short term, Satan caused great grief in David and Michal's lives due to their simultaneous poor behavior in this incident. This hate David bore of his first wife translated severely in the case where he turns over the children she helped raise (Saul's remaining descendants) to be hung just because some guys wanted to hang Saul's descendants for the supposed wrongs they had endured at the hands of Saul (2 Samuel 21:1-6). David permitted this; he could not seem to ignore an opportunity to make Michal's life worse, even years down the road, even if it meant the lives of innocent children. Surely, David had his dark side, and when it reeled its ugly head, it was truly horrific in scope and breadth.

David would show special favor to Mephibosheth out of respect for his previous best friend, Jonathan (2 Samuel 9:1ff, 21:7). So, David kept his promises, but was ruthless when a promise or other oath did not concern him.

Rizpah, the mother of two of the boys who were hung unjustly, mourned greatly for her boys (2 Samuel 21:10-14). David did permit their bones to be gathered and be buried properly and not treated as criminals. David also took Saul's and Jonathan's bones and had them buried properly. This pleased the Lord, and God moved after a prayer was offered for the land (2 Samuel 21:14).

Although David's attitude and actions were horrendous to say the least, Michal's inability to celebrate with her husband in his greatest triumph (returning the ark to the Tabernacle), showed that she who could not rejoice with her husband did not deserve to be the mother (or ancestor) of Him who would bring great joy to the world! (Luke 2:10)

Satan used both Uzzah and Michal in a mighty way to bring great evil not only to their own selves, but to many other as well. Satan's confidence must have risen significantly (if only temporarily), realizing that he had stopped Messiah's line by keeping Michal barren and untouched. Now what would David do for a wife? The answer would be equally despicable, but God would work through it to keep His promise to all mankind. Even when man is faithless, we are reminded again and again through the Old Testament that God is faithful!

David Promised a House – Chapter 96

After the ark had returned, David was sad to realize that he lived in a nice house of cedar but the ark dwelled in a tent perpetually. He wished to build God a house. So, he approached the prophet Nathan with his idea and Nathan told him to go for it. However, Nathan had not approached God first (even prophets are imperfect people, and this must be remembered – especially in the case of Balaam), so God rebuked Nathan, and gave him a message for David that differed: instead of David building a house for God, God would build David a house!

David's good intentions were met with God's great action. To God, intentions are as good as the deed. If a man were on his way to a prostitute's house but died in a car accident on the way there, he would be as guilty had he arrived. All the same, David's good intentions were counted unto God as if he actually had done it. When we mean to do good things for God, God will bless us both in the sincere intent and the obeying of His Word.

Most importantly, however, God prophesied through Nathan that Messiah will indeed come through David (2 Samuel 7:11-13). Now, God had already predicted this beforehand, but even through David's former (and upcoming) faults, God would still keep His promise to David. Indeed, this must have shaken Satan to the core. Unlike the Israelites in the wilderness whom God struck dead many of them dead many times for their sins, God is sustaining His servant David through thick and thin. Satan changes strategies, and attempts to kill David via other men,

and also tries to kill his many offspring. Satan would succeed in killing many of David's sons, but Solomon and Nathan would both carry Jesus' line – Solomon through Joseph, and Nathan through Mary.

Satan, not being all-knowing, never thought to pursue Nathan's Messianic potentiality. Instead, he focused solely on Solomon after the crown passes to him. Satan was under the impression that Christ could only come through the "royal" line, but that was a prophecy God never made. Instead, Messiah comes through both the royal (legal) line of David through Solomon, and through the bloodline of David through Nathan. God's workings in all these details are "watermarks" that Scripture is true!

Ultimately, God did not allow David to build him a house, because he was a man with much blood on his hands (2 Samuel 12:24-25; 1 Chronicles 22:1ff). Many people assume because David had fought in many wars, and God did not want a man of war building his temple. This is likely false for a couple of reasons: 1) God did not forbid David to build the temple initially (2 Samuel 7:11-13; 1 Chronicles 17:1ff); no, God only predicted it at that time. It was not until after David's sin with Bathsheba, and the killing of Uriah her husband by David's orders (2 Samuel 12:1ff, 1 Chronicles 17:1-3), was the prohibition itself stated (2 Samuel 12:24-25); 1 Chronicles 22:1ff). David's "bloody hands" were not due to war, but due to murder. Although David's place on the throne and in the line of Messiah was safe, David's reputation preceded him, and prevented him from building God's house.

Also, God had predicted that David's enemies had to be underneath his feet (1 Kings 5:3), and this simply did not occur until much past David's time where he would have been able to direct the building of a temple.

Satan certainly did not want a permanent temple for the worship of God; this would be a much more difficult structure to dismantle and destroy in a battle than the Tabernacle. As well, the Ark, which had been previously stolen before, would be more secure and harder to remove. Satan went to work for centuries seeing to the destruction of the temple, and indeed would succeed in destroying both this temple in the Babylonian captivity in 606BC, and again in 70AD by the hands of the Romans. With God's hand no longer on Israel as of Jesus' resurrection, the stage was poised for Satan through Rome to see to Jerusalem's final and complete destruction. And indeed, it happened.

It is also interesting to note that God never asked for a temple. God had planned and used the Tabernacle up to this point, and even with Jerusalem established under David, God was content with the worship from the Tabernacle. However, God did not take issue with David's idea at any point. We can therefore assume it is not necessarily wrong to have a church building, per se, even if it is not in the New Testament mentioned specifically.

Bathsheba – Chapter 97

David, like his son Solomon after him, had a weak spot for women. He had taken many wives and concubines and defied God in what He had told David what a king was to do. Instead, David wandered idly in Jerusalem, when he should have been out fighting Israel's enemies (under God's providence of protection and promises of victory). This idleness turned into real trouble when he saw Bathsheba bathing on the rooftop of her home. He immediately desired her, and called for her.

This act was not an immediate thing; no, Bathsheba had to go through many weeks worth of ceremonial preparation in order to have any kind of audience with the king. Therefore, they both had time to reconsider this meeting, which would inevitably result in sin.

This story is told commonly as David's sin – and indeed it is – but it is also Bathsheba's sin. She was married, and knew the law of God well enough that what she was about to do was wrong. David's prestige as king, as well as possibility of wealth or other securities must have wooed her to David's bed. Whatever it was, we can be certain that Satan thought he surely had David now, guilty of adultery, and soon to be guilty of murder!

When Bathsheba became pregnant (why is this a surprise to this day?), David called for Uriah to come home. He entertained Uriah and tried to get him drunk. He then tried to get Uriah to go home to his wife and hopefully sleep with her, so he would think the child was his (this goes to show that David, at least initially, was only interested in Bathsheba sexually). However, Uriah, being the honorable soldier he was (serving what he thought was an honorable king), refused to be comforted by his wife while the other soldiers of Israel were roughing it out in war.

David, impenitent throughout this entire affair, then sent a message with Uriah sealed to Joab, the battle general, to put Uriah in the front of the battle line. Joab was not ignorant; he knew David wanted him dead. David must have feared Uriah would come back on him for revenge, or at the very least, let the secret get out about Bathsheba's ill-conceived child. Either way, Joab did what David said, and Uriah was killed as a result. David then took Bathsheba to be his wife. David must have thought all was well...

However, the story of 2 Samuel 11 and 12 continues when the prophet Nathan appears to rebuke David for his sin. Nathan tells a parable about a man who has only one sheep, but another man has many more. The man with many demands the sheep of the one man instead of giving up any of the many sheep he owns. David is very angry at the man in the parable and orders that man dead for his lack of generosity and inherent greed. Nathan says, most famously, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7)

David repents sincerely, as recorded in Psalm 51, as is forgiven his sin. However, the consequences of his sin still bear out completely – the son conceived of David and Bathsheba would die – and David's sons would be at war with one another with some perishing as a result. All of these things came true, just as God had predicted.

Some liberal scholars chide God by saying that God claimed David was a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), but committed these many atrocities. It should not be believed that God “let David off the hook”; not at all. David’s heart was after God’s own, but his actions always were not. In this particular story, David suffers for the rest of his life due to this sin of adultery and murder. Indeed, death would have been kinder than some of the consequences rendered, showing God’s justice is thorough for any man!

Also, it is interesting that the idea that David was a man after God’s own heart was only said by God when David was still a valiant, brave, innocent shepherd boy. God does not use this phraseology with reference to David after this, especially not after his many sins. David’s heart certainly had dark parts, and God never celebrated those things, and in fact, punished each of them accordingly.

Satan wanted David dead, and hoped that adultery and murder of all things would do it. However, God kept His promises to David. Then, Satan hoped that possibly with David’s sons being cursed that the line of Christ would die with them. Certainly, many of David’s sons would kill each other, but both Nathan and Solomon lived to have descendants of their own to carry on Christ’s lineage (again, Nathan through Mary for blood, and Solomon through Joseph for royal/legal lineage). Satan also hoped that an adulterous relationship would not be “fitting” unto the lineage of Messiah, but Ruth, Rahab, and Tamar were already involved in Christ’s line. Each of these women had “less than ideal” characteristics, to say the least, but this was to show that Christ’s coming was out of grace and out of fulfilled prophecy (Romans 8:3). God’s grace and knowledge is greater than any prejudice we might bear!

David’s Sons – Chapter 98

In 2 Samuel chapters 12-18, and 1 Kings 1-2, we read about the many troubles of David with regards to his sons. After David’s sin with Bathsheba, these troubles were predicted by God through Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 12:10).

First, there would be Amnon, who lusted after Tamar, his half-sister. He raped her, and her brother, Absalom, later killed Amnon for this violation. Amnon hated Tamar after the rape, and Absalom hated Amnon for the violation, resulting in Amnon’s death by Absalom’s hands (2 Samuel 13:24ff).

Second, in 2 Samuel chapters 15-18, we have the saga of Absalom, who rebelled against his father David, attempting to usurp the throne, raped his wives (presumably not his own mother), and engaged the court of David in battle. Ahithophel, David’s chief counselor, actually encouraged this behavior in Absalom, in hopes that David would suffer from the death of Uriah more (Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba). Ahithophel would advise Absalom until Absalom’s death, and then when he wielded no influence any longer, he went home, settled his affairs, and strangled himself to death (2 Samuel 17:23). Absalom would die at the hands of Joab, by the leadership of Hushai. David had fled for his life, but God protected him.

Absalom had no sons, and the concubines raped by him were put into widowhood, never to be touched again by David, so that no children by them could be claimed to be in the house of David by any means. In the ancient world, if a man took the king's wives, he could attempt to claim the throne to be his own. Even after Absalom's death, David made sure that Absalom's deeds in their entirety died with him, with absolutely no claim possible to the throne.

Again, it must be emphasized that God did not protect David because of his goodness, but because of God's promises to him. However, David suffered much for his sins, as can be obviously seen. God may choose a man, but he will also treat such a man justly. In James 3:1, we can see that God actually holds a higher standard of justice to his teachers. God is fair, have no doubt of it!

It is obvious to the reader that Satan had his hands in David's boys. Amnon and Absalom and David's other troubled sons all "inherited" their father's trouble with women. This writer uses the term inherited not in a literal sense, as we understand the sins of the father do not pass onto the sons (Ezekiel 18:20). Nonetheless, they did learn from him (badly), and engaged in various sinful and devious behaviors. Satan knew Messiah was coming through David, and his offspring, so Satan wanted nothing more than to destroy that line. Satan would come very close at points, but God always kept His promise, and protected the promised Seed.

Adonijah is another sad story of David's sons as he attempted to usurp David's throne when David was old. This is especially sad when we realize that Adonijah must have laid in wait for much of his own life to bring this kind of treachery. For this treason, he would not only fail, but die, and die in disgrace and immortal memory in the Word of God! Both Joab, David's general, and Abiathar, the priest, joined Adonijah in his rebellion.

It can be hard for the reader to imagine that a priest (and prophets both before and after that) would do wrong, especially wrong on this level, but this is honestly another reason the Bible can be taken to be historically accurate. The Bible records all characters, even the great ones, with their warts. No one is spared an honest treatment, no matter their place in God's plan, or their righteousness besides. Only Jesus is pictured as perfect, and rightly so, for only He ever followed the law perfectly.

Adonijah's rebellion was put down when elder David had Solomon crowned and had the prophet Nathan and the priest Zadok ordain him. Nonetheless, Adonijah's schemes were not yet over. Solomon graciously granted clemency to Adonijah despite his treacherous rebellion, but Adonijah thought of another way to try to usurp the throne, from both his father David and his brother Solomon: he would attempt to take David's last wife.

Satan is the father of lies, and the father of evil schemes as well. The ideas he planted in Adonijah's head were evil, but also cunning, as Adonijah goes to Bathsheba to appeal for Abigail's hand in marriage. Adonijah knows that if he has David's last wife, that he could make a claim for the throne. So Bathsheba hears him, agrees to help, and approaches Solomon. Adonijah

thinks he is safe with the “buffer” of Bathsheba in between, but Solomon immediately recognizes Adonijah’s treachery again, and this time does not spare death. In 1 Kings chapters 1 and 2, we see Adonijah’s final fall take place.

Finally, Solomon was born to Bathsheba, and he too “inherited” his father’s love of women. He ended up with a thousand wives and concubines total. Dr. Faull makes a funny statement when he says, “No wonder Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. He had two thousand women telling him what to think and what to do – a thousand wives and concubines – and a thousand mother-in-laws!”

Solomon’s wives would lead him into idolatry and deeply taxing the Israeli people to pay for the various temples and houses of worship he would build unto their gods. Great idolatry sprung up in Solomon’s time because of his lust, and the nation suffered for it when it split after Solomon’s death.

Interestingly, the son whom Mary (the bloodline of Christ) would eventually be born through – Nathan – did not seem to engage in sexual deviancy. 1 Kings 2 and forward discusses some of Nathan’s life (David’s son, not the prophet, but likely named after the prophet), and he seemed to be a man without these sins. Nathan was also a son of Bathsheba by David, as was Solomon, but Solomon inherited the throne.

Polygamy again rears its ugly head with David and his sons. God may have “permitted” it, much like God “permitted” a divorce by certificate (Matthew 5:31) or God “permitted” the Israelites to eat quail as well as manna (Exodus 16:13ff), but grave consequences always came as a result of all those things. Polygamy is never pictured favorably in the Bible; God’s plan from the beginning has been one man, one woman (Genesis 2:24). This is why Paul the Apostle says much later, “everything is permissible” but not “everything is beneficial” (1 Corinthians 10:23). He did not mean “everything” as in literally everything, but rather, everything God allows to happen. We need to differentiate between what God “permits” and what God “ordains or commands.” In only the latter things are there blessings, and in much of the former, are grave consequences!

Satan tried to use Amnon’s, Absalom’s, and Adonijah’s sexual lusts and hate and power-mongering to lead them to their perishing and many along with them. Satan tried to get to David, and his son Solomon, through various insurrections and threats. Satan caused David many woes by the afflictions bore to him by his own flesh. Yet, Satan overlooked Nathan, through whom would come Mary (the virgin who gave birth to Jesus as predicted in Isaiah 7:14).

God’s plans were greater than Satan’s, and his moves “on the checkerboard” were superior. God preserved His promises through David’s family, even as trouble as it was.

David’s Troubles – Chapter 99

David might have been chosen of God, but he was not always wise. David wept for his son Absalom more than the fallen ones who had died in defense of his kingship, and Joab rebuked him for this poor attitude. The people of Judah almost threw out David as king, as these dark days showed that even God's chosen King was not always going to make good decisions. 2 Samuel 10, 16, 19, 21, and 1 Chronicles chapters 19 and 20, detail some of these various trials of David's early kingship more thoroughly.

A man named Shimei had tried to stone David when he was fleeing his own Absalom, cursing at him while he ran. However, David showed grace (as God had shown him much grace) and granted Shimei clemency at this time (2 Samuel 19).

David was also attacked by Sheba, who also thought to usurp David as king. Many times in David's life there was assassination attempts, rebellions, etc. Sheba must just thought to get in line! Nonetheless, he died a coward's death, as while he was running away into the city, some women of the city found him and beheaded him. This account is from 2 Samuel 20.

Then David tried to do some good, but was misinterpreted for his actions (undoubtedly, at least partially, due to his less-than-stellar reputation by this point). King Ammon's father died, and David sent condolences. The ambassadors were misinterpreted by King Ammon's court, however, and they abused them by cutting their beards in half. Satan was naturally hoping to start a war and see David or at least many Israelites dead. However, David's army won the victory and made slaves of the Ammonites (1 Chronicles 19; 2 Samuel 10). Foolishness on King Ammon's part brought about slavery to his people. This was not Satan's intended goal, but this author is certain that the devil enjoyed anyone's misery.

Then, Ishbibenob, a son of the giants, of the Philistines, came out to try to kill David in 2 Samuel 21:16-17. However, Abishai killed him. Several other giants were also killed by David and his men (2 Samuel 21, 1 Chronicles 20). The giants were constantly trying to kill David (undoubtedly from Satan's influence), but they never succeeded. In 2 Samuel 22, David offers God a Psalm of praise for his victories over the giants and other enemies.

David Numbers Israel – Chapter 100

In 2 Samuel 24, we have another story of God "allowing" something that did not please him, and a result (like every circumstance like it), grave consequences would follow it.

Satan prompted David to be proud (Satan's expertise) and to number Israel. His own general (and not righteous man) Joab warned him not to do it. Even a stopped clock is right twice a day. Nonetheless, David followed through with numbering Israel.

David had nine months to re-think this sin; this is similar to the time he had time to think about whether or not to pursue Bathsheba, but he did not repent then either. David ultimately

followed through with the numbering, and then on top of it, he also did not take the poll tax required by the law when a census is taken (Exodus 30:12-13).

For David's sin of numbering the people unlawfully, 70,000 people died in Israel from the promised plague. David lamented of his sin in 2 Samuel 24:17 but the people still suffered; hardly a family in Israel did not suffer from David's sin.

Satan's power is evident here, as he caused David – a man with a good heart and had experienced God's working in his life many times – to number Israel in a lawless way, causing much pain to his subjects.

Solomon, the Chosen Son – Chapter 101

Solomon succeeded David on his throne, the throne of Judah. In 1 Chronicles 17, God promises many wonderful things to Solomon:

- 1) A house
- 2) Solomon's seed would be raised up
- 3) Solomon's kingdom would be established
- 4) Solomon's throne would be established
- 5) Solomon will be treated as if a son of the Lord
- 6) Solomon's life would be treated mercifully by God
- 7) Solomon would enjoy safety in God's spiritual dwelling, his kingdom would prosper, and his throne would survive forever (in the end, by Jesus)

Back in 1 Chronicles 6:16, God also promised that He would always preserve a man who could be King through David's line. Again, this is a Messianic prophecy, promising Jesus is coming, no matter what!

Psalms 132:11 says, "The Lord has sworn truth to David; He will not turn from it; of the fruit of your body will I set upon my throne." God would be with David and His descendants, to see Messiah come. God's primary concern at all times was bringing Messiah into the world. Even through David and His descendants' many flaws, God would succeed. Hallelujah!

Solomon started out killing his brother Adonijah for trying to usurp the throne yet again. Solomon also got right to work fulfilling his father's "will": executing those his father wanted dead for their various treacheries. Joab was slain for killing Abner, and Amasa was killed for joining Adonijah's rebellion. Shimei was also executed for cursing the Lord's anointed (1 Kings 2).

The Lord approached Solomon early in his reign and told him he could have anything he wanted: Solomon, already showing wisdom, asked for wisdom above all else. Because he asked for such a wise gift, God gave him fame and fortune as well. Unfortunately, like Saul, Solomon would start out humble and wise but end up on the opposite end. Whereas Saul chose vengeance, Solomon chose idolatry. Whereas Saul chose arrogance, Solomon could not get enough of women who ultimately led him astray.

Yet, in Ecclesiastes and the Proverbs Solomon shows wisdom in middle and old age, but yet still faltered for his many wives and their many demands. This ultimately drug Solomon down. Satan was obviously tempting Solomon continuously, keeping him distracted with women and pride. Solomon got to live in a time of peace, because his father David had smote the many enemies of Israel before him. Solomon had a chance to take a time of great peace and build God's Kingdom, but instead most of the time he spent it chasing women, building foreign temples and idols, and chasing madness through various means (see Ecclesiastes).

Satan had his way with Solomon, paving the way for a divided Kingdom of Israel down the road.

Solomon's Ending – Chapter 102

Solomon built the temple for God and dedicated it. He affirmed all of the promises given to Abraham and David were fulfilled; God had been faithful to keep his promises.

God gave Solomon another conditional promise in 1 Kings 9:4-6: if Solomon would walk in God's ways, He would maintain Solomon, his throne, God's temple, and Israel's greatness and fame. But if he did not, then Israel would be cursed, the temple would be destroyed, and Israel would suffer greatly. Indeed, this is what happened, because Solomon chased women and worshipped their gods to appease them.

Solomon had great wisdom, wealth, power, fame, weapons, and a tremendous number of women (at one point, numbering a thousand total). It would be these very blessings that would be his downfall, by Satan's endless temptations:

His wealth would get in the way, as instead of destroying the remaining enemies of Israel, he put them to tribute to him. This increased Israel's and his own wealth, but by not trusting God, this wealth ultimately led to the intermixing of these pagan cultures, idols, and immorality with that of Israel.

His weapons, or great arms, would get in the way of serving God faithfully, as he amassed horses and chariots, specifically forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 17:16, Isaiah 31:1). He made a navy in league with the foreign King of Tyre (named Hiram). All of these things drug Solomon away further from God who had given him such blessings that now he abused!

Solomon worshipped foreign gods to appease the many women he married and took as concubines. Many of these marriages were for political purposes, and part of those political alliances was “respecting” the foreign gods of the foreign wives now married to him. This led to great idolatry, building of many foreign temples in Israel, and heavy taxation on his own people to fund all of this evil. Satan loves to use the love of money to drive us to all kinds of other evil, as he did Solomon.

Finally, God dealt with Solomon’s habitual infidelity, and told him in 1 Kings 11:11-13 that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to his servant, Jeroboam. This was an insult (rightly deserved), as the kingdom was to go to his son, but instead God treated Solomon as if he did not even have an heir with regards to the whole kingdom being bequeathed to him. His son would indeed inherit the throne, but only two of the twelve tribes. This was only done because God had made a promise to David to do so, and was still going to bring the Messianic line through Solomon one way or the other.

God used Hadad the Edomite, Rezone the King of Syria, and Jeroboam the son of Nebat (also Solomon’s servant) to rend the kingdom from Solomon, just as He said He would do.

Satan loved corrupting Solomon from just past the beginning of his kingship to the end of it. It is ironic that the man who would build the temple to God would be the one who would lead its same people away from the true worship of the one true God in the one correct law. Satan would win this battle, and successively cause many more battles to result in evil kings, much violence and hate, the death of God’s coming prophets, among other wicked things, but God would win the war. Messiah was still coming, and Satan could not stop that!

Rehoboam and Jeroboam – Chapter 103

After Solomon’s death, king Rehoboam was faced with a quandary: listen to the people’s desire for tax relief, or tax them the same or more to support his own financial whims. He decided to seek counsel: the older, wiser, experienced counsel told him to relieve the heavy tax burden of his father, and give the people rest, and then they would be loyal to him as a result. The younger counsel told him to tax the people however he wanted, because he was king, and they would “have” to listen to him regardless.

Rehoboam did not show wisdom early in his career (unlike his father before him), and decided to not only maintain the previous taxation on the people, but actually increase it. He told the people that his taxation would be so great on them that his thumb would be thicker than his father’s thigh, as a comparison.

What arrogance and ignorance that Satan led Solomon’s young son to! The people rebelled, and in fact ten tribes left his kingdom, leaving him only with Judah and Benjamin. Indeed, only these two tribes would survive intact through the coming judgment and exile to

Babylon. The “ten lost tribes” would be taken away from Assyria, intermarry with them, and be forever lost to the pages of history.

It is interesting that if a person would Google “descendants of Levi” (and other tribes) there are plenty of people, modern Jews or not, who claim to be them. There are even more who claim to be from any number of the lost ten tribes of Israel. Others claim to be the descendants of Solomon and the queen of Sheba, among others fantastical stories.

We can be confident that absolutely no one today is positive-proof from Levi: the Bible says so – that tribe was lost, and is still lost, to this day. God needed Judah, as that was the tribe Messiah would come from, and Benjamin as protection for Judah going forward. Some Levites did survive in those two tribes at that time, as we see them practicing the temple rights in Jesus’ time (and in history, from the Maccabean period, for example). From this little “remnant” God would keep the line of Messiah going unto fruition. Satan won many victories here, and there would come many close calls when just a single person carrying the seed of Messiah would remain, and God would protect just that one person to keep the line alive. Satan would win and win, but God would keep and keep, unto our salvation!

In 2 Samuel 24:9-10, we are told of the numbering of Israel after the nation split. Now, instead of 470,000 fighting men, there were only 180,000 left in Israel. Nonetheless, Satan convinced Rehoboam to try to fight the ten northern tribes to get them back (truly foolish, as he was both outnumbered and unpopular). However, God stopped him (from defeat, humiliation, and likely death) and let Rehoboam know through Shemaiah the prophet that this split was of God (1 Kings 12:22-24), and he was not to go up and fight his brethren. Despite Satan’s best efforts, Rehoboam finally showed some wisdom here and backed down.

Jeroboam, previously Saul’s servant, ruled the ten northern tribes as their first king (1 Kings 11:28-40 – also a fulfillment of prophecy given by God through the prophet Ahijah in that same passage). All of the kings of the north were bad, and Jeroboam got them off to a bad start as both the first king, and the first bad king. Satan planted in Jeroboam’s mind the fear that the Israelites would abandon his rule if they went down to Jerusalem to worship as they previously had done, so Jeroboam setup golden calves to worship at Bethel and Dan, and told the people to worship there. So they wandered into idolatry and the north never wandered out. They would eventually be taken captive by the Assyrians and never return home. Later, the breeding between the Assyrians and the ten northern tribes would become the Samaritans mentioned in the New Testament. The Samaritans still practiced a mixed form of old Judaism and heathenism into it that time (John 4:20).

As a part of Jeroboam’s newfound idolatry, Satan convinced him to change the priesthood, change the calendar of worship, change the object of worship, and change the form of worship. The northern tribes were largely satisfied with Jeroboam’s new religion, as it was less work, less strict, and came with a license to be immoral. Basically, ancient form of Wiccan (Satanism, in

one of its many forms) was established (the motto of Wiccan is “Do what thou wilt”). The people were simply content “to be religious”, thinking that was enough. What a lie Satan had successfully planted! How many churches today have bought these same lies through Satan’s influence; our God has laid out a specific way He desires to be worship and woe to the man who departs from it!

However, not everybody in the north followed Jeroboam. Interestingly enough, his wife disguised herself and went to see Ahijah the prophet, who had originally prophesied that Jeroboam would be king. Ahijah told her that all of Jeroboam’s sons would die (1 Kings 14:10-13). This all came true in 1 Kings 15:29. Twenty-two years into his reign, Jeroboam died a wicked man with his sons dead with him. Just “being religious” did Jeroboam no good. We either worship God as He instructs, or suffer for it. This also illustrates the lie that people often buy from Satan – the one in which if a prophet or man of God appoints you – you are “safe”. Nothing could be further from the truth. The “appointment” of God is not the same as the regeneration of man through following God’s plan of salvation. All people, from the beginning of time, have had to live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38) - in faithfulness to God as He has prescribed it. Departing from this path, regardless of any divine appointment, is doom.

His death was ultimately inconsequential to the Old Testament theme of bringing Messiah into the world: he was a servant of Solomon, not a seed of David, and his kingship was an artificial creation of the rebellion of the ten northern tribes. It is important to realize at this point that the ten northern tribes were essentially an outside, pagan nation at this point, no different than the previous, hostile neighbors of Judah. Therefore, they faded into history like all those other nations, bringing about their own demise through a combination of walking away from God and into heathen, selfish worship. In this case, Satan was not trying to destroy the Messianic line directly, but rather weaken Israel’s protection of the Messianic line, hoping to bring in a foreign power now strong enough to wipe it out. Indeed, Satan would prompt the Babylonians, but God had a plan to preserve the line, although there were a few very, very close calls!

There is a reoccurring theme that Jeroboam’s nation first illustrates. First, all of Israel wanted a physical king. They got Saul, who started out good and humble, but ended bad, murderous, and suicidal. Then, they got David, who despite his many faults, led the Israelites into a period of peace and prosperity they had not previously known. Finally, Solomon, the last of the United Kingdom monarchs, led Israel back into idolatry over the time of his reign, and ended up completely pagan in the ten northern tribes thereafter. So, we can see that people getting away from God (Christ in the New Testament) as their king is trouble, dabbling with idolatry is trouble (changing the form, calendar, object, and priesthood of worship), and then finally rebellion and total heathenism or unbelief naturally following. Let us learn from Israel’s mistakes here and follow instead God’s plan for His worship today!

Rehoboam, though Solomon’s seed, and the line through whom Messiah would come, was not a good king. He married multiple wives (though permitted by God sometimes, it was *never* depicted favorably by God, and it was always a mess for the husband and wives involved). Rehoboam reigned for seventeen years before his death, a wicked man unto the end. By the end of his reign the southern tribes were also involved in idolatry, and thus they perished in their sins. However, God did preserve the Messianic line through Judah as promised, as God is faithful, even when all around Him His people are faithless.

Judah’s Kings – Chronicles and Kings – Chapter 104

This author noticed that the title on page 101, “Judah’s King” is singular, instead of plural, as the chapter discusses multiple kings of Judah.

Rehoboam’s son Abijam was evil just like his father. Satan continued to pervert both the northern and southern tribes, but had universal success with the northern tribes.

Abijam had a son named Asa. Asa was actually a good king, followed God, and destroyed much of the idolatry that had been established. He even removed his own mother as queen, since she wanted to reestablish idolatry in Judah.

This author thought it would be useful to simply list out a chart of all the kings of the northern and southern tribes:

Kings of Israel – and Years Reigned	Character	Kings of Judah – and Years Reigned	Character
Jeroboam (22)	Bad	Rehoboam (17)	Bad
Nadab (2)	Bad	Abijah (3)	Mostly Bad
Baasha (24)	Bad	Asa (41)	Good
Elah (2)	Bad	Jehoshaphat (25)	Good
Zimri (7 days)	Bad	Jehoram (8)	Bad
Omri (12)	Extra bad	Ahaziah (1)	Bad
Ahab (22)	The Worst King	Athaliah (6)	Extra Bad
Ahaziah (2)	Bad	Joash (40)	Began good then bad
Joram (12)	Mostly Bad	Amaziah (29)	Began good then bad
Jehu (28)	Mostly Bad	Uzziah (52)	Began good then bad

Jehoahaz (17)	Bad	Jotham (16)	Mostly good
Joash (17)	Bad	Ahaz (16)	Bad
Jeroboam II (41)	Bad	Hezekiah (29)	Great
Zechariah (6 months)	Bad	Manasseh (55)	Started out bad, turned good
Shallum (1 month)	Bad	Amon (2)	Bad
Menahem (10)	Bad	Josiah (31)	Best and Last of the Good Kings
Pekaniah (2)	Bad	Jehoahaz (3 months)	Bad
Pekah (20)	Bad	Jehoiakim (11)	Bad
Hoshea (9)	Bad	Jehoiachin (3 months)	Bad
		Zedekiah (11)	Bad (and last king)
From <i>The Unfolded Plan of God</i> by Donald G. Hunt, revised by Joshua Stucki			

The sins that Satan led the various bad kings into were vast: idolatry, violence, various immorality including bestiality, homosexuality, adultery, sodomy, and cannibalism. God sent prophets to preach repentance to both kingdom, and occasionally one of the southern kings would respond positively. Notably, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, Amaziah, Uzzah, Jotham, Josiah, and even Manasseh would turn out to be good kings who enjoyed relatively lengthy reigns. So all was not lost, and God kept His promise to bring Messiah into the world despite the complete lost state of the Northern Kingdom, and the up and down state of the Southern Kingdom. It is interesting to note that the longest reigning good king was a penitent king – Manasseh started out bad but turned good and ruled 55 years. Those who experience great grace perhaps appreciate it a bit more.

Nonetheless, both Kingdoms would eventually fall. The Northern Kingdom fell totally and permanently to the Assyrians in 722BC, and the Southern Kingdom would be taken into captivity by Babylon in 606BC. The Southern Kingdom would return, however, in 70 years, as God's promise to bring Messiah was absolute, despite Satan's constant attempts to see it end.

Jehoshaphat's Foolishness – Chapter 105

In 2 Chronicles 18-19, we begin to see Satan's campaign to destroy the kings of Judah (the Southern Kingdom).

On page 101, paragraph 8, beginning with, “Satan tried to cause a civil war...” the language indicates that there was a civil war, not just an attempt to start one, as the textbook writes, “Judah won” later on in the sentence. In 2 Chronicles 13, as the author already knows, there was definitely a war between Abijah and Jeroboam (2 Chronicles 13:2-3). The sentence would be clearer to say, “Satan helped facilitate the civil war between King Abijah and Jeroboam”, or something else along those lines.

Satan prompted a civil war between King Abijah and Jeroboam. King Abijah won (Judah, the Southern Kingdom). This particular civil war occurred in 2 Chronicles 13.

Ethiopians, led by Zerah, came to fight against Judah, but God prevailed through King Asa. Satan regularly enjoyed the use of foreign kings to try to bring down Israel. King Asa’s prayer is powerful and recorded in 2 Chronicles 14:11-12.

Future Ethiopians were not held responsible for their forefather’s sin here; in fact, Ethiopia later became a nation full of Jewish proselytes (circumcised, practicing, but foreign) and in fact would also receive salvation unto Christ (Acts 8:26-39) before the descendants of Japheth would (Acts 10). So, we can see here again that indeed God does not hold the sins of the fathers unto the sons (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20).

Some theologians (mostly Calvinistic) will say that yes, God does visit the sins of the fathers unto the children, as Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 5:9, Exodus 34:6-7, and 1 Corinthians 15:22. The last verse there is especially used of Calvinists in an attempt to prove their doctrine of Original Sin (or, Total Depravity).

However, this view requires that both the guilt and consequence is rendered unto the descendants of a person regardless of their own choices, and is in flat contradiction to Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 if that view is taken up.

It is much simpler to harmonize these views: Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 simply state that each person’s guilt is their own, and the other verses speak of how the consequences of disobedience may pass onto the next generation (if a father, for example, was bad with money, the children would not come out with an inheritance, or perhaps much debt, from the family estate). This view requires no contradiction, and allows each verse in its natural language to be true. For the Calvinist, he has to prefer some Scriptures over others; for the Bible student who does not commit himself to a man-made view, but allows himself to be fully-informed by Scripture, the view that allows harmony of all Scripture, with none given denominational preference, will have no problems harmonizing this or any other doctrine of Scripture.

Interestingly, some of Israel (Northern Kingdom) tried to come down to live in Judah (Southern Kingdom) – specifically out of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh – when they saw how God was blessing them in the South, as reported in 2 Chronicles 15:9. This is the last thing

Satan wanted, so he prompted the king of the North to try to stop this migration (2 Chronicles 16:1ff).

The prophet Azariah had approached King Asa of Judah in the beginning of 2 Chronicles 15 and told him that if he would restore the worship, works, and law of God, that God would bless him and the whole Southern Kingdom. He did so, and there was great revival. Asa even removed his own grandmother from power in 2 Chronicles 15:16 as she was an idolater (he actually burned her idol – 2 Chronicles 15:16). Jehoshaphat followed Asa with another faithful rule, and for these sixty-six years Judah would know a time of peace and prosperity by God's blessings that had not been known since the time of King David. Unfortunate, Jehoram, Asa's grandson, would return Judah to idolatry after that (by marrying Athaliah – a daughter of Ahab – not a good idea in any way), and it would be another three monarchs later before a good King would return to the throne of Judah. Nonetheless, God was faithful – through good and bad kings – to bring the line of Messiah through.

Asa's death was unfortunate. Near the end of his life, he turned to foreign help before God's, and physicians for his ailment instead of asking for God's help. The Lord rebuked Asa for turning to foreign help against Israel (the Northern Kingdom), and then Asa died when he turned to the doctors without consulting God about why this had happened to him. Thankfully, Jehoshaphat, his son, was a good king, but did make one fatal mistake – he fell to the temptation to have his son, Jehoram, marry one of the daughters of Ahab (Athaliah), King of the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Ahab was the worst of the Northern Kings, and by allying with him, Jehoshaphat led his own son back into wickedness. Athaliah was a very evil woman, whom Satan used to almost snuff out the line of Messiah.

Jehoram – Chapter 106

Although Jehoshaphat was an overall good king, he really made a mistake being an ally with King Ahab of the north by marrying his son to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. Athaliah was Jezebel's daughter, and Jezebel herself is virtually unequaled in evil for women mentioned in the Bible. However, Athaliah was a special tool of Satan, as Jezebel's influence was finally stretched into Judah by her hand. Athaliah, along with her husband, decided to eliminate all of the throne's competition in Judah by killing off all the descendants of David. This process was started, but God smote him with a disease of the bowels which killed him. Whereas Jehoshaphat had been mostly a good king (as evidenced by 2 Chronicles 17:1 and other passages), Jehoram, through his unholy union with Athaliah, brought wickedness and idolatry back to Judah.

Athaliah – Chapter 107

Athaliah has already been mentioned several times, but her saga continues. Athaliah's son by Jehoram (Ahaziah) became king after his father died; now she could spend even more time doing the work of Jezebel her mother, altogether being agents of Satan to destroy Judah from

within. However, Ahaziah – doing wicked – was also slain along with all his sons by the hands of Ishmaelites. So the house of Ahaziah did not survive even one generation.

So Athaliah finally took the reins of the Kingdom for herself. She is determined that all of her grandchildren would also die, and indeed she succeeded, minus one grandchild named Joash that escaped her attention and Satan's for six years while he was hidden away in the Temple by Jehoshabath. Upon this little boy the line of Messiah hung, and upon this brave girl all of humanity's hopes were kept! God preserved Messiah through the most unlikely of people and circumstances to keep His promise to us!

Athaliah had the throne for six years, however unpopular she was. The priest, Jehoiada, anointed Joash as King, and when Athaliah heard the people shout for joy, she tried to frame him for treason but the people took her life instead. Joash would be a mostly good king after her (2 Chronicles 24:1-14), giving Judah a partial restoration unto God, far and away from Athaliah and her mother's evil influence, straight from the pits of hell.

Joash – Chapter 108

Not all was well with Joash (2 Chronicles 24:17-19), however. When Hazael came to war against Jerusalem, Joash was a coward and faithless as he gave the treasures of the house of the Lord (that were meant for its repair) to Hazael to get him to back down (Satan no doubt instilled doubt in Joash). Faithless Joash descended from there, not quite to idolatry as had his predecessors, but by the end of his life, he had the priests slain. These priests were the sons of Jehoiada, who had helped protected Joash when young from Athaliah and who had also anointed Joash as king. God saw to the death of Joash for his harshness towards the priests – Joash and his sons died in a battle against Syria. Joash himself was slain by a son of a Moabite and Ammonite. These nations were regularly available by Satan's hand to disrupt Israel or Judah in any way possible.

From Joash came Amaziah, who suffered from the same faithlessness as his father. In the beginning he did well (2 Chronicles 25:1+2) but when Judah's enemies came upon him, Satan tempted him and he hired mercenaries from the north to come and fight his battles instead of trusting in God. A prophet had told him not to do so, but instead to rely on God (2 Chronicles 25:7-9). Amaziah hired and then fired the mercenaries, which made them angry, so they attacked Judah, resulting in the death of 3,000 from Judah. Then, Amaziah introduced the foreign, Edomite gods (something his father had not done), and civil war broke out as a result (2 Chronicles 25:14ff).

After Amaziah passed, his son Uzziah came to rule. He started out well (see a pattern here? – 2 Chronicles 26:3-5), but offered incense not as a priest of Levi and was smitten by God to be a leper and ultimately died for this sin of presumption (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). Even a king cannot serve where God says he cannot!

Many people today confuse equality with God's assigned roles. King Uzziah could not do the job of the priests (2 Chronicles 26:3-5). King Saul before him had offered a sacrifice in the place of Samuel, and lost his rule for it (1 Samuel 13). Korah lost his life (and many others) for assuming that his equality with Moses meant that he could do Moses' job (Numbers 16). Miriam believed she could speak as Moses did, and was struck with leprosy for her presumption (Exodus 18). Even Jesus could not be a priest until He ascended into heaven (Hebrews 7:14-27). How many more lessons do we need from the Bible to understand that our equality with others does not mean we can assume the roles God has assigned them?

From Uzziah came Jotham. Jotham was a good king (2 Chronicles 27:1+2), but the people remained corrupt after the previous kings had failed to fully restore the worship of God many times (Satan kept full revival from coming to Judah until Hezekiah's reign). After Jotham, came Ahaz, who joined with the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in their idolatry (2 Chronicles 28:1-4). With the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom in cahoots, Satan surely thought he had won – both Kingdoms were away from the worship of the one true God.

However, God had a good king up His sleeve in the form of Hezekiah.

On page 103, the last sentence before the title, "Joash", there is a spelling error in the word, "not", spelled there, "nto".

Hezekiah's Sundial – Chapter 109

After Ahaz, came Hezekiah. Hezekiah was godly for the most part (2 Kings 18:4), and started off destroying the brazen serpent that Moses had setup generations before but now the people were beginning to worship as an idol (does this not sound like church buildings that some people elevate above actual important matters of New Testament Christianity?). Hezekiah tore it down and called it Nehushtan ("a piece of brass"). Hezekiah knew the serpent was just a tool and had served its purpose. If it was going to be revered and worshipped, it was time for it to go. In the end, it really was just a piece of brass. Satan was not happy with Hezekiah, but he found a weak spot.

Hezekiah also cleansed Judah of idolatry, renovated the temple, and observed a great Passover (2 Chronicles 30+31). However, when Assyria conquered the ten northern tribes decisively, Hezekiah became faithless and paid tribute to Assyria to keep them at bay. Although this was good enough for Assyria (and probably partially disappointing for Satan), God struck Hezekiah with an illness for his faithlessness. Hezekiah was about to die, according to 2 Kings 20:1, when Isaiah the prophet reported it to him. Hezekiah prayed (his prayers are recorded more than once – another example is 2 Kings 19:14-19) and God granted him fifteen years of life and a son who could be heir (Psalms 132:10-11; 2 Kings 20:2-3). Hezekiah, for a time, was the only descendant of David left, and his death would have meant the end of the Messianic line! Satan came so close again, just he had with Joash! Nonetheless, God honored Hezekiah's renewed faith, and granted him both more time and a son.

To demonstrate to Hezekiah that He would indeed keep the promises He had promised to him, God set Jerusalem's sundial back ten "degrees". Much has been said about this in many a commentary, but the simple truth is that God simply bent the sun's rays so that the shadow cast would reverse course ten degrees, and then go back to where it was supposed to be. The earth did not reverse rotation, the sun did not physically move, as there was no need for either (it was still a miracle wrought by the hand of God, even if it was not cosmological in scope). Further evidence for this was that people from a distance had heard about the miracle and wanted to know more about what happened (2 Chronicles 32:31). It had not happened in such a way that it affected other lands, which certainly had been the case if the earth would have reversed rotation or the sun would have physically moved (the cosmic consequences of either would have been a worldwide natural disaster in and of itself). The accounts of Hezekiah's sundial are found in Isaiah 38:1-8 and 2 Kings 20:1-11.

In the fifteen additional years, Hezekiah lived, he fathered a son (Manasseh) and organized the Hebrew Scriptures in a more efficient and accessible manner (2 Chronicles 31). However, near the end of his kingship, he showed the ambassadors of the King of Babylon all of the treasures of the house of the Lord. Basically, Hezekiah was glorying in God's glory, showing off to the Babylonians. For this, Isaiah prophesied that the treasure would leave and his grandsons would be made eunuchs and serve in the courts of Babylon (2 Kings 20:12-19; Isaiah 39:7). Hezekiah acknowledged the word of the Lord, and shortly thereafter, died (2 Chronicles 32:33; 2 Kings 20:21).

Jerusalem Destroyed – Chapter 110

2 Chronicles chapters 33-36 details the reign of Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. By the end of these kings, Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) would be led away into Babylonian captivity.

Satan would largely have his ways with the kings after Hezekiah. Manasseh, Hezekiah's son born to him in his final years of life, started out very evil. He sacrificed his own sons on altars to foreign gods and worshipped those foreign gods through divination, seeking omens, and consulting spiritists and mediums (2 Kings 21:1-6; 2 Chronicles 33:1-6). For his sins, he was taken captive by Assyria. While in Assyria, he cries out to God and repents (2 Chronicles 33:12-16). God hears his entreaty and shows mercy; Manasseh is restored to his kingdom and throne.

Manasseh then tried to restore the works, worship, and laws of God but failed to change the people (2 Chronicles 33:12-17). His repentance and efforts to restore the proper worship of God is not recorded in his biography in 2 Kings 21 because although he had changed, his first impressions on the people ultimately overpowered his desire and effort to bring revival. Indeed, we cannot "make up" for our sins later; it very well may not matter when the time comes that we try (also see Romans 6:1-4). Manasseh even ruled for 55 years, longer than any other king –

North or South. No amount of time was going to make up for his initial terrible witness to the people.

Amon, Manasseh's son, succeeded him, and was evil in his short rule of only two years. He was slain by his own officials (2 Chronicles 33:21-24; 2 Kings 21:19-23) and the people happily established Josiah his son as Amon's successor (2 Kings 21:24).

Josiah did right in the eyes of the Lord all his life (his life is so celebrated in Scripture that his life in fact occupies four chapters of the Bible – 2 Kings 22+23 and 2 Chronicles 34+35). So how did Satan have an upper hand in this situation? Although Josiah restored the worship, works, and law of the Lord, the people's hearts were not fully into it. They had wandered before, and they were going to wander again, and God knew it. So although Josiah was sincere, the people were half-hearted overall. This resulted in God sparing Josiah from seeing the coming disaster, but it was coming upon the nation, nonetheless (2 Kings 23:15-20; 2 Chronicles 34:23-28). The people did enjoy peace and prosperity as long as Josiah ruled, but not after.

Josiah did die with one of the greatest epitaphs in all the Bible – “Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did – with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.” (2 Kings 23:25)

Satan was back in full force with, Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, who succeeded him but only ruled three months. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and was taken captive by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt (2 Kings 23:31-33). Pharaoh Necho put Eliakim (son of Jehoahaz) on the throne in Judah in his stead, and changed his name to Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34). Jehoahaz died in Egypt while under captivity, and Jehoiakim reigned 11 years in his father's stead. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord as well and paid tribute to Pharaoh as a faithless and cowardly ruler (2 Kings 23:35-37). Also see 2 Chronicles 36:1-8 for the parallel passage concerning these kings.

At the end of Jehoiakim's reign, Babylon stepped in and took him captive. Jehoiachin, his successor, ruled for all of three months, and was also evil. King Nebuchadnezzar came in and took Jehoiachin captive, as well as plundering the city and the Temple, and also taking every able and wealthy family with him back to Babylon. Only the poor were left (2 Kings 24:14). King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, King in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. 2 Kings 24:8-19 and 2 Chronicles 36:9-14 are parallel passages discussing the fate of these kings. Jeremiah the prophet was also preaching and writing at this time, trying to convince the kings and the people to repent, but they would not.

Satan convinced Zedekiah to rebel against Babylon, and King Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem in 608BC as a result. In less than two years, Jerusalem was in such a severe famine and pestilence due to containment of corpses and disease, that Babylon easily conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the city, plundered its remaining treasures, and took the skilled, royal, and wealthy people into captivity (2 Kings 25:1-21; 2 Chronicles 36:15-20).

Zedekiah's sons were killed in front of him and he himself blinded immediately thereafter for his rebellion against Babylon (2 Kings 25:7). Nebuchadnezzar setup Gedaliah as governor in Judah in his absence (as the poor and undesirables still remained in Judah). However, in 2 Kings 25:25, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood, came with ten men and killed Gedaliah and all who were with him at Mizpah. The people then fled to Egypt, fearing what the Babylonians would do again now that their appointed governor had been killed.

Therefore, we know that many people escaped, including some descendants of David through Manasseh. Through all of this carnage, the Messianic line was preserved. However, it was Manasseh's sins that originally set Judah on this path to destruction, and it never recovered until after the Babylonian exile of 70 years.

In what has to be one of the strangest stories of the Bible, 37 years after Jehoiachin was taken into exile, the King Awel-Marduk of Babylon released him from prison and invited him daily to eat at the King's table, which he did, for the rest of his life (2 Kings 25:27-30). He was also given a regular allowance to live on for the rest of his life. There is no explanation for this behavior, but one has to wonder if Jehoiachin thought he was "favored" by God for his new turn of luck. Certainly, he was not – there is no record of his penitence – and earthly blessings mean nothing as to our eternal state. After all, he was being blessed by a foreign king, not the God of Heaven and earth. Nonetheless, the Messianic line was preserved through Jehoiachin, God's way of keeping His promise to bring Messiah when all seemed lost and hopeless.

Jehoiachin – Chapter 111

In 2 Kings 24, we learn about Jehoiachin. We learn also that he has other names such as "Coniah", "Jeconiah", and even "Jeconias" (Matthew 1:12, in the KJV; modern translations often leave the name unchanged from Hebrew to Greek to avoid confusion). Therefore, when we read any of these names, we can know we are speaking of the same man. Some question if this is authentic, but it is no different today when a man can be accurately called, "Jon", "Jonathan", "Jonny" or any other derivative of that name.

What is truly interesting is that Jehoiachin only ruled three months, was a bad king, and Satan thought he had him all wrapped up around his finger. Little did he know that God had a plan, even for a bad king (this also, once again, reinforces the doctrine that just because God has a plan for a person, does not mean that person is good or regenerate or saved or elected to salvation).

God had Jeremiah prophesy about Jehoiachin in Jeremiah 22:24-30. In summary, God would deliver Jehoiachin into Babylon, along with his mother, and he would never return to Jerusalem. As well, his children would not rule Judah, despite their legal right, or prosper in general. Interestingly, Jehoiachin would be the ancestor of Zerubbabel, the governor who would return from the captivity and rebuild Jerusalem. However, Zerubbabel would not be king, nor would any of his descendants.

Why does this matter? God was brilliant in that by cursing Jehoiachin's descendants that they would not prosper nor rule Judah, Satan now had no idea how Messiah would come through this line. How could Messiah not prosper? From the beginning, God had actually stated that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Genesis 3:15) but Satan never caught on. By having Jesus born of a virgin (specifically prophesied in Isaiah 7:14), Jesus could sit on the throne of David by legal descent through Joseph, but not inherit the curse, not actually being of the seed of Joseph. Also, Mary was through David's line, but through his son Nathan, not Solomon, whom Satan missed from the beginning. So, Jesus was of the bloodline of David through Nathan, and of the legal line of David through Jehoiachin up through Solomon via his legal father Joseph. Only one man, Jesus Christ, meets all of these criteria; Jesus must be the promised Messiah, or no one is. Of course, Satan would figure this out well after it was too late.

As a final note, Jehoiachin's name means, "The Lord establishes". Indeed, the Lord established Jesus' kingship through Jehoiachin, but made sure only Jesus could be king from this line by cursing all the biological descendants of Jehoiachin. Instead, Jesus would be born of Mary, of the line of David, through his son Nathan.

The Deportation of Babylon – Chapter 112

The details of 2 Kings 25 have already been covered beforehand but there are a few other noteworthy pieces of information to grasp:

Jeremiah and Ezekiel and other prophets were both preaching and prophesying at the time, their books written during this period. First, they were warning the people and kings to turn back to God, and then they were ministering during the captivities, and ultimately assisting while the return was being formed.

Jeremiah in Egypt – Chapter 113

Jeremiah, unlike Daniel, was not considered valued by the King, so he was left behind with the poor in Judah. Jeremiah chapters 41-46 detail these facts. When Gedaliah was slain, however, Jeremiah was forced by Johanan with the rest of the remaining people of Judah to Egypt, and spent part of his ministry there. Ultimately, Jeremiah and the rest would die there in Egypt. Jeremiah tried to warn them in Jeremiah 42:9-12, 17 that going to Egypt would deny them God's blessings, and staying in Judah would not bring retaliation from Babylon, but they would not listen. They died there, and Jeremiah prophesied before his death in Jeremiah 46:27 that although hope for Judah was still present, and in the hands of God, it would not come from those who practiced unbelief while in their voluntarily exile in Egypt.

Behold a Virgin! – Chapter 114

Isaiah 7:14 says, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

Satan, not being omniscient like God, only knew what he was told, just like man. In Isaiah 7:14, God reveals plainly that Messiah would be born of a virgin. Up to this point, God had limited the line of Messiah to a specific race, Shem (Genesis 9:26). Then He limited the line of Messiah to a specific nation, Abraham (Genesis 12:3). Then He limited the line of Messiah to a particular tribe of that nation, Judah (Genesis 49:10). Then He limited the line of Messiah to a particular family, Jesse's (Isaiah 11:1). Then He limited the line of Messiah to a particular house of that family, David (Psalms 132:11). Finally, came the prophecy from Isaiah that Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).

Satan had succeeded in many ways by reducing Israel to two nations, causing many deaths, and then finally seeing both nations taken into captivity. He thought he had it made. Then, in the midst of the captivities, and the Israelites spread all over, comes a prophecy from Isaiah that Messiah would be virgin born. This threw Satan completely off; he had been going after the royal line this whole time, and now the Messiah would be born of a virgin? How could this be?

To avoid Jehoiachin's curse is why. By Jesus being born of the virgin Mary, but also the legal line of Joseph, He could be both of the bloodline and legal line of David, without the curse of Jehoiachin.

However, at this point in history, all Satan now knows is that he now needs to target the women of David's descendants, because any of them could now be the mother of Messiah. So for the first time Satan goes after the women. He brought the wrath of Ishmael (not Isaac's brother from over a thousand years ago, mind you) unto Jehoiachin's daughters; he threatened Esther with annihilation, and he finally sought to rid the earth of Mary, the mother of Jesus. He would fail, to the keeping of God's promise, which brought about our Savior!

The Jews were in captivity, their harps were hung (Psalm 137:1ff), and all seemed hopeless. Jeremiah's Lamentations was written during this period, and much of the sad literature from Jewish history in other parts of the Bible was written at this time as well. All seemed lost, but God had preserved Jehoiachin and his descendants to keep the royal line of Messiah alive, and had "hidden" David's son Nathan's descendants from importance in order to preserve the bloodline of David for Messiah. Satan never caught onto Nathan's importance, but now that the virgin birth would be fulfilled, and Jehoiachin's curse existed, it was necessary. Satan just did not know where to look; he had focused so long on the royal line, he had completely missed the bloodline through which Christ would come!

The Lamentations over Judah – Chapter 115

The careful student will notice that some commentaries, books, preachers, etc. say there were three or four deportations to Babylon from Judah. The passages that refer to a possibility of

four total deportations are the following: Daniel 1:1-4, 2 Kings 24:17, 2 Kings 25:1, and Jeremiah 52:30. The last one is the one some question if it was an “official” deportation or just part of another. Some say a fourth deportation happened as revenge for Gedaliah’s death at the hands of Ishmael. Jeremiah said that would not happen (Jeremiah 42:9-12), but there again, that promise was conditional upon the remaining Jews trusting God and staying in Judah (which they did not do; they left for Egypt, and dragged Jeremiah with them, where they all perished – Jeremiah 42:17, 44:2, 46:27). So it makes sense that since they did not do as God said, Babylon did do a fourth deportation. However, the language of Jeremiah 52:28-30 seems to indicate only three total deportations.

Regardless, Judah was punished by God for their habitual sin, and was carried away in droves, and at different times, for a captivity lasting a total of seventy years. Of that, we know for sure, and the above “official” number of deportations is something that will be ultimately left to a trivia question in heaven someday.

The prophets were at various places at various times during the Babylonian captivity of Judah. Jeremiah was first left in Judah, and then was carried off and died in Babylon. He writes Lamentations while he was still in Judah. Ezekiel is in Babylon. The various other prophets wrote their books where they were for the purposes of keeping hope alive for Judah’s people, as well as preaching repentance to them even while they are in captivity.

Jeremiah laments Judah’s captivity in Jeremiah 44:11-14 and all throughout the book of Lamentations. Isaiah laments in Isaiah 3:8 and other passages in his book such as 64:10. Ezekiel laments in Ezekiel 36:19 and elsewhere in his book. Zechariah laments in 7:14 of his book. The prophets were persecuted, but lived for the hope of Messiah God still promised to bring. Their faith in the coming Messiah kept them going, and those that lasted did so to the future saving of their soul by Jesus Christ.

Promises to Restore Judah – Chapter 116

God had made many promises since the beginning that He would bring Messiah. The first was Genesis 3:15. From there, many references are made, including the following:

Jeremiah 4:27 tells of God’s faithfulness even in the face of desolation of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 6:8 speaks of the remnant God will preserve (specifically, the Messianic line) to see His promises fulfilled. Zechariah 13:8 speaks of a part that will survive all of the persecution (again, speaking of the Messianic line). Leviticus 26:44 shows God’s foreknowledge; He already knew they were going to fall, but He promised in advance that despite their faithlessness He would be faithful.

Jeremiah 29:6 encouraged them to marry one another and increase in number even in their persecution and exile. Although some were made eunuchs, others would not be, and through these the Messianic line would continue.

Psalms 137:1-6 tell us that the Hebrews would not play their instruments out of their native land out of a sign of mourning (they “hung up their harps”). This longing shows they were not meant for that foreign country, but their homeland, and at least the remnant trusted they would be restored to it one day.

In Captivity – Chapter 117

The book of Daniel tells us the many trials of those who were in Babylonian captivity. Daniel himself, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego all served the king as eunuchs in his court. Satan tempted them to eat unclean food, but they ate only vegetables to stay faithful to God and remain in prime healthful condition (Daniel 1:8-14). God blessed them with good health and protection as a result. When Satan tried to seduce them with idol worship, they would not bow, they would not bend, and then they would not burn. The attempt to burn them in the fiery furnace failed because of “the fourth man in the fire” – who was the Lord (Daniel 2:25).

Nebuchadnezzar was amazed and he honored Daniel and his friends. When Satan managed to outlaw even prayer, when he knew Daniel would pray and be seen, the Lord protected them again, and this caused Nebuchadnezzar to be amazed and honor them again for having survived the lion’s den without a scratch.

Daniel’s career stretched even into the first year of King Cyrus of Persia (so Daniel saw many kings and even the transition of another kingdom altogether in his lifetime – this is another proof he was likely a teenager when he was originally brought to Babylon) – see Daniel 1:21.

Daniel’s later career involved making many prophecies by the providence of God. He foresaw the coming of Christ’s glorious Kingdom in Daniel 7:13-14 and 9:24-27. His ascension, coronation (the only detailed description of Jesus’ coronation is in Daniel 7), judgment seat, Kingdom, and coming new and better covenant is also predicted here. The actual timing of Christ’s coming is foretold in Daniel 9. In Daniel chapters 7-12 in fact history is pre-told from the time of the then-present Babylon Empire up to the time of the Roman empire, when Christ would come and His church established forever. Even Christ’s resurrection, His first and second coming, and an easy calculation to determine the beginning of His ministry is presented.

When Judah was under great distress in captivity, these were some of the most hopeful, specific, and clearly defined prophecies yet given. It was darkest before the dawn, and indeed the dawn would be the coming of our Savior, the fulfillment of God’s promises! Satan was naturally very worried, as it seemed he had everything all wrapped up nicely, but yet prophecies kept coming, God kept intervening, and victories kept being won, even in Babylon!

Haggai 2:7 says, “And I will shake the nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of Hosts.” Indeed, the coming Messiah was the desire of all the nations, as the Jewish Scriptures were well-known in many foreign lands by this point, with the various captivities and trials the Jews had endured to that point. In fact, they

would be even more well-known by the time of Christ, as the Magi that sought him knew the Scriptures well enough to come to the King of Judah (Herod, at the time) to inquire about His arrival!

The Prophets – Chapter 118

This author has prepared the following chart concerning the prophets:

Major and Minor Prophets			
Where?	Before Captivity	During Captivity	After Captivity
Israel	Jonah, Amos, Hosea		
Judah	Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk	Daniel, Obadiah, Ezekiel	Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
Chart sourced from information recorded in <i>The Eternal Struggle</i> by George L. Faull, Rel. D.			

Each of the prophets played a role in keeping the Hebrews hopeful and urging their repentance. Prophets like Jonah and Nahum relate, as Jonah tells the story of Nineveh’s initial repentance, but Nahum tells how 150 years later they had returned to their previous heathen ways and their pending destruction was certain (indeed, it was, and to this day, Nineveh lies in ruins across the river from the modern Iraqi city of Mosul). Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Obadiah were contemporaries, though in different locations for much of their ministries. The prophets after the captivities were giving the newly-determined Jews (who did not go back to idolatry again) hope and the final prophecies before Christ would come. Interesting and compelling doctrine and instructions about divorce and offerings are given in these books as well.

A Plot to Kill All Jews – Chapter 119

Now that Satan knows that Messiah will be born of a virgin, and he knows that the time of Daniel’s prophecies concerning Messiah are counting down, he goes for the all-out approach in an attempt to exterminate the exiled Jews. He tempts a wealthy Amalekite named Haman who is a powerful man in Persia under King Ahasuerus. Haman offers the king approximately \$20 million dollars if he can put an end “to a troublesome people dwelling in the kingdom.” The king blindly accepts.

What the king does not know is that his new wife, whom he chose among many, was a Jewess, and thus an object of Haman’s murderous threat. Haman was really bitter against Esther’s cousin, Mordecai, who had previously been unwilling to bow to Haman when he was

nearby. Haman's hate of Mordecai would backfire twice, the first time to his own humiliation, and the second time to his own death.

Haman was foolish, however, as he trusted in astrology and horoscopes for when he should do this or that. His superstition would actually be his end and work against him. As well, Esther was a descendant of King Saul of the tribe of Benjamin, who was now finishing the work of her ancestor who had been charged with finishing off the Amalekites but never had done so. Esther would finish the job, save her people, and as well give birth to Cyrus, the next King of Persia, who would assist the return of Judah to Jerusalem!

Although Esther was not in the line of Messiah herself, she facilitated a great deal of protection with God's help to protect that line. As well, her mothering of Cyrus influenced him to follow the prophecies concerning him by Isaiah, speaking again of her character and influence.

Satan wanted so desperately for the Jews to be dead but he also knew Esther was not of David. So all the way to Haman's death he kept his focus global, trying to kill all the Jews captive in Babylon/Persia. He would fail, as God's providential work through Esther – though hidden in the text – is one of great testimony of what faithfulness in the one true God can do to save an entire nation from extinction!

A Nation is Saved – Chapter 119

Esther, knowing her people was in danger, agreed by the advice of Mordecai to seek an audience with the king, her husband. Esther was afraid – and rightly so – and she asked for three days to prepare herself (Esther 4:16). In her own mind, she was dead, but nonetheless, she was faithful.

She did receive an audience with her king, and she asked for the privilege to dine with him and Haman. Haman of course felt privileged himself, but he did not know his disaster was planned for him. At the dinner, Esther explained Haman's plot to the king, and how she herself was a target. The King, enraged, ordered that Haman be hung on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

Because Haman had scheduled the extermination of the Jews for eleven months later (due to his consultation of horoscopes and divinations – Isaiah 47:13), the Jews had plenty of time to prepare to defend their own. The king allowed this, and the people were spared. The nation of Judah was safe, the Messianic line preserved, and Esther herself remained as queen, became the mother of Cyrus, the next king of Persia, and was forever immortalized in her own self-titled book of the Old Testament Scriptures. God's victory in Esther was great!

Cyrus, the King of Persia – Chapter 120

Cyrus, Esther's son by her foreign kingly husband, was predicted in Scripture to release the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild their walls, city, and the Temple to God. These predictions

actually name him by name in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1. He is spoken of again in Isaiah 45:13 and then it was actually fulfilled in Ezra 1:1-6.

Cyrus' obedience to the Word of God is again God's working through various people – no matter who they were – to bring about the promise He had made originally. Messiah was coming, and now also a foreign-born, half-blood king was going to assist! Satan so very much wanted to stop Esther, and then Cyrus after her, but God was always one step ahead.

Rebuilding Jerusalem's Wall – Chapter 121

In Ezra 6:14 and the book of Nehemiah in general, the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls begin. Nehemiah himself was a cupbearer to the king, Esther's husband, who was known by two different names: Ahasuerus (Esther 1:1) and Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1).

Nehemiah 2:1ff tells of how Nehemiah himself spoke to the king concerning the Israelites' plight. The king heard him and granted his request to go and begin the rebuilding of Judah. Ezra 6:14 tells how the people started to rebuild, under the ministry of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. This began to occur under the reigns of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.

Nehemiah returned to Judah to see the city as it was after Babylon's final stretch of wrath against it: the walls were torn down, the city was burned, and the Temple of God was in ruins. Nehemiah was greatly saddened by the sight, and he knelt to pray. Nehemiah was a righteous man, who evaded many attacks and temptations of Satan, who God blessed to rebuild Jerusalem from the ground up. Never again would the Jews fall into idolatry; Nehemiah's and the prophets with him who prayed and petitioned God had their prayers honored in a nation that would never again know idolatry.

Satan sent his old allies in the form of the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Ishmaelites in an attempt to derail Nehemiah's ambition to rebuild Jerusalem. They tried open warfare with the nations that were helping Nehemiah, they ridiculed them, they tried to compromise with them, they tried to threaten him by letter, ruin his reputation, and even divide his own family over the task. None of these attempts worked, as Nehemiah equipped every working man in Jerusalem with a sword along with his trowel, to make sure that Jerusalem could defend itself, as well as rebuild the wall quickly. Indeed, the wall was built incredibly fast – only in 52 days!

God also provided providentially through Esther to provide the materials for the rebuilding.

Zerubbabel – Chapter 122

An oft-silent character in our sermons and lessons is a man named Zerubbabel. Satan hated Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel, as well as the prophets that were among them, notably Haggai at this time. Nehemiah's task was to rebuild the city's walls, while Ezra's was to restore the right worship, works of God, and Law of Moses in the land among all the returning people.

Zerubbabel's job, having returned from exile, was to rebuild the Temple and then assist in rebuilding the city. The people who returned knew their first job was to rebuild the temple, but they went about rebuilding their own houses first. Because they did not honor God first, they were always running low on food and water, their supplies were dwindling, and their wages did not go far enough. This was God's doing (Haggai 1:3-11). He instructed them to give "careful thought" (Haggai 1:5) as to why this was happening to them. He gave them the reason upfront though, and they already knew it anyway (Haggai 1:2-4). It is rather amazing that they are already being selfish and difficult again; have they learned nothing from their ancestors? Satan was obviously among them; since he had failed to stop the building the wall, he would go back to his old ways of tempting the people to put themselves first, be lazy, and complain. One area Satan did not succeed in was leading the people back to idolatry; Nehemiah's prayer (1 Nehemiah 1:4-10) was heard and honored by God, who kept the people away from idolatrous worship from that point forward. Nehemiah's faithfulness, along with Ezra and Zerubbabel, laid the foundation for a more faithful nation than what had existed before.

So Zerubbabel gathered up 42,360 people in total (Nehemiah 7:66-67) to hear the law preached (Nehemiah 8:1-7) and then rebuild the temple, inspired from the preaching just given (Nehemiah 8:8).

Satan had a particular reason to hate Zerubbabel because he was the son of Shealtiel, but he would not know the significance of this until it was too late for him to stop Messiah from coming. Shealtiel was a descendant of Nathan, David's son, and was the son-in-law of Jeconiah, the captive king of Israel. If you remember, Jeconiah also goes by the name of Coniah – Jeremiah 22:24, 28, 37:1, Jehoiachin - 2 Kings 24:6, 8, 12, 15, 25:27; 2 Chronicles 36:8+9; Jeremiah 52:31, Ezekiel 1:2, and even Jeconias in the Greek – Matthew 1:12 – see KJV for Greek translation instead of Hebrew transliteration as is common in other Bible translations.

So, Jeconiah, the grandfather of Zerubbabel, was captive in Babylon, under Mardok's protection and privilege. The message from Haggai was delivered to Zerubbabel, descendant of a king from David, and to Joshua, the high priest, son of Josedech. These two men foreshadowed the fact that Messiah would be both a king and a priest on his throne (Zechariah 6:13). Zerubbabel, a governor, was still of kingly blood (but forbidden to be king because of the curse upon Jeconiah – Jeremiah 22:30), and Joshua was of Levite (priestly) blood.

Zechariah was prophesying in the days of the rebuilding, just as Haggai was, so both Zerubbabel and Joshua were aware of their prophecies. These prophecies did not make a lot of sense to the people (nor Satan at the time), but that was the plan – that Messiah would be clear upon his coming – but before his arrival hard to track down (just like a riddle's answer is obvious after one hears the answer but not before). God did not give any more information that what was needed *at the time* Messiah would come, so Jesus would be the obvious fit, but not identifiable specifically before His coming. Remember, Satan had many close calls to kill off the Messianic

line (specifically Joash and Hezekiah), and so God played every hand carefully. God would win the war, but Satan would still win many battles until then.

The questions still remain, “How can a man be priest and king, when both are required to come from separate tribes?” (Zechariah 6:13) As well, how could a priest sit down, when there was no chair in the tabernacle, as their work required standing daily, offering sacrifices? (Hebrews 10:11) As well, what does the prophet Isaiah mean when he says that a branch will come out of Jesse? (Isaiah 11:1)

Jesus would fulfill each of these uniquely, unlike any other man could, so that again we could obviously identify Him when he came. First, Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, so of kingly right, but not born of Joseph, so without the curse of Jeconiah on him (another reason the virgin birth is an absolutely essential Christian doctrine). Second, Jesus would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, satisfying the prophecy to be a priest, but also the prophecy concerning the Messiah’s priesthood specifically coming after Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7). Third, Jesus would give his blood in the Heavenly Tabernacle, on the mercy seat of Heaven, once for all, and then sit down at the right hand of God the Father, as the priestly work was finally finished (Hebrews 10:12). Fourth, Jesus’ hometown would be Nazareth, which translates “branch”, fulfilling this prophetic requirement (Isaiah 11:1, John 18:5), while still being born in Bethlehem, another prophetic requirement (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:4-7).

Absolutely only Jesus could fulfill all of the above, plus hundreds of other prophecies. When the prophecies were given, they were deliberately vague in places to keep Satan guessing, but obvious once Christ came. Matthew details 65 Old Testament prophecies alone that prove Jesus the Messiah, and Hebrews in particular goes on in detail of how the Old Testament Law was a shadow of the covenant and worship of Jesus and His person/priesthood/kingship today. These parallels are astounding, and claiming Jesus was not the Messiah takes incredible faith in insurmountable odds!

The Samaritans – Chapter 123

Samaritans came about due to the earlier captivity of the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel by the Assyrian empire. Unlike Judah, who had not intermarried as a race with the Babylonians, the Northern tribe had, and created a half-breed Assyrian/Jew who then became known as Samaritans. Some argue that there had not been enough time between the captivity of the North and rebuilding of the walls, temple, and city in Jerusalem but minimally, we are talking about 186 years. How many babies and generations from a large group of people (the Ten Northern Tribes of Israel) intermarrying with an even larger group of people (the Assyrians) create? A nation’s worth, that is how much! So the Samaritans, being half-breeds, who had mixed their flawed understanding of the Law of Moses with their new heathen, inherited customs, tried to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Then they tried to coo their way in and “help” (Ezra 4:1-2).

Zerubbabel, Joshua (the high priest), and the rest of the elders of Israel would hear none of it. They knew the Samaritans opposed them at first, and their mixing with the idolatry and seed of the Assyrians had corrupted them (Ezra 4:3-4). Satan naturally prompted the Samaritans to resist the first time, then to try to deceive the second time, and now a third time he would tempt them to prevent the remaining reconstruction. For a little while, they succeeded, discouraging the Jews in their work, but Haggai rebuked them, and between the prophets, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, the reconstruction would eventually finish.

Even the governor of Syria was prompted by Satan to try to prevent the reconstruction. Above all else, Satan did not want Jerusalem rebuilt, fortified, preserving the Messianic line, and the Law of Moses practiced again both within and outside the Temple of God. Nonetheless, the Israelites, though faulty as they were and continued to be, never did wander back into idolatry and the reconstruction was eventually finished. Satan had delayed it twenty years, but God still saw it through.

The Separation from Heathens – Chapter 124

In one of the most misunderstood and shocking stories of the Bible comes the forced, mass divorce of all the men of Judah from their foreign wives. God even called them to put away their children from foreign wives (Ezra 10:3-17).

Why did God require this? Was God being cruel to both the women and their children, leaving them husbandless and fatherless?

First, the Jews knew not to marry foreign wives to begin with; it was both a sin and a threat to their inheritance if they married outside their tribe. Second, it was not God's fault they had chosen to marry foreign wives and have children by them; the men sinned on their own in that matter, and now that matter is being corrected. The correction is forceful, but necessary. There was a bigger issue at hand. Most of all returned from Babylon were from Judah, and from Judah was to come the Messiah. If the intermarriage of foreign women corrupted the Messianic line, Satan would succeed in nullifying prophecy, and prevent Jesus from coming. The seriousness of the intermarriage is so much that God has it recorded the men by name who committed that specific wrongdoing in Ezra 10:18-44. There was bigger fish to fry here than the marriages lost; all of humanity's hope was riding on Messiah's coming, and Judah's primary purpose was to see that through. The women and their children (who could later become further corruption of the seed of Judah) had to be cast out to keep the Messianic line intact.

Also, there is no evidence that God did not providentially supply the needs of the divorced women and children. He did so for Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:17ff). Some will say that is only because Abraham prayed for Ishmael (Genesis 17:18), but God simply responded out of grace to Hagar (Genesis 21:15-20). God had also done the same before for Hagar and Ishmael, at Genesis 16:7-14. This author thinks it is best to assume God provides for all who were necessarily cast off, as he even did for a boy who would grow up and cause all kinds of trouble

for God's people. In fact, the trouble Ishmael causes for all the world continues to this day. This has never stopped from God from showing kindness.

Malachi was also prophesying during this time, and in Malachi 2:10-16, he discusses this particular sin of the Jews and how this divorce was not a license to divorce freely. Rather, this was a case of cleansing Judah from the last of her idolatry and keeping the Messianic line pure for the coming Messiah. So Malachi reinforces the importance and sanctity of marriage, while explaining why these divorces were justified in this case.

The Jews complied and let their foreign wives and children go. Satan had succeeded in having them sin through intermarriage yet again to begin with, but they repented of their sin, and God continued to work through them. At the point of the casting off of the foreign wives and children, as well all idolatry finally left Jerusalem permanently at that point. It was an awful purge, but a necessary one, both for the spiritual and physical purity of Judah as well as the promised Messiah's coming, who would bless the whole world (Genesis 12:3, Luke 2:10).

Moses Obeyed – Chapter 125

After the people of Judah were cleansed of the last vestiges of heathen intermarriage and religion, the people swore not to intermarry with the heathen again, and to honor the Sabbath. They also swore to financially care for the temple and the priesthood, as they were originally commanded to do (Nehemiah 10:29-39; Numbers 18:21+26).

Satan was really floundering here. Judah was back in their homeland, the Temple was rebuilt, the walls and city were rebuilt, and the worship and works and Law of Moses were reestablished again. Satan's attempts from here would be much more broad, as he could not figure out how Messiah would come from Judah, but also be a priest, as well as how the curse of Jeconiah and the other prophecies played in. Satan would prompt the Greeks against Jerusalem, other foreign nations, and ultimately the power of Rome over their heads. Nonetheless, God had a plan from beginning to end, to bring Messiah, and then have Messiah perform His priestly work, so salvation could be available to us until His second return!

If we consider the following, we can see how God was one step ahead of Satan each step of the way:

- 1) God worked through Queen Esther to save the Jews from the hands of Haman prompted by Satan.
- 2) Nehemiah brought back people from Babylon to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and did so in only 52 days, even with all the threats from the outside, all prompted by Satan.
- 3) Zerubbabel and King Cyrus of Persia had 50,000 Jews return to rebuild the Temple. The many attempts Satan wrought to defeat this grand purpose did delay it twenty years, but it was completed, nonetheless.

- 4) Haggai the prophet rebuked the people upon their occasional discouragement, laziness, and selfishness and encouraged them to the finishing of the Temple.
- 5) Zechariah's prophecy concerning the future Messiah from Nazareth encouraged the people to finish rebuilding Jerusalem.
- 6) Ezra and Malachi cleansed the land of the last vestiges of paganism and foreign seed, and commanding the proper worship of God and seeing that it was fulfilled among the people.

As a result of all this, joy was found in obedience to God for all the people, as recorded in Nehemiah 12:43. Their joy was even so great, that the verse indicates it was heard from afar off. Obedience to God indeed gives great joy!

The Messiah is Still to Come! – Chapter 126

The Old Testament ends with many promises, with some repeated, and some new.

Haggai 2:7 reminds us that the Messiah is the desire of all nations (Romans 8:19+22, Genesis 12:3). He also reminds us in 2:23 of his same book that Zerubbabel would be made as a "signet". What does this mean? It means that Zerubbabel would meet many of the qualifications of the Christ Himself, but would not quite fulfill all of them (like the virgin birth). Most interestingly, Zerubbabel's father (Sheiltiel) had married into the kingly line, but Zerubbabel's mother was of directly kingly descent. Therefore, the two lines of the kingship met in him.

Satan must have trembled to realize that so many of the qualifications of the coming Messiah were met in this one man he had not managed to kill off. It was only a matter of time when Messiah would actually come, fulfilling all that had been said about him, and then accomplishing His mission for us, outmaneuvering the devil at every turn!

The prophet Zechariah prophesies about the coming Messiah – that He is coming, that He would be a priest and a king (Zechariah 6:13), that the Lord remembers His promises, and the Lord would bless them as long as they stayed faithful.

Malachi tells them that Messiah's forerunner (John the Baptist) will come first to prepare the way of the Lord (Malachi 3:1). As well, more details about the coming Messiah were given by Malachi (Malachi 4:2, 5+6).

The Jews were in their homeland, the walls rebuilt, the Temple and its worship restored, and the city populated and busy again with the works of God and the Law of Moses preached. Satan knew the time of Messiah must be getting close, as things keep falling into place, and the prophecies suddenly cease between the time of Jesus and Malachi, the last prophet, who preached in the 5th century BC. He would then try to take on the nation altogether, and regularly attack women for the first time, as he was hunting for the virgin would give birth to Messiah, as well as attempt foreign coups. However, God would protect Judah all the way until about 40

years after Jesus' death, when the destruction of Jerusalem would occur (Joel 2). Jesus was coming and the devil could not stop it!

Between the Testaments – Chapter 127

The Bible is silent for the around 400 year period between the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. Those titles are slight misnomers, as the Old Testament era (the Mosaic period of time) stretched into all four Gospels, until the death of Christ. It was at this point the ministration of death was finished, and the ministration of life was dawning (2 Corinthians 3:6-18).

Although we do not have inspired history recorded for us in the Bible, we know that God sustained the Israelite people through great tribulation during this period, to finally bring Christ. We also have some foreshadowing and prophecy from the book of Daniel and other places about this period, by which we can compare with secular history, to get a relatively-certain grasp of what really occurred during this period.

It should also be said that also secular history study is a science and art unto itself; this does not mean we should not have confidence in the plain facts of it. No one doubts, for example, that Alexander the Great and the Greeks came and conquered Persia, and after them came the Romans, who ended up ruling the entire known world at the time Christ came. The images of all this found in Daniel 2, 8:4-22, 10:20-11:4 tell us that the Bible is right, and that this particular section of secular history is certain as well.

Satan attempts to kill off the Jews at this point begin with him angering Alexander the Great against them. The Jews had an alliance with Darius and Persia, and remained loyal to him (it was, after all, his predecessor that allowed them to return home and rebuild Jerusalem, as well as provided some of the means to do it).

So Alexander and his armies marched on Jerusalem. The high priest at the time claims he saw Alexander coming on a vision, and that God had told him what to do. He had all the people put on white robes and stand outside the city to greet Alexander. The priest himself stood outside the city, in his priestly arraignment. When Alexander approached, he was amazed, because he himself had a vision the night before about this very thing occurring. Alexander was also told in his vision that if he showed the Jews respect, he would have success over the Persians.

Alexander followed the priest into the city and the priest showed him the prophecies about him (Daniel 2, 8:4-22, 10:20-11:4). This so impressed Alexander that he granted the Jews freedom of their religion. Satan had tried to see the Jews' end at the helm of the world's most powerful man, but instead, the world's most powerful man ended up protecting their right to worship God. Every plot of Satan foiled, sometimes to the reverse of Satan's original goal!

A foreign king named Philopater visited Jerusalem. He was too curious, and ended up wandering into the Holy of Holies on the day of Expiation, when no one but the High Priest could enter. Philopater was struck with such a great fear that he had to be carried out, and he almost died simply due to the fear alone.

Satan angered Philopater, who felt embarrassed. He threatened to remove the Jews' religious freedom over this incident and demanded the Jews worship his God, Bacchus. He tried to take captive those who would not obey him and put them in the Hippodrome of Alexandria to be killed by elephants in a spectacle for his constituents to enjoy in a morbid manner. However, God turned the elephants around and they killed those who tried to exterminate the Jews. God did many other things that frustrated and bewildered Philopater; in the end, he released the Jews, and slaughtered those who had turned to his false god.

A man named Seleucus sent Heliodorus to steal the temple treasures. During his attempt, he was surprised to see a host of armed angels standing in his way. He fell to the ground unable to speak, and remained so until the High Priest prayed for his healing. He left, never to return, no doubt carrying this story with him wherever he went.

This and other stories circulated (in various forms of truthfulness) all around the known world. This did not stop Satan from trying to exterminate the Jews at every turn, but undeniably, some did not fall to the temptation, simply because the stories were largely regarded as true (even if the local version was exaggerated or some of the details changed depending on what account is read).

Some secular or liberal historians will say, "Daniel foresaw one thing and this local account has different details, etc." It is extraordinarily common, in both secular and liberal circles (as well as denominational), to simply prefer the non-Biblical text above the Biblical one. They try to post-date Daniel after his prophecies. They try to say one local account is better than another, simply because its details are simpler ("always prefer the simpler text" has been a common fallacy in interpretation, even in otherwise-solid conservative Biblical scholarship) or more in line with natural theology (theology that denies the supernatural).

There is one goal in all of this: to discredit the Bible. Nonetheless, there is no book consistently more accurate than the Bible, and where archeology is absent or other proof is still missing (or, in the case of some it – lost to time and natural decay), it takes more faith to dismiss the Biblical account than to accept it. As well, a supposition against the supernatural is the most common bias present when interpreters of history accept one account over another. There is a built-in, assumed penalty for accepting the Bible's accounts on any historical matter; this should be remembered when reading literature outside conservative, well-researched, Biblical scholarship.

The reasons for rejecting a Biblical account are usually one of a few: 1) rejecting the supernatural, 2) requiring the adoption of the simplest/most natural account, 3) assuming the

Bible is wrong, 4) interpreting archeology to dismiss the Biblical account, or 5) cherry-picking the evidence that best backs up any account but the Scriptural one. All of these are biased, poor research attempts, undeniably still guided by Satan, to lead people away from the truth of Scripture. Fellow student, be aware.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Greek King of the Seleucid Empire, likely staged the worst invasion of Judah during this period. He and his armies invaded Jerusalem, managed to kill 40,000 Jews, and even sacrificed a sow (female pig) in the Holy of Holies. He then dedicated the Temple to Jupiter (the Roman god of light and sky), burned the Law of Moses, and killed the women of the realm who still circumcised their sons.

For these atrocities, God raised up the Maccabees family who were granted many miraculous victories over their enemies. 1 and 2 Maccabees, part of the Apocrypha, are books that detail some of these events. Now, these books are apocryphal, and thus have to be taken with a grain of salt. Nonetheless, they are considered valuable literature, and undeniably the basic idea that the Jews were successful over their enemies by God's providence is true. However it exactly went, and how many of the fantastic stories actually happened, are up to debate, but nonetheless some of them did occur, in some form that saw God protecting His Messianic line until the appointed time. Of this, there can be no doubt.

Conclusion

The Old Testament is a funnel → it begins with all of mankind, who sins, and then God narrowed down each generation after that to bring Christ Himself, fulfilling prophecy and working wonders and providing His Word along the way. The rest of history happened, but the history that happened in relation to Christ coming literally saved the world. Will you accept a gift that was 4,000 years in the making, directly provided to save you from destruction? Christ is the greatest gift of all! (2 Corinthians 9:15)