NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: CTH 812

COURSE TITLE: OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY (PENTATEUCH)

COURSE GUIDE

Code	CTH 812
Course Title	Old Testament Theology
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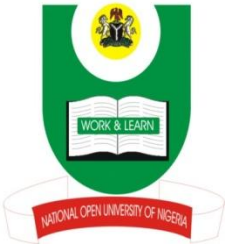

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Introduction

CTH 812: Old Testament Theology is a one-semester 2- credit unit course. It will be available toward the award of the postgraduate degree in Christian theology. The course is also suitable for anybody who is interested in the theological study of the Bible.

The course will consist of 14 units and it will examine a theological study of themes in the Old Testament including: God, creation, humanity, gift of land, sin and evil, worship, priesthood and sacrifice, redemption and mission. The material has been especially developed for students in African context with particular focus on Nigeria.

There are no compulsory prerequisites for this course. The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for Tutor-Marked Assignments. (TMAs) Detailed information on (TMAs) is found in the separate file, which will be sent to you later.

There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

What you will learn in this course

The overall aim of CTH 812: Old Testament Theology is to lead you to study the theological ideas found in the Old Testament with particular emphasis on God, humanity, sin, redemption and mission.

Old Testament theology is a part of Biblical theology. Therefore, our study of the theological themes of the Old Testament will include the witness of the Old Testament to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Your understanding of Old Testament Theology will equip you to explain Christian faith to other people - Christians and non-Christians.

You will find biblical theology to be an enriching study as you benefit from the insights of other biblical theologians.

Course Aims

The aim of this course (CTH 812 – Old Testament Theology) is to study some of the theological themes found in the Old Testament, using exegetical methodologies in a canonical order, relating the Old Testament themes to the New Testament, and drawing implications for believing communities in contemporary Africa. This will be achieved by:

- Introducing you to the Methodologies and Currents in Old Testament Theology
- Discussing the nature and attributes of God in the Old Testament

- Exposing you to the realities of God's creations and the endowments God made for humanity.
- Analyzing the importance of covenants in humanity's relationship to the God and to one another.
- Attempting to discover the origin of sin and evil, and explores the provisions made in the Old Testament for its solution.
- Equipping you with a better understanding of the dynamics of worship, priesthood, prophecy, and sacrifices.
- Analyzing the future of Biblical Studies in African context.

Course Objectives

To achieve the above course aims, there are set objectives for each study unit, which are always included at the beginning. The student should read them before working through the unit. Furthermore, the student is encouraged to refer to the objectives of each unit intermittently as the study of the unit progresses. This practice would promote both learning and retention of what is learned.

Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. By meeting these objectives, you should have achieved the aims of the course as a whole.

On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Define the Methodologies and Currents in Old Testament Theology
- Discuss the nature and attributes of God in the Old Testament
- Appreciate the realities of God's creations and the endowments God made for humanity.
- Analyze the importance of covenants in humanity's relationship to the God and to one another.
- Discover the Biblical view of the origin of sin and evil, and explores the provisions made in the Old Testament for its solution.
- Become equipped with a better understanding of the dynamics of worship, priesthood, prophecy, and sacrifices.
- Become conscious and work towards the future of Biblical Studies in African context.

Working through this Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials provided by National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, and at points during the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course there is a final examination. Below you will find listed all the components of the course and what you have to do.

Course Materials

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignments File
5. Presentation Schedule

In addition, you must obtain the materials. You may contact your tutor if you have problems in obtaining the text materials.

Study Units

There are three modules, fourteen study units in this course, as follows:

Module 1: Creator and Creation

Unit 1: Methodologies and Currents in Old Testament Theology

Unit 2: God (Nature and Attributes)

Unit 3: Creation (Origin and Providence)

Unit 4: Humanity (Nature and Purpose)

Unit 5: Covenants

Module 2: Endowments, Abuse and Recovery

Unit 1: Land as a Gift

Unit 2: Sin and Evil

Unit 3: Worship

Unit 4: Priesthood

Unit 5: Sacrifice

Module 3: Other Relevant Subjects

Unit 1: Redemption and Mission

Unit 2: Prophecy

Unit 3: Community

Unit 4: Prophecy

Please note that Module 1 introduces you to Old Testament Theology and examines methodologies, the Creator and his Creations with relevant themes. The next Module 2 addresses the endowments, abuse and recovery with themes like the gift of land, sin and evil, worship and sacrifice. The last Module 3 discusses the theologies of relevant themes from the Old Testament like redemption and mission, prophecy, community and Prophecy.

Each unit contains a number of self-tests. In general, these self-tests question you on the material you have just covered or require you to apply it in some ways and, thereby, help you to gauge your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the material. Together with tutor marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

Textbooks and References

The student is encouraged to buy the under-listed books (and more) recommended for this course and for future use.

1. *The Holy Bible* (RSV or NIV).

2. Palmer, Timothy P. (2011) *A Theology of the Old Testament*. Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks.

3. Hinson, David F. (1976) *Theology of the Old Testament*. London: SPCK.

4. House, Paul R. (1998) *Old Testament Theology*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.

5. Rowley, H. H. (1956) *The Faith of Israel.* London: SCM Press LTD.

6. Gwamna, Je'adayibe Dogara (2008) *Perspectives in African Theology*. Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks.

7. Parrat, John (1997) *A Reader in African Theology.* London: SPCK

8. Hargreaves, John (1979) *A Guide to the Book of Genesis.* London: SPCK

9. Millar, J. Garry (1998) *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy.* Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

10. Migliore, Daniel L (1991) *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology.* Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Assignments File

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the Assignment File itself and later in this *Course Guide* in the section on assessment.

Presentation Schedule

The *Presentation Schedule* included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against lagging behind in your work.

Assessment

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First are the tutor marked assignments; second, there is a written examination. In tackling the assignments, you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark.

At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three-hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course mark.

Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAS)

There are fourteen tutor marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best five (i.e. the highest five of the fourteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with form to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination and Grading

The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor–marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	**Marks**
Assignment 1-4	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count at 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

Unit	**Title of work**	**Week's Activity**	**Assessment (end of unit)**
	Course Guide	1	
Module 1			
Unit			
1.	Methodologies and Currents in Old Testament Theology	1	Assignment 1

2.	God (Nature and Attributes)	2	Assignment 2
3.	Creation (Origin and Providence)	3	Assignment 3
4	Humanity (Nature and Purpose)	4	Assignment 4
5	Covenants	5	Assignment 5
Module 2			
Unit			
1	Land as a Gift	6	Assignment 6
2	Sin and Evil	7	Assignment 7
3	Worship	8	Assignment 8
4	Priesthood	9	Assignment 9
5	Sacrifice	10	Assignment 10
Module 1			
Unit			
1	Redemption and Mission	11	Assignment 11
2	Prophecy	12	Assignment 12
3	Community	13	Assignment 13
4	Prophecy	14	Assignment 14
15	REVISION	15	
16	EXAMINATION	16	
	TOTAL	**17 Weeks**	

Table 2: Course Overview

How to get the best from this course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives enable you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a *Reading* section.

Remember that your tutor's job is to assist you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this *Course Guide* thoroughly.
2. Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on it and write in your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they lag behind in their course work.
4. Turn to *Unit 1* and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this *Course Guide*).

Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary. Contact your tutor if:

- you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings,
- you have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises,
- You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

CTH 812 intends to introduce you to biblical theology of the Old Testament. Upon completing this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

- What is the meaning of Old Testament theology?
- What are the attributes of God in the Old Testament?
- What are the implications of the theologies of creation and providence for the existence of sin and evil in the world?
- What does the Old Testament teach about the nature and purpose of humanity?
- What is role of covenant in humanity's relationship with God and with one another?
- Why is worship necessary and are the roles of priesthood and sacrifice?

- Why is land ownership a major factor in many communities?
- Is there any provision for redemption and mission in the Old Testament?
- What is the future of biblical theology in Africa?

Of course, the questions you will be able to answer are not limited to the above list. Biblical theology of the Old Testament offers you more. I am excited to lead and guide you in this study of theological themes in the Old Testament and in the whole Bible. I hope you will enjoy the course.

MAIN COURSE

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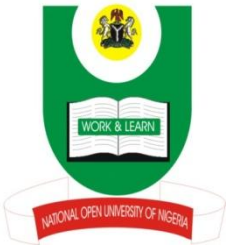

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MODULE 1: CREATOR AND CREATION

Unit 1: History and Methodology of Old Testament Theology

Contents

1.0 Introduction

The Course CTH 812 (Old Testament Theology) is structured into three modules. **Module 1** presents the Creator and Creation, discussed under five units in the following order: the History and Methodology of OT Theology; the Nature and Attributes of God; the Origin and Providence of Creation; the Nature and Purpose of Humanity; and Covenants. **Module 2** is captioned Endowments, Abuse and Recovery, which is an offshoot of Module 1. Its five units discuss Land as a Gift; Sin and Evil; Worship;

Priesthood; and Sacrifice. The last section, **Module 3** presents Other Relevant Subjects in Old Testament Theology, namely: and Redemption, Mission; Community; and Prophecy.

Unit 1, which is the beginning of this study, discusses the History and Methodology of Old Testament Theology. The main body of this unit will be discussed under the following headings: Defining Old Testament Theology; Barriers to the study of OT Theology; Possible approaches to the study of OT Theology; History of OT Theology; Tools and Method for OT Theology; and Implications for Africa.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define Old Testament Theology
- Identify some of the barriers to the study of Old Testament Theology
- Note some of the approaches to the study of Old Testament Theology
- Have an overview of the history of Old Testament Theology
- Be acquainted with the tools and method of Old Testament Theology
- Discuss some of the implications of doing OT Theology as an African

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Defining Old Testament Theology

The word "Theology" is derived from a Greek word meaning "the study or discourse of God" and implies that those who undertake to study God will learn a great deal about God's nature, actions and attitudes. P. R. House (1998, 53) argues that from learning about God, the student would in turn discover how God relates to the created world, including the human race; that all analyses begin with God and flow to other vital subjects. So, the Old Testament Theology can be defined as "the task of presenting what the Old Testament says about God as a coherent whole." Only by keeping God at the forefront of research can one compose a viable and balanced theological work.

How does the Old Testament present God, Humanity and the World? Scholars are not in agreement on how OT Theology should be defined or explained. According to W. C. Kaiser (1988, 477), "Old Theology is a discipline in search of a definition, a methodology, an organizing center or motif, and a permanent berth in the curriculum of divinity." But it was M. R. Schlimm (http://catalystresources.org/issues/373Schlimm.htm - 12/7/11) who summarized the opinions of scholars on the best way to approach OT Theology into three subheadings: (1) by naming a single theme as the Old Testament's unifying concept, (2) by explaining the problems with answering this question, and (3) by answering this question in a way that treats the diversity of Old Testament materials.

By the first opinion: **Naming a single theme**, the scholars sought somewhat simple explanations to how the Old Testament speaks about God, humanity, and creation. They attempted to name a singular theme as *the* rubric that brought all of the OT together into a coherent and organized whole. Examples are: Walther Eichrodt's *Theology of the Old Testament*, which argued that *covenant*, was the central unifying feature of the Old Testament; and G.E. Wright's *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as* Recital, which provided both the academy and the church with a lens for viewing the Old Testament as a record of ways God had acted powerfully in Israel's history.

The second opinion: **Critique and Uncertainty** observed that attempting to fit all of the Old Testament within one rubric proved too difficult a task. Interpreters became increasingly aware of diversity among biblical texts. In 1970, B. Childs declared that biblical theology was in a state of crisis, citing not only its inability to find a central focus, but also (1) its failure to deal with both the divine and human aspects of Scripture, (2) its difficulty in articulating the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and (3) its inability to provide a foundation for theological education (cf. *Biblical Theology in Crisis* [Westminster, 1970]).

Recognizing Diversity was the third opinion that found expression in recent decades. According to this view OT theology is the mainstay of biblical studies; it does not emphasize one concept as the singular item that brings all of the OT together. Instead, they are quite aware of the diversity of genres, concepts, and perspectives within the canon. A key example is W. Brueggemann's *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Fortress, 1997). Brueggemann maintains that at the core of OT faith is *testimony* to God's core character, which he describes in terms of covenant solidarity and unlimited sovereignty. Another important work aware of the OT's diversity is E. Gerstenberger's *Theologies in the Old Testament* (Fortress, 2000). The plural noun in this title is not accidental. This volume examines the different theologies present among various social institutions in the OT: families, villages, tribes, nations, and exiles.

This Course will uphold the fact that Old Testament Theology is both a complex assortment of concepts and a variety of perspectives on each of these particular concepts. We will respect the diversity of Old Testament materials, because the OT offers a variety of perspectives so that God may speak to all of humanity in all of its differences, including the African.

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Define Old Testament Theology, and summarize the three different opinions of scholars on how OT Theology could be explained.

3.2 Barriers to the study of OT Theology

There are certain difficulties confronting the study of Old Testament Theology. P. R. House (1998, 12) summarized it under five headings: (1) Historical barriers, (2) Literary

barriers, (3) Theological/Hermeneutical barriers, (4) General unfamiliarity with Old Testament, and (5) Scholarly barriers.

Historical Barriers: The historical context of the Old Testament is different from ours. Even though one does not have to be an expert in ancient history to read the Old Testament intelligently, some historical context is necessary. Such knowledge is particularly important if for no other reason than that the books of the Old Testament are not in chronological order. Unfortunately few readers are knowledgeable in even basic background matters.

Literary Barriers: While most readers can easily understand narrative books like Genesis, Joshua, Esther, etc, Poetic works and Prophecies are more difficult to manage. For one to correctly interpret the OT, the person should be able to understand the different types of OT literature and how to interpret them. A wrong understanding would lead to a wrong interpretation and application.

Theological/Hermeneutical Barriers: Myriads of theological questions abound in the OT that requires informed answers. Most times scholars are not in agreement of which answer to accept. Examples: How does one reconcile the love of God and the wrath of God? How does the OT relate to NT? How should one relate the OT to the current readers and worshippers?

General Unfamiliarity with OT: The barrier of general unfamiliarity with the Old Testament hampers many readers. If there ever was a time when the Old Testament's contents and emphases were well known, then that time has passed. Most students have not read through the entire OT, hence the difficulty in grasping the comprehensive message of the OT.

Scholarly Barriers: OT scholars do not agree on how to approach the OT history, content, and theology. The diversity of opinions can be quite confusing.

In approaching OT studies the student is left with a dilemma: on the one hand is the opportunity to analyze and enjoy enriching, inspired, literature; yet on the other hand lie the problems of understanding, interpreting and unifying the material being studied. Any attempt to discuss OT Theology must therefore strive to bridge these gaps while remaining faithful to the OT's message.

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Discuss the five barriers to the study of Old Testament Theology

3.3 Possible approaches to the study of OT Theology

A survey of the study of OT Theology shows is quite difficult to choose a starting point for a description of the study of Old Testament theology. P. R. House (1998, 13) identified five possible approaches to the study of OT Theology:

(1) One could begin with the OT itself. How the Old Testament's theology grows and develops within its own pages must be part of a serious analysis of the subject. Attempting to chart how ideas originated and grew to maturity has the potential to leave interpreters seeking the history of theological processes rather than the conclusions of theology proper.

(2) One could also start the description with the New Testament's treatment of the Old Testament, as the New Testament writers made extensive use of the Old Testament. To start here, however, is to run ahead of one's self. The New Testament authors knew the Hebrew Scriptures thoroughly and expected their readers to possess a similar familiarity. Most current readers need to examine the whole of the Old Testament and digest its theological contents before undertaking a study of the relationship between the testaments. Some knowledge and expertise are needed to proceed further.

(3) Examining how the early church fathers, medieval interpreters and leaders of the Reformation viewed Old Testament theology is another potential entry point. John Calvin and Martin Luther are particularly notable examples of figures from church history who interpret the Old Testament as a theological document closely linked to the New Testament. The problem with this approach is that none of these individuals ever produced a single volume specifically devoted to Old Testament theology. Their ideas must be gleaned from literally dozens of sermons, commentaries and other works.

(4) Some modern writers argue that the synagogue tradition is the place to start when assessing Old Testament theology because rabbinic scholars have been commenting on the Hebrew Scriptures since the Old Testament was completed. This approach has the same constraints as trying to gather the various comments from church history. Again, Judaism and Christianity disagree over the value of a two-testament Bible and over the nature and work of Jesus Christ.

(5) The last approach is an attempt by scholars to analyze and explain what the OT itself taught; then sought to incorporate those teachings into a larger biblical or systematic theology. Furthermore, an attention is paid to historical data. Over the years, this approach is preferred.

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Evaluate the five possible entry points to the study of Old Testament Theology.

3.4 History of Old Testament Theology

Earlier, we had discussed the five possible entry points of OT Theology, which included: Starting from Old Testament itself; New Testament; Early church fathers, medieval interpreters, and leaders of the Reformation; Rabbinic scholars; and later, the attempt to synchronize the message of the OT with biblical or systematic theology. Our focus in this

section is to have an overview of the nature and practice of biblical theology by different groups and scholars over a period of time. P. R. House (1998, 15) highlighted four periods, each of which moves OT Theology studies onto new and challenging ground.

(A) Beginnings: From Gabler to Wellhausen (1787-1878)

While the Bible has been read theologically since its formation, in the early, medieval and Reformation church there was no biblical theology or OT Theology as a discipline. Tertullian, Augustine and Martin Luther did not do biblical theology by itself. Instead, they did general Christian theology (Palmer 132). The origins of biblical theology as a separate discipline are commonly traced to **Johann Phillip Gabler** (c. 1753-1826), who made a distinction between biblical theology and dogmatic or systematic theology. According to Gabler, the origin of biblical theology lies in the Bible itself, while dogmatic theology stems from individual theologians with prior philosophical and ecclesiological commitments. Gabler suggested a three-stage approach to examining biblical theology. First was the gathering of historical data from OT and NT; second was a comparison of the various parts attributed to each testament; and third was to note the agreements and disagreements in order to determine what universal notions emerged. Gabler never wrote an Old Testament theology, but in his work **Georg Lorenz Bauer** (c. 1796) divided the biblical material into the study of God, humankind and Christ.

G.P.C. Kaiser (c. 1813): Following Gabler's and Bauer's seminal efforts, Old Testament theologians began to respond to their findings. Kaiser was the first scholar to view the study of Old Testament theology as essentially a history of religion rather than a history of God's revelation. This emphasis on OT theology as a strictly historical exploration was to become the dominant methodology in biblical studies later in the century (House 19).

Other scholars who made remarkable impact during this period were Wilhelm M.L. de Wette (c. 1813) - philosophical approach to theology; Wilhelm Vatke (c. 1806-1882) – "History of Religions" approach to theology, which had a great influence on J. Wellhausen (c.1878); etc. However, OT Theology was reduced to historical questions during this period. Matters of faith were excluded. The historical approach had triumphed on every side. The result was "the tyranny of historicism in OT studies" (Palma 132).

(B) The Dominance of Historicism: 1878-1920

During this period the OT Theology was eclipsed by the History of Israelite Religion. Three factors were responsible: (1) Greater historical consciousness; (2) Archeological discoveries of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Ugarit, Greece, etc; (3) The literary critical works of Vatke, Graf, Kuenen, and above all Wellhausen (Lemke, "Theology - Old Testament," *ABD*).

In 1878, Julius Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* dictated to a great extent the agenda in OT research. His contributions came from his ability to synthesize the findings of earlier scholars into a readable and unified whole. Wellhausen

proposed the JEDP documentary hypothesis, which presented the Pentateuch as a composite document that was put together from different sources, and which could account for the seeming contradictions and inconsistencies found in it.

(C) The Re-emergence of Old Testament Theology: 1920-1960

The dominant hold which the history-of-religions approach had exercised over the discipline of OT theology began to wane during the period between the two world wars. Several factors helped bring this change about. Among them were the general changes in theological climate following World War I, a reaction against the extremes of 19th-century historicism and evolutionary developmentalism, and new developments in the field of OT scholarship itself (Lemke, "Theology - Old Testament," *ABD*).

The year 1933 may be said to mark the beginning of a new era in OT theology with the appearance of two works, one by **E. Sellin** and the other by **W. Eichrodt**. By far the most outstanding and enduring representative of the new era in OT theology is Eichrodt's *Theologie des Alten Testaments,* (Theology of the Old Testament) originally published in three parts between 1933-39 (Eng 1961-67). He used historical-systematic method to understand the main themes of the OT. His Theology is synchronic (systematic) built around the theme of the covenant. In spite of legitimate criticisms and acknowledged shortcomings, Eichrodt's work so far remains unsurpassed in comprehensiveness, methodological thoroughness, and theological acumen (Hayes and Prussner 1985, 277).

Another remarkable contribution of this period came from **Gerhard von Rad** through his two-volume Old Testament Theology. Von Rad believed strongly that the Old Testament speaks repeatedly of God's saving acts in history. He argued that the interpreters of OT must take Israel's confession about God as preaching, not specifically as history (House 35).

(D) The Growth of Diversity: 1960-2000

This period witnessed the emergence of diversity of opinions and methodologies never seen before in OT Theology. Conservative scholarship, which had not been a serious partner in the discipline's dialogue for many years, once again entered the picture. For lack of consensus in methodologies presented by both critical and conservative scholars, **Brevard Childs** (c. 1970) concluded that biblical theology was in crisis in his book. Childs proffered a canonical approach to the study of OT Theology. He separated his canonical approach from other methodologies. His approach does not utilize a single theme, nor does he choose between systematic or tradition-based categories. Instead child stated that a canonical approach recognizes that both types of features appear in the Old Testament, as do "innumerable other options" (House 46).

Other notable scholars of this period include: **Walter Kaiser** (c. 1978 – *Toward an Old Testament Theology*), whose work is thoroughly conservative in its opinions on revelation, history and unity of the scripture; **Claus Westermann** (c. 1982 – *Theologie*

des Alten Testaments in Grundzugen), the work presented the theology of OT as having the task of summarizing and viewing together what the OT as a whole, in all its sections, say about God; and **Walter Brueggemann** (c. 1992), who sought to cast OT Theology in a different mold. He maintains that at the core of OT faith is *testimony* to God's core character, which he describes in terms of covenant solidarity and unlimited sovereignty (Schlimm, http://catalystresources.org). Another important work aware of the OT's diversity is **E. Gerstenberger's** *Theologies in the Old Testament* (Fortress, 2000). The plural noun in this title is not accidental. This volume examines the different theologies present among various social institutions in the OT: families, villages, tribes, nations, and exiles.

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Identify the different historical periods of OT Theology presented by P. R. House, and summarize the main contributions of scholars in each of the period.

3.5 Tools and Method for OT Theology

The survey of the different historical periods in OT Theology (done above) has made it clear that several methodologies for composing Old Testament theology exist. In this Course, we shall adopt a combination of methodologies that would suit our purpose. P. R. House (1998, 53) presented five factors that should guide whatever methodology one adopts in OT Theology:

(1) It must have a historical base.

(2) It must explain what the Old Testament itself claims, not what preconceived historical or theological systems impose upon the biblical material.

(3) When part of Christian theology, Old Testament theology must in some way address its relationship to the New Testament.

(4) By joining with the New Testament to form biblical theology, Old Testament theology offers material that systematic theologians can divide into categories and topics for discussion.

(5) By stating what the Old Testament says about God's nature and will, Old Testament theology moves beyond description of truth into prescription of action (i.e. application to one's context).

So, our approach in this Course is to study some of the theological themes found in the Old Testament, using exegetical methodologies in a canonical order, relating the Old Testament themes to the New Testament, and drawing implications for believing communities in contemporary Africa. The selected themes are: God (Nature and Attributes); Creation (Origin and Providence); Humanity (Nature and Purpose); Covenants; Land as a Gift; Sin and Evil; Holy Place and Worship; Priesthood and

Sacrifice; Redemption, Mission; Community; and Prophecy; discussed under three modules.

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Can you summarize the five factors that should guide whatever methodology one adopts in OT Theology suggested P. R. House?

3.6 Implications for Africa

Just like the global experience, biblical theology in Africa is in search for an acceptable methodology. The advent of Christianity to black Africa coincided with the western imperialism, which impacted on the way the missionaries did biblical interpretation. According to Gwamna (2008, 200),

> The resultant effects of this was the superior outlook of western missionaries on Africa and Africans as a whole, whose land, traditions, beliefs, philosophy and entire cosmologies, were branded as 'undeveloped,' 'savagery,' 'animistic' paganism,' 'native,' 'primitive,' superstitious,' 'pre-logical in mentality' and 'incapable of conceiving God', among others.

In the words of Mbiti, "mission Christianity" produced a church, 'trying to exist without a theology and without theological consciousness and concern in Africa." Even the theology that evolved was one sided" (Gwamna 200). So, in an attempt to extricate Africa from western imperialism in Africa's theological thoughts, many African scholars have proffered different kinds of methodologies as an alternative in doing biblical theology in Africa. Some of the methodologies for doing biblical theology presented by African scholars include: *Contextualization, Inculturation, Indigenization, Africanization, Intercultural Hermeneutics, African Theology, Black Theology, and Savannah Theology*, etc (**Note**: these methodologies to biblical theology in Africa will be evaluated in the last unit of this Course).

Theological consciousness in Africa is evolving rapidly. The pace will accelerate if biblical scholars in Africa would engage in serious study of Biblical languages, in order to read and interpret the bible for themselves and not rely on versions. Furthermore, biblical theology in Africa should not be lured into syncretistic tendencies, and it should not be at variance from global consensus of what biblical theology stood for.

3.6 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Biblical theology in Africa is in search for a methodology. Discuss.

4.0 Conclusion

From the foregoing, Old Testament Theology is a discipline that has a diversity of methodologies in its interpretation and application. The guideline for every methodology remains: OT Theology must have a historical base; it must explain what the Old Testament itself claims, not what preconceived historical or theological systems impose upon the biblical material; when part of Christian theology, Old Testament theology must in some way address its relationship to the New Testament; by joining with the New Testament to form biblical theology, Old Testament theology offers material that systematic theologians can divide into categories and topics for discussion; and by stating what the Old Testament says about God's nature and will, Old Testament theology moves beyond description of truth into prescription of action. This Course adopted a synthesis of theological themes with exegetical methodologies in a canonical order.

5.0 Summary

This unit presented a definition for Old Testament Theology, barriers to the study of OT Theology; possible approaches to the study of OT Theology; history of OT Theology; tools and method for OT Theology; and implications for Africa.

In the next unit, we shall examine the nature and attributes of God using the methodologies we had established here.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

Define the term: Old Testament Theology, and discuss some of the methodologies advocated by scholars for OT Theology.

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 1: CREATOR AND CREATION

Unit 2: God (Nature and Attributes)

Contents

1.0 Introduction

The Old Testament opens with the declaration; "In the beginning, God Created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The idea of God is an overwhelming concept emphasized in the Old Testament. There is the belief that God exists. Yet there is no concerted effort anywhere in the Old Testament to prove the existence of God. So, the Old Testament is not a laboratory for the test of whether or not God exists. It is a testimony of the Old Testament believing community of their relationship with the One who created and sustains the universe.

This unit aims at discussing the nature, names, and Metaphors about God in the Old Testament. A hermeneutical consideration of how this Old Testament concept relates to the New Testament and its implications for believing community in Africa concludes the discussion.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the Nature of God, Names of God, and Metaphors about God in the Old Testament.
- Discuss the hermeneutical considerations of OT concept of God to the New Testament and African context.

3.0 Main body

3.1 The Nature of God

The nature of God is discussed throughout the books of the Old Testament canon. God is described in the following terms: The God who creates; the Oneness of God; the Personal God; the Living God; etc.

The God who creates: The thought of God as creator is an indispensable feature of biblical theology. The Israelites believes that creation is entirely God's doing. God's uniqueness and sovereignty is manifested in Genesis 1:1, which declares: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." P. R. House (1998, 63) described how this notion ran through OT Canon: (1) In the Prophets creation serves as evidence of God's concern for Israel and the rest of the human race and as proof that the Lord has every right to judge every living creature. For example, Isaiah claims that the fact that the Lord creates the heavens and earth means that the Lord never grows weary and is ever willing to comfort a hurting people grown weary of Assyrian oppression (Is 40:12-31). (2) Several Psalms celebrate the Lord's status as Creator with the intent of stressing God's incomparability, the dignity of the human race made in the Lord's image, the redemption of Israel and the constancy of God's commitment to David and his lineage (Psalms 136 and 89). (3) Job 28 and Proverbs 8 argue that God's skills as Creator prove the Lord's unsurpassed wisdom.

The Oneness of God: Deuteronomy 6: 4 records, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." This confession occupies a central place in the worship of the Jews, and influences their thoughts about religious matters. Scholars are not in agreement on how to interpret the Oneness of God in OT Theology. D. F. Hinson (1976, 19) reported that some may have interpreted it: 'The Lord is one, but there are others.' More likely, some believed: 'The Lord is the only God for Israel, but there are other gods for other peoples.' The other nations worship gods who share their power with lesser deities, but the Lord's power is supreme in Israel. Most certainly 'The Lord is One' came to mean that 'The Lord, the God of Israel, is the only God; all others are mere idols with no real existence and no power.' Other references in to God as One or supreme found in the canon include: Exodus 20:2-3; 1 Sam 5:1-5; Psalm 82:1-5; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10; 44:6.

The Personal God: The God of Israel is personal. The personal nature of God in the Old Testament is readily shown by references to nearly every portion of the Canon. God is ascribed human functions, namely: God speaks (Gen. 1:3), hears (Exd.16:12), smells

(1Sam 26:19) has eyes (Amos 9:4), personal emotions (Zeph 3:17; Ezek 16:8), etc. According W. G. Baab (1934, 28),

> It is clear that God is viewed as having personal and even manlike traits whereby he may communicate or otherwise relate himself to others. Yet these evidences of personal being are extremely superficial and inconclusive. They obviously fail to distinguish God from men; neither do they identify the deeper meaning of personality.
>
> As a matter of fact, the basic ingredients of the concept are to be found in the many indications of the self-determination, the ethical freedom, and the affective characters of the divine life. There is abundant evidence on each of these points, and its accumulation readily leads to the conclusion that the God exhibited in the Old Testament is personal in the deepest and most significant sense.

The self-determination of God implies that God is able to conceive purposes and work for their realization in the processes of history as well as beyond. This assumes the power of thought and reflection as well as memory and volition. This self-determination and self-direction of God is seen in every document of the Old Testament. In Genesis 1:3, God said, 'Let there be light!' This utterance requires a preconceived purpose which receives fulfillment in the very pronouncement of the words quoted.

The Living God: The Old Testament presented God as a living person. Jeremiah 10:10 records, "But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King…" this signifies the God who acts in history, who performs mighty deeds of deliverance, and who manifests his power among men. He demonstrates that he is a living God by disposing of Israel's enemies. In the words of Joshua, "By this you shall know that the living God is in your midst, and that he is surely going to drive out of your way the Canaanites" (Josh.3:10). According to W. G. Baab (1931, 25), "the implication of the word "Living" shows that God is not simply an idea; he is an experiences power, acting upon and through human life and the natural order which sustains it. He delivers, redeems, saves, helps, and blesses."

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Identify and discuss the four main ideas of the nature of God in the Old Testament?

3.2 The Names of God

The belief in the existence of God is common to many religions, and each of these religions has different names for the supreme deity. In the Old Testament different names are used for the supreme deity, namely: *Elohim, El, YHWH, Adonai,* etc.

***Elohim*:** In Genesis 1:1, we read: "In the beginning God created…" The Hebrew word used for God is *Elohim,* a word which is plural in form, and which is sometimes used of foreign deities and translated gods. In the great majority of its occurrences, however, it is rendered God and refers to the Israelite deity. Of itself therefore its use neither demands nor excludes a monotheistic view. It is probable that the term took its rise in a polytheistic milieu, but in the most ancient texts of the Bible it is already used of a single God and is construed with a singular verb (Rowley, 51). H. H. Rowley opines that this does not prove that *Elohim* is thought of as the only existing deity, and indeed there can be little doubt that in historical times many in Israel used this term of their God without any idea of denying the reality of other gods. Another possible implication of the usage of the word *Elohim,* could be its allusion to Trinity in a Christian parlance. T. P. Palmer (2011, 17) argued that it was more likely that the plural form *Elohim* reflected a plurality of majesty or intensity.

El: The word *El* sometimes stands alone or it is used as a prefix to another word to form the name of God. So, *El* is a generic word for God or god in the Old Testament. Amongst many other terms for God found in the OT, *El-Shaddai* and *El-Elyon* were used in reference to the God of Israel. It is certain, however, that there was a stage when they were thought of as separate and distinct deities. Moreover, incorporated in proper names are elements consisting of the names of other gods who are known to us from the texts which have come down from Israel's neighbours. For Example, when Abram offered a tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of ***El-Elyon***, he equated the Canaanite deity ***El-Elyon*** (i.e. The Most High God) with ***El-Shaddai*** (i.e. The All Sufficient or Almighty God), the God of the Hebrews (Ajah, 45).

YHWH: The most common name used for God in the Old Testament is the *tetragrammaton* (i.e. the four letters) *YHWH*. In Exodus 6:2, Moses was told that God appeared to the Patriarchs as *El-Shaddai*, and not as *YHWH* (translated the LORD), the new identity with which he was appearing to Moses. But it is clear here that the God of the patriarchs is identified with the God in whose name Moses came, though they bear different names. According to H. H. Rowley (1954, 52), "In Israel the name *Shaddai* fell largely out of use, and was replaced by the name of Moses' God. Where it remained, it was generally in poetry; and the same is true of *Elyon*. We never find any opposition between the God of Moses and the God of the patriarchs, or any undercurrent of feeling that the identification was not complete."

Concerning how the actual meaning of the letter *YHWH* or how it should be pronounced; scholars are not in agreement. Some rendered it as ***Yahweh***, while others call it ***Jehovah***. But, in the Hebrew tradition, the word is not pointed or pronounced. In its place they would prefer to pronounce it ***Adonai*** **(**translated as **LORD** – all the letters written in the upper case).

Adonai: In the Old Testament**,** *Adonai* could mean Lord, master, LORD depending on the context. The plural form *Adonai,* like the plural form *Elohim,* is regularly used with

singular verbs and modifiers, so it is best to construe the Name as an emphatic plural or plural of majesty. When the plural is formed using a singular possessive ending (my Lords), it always refers to God, and occurs over 300 times in the *Tanakh* in this form (http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/Adonai/adonai.html -19/9/11).

The Old Testament presented the Israelite God, *YHWH* as the only LORD, and not *Baal* (the Canaanite God of Rain and Fertility). The Canaanites used the term *Baal*, or Lord, for their gods, and in the post-settlement period Israelites worshipped at Canaanite shrines according to Canaanite rites, and used this term when they would have affirmed that they were worshipping the God of Israel. There was always an undercurrent of feeling that Israel's God was not *Baal*, and in times of national tension this found open expression.

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Mention and discuss two names used for God in the Old Testament.

3.3 Attributes of God

The attributes of God refers to the way the Old Testament presented the characters of God. It is in the attributes of God that the distinctive elements of the faith of Israel lie. The characters of God listed in the OT include: Love, Justice, Holiness, and Faithfulness.

Love: The Old Testament presented God as the God of love. Israel was suffering in Egypt, God loved her and had pity on her and his love both expressed his own character and laid its constraint upon Israel. The Book of Hosea gave a graphic picture of how God loved his people, even though they remained unfaithful to him (Hosea 1-3). According to Rowley (62), "It is sometimes supposed that it was to Hosea that Israel owed the thought of God as gracious and merciful. Yet it clearly went back far behind Hosea to the event of the Exodus, and in a passage which is held by many critical scholars to antedate the time of Hosea" (cf. Exodus 34:6). Indeed, Hosea developed the thought of God as gracious and merciful, and with an intensity born of his own tragic experience declared the constancy of God's love, and pressed on people the demand of that love for an answering love and loyalty.

Justice: If God was a saving God in Exodus, he was by no means always represented as such. There were many occasions when he delivered his people, and there were other occasions when the prophets predicted woe for them. When Israel did not reflect God's character in her internal life, but by the evils that were rampant revealed her sorry state, then her way could not prosper. This was not simply God was offended with her. It was the expression of his moral character and his love. For in the teaching of the prophets the only foundation for man's well-being lies in obedience to the will of God. If God were indifferent to their well-being he would not be God of love. Hence the discipline of events was thought of as designed to bring Israel back into the way of God's will, so that she might reap blessing, and the disasters foretold by the prophets were as much the expression of the character and will of God as the deliverance from Egypt had been.

Israel's election did not mean that she was the pampered favorite of God. It brought her high privilege; but it also laid heavy responsibility on her, and was charged with constraint, which she could only disclaim to her hurt (Rowley 63).

Holiness: Holiness was at first thought of as a numinous quality attaching to God and to persons and things that were separated from common use. In the faith of Israel a moral content was given to the term. This is associated especially with the teaching of Isaiah, who is fond of calling God 'The Holy One of Israel', though again it was not without preparation before his time. Rowley (66) highlighted that in the call of Moses, the numinous quality of God's holiness (i.e. awe in the presence of God in terms of power and separateness from humanity) and the moral consideration (i.e. goodness and mercy in sending Moses as an agent of deliverance) came together. There is a moral quality in the holiness of God, as well as the numinous quality which communicated itself to the very ground on which Moses stood (cf. Exod. 3:1ff).

Faithfulness: Faithfulness of God is often insisted in the Old Testament. This term implies that God is not arbitrary in character, but self-consistent and to be relied on. He does not resort to the exercise of power to cover fickleness, which man is therefore powerless to question. In him there is no fickleness, but in all that he is and all he does he is to be trusted. Malachi 3:6 records, "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished." It is true that there are many passages where God is said to repent of having done something. This term is not used in a moral sense, however, implying that God recognized that he had been at fault. There is certainly an element of anthropomorphism in the term, and it is used at various levels of meaning in the Old Testament. In general terms it may be said to mean that God changed his mind, not because of fickleness in himself, but because of failure in men or because of man's repentance.

3. 3. Self-Assessment Exercise

- Summarize each of the attributes of God discussed in this section.

3.4 Metaphors about God in the Old Testament

The Old Testament made several metaphorical labels on God, signifying how the community of faith in the Old Testament regarded God; namely: the Lord as King; God as a Rock; Father, Brother and Kinsman; God as Judge; Shepherd; etc.

The Lord as King: The LORD as King is a "root metaphor." It generates such metaphors as the notion of the temple as God's royal dwelling - God's palace; the concept that God is an enthroned ruler of the Universe and presides over a heavenly court of divine armies (Lord of Hosts); that there will be a great battle, the "Day of LORD." The OT speaks of the Lord as King a total of 85 times; representative passages include: Num 23.21; Deut 33.5; 1 Sam 12.12; Isa 6.5; 33.17, 22; Jer 8.19; 10.7, 10; Dan 4.37; Mal 1.14; Psalm 10.16; 24.7, 8, 9, 10; 29.10 (Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 116).

The root metaphor of the Lord as King utilizes two divine designation: “the King” and “LORD of Host” - the first gives us a glimpse of the LORD as the warring deity and the second as the enthroned reigning deity" (cf. Isaiah 6.1-5). In the biblical ideological complex in which the Lord as King is the very center, there are three components: chaos battle, kingship, and temple. It is logical to assume that this root metaphor was especially cultivated in the milieu of the temple, which would help to explain its occurrence in the Psalter and related literature" (Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 104).

God as a Rock: The Hebrew word *zur* means "rock." The word was a figure of speech drawn from Palestinian scenery to portray divine strength and permanence. No doubt these local associations favourred the continued usage of the word (cf. Isa. 32:2), but it is quite probable that the primary meaning was given in the pre-Mosaic period when the patriarchal deity, Shaddai, was invested with mountain imagery (Anderson, "Names of God," *IDB CD-Rom*). In Akkadian prayers the deity was often addressed as "great mountain," and throughout the West men worshiped the great storm-god, Hadad, usually known as Baal among the Canaanites. Thus the mountain or rock imagery suggested by zur has its source in the North West Mesopotamian locale with which the patriarchs are connected. Support for this view is found in some of the early personal names like Elizur - "My God is a Rock" - Num. 1:5. Another early name was Pedahzur - "May the Rock Redeem" - Num. 1:10 (Anderson).

According to OT testimony, Israel affirmed that the LORD is the Rock of Israel (Isa. 30:29; cf. Gen. 49:24). The name often appears in poetic literature (e.g., Psa. 18:2; parallel with lsa: 18:31; 18:46; 19:14; Isa. 17:10; 44:8; Hab. 1:12). An important passage in this connection is the so-called Song of Moses (Deut. 32:1), where it is affirmed that the LORD is the Rock who has given birth to his people (vs. 18) and whose stability and steadfastness are their sole refuge (vs. 4, 15, 30-31). In Isa. 26:4 the LORD is called an "everlasting rock" (Anderson).

Father, Brother and Kinsman: A cluster of names, such as "father"; "brother" ("kinsman") were used in antiquity to express the very close family relation between the deity and his worshipers. The conception of family kinship with the deity is reflected in personal names like *Eliab*, "My God is Father" (Num. 1:9; I Sam. 16:6); *Ahiezer*, "My [divine] Brother is help" (Num. 1:12); or *Ammishaddai*, "[The god of] my Kindred is Shaddai" (Num. 1:12). The ancient Semitic background of these divine names is the view that the god was actually a blood relative of the clan or family, whose members were by the same token sons, brothers, and kinsmen of the god (Anderson).

God as Judge: The title "Judge," like "King," refers to the function of the ruler. In a passage from the fourteenth-century Ras Shamra Tablets the two terms are used of the deity in poetic parallelism: "Our king is Triumphant Baal, our judge, above whom there is no one!" Moreover, the word "judge" was used for the early leaders of the Israelite confederacy, whose task was not just to arbitrate legal disputes (as in our restricted

meaning of the term), but to get justice for Israel by acting in military crises when the confederacy was threatened (see the book of Judges). In the highest sense, the LORD is Judge (Gen. 18:25), for his actions in history set things right, by humbling the oppressor and exalting the oppressed. Other passages include Isa 33.22; Psa. 7:8, 9; 96:13).

Shepherd: The title "Shepherd" is also related to the office of kingship. In the ancient Orient the king was often styled as the shepherd of his people, as, e.g., in the prologue to the Code of Hammurabi, and the court language was also applied to deities whose role was to lead and protect the people. Divested of its ancient polytheistic associations, the term was applied to the LORD throughout the OT period, and was particularly appropriate for expressing the personal relation between God and his people in the covenant. Examples: Israel is the LORD's "flock" or the "sheep of his pasture" (Psa. 79:13; 95:7; 100:3); the LORD is the Shepherd (Gen. 49:24; Psa. 80:1, 2) who leads (literaly "shepherds") and enfolds his people with goodness and concern, as expressed classically in the Twenty-third Psalm. Others are: Isa. 40:11; cf. Ezek. 34:1.

3. 3 Self-Assessment Questions

- Explain what the OT means, when it refers to the LORD as King, a Rock, and a Shepherd.

3.5 Hermeneutical Considerations

The reality of God is the main focus of the Old Testament. This consciousness is not alien to the traditional African. Just as the African has much to learn from the Old Testament and Christianity, it is also true that some insights from the African traditional religion could facilitate a better interpretation of the scriptures in African context. For example, in the Old Testament, God has various names or titles; some are generic, but one is personal (Palmer 16). Different African traditions and cultures have a common name or title for God. Nyamiti (Parrat 61) opined that Christianity could learn much from the divine names and the divine attributes stressed by Africans, such as friend, fecundity, fatherhood, life-giver, protector. But he would need to examine them in the light of the cultural elements central to African cultures: dynamism, solidarity, participation, the sacred, and anthropentrism. In particular, the symbol of the Motherhood of God found in some African cultures, could, when used correctly, complement the biblical imagery of the Fatherhood of God, and open up a deeper understanding of the nature of the Deity.

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

- Can you explain how a good knowledge of African concept of God could facilitate a good understanding of the concept of God in OT?

4.0 Conclusion

From the fore-going, we have seen that in presenting the nature and attributes of God, the Old Testament affirms the existence of God, who is both personal and living amongst

other attributes. As a personal God, he is able to conceive purposes and work for their realization in the processes of history as well as beyond. This assumes the power of thought and reflection as well as memory and volition. As a living person, God acts in history, who performs mighty deeds of deliverance, and who manifests his power among men. He demonstrates that he is a living God by disposing of Israel's enemies. This understanding explains why different metaphors and names were used in connection with God in the Old Testament.

5.0 Summary

This unit discussed the nature of God, which includes: the God who creates, Oneness of God, the personal God and the Living God; various names for God: *Elohim, El, YHWH*, and *Adonai*; attributes of God: love, justice, holiness and faithfulness; and metaphors about God: the Lord as King, God as Rock, Father, Brother and Kinsman, God as Judge and Shepherd. The unit concluded with a hermeneutical consideration explaining how African concept of God could facilitate a better interpretation of the OT in African context.

The next unit will dwell on creation (origin and providence) as a product of God.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

Outline and discuss some of the attributes of God you know. How is God described as a Judge and Shepherd in the Old Testament?

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 1: CREATOR AND CREATION

Unit 3: Creation (Origin and Providence)

Contents

1.0 Introduction

The OT begins with the affirmation that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1.1). Creation is the sovereign act of the Triune God who was before the foundation of the world. This unit examines the origin and providence of creation discussed under the following headings: Creation in the Pentateuch, Creation in Prophetic Literature, Creation in Wisdom Literature, Christ the Instrument of creation, and Hermeneutical Considerations.

2.0 Objective

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Understand the biblical concepts of God in the Pentateuch, Prophetic, and Wisdom literatures of the Old Testament
- See how Christ is God's instrument of creation
- Draws lessons for today through a hermeneutical consideration

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Creation in the Pentateuch

The oldest creation narrative in the Bible is probably recorded in Genesis 1 & 2. Scholars have different opinions whether or not there are two different accounts of the same event recorded by two different traditions, namely Yahwist tradition (Gen. 2.4ff) and Priestly tradition (Gen 1). House (6) opined that the Pentateuch began the Bible's sustained interest in creation and its attendant theology. It was here that themes such as God's personal involvement with human beings, God's sovereignty, God's power, God's giving of standards, and God's willingness to forgive erring human sinners have their origins. It was also here that the fact that God is the only creator, indeed the only deity, begins its key role in Biblical theology. In some way all subsequent doctrines flow from these truths, all of which were founded on the principle that the Lord is the creator. These truths must be received and processed through human reason, but in the end they must be accepted as true by faith.

God's Sovereignty: Genesis 1:1 claims that the Lord is the sole source and cause of creation's existence. This verse also indicates that though the Lord is directly and personally involved in creation the Lord is separate from creation. Commentators generally agree with these initial points, but they have often debated what the opening phrase teaches about the timing of creation. William J. Dumbrell writes,

> Since there is no agreed-upon translation of the two verses, interpreting them is fraught with difficulties. Verse 1 may be translated absolutely ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth") or dependently ("When God began to create the heavens and the earth …"). Though both translations are syntactically and contextually possible, Genesis 1:1 is best regarded as an absolute beginning, and indication of God's control over all creation as complete (House 6).

Besides emphasizing that the world owes its existence to God, the only one able to create, Genesis 1:1 reveals that the Lord is solitary and unique. That is, there is no other god involved in the creation process and therefore there is no deity like the Lord. Genesis 1:2 indicates that the Lord personally works in creation through his spirit. Though the earth was "formless and void," the "Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." Though it is possible for "spirit" to mean either "wind" or "spirit," C.F. Keil correctly comments that here the spirit is "the creative Spirit of God, the principle of all life (Ps. 33:6; 104:30), which worked upon the formless, lifeless mass…"

Sin and evil: The Pentateuch marks the beginning of series of narratives which centre on the emergence and development of evil within humanity – expulsion from Eden, Cain's murder of Abel, and the marriage of the sons of God with human women and the great flood, until the time of Abraham which marks a new beginning for the people of God (Gen.1-12). Nurnberger (2004) commented that on the one hand the narrative describes what ought to be. Where there is no evil, there is no knowledge of the difference between good and evil, thus no necessity to hide anything from God or from each other, thus no

shame. Similarly, in authentic human existence, there is no conflict between humanity and nature. The creator clearly intended human existence to be without hardship.

On the other hand, the narrative depicts the discrepancy between what ought to be and what is. The commandment of God evokes human desire. While it is meant to preserve the wellbeing of humanity, it actually provides the occasion for disobedience. Where the moral norm is broken, shame emerges and with it the need to hide, to cover oneself, to find excuses and scapegoats. Adam blames his wife whom God has provided; Eve blames the snake, which God has made. Thus in the end God is to blame.

At the end of the Genesis creation accounts certain theological elements are in place. First, the Lord has been portrayed as unique, personal, sovereign, caring, and good. God's character is firmly presented as the core of all that is best in creation. Whatever is good about the heavens and earth can be traced directly back to God. Second, human beings are entrenched as the flawed stewards of creation. Third, sin must be overcome for creation to return to its intended purpose. Readers are left to cling doggedly to the belief that the personal God capable of creating the created order will also have the ability to recreate it as needed (House 9).

3.1 Self-Assessment Question.

- Can you explain the Sovereignty of God and the role of sin in creation?

3.2 Creation in Prophetic Literature

The Old Testament teaching on creation goes beyond the Pentateuch. House (9) argued that the Prophets handled creation themes in a manner calculated to deal with the specific problems in their eras as well as with the larger problems related to human sin left unresolved at the end of the Pentateuch. Isaiah and Amos are good representatives of how the prophetic literature uses creation themes to correct and exhort the people of their day. Both Isaiah and Amos focus on how a proper grasp of creation theology can form, or re-form, God's people into a holy nation. Isaiah 40-48 addresses an audience that has been devastated by the Assyrian invasion known as the Sennacherib Crisis, which occurred about 711 or 701 B.C. This audience could easily have been tempted to serve the gods of Assyria, as king Hezekiah's father Ahaz had done (see 2 Kings 16:10-18), given the fact that Assyria had destroyed all of Judah except Jerusalem, which Isaiah 1:1-9 says was left with but a few survivors. They could also have thought it wise to turn to the Babylonian gods, for the Babylonians were constantly opposing Assyria (see Isaiah 39). They might even have considered venerating Egypt's gods, for the Egyptians had been able to withstand Assyria's attempts to overrun their territory.

Isaiah deals with their feelings of rejection by highlighting God's greatness, power, Sovereignty, and mercy in 40:12-31. God cannot grow weary, and God cannot forget Israel, he argues. Why? It is because the Lord is the creator, the one who stretched out the heavens and the earth (40:12). Because the Lord is the one who makes nations and

decides how important or unimportant they will become (40:15-17). Because it is the Lord who sets up and takes down rulers (40:23).

Amos is not as interested in comforting and instructing as he is in waking up a stubborn, sinful nation. Working about 760-750 B.C., Amos seeks to warn the northern kingdom of Israel to repent before judgment comes. To achieve his purposes he calls upon creation theology at three crucial junctures to punctuate his emphasis on the day of the Lord, or the day of God's wrath. This day is coming not only for Israel, but for all surrounding nations as well (see 1:2-2:8). After declaring Israel and its neighbors guilty of a variety of heinous acts in 1:12:8, the prophet proceeds to focus on Israel's unjust and unrighteousness ways in 2:9-4:5. God brought Israel out of Egypt and called some of Israel's best to be Nazirites and prophets, only to have these messengers rejected (2:9-12). Thus, judgment must come (2:13-15). God's word for the people now is one of punishment, not of deliverance (3:1-5); their richest men and women have oppressed others and sinned in their religious observances (4:15), so God sent them smaller punishments to warn them (4:6-11), all to no avail. Why should Israel be terrified? Why should Israel repent? It is because the creator has decided to judge (4:12-13).

Amos used the fact that the Lord is the creator to warn (4:12-13), express God's wrath over injustice (5:8-9), and announce the end of God's patience with a rebellious people (9:5-6). In other words, Amos uses creation theology quite differently than Isaiah does. Amos wants his audience to sense fear at continuing to rebel against the creator. He wants his audience to take no comfort in the knowledge that there is no other god. He wants his audience to tremble at the thought of the creator and let this awe change their behavior. Isaiah and Amos used creation theology to remake God's people into a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, a goal first set forth in Exodus 19:5-6.

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- Discuss the concept of creation as presented by prophets Isaiah and Amos.

3.3 Creation in Wisdom Literature

Psalms, Proverbs, and Job are considered as part of Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature. They presuppose the existing tradition about creation, but moves in their own directions. Creation theology is strategic here in declaring God's personal wisdom and absolute sovereignty over the created order. These twin emphases are in turn vital for these books' arguments that the Lord is the source of all wisdom and that the Lord capably rules the universe in a way that demonstrates he is worth serving under all conditions.

In Psalm 90, God's personal majesty receives further definition through detailed creation theology. In 90:1 the Lord is depicted as protecting Israel throughout all generations. Then the psalmist claims that God has no personal end or beginning, and bases his opinion on God's role as creator. The author says to God, "Before the mountains were

born, or you gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (90:2). Clearly, this text recognizes no end or beginning for the one who has created the world. It also recognizes that God's "majesty can hardly be grasped by his creatures." There has never been a time when the Lord was not God, and no such time will ever arise. Because the Lord is the creator, the psalmist goes on to argue that God has power to give and take life (90:3-6). The author also determines that one must pray to the creator for deliverance and forgiveness (90:7-17). Thus, in this psalm the creator is also the giver and taker of life, the one who forgives sin, the one who shelters Israel, and the one who has no beginning or end. Given these facts, it is appropriate for the psalmist to take all needs to the Lord. Creation theology becomes the basis, then, for intercession, for healing, and for confession of sin.

Psalms 89 and 104-106 begin their survey of God's saving works on Israel's behalf with creation. Here creation is the beginning point of God's redemptive plan that culminates in the Davidic covenant and the need for deliverance from exile. In these psalms the people cry out for help as they recall all that God has done in the creation of the heavens and earth, the exodus, the conquest, and finally in the chastisement of the chosen people. Current forgiveness would become, then, the latest in a long line of great acts that began with Genesis 1-2. Creation theology in this passage is intended to lead to contrition, and ultimately to cleansing and wholeness (House 10).

Job and Proverbs have as high a view of God's person and worth as the psalms, but they use these beliefs to make different theological points. For Job the issue is whether or not the creator is faithful, trustworthy, and kind. God's power is never questioned in the book. Rather, God's use of his unlimited authority and strength is under scrutiny. Thus, it is vital that in Job chapters 38-42 emphasize the capable and kindly manner in which

God, the creator, rules creation. Nurnberger (221) commented that in Wisdom Literature we saw how a genre responded to the transcendent needs for meaning, acceptance and authority in the face of the enduring riddles of human existence. It was as if a new "Word of God" was born in their minds as they battle with the universal and never ending problems of life and death, righteousness and sin, nature and history.

3.3 Self-Assessment Questions

- Show how Psalms, Proverbs and Job presented the personal wisdom and absolute sovereignty of God over the created order.

3.4 Christ the Instrument of Creation

The prologue to John's Gospel in the New Testament proclaims Christ to be the ***logos***, that is, the principle according to which the world was put together, or the wisdom with which God created the universe, as in Wisdom literature (cf. Prov. 8). Similarly Col 1:15 refers to him as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; foe in him and through him are all things created, etc.

Referring to ***ultimate power***, Christ was proclaimed to be Ruler of the universe, seated "at the right hand of God", that is, as God's prime minister or executive (Mtt 28:18; Acts 2:33, 5:31). His miracles were perceived to be the manifestations of messianic authority prophesied in the Old Testament. Furthermore, Christ occupies ***ultimate space,*** shown as having descended to the lowest, and ascended to the highest places imaginable (Eph 4:9f). He has been enthroned above all powers in the heavens, the realm of God (Eph 1:20). Also, Christ was presented as having ***ultimate beginning***, as God's instrument of creation (Col 1:15ff; Heb 1:2f; John 1:1-5). The understanding is that Christ acts both as the channel of God's power and as the embodiment of God's redemptive love. Christ represents God's original intentions. This is where the creation narrative fits in.

3.4 Self-Assessment Questions

- Christ represents God's mastery over Creation. Discuss.

3.5 Hermeneutical Considerations

The Old Testament concept of creation is not a product of science, but a product of the community of faith. In the words of Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible." The Old Testament believes that the LORD is the only God, so the only creator of the universe. According to Hinson (24), "several important ideas follow from the belief that God created the heavens and the earth." Such ideas include that God is Almighty (Exod 6:3); the LORD controls nature (Gen 8:22; Jer 31:35, 36; Amos 5:8; Ps 145:15, 16); God works miracles through nature (1kings 17); the LORD id God of wisdom (Ps 147:4, 5); God has a purpose for the creation (Gen 1:28; 2:15) and evil cannot stop the LORD's work (Gen 6:12; Exod 32:7).

3.5 Self-Assessment Question

- What are the implications that God created the universe?

4.0 Conclusion

The Old Testament concept of creation is multifaceted. From the fore-going, the Pentateuch teaches that God alone is the creator, the cause and source of all things that are made. It claims that the creator is personal, and as such entrusts human beings with the care of the earth and with divine laws. The Prophetic writings accepted and built upon the points made in the Pentateuch. Writing to a dispirited, wavering, people of uncertain faith, Isaiah uses creation theology to comfort, challenge, correct, embolden, and instruct. Amos has little comfort to offer his erring, stubborn, oppressing audience. He uses creation theology to punctuate warnings about judgment for oppression and announcements that the creator's patience with sinful Israel has been exhausted. Psalms, Job, and Proverbs adapt prophetic uses of Genesis 1-2 still further. The psalmists use Genesis 1:26-31 as a reason for praise, and monotheistic passages such as Isaiah 40-48 as reasons to bow down and worship the only living God. Job stresses the notion that God is a wise, capable, and

revelatory God to conclude that the Lord is worth trusting and serving when one suffers due to no fault of theirs. Proverbs invites those who need wisdom to seek it from the one who has possessed it from the very beginning. Wisdom is available to human beings because the creator wills to reveal it to them.

5.0 Summary

The above adopted a canonical approach in evaluating the concept of creation in the Old Testament. The Pentateuch gave the foundational understanding of creation as the product of God. This section discussed the sovereignty of God and the presence of sin in creation. Prophetic writings followed after the Pentateuch teachings. Prophetic books of Isaiah and Amos were examined. Each of the books resorted to the creation theology as a tool for demanding obedience to commands of God, who is the creator. Wisdom literature amplified the personality and wisdom of God in creation. Christ as the instrument of God's creation and a hermeneutical consideration concluded the unit.

In the next unit, we shall examine one of the products of God in creation, namely: the nature and purpose of Humanity.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

Critically examine the concept of Creation in the Hebrew Canon of the Scriptures.

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 1: CREATOR AND CREATION

Unit 4: Humanity (Nature and Purpose)

Contents

1.0 Introduction

The Old Testament declares that humanity is a creature of God with a definite nature and purpose. Humanity occupies a unique place among the creatures. Our duty in this unit is to examine the distinctive features of the nature of humanity recorded in the Old Testament. They include: humanity as a creature, humanity as a thinking being, humanity as an ethical being, humanity as a free being, man a religious person, and humanity as the image of God.

3.1 Humanity as a creature

The graphic account of the creation of humanity by God is recorded in Genesis 2. Other references abound in the Old Testament, which attest to the creation of humanity by God. Humanity is a creature sharing the weakness and limitations of all creatures, made of flesh and so is subject to sickness and death (cf. Job 14:2; Ps. 103:15-16). The frailty of human flesh was highlighted in order to glorify the everlasting God (Isa 40:6-8). The weakness of humanity in comparison with the power of God was again brought out in the

Chronicler's history of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. King Hezekiah reassures the people and tells them to be strong and of good courage, for they have on their side a greater power than the Assyrian. "With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles." (II Chr. 32:8).Otto Baabs (62) argues, "Humanity is thus undependable, not because of sinfulness, but because in him is weakness inherent in his nature as creature participating in the frailty of all created beings."

The close connection between humanity and animals makes them both children of nature. Humanity breathes the air which surrounds him; he reproduces his kind as do the animals; he partakes of food; he sleeps for the renewal of his strength; he wears clothing—perhaps the skins of animals—to protect his body; and he lives with his own kind for survival and companionship. In none of these activities does he differ greatly from the beasts of the field. As a conscious organism struggling for existence, he should be depicted as one who makes all of the complicated adjustments demanded by his basic drives, which brought his civilization into existence.

3.1 Self-Assessment Questions

- Humanity is undependable, not because of sinfulness, but because in him is weakness inherent in his nature. Discuss.

3.2 Humanity as a Thinking Being

Perhaps, one of the most distinguishing features of humanity from other creatures is the thinking ability in the human. Old Testament presented several Hebrew words that may be helpful in understanding this aspect of humanity. The words are: ***ruach*** (spirit), ***nephesh*** (soul), ***1ev*** or ***levav*** (heart, mind), and ***basar*** (body). When used of humanity, *ruach* has a wide range of meanings, from "breath" to "the spirit of prophecy." It may connote wind, air, gas, temper, disposition, vivacity, vigour, courage, anger, patience or impatience, spirit (bitterness of spirit), and the spirit of prophecy. It is imparted by God (Zech. 12 :1); it is the principle of life within humanity (Job. 27:3); it is preserved by God (10:12); it is the life of all human beings, which God holds in his hand (12:10); it is given by God to all people upon the earth (Isa. 42:5); God is the "God of the spirits of all mankind" (Num. 16:22; 27:16); God weighs the motives of each person (Prov. 16:2). At death the *ruach* departs from humanity (Psa. 31:5; 78:39; 146:4; Job 17:1; 34:14; EccI. 3:21; 12:7).

The second term is ***nephesh***, variously translated as "soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion, passion" however; it also bears the meaning of volition and judgment. It is never the symbol for rational power alone (Baabs 67). Humanity has reality in the Bible because he is, not because he is a spiritual being, a bodily organism, or a thinking-feeling centre of consciousness. Israel's thinkers did not minimize human's power to conceive ends and to will them into being; neither did they glorify the body and its natural functions as ends in themselves. They achieved a balance between body and mind in their thinking about humanity which enabled them to avoid certain intellectual

problems, and which confronted them with others just as difficult. Baabs (68) opined that the Old Testament community of faith had no problem as to the sinfulness of matter, so that asceticism never arose as an influential movement in Israel. They did create the problem as to humanity's ultimate destiny beyond history, since body and soul must share the same fate in the absence of a real dualism as to human nature.

3.2 Self-Assessment Questions

- How is thinking ability one of the distinguishing features in humanity as a creature of God?

3.3 Humanity as an Ethical Being

Humanity is an ethical person, that is, a being capable of making moral choices in the light of alternatives, and of acting thereon. It is also possible for humanity to refuse to make choices considered by the community or conscience to be desirable, or to make wrong choices. Two typically biblical limitations upon this discussion of humanity as ethical come to mind. One is the fact of humanity's existence as a collective personality, and the other is the positive theistic focus of all biblical ethics.

When humanity is observed as a corporate or collective personality, ethical consciousness and social consciousness are closely allied. Appeals to adhere to some ethical ideal are usually presented to the nation rather than to the individual, or possibly to particular groups within the nation. Amos addresses the wealthy women of Samaria, for example, and rebukes them for injustice. For him injustice and justice have real and serious social implications. A solitary good humanity is inconceivable, although Yahweh does call upon Jeremiah to look around in the streets of Jerusalem: "Search her squares, if you can find a person, one who does justice, and aims at honesty" (5:1). This language is rhetoric rather than ethical theory, however.

In the Old Testament the belief prevails that humanity is ethical. He may do justice and love mercy; he may repent and let righteousness flow, down like a mighty stream; he may wash his hands of the blood of violence and cruelty and succor the widow and orphan; and he may substitute justice for bloodshed and righteousness for the cry of the afflicted. This conduct is within his reach. The very fact that Israel's ethical leaders—the prophets, the wise men, and the lawgivers—urge upon the people the doing of good shows their belief in its possibility. The stubborn resistance of power-holding groups in the nation to the summons to live righteously should not blind us to the reality of the ethical ideal advocated by these teachers of morality with such passionate insistence and devotion. In examining the nature of this ideal, we shall come closer to the humanity of the Bible, for and by whom it was conceived.

The practice of justice in the sanctuary, the gate, and the market place is humanity's ethical obligation. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah,' as well as later prophets exhort men to do justly in their social and institutional life. Their writings are full of such

exhortations. Even where denunciation takes the place of exhortation, as it often does, the same purpose of exalting the claims of justice and securing its embodiment in the national, urban, and rural community is apparent good (cf. Amos 2:6-7). Religious leaders, be they prophets or priests or teachers, will use their ecclesiastical office in an unselfish desire to advance God's good purposes in the world and will avoid maneuvering for personal ad vantage or gain. And laymen will not use the formulas and formal observances of religion as a substitute for ethical obedience to the moral law. All of this means that humanity, the source and center of this ethical transformation, will be true to that ethical self which is a part of his being. Further evidence of this ethical-social ideal may be found in Deut. 15:1-8; 16:18-20; 20:5-9; 24:17-22; Lev. 19:9-18.

The prophets were not content to be teachers of morals. By the nature of the case they were compelled to expound their ethical insights and ideas as the revealed will of God. These, they firmly believed, had come to them with such power and clarity from God himself that they were compelled to proclaim them, no matter what the cost. So they were prophets primarily and teachers incidentally. Convinced that their message truly corresponded with the will of God, they uttered lofty moral truths with passion and unforgettable vividness. The word of Micah, delivered by him in the latter part of the eighth century, was recalled over a century later, when the defenders of Jeremiah remembered the earlier prophet's ethical condemnation of Israel and the fulfillment of his prophecy by the fall of that country. The forcefulness of the prophets and the depth of their religious conviction made the ethical phases of their message unusually impressive.

3.3 Self Assessment Questions

- Explain how humanity is regarded as an ethical being in the Old Testament

3.4 Humanity as a Free Being

The freedom of humanity in the Hebrew Scriptures is a corollary of his ethical nature. Humanity marries and is given in marriage; they pioneer in new lands and adjust themselves to strange customs and peoples; they buy land, gather wealth, and lose it—all through the exercise of freedom. And in weightier matters human freedom is recognized, whether these have to do with moral conduct or obedience to God.

We are informed that God desired to test Abraham, for example, and instructed him to take his only son, whom he loved much, to the land of Moriah, where he must offer him as a burnt offering to God (Gen. 22). The narrative reveals that upon receipt of these instructions the father promptly complied – "So next morning Abraham rose early." It is the consummate skill of the narrator rather than the insensitivity of Abraham which occasions the omission of any reference to his travail of soul as he faced the alternatives and struggled freely to make a decision. Obedience was avoidable, but nonetheless Abraham chose it. The decision of Joseph's brothers to sell the young dreamer into slavery was accompanied by a delicate balance of personal feelings and individual

desires. One brother wanted to kill him, another counseled moderation; circumstances beyond their control brought a caravan in sight; so they sold him (Gen. 37).

It is obvious that the Hebrews viewed freedom in the common-sense fashion of modern humanity. For all practical purposes humanity was free. Biblical humanity went his own way, acting as though he were free, and raising few questions about the contingencies of nature, heredity, social and cultural environment, and economic necessity, which hemmed him in and limited his action. The greatness of God's power over the life of his people and over nature would seem to shrink humanity's freedom, or even to eliminate it entirely. In holiness and majesty God ruled the life of men; how could they avoid a divine dictatorship determining their every thought and deed? This presentation of the problem would hardly be recognizable by the men of the Bible; they knew the experience of refusing the demands of God and stubbornly seeking their own ends. So they were keenly conscious of their own will, which could be exerted to oppose even the will of God. This empirical fact far outweighed any speculative considerations respecting freedom and determinism. Men knew that they were free because they actually were able to defy or to ignore the demands of God. Whether this defiance proved to be successful in the long run is another matter.

The commission of sin by Israel is a demonstration of the existence of freedom. Rebellion against God is frequent. Forceful injunctions are laid upon the nation to listen to the words of the law, to honor parents, to abstain from murder, adultery, theft, and lust, to remember past sins and past mercies, to love the Lord their God, to observe all his commandments. Before this nation is set a blessing and a curse, hinging upon obedience or disobedience (Deut. 11:26-28), "I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you as well as your descendants may live" (30:19). The very presence of the Law presupposes lawlessness and sin – and moral freedom. Commands to comply with a particular code, such as the Decalogue, call for a redirection of the human will, whose reality and freedom are thus affirmed.

At this point the prophets may again he called in as witnesses. In the dramatic contest between Yahweh and Baal on Mount Carmel, the account of which is clearly a condensation of a long historical struggle between two opposing cultures, the prophet Elijah confronts the spectators with the necessity of making a clean-cut and unequivocal decision. They have straddled the fence long enough. "How long are you going to limp upon two diverse opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him, but if the Baal, follow him." (I Kings 18:21.) He challenges them to make up their minds and proceeds to assist them by presiding over a remarkable demonstration of the power of Yahweh. The oracles of the great literary prophets abound in imperatives summoning the nation to action based on sincerity of purpose and a new devotion to the God of justice. In Isaiah we find, "Hear the word of the Lord; . . . give ear; . . . put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil; . . . seek justice; . . . restrain; . . . uphold; come now;. . . hear now;. . . go now;.. return;..quake with fear; draw near to listen; . . behold!"

In the view of the prophets the men of Israel and Judah had the power to respond to the word of the Lord, even though that word was a radical one eliciting from human beings the most strenuous moral and spiritual effort of which a humanity is capable. That word of God is a deadly attack upon the egotism and passions of men, upon their complacency and self-will. When it is answered, it is answered by an act of faith which permits the substitution of God's will for that of men. This means nothing less than a voluntary, wholehearted committal to the demands of God, and a love for him which absorbs the heart and mind and soul. This love is freely given: man may love other gods and withhold his love from his Creator. That this possibility became an actuality may be seen in the biblical emphasis upon the sin of idolatry.

Our survey has disclosed the presence of **three principal types of freedom** in the Old Testament. There is **practical freedom**, which permits a satisfactory amount of self-expression in making life's routine decisions. This is the freedom which all men share without raising profound philosophical questions as to whether they really have it. Unperturbed by the implications for the problem of freedom of God's power over his life and thought, biblical humanity goes blithely on his way, announcing, "I will; I propose; I intend ;" as though he really were free. The second kind of freedom is **ethical freedom**, in the exercise of which humanity may eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or he may refuse to eat. As a free, moral person he may elect what is good and reject what is evil, or do just the opposite – and suffer the consequences. From his very creation he was made aware of this possibility, and in his continuing social experience this fact was driven home to him by the admonitions of his moral leaders and by the disturbance of his own conscience. Finally there is **religious freedom**. Through its possession humanity may turn to God with his whole heart; and through it he may defy his Maker and remain content with lower loyalties. These are the three freedoms of biblical men as they knew them.

3.4 Self-Assessment Questions

- Explain the three types of freedom connected to human nature

3.5 Humanity A Religious Person

Without doubt the Old Testament's description of humanity as a religious person is its most conspicuous testimony about humanity. This does not mean that humanity in the biblical record is remarkable for his piety. Even a hasty reading of the literature will correct that misapprehension. Israel's spiritual guides encountered an overwhelming weight of indifference and spiritual inertia when they tried to lead the- people in the way of faith. Complacent, content with their own resources, blind to ethical values, given to trust in physical power and military might, they constituted the immovable object against which the irresistible force of prophetic denunciation was hurled with no visible result. The testimony does mean that the attention of the Bible is focused upon humanity chiefly as a religious person, capable of entering into a relationship with God. Humanity's very spiritual blindness or indifference is of interest to biblical writers because these conditions bear upon that relationship. In fact, humanity's total activity, no matter what its nature, is

considered important for this reason. This interest ranges in the Old Testament from the meditations of the mystic to rules governing camp sanitation.

Humanity as a religious being is dependent upon God, from whom he received his life, and through whom he has hope of salvation. God is his creator and preserver, the giver and sustainer of life. The nation, which is collective humanity, was originated by God's selection of Abraham and by the divine guidance of his sons and grandsons. God brought their descendants out of Egypt; he went before them in time of danger as they entered the land of Canaan; he advised and rebuked their leaders throughout the nation's history; and he revealed a new concept of national destiny when political disaster overtook it. Religious humanity is able to feel deeply his dependence upon God. Associated with feelings of trust and gratitude, this feeling of dependence appears most prominently in Israel's book of worship, otherwise called Psalms. In the presence of foes humanity can lift up his head and trust in God (Psa: 3:3).

Afflicted by his enemies the pious humanity turns to God, who is his refuge and strength, his rock and fortress (18:1-2). The Lord answers prayer in the time of trouble when enemies are near (20:1, 7); he is humanity's unfailing friend (23), his mountain-fort (31:2), his deliverer from sickness (31:10-16; 38:5-6, 21), and a well-proved help when need is great (46:1). The heart of this religious humanity is made glad when the divine mercies are counted (Psa: 47:1)

Humanity voices are not adequate to sing God's praises (34:1-2); orchestral music is needed to supplement these. The horn, the lyre and lute, the drum and strings and cymbals are to add their swelling rhythm of sound and harmony to humanity's mighty chorus of praise to God (81 :1-2; 150). Humanity is capable of deep gratitude to his maker and redeemer, the Lord of history and of all life. He has created all things, snow and hoarfrost, wind and rain, the heavens, the earth and all creatures living thereon (104; 136; 146—148). He is the Lord of history, having through its vicissitudes delivered his people in a glorious manner (78; 81; 83; 105—106). Therefore the psalmist cries 'Let all the people say, "Amen." Hallelujah!' (106:48.)

There is no craving so absorbing and as intense as humanity's craving for God. The satisfaction of this longing by the gift of God's loving-kindness produces in the heart an immense gratitude and upon the lips continuous songs of praise and thanksgiving. Humanity's highest good is communion with God, declares the writer of Ps. 73, when the problem of the wicked perplexes him. He has no rational answer to this problem, but upon entering the sanctuary he receives the answer of faith. Humanity is made for God, and he can have no peace until he rests in him.

3.5 Self-Assessment Question

- How is humanity a religious person?

3.6 Humanity as the Image Of God

Humanity's dependence upon God rests upon the fact that he is a creature; his power to worship his Creator and his deep religious craving are rooted in the fact that he was made in the divine image. From God he came, and for God he is destined. Earlier in this unit allusion was made to humanity's creaturely nature, which he shared with other creatures. Created from the dust of the ground, as were they, he shares their fate as a child of nature. He is weak and mortal, like the grass that withers in a day. From standpoint humanity as a creature is different from other creatures in that he is a special creation. To his nature was added an element found in no other created beings – godlikeness.

Five times the priestly writer uses the Hebrew word ***elem*** to signify **"image, likeness**" (Gen. 1:26, 27, 27; 9 :6; 5 :3). The more precise connotation of the word is not so easily determined. If we use the context in which the term occurs in connection with the creation of humanity and consider not only the particular verse but also the surrounding material, tentative results may be secured. After his creation humanity is given instructions to reproduce, to subdue the earth, and to have authority over fish, birds, tame animals, and crawling things upon the earth. As God has supreme authority over his creation, so humanity has this limited power over certain living things. "In the image of God," then, may include this assumption of authority; certainly it is not an authority which any other creatures are said to possess and is therefore unique for humanity. However, it must be admitted that this is not certain, since direct textual evidence is lacking.

In Genesis (9:6) we read, "Whoever sheds the blood of humanity, by humanity shall his blood be shed; for God made humanity in his own image. This sentence is a part of the covenant made with Noah after the flood. Permission is vouchsafed to eat the flesh of animals, even as previously humanity had been allowed to eat green plants. While animals could be slain for food after the flood, in view of this covenant, the blood must first be properly removed. But the lives of human beings must be protected, "for God made humanity in his own image." Thus human life is distinguished from other animal life by the fact of its special relation to God. This gives it a sacredness or inviolability which no other form of life possesses. Perhaps there is special significance in the recurrence of the command which appears in the Creation account also—that humanity is to be fruitful and multiply in the earth—although the word "subdue" is not repeated. Both sacredness and dominance are suggested by the passage here discussed, and both seem to be connected with the phrase "in his own image."

The Yahwist's version of the events of Creation, while not containing the word ***elem*** includes data which might help in defining that term. In this story the serpent engages in a conversation with the woman in the garden and insinuates that God's real motive in prohibiting the eating of fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden is to prevent humanity from being like the gods. "God knows that the very day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods who know good and evil." (Gen. 3:5.) This idea is found also in a later verse in the same chapter, where God says, "See, the humanity has become like one of us, in knowing good from evil" (3:22). The next statement in this chapter suggests that eating of the other forbidden tree will be rewarded with the gift of

everlasting life. Possibly this gift also was considered to be an exclusive possession of the gods. If humanity became immortal, he would become like one of the gods. If the serpent was right, not so much in the immediate context of the story, but in the general setting of the book of Genesis, then humanity's power to know good from evil was imparted in his creation—departing here from the serpent story—and should he incorporated in our definition of the phrase "image of God."

In creating humanity in his own image, God, who is righteous, made humanity with the potentiality for righteousness. ***Imago dei*** has the further meaning of spirituality, as may be recalled from our earlier exposition of spirit in humanity. This spirit is the gift of God and is definitely a divine characteristic which would normally be shared by anyone made in his likeness. ***Ruach*** in humanity is his God-given capacity for communion with God and for living religiously. No biblical doctrine is clearer than this. From God, who as creative mind conceives his righteous purposes, humanity obtained his rational powers whereby lie can do the divine will, carry out ethical demands for social justice, and organize his life around an ennobling faith.

Let us conclude, as a result of this investigation, that "***image of God***" means partaking of the divine nature with respect to power to rule over other living things, ethical discernment in distinguishing good from evil, and a special sacredness of personality unknown in animals. These characteristics and those whose description has been outlined in detail in this unit constitute the biblical doctrine of humanity as far as the Old Testament is concerned.

3.6 Self-Assessment Question

- In what sense is humanity created I the image of God?

4.0 Conclusion

So far, in this unit we have discussed the concept of humanity in the Old Testament. As a creature of God, humanity shares the weakness and limitations of all creatures; as a thinking being, humanity is distinguished from other creatures psychologically; the ethical nature of humanity makes him distinguish between right and wrong; as a free being, humanity is programmed to make choices, and not a robot; humanity as a religious person brings out the consciousness of worship or reverence for the Deity; and humanity made in the image of God is a demonstration of the uniqueness of the human person from every other creature of God.

5.0 Summary

This unit examined Humanity as a creature; Humanity as a thinking being; Humanity as an ethical being; Humanity as a free being; Humanity as a religious person; and Humanity as the image of God.

Next unit will study the concept of Covenants in the Old Testament.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Identify and summarize the six main features of the nature of humanity in the Old Testament.

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 1: CREATOR AND CREATION

Unit 5: Covenants

Contents

1.0 Introduction

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for covenant is always *b'rith.* In the New Testament, it is always *diatheke*. A covenant is a pact or agreement between two or more parties. God has initiated many agreements, or covenants, with different people throughout biblical history, i.e., Adam, Noah, and Abraham, and more. Covenant is an important part of biblical history and, therefore, theology. In this unit we shall discuss the concept of covenants in the Old Testament under the following sub-headings: Defining Covenants in Old Testament; Covenant with Adam; Covenant with Noah; Covenant with Abraham; Sinai (Mosaic) Covenant; Davidic Covenant; Prophets; and the New Covenant.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit should be able to:

- Know the meaning of covenant in the Old Testament
- Discover the different features of God's covenant with Adam, Noah, Abraham, David and others
- Appreciate the privileges and responsibilities of God's covenant
- Understand the reason for the new covenant with God's people.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Defining Covenant in Old Testament

Every religion has to do with some form of union, fellowship, friendship or relationship with the Deity. "This is not peculiar to the Hebrew religion. What is peculiar to the Hebrew religion is that this union, fellowship and partnership with the Deity is based on a legal arrangement called a *covenant*. This means that God's union; fellowship and partnership with man are based on a legal contract. Further, God will have no relationship with His people outside of this legal contract. The term 'covenant' is found 286 times in the Old Testament and 33 times in the New Testament. Even when it is not explicitly used the covenant forms part of the background of each passage or book. Because it occurs so often, and in such a variety of passages, it is difficult to form a precise definition, or even description, of the essence of the covenant. However, the covenant concept provides for a very unique and distinctive kind of fellowship with God.

It is a Lawful Fellowship. The concept of fellowship with God based on a legal covenant meant that there was a stable and dependable element in the religion of the Old Testament. The covenant provided for a firmly regulated form of fellowship between God and man or man and God. The legal concept is introduced to show that there is an established pattern in the dealings between God and man. There is no firmer guarantee of legal security, peace or personal loyalty than the covenant. . . . It means legitimate order as opposed to caprice, uncertainty and animosity.

It Is a Faith-Inspiring Fellowship. The concept of a covenant fellowship with God gave the men of the Old Testament a mighty anchor to their faith. We may even say that it put them on vantage ground with God. God was obligated to them by the covenant (such is the love and condescension of God). He was their God. They were His people. He was bound to be loyal and merciful to His people. This is why we see examples of remarkable boldness to claim God's blessings. It was the covenant background which enabled Jacob to say to the Angel, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Outside of the covenant relationship this demand would have been presumption. We must not, of course, get the idea that the covenant operated automatically or that Israel could rest on God's pledge while she herself flouted her own covenant obligations. Yet if she sincerely turned from her sins, she could always claim God's favor (1 kings 8:31-53; Ps. 106:43-47). This

reminds us of St. Paul's words: "... if we are faithless, He remains faithful — for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13, RSV).

It Is an Exclusive Fellowship. The covenant concept taught the Hebrews that fellowship with God was an exclusive fellowship. They alone were His chosen people. Yahweh alone must be their God. When we say that the covenant relationship with the Deity was peculiar to the Hebrews, this is not to deny that other nations may have thought of themselves as having some form of covenant with the gods. It seems, however, that "the covenantal idea was a special feature of the religion of Israel, the only one to demand exclusive loyalty and to preclude the possibility of dual or multiple loyalties such as were permitted in other religions, where the believer was bound in diverse relationships to many gods. The stipulation in political treaties demanding fealty to one king corresponds strikingly with the religious belief in one single, exclusive deity." This idea of exclusive loyalty in the relationship between God and His people is well illustrated by the marriage relationship. "The prophets, especially Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, seize on this thought and use it again and again to charge Israel with adultery. Furthermore, the formula expressing the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 29:12, [13]; etc.) is a legal formula taken from the sphere of marriage, as attested in various legal documents from the ancient Near East (cf. Hosea 2:4, [2]). The relationship of the vassal to his suzerain, and that of the wife to her husband, leaves no place for double loyalty in a monotheistic religion." This helps also to explain why prophets like Isaiah frowned upon any alliance which Israel might make with surrounding nations. Such alliances were forbidden by Israel's covenant with Yahweh.

3.1 Self-Assessment Question

- The term "covenant" is best understood within the context of fellowship or relationship. Discuss.

3.2 The Covenant with Adam

The covenant with Adam is an example of the covenant with the deity. Two kinds of covenants with Adam can be seen: the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace.

The Covenant of works: The agreement between God and Adam, whereby eternal life is conditioned upon obedience. Life in the Garden of Eden was a period of probation or testing and Garden of Eden was part of this world before the fall, Adam was sinless, had free will and could have obeyed God perfectly. God created Adam and Eve in His own image and likeness and made a Covenant with them (Genesis 1:27-31). It simply was that God spoke to Adam saying, "you may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2: 16-17). This original covenant of God with man may be called the *covenant of life.* Everlasting life based upon obedience to God. The promise annexed to that covenant was life. The condition was perfect obedience. Its penalty was death.

God purposed that human beings establish a foundation for love through the family. The world without love is hell; even God's existence loses its meaning. Understand the absolute law of creation: love is human beings' God-given purpose. According to Genesis 3, the immediate consequence of Adam's disobedience was accompanied by: a) **Physiological results** - death, decay, suffering, sickness - all of this traces back to theoriginal act of disobedience (*Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:12; 8:19-22*); b) **Psychological results** - shame, guilt, and fear (*Gen. 3:7*); c) **Sociological results** - blame shifting and alienation (*Gen. 3:8, 12-13*). Sin separates people. (Consider the pattern in the O.T., e.g. Cain and Abel, Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, etc.); d) **Ecological results** - The ground is cursed - thorns, and thistles (*Gen. 3:17-19*); e) **Spiritual results** - enmity between the seed of woman and seed of Satan. Alienation from God - hiding, no desire for God's companionship - these trace back to original sin (*Gen. 3:8, 15, 4:1-15; I John 3:12*). a- Alienation from God: Our sin blots out God's face from us as effectively as the clouds do the sun. b- Bondage to self: sin brings us into captivity.

The Covenant of Grace (Gen. 3:9, 15, 21-24): After the fall, Adam entered into "Covenant of Grace" by which salvation is a free gift of God, by grace through faith, not based on works or merit. Thus salvation is by works, before the fall; and by grace, after the fall. God's grace and redemption was clear right in the beginning of the fall: This may be defined as that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience. This table is taken from William Payne: "Nowhere does the Bible mention explicitly the covenants of Work, Grace and Redemption. There are no such passages or texts or chapter and verse that uses the word covenant. It does not appear at all in Gen. 1-3, not even once. This theology is, at best, a hypothesis or an inference.

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- How will you describe God's covenant with Adam?

3.3 The Covenant with Noah

Noah's son's offspring's went to build a city so they would not be scattered, to build a tower to touch heaven, and to make a name for themselves. God however confound their language that they would not understand others resulting in dispersing them over the earth What has been implicit in creation is now found explicitly in the first mention of "covenant" in the Bible. Noah alone was found righteous (in right relationship with God) among all creation. By the time of Noah, violence had become a way of life. God decides to destroy the world with a flood, but to save Noah and make a covenant with him. The flood represented God's punishment on the world, but also His grace. Noah and his family were spared to make a new beginning. After the Flood, the blessing was renewed. God spoke to Noah and his sons: " Behold I establish my covenant with you, and your descendants after you, and with every living creature….. that never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:9-11).

Two covenants were contracted between God and Noah: (1) Genesis 6:18; I will establish my covenant with you…Covenant God's salvation, protection, covenant because Noah's faith. I will save you. (2) Genesis 9:8-17; The covenants tied with the blood sacrifices. Noah's sacrifice was pleasing to God. Covenant applies to the relationship between God an individual as well as descendants and it is established by the blood. Animals for food; Sanctity of life; God will not destroy the earth by water again; & The bow in the sky is a token of this covenant. This covenant is universal "in the widest sense imaginable", encompassing all creation, for all time - making the near ubiquitous rainbow a most appropriate sign. "The covenant is unconditional; a necessity given the flood changes nothing of man's sinful nature." Gen. 8:22 and Gen. 6:5 are significant - in the first instance the evil of humanity is the justification for the flood, in the second case the same justifies never again bringing a flood. Why then a flood at all? It is because of God's desire to make explicit the purposes of the creator previously implicit in creation.

The first instance of covenant in Scripture is the covenant of God with Noah after the Flood. "It, perhaps more than any other in Scripture, assists us in discovering what the essence of covenant is. . . ." There are five features in this covenant: (1) "it is conceived, devised, determined, established, confirmed, and dispensed by God Himself;" (2) it is universal, with all flesh; (3) it is unconditional; (4) it is "intensely and pervasively monergistic;" and 5) it is everlasting. Murray concludes that "Here we have covenant in the purity of its conception, as a dispensation of grace to men, wholly divine in its origin, fulfillment, and confirmation". Yet even in this case, "where obedience to commandments is the means through which the grace of the covenant is to be realized and enjoyed, we must also take note of the fact that in other respects this covenant exhibits the features of divine initiation, determination, establishment, and confirmation which are so conspicuous in the post-diluvian Noahic covenant. The idea of compact or agreement is just as conspicuously absent as in the post-diluvian."

We may think of Noah as co-operating with God in carrying out the provisions of the covenant but the co-operation is quite foreign to that of pact or convention. It is the cooperation of response which the grace of the covenant constrains and demands. God and man do not sit down and each propose and counter-propose the various clauses of the compact or contract. The covenant relation is brought into existence by God and God alone. "Like the Adamic covenant, the Noahic covenant shows forth God's goodness and proclaims a blessing, which implies positively that physical life will continue through the ages. In that sense the covenant with Noah and all the earth is, like the covenant with Adam, a covenant of life."

3.3 Self-Assessment Question

- Why is covenant of God with Noah regarded as the first instance of covenant in Scripture?

3.4 The Covenant with Abraham

The significance of the Abrahamic Covenant is the promise in Gen. 12:3. The scriptures, foreseeing that God will justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel before hand to Abraham saying, 'In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.' "The covenant is the foundation of Israelite theology and identity, and its history is therefore of understandable significance." To develop his redemptive purpose further, God calls Abram with a promise of land and descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). This promise becomes a covenant when God formalizes the relationship with through a theophany in which the promises are restated and made binding by an oath (Gen. 15 cf. Jer. 34:18-19; Heb 6:13-18). "Against the background of complete faith that Abram showed every time God promised him something, God made His covenant with Abraham saying,," to your seed I give this land…." Previously we noted God's preface to the covenant: "walk before me and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you…." Hence, walking with God and living blamelessly is a demonstration of faith and is essential for the covenant God was about to make with Abraham.

Promises of Abraham's Covenant (Genesis 15, 17): Abraham would be called "father of a multitude" of many nationalities. Kings would come from him. The covenant is everlasting and for all future generations. Canaan, a foreign land, would be an everlasting possession. God will be their God. Circumcision is an everlasting sign of the covenant and applies to any nationality. All the families of the earth would be blessed because of Abraham's faithfulness. His seed would be as the stars of heaven...as the children of the Messiah, as the personification of God's chosen ones. Abraham's heirs would seize, dispossess, take possession of, inherit, disinherit, occupy, impoverish, be an heir, come to poverty, to devour, to destroy, to ruin the lands of our enemies. "The promise is eternal. It does not depend on human obedience, but on the sovereign intent of God. The disobedience of individuals cannot frustrate the purpose of God to bring salvation to the Gentiles."

Ratification: "God's promises are ratified in a covenant/treaty Abraham cuts the animals in half. God appears as a torch of fire. God walks between the divided animals. This covenant is un-lateral: God is responsible to keep His word. This covenant is most important. God takes an oath and swears by His life. This is the covenant which is mentioned in Exod. 6:2-4, the content of the promise to Abraham a Land, a Seed and a blessing to gentiles.

The Land: the boundaries (15;8) from Euphrates to the river of Egypt. The river of Egypt is not the Nile, it is el' Arish (eastern boarder of Sinai); after ca. 400 years; 430 years according to Exodus and after return from slavery.

The seed: A physical son, not Eliezer, a son by adoption; not a physical descendant from Hagar but a son through Sarah; Numerous descendants as the stars in heaven and as the sand on the shore. Abram's name is change to Abraham (Father of multitudes). Royalty: Kings of peoples will come from Sarah. Sarai's name is changed to Sarah (Princess). Go

will develop special relationship with them: I will be their …(Gen.17:8). This covenant will be forever."

The Blessing to the Gentiles: "This covenant, like that with Noah, has the broader purpose of blessing all humanity and is fundamentally universal in scope. It is appropriate that there is a response from Abraham." Yet this is a response within a religious relationship; without which there can be no fellowship and hence no blessing. It is clear that God's conditional relationship with individuals must be distinguished from God's determination to work out his purposes in the theatre of redemptive history, a determination not conditional upon human response to divine initiative; So too with circumcision (Gen. 17:10-14).

Without question the blessings of the covenant and the relation which the covenant entails cannot be enjoyed or maintained apart from the fulfillment of certain conditions on the part of the beneficiaries. "We must bear in mind that ultimately what God intends in His covenant with Abraham is not material blessing but spiritual, not the land of Canaan but a spiritual realm. To inhabit this land calls for a circumcision, not of the flesh, but of the heart. Moses later said to the Israelites in the wilderness: 'circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn' (Deut. 10:16). Much later the prophet Jeremiah spoke similarly: 'circumcise yourselves to the lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem'. (Jer.4:4)"

The Obligation: "The obligation of the covenant consisted of one thing: *circumcision. (Gen. 17:9-11).* God did require this one thing to keep the covenant. If there was failure in this regard, such a person had to be "cut off from his people" he had broken god's covenant. God would not renege on His covenant, but man by disobedience could break it and forfeit his place in the land." When we think of the promise which is the central element of the covenant, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people', there is necessarily involved, as we have seen, mutuality in the highest sense. Fellowship is always mutual and when mutuality ceases fellowship ceases. Hence the reciprocal response of faith and obedience arises from the nature of the relationship which the covenant contemplates. (cf. Gen xviii. 17-19, xxii. 16-18) (Murray 1954, 18). Our obedience is the condition upon which the fulfillment of the promise given to us is contingent. Our failure, in the face of clear commands to obey the Lord's voice, to keep the conditions of the covenant, is culpable, eternally so. Breaking the covenant earns us the wrath of the covenant.

The Fulfillment: Concerning both a multiplicity of descendants and the land of Canaan. Moses addressed Israel after forty years of wilderness wanderings; *"Go in and take possession of the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob…the Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude" Deut. 1:8-9.* Later, after the land was occupied and Solomon was king, *"Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates…to the border of*

Egypt" 1kings 4:20-21. Thus were fulfilled both promises given to Abraham when God made a covenant with him. The gift affirmed, (Exod. 6:8) and the conquest under Joshua's leadership. The covenant of God with Abraham extends far beyond Canaan: indeed, according to the New Testament, The promise to Abraham and his seed is that they should inherit the world. Abraham was looking for more than earthly place; rather, he was looking for a city which has foundations; whose builder and maker is God. Eternal foundation; he was seeking an enduring home land…a better country…a heavenly one.

Thus the world that Abraham and his seed were to inherit was the not the primarily a physical realm but a spiritual one. Was to happen through "Christ", the seed of the women, the seed of Abraham (Gal.3:16); heirs according to promise. It is those in Christ to whom the promise belongs. No longer are the heirs those who descend from Abraham according to the flesh, not even from the selected line within Abraham's seed. No longer is it physical Israel that inherit the promise, but it is those from any race and tribe, tongue, nation and people who have faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 2; 28-29).

3.4 Self-Assessment Question

- What were the distinctive features of the God's promises in Abrahamic covenant?

3.5 Sinai (Mosaic) Covenant

The covenant was renewed by Moses forty years later upon Israel's preparation to enter the Promised Land: *"The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb (Sinai). Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day' (Deut. 5:2-3)* The LORD our God made (*karath* - "cut") a covenant with us in Horeb (Deuteronomy 5:3). The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers (Deuteronomy 5:4). This didn't exist prior to Horeb although other types of covenants did. He declared to us His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. (Deuteronomy 4:13). Moses was to teach this covenant. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess. (Deuteronomy 4:14). Moses (leads Jewish slaves to Israel) is given God's commandments to govern relationships between man and God. Man is to keep God's laws as a test, but trust in God. Mosaic Covenant, 10 Commandments; all other commandments; land with signs and tokens of continuing with circumcisions and Sabbaths.

Obligation: The Mosaic covenant is communal and universal. "The commandments are addressed to the individual and require individual compliance, but there is a communal aspect also; the community which is answerable to God for the actions of its members and is to ensure personal and communal compliance to God's laws." Furthermore, Israel are not called simply to obtain the blessing, but to be a "kingdom of priests" through whom God's blessing can be poured out on all humanity. The promises of God, pledged on His

part, were to be realized through Israel's obedience. Unless Israel was obedient to God's commandments, there would be no possibility of receiving what God has promised.

In Exodus 19:4-6b, God spoke to Moses from the mountain:

> *Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you and eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for the earth is mine, and you shall be my to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:3-6).*

"What is further remarkable, is that when Israel does, in fact, break the covenant (see Exodus 32), God's response is to forsake his right as suzerain lord to consider the covenant annulled and instead chooses to forgive his rebellious vassal! Admittedly, Israel does pay a terrible price for rebellion (Exodus 32:28b,34-35) but God's determination to keep the covenant indicates that whatever formal marks of conditionality the covenant contains, the tremendous grace of God gives a measure of conditionality. No wonder the Israelites, who failed time and again to keep the covenant relationship, came to know God as "the one who keeps covenant." It may help us to grasp the significance of this point if we observe that the covenant between God and His people is often likened to a marriage contract (see Ezek. 16:8, 60; Hosea 2:16; Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:14; 31:32). In some respects Israel's solemn promise before Mount Sinai ("All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," Ex. 19:8) sounds like a bride making her wedding vow. The marriage contract, of course, is only one illustration and by no means exhausts the meaning of God's covenant with His people. But since this concept of a marriage contract is still with us moderns, it does help us to understand the biblical thought that our union with God is first of all a legal union. Just as the most sacred human relationship is based on a legal covenant, so God's union with man must be based on a legal covenant. God, being holy love, will have nothing to do with spiritual fornication.

Ratification: The ratification of the covenant is by blood. By sprinkling blood on the altar and the people, there was the expression of a deep covenantal relationship between God and the people of Israel. Thus there was a solemn establishment and ratification of the covenant. Thereby the covenant of God with His people was confirmed. God Himself was deeply involved; the sprinkled blood on altar and also on the people. Subsequently God established the sacrificial system with Israel (Book of Leviticus), a system that culminated in the Day of Atonement, whose purpose is purification and forgiveness. We observe that the sprinkling of blood followed upon the commitment of the people to do all the words the Lord has spoken.

Promises: The promises of God in the covenant are essentially twofold. "First, Israel was to be God's 'own possession among all peoples.' Israel was to be a special possession unto God, His own people. Second, Israel was to be to God a 'kingdom of priests and a

holy nation.' Israel was to have a special place before God, namely to offer sacrifices to Him, to stand in a unique relationship to God, to be set apart as a holy people." The promise of the offspring is found in Exodus 19:5-6, *"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and holy nation". "*This promise that Israel would become a national entity, sustaining a unique relationship to God, is not without historical antecedent. It has been observed that the Abrahamic promise envisioned a people who would become a great nation and who would have the Lord as their God." The promise of divine blessing for Gentiles may be found in Deuteronomy 28:9-10, where Israel's obedience will cause the nations to see that she is "called by the name of the Lord", and the nations will fear Israel. The Book of Deuteronomy teaches that if Israel is disobedient she will become subject to these nations (28:49,65). These verses deal with Israel's destiny among the nations as determined by her relationship to God.

The fulfillment: The call of Moses lays the scene for the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham (Ex. 3). To him, God reveals a new name - "Yahweh." (Ex. 3:14). "This name is found earlier in the Pentateuch (e.g. Gen. 6:1-8) thus demonstrating the writer's understanding of continuity with the patriarchal religion." In Deuteronomy 5:1-4, The Lord made a covenant with Moses. In this text Moses reminds the people of the Law that had been given to the Israelites in Horeb ("desert" synonym for Mt. Sinai), and the covenant relationship with Him that it spelled out. Conditional fulfillment is not peculiar to the Mosaic only. The reason for the liberation of the Israelites is to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. In both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants union and communion with the Lord is at the center of the relation (Exod 6:7 and Deut 29:13). Also, the Mosaic covenant "was made with Israel as the sequel to their deliverance from Egypt. That is, because of the Abrahamic covenant of which they are already a part the Mosaic covenant is brought to realization. It is a further working out of God's covenantal ways. It is making more patent, in a broader sociological setting, the features latent in the Abrahamic covenant. "From God's side the covenant he made with Israel would never be broken. God is faithful to His covenant, even if Israel should prove faithless and disobedient and be punished by going into captivity again (Lev. 26:44-45). 1- Regardless of Israel's failure, even to breaking God's covenant, they could not annul the covenant, for it was God's covenant, not Israel's. Israel might, and did, violate the conditions, but the covenant remains firm. 2- Since god's covenant remains firm and the problem rests basically in the heart, God will provide a way for the changing the heart. Much else will be needed, including a remission of sins that animal sacrifices cannot mediate and a deeper knowledge of God, but God as the Lord will surely bring it out. 3- Since Israel as a nation finally provided intractably disobedient, God did not hesitate to move beyond national Israel to claim a people out of all races and nations."

3.5 Self-Assessment Questions

- Compare and contrast, Mosaic covenant with Abrahamic Covenant.

3.6 The Davidic Covenant

Israel is initially administrated by Judges and later by Kings (its first king was Saul). Israel and Judah are both guided by God's commandments to Moses and Abraham's faith covenant; with a moveable tabernacle including the Ark of the Covenant for the place to worship God.

The Promise: God anoints David king over Israel with a promise for a kingdom that would last forever through his seed that of Jesus who will reign forever. Solomon, David's first offspring, built the temple in Jerusalem for Israel to worship God with sacrifices. God spoke to David through Nathan the Prophet: *"When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you…and I will established the throne of his kingdom forever….And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever" 2Sam. 7:12,13.* This covenant was made soon after David had become king over all Israel. Throughout the years of his kingship David had this covenant assurance from God, for among David's last words spoken were these: *"he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure" 2Sam. 23:5*

The covenant with David (2 Sam 7; 1 Chr 17, Ps 89) is preceded by two significant events, the capture of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5) and the return of the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6), which prepare for the building of the temple and the kingship of Israel. Both were interrelated, for the king of a nation was considered the divine representative, and the temple was considered the earthly abode of the deity. Thus, both kingship and temple would speak to Israel of God's presence in their midst. It is not coincidental, therefore, that when David raises the issue of a "house" for God (2 Sam. 7:2), that God refuses David's offer and retorts by promising to build David a house (2 Sam. 11f.) - the divine response demonstrates that God needs no assistance from humanity, but rather is always graceful in his dealings and ready to bless. In this case, the blessing takes the form of a covenant with David, in which perpetual rule by his descendants is assured (2 Samuel 7:16).

The Ratification and Obligation: "The ratification is by God Himself, it could not be any higher or more certain, since it is God who swears by Himself. (Psalm 89:34-35) and (Psalm 132:11)." This covenant is unconditional (2 Sam. 7:13b; 23:5; Psalm 89:4-5; 29-30; 33-37) as David makes no oath which could be construed as making the covenant bilateral. Yet there is an element of conditionality also (Ps. 89:29-32; 32-40, 50; 132:12; 1 Ki. 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5). If any one of David's descendants fails to properly serve Yahweh, then that particular king's rule would not be guaranteed. Ultimately, events would demonstrate that God was indeed prepared to withdraw his blessing form Israel, if Israel withdrew their loyalty from Him.

"Yet despite the virtual failure in physical terms of the Davidic line in 586 BC, the un-conditionality of the covenant is demonstrated in the spiritual continuity through Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ. Yet God's intention is not to bless one individual only. The

promise of perpetual reign requires a perpetual kingdom and so the promise entails that Israel will enjoy political stability as long as God is honored. David is thus seen as the agent through whom the Exodus deliverance ("rest" in the land of promise) will be achieved."

Furthermore, when understood in its full Messianic and eschatological significance the David covenant is universal and is intended ultimately to bring God's blessing to all humanity. In the Davidic covenant several previous themes are brought together demonstrating that this is a renewal and fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs. For instance, a parallel is drawn between David and Moses by the use of "my servant". "David is a second Moses; Solomon is a second Joshua; Moses and David started their tasks but Joshua and Solomon finished them. Moses brought Israel out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and led them in the wilderness, but it was Joshua who led them into Canaan. David captured Jerusalem, brought the ark, conquered and empire and financed the project, but it was Solomon who built the Temple. Bringing the ark to Mt. Zion is considered David's most important accomplishment. The people traveled from Egypt to Canaan, conquered the land and then settled in their homes. God also left Egypt and entered the Promised Land with them. Unlike them, He and Qiryat Ye'arim. Only when David brought the Ark to Mt. Zion could God finally finish the journey and settle in His permanent residence." The covenant has its main purpose in the promise of the Messiah. Even though David recognizes, at the end of his life, that his sons are not living according to the commands of the covenant, yet the Lord "hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he makes it not to grow" (2 Sam 23:5).

The Fulfillment: The Land: The empire which David conquered corresponds to the land which God promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18=1kings 4:21=2Chr.9:26). By capturing Jerusalem and bringing the Ark to Mt. Zion, David fulfills God's promise concerning a central sanctuary, a resting place. (Deut. 12:10-14). The empire makes it possible to finance building the temple. The empire enables Solomon to be a man of peace, eligible to build the temple. The family: The population is numerous (Ex. 1:7,12; 1Kings 4:20) the name Abraham. The dynasty fulfills the promise of royalty (cf. the name Sarah). The special relationship is that of Father-son (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13). Blessing to the Gentiles: God brings blessings into Gentiles in several ways. Everyone came to hear Solomon's wisdom= God's word (1Kings 10:23-24). Bringing gifts to Solomon anticipates the gentiles bringing gifts to Jesus. The queen of Sheba praises the Lord (1Kings10:9). The temple is a house of prayer for all nations (1Kings8:41; Isa.56:7). In 2Sam. 7:19, the words torah "Adam may be a messianic promise, referring to the Son of David in the distant future who will be God's standard for judging the world. This son turns out to be Jesus.

There are, too, obvious allusions to the Abrahamic covenant; the concept of a Davidic Kingdom whose boundaries match those of the land promised to Israel (2 Sam. 7:9b-11a cf. Gen. 15:18; Deuteronomy 11:24ff), the promise of a great name (2 Sam. 7:9 cf. Gen.

12:2), and the reference to "seed" (2 Sam. 7:12 cf. Gen. 15:3-4). And not an allusion only, there is also a fulfillment as the descendants of Abraham are gathered into the land of promise under the rule of David and his heirs. "According to Samuel, David fulfilled God's promises to Abraham. According to Chronicles, when David brought the ark to Jerusalem, God finished His journey from Egypt to Mt. Zion. Now God can rest from His travels and settle in His own place, Jerusalem." God's covenant with David repeats and is based on God's promises to Abraham. 2Sam.7 Great name Gen. 12:2 2Sam. 7:9 Land/place to dwell Gen. 15:18 2Sam. 7:10; Abraham's seed Gen. 17:7-10,19 2Sam.7:12; Father-son relationship Exod. 4:22 2Sam. 7:14; Covenant relationship Exod. 6:7 2Sam.7:23-24; Adonai Yahweh Gen. 15:2,8 2Sam.7:18-19.

3.6 Self-Assessment Question

- What promises and obligations were associated with Davidic covenant?

3.7 The Prophets

The kings became corrupt; Judah & Israel worshipped false gods in false places of worship. Israel & Judah are both guided by God's commandments to Moses & Abraham's faith covenant. But because of their sins God through His prophets judged the people. The covenant theme is taken up and expounded elsewhere in Scripture. In Judges 2 and 2Kings 17 disobedience by covenant people leads to national calamity (the operation of the covenant curse). For this, repentance and faith only is the cure and will lead to God's forgiveness and restoration to covenant relationship. Such a theology of history lay behind the books of Kings and Chronicles, but it is clearly evident also in the preaching of the prophets. The pre-exilic prophets (Jeremiah and Isaiah) foresaw judgment and exile but also looked ahead to the day of restoration. Ezekiel, the prophet of the exile, saw the eternal character of God's covenant, and that this would lead to restoration and renewal of Israel's former glory.

The post-exilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi), in the context of a people whose hopes had been frustrated when the newly restored Israel did not meet expectations, preached that full covenant fellowship and its attendant blessings were delayed because of sin (Hag. 2; Zech. 2). However, through it all was the underlying assurance that God's covenant is eternal, that God is a God of promise, and that people would yet witness the breaking in of the age of that everlasting covenant of peace. Thus, the failure of Israel to live loyally as the covenant people led to the development of eschatological hopes and ultimately to an understanding that God's purpose in covenant was far greater than simply the provision of the law to Israel.

3.7 Self-Assessment Question

- Prophetic covenant was anchored on repentance and faith. Discuss.

3.8 The New Covenant

"The use of the word "new" does not indicate a totally separate covenant distinct from the previous ones, but it is an extension of them with new features and dimensions added. The new covenant in 600 B.C. occurred in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This proclamation of the new covenant is generally considered to be the foremost of the prophet's contributions to theology": Law written on the heart. The covenant formula, "I will be their God…" (repeated). Everyone will know God from the least to the latest by the Holy Spirit (1John 2:18-29). Forgive sin not based on ark. Worship system will change, Jesus is the high priest. New system is the work of Christ no animal sacrifices. God takes the initiative to declare that the Sinai covenant was flawed from inception (Heb. 8:7) because its legal framework could never engender the heart response which had been presupposed in its very institution. Thus, a fundamentally different covenant is proposed, to be written, not on tablets of stone, but upon the human heart (Jer. 31:31-34). Although this covenant was made necessary by the failure of the Mosaic covenant, paradoxically it will also act as its fulfillment by bringing people into right relationship with God. This covenant will initiate a new community - the people of God - it will rest upon divine forgiveness and have an eschatological focus.

The one **obligation** for the fulfillment of the new covenant is faith in Jesus Christ. This does not mean that by faith we achieve what God has promised, rather we receive the blessings He has in store.

The **promises** and their **fulfillments**: The promise of the law within the heart: (Jer. 31:33).The compulsion to do God's command will no longer be from without but from within, it will stem from a willing heart. On a deeper level, what is really called for is a new mind, a new heart, a new spirit: and such is the promise. This promise is fulfilled through the Spirit of God, it is no longer a law that leads only to sin and death, but to eternal life in the Spirit. The promise of a unique relationship between God and a people: I will be their God and they shall be my people. (Jer. 31; 33). This relationship is no longer to the Israelite nation or race only, but to those- whoever they may be- who are called by God. The fulfillment is to be found in the New Testament. Paul sees it as the Gentiles coming to salvation.

In 1 Peter 2:9-10, once you were no people but now you are God's people. It matters not whether they are Jew or Gentile, what counts is that through faith in Jesus Christ there is a new birth, a new relationship. The promise of the knowledge of the Lord: (Jer.31; 34). There is ……no knowledge of God in the land….. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. (Hos.4:1, 6). The people of God will be people of knowledge, that of an immediate certainty. In such a direct and personal knowledge of God, all of life will find its profoundest meaning and fulfillment. This promise is beautifully fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ who in His own person makes God known. The promise of forgiveness of sins: (Jer. 31:34). Jeremiah does not state how this will be done. Under the old covenant, God established a pattern of animal sacrifices as a channel for the cleansing and forgiveness of sin. However, the very repetition of these sacrifices plus the fact that

animals were the offering for sin signified that there was no full cleansing and abolition of sin.

The fulfillment of this great promise is vividly declared in the new covenant in Jesus' own words: "this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins". Sins are fully forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

3.8 Self-Assessment Question

- Show how the New Covenant prophesied in the Old Testament got fulfilled in the New Testament.

4.0 Conclusion

The different covenants in the Old Testament surveyed in this unit point to the fact that God the creator values fellowship and relationship with God's people, and their relationships with one another. All the covenants contained rich promises for humanity, and responsibilities which were most of the time not kept. A new covenant was promised in Jeremiah, which would address most of the lapses in the other covenants. This new covenant got its fulfillment in the New Testament in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, the desired fellowship and relationship between God and humanity, and humanity with one another are fulfilled.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we surveyed the theological concept of covenants found in the Old Testament. They include: Adamic Covenant, Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant, Mosaic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, Prophetic and New Covenants. These covenants were based on fact that God values fellowship and relationship with humanity, and humanity with one another.

Next unit, which is the beginning of a new Module (Module 2: Endowments, Abuse and Recovery) will discuss the Gift of Land as an endowment from God.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Outline the main features of Abrahamic Covenant, and compare it with Mosaic Covenant. How do they compare and contrast with the New Covenant?

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 2: ENDOWMENTS, ABUSE AND RECOVERY

Unit 1: Land as a Gift

Unit 2: Sin and Evil

Unit 3: Worship

Unit 4: Priesthood

Unit 5: Sacrifice

Unit 1: The Gift of Land

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This unit is the beginning of Module 2 in our study of Old Testament theology. The theme of the module is Endowments, Abuse and Recovery. This module is a follow up of Module 1 which concentrated on the Creator and his creations. Module 2 shows how the creator endowed his creatures in the creation (viz: Gift of Land), how the creatures abused the endowments (viz: Sin and Evil), and how the creators provided for their redemption (viz: Holy Place/Worship, Priesthood/Sacrifice, and Redemption/Mission). So this unit

begins with the Gift of Land as an endowment from the creator discussed under the following sub-headings: The Land as a Promise, The Land as a Gift, The Regulations about the Land, The Loss of Land, The Prophets and Promise of a Return, and Hermeneutical Considerations.

2.0 Objective

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand why much importance is placed on the Promised Land, Israel
- Differentiate between the promise of land and the gift of land
- understand the regulations about the land in the Old Testament
- Discover why the Promised Land was lost, and why it was recovered
- Appreciate the value of land as an endowment from God in our African context.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 The Land as a Promise

In Genesis 17:7-8 we read God's promise to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God." So the promise of the land was a vital part of the covenant with Abraham. The gift of the land cannot be treated as an incidental part of the Old Testament covenant: it is part of very substance. According to Walter Brueggemann (1977: 3), "Land is a central, if not the central theme of Christian faith". Yet despite the importance of this theme, much attention has not been given to it by scholars. In particular, the land is presented to Israel's faith as a place of almost unimaginable blessing.

The Old Testament is largely a story of the people's relationship to the land. At the core is "the Promised Land," and the action of the story largely concerns a moving towards or away from this land, a land that could be called "home". The people are either wandering aliens longing for this land, or possessors of the land scheming to maintain possession either by power or purity, or exiles from the land looking once again to return. Therefore a Biblical theology which ignores this existential category not only makes the scriptures more abstract, but has less to say to a nation that is rootless and lost in anomie. If land is a central category of the Biblical story, then different relationships to the land must result in (or perhaps *from*) a different conception of faith (Médaille 2001:4).

The priority of the divine Word and divine oath as the basis for any discussion of the land is of first importance. From the inception of God's call to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees,

God had marked out a specific geographical destination for him (Gen. 12:1). This territorial bequest was immediately reaffirmed and extended to his descendants as soon as Abraham reached Shechem (Gen. 12:7). So solemn was this covenant with its gift of the land that Genesis 15:7-21 depicted God alone moving between the halves of the sacrificial animals after sunset as "a smoking furnace and a flaming torch" (v. 17). Thus He obligated Himself and only Himself to fulfill the terms of this oath. Abraham was not asked or required likewise to obligate himself. The total burden for the delivery of the gift of the land fell on the divine Provider but not on the devotion of the patriarch. As if to underscore the permanence of this arrangement, Genesis 17:7, 13, 19 stress that this was to be "an everlasting covenant."

In Leviticus 26:4-13, God's blessings for the people include the inheritance of cities, lands, olive-yards and vineyards, the bounty of which Israel will enjoy though they did not labour over them (cf. Deut. 6:10, 11; Josh 24:13). It will include rest from all enemies round about and even the healing of diseases (Exd. 23:25, 26; Deut. 7:15). Here Israel will serve the God who has brought them out of Egypt for that very purpose (Exod. 4:22-23). The fact that the promise is not unconditional in no way detracts from the reality of the promise.

The language used of God to describe the land of Canaan is sacramental in quality. That is to say that while, on the face of things, it might appear to be a straightforward description of the land; this is by no means the case. The description of the Promised Land as given in many of the records of the promise is not constrained by the realities of the land which they purport to describe. Rather, God describes the land in terms which could only fully be applied to a restore creation. It is not simply that the land fails to live up to expectation because of the sin of the heirs of the promise; there are fundamental reasons for the unfulfilment of the promise in Canaan. Canaan never was, nor could be, all that the promises declared.

This does not mean that the promise was, or is, in any sense false. It is, after all, the promise of God. This is reality and truly what God is promising to his faithful people – Paradise. Nevertheless, Canaan always falls short of the fullness of the promise and so the promise of the eternal covenant always points beyond its imperfect realization in Israel, to the new Israel, the Church.

3.1 Self-Assessment Question

- God's covenant with Abraham is anchored on the promise of a land. Discuss.

3.2 The Land as a Gift

Leviticus 25:23, in a context dealing with the Year of Jubilee, declares that the owner of the land is none other than the Lord. Indeed the God of Israel is the Giver of whatever the land yields (Deut. 6:10-11). Thus one of the central theological affirmations about the land is that it is the gift of God to Israel. Eighteen times the Book of Deuteronomy refers

to the promise of the land made with the patriarchs, and all but three of these eighteen references emphasize the fact that He likewise "gave" it to them This land was "a good land" (Deut. 1:25, 35; 3:23; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:7, 10; 9:6; 11:17), for it was filled with brooks, springs, wheat, barley, grapes, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, honey, iron, and copper. Yet what God gave, He then termed Israel's "inheritance" (*nahlah*). It was "the good land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance" (Deut. 4:21; cf. 4:38; 12:9; 15:4; 19:10; 20:16; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1). Thus the Owner of all lands (Ps. 24:1) allotted to Israel the land of Canaan as their special "inheritance."

Whereas the land had been granted to the patriarchs by virtue of the divine Word and oath, it was still theirs in theory and not in actuality. For over half a millennium it was only the land of their sojourning; they did not as yet possess it. Then under Joshua's conquest the ancient promise was to be made a reality. Since the land was a "gift," as Deuteronomy affirmed in some twenty-five references (Deut. 1:20, 25; 2:29; 3:20; 4:40; 5:16), Israel had but to "possess" it (Deut. 3:19; 5:31; 12:1; 15:4; 19:2, 14; 25:19). This does not mean that the idea of taking the land by force or conquest was contradictory to the idea of its bestowal as a gift. As Miller correctly reconciled the situation, God's overthrow of the enemy would be the way in which He would finally allow Israel to take possession of the land. The two notions come together in the expression, "The land which Yahweh gives you to possess."

If it be objected, as it surely has, that such action on God's part is pure chauvinism and unfair partiality, it should be remembered that Deuteronomy had already spoken of the same divine replacement of former inhabitants in Transjordania. The Emim, Horites, and Zamzummim had been divinely dispossessed and destroyed (Deut. 2:9, 12, 21) and their lands had been sovereignly given to Moab, Edom, and Ammon. The comparison of their situation with Israel's had not been missed by the writer (2:12). In fact Amos 9:7 reviews several other exoduses Yahweh had conducted in the past: the Philistines from Crete and the Syrians from Kir of Mesopotamia, not to mention the Ethiopians. Accordingly, as the conquest came to an end, what the patriarchs had enjoyed solely in the form of promissory words except for a burial plot or two was now to be totally possessed. Yet this introduced another enigma, namely, the gap between the gift of the whole land and the reality of Israel's partial conquest and control of the land. On the one hand Yahweh promised to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan "little by little" (Exod. 23:30-33), and Joshua made war "a long time" (Josh. 11:18). On the other hand the Canaanites were destroyed "quickly" (Deut. 7:22; 9:3).

Furthermore not only is the speed with which the conquest was completed an issue; but also the extent of the conquest is a problem (cf. Josh. 12:10-23 with 15:63; 17:12; Judg. 1:21-22, 29). But the contrasting statements on the speed of the conquest are relative only to the magnitude of the work that was to be done. Where the conquest is presented as *fait accompli*, it is so from the standpoint of the

territory having been generally secured from the theocratic perspective (even though there were many pockets of resistance that needed to be flushed out and some sites that needed to be recaptured several times since the fortunes of warfare tended to seesaw back and forth as positions frequently changed hands). Nevertheless the inheritance remained as a gift even when the actual possession of the land lagged far behind the promise. An identical conundrum can be found by comparing the various provisions for "rest" (Exod. 33:14; Deut. 12:9) in the "place" that the Lord had chosen to "plant" His people. Whereas Israel had not yet come to the "resting place" and to the inheritance of the land (Deut. 12:9), by the time Joshua had completed his administration "The LORD had given them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers .... Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed: all came to pass" (Josh. 21:44-45).

Why then, it might be asked, was David still expecting this rest as a future hope (2 Sam. 7:10-11)? And why was Solomon, that "man of rest," expecting it (1 Kings 8:56; 1 Chron. 22:9)? The solution to this matter is that even the emphasis of Joshua in 21:44-45 was on the *promised word* which had not failed Israel, nor would it. But whether any *given* generation has remained in the land has depended on whether it has set a proper value on God's promised inheritance. Such conditionality did not "pave the way for a declension from grace into law," as von Rad suggested; neither does the conditional aspect of any single generation's participation in the blessings offered in the Davidic covenant contradict the eternality of their promises. The "if" notices in this covenant (1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5; Pss. 89:29-32: 132:12; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14-15) referred only to any future generation's participation in the benefits of the covenant, but they did not affect the transmission or the certainty of God's eternal oath. The ownership of the land (as a gift from God) is certain and eternal, but the occupation of it by any given generation is conditioned on obedience. Therefore neither the days of Joshua nor those of David could be used as a kind of blank check for any subsequent generation to rest on their fathers' laurels. Indeed, the word of promise could also be theirs, if they would enter not only into the material resting place, but if they too would appropriate that rest by faith as did Caleb and Joshua (Ps. 95:7-11; cf. Rom. 9-11).

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- Whereas the land had been granted to the patriarchs by virtue of the divine Word and oath, it was still theirs in theory and not in actuality. Discuss

3.3 Regulations about the Land

The law of *NAHALAH* (inheritance): The custom of inheriting the land was prevalent among the Israelites. Hebrew words denoting this custom are the verb *NAHAL* which means “inherit” (Exod. 32:13; Num. 26:55; Jer. 12:14) and the noun *NAHALAH* which means “inheritance” (Gen. 31:14; Num. 26:55; Josh.11:23). In their widest application these terms refer not only to an estate received by a child from his parents but also the land received by children of Israel as a gift from God. The reference to the land as an

inheritance has its beginnings in the promise that God made to Abraham when he entered the land of Canaan. In Genesis 12:7 God said: "To your descendants, I will give this land". This promise was passed down through Abraham's descendants and was reaffirmed to Moses: "I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord" (Exod. 6:8, cf. Exod. 3:7-8; 32:13). In Deuteronomy, Moses reminded the nation of Israel many times that the land is the Lord's and he is the one who is giving it to them (Deut. 4:21,38; 12:9; 15:4; 19:10).

With the entrance of Israel into Canaan after the death of Moses, a new focus came into view. As the nation regarded the entire land as an inheritance, so it was then distributed among the people as an inheritance (cf. Num. 32:18-19; 34:14-18; 36:2-12). Here and at other places in the Old Testament, a clear distinction is made between the possession of land and the acquisition of other personal properties. The underlining idea being that the land is God's property, and the people hold it as a *nahalah* = inheritance which they received through God's grace – not by right. Therefore, even though the Israelites had settled in the land, they continued to be called "strangers and sojourners" in the land, and the portion allotted to them could not be sold into perpetuity (Lev. 25:23-28). The terms *nahal* and *nahalah* are used many times in this sense to denote the possession of a portion of the land by a tribe or family.

Joshua, the son of Nun, was a man chosen by God to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (Josh. 1:1-2). When the people settled in the land according to God's guidance, Joshua was commanded to divide the land proportionally among the different families (Josh. 13:7; 18:6; Num. 26:53-56; 33:54). This was done by casting lots to determine the specific piece of land to be owned by each family head. Here we see the equal distribution of land among the people who depended on land for their livelihood. In Israel only the family of priests was not given land apart from few towns (Num. 35:1-8). The reason was that their sustenance was brought to the temple in the offering by the whole nation (Ez.44:28). The children could inherit their father's properties including his cultivated fields (Lev. 25:46; Prov. 13:22; Job 42:15). No inheritance was to be transferred. To prevent properties from going to other families, girls were prohibited from marrying outside their father's family (Num. 36:6-9).

The New Testament also reflects the custom of inheritance as shown in the proverbs of Jesus (Matt. 21:38; Mark 12:1-8; Luk 11:13). Every member of the family or tribe had to guard that no inheritance was wasted in the form of selling it or otherwise. In 1 Kings 21:1-16 king Ahab was forcing Naboth to sell him his land, but Naboth pointed out that under the law of the Lord he was forbidden to alienate the heritage of his family. Naboth refused to sell his land, after which the king used his power and killed Naboth. King Ahab treated the land as a commodity and not as a heritage, which was against the Israelite laws of "*nahalah*". The transgression of king Ahab of the inheritance law was later condemned by the prophet Elijah and even led Ahab's family into a catastrophe (1 Kings 21:17-24).

The transgression of the "*nahalah*" law, acts of injustice and the discrimination of the poor, were some of the issues that angered the prophets in the Bible. The prophet Micah said: "Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil upon their beds; when the morning dawns, they perform it because it is in their power to do so. They covet fields and seize them; the houses, they take them away; they oppress a man and his inheritance" (Micah 2:1-2; Amos 5:11; 8:4-6; Isa. 3:13-15; 10:1-2).

In the Bible there is no one, neither a king nor a chief who had the right to take away land from anyone. "The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their property. He shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of my people shall be dispossessed of his property" (Ez. 46:18). Again, "Do not remove an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you" (Prov. 23:10-11).

3.3 Self-Assessment Question

- Describe the regulations governing the use of land in the Old Testament.

3.4 The Loss of Land

The history and theology of the land divides right at this point. In the succinct vocabulary of Brueggemann, the Jordan is "the juncture between two histories." In the one "history is one of *landlessness on the way to the land*" and in the other it is "*landed Israel in the process of losing the land*." Thus the *sine qua non* for continued enjoyment of life in the land is obedience that springs from a genuine love and fear of God. Failure to obey could lead to war, calamity, loss of the land, or death itself (Deut. 4:26). Many of the laws were tied directly to the land and Israel's existence on it, as indicated by the motive clauses or introductory words found in many of them. In fact when evil was left unchecked and was compounded, it caused the land to be defiled and guilty before God (Deut. 21:23; 24:4). This point could not have been made more forcefully than it is in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Naturally no nation or individual has the right to interpret any single or isolated reverse or major calamity in life as an evidence of divine love which is seeking the normalization of relationships between God and man. Yet Israel's prophets were bold to declare with the aid of divine revelation that certain events, especially those in related series, were indeed from the hand of God (e.g., Amos 4:6-12 and Hag. 1:4-7).

The most painful of all the tragedies would be the loss of the land (Lev. 26:34-39). But such a separation could never be a permanent situation; how could God deny Himself and fail to fulfill His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Lev. 26:42)? As surely as the judgments might "overtake" (Deut. 28:15, 43; cf. Zech. 1:6) future generations, just as surely would every promised blessing likewise "overtake" (Deut. 28:2) them the moment "repentance" began (Deut. 30:2, 6, 8, 10; cf. Zech. 1:6). Forsaking the covenant the Lord made with the fathers would lead to an uprooted existence (Deut. 30:24-28) until God once more restored the fortunes of Israel.

3.5 The Prophets and Promise of a Return

The "headwaters" of the "return" promises, as Martens states in one of the first studies of land theology in the prophets, are in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both of these men had experienced firsthand the loss of land; yet together they contain twenty-five The Promised explicit statements about return to the land and five texts with indirect announcements of return. Jeremiah's characteristic formula for the restoration of Israel to the land is "restore the fortunes (or captivity)." Twelve of its twenty-six occurrences in the Old Testament are found in Jeremiah (e.g., 29:14; 30:3; 32:44). Ezekiel on the other hand usually casts his message in a three-part formula (e.g., Ezek. 11:17; 20:41-42; 36:24; 37:21): (a) "I will bring you from the people"; (b) "I will gather you from the lands"; (c) "I will bring you into the land of Israel." In one of the most striking passages in the prophets, Yahweh pledges that His promise to restore Israel's fortunes (Jer. 33:26) will be as dependable and as certain as His covenant with day and night (33:20, 25). While the sheer multiplicity of texts from almost every one of the prophets is staggering, a few evangelicals insist that this pledge to restore Israel to her land was fulfilled when Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah led their respective returns from the Babylonian Exile. But if the postexilic returns to the land fulfilled this promised restoration predicted by the prophets, why then did Zechariah continue to announce a still future return (10:8-12) in words that were peppered with the phrases and formulas of such prophecies as Isaiah 11:11 and Jeremiah 50:19?

Such a return of the nation Israel to the land could come only from a literal worldwide assemblage of Jews from "the four corners of the earth" (Isa.11:12). The God who promised to bring spiritual and immaterial blessings will also fulfill the material, secular, and political blessings in order to demonstrate that He is indeed Lord of the whole earth and all that is in it. The question as to whether the return follows a national spiritual awakening and turning to the Lord or vice versa is difficult. Sometimes the prophets seem to favor the first, as in Deuteronomy 30, and sometimes it appears that the return precedes any general repentance, as in Ezekiel 36:1-37:14 and perhaps in Isaiah 11. But there can be no question about a future return in any of the prophets

3.5 Self-Assessment Question

- Discuss the steps that would lead to the recovery of the land proclaimed by the prophets.

3.6 Hermeneutical Considerations

For Paul, no one of the previous promises has changed—not even the promise of the land. Since the Old Testament has an authority equal to that of the New Testament, the permanency and directness of the promise of the land to Israel cannot be contravened by anything allegedly taught in the New Testament. The most significant passage on this subject in the New Testament is Romans 9-11, especially 11:11-36. For Paul, Israel's restoration to the favor and blessing of God must come in "full number" or as the RSV

puts it, "full inclusion" Rom. 11:12; Thus Israel is and remains God's link to her own future as well as the link to the future of the nations. For if her temporary loss of land and failures have fallen out to the spiritual advantage of the world and their reconciliation to God, her acceptance will signal her "life from the dead" (11:15). "And so all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26) in accordance with the predictions of Isaiah 27:9 and 59:20-21. The "and so" probably points back to verse 25 and the "mystery" of the temporary failure of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles comes in (cf. Luke 21:24). Then, in that future moment, "all Israel will be saved". This is not a matter of individual salvation or a matter of converting to a Gentile brand of Christendom, but it is a matter of God's activity in history when the nation shall once again, as in the days of blessing in the past, experience the blessing and joy of God spiritually, materially, geographically, and politically.

The main lines of Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 are clear and in complete agreement with the promise of the land to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Therefore one ought not detract from or minimize the full force of this blunt witness to God's everlasting work on behalf of Israel. For herein lies one of the greatest philosophies of history ever produced: Israel is God's watermark on secular history that simultaneously demonstrates

that He can complete in time and space what He promised to do and that He, the Owner and Ruler of all nations, geography, and magistrates, will deal severely with those nations that mock, deride, parcel up, and attack Israel (e.g., Joel 3:1-5). Those that attempt to do so either in the name of the church or the name of political and economic expediency will answer to the God of Israel.

In, Africa land ownership is very important, that is why, here and there, you see communal clashes in relation to who owns the land. Most communities rely on the land for subsistence living, hence the much attachment to it. On the other hand, some communities lose their lands to government, either because of urbanization or mineral exploration. Most times the government or its agencies do little or nothing in alleviating the problems of the affecting communities, hence the incessant militancy and unrest from the aggrieved youth of those communities. In the Old Testament, the creator endowed land to his people to benefit them; if the land in Africa is not benefiting the African people, then one should not be surprised to witness a rising incident of unrest among the African people.

5.6 Self-Assessment Questions

- How would you relate place of Land in the Old Testament to the New Testament and the subsequent application to African context.

4.0 Conclusion

The Old Testament is largely a story of the people’s relationship to the land in relation to God’s covenant with Abraham. This unit has shown that the Promised Land was first and foremost, before it became a gift. The gift of land does not imply a passive receptive but

an active possession of it to be pursued by the covenant family. Enjoyment of the Land was dependent on whether the people would abide by the regulations governing its usage. So the last was lost at a point because of abuse, and was eventually regained because of God's mercies and unfailing kindness to the people.

5.0 Summary

So far, we surveyed the Gift of Land in this unit under the following sub-headings: The Land as a Promise, The Land as a Gift, The Regulations about the Land, The Loss of Land, The Prophets and Promise of a Return, and Hermeneutical Considerations.

Next unit will discuss the problem of sin and evil, which became a wrong response from humanity in the reception of God's endowments.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Discuss the importance of Land in Old Testament Theology.

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MODULE 2: ENDOWMENTS, ABUSE AND RECOVERY

Unit 2: Sin and Evil

Contents

1.1 Introduction

The presence of sin and evil in God's creation has preoccupied the mind of many people on how to explain it, overcome it or at least control it. Genesis 1 records that God created everything good, and expected humanity to have a personal relationship with him, and enjoy life to the fullest. But this expectation was cut short in Genesis 3 when humanity sinned against God. The 'Fall of Humanity' is the phrase which theologians use to express the fact that most people do not reach the highest experiences of the life which God has planned for them. This unit will examine the Old Testament teachings on Sin and Evil under the following sub-headings: the Definition of Sin and Evil; Origin of Sin and Evil; Consequences of Sin and Evil; and Hermeneutical Considerations.

2.0 Objective

By the end of this unit you should be to:

- Discuss the role of human freedom in the presence of sin and evil
- Understand the Old Testament perspectives on the definition for sin and evil
- Understand how God views sin and evil in the Old Testament

- Describe the possible consequences of sin and evil
- Discuss the private and corporate nature of sin and evil

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Definition of Sin and Evil

Different Hebrew words are used to express the meaning of sin in the Old Testament. This unit will concentrate on two terms, namely: "sin or **missing the mark**" and **"transgression**". The first of these words 'sin' is a very general term and covers things done intentionally (Isa. 3:9; 30:1), as well as things done without intention to disobey (Lev. 4:13; Gen. 20:3-7). It may refer to something done against another man (1 Sam. 20:1), and it may also be use for something done against God himself (Exod. 32:33; cf. Hinson 78). Sin as 'missing the mark' or missing the road' was used, for example of an archer who failed to hit his target, or a traveler who lost his way. So, when the word is used theologically, sin carries the meaning of '**failure'**: something that should have been done has not been achieved. A sinner is a person who has failed to do God's will, and has failed to live on good terms with his neighbour (Hinson 79).

The second word, 'transgression' is used in the RSV to translate a Hebrew word which always means an intentional act against the will of God. A 'transgressor' is a man who chooses to disobey God, and who goes his own way without accepting the authority of God. This same word is also translated as '**rebellion**', e.g. in 1 Kings 12:19. The attitude of mind which leads a man towards acts of sin or transgression is described by the word 'iniquity' (Job 31:24-28; Ps. 36:1-4).

The people who are rebellious against God, and who refuse to do his will are frequently called 'wicked' (Ps. 10:3). Such people are often set in contrast with 'righteous', who do the will of the Lord (Gen.18:23; Prov. 12:26). Job complains that both come to the same end in death (Job 9:22; cf. Eccl. 9:2). The prophet Ezekiel recognized that a man might change from being wicked, and begin to live righteously (Ezek. 33:14-16), and that the righteous also could turn aside from God, and become wicked (Ezek. 33:13).

Similarly, **'evil'** is related to sin in the Old Testament. Anything which goes against the will of God and hinders his purposes is evil. Many of the writers of Old Testament describe the evil things which people do (Gen. 6:5; Isa. 13:11, etc). These things are evil because they are contrary to the will of God. But the word 'evil' is also frequently used in the Old Testament to describe which God has done (2 Kings 21:12; Neh: 13:17, 18; Jer. 4:6). It is not part of God's purpose to do evil to men. He does not act to defeat his own purposes. But there are times he must punish rather than bless, in order to achieve his purposes. The suffering that is involved in punishment is what is meant when biblical writers talk about evil done by God. Its purpose is to correct sinful men. There are two kinds of evil in the Old Testament: moral evil and natural evil. Moral evil is a sinful act; natural evil is a disaster or calamity (Palmer 42)

3.1 Self Assessment Question

- Identify and explain some of the terms used to define sin and evil in the Old Testament.

3.2 Origin of Sin and Evil

Many Christians look to Genesis 3 for an answer to the origin of sin and evil. They say that the first man fell into sin, and passed on his fallen nature to all his children. There is no doubt that this story influenced the thinking of the Israelites. It comes from the earliest of the written records in Israel, and was probably among the earliest traditions. J. E. Colwell (NDT 642), argues that if the narrative of Genesis 3 was to be interpreted not only as the historical account of Adam's sin, but also as an account of the origin of sin, then the sin of Adam must be recognized as the primary biblical definition of the essence of sin – i.e. a grasping for spiritual and moral autonomy rooted in unbelief and rebellion. On the basis of Psalm 51:5, Augustine defined original sin as inherited sin; he considered that the fallen nature of Adam was transmitted biologically through sexual procreation. For Calvin and Barth, Psalm 51:5 is not to be interpreted as a reference to this inherited sin, but as recognition that from the very first the psalmist is conscious of his own sin and corruption: 'From his very conception he carries the confession of his own perversity' (NDT 642).

On the other hand, some scholars attributed the origin of sin and evil to the freedom in choice in humanity when they were created. Human beings are free to choose good and evil. Each person can respond to God either by obedience and service or turn away from him and do things contrary to his will. Thomas Aquinas had argued that for a person to be held guilty of sin it was necessary for him to be a rational being; and that therefore the fall could not have involved the loss of human reason, which Aquinas identified as the image of God in which man and woman were created, but rather must have involved the loss of that supernatural endowment which enabled a person's reason to be subject to God. According to the Reformers, however, the fall resulted in the corruption of human nature in its entirety. Reason and every aspect of his being have become totally depraved as a consequence of Adam's sin. This doctrine of total depravity is not intended to imply that fallen humanity is incapable of good works, but rather that there is no aspect of human being that is unaffected by sin: there is no 'relic or core goodness which persists in man in spite of his sin' (NDT 642).

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- Write a short note on the possible origin of sin and evil from Old Testament perspective.

3.3 Consequences of Sin and Evil

In Genesis 3:8-24, the OT gives the interpretation of the pain and unhappiness that follow sin, or disobedience to God. These are the results of humanity's refusal to accept God as

the supreme authority. Here, Adam is a symbol of the entire humanity of every generation. The writer shows how even in the most enjoyable human activities there is often some pain or sadness. The examples which he gives are summarized by John Hargreaves (1979:24) as follows:

(a) The attitude of people to each other (cf. Gen. 3:7, 16). God wants people to enjoy each other and to help each other, but we find that pain and shame and loneliness exist among people. Adam and Eve here stand for the whole human race, not just for males and females as they meet each other. Moreover, the writer is not saying in 3:7 that nakedness or the use of sex – by which a man and a woman are joined – are shameful or evil.

(b) The attitude of people and animals to each other (Gen. 3:14, 15). According to this passage, God intended that people and animal should understand and respect each other, but often there is enmity between them. The writer uses the snake as an example of all living creatures which are not human.

(c) Childbearing (3:16). The writer interprets the pain which often accompanies childbirth as another result of the sin of Adam and Eve.

(d) Work (3:17-19). According to the writer, God wants people to see their work as a way of co-operating with him and with their fellow men (cf. 2:15). But often there is pain in it. Many people have work which is of no interest to them. Many people in the world die before their time because of the hardness of their work. One man envies another because he gets bigger wages. Employers and employed are often at enmity.

(e) Man and God. In Genesis 3:8, we see that man and the woman in their guilt hid from God, although he was the one whom they most needed. He alone could free them from guilt. Genesis 3. 23, 24 contain another picture of this separation and misery.

So the progression of humanity's sin led to the following: **guilt, God's wrath**, and **judgment.** A sinful person lives in a state of guilt. He is liable to be punished for the evil he does. The prophets were deeply aware of the guilt of God's people, and continually warned them of punishment to come. They believed that the leaders of the nation were particularly guilty (Jer. 23:1-4). Among these were the kings (Hosea 5:1), prophets (Jer. 28:15, 16), priests (Isa. 28:7), and the richer and more powerful people generally. Ordinary people were not excluded from the guilt of sin.

God's response to human guilt is 'wrath'. The nature of God's wrath is well described in Genesis 6:5-7; 'The Lord saw the wickedness of man… and the Lord was sorry that he had made man on earth, it grieved him to his heart'. The prophets spoke often of the wrath of God, e.g. Hosea 5:10; 13:11; Isaiah 9:19; 10:6; Jer. 7:29; 10:10; etc. some of the Psalmists rejoiced that God's wrath would fall on evil doers (Ps. 2:5; 21:9;

59:13). Many passages in the Old Testament describe how God restrains his wrath, and holds back the punishment that sinners deserve (cf. Gen. 8:21, 22; 18:32; Exod.32:11-14; Amos 7:1-6; Ezek 33:11).

God's wrath is not a blind fury, or an uncontrolled anger. It is aroused by sin (Deut. 7:4; Isa. 5:24-25) it leads on to judgment and punishment as the reasonable consequences of sin. From the earliest time God was recognized as 'the Judge of all the earth' (Gen. 18:25), but in the Torah 'judgment' was a responsibility given to men. They were rules for fair treatment of the accused. There was to no injustice or partiality (Lev.19:15). Judgments were to be based on God's ordinances (Num.35:24). The prophets recognized that the judges of their day were not giving judgment fairly, but were helping the rich and neglecting the poor (Amos 5:7, 12). The prophets believed that they themselves were sent to declare God's righteous judgments (Hos. 6:5; Mic. 3:8), but it is the Lord who judges his people (Isa 3:14, 15; Jer. 1:16; Ezek 5:6-8).

3.3 Self-Assessment Questions

- Identify and discuss the five consequences of sin deduced from Genesis 3.

3.4 Hermeneutical Considerations.

It is vital to state here that each individual is responsible for his or her actions. Genesis 3 may have painted the picture of the serpent luring humanity into sin. But they were responsible for every action they were engaged in, since they had been warned by God earlier, and since the serpent possessed no physically coercive powers. No one is sinless; everyone is affected by living in a sinful a world. By birth, by choice or by both, the result remains that every human sins and that every human suffers for that sin spiritually, physically, emotionally, relationally, and vocationally.

According to House (1998:67), the prevalence of sin in the rest of the Old Testament cannot compare with the solutions God provided in the rest of the scripture to deal with the sin problem. Moses mediates a covenant in the Pentateuch that includes sacrifices for sins offered in faith by penitent sinners. The Former Prophets sketch how long-term, habitual sin, left unchecked, gradually pulls Israel into destruction. Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah lament being among an unclean people (Isa. 6:5) and being a person with wicked, diseased heart (Jer. 17:9), etc.

3.4 Self-Assessment

- . Sin never skips a generation, nor does it skip a single individual. Discuss.

4.0 Conclusion

This unit surveyed the Old Testament concept of Sin and Evil. Sin was defined as "missing the mark' or 'missing the road', a 'transgression'', a 'failure' or a 'rebellion' against God, humanity and God's entire creation. The Old Testament presented Genesis 3 as the introduction for human's sin, and the foundation for evil in God's creation. It was further expressed that the origin of sin and evil was connected to the human freedom which gave them the power of choice of either good or bad. The consequences of sin brought guilt, alienation from God, God's wrath and judgment. But the rest of the Old Testament testified how the creator provided an escape route from the scourge of sin and evil, which most of the time were not appreciated by the covenant people of God.

5.0 Summary

Thus far, we have surveyed the concept of Sin and Evil in the Old Testament, discussed under the following subheadings: definition for sin and evil in the Old Testament, the origin of sin and evil, the consequences of sin, and a hermeneutical consideration.

Next unit will examine one of the places the creator provided for the Old Testament community to relate with him and deal with every problem that troubles them.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Write short notes on the following with Old Testament as your tool: (a) Origin of sin and evil, (b) Consequences of sin and evil, and (c) the implications of sin and evil in the world today.

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MODULE 2: ENDOWMENTS, ABUSE AND RECOVERY

Unit 3: Worship

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Worship is an act of appreciating the deity for a favour received. In the Old Testament, worship applies to the response of the believing community to God for grace received or hopes to receive demonstrated through prayer, sacrifices, offering and praise. In this unit, we begin our examination of biblical worship by looking at the scriptural law of worship, as declared by Moses. We will then see how the precepts of the law apply within the historical narratives of the Old Testament.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the Old Testament precepts for acceptable worship.
- Describe the acceptable place for worshipping God

- Know the items required in an acceptable worship
- Appreciate the benefits of worship, and the dangers of not worshipping aright.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 The Old Testament Law and Worship – Pentateuch I

The Decalogue, Exodus 20 gave a graphic regulation concerning what is acceptable and not acceptable in the people's relationship with God. This regulation was an attempt to put the people on the right course before they enter the Promised Land. The first commandment reminded them that the LORD is the only proper recipient of their worship. The command prohibited the worship of false gods, and enjoins them to worship only the true God, the Lord (Ex. 20:2-3). The second commandment continued the focus on worship by telling them how God should be worshipped. It does so in a negative sense, by forbidding them to worship God with human inventions. "You shall not make for yourselves any graven image"(Ex. 20:4). No physical image whatsoever was to be used to represent God (cf. Deut 4:15-16).

In this light, apostle Paul was right when he instructed the Athenians in the New Testament, "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29; cf. Ps. 115:4-8). Any attempt to represent God by human devices is an insult to the Lord. His pronouncement is clear: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isa. 42:8). When we consider the corrupt nature of fallen mankind, we may perceive why biblical directives in worship are so essential. The natural tendency of mankind is to pollute the worship of God, changing the truth of God into a lie, worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

The Creator is the regulator of worship, and not the creature. So The Lord demands obedience from his people. He tells them how to conduct worship; and it is unlawful to worship God by means which he has not established. Any humanly-devised alterations or additions to the worship of God are a species of idolatry.

3.1 Self-Assessment Questions

- Describe the basis for worship from Exodus 20:2-3.

3.2 The Precepts for Worship – Pentateuch II

Deuteronomy 12 reviewed specifications on the ways to offer worship to God delivered by Moses to the people. The Lord forbids his people to imitate pagan ways of worship; the Israelites were commanded to eradicate the remnants of corrupt worship from their midst (Deut. 12:2-3). They were commanded to destroy "all the places" wherein the heathen served their gods. They were instructed to purge the land of all the implements associated with false worship: "You shall over throw their altars, and break their pillars,

and burn their groves with fire; and you shall hew down the graven images of their gods." Even the terminology of corrupt worship was to be erased: "Destroy the names of them out of that place." The chapter concludes with another stern warning against imitating heathen worship. There is no room for comparative religion or the assimilation of man-made devices in the worship of the true God.

Take care that you are not snared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you: do not inquire concerning their gods saying, "How did these nations worship their gods? I also want to do the same. You must not do the same for the Lord your God, because every abhorrent thing that the Lord hates they have done for their gods. They would even born their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. You must diligently observe everything that I command you; do not add to it or take anything from it (Deut. 12:30-32).

That last statement points to doctrine highlighted earlier in the book of Deuteronomy respecting the sufficiency and authority of scripture. "You must neither not add unto the word which I command you, nor shall ye diminish anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). The general sufficiency and authority of scripture are brought to bear upon the content of our worship. This is the meaning of the scriptural law of worship: all forms of worship must have express scriptural warrant, if they are to be admitted as legitimate means of worship. The biblical pattern of worship needs no supplements of human devising; indeed, such man-made additions are a snare "a graven image" and "the very seed of idolatry."

Apart from corporate worship, there were private worships recorded in the Pentateuch. In Genesis 12:7, Abram, at Canaan "built an altar to the LORD who appeared to him" – also at Bethel (Gen. 12:8; cf.13:4). Others include, Jacob (Gen 28:18-22; 32:22-30), and Moses (Exod. 3:5, 6; cf. Josh. 5:13-15). Through out the period of the Pentateuch, and early monarchy, worship often took place at local sanctuaries (Palmer 2011: 87).

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- Summarize the nature of worship in the Pentateuch

3.3 Nature of Worship in the Historical Books - I

The folly of Saul: The case of King Saul illustrates the folly of claiming good intentions as an excuse for worship which God has not sanctioned. Saul found himself in distressing circumstances. He was faced with a formidable number of enemy troops; and Samuel was late for their appointed meeting. Therefore, Saul decided to make a burnt offering himself, without waiting any longer for Samuel. According to the Mosaic Law, only the priests were authorized to make such offerings, but King Saul performed the priestly task on his own. No sooner had Saul committed his presumptuous deed, than Samuel arrived (1 Sam. 13:13-34). Paul R. House (1998:235) argues that since the LORD remains sovereign, and since the LORD has standards for kings, it is inevitable that the LORD will assess Saul's

effectiveness by his faithfulness to those standards. It becomes apparent that the LORD does not judge according to whether or not Saul performs as well as kings of other nations, though Israel does see (cf. 1 Sam 8:4, 5). God determines Saul's future by the king's disobedience to divine commands.

Samuel's response was blunt:

> Has the LORD any great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to obey than the fat of rams; for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness, as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he too has rejected you from being king" (1Sam. 15:22-23).

The lesson of this incident is simple. No motive or action in worship is acceptable, if it runs contrary to God's revealed word. At no point had Saul professed the worship of another god; yet the king's actions toward the Lord were unacceptable, because they deviated from God's revealed word. Therefore, Saul's deeds are likened to the very opposite of true worship, to witchcraft and idolatry.

Temple Worship: As noted earlier, the 12th chapter of Deuteronomy opens and closes with general statements prohibiting the corruption of worship through imitation of heathen practices. The middle portion of the chapter is significant as regards the outward ceremonies of worship under the Levitical priesthood. Even at the time of Moses, it was understood that the portable tabernacle would eventually give way to a permanent place for the Levitical sacrifices. "There shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; there you shall bring all that I command you" (Deut. 12:11; cf. 12:5,14).

The designation of a fixed place of worship did not reach fulfillment until the Israelites conquered and settled the land of Canaan. During the reign of King David, Jerusalem was designated as the permanent location for the ark, thereby establishing Jerusalem as the center for the sacrificial ordinances associated with the Leviticus priesthood. Even so, the entire program of worship, from the tabernacle to the temple, was directed by divine revelation (McConville 1992:20).

The tabernacle worship was not the invention of Moses; it was built according to a divine blueprint. The Israelites were instructed: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I have shown you, after the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so you shall make it" (Ex. 25:8-9; Ex. 25:40; 27:8; Num. 8:4; cf. Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5). Throughout the description of the tabernacle furnishings, it is reiterated that all things must be made according to the God-given pattern.

The Ark of the Covenant was placed within the tabernacle. It was a symbol of God's presence among them, a meeting-place between the Lord and his people. The Levitical priests performed sacrifices in the tabernacle: all according to the divine pattern given by God to Moses (Ex. 25:10-22; 29:42-46). Later, when David sought to transfer the ark to Jerusalem, the ark was moved initially in a careless manner. The law required the ark to be carried on poles by the priests (Ex. 25:14; Num. 4:1-5). Instead of following the biblical procedure, the Israelites placed the ark upon an ox cart. While this method might have seemed more convenient, it resulted in a tragedy. "And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God" (1 Chron. 13:9-10; cf. 2 Sam. 6:1-10).

The problem was not with the ark. The problem was the failure of the Israelites to maintain the biblical order. Therefore, David called for the priests and Levites, and he charged them, "Sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it …" (1 Chron. 15:12-13).

Later, David provided Solomon with a plan for building the temple: "David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof and the pattern of all that he had by the spirit also for the courses of the priests and the Levites. All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern" (1Chron. 28:11-13,19). Nothing was left for improvising; everything was ordered by the divine pattern for worship.

Solomon built the temple according to the heavenly blueprints left by David. The kingdom prospered under Solomon, and Jerusalem remained the seat of public worship for the entire kingdom of Israel. After the death of Solomon, the nation became divided and the people slid into corruption and apostasy. The northern tribes immediately embraced false worship, and never recovered from their apostasy. Within the kingdom of Judah, there were several seasons of reformation, amidst waves of idolatry. The key to understanding the history of the Israelites is to note the critical connection between the worship of the people, and God's dealings with them in relation to their worship.

3.3 Self-Assessment Question

- Review the nature of worship in Israel from the time of King Saul to King Solomon.

3.4 Nature of Worship in the Historical Books - II

The Apostasy of the Northern Kingdom: When the nation of Israel was divided, Jeroboam received a prophecy, that his reign in the northern tribes would be firmly established, if he would walk according to the statutes and commandments of God. Instead, the condition

of the northern kingdom was sealed negatively, because Jeroboam took a pragmatic approach to worship (1 Kings 11:37-38).

As we have seen, Jerusalem was the divinely-appointed center for the sacrificial ordinances of the Old Testament. Jeroboam reasoned that his authority would be undermined, if his subjects continued to participate in the temple worship of Jerusalem. So Jeroboam devised a "local" program of worship suited to his own purposes (1 Kings 12:28-33). Jeroboam's actions were wholly revolutionary. He established a new center for worship, new means for worship, and a new priesthood. It was not so much that Jeroboam encouraged his people to worship other deities, but that he devised new methods which displaced the biblical means of worship; Jeroboam's offense was akin to the Aaron's sin in making the original golden calf. Jeroboam was confirmed in his evil, and cursed on account of it. Similarly, the northern kingdom never recovered from this disastrous undertaking (1 Kings 13:33-34).

The kings of northern Israel are denounced for retaining the legacy of Jeroboam. Baasha exterminated the descendants of Jeroboam, but retained the corrupt religion. Therefore, the Lord sent a prophet to pronounce judgment on Baasha because he "walked in the way of Jeroboam, and has made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins" (1 Kings 16:2). This became the trend for the northern kings.

There is one especially curious episode in the latter history of the apostate northern kingdom. When Jehu took the throne, he exterminated the house of Ahab, and repudiated the Baalism of his predecessors. Jehu professed a "zeal for the Lord;" he developed a crafty plan for destroying the prophets of Baal, and he eradicated Baal worship from Israel (2 Kings 10:16; 18-28). Jehu's action brought temporal blessings for his house, but his heart was not right: "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin" (2 Kings 10:29-31). The kings of Israel were idolaters; the apostasy of the nation was thorough; and so the Lord destroyed the northern kingdom. A chilling account is provided in 2 Kings 17:4ff, with a summary statement in verses 20-24 of that same chapter. The apostasy spelt doom to the Northern kingdom, and they were destroyed and taken captive by Assyria (2 Kings 17:32-41).

The Kingdom of Judah: After the separation of the northern kingdom, the people of Judah retained their connection with the kingly descendants of David. Sadly, not all of the kings of Judah walked in the ways of their father David, who had displayed such commendable zeal for the true worship of God. Judah became apostate during the reign of Rehoboam by resorting to unhallowed means of worship (1 Kings 14:22-24). Kings Asa and Josiah instituted reforms in their times, which their purposes at the time. But the level of apostasy in the land also attracted God’s judgment on Judah. Since the people remained

corrupt, the Lord sent them the leadership they deserved. The nation fell to the Babylonians, and the people were carried away into exile.

3.4 Self-Assessment Question

- How will you describe the nature of worship in Israel during the divided kingdom in the North?

3.5 The Period of Captivity

During the captivity, it was impossible for the Jews to conduct the public ordinances related to the temple in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the Lord's people were still obligated to keep themselves free from idolatry.

Consider the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They were told to accede to idolatry on the direct orders of king Nebuchadnezzar. (The king spoke in a tart manner; his commands sounded remarkably similar to the high-sounding rhetoric of contemporary church rulers who instruct church members to submit to unscriptural worship.) The response of the Israelites was equally direct: "Be it known unto thee, O king that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3:18).

The prophet Daniel was confronted with the tyrannical decree of Darius. To comply with the decree, Daniel would be required to neglect an important element of private worship, prayer. The prophet responded with open defiance, by performing his exercises of worship openly. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

These short lessons from the exile are a perpetual testimony to God's people to keep themselves from idolatry. No authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, has the right to enjoin corrupt worship upon the people; and it is unlawful to submit to usurped authority, if we are ordered to participate in idolatry. Similarly, no rulers, whether civil or ecclesiastical, have the right to discharge us from our duties of worship. If faced with such unlawful demands, our response should be plain; "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

3.5 Self Assessment Question

- During the captivity of Israel to Babylon, it was difficult for them to observe public worship. Why?

3.6 Restoration and Reform

During the reign of Cyrus the king of Persia, the Jews were permitted to return to their homeland and commence rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. They were careful to restore the temple and its services according to the scriptural pattern. "And when the builders laid

the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel." When the construction was complete, "they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses" (Ezra 3:10; 6:18).

Having reestablished the proper place and the proper priesthood for public worship, the children of Israel celebrated the Passover. "For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the Passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel" (Ezra 6:20-22).

During the reforms of Nehemiah, the word of God was restored to a prominent position, the people confessed their sins and renewed their covenantal obligations, and provisions were made to sustain the public ordinances of worship (Neh. 8-10; Neh. 10:32-33).

3.6 Self-Assessment Question

- Describe the nature of worship in Israel during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

3.7 Hermeneutical Consideration

The study in this unit has shown that ignorance of the historical books of the Old Testament, especially Kings and Chronicles, is a preeminent reason why some Christians do not perceive the importance of biblical worship. The critical nature of worship, and God's dealings with his people in relation to their worship, are themes scarcely known in contemporary churches. After all, when was the last time you heard a series of sermons based upon 2 Chronicles?

The implication, whether stated or merely implied, is that the older, biblical forms of worship are simply boring, and must give way to more creative contemporary ideas. Today, many evangelicals decry the sins of abortion and homosexuality as manifestations of our nation's corruption (which they are indeed); but our contemporary moralists generally seem oblivious to the heinous sin of corrupt worship. Note well: this is precisely the kind of imitation forbidden in Deut. 12. The biblical doctrine of worship is a corollary to the biblical doctrine of salvation. As regards salvation, mankind has nothing acceptable to offer to God to procure his favour, since "all our righteousness is as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Through Christ Jesus, God has declared the way of salvation in his word. When men go about to establish their own salvation, deviating from the way declared in God's word, they incur added guilt. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going

about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3).

Similarly, when men seek to worship God according to their own innovations, they are concurrently deviating from the biblical means of worship, and thereby adding to their own guilt. The Lord declares of such: "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy scripture" (Westminster Confession, 21:1).

3.7 Self-Assessment Question

- How will access our contemporary mode of worship with the practice in the Old Testament?

4.0 Conclusion

Based on the survey of Old Testament precepts and narratives on worship, we have discovered these general truths:

1. God is holy and jealous for his honor. He has forbidden us to worship anyone or anything beside him.

2. God has prescribed the proper way of worship; he has furnished a "divine pattern", a "due order" for worship. Since mankind has an inherent tendency to corrupt worship, we need divine instructions if our worship is to be acceptable unto God. Therefore, proper worship is restricted exclusively to the means ordained by God.

3. All elements of worship which lack divine warrant are forbidden.

To state these ideas simply: Nobody has the right to add to (or subtract from) the biblical pattern of worship; we are forbidden to alter the proper elements of worship in any way. The restriction applies to both the church collectively, and to persons individually, regardless of their station. Only the Lord has the prerogative to modify the means of worship used by his people.

5.0 Summary

So far, this unit adopted a canonical approach in surveying the nature of worship in the Old Testament, discussed under the following sub-headings: The Old Testament Law and Worship – Pentateuch I; The Precepts for Worship – Pentateuch II; Nature of Worship in the Historical Books – I; Nature of Worship in the Historical Books – II; The Period of Captivity; Restoration and Reform; and Hermeneutical Consideration.

Next unit will examine the role of priesthood in the Old Testament worship.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Narrate in brief the nature and progression of worship from the Pentateuch to the post-exilic era of the Jews.

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 2: ENDOWMENTS, ABUSE AND RECOVERY

Unit 4: Priesthood

Contents

1.0 Introduction

A priest is one who makes the sacrifices, performs the rituals and acts as mediator between man and God. This means that he is responsible for offering the divinely appointed sacrifices to God, for executing the different procedures and ceremonies relating to the worship of God, and for being a representative between God and man. The theme of priests and priesthood is made more prominent in the Old Testament. One is first introduced to the concept of a priest in the book of Genesis, in the offering of tithes to Melchizedek by Abram (Gen 14:17-20). So, our survey of the concept of Priesthood in the Old Testament will be discussed under the following sub-headings: Definition for Priesthood in the Old Testament; Patriarchal Priesthood; Aaronic Priesthood; The Legitimating of priestly status and privilege; Hermeneutical consideration.

2.0 Objective

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the Old Testament definition of Priesthood.
- Describe the role of priests in worship.

- Realize why their ministry was legitimated in the Old Testament.
- Explain why special emoluments accrued to them.
- Be informed of the threat of corruption confronting it.
- Discuss the relevance of Priesthood in the contemporary church.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 Definition of Priesthood in the Old Testament

According to the priestly tradition, priests were drawn from the tribe of Levi, within which was a 3-fold hierarchy: the high priest (Aaron and his successors), the priests (Aaron's sons), and the other Levitical clans (Jenson 1997:1066). The priest was a human mediator between God and the people. God was represented to the people in the splendour of his clothing, in his behaviour, and in oracles and instruction, while in sacrifice and intercession the people were represented to God (Exd 28:29-30; Lev 16). The priest or the high priest must be of the family of Aaron, unblemished in body, and character, ordained and consecrated, etc (Exd 28-29; Lev 16&21). For their emolument, priests were entitled to a share of the sacrificial meat with the exception of the burnt offering. They also benefited from other offerings like the first-fruits and tithe of tithes, etc (Lev 6:24-26; 7:28-34; Num 18; cf. Ajah 2010: 13).

Figuratively, priesthood was applied to the nation of Israel as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exd 19:5-6; Lev 20:26; Deut 14:2 cf. 1Peter 2:9-11). These priestly people were to mediate the knowledge and the blessing of the holy God to other people. The prophets frequently accused the priests of ritual and moral failure (Ezek 22:26; Hos 6:9). The people were seriously affected each time the priests failed in their role of preserving distinctive Israelite faith and practice (Amos 4:9). The introduction of monarchy also affected the appointment of priests. Example, the political choices of Abiather and Zadok determined their respective fates (2 Sam 19:11; 1Kgs 2:21-27, 35). Eventually, "the demise of an effective royal line led to the political ascendancy of the priesthood, and the Hasmoneans combined the offices of high priest and king" in the inter-testamental period (Jenson 1997:603).

On the other hand, the Levites were regarded by some as servants of the priests and guardians of the temple. According to Jenson (1997:773), the subordination of Levites to the priests is evident at various points (Num 3:9; 8:19), although they had a privileged place in relation to other tribes. The Levites' duties in the priestly writings were to guard the sanctuary manual labour, receive tithes and offerings from the people, etc (Num 4:5-15; 8:24-26; 18:1-7, 21-24). Deuteronomy refers to both priests and Levites as Levitical priests thus grouping them together. It represents a non priestly perspective and may be using the terms more loosely. The historical books treated priests and Levites together like Deuteronomy (Josh 21). Ezekiel gave a prominent role to the Levitical priests who are to be descendants of Zadok (Ezek 44:15). The Chronicler compared the Levites

favourably to the priests (2 Chron 29:34). But in Ezra-Nehemiah the number and role of the Levites depleted considerably, and most of their duties were taken over by the priests (Ezra 2:36-42; Neh 7:39-45; cf. Ajah: 14).

3.1 Self-Assessment

- How would you define Priesthood in the Old Testament?

.2 Patriarchal Priesthood

The first occurrence of "priest" in the Old Testament is the reference to the pre-Israelite "Melchizedek king of Salem priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18). Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and the priest of Midian, was also recognized as non-Israelite priest of the true God of Sinai by Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel (Exod 2:16 ; 3:1 ; Exodus 18:1 Exodus 18:10-12).

Priests of foreign gods in foreign lands referred to in the Old Testament are Potiphera, Joseph's father-in-law, who was a "priest of On" in Egypt (Genesis 41:45 Genesis 41:50 ; 46:20), the whole priestly organization in Egypt (Genesis 47:22 Genesis 47:26), the "priests of Dagon" in Philistia (1 Sam 5:5 ; 6:2), the "priests of Chemosh" in Moab (Jer 48:7), and the "priests of Malcam" in Ammon (Jer 49:3). Unfortunately, there were also priests of foreign gods who practiced their priesthood within the boundaries of Israel, sometimes even under the auspices of certain unfaithful Israelite rulers (see, e.g., 2 Kings 10:11 2 Kings 10:19 2 Kings 10:23 ; 23:5).

The introduction of priests into the practice changed its meaning fundamentally. The offering of sacrifices to the deity was originally sporadic, spontaneous and personal. As the patriarchal narratives show, individuals offered sacrifices when they deemed it appropriate to do so. Sanctuaries or priests were not involved. According to the Yahwist there were no priests in the time of the patriarchs. The so called Book of the Covenant (Exod 20:23- 23:19) also does not speak of priests (Nurnberger 2004:147).

In the early times the role of the priest was the oracle. Clans, tribes or groups of tribes may have begun to acknowledge the role of a priest in sacrificial acts at traditionally holy places. The priest Eli at Shilo is a case in point (1 Sam 2ff). The Levites, a landless grouped dispersed among the different tribes, were considered to be more holy than others were preferred as priests. An example is Micah’s recruitment of Levite as a priest in Judges 17. Originally, ‘holy’ simply meant ‘dedicated to the deity’. However, there seems to be a tendency for the idea of ‘sanctity’ to grow on itself. In time a part of one’s possession set apart for the deity (the sacrifice) led to a set-apart caste to administer this process (the priesthood), a set-apart realm (the sanctuary), and a set-apart time (the religious festival. Once you have priesthood, regular sacrifices become necessary to maintain the priesthood. The need of the priesthood for recognition, power and income led, in a subtle way, to the claim that regular sacrifices were demanded by the LORD. The empowerment of the clergy again led to the religious disempowerment of the laity.

Deuteronomy no longer recognizes the right of the laity to bring sacrifices (Nurnberger 147).

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- List the Bible references of some of the priests that operated during the patriarchal era. Who were they, and what was the nature of their priesthood?

.3 Aaronic Priesthood

Moses functioned as the original priest of Israel by initially consecrating (1) the whole kingdom of priests (Exod 24:3-8), (2) the perpetual priesthood of Aaron and his descendants, who would in turn mediate for that kingdom of priests (Exod 29 ; Lev 8), and (3) the tabernacle (Num 7:1). However, there are several passages that seem to indicate that Aaron and his sons functioned as priests in Israel even before the official consecration of the Aaronic priesthood (Exod 19:24 ; 24:1 ; 32:3-6). Of course, as brothers and sons of Amram and Jochebed (Exod 6:20) Moses and Aaron were both from the tribe of Levi through Kohath. Therefore, it was natural that the Lord should then choose the whole tribe of Levi to assist the clan of Aaron with all their priestly duties in place of the firstborn of all Israel (Num 8:14-19).

So, although the entire nation constituted "a kingdom of priests," the Lord established Aaron's descendants as the perpetual priestly clan in Israel. Together they were responsible for maintaining the proper relationship of the people to Lord in regard to the two major foci of the Mosaic covenant: (1) the administration and ministry of the sanctuary and (2) the custody and administration of the Law of Moses (Averbeck 1996).

The formal priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation was known as the Aaronic priesthood, because all the priests were required to be selected from Aaron’s (Moses’ brother) lineage. However, there apparently was a priesthood of some sort before that time. Moses requested permission from Pharoah to lead his people into the wilderness so they could “sacrifice unto Jehovah” (Ex. 5:3). Furthermore, certain “priests” were required to sanctify themselves in preparation for the reception of the law on Sinai (Ex. 19:22, 24). Some surmise that these were the “elders” (Ex. 3:16), or else a select group of “young men” (Ex. 24:5). This group might have been constituted of the “first-born” who were “sanctified” unto the Lord (Ex. 13:2). Later, the Levites seem to have taken the “sanctified” place of the first-born (Num. 3:5-13). The tribe of Levi was chosen because of its fidelity when Israel worshipped the golden calf at the base of Sinai (Ex. 32:26-29).

When the law was given to the Israelites in the wilderness; Aaron and his sons were appointed to priesthood (Num. 3:10). The role of high priest was a life-long appointment, and was assumed by the oldest qualified descendant of Aaron. All other male offspring of Aaron served as priests, except in the case of the physically impaired (Lev. 21:17-23), or unless he became temporarily “unclean” (Lev. 22:3). Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement each year (Lev. 16:1ff).

3.3 Self-Assessment

- Why do scholars regard Aaronic Priesthood as the defining moment of priesthood?

.4 The Legitimating of priestly status and privilege

During the rule of the high priest in Jerusalem the status of the priests rose to that of a national elite. The Levites became their servants (Num 18:2). The sacrificial route became ever more prescriptive, complex and demanding, both in terms of the quality and the quality of the gifts – money, animals and crops.

The legitimation of the Levite role was achieved by declaring the Levites a sacrifice made by Israel to the LORD their God (Num. 8:16-19). They were substitutes for the first born sons of the other Israelites. The dedication of their lives to the LORD consisted of their service to the priesthood. According to an ancient sentiment, a sacrifice must be the best possession one has as one's disposal. So it was claimed that the Levites, previously a rather odd landless crowd, were the best part of Israel, the specially chosen part (Nurnberger 150).

Of course, the priests again were the cream of the Levites. To safeguard their special status and delineate their particular role "from now on the Israelites must not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin will die" (Num 18:22). The Levites and priests were themselves charged with the responsibility of keeping the Israelites out of the sacred realm.

More down to earth, this particularly precious sacrifice to the Lord (the Levites) had to be paid for by the Israelites. They had to give sacrifices to maintain the Levites. It was claimed that the LORD had ceded his share of these sacrifices to the Aaronides for their exclusive use (Num. 18:8). The LORD's endowment to the Aaronides was declared to be an 'everlasting covenant' decreed by the LORD (Num. 18:19).

The Levites received the tithes (Num.18:21), but they had to pay tithes on the tithes they had received from the Israelites (and corresponding portions of sacrifices in kind). This Lord's portion was to be given to Aaron, that is, to the high priest (Num. 18:28). The Levites had to care for the for the sanctuary, which no other Israelite was allowed to do. The motivation given for this arrangement, the landlessness of the Levites (Num. 18:20ff), must have been a two-edged sword. Landlessness is always painful in an agricultural society. Land constituted the basis of economic independence, citizenship, status and honour in ancient Israel. With the declaration that the LORD was 'their share and inheritance' (Num. 18:20), their dignity was not only restored, but their status was elevated above those of ordinary Israelites.

3.4 Self-Assessment Question

- Why were the priests compensated with sacrifices and tithes in the Old Testament?

.5 Hermeneutical consideration.

(1) Priesthood is bestowed upon all those who are a member of the right family. Just as it was only the sons of Aaron who were priests under the Law of Moses, so it is only those who are in Christ by personal faith who are priests today. Priesthood is not something which men can bestow upon other men, or even which the church can bestow; it is the result of the new birth, which constitutes one to be a child of God and thus to be in Christ. Priests are those whose sins have been atoned for, so that they are free to minister to other sinners. This atonement for the New Testament priest is that which Christ, our Great High Priest, has made through the shedding of His blood on the cross.

(2) God's priesthood is a holy priesthood. We are to learn from God's words, quoted by Moses, that disobedience to God dishonors Him and fails to regard Him as holy. A God who is Holy is a God who is to be honored, and we honor God by obeying Him. This same principle of showing honor by our obedience applies to others, including children, who are to honor their parents (Eph. 6:1-2), and citizens, who are to honor those in authority (cf. Rom. 13:1-7).

God takes the sin of His priests very seriously. Being in close proximity to God brings with it correspondingly high standards of conduct. This is indicated in several ways in the Book of Leviticus. God frequently indicated that disobedience to His commands would bring about the death of the violator. The expression "lest you die" is often found in this context (cf. Exod. 28:35, 43; 30:20, 21; Lev. 8:35; 10:6, 7, 9). In addition, a previous statement of God is quoted by Moses in our text as an explanation of what happened to Nadab and Abihu and its implications for the priesthood:

Priests must not let their human sympathies and family affections dim their regard for the holiness of God. Specifically, Eleazar and Ithamar were not allowed to touch the bodies of their brothers, nor were they allowed to mourn their death, as others could do (v. 6). The priests were to represent and reflect the holiness of God, and thus they could not identify with the sympathies of men. To have mourned for their brothers would have implied a sorrow for their deserved judgment, and would have implied an excessive severity on the part of God, who judged them.

(3) Priests must not do anything which dulls their sense of judgment or their grasp of the significance of what they are doing (vv. 8-11). I understand verses 8-10 to be directly related to the death of Nadab and Abihu. Distinct from later instructions, which are given by Moses, verses 8-10 are said to have come directly from God to Aaron (v. 8). I take it that it is possible, perhaps even likely, that Nadab and Abihu had been "tipping the bottle" before or while they were acting as priests. The consequent dullness of mind, or even downright drunkenness, could have contributed greatly to their disobedience. Today, we remind people not to mix drinking and driving. In those days God reminded

the priests not to drink and be on duty. Drinking can be deadly, to those who drive and to those who serve God.

(4) The function of priests is to serve God and men. Repeatedly in the 28th chapter of Exodus, the garments which are made for Aaron and for his sons are those which enable them to minister to God. So that we frequently find the expression, or one that is similar, "… that he (or they) may minister as priests to Me" (cf. Exod. 28:1, 3, 4, 41; also 29:44). The emphasis here is on serving God, more than on serving men, though I believe both elements are present.

Just what is involved in the ministry of Aaron, and of his sons? As I have pondered Exodus chapter 28 it seems to me that each of the various components of Aaron's attire relates to a particular facet of his ministry. The ephod is to contain two stones on the shoulder pieces (cf. Exod. 28:6-14). On these two stones were engraved the names of the sons of Israel. Aaron was to wear these, "as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel," to bear "their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for a memorial" (Exod. 28:12). Aaron also was to wear a "breastpiece of judgment" (vv. 15-30). On this breastpiece four rows of stones were set, with three stones in each row, each signifying one of the tribes of Israel. The purpose of these stones is given in verse 30: "… and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually" (Exod. 28:30b). On Aaron's turban was to be placed a "plate of gold" (Exod. 28:36-39). It was to be engraved with a seal, reading, "Holy to the Lord" (v. 36). This had to do with "taking away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrated," "so that they may be accepted before the LORD" (v. 38).

3.5 Self-Assessment Question

- Summarize the four lessons we can derive from Old Testament Priesthood for our contemporary society.

4.0 Conclusion

This unit has surveyed the concept of priesthood in the Old Testament. We have seen that priesthood got a legal backing as a recognized institution in the Old Testament from the time of Moses, who consecrated Aaron and his sons as priests. They had the oversight of the various offerings and sacrifices in the tabernacle, etc. (Leviticus 6:8-7:36). There were also daily, weekly, monthly, and periodic festival offerings that the priests were responsible to offer as part of the regular pattern of tabernacle worship (Num. 28-29). Also the Aaronic priests were responsible to maintain the sanctity and purity of the sanctuary (Lev 10:10). Since the Lord was physically present within the physical tabernacle structure in their midst, therefore, the physical purity of Israel was essential to the habitation of the Lord among them. The priesthood was compensated with the tithes and offerings from the sanctuary.

5.0 Summary

So far, this unit discussed the concept of priesthood in the Old Testament, discussed under the following subheading: definition for priesthood in the Old Testament; Patriarchal Priesthood; Aaronic Priesthood; the Legitimating of priestly status and privilege; and hermeneutical consideration.

Next Unit will discuss the concept of Sacrifice in the worship life of Old Testament believing community.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Identify and analyze the distinctive features of Aaronic Priesthood, and differentiate it from the Partriarchal priesthood.

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 2: ENDOWMENTS, ABUSE AND RECOVERY

Unit 5: Sacrifice

Contents

1.0 Introduction

According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, “Sacrifice is a complex and comprehensive term. In its simplest form it may be defined as "a gift to God." It is a presentation to Deity of some material object, the possession of the offerer, as an act of worship. It may be to attain, restore, maintain or to celebrate friendly relations with the Deity.” The purpose of sacrifice could be “total self-surrender” to God, thanksgiving or a form of appeasement.

This unit examines the concept of sacrifice in the worship life of the Old Testament, discussed under the following sub-headings: History of sacrifice in the Old Testament; Types of Sacrifices; The Aims of Sacrificial Act; Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament; and Hermeneutical Considerations in the New Testament.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the historical development of sacrifice in the Old Testament

- Describe the reasons for sacrifice in worship.
- List the types of sacrifices in the Old Testament.
- Show how the Old Testament sacrifices point ultimately to the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
- Explain the significance of the Old Testament sacrifice to the contemporary Church in Africa.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 History of sacrifice in the Old Testament

The Offerings of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:4): The account of the offerings of Cain and Abel shows that the ceremony dates from almost the beginnings of the human race. The custom of offering the firstlings and first-fruits had already begun. Arabian tribes later had a similar custom. Cain's offering was cereal and is called *minchah*, "a gift" or "presentation." The same term is applied to Abel's. There is no hint that the bloody sacrifice was in itself better than the unbloody one, but it is shown that sacrifice without a right attitude of heart is not acceptable to God. This same truth is emphasized by the prophets and others, and is needed in this day as much as then. In this case the altars would be of the common kind, and no priest was needed. The sacrifices were an act of worship, adoration, dependence, prayer, and possibly propitiation (ISBE).

Noah (Gen 8:20): The sacrifices of Noah followed and celebrated the epochal and awe-inspiring event of leaving the ark and beginning life anew. He offered burnt offerings of all the clean animals. On such a solemn occasion only an *'olah* would suffice. The custom of using domestic animals had arisen at this time. The sacrifices expressed adoration, recognition of God's power and sovereignty, and a gift to please Him, for it is said He smelled a sweet savor and was pleased. It was an odor of satisfaction or restfulness. Whether or not the idea of expiation was included is difficult to prove (ISBE).

Abraham (Genesis 12:7): Abraham lived at a time when sacrifices and religion were virtually identical. No mention is made of his offering at Ur, but on his arrival at Shechem he erected an altar. At Beth-el also (12:8) and on his return from Egypt he worshipped there (Genesis 13:4). Such sacrifices expressed adoration and prayer and probably propitiation. They constituted worship, which is a complex exercise. At Hebron he built an altar (Genesis 13:18), officiating always as his own priest. In Genesis 15:4 he offers a "covenant" sacrifice, when the animals were slain, divided, the parts set opposite each other, and prepared for the appearance of the other party to the covenant. The exact idea in the killing of these animals may be difficult to find, but the effect is to give the occasion great solemnity and the highest religious sanction.

Job (Job 1:5): Whatever may be the date of the writing of the Book of Job, the saint himself is represented as living in the Patriarchal age. He constantly offered sacrifices on

behalf of his children, "sanctifying" them. His purpose no doubt was to atone for possible sin. The sacrifices were mainly expiatory. This is true also of the sacrifices of his friends (42:7-9).

Isaac (Gen. 26:25): Isaac seems to have had a permanent altar at Beer-sheba and to have regularly offered sacrifices. Adoration, expiation and supplication would constitute his chief motives.

Jacob (Gen. 28:18): Jacob's first recorded sacrifice was the pouring of the oil upon the stone at Beth-el. This was consecration or dedication in recognition of the awe-inspiring presence of the Deity. After his covenant with Laban he offered sacrifices (*zebhachim*) and they ate bread (Genesis 31:54). At Shechem, Jacob erected an altar (Genesis 33:20). At Beth-el (Genesis 35:7) and at Beer-sheba he offered sacrifices to Isaac's God (Genesis 46:1).

Israel in Egypt: While the Israelites were in Egypt they would be accustomed to spring sacrifices and spring feasts, for these had been common among the Arabs and Syrians, etc., for centuries. Nabatean inscriptions testify to this. At these spring festivals it was probably customary to offer the firstlings of the flocks (compare Exodus 13:15). At the harvest festivals sacrificial feasts were celebrated. It was to some such feast Moses said Israel as a people wished to go in the wilderness (Exodus 3:18; 5:3; 7:16). Pharaoh understood and asked who was to go (Exodus 10:8). Moses demanded flocks and herds for the feast (Exodus 10:9). Pharaoh would keep the flocks, etc. (Exodus 10:24), but Moses said they must offer sacrifices and burnt offerings (Exodus 10:25).

Jethro (Exod. 18:12): As a priest of Midian, Jethro was an expert in sacrificing. On meeting Moses and the people he offered both *`olah* and *zebhachim* and made a feast.

Moses onwards: The Levitical Priesthood instituted from the time of David herald a new dispensation of sacrifice. At this time, sacrifice as worship requirement received a legal backing and comprehensive regulations followed. The detail description of the types of sacrifices in the Old Testament discussed below came from this period.

3.1 Self-Assessment Question

- Summarize the early historical development of Sacrifice in the Old Testament.

3.2 Types of Sacrifices

Two kinds of sacrifice are recognized and required of in the Old Testament, the bloody and the unbloody.

Four types of bloody sacrifices are described:

**(1) Holocaust or whole-burnt offering (*`Olah)*:** a "burnt offering," sometimes whole burnt offering is derived from the verb *`alah*, "to go up." It may mean "that which goes up to the altar" (Knobel, Wellhausen, Nowack, etc.), or "that which goes up in smoke to the

sky" (Bahr, Delitzsch, Dillmann, etc.); sometimes used synonymously with *kalil* (which see). The term applies to beast or fowl when entirely consumed upon the altar, the hide of the beast being taken by the priest. This was perhaps the most solemn of the sacrifices, and symbolized worship in the full sense, i.e. adoration, devotion, dedication, supplication, and at times expiation (ISBE).

(2) Sin offering (*Chota'ah, chatta'th*): a "sin offering," a special kind, first mentioned in the Mosaic legislation. It is essentially expiatory, intended to restore covenant relations with the Deity. The special features were: (i) the blood must be sprinkled before the sanctuary, put upon the horns of the altar of incense and poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering; (ii) the flesh was holy, not to be touched by worshipper, but eaten by the priest only. The special ritual of the Day of Atonement centers on the sin offering.

(3) Guilt offering' (*Asham*): "guilt offering," "trespass offering" (King James Version; in Isaiah 53:10, the King James Version and the Revised Version (British and American) "an offering for sin," the American Revised Version margin "trespass offering"). A special kind of sin offering introduced in the Mosaic Law and concerned with offenses against God and man that could be estimated by a money value and thus covered by compensation or restitution accompanying the offering. A ram of different degrees of value, and worth at least two shekels, was the usual victim, and it must be accompanied by full restitution with an additional fifth of the value of the damage. The leper and Nazirite could offer he-lambs. The guilt toward God was expiated by the blood poured out, and the guilt toward men by the restitution and fine. The calling of the Servant an *'asham* (Isaiah 53:10) shows the value attached to this offering.

(4) Peace offering) (*Shelem, shelamim*): "peace offering," generally used the plural, *shelamim*, only once *shelem* (Amos 5:22). These were sacrifices of friendship expressing or promoting peaceful relations with the Deity, and almost invariably accompanied by a meal or feast, an occasion of great joy. They are sometimes called *zebhachim*, sometimes *zebhach shelamim*, and were of different kinds, such as *zebhach ha-todhah*, "thank offerings," which expressed the gratitude of the giver because of some blessings, *zebhach nedhabhah*, "free-will offerings," bestowed on the Deity out of a full heart, and *zebhach nedher*, "votive offerings," which were offered in fulfillment of a vow (ISBE).

Unbloody sacrifices include:

Meal offering (*Minchah*): "meal offering" (the Revised Version), "meat offering" (the King James Version), a gift or presentation, at first applied to both bloody and unbloody offerings (Genesis 4:5), but in Moses' time confined to cereals, whether raw or roast, ground to flour or baked and mixed with oil and frankincense. These cereals were the produce of man's labor with the soil, not fruits, etc., and thus represented the necessities and results of life, if not life itself. They were the invariable accompaniment of animal sacrifices, and in one instance could be substituted for them (see SIN OFFERING). The term *minchah* describes a gift or token of friendship (Isaiah 39:1), an act of homage (1 Samuel 10:27; 1 Kings 10:25), tribute (Judges 3:15,17), propitiation to a friend

wronged (Ge 32:13,18; Heb 14:19)), to procure favor or assistance (Genesis 43:11; Hosea 10:6).

Wave offering (*Tenuphah*): "wave offering," usually the breast, the priest's share of the peace offerings, which was waved before the altar by both offerer and priest together (the exact motion is not certain), symbolic of its presentation to Deity and given back by Him to the offerer to be used in the priests' service.

(Heave offering (*Terumah*): "heave offering," something lifted up, or, properly, separated from the rest and given to the service of the Deity. Usually the right shoulder or thigh was thus separated for the priest. The term is applied to products of the soil, or portion of land separated unto the divine service, etc.

An Oblation (*Qorban*): "an oblation," or "offering"; another generic term for all kinds of offerings, animal, vegetable, or even gold and silver. Derived from the verb *qarabh*, "to draw near," it signifies what is drawn or brought near and given to God.

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- Explain the following types of sacrifice: Wave offering, Burnt offering, Peace offering and *Qorban.*

3.3 The Aims of Sacrificial Act

Sacrifice as an expression of dependence: dependence implies vulnerability. Survival and prosperity are precariously on the balance at all times. Sacrifice is a ritual which attempts to stabilize the situation. It consists of a symbolic act of subordination under the deity who believed to be in charge of the forces which determine life. The primary motive is not the fulfillment of a divine demand, but the acknowledgement of dependence through a sign of submission. Sacrifice assumes that the deity might be disposed favourably by human gratitude and servitude, and that the deity's wrath may flare up if human acknowledgement of dependence is not made manifest in some way.

Sacrifice as an acknowledgement of guilt: the awe associated with ultimate dependence translates into trepidation when guilt comes into the picture. If persons or communities have transgressed the values and norms laid down by the deity, they expect the wrath of the deity in the form of punitive or destructive events. Sacrifice now assumes the function of reconciling the deity to the transgressor. As a sign of repentance and contrition, sacrifice can take the form of self-mutilation – which does not seem to benefit the deity in any way. It is clear, therefore, that the rationale is not to pay off a debt or make amends, but, once again, to acknowledge one's dependence and abandon the usurped autonomy which the iniquity had manifested (Nurnberger 2004:144).

Covenant relationship: the covenant relationship with the LORD was the basis for sacrifice in Deuteronomy. The people were chosen by the LORD out of all the nations of the earth (Deut 10:15; 14:2). As a result they were expected to be a holy nation,

reverencing the LORD (14:1, 2, 23). The covenant ceremony in Deuteronomy 26:16-19, which immediately follows the tithe declaration, and ends the stipulation section of the book of Deuteronomy (12-26), makes the concept of the uniqueness of the Israelite people obvious (Ajah 2010:133).

Fellowship: another peculiar characteristics of the sacrificial system is the idea of fellowship with the LORD and the community at the central sanctuary: "And you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and rejoice with your household" (Deut. 14:26). Merrill (1994:241) opines that this phrase strongly suggests that the LORD was more than an interested observer in what was going on. The LORD was a participant, for such was the nature of banquets that accompanied the making and ratification of covenant relationships (Ajah 133).

3.3 Self-Assessment Question

- Mention and discuss at least four reasons for sacrifice.

3.4 Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament

Some of the references in the Old Testament that suggest human sacrifice include:

1. Leviticus 27:28-29 (NASB)

Nevertheless, anything which a man sets apart to the LORD out of all that he has, of man or animal or of the fields of his own property, shall not be sold or redeemed. Anything devoted to destruction is most holy to the LORD.

No one who may have been set apart among men shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.

2. Exodus 22:29-30

You must give me the firstborn of your sons. Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day.

3. Joshua 6:21

They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it - men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

4. Numbers 31:25-30, 40-41 (NKJV)

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Count up the plunder that was taken - of man and beast - you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation; and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation. And levy a tribute for the LORD on the men of war who went out to battle: one of every five hundred of the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and

the sheep; take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering to the LORD. And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep, from all the livestock, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

The persons were sixteen thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was thirty-two persons. So Moses gave the tribute which was the LORD's heave offering to Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses.

5. Genesis 22:2

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

6. Judges 11:30-39

And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

…"You may go," he said. And he let her go for two months. She and the girls went into the hills and wept because she would never marry. After the two months, she returned to her father and he did to her as he had vowed.

Conversely, there are several verses that indicate that God is against child sacrifice. God expressly forbids it and its practice is described as evil:

Deuteronomy 12:31: You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

Deuteronomy 18:9-12: When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire...Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.

2 Kings 16:3: He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.

Psalm 106:38: They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood.

Jeremiah 19:4-5: For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of

Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal - something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind.

We argue here: There are numerous forms of sacrifices mentioned in the Old Testament of which human sacrifice is one. Human sacrifice in the Old Testament could mean: (a) Self-dedication; (b) Dedication of the first-born; and Child-sacrifice – holocaust. For one to ascertain whether or not it was accepted by the LORD, the context should be taken into consideration. Some have argued that if the near-sacrifice of Isaac was not actually intended by the LORD, that it would negate the understanding that Christ was actually sacrificed for the salvation of the world. But to insist that the LORD approved human sacrifice in the Old Testament in the sense of holocaust, is at best an over assumption. However, acceptance or rejection of this subject: human sacrifice (holocaust type) in the Old Testament remains controversial. More research is required to know the best way to interpret it.

3.4 Self-Assessment Question

- How would you interpret the concept of human sacrifice in the Old Testament?

3.5 Hermeneutical Considerations in the New Testament

According Nurnberger (2004:166), "Sacrifice is unavoidable." Sacrificial acts and actions are rooted in feelings of dependence, guilt and indebtedness. The classical form is to give to the deity a part of one's substance as a symbol for one's life as a whole. To express one's seriousness, this part must be one's most treasured possession. In patriarchal cultures the most treasured possession was the first-born son. In the course of time, spontaneous and personal sacrifices were institutionalized and abused by kings and priests to gain power, prestige and income. In the New Testament the paradigm experienced a dramatic inversion: not humans sacrificed their first-born to reconcile God, but sacrificed his only-born to reconcile humanity. Humans reconciled with God are involved in the sacrifice of God on behalf of other creatures. This inversion is of great importance for ecological survival in modern times. We cannot help but live off the sacrifice of other creatures, thus of God, but we also have to take part in the sacrifice of God to give other creatures a chance.

4.0 Conclusion

This unit has shown that sacrifice occupies a central place in the worship life of the Old Testament. The believing community performed sacrifices as an expression of dependence on God; as an acknowledgement of guilt before God; as a covenant relationship; and as a mark of fellowship with the deity and the community. The priest plays the pivotal role in the rituals of which he is compensated with offerings and proceeds from the sacrifice. The sacrifice acceptable to God today is not the presentation of animals or agricultural produce, but a humble submission in faith and obedience to

supreme sacrifice on behalf of humanity made by our LORD Jesus Christ, which has abrogated ever other form of ritual sacrifice.

5.0 Summary

The concept of sacrifice was surveyed in this unit under the following subheading: History of sacrifice in the Old Testament; Types of Sacrifices; The Aims of Sacrificial Act; Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament; and Hermeneutical Considerations in the New Testament.

Next unit will survey the concept of redemption and mission in the Old Testament.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Discuss in detail, the four major types of blood oriented sacrifice.
- How can you defend or oppose the concept of human sacrifice from the Old Testament?

7.0 References/Future Reading

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The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. www. Studylight.org.

MODULE 3: OTHER RELEVANT SUBJECTS

Unit 1: Redemption

Unit 2: Mission

Unit 3: Community

Unit 4: Prophecy

Unit 1: Redemption

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This unit marks the beginning of the last module of this manual. The module follows up on God's recovery plan for humanity and concludes with a study on the concept of Prophecy.

The theme of this unit "Redemption" is a comprehensive term used in the Old Testament to refer to the special intervention of God for the salvation of mankind. There are other ideas closely related to the primary concept of redemption which relate to the necessity for redemption and its various aspects and to the effects of the ministry of God's grace in the life of the believing community. This unit will focus on redemption as it relates to God's recovery plan (or salvation) for humanity after they had abused his endowments on them, discussed under the following sub-topics: Redemption Stories in the Old

Testament; The Day of Atonement; The Role of fasting; and Hermeneutical Considerations.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Narrate the stories of redemption in the Old Testament.
- Appreciate God's provision for the redemption of mankind through atonement.
- Understand the role of fasting in the journey to redemption.
- Describe how the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom for redemption.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 **Redemption Stories in the Old Testament**

Basically there are two Hebrew words that deal with the doctrine of redemption. The first word is *PADAH* (Exod. 13:13-15), which means to sever, ransom, release, and preserve. The second word is *GA'AL* (Gen. 48:16; Exod 6:6; Ruth 4:1-11), which means to purchase or buy back as the next of kin. In each case, the sense of redemption as synonymous word to salvation is obvious. Surveyed below are some of the redemption stories in the Old Testament:

1. **The Redemption of Israel Out Of Egypt (Psa. 106:6-12):** Israelites were in bondage in Egypt; groaned under it; cried out in anguish of heart and spirit; the LORD saw their condition; and came to their rescue (Exod. 2). Moses was sent to them as a deliverer; and the price of redemption was the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:13).

2. **The Atonement Money Paid by Israel (Ex. 30:11-16):** The Israelites were required by God to present a token offering to serve as atonement for their lives during a census exercise, so that no plague could come upon them. None but Israelites were ransomed. A specific, numbered people were ransomed. The ransom price was the same for all. Those who were ransomed were preserved from any plague.

3. **The Kinsman Redeemer (Lev. 25:47-49):** the buying again of an Israelite who, by reason of great poverty, had sold himself to another, by one of his near kinsman, is another form of redemption. The person went into slavery or bondage for one reason, and he a relation came to the rescue, paid a ransom, and the person is released. The story of Ruth and Boaz, who became a kinsman redeemer for the former husband of Ruth, is another good example (Ruth 1-4).

4. **The Deliverance of a Debtor from Prison (Isa. 49:8-10; 61:1-3):** In ancient times a man in debt was liable to be arrested and cast into prison. There he would have to remain in bondage until his debt was paid, either by himself or another. This is similar to the role

of redemption Paul played for Onesimus, who was in serious debt to his master Philemon (Phile. 1:18).

3.1 Self-Assessment Question

- Discuss at least four examples of redemption stories in the Old Testament.

3.2 The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement Feast (also called Yom Kippur, Lev. 16; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7-11): the purpose of the feast was to cleanse both the priests and the people from their sins and to purify the Holy Place. The Levitical laws made provisions for atonement through the offering of sacrifices. If the community or a member of the community sins unintentionally, a sin offering or a guilt offering must be made. An animal would be sacrificed: "in this way the priest will make atonement for them and they will be forgiven" (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31).

The Day of Atonement was usually done once in a year, and then a bull would be sacrificed as atonement for the priest and his family. One goat would be sacrificed to make atonement for the people's sins. Another sent into the desert would symbolically carry the people's sins and thus make atonement for them. This animal that carries the people's sins is called the "scape-goat". Thus, "atonement is usually made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites" (Lev.16:34). H. H. Rowley (1956: 95) reports:

> Beyond these individual sacrifices we find the Law provision for the daily offerings on behalf of the community, so that right relations might be maintained between it and God. Further, on the annual Day of Atonement, whose ritual was certainly of ancient origin, sacrifice was offered for the sin of the community during the year. Here, however, the scape-goat on which the sin of the people was put was driven out into the wilderness and not sacrificed in the shrine.

Forgiveness of sins was often the result of atonement. Atonement and forgiveness are usually linked together in Leviticus. When the priest offers a sin offering or guilt offering, he makes atonement and the person is forgiven. This is the important ritual of sacrifices and forgiveness. But ultimately forgiveness was dependent on Israel's confession of sin and God's forgiving grace. Solomon prayed that if the people sin and then turn and confess their sins, God should hear from heaven and forgive the sin (1 Kings 8:33, 34).

Now, the cleansing achieved was not just for the priest and the people, but for the sanctuary. House (1998:138) opines that this act cleanses the most holy place in particular and the entire sanctuary in general. Israel's sins, whether breaches of the cleanness laws or outright rebellion against God, 'pollute the sanctuary to some measure.' Sin is pervasive, but this sacrifice removes the guilt of all types of transgression.

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- Describe the nature of the Day of Atonement, and show why it was necessary for redemption in the Old Testament.

3.3 The Role of Fasting

Fasting was associated with the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. Fasting is the voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes. The Law of Moses specifically required fasting for only one occasion—the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-30; 23:27-31; Numbers 29:7). This custom resulted in calling this day "the fasting day" (Jeremiah 36:6) or "the fast," (Acts 27:9). It was a very solemn and holy day with a lot of elaborate ritual. (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 10:1-1). Fasting, however, could also be done for other reasons. It was sometimes done as a sign of distress, grief, or repentance. Fasting was often accompanied by prayer; also tearing of clothes, throwing dust and ashes upon ones head, dressing in coarse sackcloth and uncombed hair and unwashed bodies.

Some fasting was a natural reaction to grief over the loss of a loved one (like the men of Jabesh-Gilead and David); but more often, fasting was done to purposely: to "afflict the soul" - Lev 23:26-32; "chasten the soul" - Ps 69:10. The purpose of such affliction or chastening was to "humble" the soul (Ps 35:13), and not for any affect it might have on the body. Evidently, they felt that by so humbling themselves they would more likely incur God's favor - cf. Ezra 8:21-23; Is 57:15; 66:1-2. So they would fast when they needed: (a) Forgiveness for sin (Moses, Ahab, and Daniel); (b) Their loved ones restored to health (David); (c) Protection from danger (Ezra); (d) Deliverance from their enemies (the Israelites). Because they were seeking god's favor, fasting would almost always be accompanied with prayer.

The normal means of fasting involved abstaining from all food but not water. Sometimes the fast was but partial - a restriction of diet but not total abstention - cf. Dan. 10:2-3. On rare occasions there was the absolute fast, as in the case of the people of Nineveh, who also included the animals in their fast - cf. Jonah 3:5-10; as in the case of Queen Esther – Esth. 4:16 (cf. Paul, Ac 9:9); the absolute fasts of Moses and Elijah must have had divine assistance - Deut 9:9; 1Ki 19:8.

A fast was often for one day, from sunrise to sunset, and after sundown food would be taken - Judg 20:26; 1Sa 14:24; 2Sa 1:12; 3:35. A fast might be for one night - Dan 6:18. The fast of Esther continued for three days, day and night, which seems to have been a special case – Esth. 4:16. At the burial of Saul, the fast by Jabesh-Gilead was seven days - 1Sa 31:13; 1 Chron. 10:12. David fasted seven days when his child was ill - 2Sa 12: 16-18. The longest fasts recorded in Scripture were the forty-day fasts by Moses, Elijah, and Jesus – Exod. 34:28; Deut 9:9; 1Ki 19:8; Mt 4:2; Lk. 4:2.

Fasting can easily turn into an external show and ceremonial ritualism; when it did, the prophets spoke out against it. The most vigorous attack against such fasting is made in

Isaiah 58. The people complained that they had fasted and God had not seen – Isa. 58:3a. But they had not been fasting for the right reason (to be heard by God) – Isa. 58:3b-4. In contrast to simply an external display of bowing one's head like a bulrush and spreading sackcloth and ashes, the Lord would rather they: 1) Loose the bonds of wickedness; 2) Let the oppressed go free; 3) Share bread with the hungry; 4) Bring the poor into one's house; 5) Cover the naked. Then they should be heard in their prayers – Isa. 58:6-9. Fasting without true repentance defeats the purpose of fasting: to have your prayers heard by the Lord! The same point was made about the ceremonial fasts that had been added by the Israelites to commemorate certain occasions - Zech 7:1-14. The people wanted to know if they should fast on the special occasions as they had done - Zech 7:1-3. The Lord responded that the fasts had not been done for Him - Zech 7:4-6. They should have instead done the will of the Lord - Zech 7:7-10. But because they did not, the fasting in the past was of no value - Zech 7:11-14.

3.3 Self Assessment Question

- What was the role of fasting in the worship life and redemption of the believing community?

3.4 Hermeneutical considerations

Hebrews 9:7-12 makes the most extensive use of the Day of Atonement in the Scriptures. There the author says that the problem with the Day of Atonement was that it had to occur annually, which meant that the consciences of the worshippers could not be cleared permanently (Heb 9:7-9). Therefore these rules applied only until Christ's death atoned for all sins committed by God's people (Heb. 9:10-12). Before the permanent atonement unfolded the Leviticus system atoned for sins on an annual basis and presented a picture of a greater sacrifice to come (Heb 9:6-8). Presumably, the Day of Atonement helped instill in faithful Israelites a strong desire for a permanent forgiveness of sin. After the cross, however, the Day of Atonement, like the other sacrifices, is subsumed under Jesus' one comprehensive payment for sins on the cross.

Redemption in the New Testament is deliverance from sin by the blood of Christ. All God's elect were delivered from the penalty of sin at the cross. They are each delivered from the dominion of sin in regeneration and effectual calling. We shall be delivered from the being of sin in the death of these bodies. Finally, we shall be completely delivered from all the evil consequences of sin in resurrection glory.

This redemption is the unaided, unassisted, effectual work of Christ alone. - "Christ hath redeemed us!" In every picture we are given in the Old Testament, as well as in every explanation of the doctrine in the New Testament, redemption was made for a specific people, and is an effectual work which always results in deliverance experienced. That is the doctrine of redemption taught in the Bible. The notion of a universal redemption, a redemption made even for those who suffer the wrath of God in hell, a redemption which

redeems no one, accomplishes nothing, and secures nothing is as foreign to the Word of God as it is blasphemous.

3.4 Self-Assessment Question

- How can you apply the Old Testament concept of Redemption to the New Testament?

4.0 Conclusion

Redemption remains the highest attempt in the Old Testament to redeem mankind. The Day of Atonement was the climax of Redemption activities in the Old Testament. The Priest was required to offer atoning sacrifices for himself, the people, and the worship place. The Day of Atonement was observed with fasting, which was the only annual fasting day commanded by Moses (Lev 16). Old Testament prophets queried any sacrificial act that lacked repentance and sincere faith in God, hence their attack on outward religiosity. The Day of Atonement was only effective if the people participated in it under genuine repentance and faith. However, redemption in the New Testament took a different understanding. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross has abrogated once for all the annual sacrifice for sin required on the Day of Atonement. This is the position of Christianity.

5.0 Summary

So far, this unit examined God's plan of redemption in the Old Testament, discussed under the following sub-headings: Redemption stories in the Old Testament; The Day of Atonement; The Role of Fasting; and Hermeneutical considerations.

Next unit will discuss another plan of God to recover mankind presented in the Old Testament, namely: Mission.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Give a brief survey of God's redemption plan for humanity in the Old Testament.

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Unit 2: Mission

Contents

1.0 Introduction

The concept of God's mission in the Old Testament hinges around God's purpose for electing Israel, which is precisely to bring blessing ultimately to all nations. The Bible is the united testimony to God's purpose to redeem the whole world. So, this unit will survey the concept of God's mission to other nations in the Old Testament under the following sub-headings: Definition of Mission in the Old Testament; God's plan for other nations in the Pentateuch; God's plan for other nations in the Prophets; God's plan for other nations in the Writings; and Hermeneutical Considerations in the New Testament.

2.0 Objective

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of God's mission to redeem other nations in the Old Testament.
- Discover that the purpose of God's election of Israel was for the ultimate blessings of other nations of the world.

- Recognize Israel as God's Servant Nation, and why Jesus said Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22).
- Recognize the reasons for the passive nature of Israel's witness to the Nations.

3.0 Main body

3.1 Definition of Mission in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, a degree of tension exists between Israel and the nations, that is, between the fact of Israel's election and the concept of world mission. Throughout her history Israel had to grapple with the reality that she was related to all the nations through creation and that God had also called her to be separate from them. The Abrahamic Covenant, which gives Israel an exalted place in God's program for the world, promises that Israel will be a channel of blessing to "all peoples on earth" (Gen 12:3). In H is choice of Israel to be His elect people, Yahweh bestows on them both blessings and responsibilities. He promises to give His elect people a position of power and prominence in the world. Yahweh intends to utilize Israel as His servant nation to carry out His plan for all humanity.

In Exodus 19:4-6, Yahweh presents Israel with a unique and sobering challenge (before revealing to them the Law, i.e., the Mosaic Covenant). Doubtless, their conformity to the Law would have caused them to be a distinct nation among the pagan nations of the world. However, that distinctiveness was not an end in itself. From the very outset, this divinely-intended distinctiveness carried with it worldwide implications. By conducting their lives in conformity with the demands of the Law, the nation of Israel would have been able to function as God's servant nation, representing God and His character before the surrounding nations of the world.

Various aspects of her national existence also contributed to Israel's consciousness of her distinctiveness. Jacob and his descendants enjoyed a separate existence in Egypt (in the land of Goshen-Gen 46:31-34) for a number of years. By means of the Law, Yahweh clearly demonstrated that Israel's relationship with Him demanded a moral and ritual distinctiveness (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2). Prior to their entrance into Canaan, Yahweh instructed His chosen people to exterminate all the inhabitants and to avoid every pagan custom in order to maintain their

uniqueness. As the nation of Israel developed, certain Gentiles enjoyed divine redemptive benefits only by virtue of their access to Israel.

This tension between Israel's election and her worldwide witness reached a climax in Isaiah 40-55. In the years leading up to Isaiah's prophetic ministry, the nation of Israel often failed to live in accordance with her God-given function, i.e., serving as Yahweh's servant nation. As a nation she became characterized by covenant rebellion. The northern ten tribes (also called Israel) were soon to go into Assyrian exile, and the southern two tribes (Judah) would be left alone in the land. In Isaiah 1-39 Yahweh delivered His stinging indictment against the nation Israel (focusing on the southern kingdom): divine judgment is coming because of your covenant treachery! As with any nation that refused to submit to Yahweh's sovereignty (cf. Isaiah 13-23), Israel's covenant Lord promised to punish her Israel's Mission to the Nations in Isaiah 40-55. However, Israel's disobedient conduct was especially reprehensible. As God's covenant partner, God's chosen nation had become like an adulterous wife.

Let's conclude this section with the words of John Roxborogh (2001:27-28):

> While we cannot but approach any text with assumptions and questions, one would like to think that it would be possible to allow the text to challenge the interpreter more than lend support to externally formulated views. This work surveys ways in which the Old Testament has been interpreted in select missiological writing, and invites discussion as to where we might go from here - particularly if missiology and ethics were to become serious partners in the hermeneutical task.

3.1 Self-Assessment Question

- Give a brief definition of mission in the Old Testament

3.2 God's plan for other nations in the Pentateuch

The first eleven chapters of Genesis lay the foundation for everything that concerns itself with missions. Chapter one begins with God, is filled with God, and ends with God. Thirty-eight times the word "God" is used. He is the only true God and there are no other gods. He is the creator of all the earth and must be made known to all the nations. This chapter reveals God as the only God of creation and man being the ultimate focus of his love. It is said, "Creation is the work of God which culminates in man." The first concern

of the Bible is not with Hebrews, but with humanity. Because of creation, there is but one human race. We all share the same common origin.

In the Garden of Eden, God's plan for mankind is revealed. God desires a personal relationship with all, and eternal and abundant life is given freely for man to enjoy. Chapter three speaks of the universal problem of sin and its consequences. In verse 15 of this same chapter, the first promise is given concerning" the purpose of God to unite the human race to himself through one of its own members. God also introduced the method of salvation by providing a substitute payment for sin. Genesis 4, through the story of Able teaches the church that, "we are our brother's keeper." Throughout these first chapters, God dealt with mankind as a whole and then in Geneses 11, God confused their language, scattered the "nation," and set in motion his plan of bringing the "nations" back into a covenant relationship with himself.

God's plan was that through one nation, all the nations of the world would be blessed. God chose Abram out of idolatry and said, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:1-3). Some have questioned why God would only choose one nation out of so many. Julian Love answers this saying, "The choice of one race among many was not an anti-missions act on God's part, selecting one and letting others go by; it was rather among the most missionary of his acts, choosing one and filling it with a sense of his will and a deep understanding of his nature so that it might teach all mankind." Avery Willis also states, "God chose the Israelites, not because he liked them better, but in order that they might bring the lost to knowledge of God. God elects and in this election enters into the missionary enterprise. This understanding takes one back to the premise that God is author and originator of missions.

The other books of Moses continue this "all nations" theme. Genesis focuses on God's promise to Abraham, where He repeated the Gen 12:1-3 promise many times to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 18:17-19; Gen 22:16-8; Gen 26:2-5; Gen 28: 13-15). In Exodus 19:3-6, before God gave the Ten Commandments, he set before the people a conditional covenant. He wanted them to be a kingdom of priests among all the nations. The function of the priest is well known. He serves as a mediator between God and the congregation he serves.

He makes the will of God known to the people and makes the people acceptable to God. However, in this case, it is not of one congregation, but of many priests serving among all the nations of the earth; Leviticus points to God's concern and ownership for the Gentiles (Lev 19:18, 34). In Numbers, God kept his oath and preserved a remnant that would spread his glory throughout the whole earth (Numbers 14: 20-23). Finally, Deuteronomy records Moses' last words at the end of the wilderness wonderings where he reaffirms God's ownership of all of the nations (Deut 10: 14-19).

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- Every book in the Pentateuch has something to say about God's plan for other nations. Discuss

3.3 God's plan for other nations in the Prophets

Of all the declarations of worldwide mission, Isaiah is central among all the prophets. The fifty-third chapter speaks of the suffering servant, but Isaiah 52 and 54 point to the nations as the object of the love of this Suffering One. Some scholars explain that before chapter divisions in the Bible, this whole section of the Old Testament from Chapter forty-one to sixty-six would have been treated as a whole. Jesus and the New Testament writers give ample evidence that they were familiar with and understood these Scriptures applied to the Messiah and to the nations. Jeremiah was "appointed as a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5). He saw the future glory of a new covenant (Jer. 31:33-34) which spoke of the Holy Spirit and Jeremiah knew that the ultimate purpose of God was "the nations" (Jer. 16:19-21). Ezekiel's concern was the glory of God among the nations (Ezekiel 36:22-23; 38:23; 39:7). Israel would be brought back from captivity so that the great name of the Lord would no longer be profaned among the nations. Hosea foretold that the Gentiles would become the people of God (Hosea 1:10, 23; Rom 9:25, 26).

After Paul's first missionary journey, the leaders in Jerusalem raised many questions concerning the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church. James, at that critical point in church history, reached back to the book of Amos to bring resolution to a potentially damaging situation. He may have remembered Jesus' teaching from the Law, Prophets, and Psalms. Maybe it was just the Holy Spirit who gave him special insight on that day. Whatever the reason, James understood clearly that the gospel was meant not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. "He quoted Amos 9:11-12 from the Greek Septuagint."

Joel gave to the church the "whosoever will gospel" that was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost and expounded by Paul in his letter to the Romans. Micah prophesied the birthplace of the one "whose origins are from of old" (Micah 5:2). This kingdom rule was not only for the Jews, but would reach "to the ends of the earth" (Micah 5:5). Habakkuk called for universal worship through faith alone (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:7; Gal 3:11). The book of Zechariah is filled with intimate details of the Savior's final days and hours upon the earth. His entry into Jerusalem as the king and his method of death are outlined in this magnificent document. The message of this prophet and the other prophets was unmistakably clear. "Yahweh, the eternal One is the God of all the nations. All will be judged with righteousness and justice." The need for salvation and the call for repentance and the offer of forgiveness are universal. The Messiah must suffer for all, and after his resurrection this message would be proclaimed to the whole earth beginning in Jerusalem.

3.3 Self-Assessment Questions

- Summarize the main views of the some of the prophetic books on God's mission to the nations.

3.4 God's plan for other nations in the Writings

The book of Psalms was probably the most familiar among the Hebrew people, because of its constant use in worship in the temple and the synagogues. These hymns of praise were chanted, sung, and prayed individually and corporately. The universal message woven throughout this collection of songs could not have been overlooked as it is today. He explains that in many verses, the King James Version of the Bible has veiled the "all nations" theme. In Psalm 47:1, for example, the King James Version reads: "O clap your hands all ye people." This could be thought of as a call to all the people of Israel to come together to worship. Today's church often interprets and uses this verse in the context of a call to worship. However, the correct translation of this verse is: "Clap your hands all peoples," or as the New International Version of the Bible states: "Clap your hands all you nations." This verse is obviously addressed to all the nations, calling upon them to respond the God of all creation in worship. No doubt, every time this was sung, God reminded his covenant people of the offer of salvation to all nations and to the responsibility given to the Jews to be a kingdom of priests.

If one were to survey the book of Psalms searching for this missionary or "all nations" theme, Psalm 2:8 would be a beginning point. God says to his people, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." In fact, if a careful study is conducted of Psalm 2, its missionary thrust is clearly seen. Roger E. Hedlund, in his book *The Mission of the Church in the World* offers a helpful outline. In Psalm 2:1-3, mankind rebels against the Lord. However, God is sovereign (Ps 2:4-6), and is not subject to man's approval. His plan will prevail and "His King", the Christ will be installed and enthroned in

Zion. Thirdly, God's mission to the nations is enunciated (Ps 2:7-9), and was clearly understood by first-century believers (Heb 1:5, Rev 2:27). Lastly, the nations are offered their only hope, which is submission to the King.

Psalm 22 is most fascinating because it not only begins with the words "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" but because it reads as an eyewitness account of the crucifixion of Jesus. It is not known whether Jesus quoted anymore of this Psalm from the cross, however it is a possibility that he recited this Psalm to himself while hanging on the cross, or at least taught these thirty-one verses to his disciples in his post-resurrection discourse. The majority of Psalm 22 portrays the anguish and horror of Christ' death, however, the song shifts in verse 27 to the nations. The peoples of the earth are the purpose of this death. "All the ends of the earth will remember" (Ps 22:27). "All the families of the nations will bow down" (Ps 22:27).

The rich will come, along with the poor and "future generations will be told" (Ps 22:30) that, "the Lord has done it" (Ps 22:31). Psalm 33 focuses on God's work among the nations. Psalm 66 is set in the context of the Passover and recounts the mighty acts of God in delivering the children of Israel from Egypt. It was an invitation to the nations to come and worship this God who acted in history. Psalm 67 is a missionary psalm, which

anticipates the conversion of the nations. Nine times in seven verses the Psalmist challenges the listener to lift up his eyes and look to the nations as the recipient of God's salvation. Psalm 68 is a celebration of the redemption of Israel with the result being the redemption also of the Gentiles. As Isaac Watts meditated on Psalm 72, he penned the word to his famous hymn, "Jesus Shall Reign." These above mentioned Psalms and many more (Pss 87, 96, 98, 117, 145) give ample proof from this section of the Old Testament that God is a missionary God, that the people of Israel were a missionary people, and that Jesus had plenty of material to teach his disciples on their first post-resurrection meeting. Jesus walked down the road to Emmaus with two disciples and explained the gospel from the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, and the Bible said that their hearts burned within them as he spoke. The disciples attended "witnessing 101" in an upper room with Jesus and He taught them everything they needed in order to be a witness. He did not teach them the *Romans Road, Continued Witness Training, Evangelism Explosion, F.A.I.T.H., or Witnessing Without Fear.* Jesus taught them the Old Testament, and their minds were opened. With their minds opened, their hearts on fire, and their lives full of the Holy Spirit, it is no wonder that they went out and preached the gospel to all the known nations of their time. Could it be that what is needed in order for the church to be a witness-minded church and a mission-minded church is to really understand the message of the Bible, which is, "all nations?"

3.4 Self-Assessment Questions

- How would you defend or oppose the claim that Psalms is a missionary Book?

3.5 Hermeneutical Considerations in the New Testament

God deals with all nations with justice and mercy. Nations as wholes can be under God's judgment (Deut. 9:4-6; Isa. 24), agents of God's judgment (Isa. 1O:5-19), or recipients of God's mercy (Jer. 12:15f.; 18: 1-10, Jonah). This international and collective dimension to the sovereignty of God needs more attention in its missiological implications. The nations are portrayed as 'observers' of what God was doing in Israel. God's actions in and through his people were on an open stage, intentionally. Like the light on a lamp-stand or the city set on a hill in Jesus' comparison, there was to be a visibility to the nations who would ask questions and draw conclusions (cf. Ex.15:14-16; 32:1lf.; Deut. 4:6-8; 29: 22-28; Ezek. 36: 16-23). The nations would in some sense 'benefit' from Israel's salvation-history. They can therefore be summoned already to praise Yahweh for that history, even though it paradoxically includes the defeat of some nations by Israel in the conquest. The faith imagination of Israel's worship has many examples of this invitation to the nations to join the praise of Yahweh (e.g. Ps. 47:1-4; 22:27-28, 67; 96:1-3; 98:1-3, etc.). How it could happen was, as Paul put it, a 'mystery'. Even the Deuteronomic history perceives the universal 'missionary' significance of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs. 8:41-43, 60f.).

3.5 Self-Assessment Question

- New Testament is a continuation of God's mission to the nations and not the beginning of it. Discuss.

4.0 Conclusion

This unit provoked our minds in reading the Old Testament differently. God's election of Israel has a global connotation. Through Abraham, the whole nations of the earth will be blessed. So we examined some of the opinions expressed in the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in the Hebrew Canon. We can conclude that the New Testament is not the beginning of God's mission for the recovery of humanity; it is only a continuation.

5.0 Summary

This unit surveyed the concept of God's mission in the Old Testament under the following sub-topics: Definition for Mission in the Old Testament; God's plan for other nations in the Pentateuch; God's plan for other nations in the Prophets; God's plan for other nations in the Writings; and Hermeneutical Considerations in the New Testament.

Next unit will consider the last theme on God's plan for the recovery of humanity, namely: Community.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

- Do a critical appraisal of Old Testament concept of God's mission to other nations.

7.0 References/Future Reading

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MODULE 3: OTHER RELEVANT SUBJECTS

Unit 3: Community

Contents

1.0 Introduction

It was Parratt (2001:7) who said that there are areas of African culture which may throw light on aspects of the Christian faith and which may be helpfully compared to them. One of the areas in question is the sense of the community in African life, which can illuminate the meaning of the solidarity of the people of God in the Old Testament and the Church as the Body of Christ in the new. So this unit will survey, the concept of community life in the Old Testament under the following sub-headings: Meaning of Community in the Old Testament; Solidarity Thinking; Freedom and Bondage of the Individual; Solidarity in the Monarchical Period, Political Collapse and the Individual; Hermeneutical Considerations.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Appreciate the importance of community in the recovery plan of God for humanity in the Old Testament.
- See the danger of individualism in a covenant community
- Describe the benefits of solidarity in the community
- Understand the indispensable nature of the community in the socio-political life of an individual.
- Value the African recourse to community living, and the hope for the future.

3.0 Main body

3.1 Meaning of Community in the Old Testament

Hinson (1982:11) was right when he said that whenever God called anyone to serve him that he did so in order that that person could have an influence with the community in which he lived. The call of Abraham, Moses and David was altogether for the sake of the community, to establish the nation of Israel, freed from their enemies and able to serve the LORD. He did not only call the great leaders, every person who was responsive to the steadfast love of God, was to set an example to the people of his day. His life was ruled by God, and this should have an effect upon his relationship with his fellow men.

Walter Eichrodt (231-232) faulted a definition for the "Individual" and the "community" presented by philosophical idealism, which used "Individualism" and "Collectivism" to describe the situation found in the Old Testament and elsewhere. According to this view, "Individualism" is defined as that spiritual state which affirms its own existence without regard for any collective ties of the nation or cult community, and seeks to develop its own attitude to God and the world. While "Collectivism" was understood as impersonal attitude to the holy, guided by mass instincts or sacred traditions, and ruling out any individual shaping of thought and action. Eichrodt labeled these definitions ill-defined and inadequate delimitation of the concepts found in the Old Testament.

He opines that instead of employing such conceptual categories, it is better to keep firmly in mind the striking fundamental characteristics of all forms of community in ancient world, and in particular of those of Israel, namely the strength of their sense of solidarity – a sense which adjusts itself in a variety of ways to changes in the shape of society, but is always the essential determinant of its distinctive quality. According to Eichrodt, the interplay with this solidarity thinking presents a living individuality which, as distinct from individualism, is to be understood as the capacity for personal responsibility and for shaping ones own life. This does not stand in mutually exclusive opposition to, but in fruitful tension with, the duty of solidarity, and as such affects the individual and motivates his conduct.

We argue here, that the community life and individual experiences in the Old Testament were mutually inclusive and not exclusive. So there is a great insight from the position of Eichrodt. Let us examine the solidarity thinking in the social life of the community of faith in the Old Testament. H. H. Rowley (1956:100) supported this view when he said,

> But in no period of the life of Israel do we find extreme collectivism or extreme individualism, but a combination of both. Some writers or some passages emphasize one side of this dual nature of man more than the other, but both sides belong to the wholeness of Biblical thought in all periods.

3.1 Self-assessment Question

- How would you define the concept of community in the Old Testament?

3.2 Solidarity Thinking

The Book of Deuteronomy championed community living where every one is considered as important in the believing community. The distinctive sense of belonging together was rooted in the structure of patriarchal society, where the father of the tribe moulds the life of his great family both externally and internally, and occupies a place of decisive importance for the tribal destiny. By their descent from him the members of the tribe are incorporated as kinsmen in a family community, and welded into social unit outside which there can be no meaningful life for the individual, since he would be abandoned to every danger without the protection of the Law. The Laws of blood-vengeance, city of refuge, care for the stranger, widows and orphans readily come to mind (cf. Deut 26).

Ajah (2010:135-136) argues that the fellowship aspect of the tithe system in Deuteronomy has strong social and ethical dimensions. The unity of the people in worship knew no hierarchy or divisions. This depiction of the sacrificial activity is not concerned with the role of the priests; no king leads or represents the people. The ‘place’ is not a royal-sacral complex in which the people’s right of approach is restricted or mediated. The place belongs to the LORD and to Israel. The gathering of households as demanded involved the inclusion of slaves, and the less privileged, in the big picture of the people of God, as well as the Levites, who have no substance of their own. It is unthinkable that they were to be left at home in the light of the specific provisions for them in the triennial tithe (14:28-29).

In spite of the clear recognition that Israel is a nation, living on the land given to it by God, the image that is presented is more that of a family, or clan, than of a nation with all its mixed and varied elements. In consequence all Israelites are encouraged to think of themselves as ‘brothers’ (cf. Deut. 14:7; 15:2, 3; Clements 1989:56). The term, ‘brothers’ (*’achm*), is Deuteronomy’s characteristic expression for referring to fellow-Israelites,

regardless of social status or tribal divisions (e.g. Deut. 1.16; 3.18, 20; cf McConville 1984:19). As God's children, all Israelites are brothers and sisters with mutual obligations to care for each other. They are holy to the LORD and must shun all conduct that is incompatible with that status (Ajah 2010:136).

3.2 Self-Assessment Question

- In what sense did the Israelites regard themselves as "brothers"?

3.3 Freedom and Bondage of the Individual

Reference has been made to the story of Achan, where the whole people were involved in disaster through the sin of one man. In that story there is a profound spiritual message, though its form embodies the long outgrown idea of wholesale massacre, to which both Israel and her neighbors sometimes resorted as a religious act. Achan had retained some of the material spoil because his selfishness of spirit triumphed over his public duty, and by every standard he was to be condemned, as he doubtless was condemned by his own conscience.

That a single individual may involve a whole community in disaster is amply attested by history. It takes but one traitor to betray an army or a nation, and a single careless deed may expose large numbers of people to danger. Yet in all such cases as we recognize there is a direct causal chain between the individual failure and the public consequences, whereas in the case of Achan no causal chain can be demonstrated between his sin and the national impotence that followed it. Often in the world of the spirit causal chains cannot be demonstrated, while yet they exist. The subtle and imperceptible influence of one spirit upon another is real, though hard to assess, and an evil man is a social liability. Even if Achan's sin had not been discovered, he would still have been a social liability, a center of moral disease within the life of the community. If there is disease in the body at any point, it is as real a menace to the body before its nature and location are discovered by a doctor as it is after diagnosis. So the sinner, even though his sin is concealed, **is** a menace in the measure of his sin to the welfare of the community. When Achan's sin was known he was destroyed, less to punish him than as an act of social hygiene, to cleanse the community of his stain.

Where the individual is a representative and leader of the community, it is less surprising that his act should affect the welfare of the whole society, and that if he is evil he should be a public liability. The action of a leader may determine the policy of the state and involve the people in disaster or blessing.

Furthermore, it is to be noted that the Biblical teaching of the grace of God is such that when a nation is indicted, something more is meant than that the balance of the life of the community is alienated from God. The Bible teaches that for the sake of a small minority,

which is as the salt of society, the whole community may be spared. Sodom might have been spared for but a handful of righteous men, and in the thought of the Remnant, which runs through so much of the Old Testament; we have further illustration of the same principle. A society that is rotten through and through may bring disaster upon itself, lest its corrupting influence spread more widely. But where there is hope of reform the divine mercy persists, and even where there is no hope for the society as a whole, a Remnant may be spared, either for its own sake or for the sake of those who will come after.

3.3 Self-Assessment Question

- Discuss at least two examples from the Old Testament where an individual action affected the community positively or negatively.

3.4 Solidarity in the Monarchical Period

The king's act is therefore never without significance for the nation. His private life may affect his public act; and his public act is not merely his but the community's, since he is its representative. It is frequently said in the Bible that Jeroboam I not only sinned but made Israel to sin, and by this is meant that he not only led them in the way of evil, but that his act as the representative of the nation was itself an act of corporate sin. The prophets denounced both the political and the religious leaders of the nation precisely because their acts were always more than their own. Nevertheless, it is not to be supposed that only the leaders are important; everyone, whether leader or common man, may contribute something to the strength of the life of the community, or may diminish it. Where there runs through a people indifference to the will of God, it will have leaders who will lead it in the way that is alien to his will; for only in such a way will they be content to follow. If they had other leaders, the spirit of the community would nullify their leadership.

Jeremiah declared that though Moses or Samuel was to act as intercessor for the people of his day, the intercession would be unavailing, since the nation was so corrupt. Neither of these great men would be really representative of the nation that Jeremiah knew. Wise leaders must be supported by the spirit of the communities they lead. 1 Kin. 12. 21; I1 Sam. 24.22 Jer. 15: 1. On the other hand, unwise leaders, whose acts may compromise and menace the communities they lead, are not to be endured patiently with a disclaimer of responsibility for their acts. Without any thought of the machinery of modern democracy, the prophets were sure that a people which walked in the way of God would find all its interests watched by God, Who would raise up for it leaders attuned to His Spirit. Thus Jeremiah said, “Return, 0 backsliding children, says the Lord. . . . And I will give you shepherds according to my own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” When we view the thought of the Old Testament as a whole, therefore, we see that the corporate spirit of society, and the individual spirit of the leader or the common man, are alike important. They may be a source of strength to the community if directed by the spirit of God; they may be a source of weakness if they are marred by sin. For every individual, whether great or small, is a member of the corporate society, carried

in the current of its life and bringing his contribution to that current. He cannot live to himself alone; for his life belongs to all, and the life of all around him belongs to him.

It has been said that there is no Biblical doctrine of the rigid equation of desert and fortune. The book of Deuteronomy and the writings of the Deuteronomic school are governed by the theory of such an equation in the experience of the nation. Deuteronomy promises that so long as Israel is obedient to the will of God it will prosper in all its life, while when it is disobedient it will suffer natural calamities and grievous ills at the hands of foes. The book of Judges represents history in the form of alternation between foreign oppression as the result of religious disloyalty and deliverance through a God-given leader when repentance brings men back to God. The prophets of the pre-exilic period promised disaster to generations that were not walking in the way of God. All of this presupposes that desert and fortune, at least on the national scale, are linked together. Broadly speaking there is truth in this, though it is not the whole truth. Still less is it the whole truth, when it is individualized and used as a basis for the doctrine that every man gets precisely what he deserves. With Jeremiah, as we have seen, Jer. 3: 15, it was not presented as the whole truth, but balanced by other aspects of truth.

3.4 Self-Assessment Question

- Kingship in Israel did operate in isolation from the community; hence their destinies were a corporate enterprise. Discuss.

3.5 Political Collapse and the Individual

The question of man's sociality is complicated further by the bond which unites him to the generations of the past and **of** the future. He is not merely a member of contemporary society. He belongs to the past and to the future. While Jeremiah rebuked his fellows for blaming their fathers for their misfortunes, the Bible teaches that there are occasions on which one generation sins and the next generation pays the price. When Ahab repented on hearing the rebuke of Elijah, the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying "Have you seen how Ahab humbled himself before me? Because he humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring this evil upon his house" **(**1 Kings 21: 29). When Isaiah came to Hezekiah to predict that because he had opened his treasuries to the messengers of Merodach-baladan, his treasures should one day be carried off to Babylon, and his descendants be eunuchs in the palace of the Babylonian king, Hezekiah replied, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. . . . Is it not so, if peace and truth shall be in my days?" (I1 Kings 20: 19).

It often happens that the evils of one generation take time to bring forth their fruits, and a later generation must pay the price of the mistakes of their fathers. Moreover, the Decalogue, in the expanded form it now has in both Exodus and Deuteronomy, declares that God visits the sins of fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. To many modern minds this appears to be unjust, though it is undeniable that in experience children are involved in the fruits of their parents' lives. If we consider man merely as an

individual it may seem unjust; but if we realize that he belongs to the continuous stream of the generations and to the society of which he is a member, it is not. He is born into an ever changing society and family, which yet has continuity within its change that makes it a unity from moment to moment and from generation to generation. He is the heir of the past and a fragment of the society of the present. While he is liable to suffer for the common sins, or for the sins of other individuals, he also receives a rich inheritance from those who have gone before and from his contemporaries, and from both he may receive great blessings. If he shares ills he has done nothing to deserve, he also receives blessings he has not merited. If he wishes to cry out against God because of the debits of this balance, he rarely complains of the far greater credits. An arid individualism can neither justify the vast and beneficent heritage from the past which comes to every man nor begin to understand the richness and complexity of the divine justice. Nevertheless, we are individuals, with an individual responsibility. We may raise or lower the spiritual quality of the society of which we form a part, and contribute something to the enlargement of the heritage which we pass on to our children, and the effect of our character will fall in some measure on others, so that our lives are not wholly ours. At the same time, they are ours, and the effect of our character will fall also on ourselves.

Either side of this truth may be appropriately emphasized in different situations. Both have to be held together in the totality of truth, and the faith of Israel, as reflected in the Old Testament, was wisely balanced in combining both. This means that there is a problem of suffering which cannot be solved. The book of Job was written to deal with that problem, but not to solve it. Rather was its purpose to insist that there is a problem of innocent suffering, which cannot be explained by any process of human reasoning. It is sometimes suggested that until the book of Job was written it was the orthodox Israelite view that there was no such thing as innocent suffering. Such a suggestion is patently false. There is not the slightest suggestion that Uriah deserved his death, or that Abel was justly murdered. Jeremiah was sure that the malice of his kindred was undeserved. And all the prophets who denounced the oppressions of their time were persuaded that the oppressed were not reaping the fruit of their sins. It was only in certain circles, at the time when the book of Job was written, that a hard and rigid equation of desert and fortune, such as is nowhere characteristic of the Old Testament as a whole, was made. If a man's acts may involve others in suffering, clearly the suffering cannot prove the sin of the sufferer; on the other hand, if his acts may involve himself in suffering, that suffering may be the fruit of his sin. Hence there may be innocent suffering, though not all suffering is innocent. The Bible never tries to reduce the facts of experience to the simplicity the theorist seeks. Jeremiah and Ezekiel insisted that not all suffering is innocent; the book of Job insists that some suffering is. It does not attempt to fathom the cause of innocent suffering. It tells the reader the cause in the case of Job; but that is necessary in order to establish to the reader that Job was not suffering for his sin. Here he is told that Job is suffering to vindicate God's faith in the purity of his motives against the slanders of the Satan. It thus appears that Job was supremely honored in his very suffering, for God had staked himself upon Job's integrity.

3.5 Self-Assessment Question

- Show how a political collapse of the community can affect an individual.

3.6 Hermeneutical Considerations

The scriptural admonition of loving the neighbour as oneself is attested for in the two Testaments. Jesus Christ echoed it when he gave the parable of the Good Samaritan. Good neigbourliness is a sign of healthy community living, which in divine agenda fulfils one of the ways of recovering the destinies of humanity. The Laws of Moses, which gave specific regulations on how people should relate, and our duties to one another, shows that following our allegiance to God which is supreme, the second is our submission to the community. For everything that affects the community affects the individual. So the ethics of the community must be guarded tenaciously.

The missionary enterprise of the Church to the world is a communal enterprise. Regardless of the contributions of Apostle Paul to spread the gospels through missionary endeavours and church planting, he did not achieve them in isolation. He operated within the community of faith that commissioned him in Acts 13. Even in the field, he did not operate alone; he worked with a community.

Africans have a sense of community and solidarity for one another. Communal institutions like the kinsmen, compound relations, village and tribe remain a very powerful tool in determining the destinies of individuals in the community. This understanding would be a veritable tool in the biblical hermeneutics of the importance of the community. It was on this basis that Parratt (2001:7) argued that there are ample areas of African culture which may throw light on aspects of the Christian faith and which may be helpfully compared to them.

3.5 Self-Assessment Question

- How does the Old Testament concept of community compare and contrast with African understanding of community?

4.0 Conclusion

This unit has shown that God’s recovery plan for humanity is not limited to the individual, but includes the community. For what happens in the community affects the individual. The Old Testament took time to give regulations on how the individuals in the community should relate with on another. The communal nature of the Gospel in the New Testament was also highlighted, which our sense of community as Africans has become an interpretative lens for biblical studies.

5.0 Summary

So far, this unit surveyed the Old Testament concept of community under the following sub-headings: Meaning of Community in the Old Testament; Solidarity Thinking;

Freedom and Bondage of the Individual; Solidarity in the Monarchical Period, Political Collapse and the Individual; Hermeneutical Considerations.

The next unit, which concludes our studies in this Manual, will examine the Old Testament concept of Prophecy.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

- Give a brief survey of the concept of community in the Old Testament, making relevant applications to African context.

7.0 **References**/Future Reading

Ajah (2010). *Tithing in the Old Testament*. Ohafia: Onuoha Press.

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MODULE 3: OTHER RELEVANT SUBJECTS

Unit 4: Prophecy

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This unit marks the end of study on Old Testament Theology in this manual. It focuses on the concept of Prophecy in the Old Testament. In the words of Dennis Bratcher, "Prophecy is a difficult topic in modern religious culture. It is not that the topic itself is so complicated, only that we bring so many preconceptions and assumptions to it. We are so used to hearing the term "prophecy" equated to "prediction of the future" in popular thinking and language that we assume this is what biblical prophecy is about." This unit will survey this concept of prophecy under the following sub-headings: Definition for Prophecy in the Old Testament; Prophetic Methods; Prophetic Messages, and Hermeneutical considerations.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Appreciate the role of prophets in the Old Testament as the bedrock for Judaism
- Understand how prophecies shaped the conscience of the nation, Israel.
- Know the criteria for differentiating between false prophecies and real ones.
- Acquire an interpretative lens for evaluating prophecies in the contemporary church.

3.0 Main body

3.1 Definition for Prophecy in the Old Testament

The prophets in the Hebrew Bible are divided into two groups, the "Earlier Prophets" and the "Later Prophets". In the Hebrew Bible, the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings are called "The Early Prophets". It is in these books that we find listed many prophets of ancient Israel. Joshua, Nathan, Gad, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha all testified during these early days. No one knows exactly when the institution of prophecy began in Israel. Tradition traces it back to Moses. From ages old, the religions surrounding the Hebrew world presented with those who claimed they could speak for God. The Book of Kings describes 450 such ecstatic under the tutelage of Jezebel confronted and destroyed by Elijah on Mount Carmel. Similar groups of visionaries, many false, abounded during these times and were accepted by the Hebrew officials as occupying a legitimate service in their territory. Their visionary powers were often utilized by the officers of the Hebrew government. Such groups could be found accompanying Samuel, Elijah and Elisha. As a

confraternity, there was a harmony between them, but also, the distance of rank. There is no question in scripture as to which prophets commanded the awe and respect of the lesser visionaries.

All were chosen by a simple rule: no one was permitted on his own to be a prophet. He had to be selected by God and inspired to speak. No one was permitted to turn God down. In the chronicle of Jonah we learn that when asked to speak, the prophet has to speak. As it grew, the institution of prophecy became enormously important in Israel. It formed the third office of the Hebrew government. Although the period of prophecy was short, one has only to look at the large quantity of prophetic books chosen for scripture to see how reverently it was received by priests, people and governing officials alike. After the Jewish Return from exile to Babylon, Hebrew visions began to fade in importance. With the appearance of Christ, Jewish prophecy disappeared altogether. That house of Israel has yet to see it return.

With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost a new wave of prophecy appeared on earth heralding the Messiah that was promised, and declaring the salvation that He had brought down to the world from heaven. That same Spirit and the prophetic voices it inspires continue to this day.

3.2 Prophetic methods

The prophets conveyed the mind of the LORD to their contemporaries through spoken or written words and through symbolic actions. Divine inspiration came to the prophet usually before the actual delivery (e.g. Jer. 7:1-2; 28:12-13), although inspiration during delivery is not to be excluded. Presumably divine inspiration revealed the ideas, rather the words, to the prophet, and the finished discourse was prepared through meditation and perhaps composed in writing in full or in outline. In any case, the prophetic discourses that have been transmitted to us were written either by a hearer or by the prophet himself after delivery.

Besides the spoken and written word, the prophets used symbolic acts to convey their message. The majority of scholars assert that Hosea's marriage to a prostitute (Hosea 1:3) was ordered by the LORD as a dramatic object lesson to Israel; in reality this unpleasant story is based on a misinterpretation of Hosea 1:2 and the unwarranted identification of the wretched woman of chapter 3 with Hosea's respectable wife Gomer; "wife of whoredoms" and "children of whoredoms" in 1:2 is clearly explained as in a state of religious, not literal, prostitution (Pfeiffer 1961:136; cf. Isa 8:3-4;Jer 19:1-13).

3.3 Prophetic Messages

In a sense the prophets, notably Isaiah and Jeremiah, were statesmen without portfolio, regularly in the opposition. They were in fact the LORD's agents in his dealing with Israel and Judah. Some of the prophets were ardent advocates of social justice, champions of the underprivileged, and defenders of the oppressed. The most important contribution of the prophets was in the field of religion but, curiously, they did not realize how

revolutionary and epoch making this contribution was. They did not know that they were preaching a new religion. The prophets were not historical scholars, but men convinced of teaching the true religion by divine inspiration.

Robert H. Pfeiffer (1961:126) summarized the prophetic messages as follows:

1. They introduced a new standard of values: where the national leaders saw only prosperity, power, justice, and piety, they could see but iniquity and ruin.
2. They introduced a new conception of the requirements of the LORD: not primarily sacrifices and offerings, but right living, honesty, and philanthropy.
3. They proclaimed the notion that the LORD, the God of Israel, and his people Israel were not inseparable, but that the LORD could – and in his holy fury would – destroy his people without committing suicide.
4. They announced that the LORD was the ruler of history, using Israel's enemies to punish his own people.
5. They changed the national God the LORD into a God of unlimited power, extending far beyond the limits of Israel, and a God of unspotted moral character, without partiality for Israel.

3.4 Hermeneutical Considerations

In looking at Old Testament prophets more closely, it is clear that their message was most often calling people back to proper worship of God. But much of that task was done in the context of the community, the nation of Israel. That means that much of the criticism of the prophets was leveled at religious leaders for their failure to be spiritual leaders. It was also aimed at the powerful, most often also the religious leaders, who used their power and influence for selfish or sinful purposes. The prophets were a balance to the unrestrained power of the monarchy and the aristocracy (Bratcher).

Prophecies in the contemporary church in Nigeria has been influenced or shaped by socio-political and economic factors. One cannot say that the circumstances which OT prophets addressed are quite different from what is obtainable in modern Nigeria. It is almost the same. The spate of corruption, violence, arms struggles and injustices are rife in the nation. Religion as the conscience of the nation should address some of these ills in the nation; but apparently religious groups and leaders fail to play their roles, instead have become praise singers and card carriers of politicians. Some issue-out their so-called prophecies in support of one political group or the other, expecting material support in return for their institutions. Similarly, individuals are exploited with fake prophecies, promising them prosperity in the face of economic hardship, healing in the face of sicknesses and diseases; compelling them to commit their resources (or as they call it, "sow seed") in anticipation of a divine visitation. Hence, most religious institutions, instead of fulfilling their roles as consciences of the nation, are compounding the woes of the nation.

So, if religious groups and leaders must fullfil their roles in the society, they must become ardent advocates of social justice, champions of the underprivileged, and defenders of the oppressed. For that is what it means to declare the mind of God in a prophetic ministry to a degenerated world.

4.0 Conclusion

Prophetic movement in the OT formed the bedrock of Judaism. The prophets conveyed the mind of the LORD to their contemporaries through spoken or written words and through symbolic actions. They were ardent advocates of social justice, champions of the underprivileged, and defenders of the oppressed. In hemeneutical considerations, the unit argued that for religious organisations and leaders to maintain their roles as the conscience of the nation, that the prophetic role of defending the weak and the less privileged must be pursued.

5.0 Summary

This unit surveyed the concept of prophecy under the following sub-headings: Definition for Prophecy in the Old Testament; Prophetic Methods; Prophetic Messages, and Hermeneutical considerations.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

Write short notes on the following: (a) Definition for prophecy, (b) Prophetic Methods, and (c) Prophetic Messages.

7.0 References/Future Reading

Ajah (2010). *Tithing in the Old Testament*. Ohafia: Onuoha Press.

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