

# A Recapitulation of the Story Line in “See Through the Scriptures”

(an excerpt from the audio line of a previous Session 7 lecture by Pastor Reiter)

[Here you may want to have the Story Line of Session 1 before you.]

There’s value in repetition. It may be that finally with a third pass through, something clicks. I’d like just one last time to review where we’ve been and recap where we are right now. And using this image that is before us, let that be a way of reviewing.

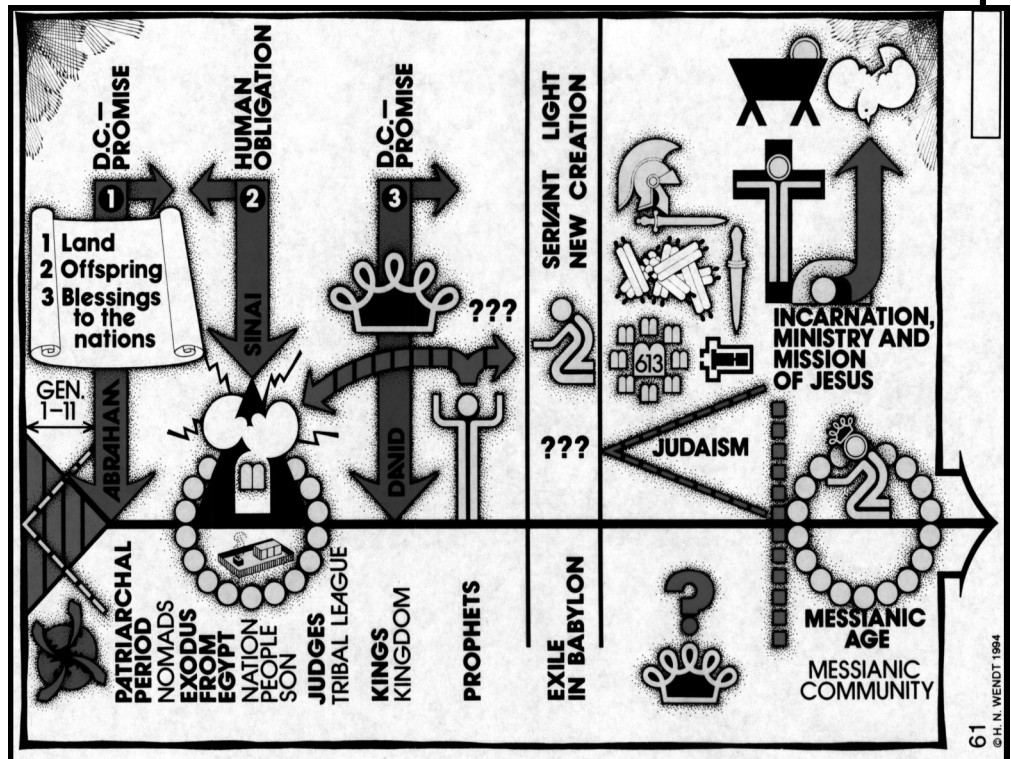
Again, it is my understanding [that] no one can assume in the Church that the people—the adults in the pews—are familiar with the Biblical narrative. The rate of Biblical illiteracy among active, Church-going Christians is phenomenal... Even at the end of several weeks together, I can not assume that you’ve automatically caught it all. It may be, as you continue to go through this material, that finally something clicks.

So real quickly, for review, let us remember that we started over here with Genesis and a focus on Genesis 1-11. And we admitted that you really have to understand what’s going on in Genesis 1–11 because without it, there is no need for the rest of the story line. In Genesis 1 – 11, we have one, two, three, four... four times that we had a cycle of sin (or disobedience), followed by judgment, but also Grace. We saw it with the Garden, we saw it with Cain and Abel, we saw it with those divine beings whose actions precipitated the flood, and finally we saw it with the Tower of Babel. And that’s what this picture down here, this image down here reminds us of: that sin--wherever evil comes from... No evil, no need for story line after Genesis 1 and 2. But there is evil. And it isn’t ours to figure out where it came from. It’s just one of those things that makes its presence on the scene and it shatters all creation. All of creation is shaken by the impact of sin. And it results in a break between the human and Divine, between the male and female, between brother and brother, between divine earthly realities, between nation and community and community. It ripples throughout and it spreads (that’s why these lines get bigger). But over that same time period, the Scriptures remind us that God’s focus narrows in on a plan/solution focused in one person, who is Abraham. And here we get our first “Divine Covenant.” It looks forward. Remember, it looks forward and says “No matter how you act, this is a unconditional/unilateral agreement... You all remain faithless and fickle, I am committed to this promise.” And namely, it is a three-fold promise: that, through Abraham, his descendants will be given land, offspring, and they will (in his name) be a blessing to all the nations.

We have the story of the other Patriarchs who eventually make their way to Egypt. (Through Jacob and Joseph, they end up in bondage in Egypt.)

God delivers with a powerful hand and sets up the next round of covenant making at Sinai—making his Presence known in cloud and fire on a mountain. He establishes a covenant, and at the heart of the covenant are commandments. His presence, His ongoing presence in a community that is joined together is through the ark and the tabernacle that travels with them. But the covenant is a “Human Obligation” covenant. In other words, instead of unconditionally looking forward (“I am you God and I will be it forever”), it says “Remember, I am the Lord God who brought you out of Israel.” It remembers something in the past and it says, “therefore, I will bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey and it will be yours to keep and enjoy and be blessed by if you do this, this, this and this... If you don’t, though, curses will come”—including the curse which is “you will be stripped from that land.”

So, can you see the difference a “Divine Commitment” covenant and a “Human Obligation” covenant. Sinai is the latter. It says, “If you stick to these stipulations, it will go well for you and your descendants.”



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*They do enter the Land and become a tribal confederation of a loose knit group of tribes or regional areas. And, every now and then, a Judge inspired by God's spirit, speaks for God and leads the people in military campaigns. But, eventually they hearken for a king to be like all the other nations. It's confusing, you will remember: we can not remember whether God (Yahweh) really wants a king or not. We just remember that, reading between those lines of that narrative in Samuel, there seems to be some debate: God doesn't mind a prince, but he wonders about having a king because He's the king of Israel.*

*Eventually, David does come to the forefront as the epitome of kings in their minds. So, that in time, whenever they have any idea of what Messiah should be, it will look like David.*

*The Prophets come along, though, after David. (And again, you will remember, this is the next "Divine Commitment" covenant in which God says, "No strings attached, David, I do want you to build a house, but I will make a house out of you.") Over time, the Prophets do arise and they offer all sorts of questions because they hearken back to Sinai. And they remember that there is a human obligation implied in this covenant that it doesn't appear that individuals or the nation are living up to.*

*And the Prophets begin to ask, "What's going to happen to us if we don't live up the agreement?"*

*And the answer is "time out" in Babylon: Exile.*

*They begin to formulate questions in exile and after exile:*

- \* Why did this happen?*
- \* How can we prevent this from ever happening again?*
- \* And, further, what can we do to bring back the Messianic/Davidic king line?*
- \* What can we do to bring Messiah into our midst?*

*Their answers form the beginnings and basis of Judaism. Of course, in the ensuing years, it is not the Garden of Eden they had expected. And again, when I talk about the "ensuing years", we are basically talking about the Southern tribe of Judah going into captivity in 587 and Cyrus the Persian letting them go back home in 538 BC.*

*Between 538 and 63 BC (when the Romans take charge), Judaism incubates and ferments. It that same time period, you have different groups. Of course, they believe in "One God, One Law, and One Nation," but they have "denominations." They believe that one creed, but they see it with a different emphasis on different "syllables." There are those who say if we just learn Torah and the Oral Tradition: that's how we'll bring Messiah. Others say we won't bring Messiah without a sword. Some say, "No, it's all locked up in Temple worship."*

*Messiah does come. Apart from all these expectations (at least as they held them), Messiah comes in an out-back manger, no palace to be found. Messiah lives the life of a servant that is epitomized by the cross. The cross is the symbol of a servant without limit—servitude with no strings attached, unconditional, "no greater love than this,"... God validates that that is His Messiah by opening the tomb and raising Jesus from the dead. The tomb is open, by the way, not to let Jesus out. The tomb is open to let us in so we can see that it's empty.*

*The Ascension is not Jesus' withdraw from us but it's the transformation of His presence in our midst. Jesus is here... Jesus the Christ, the Messiah is as radically and dynamically present here as He as has been present anywhere in history!*

*Now, we live in this new Messianic age. Oh, it's radically redefined from what the Jews thought the Messianic age would be. Jesus had a way of doing that. You will remember in his message in Mark 1: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is near!" And that word "repent" speaks of a 180-degree turn. And we are going to find that, at every turn, the Messianic hope is there but it's 180 degrees from what they were imagining it to be.*

*And now we live in this period [between the first and the Second appearing of the Christ]...*