

# A Theology of the Old Testament for Christians

Lecture in Kiev at the presentation of the Russian translation of Koorevaar & Paul (eds),  
*Theology of the OT*

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## Introduction

For me and my colleague Geert Lorein it is an important day. We are both from the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, in Belgium, and each year in September we meet Vladimir Yakim and discuss his research for his PhD thesis. He heard about our *Theology of the Old Testament* in the Dutch and German language and suggested a translation into the Russian language. He told us much about the situation of the Christians in the Ukraine and the need for good theological literature. We decided to help him. Funds were raised and Yevgeny Ustinovich, also a PhD student at the ETF in Leuven, made an excellent translation. Now we are thankful to be in your midst for the official presentation.

In this lecture I want to tell you something about the message of the OT, the relation to the NT, and the outline of our book.

## A short history of biblical theology

We start our publication with some questions. In the Old Testament we have many books, written over more than 1000 years. How are they connected? What is their message? To understand the characteristics of Old Testament Theology it is useful to point to the work of Johann Philipp Gabler. In 1787 this German scholar gave an inaugural lecture, in which he made a distinction between biblical theology and systematic theology or dogmatics. In his opinion systematic theology has a philosophical and didactical character, while biblical theology is descriptive, inductive and historical. It means that biblical theology collects the opinions of biblical writers, and looks at whether or not there is a historical progress in the texts. In this way it is possible to escape the problem of using isolated proof texts to form a dogmatic view. More attention is now paid to the meaning of texts in their contexts.

In the two centuries after the proposal of Gabler, three further approaches to biblical theology can be discerned: 1) a thematic, 2) a historical and 3) a literary/canonical approach.

1) In the thematic approach themes are formulated. Some of these important themes are: creation, covenant, Israel, holiness. Many theologians even tried to discern a main theme, a theological center, to which other themes are connected, as petals around the flower. Suggestions for a central theme are the covenant or the promise.

2) Others choose an historic approach. Usually this methodology was connected with an historical-critical approach, in which the first books of the Bible were dated in the time of the kings, in the period of the exile or later. This is in contrast with the description in the Bible that the Torah was given in the time of Moses. Other scholars accepted the early dates. In general: the presuppositions about revelation and the origin of the Biblical books are very important and even decisive in this approach.

3) Other exegetes concentrate on the accepted canonical form of the books. In Jewish and Christian circles the books are accepted as holy books. Now it is possible to describe the separate books, also in the canonical order.

In our book, we follow this third approach, recognizing the special revelation of God in the history of Israel.

### Methodology for a Theology of the Old Testament

In the second chapter we develop a methodology. Many books are part of the canon of the Old Testament. The challenge on the one hand is to respect the characteristics of the different books and on the other hand to see the unity of them. Each topic should get the place in the big picture, it deserves. But how is this possible? How can such different books as Joshua, Proverbs, Isaiah and Esther receive their proper place in the presentation? How can such different topics as creation, sacrifices and wisdom be united in a common concept? How can the history of revelation over so many centuries fit under one umbrella?

In our *Theology of the OT* we focus on a canonical approach. In most Bible translations the order of the books is based on the Greek Septuagint, but we use the order of the Hebrew Bible. That Bible has three divisions: Law (*Torah*) – Prophets (*Nevi'im*) – Writings (*Ketuvim*), with the book of Chronicles at the end. More specific we use the order as presented in the Jewish Talmud in Baba Bathra 15.

We suggest other main divisions, and speak about a Priestly Canon (Genesis – Kings), a Prophetic Canon (Jeremiah – Malachi) and a Wisdom Canon (Ruth – Chronicles).

The canonical approach has the advantage that all topics can be designated, but at the same time it prevents a systematic and in-depth treatment of those subjects. Hence the structural canonical approach is only the first part of our book, and it has to be supplemented by a second part with a systematic thematic approach.

We believe that in Genesis six main topics can be detected, with which all other messages in the whole OT are connected. The first three topics are determined by their order in Genesis 1-3. The last three topics are also already present in the first chapters, and receive special attention later in the book.

The six topics in Genesis are:

- The creation by God (1:1-2:3).
- The ways of God: his will, commandments and law (2:4-25).
- Sin: origins and destruction, healing and victory (3:1-24).
- The promise of the seed of the woman and the calling of Abraham to be a blessing for all peoples (3:14-15; 12:1-3).
- The worship of God and the LORD living in the midst of the people of Israel (4:3-4; 9:24-27).
- The possession of the Earth and the land of Canaan (1-3; 12:7; 13:14).

The structure of our book is:

#### Part I: Introduction: history and methodology

1. A brief history of the discipline of the theology of the Old Testament
2. Methodology for a theology of the Old Testament

## Part II: A literary theological approach

3. A structural canonical approach for a theology of the Old Testament as a whole
4. Demonstration of a literary approach on the basis of a structural theology of Exodus-Leviticus-Numbers

## Part III: A thematic theological approach

5. The creation by God
6. The ways of God: his will, commandments and law
7. Sin: origins and destruction, healing and victory
8. The promise of the seed of the woman and the calling of Abraham to blessing for all peoples
9. The worship of God and the LORD living in the midst of the people of Israel
10. The possession of the Earth and the land of Canaan

## Part IV: The movement from the Old to the New Testament

11. Developments between the Old and New Testaments
12. The New Testament as a continuation and completion of the Old Testament

## The New Testament as continuation and completion of the Old Testament

### *God's plan*

The Christian Church has always accepted the holy books of the people Israel as the first part of God's revelation. Over time the term 'Old Testament' was introduced to denote the collection of writings of Israel, as well as the term 'New Testament' for the later revelation concerning Jesus.

The OT has many promises about the future. In the book of Genesis the first promises are made, starting with the promise of the seed, given to Adam and Eve (3:15). Then we read the covenant with Noah and the promise that the waters will never again cover the earth (9:15), the prophetic statements of Noah about the descendants of his sons (9:24-27) and the promises made to the Patriarchs. Of special importance is the blessing in 12:3 that has to be translated in a passive sense: "In you shall be blessed all the families of the earth."

Here we see God's definite plan. He called Abram, put him apart and wanted to bless other peoples through him. God gave promises about posterity and the land of Canaan. Many centuries later a covenant was made with Israel at Sinai. In the time of King David special promises were made to him (2 Sam. 7) and still later a new covenant was announced (Jer. 31-33). The promises of the OT are quoted in the NT, in order to demonstrate a historical continuity.

God's plan of salvation is unfolded gradually: first, there are promises, then they are partially fulfilled or are still left open for future fulfillment. This is a constituent part of the OT. It is important to see the continuity between OT and NT. Unfortunately, Christians often reason from a fault line and compare the values of OT and NT with each other. It is better to see the NT as a further unfolding of God's plan of salvation.

The canonical writings of Israel are of permanent interest for the Christians. Jesus has never laid aside these writings, but He came to fulfill them, to place them on a higher level (Mat. 5:17). Paul and the other Apostles use again and again the OT as a testimony for the

Christians of Jewish or pagan origins. Usually the OT is referred to as ‘the Scripture’ or ‘Moses and the prophets’.

### *Designation*

In the Bible itself the designation ‘Old Testament’ is absent. The expression ‘Books of the old *diathèkè*’ as title for the Old Testament canon is used for the first time by Melito of Sardis (died c. 190 AD). A few years later, the term ‘New Testament’ is used to identify a collection of canonical early Christian books. Within a few decades, these designations were accepted as titles of the two parts of the canon. In Latin writings the titles *Vetus Testamentum* and *Novum Testamentum* were used. From this time these terms have been the standard way to describe the two parts of the Christian Bible.

In 2 Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 8 the superiority of the new covenant is expressed, and the lesser position of the old covenant. When we ask what exactly is out of date, it appears this is the covenant at the Sinai, not the Abrahamic covenant. The promises and oaths to Abraham are of a permanent validity. The term ‘old dispensation’ in the NT concerns only the content of the books Exodus to Deuteronomy, or possibly also its history. The covenants with Abram as well as the promises to David in 2 Samuel 7 are of a permanent character.

The Sinai covenant is conditional: much depends on the fulfilment of the conditions by the Israelites. The passage about the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 mentions the failure of the Israelites to fulfil these conditions. Now God promises to work through his Spirit and to write the laws in their hearts, making them obedient. “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (31:31). It is striking that the new covenant is not with the peoples of the world, but with Judah and Israel, the two and the ten tribes. The new covenant concerns Israel and this people are permanently God’s property.

The characteristic of the new covenant is that the Israelites will love their God. The law of God is no longer an obligation that comes from outside, too heavy to carry, but there is an inner readiness to serve God. The Sinaitic covenant was too difficult for the people. In response, God will not tone down its demands and make the law much easier, but He renews the people, so that they can be obedient. It is also possible that other nations share in God’s salvation. They may share in the privileges and become joint-heirs according to Ephesians 2.

On the base of the difference between the covenant with Abraham and the covenant with the Israelites it is regrettable that the books Genesis through to Malachi have the label ‘Old Testament’ and that the impression is that the old is outdated and abolished. The white pages in our Bible editions between both parts create a misunderstanding. It is better to regard the books as a unit, in which God’s revelation is further and richer unfolded.

The fulfillment of the new covenant is only partially realized. Salvation for Israel and the nations will be even greater. The complete fulfillment of the new covenant comes after the close of the NT. In the belief that God’s plan of salvation is a continuous line (though there are also temporary provisions) the first and second collection of books in our Bible could be better named: ‘Former revelations’ and ‘Subsequent revelations’ or ‘Earlier writings’ and ‘Later writings’. Because the expressions Old and New Testament, however, are completely established and are rarely interpreted according to their factual meaning, we can still continue to use these expressions.

## A thematic theological approach

In the third part of our book the six themes of the previous part are elaborated and in each case the relation to the NT is mentioned. I give a short overview and mention several aspects.

### 1. The creation by God

The first chapters of the book of Genesis reveal many aspects of the wonderful origin of this world and the living creatures. In contrast to the beliefs of other peoples, the earth is not a part of the god, but a separate entity.

Man and woman were made in the image of God and were given the important role of ruling over the earth. The emphasis is on relationship and obedience. However, through disobedience, it was no longer possible to remain in the Garden of Eden. Outside Paradise the first humans lived in a different situation. The relationship with God was distorted, but humans were still able to do some creative work in this world.

The Creator of heaven and earth revealed himself in the first books of the Bible as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and also as the LORD, the God of the covenant with Israel. He is not a local god, but the Owner of the whole world. On this basis, it is possible that He punished the Pharaoh of Egypt and replaced the Canaanites with the Israelites. It is also possible for the prophets to criticize the foreign peoples and to predict the future. JHWH, the God of Israel, is so much more than Baal and other gods.

While the creation was completed in six days and God rested on the seventh day, the week and the Shabbat were very important for the Israelites. The creation reveals many aspects of the wisdom of God and therefore He is praised in the Psalms. In the wisdom books there are universal rules about what is good and what is wrong, what is wisdom and what is foolishness. Aspects of God's wisdom can be seen in his creation.

The world of the creation has changed in several aspects, and as Romans 8:19-21 tells us, is 'subjected to futility', but in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. In the book of Revelation more about the future is revealed. It is remarkable that in the last chapters of this book many themes from the first chapters of Genesis are referred to. These themes are: the creation, the Paradise, the tree of life, the serpent and the dragon. Death will be conquered and eternal life will begin. God will judge the old world and create a new one.

### 2. The ways of God: his will, provisions and law

In the Old Testament, the expression 'walking in the ways of God' is used frequently. The first five books of the Bible are named 'Torah': they point in a specific direction. The translation 'law' is not quite correct, because the narratives also help people to walk in the right ways.

The book of Genesis mentions a few specific laws, but many of the rules are presupposed in the narratives, e.g. the prohibitions to deceive, to lie and to murder. In our Bibles most of the laws are mentioned in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy.

How to explain this? We assume that at the time of the composition of the Torah it was superfluous to mention all the earlier regulations. However, the first people did not live without rules for their behavior. It is clear that Cain and his descendants didn't obey and that the behavior of the generation of the Flood behaved was particularly depraved. The patriarchs walked with God. In Genesis 18:19 it is said of Abraham "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing

what is right and just". Later on, in 26:4-5 the promise is stated that the nations of the earth will receive blessing through the offspring of Abraham, "because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws".

We are not told about the content of all these commandments and laws, but they are presupposed in the narratives.

It is important that many commandments have a universal tenor, and are for the whole of humanity. However, God gave Israel many special regulations. Christians can have a negative view of these regulations, but we have to study them in their own context, as God helping Israel to live as a righteous society. In these laws much wisdom is revealed. Moses said to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 4:5-6 "I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say: Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!"

In the next chapter, Deuteronomy 5, the Ten Commandments are mentioned. In the last few decades it is becoming clear that the subsequent laws in Deuteronomy are arranged more or less in the order of the Ten Commandments. These concise formulated laws are explained in the chapters 12-26. The commandment to keep the Sabbath is elaborated in provisions concerning the tithe, the Sabbath year, the release of slaves in the seventh year, the firstborn of the cattle and the three great feasts: the Passover, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Booths (14:22-16:17). The commandment about honoring the parents is elaborated to include all sorts of authority figures: the judges, the king, the priests and Levites, and the prophets, as a replacement for occult practices (16:18-18:22).

Then the prohibition of murder is elaborated. There are cities of refuge so that innocent offenders are safe. Further we read about the honesty of witnesses, war laws, reconciliation of a murder committed by an unknown, the birthright, the death penalty, the funeral after the death penalty and some other provisions. These matters relate to the prohibition of murder (19:1-22:12).

The overview in Deuteronomy is not complete, and usually only a few principles are mentioned. The elaborations are illustrative and it is intended that the responsible persons interpret the examples in their own life practice. That is why the commandment "honor your father and your mother" also applies to public servants. While our legislation aims for completeness, the legislation in the Ancient Near East is different. It is also clear that the legislation for Israel is given in the framework of the covenant and is framed by incentives to do good.

In the NT Jesus confirmed many aspects of the Torah. He did not come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets, but to fulfil them.

The summary 'to love God above all else and the neighbor as yourself' (Mat. 22:37) is based on Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Jesus also shows that God's will is more important than all other things, so much so that He is even willing to die. The Apostles in their letters give many practical directions for a Christian way of life. There is a partial connection with the Old Testament commandments and prohibitions. However, a Christian is not 'under the law but under grace'. Paul opposes legalism, but in no way condemns the law in itself. It is important to recognize that Paul uses the word 'law' in different ways and therefore he can write in both a positive and a negative way about it.

In comparison with esoteric religions, secret societies and philosophical views, the message of God's will is for every man, and also applies to ordinary life. Also, the revelation is not only for a few high persons in society, but for slaves and free persons, men and women, Jews and people of other nations.

Israel was intended to be God's property, a kingdom of priests and a holy people (Ex. 19:5-6). Peter used these words to describe the congregation, with the indication that its members will proclaim God's virtues (1 Peter 2:9).

### 3. Sin: origins and destruction, healing and victory

Sin is transgression of the will of the Creator. In the beginning God created a good world. He told Adam and Eve to be obedient. He warned against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they transgressed they would experience death. Therefore sin is not automatically present, and the same is true of death. They are a possibility, but not a necessity.

Listening to the lies of the serpent, Adam and Eve wanted to become like God, but instead they received a heavy punishment. The identity of the serpent is not revealed, but based on later revelations we can discern an evil power behind it, the work of Satan.

In his verdict, God also gave a promise about enmity between the serpent and the woman. Her offspring will strike the head of the serpent.

Outside the Paradise humanity increased in number, but so did their wrong behavior. God told Cain that sin is lurking at the door; 'its desire is for you' and the advice is: 'but you must master it' (Gen. 4:7). Cain didn't listen, and killed his brother.

The alternative is shown by Enoch. The Bible says that he 'walked with God; and he was no more, because God took him'. It seems that the death penalty can be overcome by living with God. The same is the case much later with the prophet Elijah. They are exceptions, but the descriptions of the ends of their lives contain a message.

In his plan with Abraham God showed his blessings. Later, in the covenant with the descendants of Abraham, God said that He wanted to live with the Israelites. The tabernacle was the visible sign of God's presence. In the tabernacle sacrifices were made, for reconciliation. Leviticus 16 is about the Day of Atonement.

We see God's presence among his people and his regulations to overcome the severe difficulties of sin.

In Psalm 50 it is stated that the sacrifices as such are not enough. Right behavior is also important as truly honoring God. The next Psalm tells of David's repentance and his prayer for cleansing and pardon.

The prophets have strong words against Israel, and call to confession of sins, to repentance. In that case God will listen to his people. Several times it is revealed that God will judge all deeds, including every secret thing, whether good or evil (Eccl. 12:13).

In the NT Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (Joh. 1:29). The sacrificial system finds its climax and fulfillment in Him (Heb. 1 and 10). Through his sacrifice on the cross, he atones for the sin of mankind. People can become children of God. Through belief they can be freed from the bondage of the kingdom of darkness and become citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' teaching on sin is based on the OT. In the speech on the mountain, He deals with the Ten Commandments and with their radical consequences (Mat. 5:17-7:12).

The apostle Paul declared that sin has made its appearance in the human world with 'the first Adam', resulting in death. Jesus, however, is come as 'the last Adam' and through him death is conquered (Rom. 5:12-21). The purpose of his life is already encapsulated in his name. He carries the name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins (Mat 1:21).

#### 4. The promise of the seed of the woman and the calling of Abraham to be a blessing for all the nations

The term 'Messiah' does not occur in the book of Genesis. However, there is an expectation of a future helper and savior. In Genesis 3:15 it is said to the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed/offspring and hers."

What is the identity of the serpent and her seed? The highly symbolic context points to sin, death and evil. The text is very short and elliptical, but the motif of the victory over the serpent will be developed further in the OT.

Out of the descendants of Adam and Eve, Abram is called and he will be a blessing for all the nations. Several translations are proposed, but we prefer the passive translation: 'will be blessed'. This is affirmed by the Septuagint and the NT. This promise points to a divine plan. For a time, God restricts his grace to one family, but he does not forget the many nations, mentioned in Genesis 10.

How will the blessing reach the nations? At the end of the book of Genesis, Judah, a son of Jacob, is mentioned. He received a promise about the exercise of kingly authority. Later, David, member of the tribe of Judah, became king. He received from the mouth of the prophet Nathan a special promise of an everlasting dynasty (2 Sam. 7). Several prophets describe the future Messiah as a son of David. And in several Psalms the Davidic king is depicted with universal authority.

In the NT Jesus cites texts from the OT to show that He is the promised Savior. He fulfills prophecies of the prophets Isaiah and Daniel. The letter to the Hebrews gives many indications that Jesus is the One, promised to the forefathers. In Galatians 3:16 Paul uses the word 'seed' in the singular and the plural to speak about Christ. The blessing of the Gospel goes to the nations. Those who despise this blessing, receive a curse (1 Cor. 16:22) and condemnation (Rev. 20:11-15). In God's future nothing accursed will be found on the new earth (Rev. 22:3).

How is it possible to receive the blessing of Abraham? Jesus declared: "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). This is not only for the Jews, but also for other peoples, as is seen in the NT. Paul says that believers from the nations are no longer strangers and aliens, but also citizens along and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). They are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Eph. 3:6).

In the OT the blessings concern many aspects of the life in the land of Israel. However, the blessing is not always seen in this life. Especially in the NT the believers in Jesus can experience suffering and martyrdom. Even in those situations nothing will separate the believers from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35).

#### 5. The worship of God and the LORD living in the midst of the people of Israel

In many chapters of the book of Genesis the worship of God is mentioned. The worship consists in living with God, prayer, sacrifices and giving the tithes. Noah spoke to Japheth about living in the tents of Shem. Usually this text is interpreted as Japheth living there, but there are also arguments for in the interpretation that God will live in Shem's tents.

The relationship between God and Abraham is formalized with a covenant. As a sign of the covenant the circumcision is mentioned. An example of the public cult to God is the journey of Jacob and his extended family to Bethel (Gen. 35). Jacob prepares his family members and asked them to do away 'the strange gods' and let them clean themselves. In Bethel an altar was constructed. The name of the place means 'House of God'.

Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers contain a large number of rules for a more or less centralized cult for all the people. In Exodus those rules are grouped around the description and creation of the Tabernacle. The shrine is the place of encounter, a place where God dwells in the midst of his people (Ex. 29:46). The centerpiece of the Tabernacle is the ark. Therein lies the covenant text (25:16). On top of the ark is the mercy seat (25:20), on which the high priest sprinkles blood on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:14).

The Tabernacle shows differences between holy and profane, and between clean and unclean. For the Israelites it is important to celebrate the Shabbat and several feasts.

Many prophets criticize the practice of the cult, because the Israelites have a wrong moral behavior. It is important for the people to obey and to practice righteousness.

In the Psalms the practice of prayer and praise is seen. It is possible for the Israelites to speak to God and to hope for deliverance of all sort of distress. The wisdom books give instruction about serving the Lord in daily life.

In the NT Jerusalem remains the center of the service of the one God. The service in the temple is fulfilled by Jesus. He sacrificed his own life. He is the Lamb of God. He ascended to heaven to perform the heavenly service (Hebr.).

In the gatherings of the early believers in Jesus many aspects of the Psalms are present, as praise, as remembrance of God's great deeds and as prayer. The congregation is depicted as a new temple (2 Cor. 6:16). In the book of Revelation the future is depicted without temple, but with an eternal worship.

## 6. The possession of the Earth and the land of Canaan

The first sentence in the book of Genesis states that God created the heavens and the earth (1:1). The word *'ereš* means here the whole earth. The man, who was created in God's own image, received the command to multiply and to subdue the whole earth (1:26-28). This rule over the earth is not destructive in character, but points to the task of man as Viceroy under God.

After his sin, the man is expelled from the garden. Instead in this beautiful place, the human activity is on the ground outside the garden. This earth is cursed and will bring forth thorns and thistles. Man has to toil in order to eat the earth's produce.

In the time of Noah the earth was nearly destroyed by water, but there was salvation for Noah and his family. After the Flood humanity received new possibilities to live on earth.

After the description of the distribution of the peoples over the earth, Abraham, descendant of Shem, is called to a special destination. He is asked to leave his country (Ur), and head for the country that will be pointed out to him. Later, that proves to be the land of Canaan (12:5). Now there is a concentration on one small area, one country, but with a view to the world,

because Abram is to be a blessing for the other peoples. We can make the comparison with the Paradise, that also had a purpose for the whole world.

God as owner of the earth and of all the lands, can give a land to whom He will. It is also possible to take that land away from its inhabitants. That is reflected in the provisions in the blessings and the curses (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). In obedience to God He will give the country its revenue and enemies have no chance to pounce, but in the case of disobedience to the covenant God will punish: there will be famine, the enemies are powerful and it is even possible that the Israelites will be expelled from the country.

Deuteronomy 30 starts with the communication “When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and the curses that I have set before you, if you to take them to heart among all the nations, where the LORD your God had driven to you, ...” Yet that is not God’s final act, for He promised a circumcision of the heart and return to the promised land (vs. 1-6).

When Joshua and the Israelites conquer the land of Canaan, we have many questions about this act, especially in our society in connection with international laws. However, in the Bible the conquest is seen from God’s point of view. The curse of Canaan (Gen. 9:25) and the sins of the Canaanites (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 7:25-26) formed the main reason for divine punishment. The Israelites are used in God’s hands to punish the inhabitants. However, in the context it is clear that the Israelites will be measured in the same way.

Later on it becomes clear that God will make a new heaven and a new earth (Is. 65:17; 66:22). The faithful Israelites will inherit the earth, but the wicked will be cut off (Ps. 37; Dan. 12:2). The believing nations are allowed to share in God’s future. The relationship with God is decisive.

God completes the plan He had with the garden in Eden. History shows that man is driven out, the earth is almost wrecked by the water, but there will be a new earth, in which humanity the LORD will serve.

The first chapters of Genesis are frequently quoted in the New Testament. Various aspects of the promised land are extended to the whole world. This applies, for example, to the sojourning and the achieving of the peace in the land of Canaan (Heb. 3-4). The question, however, is whether the first meaning is void or that this is maintained. In the New Testament research many writings from the intertestamentary period are used. They shed much light on the views about the land Israel and Jerusalem. It is unthinkable in Judaism (in all the religious parties) that the restoration of Israel would take place without or outside the country.

Jesus adjusted those Jewish expectations, but nowhere He contradicted them. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount He said “Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land” (Mat. 5:5) as a quotation of Psalm 37:5. Also, the first three Beatitudes are related to Isaiah 61:1-3, a passage of which Jesus elsewhere says that this has come to fulfillment in him (Luke 4:18-21) and that speaks about the restoration of Israel (61:4-7). The Savior chose twelve disciples, a symbolic number in accordance with the twelve tribes, and sent them out to the villages and towns of Israel, not to other countries (Mat. 10:5-6, 23). These twelve disciples get the prospect of sitting on twelve thrones to administer justice to the twelve tribes of Israel (Mat. 19:28).

Many residents of Jerusalem rejected Jesus, and therefore He announced the verdict on the city. However, in the future, a time will come when they will welcome Him (as Messiah) (Mat. 23:37-39). Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

Just before the Ascension the disciples asked when Jesus is going to restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). That is an understandable question, because their Master had spoken about the Kingdom of God (vs. 3). This question is not corrected, but the disciples have to fulfil their duty and they have to leave the time to God. They are instructed to be witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, to the borders of the country or the earth (1:8). Peter announces in his speech 'the restoration of all things', about which the prophets have spoken (3:21). All the prophets have spoken about this restoration of Israel, the return from the exile and the dawning of the time of salvation.

The emphasis in the first part of the book of Acts is on the Jewish people (9:31). Only from Acts 10 on, do the Gentiles come in sight. It is also important that Jerusalem remains the center of all mission trips and that the congregations in the diaspora continue to support the congregation in Jerusalem, also in financial terms.

In the NT there is a strong focus on the whole earth. This earth bears the consequences of sin, but there is a new future (Rom. 8:18-22). In the future the earth will no longer perish by water, such as in the time of Noah, but will be refined by fire. Then God creates a world in which righteousness lives (2 Peter 3:6-13). The book of Revelation also points to the new earth, intended for those who believe and overcome. When the present earthly dispensation ends, the resurrection of the dead will take place. For the faithful, there is a rich consolation, but the unbelievers are left out forever, their destination is in a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20-22).

### Conclusion

With the six subjects we have drawn lines through the whole Bible. Again and again we see that the NT is in continuity with the OT. There is a continuous line when we look at the plan of salvation of God and the fulfillment of the promises.

Whoever reads the Pentateuch (Torah), will notice that many things are proclaimed for life in the promised land. The book Deuteronomy, however, ends with the death of Moses, while the people are allowed to enter the land. In these books it is proclaimed that God will perform major deeds in the future. When we take the OT as a whole, there are still a lot of unfinished elements:

- the earth is affected by the curse (Gen. 3), but the prophets foresee a future in which this judgement will be taken away.
- The sacrificial service is set for atonement of sins and to live with God in the midst of his people. However, the reality of sin is very strong and the exile of the ten and two tribes of Israel are the result. How will true reconciliation and renewal of the heart take place? The prophets point to a future in which this will happen.
- The promise of the seed is developed in the OT and it appears that a descendant of David will be King. After the exile, however, that promise is never realized in Israel.
- While in the OT much emphasis is placed on Israel as the people of God, there are also indications that other peoples will share in the salvation (Is. 56 and 66).

The content of the NT is connected with these promises and shows that they are to a large extent achieved through Jesus Christ. He brings reconciliation and blessing instead of the curse. The earth will be renewed by him. He sacrificed his life and with his Spirit He renews the heart. He is the great son of David who lived here in humiliation, but will appear in glory in the future. He will deal with sin and iniquity, and with all opposition to God. Now, He allows everyone in the world to come and to share in his Kingdom.

The NT is the crown of the Old Testament and also of the theology of the OT. Therefore, we conclude our book about the main threads of the message with the extension of these threads through into the NT. The whole Bible is necessary to see the wealth of God's revelation to men.