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**B0940 – October 4, 2009 – The New Covenant & Resolution Of  
Old Testament Tension**

I want to start by reviewing the tension set up by the OT covenants. The Kingdoms in Decline period of the OT that we are studying is a revelation of the discipline that God used with His people Israel over the centuries.

This chart points out the major covenants of the OT.

**Biblical Covenants**

<b>Covenant</b>	<b>Parties</b>	<b>Sign</b>	<b>Legal Terms</b>	<b>Founding Sacrifice</b>
<b>New World (Noahic)</b>	God & man, nature	Rainbow	No Global Flood, Survival of Human Race	Noah's Sacrifice
<b>Abrahamic</b>	God & Israel	Circumcision	Land, Seed, Worldwide Blessing	God's Sacrifice
<b>Mosaic</b>	God & Israel	Sabbath	Mosaic Law Code	Moses' Sacrifice
<b>Davidic</b>	God & David's Seed	Eternal Dynasty	Father-son relationship, Discipline, Jerusalem	???
<b>New</b>	God & Future Israel, nature	Communion	National Regeneration, Nature Restored	God's Sacrifice (Jesus)

What we're trying to demonstrate is that the Bible insists that God controls history by means of covenants or contracts between Himself and man. Dr. Albright, who for many years was Dean of Archeology at Johns Hopkins, in one of his books mentioned a very interesting point. He said that the Hebrew people are the only people in all of history who made a covenant with their god. Actually it was God who made a covenant with them. But the point

stands that no other religion has a covenant with their god. That's a very important observation. Why do people make covenants; why do we make contracts? Why when you buy a house or a car do you make a contract? The contract specifies a meeting of the minds that two parties agree to certain behavior. There are certain expectations. That's what contracts are all about. Contracts measure character. That's why one of the marks of a pagan society, according to the Apostle Paul, is that they will be contract breakers, and we see this all through our society today. Masses of people default on their loan contracts because they didn't have the character to enter into it in the first place. And the sad thing about it is that we have to live with the fallout. We suffer by association.

And so what the OT contracts are saying is God entered into a verbal contract with the nation Israel and as the centuries go by the prophets record the behavior of God and the behavior of man, answering the question of who is faithful to the contract. So the contracts are key because they reveal character, they set up the framework of history. Let's review some of the covenants we've covered.

The first covenant we studied was the New World or Noahic Covenant. The parties to the covenant: God & man and nature; your pets are a part of this covenant. The sign, that we still see in our atmosphere today, the rainbow. The legal terms of that covenant are that there will no global flood and the human race will survive. The human race is not going to be wiped out by some asteroid coming near the planet or some nuclear holocaust. God's word says that the human race will survive forever, obviously it's going to in resurrected form, but the human race will survive. Last, we have the founding sacrifice, this is the basis of the covenant, it's a blood covenant and after the Flood Noah does his sacrifice.

Second, we have the Abrahamic Covenant, that's the foundation of human redemption that controls the direction of human history. The Noahic Covenant is the foundation for the physical environment of the human race. All of the ecological questions that people talk about; the environment, global warming, natural resources, etc...it's really controlled by the Noahic Covenant. That spells out, so to speak, the room. The Abrahamic Covenant spells out what God is doing inside the room. The Abrahamic Covenant is redemptive, the Noahic Covenant is preservative. There's no direct

redemption in the Noahic Covenant; it preserves the human race so there can be redemption in the Abrahamic Covenant. The parties to the covenant are God and Israel. It started with Abraham, it narrowed to just his son Isaac, then another narrowing to Jacob who was re-named Israel. The sign of that covenant was circumcision. Physical circumcision of the flesh on the eighth day was used because of the theological implications: fallen flesh, the sin nature is present from birth, it's transmitted by the male sperm to the offspring and therefore corrective surgery was done on the eighth day which pointed out that man, from the very beginning, needed corrective surgery on his heart, a spiritual surgery was necessary. The legal terms: the land, the seed and the worldwide blessing. The founding sacrifice: God's sacrifice, remember the maledictory oath of Gen 15, it was a terrifying moment, Abraham was knocked out on the rock and God alone passes through the pieces.

Third, the Mosaic Covenant: God and the nation Israel, not the Church. Please notice the parties to the contract. It's going to be very important when we get to the last one. The sign of the Mosaic Covenant is the Sabbath, the keeping of the seventh day. The legal terms, the Mosaic Law Code, an entire corpus of law, all with one goal, to reveal YHWH's holiness and the need for righteousness. The founding sacrifice was conducted by Moses and the elders in Exodus 24.

Fourth, the Davidic Covenant, the parties to the contract, God once again and on the human side David's seed. The sign was the eternal dynasty. David's line can't be destroyed. The legal terms of that covenant: it specified there would be a Father-son relationship between God and David and his seed. Discipline - this is important and this is going to come out more and more and it's been behind the Kingdom Divided and the Kingdoms in Decline - and that's the fact there's discipline but not rejection. And then Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the city God chose to be the center of David's reign in power and glory. Jerusalem will always be the city God chose. There's a bright future coming for Jerusalem. The founding sacrifice is the problem because we can't find one and the only hint you get is in Ps 16 when David says of a greater than David that he would not see corruption, and that would imply a sacrificial death, pointing to Jesus' sacrifice.

Last time we came to the New Covenant, and we looked at two passages of Scripture. Deut 30 told us how Moses looked forward to it centuries before it happened. The date of Deut 30 is about 1400 BC. Jer 31 is the giving of the New Covenant about 600BC. So we're talking about 800 years later. That's a long time. We Americans think our country has gone on a long time. 200 years is nothing and at the rate we're going we're not going to last much longer. So 800 years between Deut 30 and Jer 31. I want to introduce a third passage in a moment but first let's review and then we'll look at an oft overlooked aspect of the New Covenant.

Starting v 1, "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you," the you is Israel, "when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you" so looking forward to the time when these things have all happened, past tense, they've all occurred, "and you call them to mind in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you," there's the exile. So whatever this prophecy is, it's talking about something that occurs after the exile. Verse 2, "And you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul," etc. <sup>3</sup>"Then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity," beginning in verse 3, and 4 and 5, this is the restoration and the resolution of the OT problem. The OT showed the fact that men cannot obey God in the flesh; we constantly fail, so how is history ever going to get resolved? That's why prophecy looks down the corridor of time to the point when history does get resolved.

Vv 3-5, "Then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup>If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. <sup>5</sup>And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed," there's only one area of real estate that qualifies for that phrase, it's the literal land of Israel, *eretz Yisrael*, "into the land which your father's possessed, and you," That is, the group of Jews that will return in the future to that land, "shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers."

That's the future of Israel, and it's predicated upon resolution to the problem of their sin. Their sin was what excluded them from the land, and it says in verse 2, you will "return to the LORD your God," so the sin will be dealt with,

and the mystery is how are they going to return to the Lord? Hosea has an answer to that. God is going to draw her to Himself and whenever that happens then the wheels are set in motion and He'll regather them, and you'll notice that occurs after verse 2, not before verse 2. The regathering in vv 3-4 cannot be the gathering of the Jews today into the land. Why not? Because v 2 hasn't happened yet. First they have to return to the Lord then the Lord will regather them from captivity.

Turn to Jer 31:23, when Jeremiah, led by God the Holy Spirit, starts to talk about a new covenant that God is going to make in history. "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Once again they will speak this word in the land of Judah and in its cities when I restore their fortunes. 'The LORD bless you, O abode of righteousness, O holy hill!'" So whatever is going to happen, the people are back in the land, but the difference is, "O abode of righteousness." Somehow the necessary righteousness that qualifies them for God's blessing is there, like it wasn't in Jeremiah's day. Verse 24, "And Judah and all its cities will dwell together in it, the farmer and they who go about with flocks, <sup>25</sup>For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh every one who languishes." We have here a promise of God toward these people. That's coming into the land.

Verse 33-34, "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," notice when the covenant is made, the covenant is made with Israel "after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup>"And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," This prophecy is talking about the regeneration of the nation Israel. It's not talking about the Church, the Church hasn't happened yet. We'll get to the Church next year, but right now we're in the OT and the Church isn't here, this is Israel.

Let's read it the way it was originally intended. This is looking forward to the future of Israel. Verse 34 implies that evangelism is not going to be needed because they shall all know Me. So, we have the land, they're back in the land, verses 22-24; verses 33-34 they are obviously dwelling in righteousness. If we drop down in the same chapter to verses 36-37, we have their security and the fact that they rule. Verse 36, "If this fixed order departs from before

Me,' declares the LORD, 'Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever,'" Eternal promise, this will come to pass.

Now let's introduce a third passage, this one in Hosea, rarely given attention. Few people pay attention to the little guys. But the little guys said some big things and here's one that relates to the new covenant. Hos 2:18. Hosea is one of those prophets I told you about that God told to do some strange things. Hosea, of all things, is told to marry a whore because that's the worldly parallel to what God was married to. So you can imagine how that communicated. Israel was like Hosea's wife, committing fornication. So Hosea's marriage, while very real, is a very strong message to the nation to stop fornicating with other gods. But after all the fornication and the discipline, v 14, God's going to seduce her, bring her back to Himself and there's a little program there men for how to seduce your wife if you want to study that out. And when she turns back to Him then something else happens. She's in her kingdom, she's in the land, and she's enjoying blessing and notice v 18. V 18 notice the parties to the covenant. We know Israel is a party to the covenant but is Israel the party in this verse? "In that day I will also make a covenant *for* them" not with them, for them, with who? "*With* the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky And the creeping things of the ground." And it goes on, but the only thing I want to point out is that nature is party to the new contract. Does this sound familiar? What other contract involved nature as a party? The Noahic Covenant. In fact, the language of v 18 "the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, the creeping things of the ground," that all comes from Gen 9:2. What was happening in Gen 9:2? The Noahic Covenant was being spelled out. So when the New Covenant is fulfilled it's accompanied by a return to a kind of pre-Flood environment. I bring that in because we hear today about the new covenant fulfilled to the Church. Well, if that's the case why hasn't Israel repented and been regathered to her land? There aren't many Jews believing in Jesus today. Why isn't nature restored to a pre-Flood type of environment? Where is human longevity? I don't see anyone living 900 years. Where are man and nature at peace? I don't see that at all. So to finish our chart, the parties to the New Covenant are God, the future nation of Israel *and* nature, there's a restoration to the pre-Flood environment. What is the sign of this New Covenant? It's not given in the OT, but we know what the sign is because what did Jesus do in the Last Supper? He held up the cup and He said "this is the blood of the new covenant." The whole thing was hidden in the counsels

of God until Jesus Christ in the Last Supper got up and made that dramatic announcement. We read through it every communion service? Do we pay attention to it? What is He saying this is the new covenant in my blood? We get so familiar with it it loses all significance. He was claiming to be the One who would bring in a new world order, a New Covenant.

It didn't come in at the first coming of Christ. Why not, what's the problem? Jesus said, this is the blood of the New Covenant, it's My blood. Why didn't it come? Because the nation didn't repent. Rather than repent what did the nation do? They said crucify Him. So the nation rejected their Messiah and now we have a problem that the NT has to deal with theologically. The Messiah has come, He has called the nation to repentance, the nation rejected Him, they crucified Him, His blood stands as the founding sacrifice of the new covenant but the nation rejected. So the theological difficulty is that it's in place but it's standing in abeyance. A funny kind of thing happened and the NT is coming to grips with that. That's what all the epistles are talking about - what's going on here, what's this new thing that's happened, this thing the Church. Before we were clear, it was all Israel, and those are the Gentiles out there. Now all of a sudden we have Jesus rejected by Israel and this new thing happens. Pentecost happens and all kinds of things happen. This Church thing begins. But that is not revealed here in the OT.

On our chart the sign of the New Covenant is Jesus' blood. The legal terms of the covenant, notice, national regeneration of Israel, they will be regathered, nature will be restored. They will reign with God. The founding sacrifice was God's Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. So the difficulty in the NT is reconciling the fact that the founding sacrifice of this covenant has taken place but the nation Israel has not responded to their Messiah. So between the sacrifice and the acceptance of the sacrifice is this big gap that we live in called the Church.

Let's wrap this together. The New Covenant resolves the tension set by the Abrahamic and the Mosaic. Israel will be blessed because God's word in the New Covenant replaces the Old Mosaic Covenant. And so, all the prophets look with hope to the future, a future covenant that YHWH would initiate that would deliver the nation from its sin. They're looking at history covenantally, through the lens of the covenants.



We have in the OT history interpreted covenantally; it is not just random stories told to teach you how to live a moral life. I grew up in Sunday School and youth programs that totally emphasized be a good boy, obey your parents, don't drink. I never heard about the covenants. It was just do good. What does that have to do with anything if I don't know this? History is personally run according to God's word. History has a pattern to it and that's something I can latch onto because my life is a part of history and therefore the details of my life have a pattern to them, it's not random. So the prophets interpret covenantally and they are models for how you and I should interpret events around us personally during the week. We should be interpreting the events of our lives using the same mentality as the prophets of the OT used to interpret their nation's history.

What this did for the prophets was two things; one, it demonstrated that God was faithful and two, it demonstrated that man was a sinner—both the people and their leaders. Why do we say that? The book of Judges, was that the people or the leaders? It was basically people, how did the book of Judges end? "Every man did what was right in his own eyes." Why? Because there was not yet a king in Israel, no leader. So then God gave them a leader and what has our study shown about the leadership? It shows you leadership wasn't any better than the people. Leaders are sinners because they're people. Sin permeates every level of society. Every once in a while we get in this democratic spirit; we've got to get rid of all the leaders. The leaders are sinful, yes, but who are you? Where do the leaders come from? They come from people like you. All it is showing is that man's big ideas don't work. The best government man can come up with is a republic but even with that people drift and it morphs into something else. Why? Because man fails to go back to God's laws. That's the lesson of this period. The nation went through all this and they got spanked by the rod and finally they got to the point they had no claim on divine protection. He's not going to protect them; they're corrupt so they go into Exile, yet somehow in the end they'll be restored. That's the whole story.

Now we come to the unresolved tension left in the OT. We want to spend some time on this because we have some unresolved tension in the NT and we want to be able to handle this tension. The critic of the Christian faith loves this one because inevitably you get into a discussion and somebody will say there can't be a loving God who is also omnipotent because if God had the

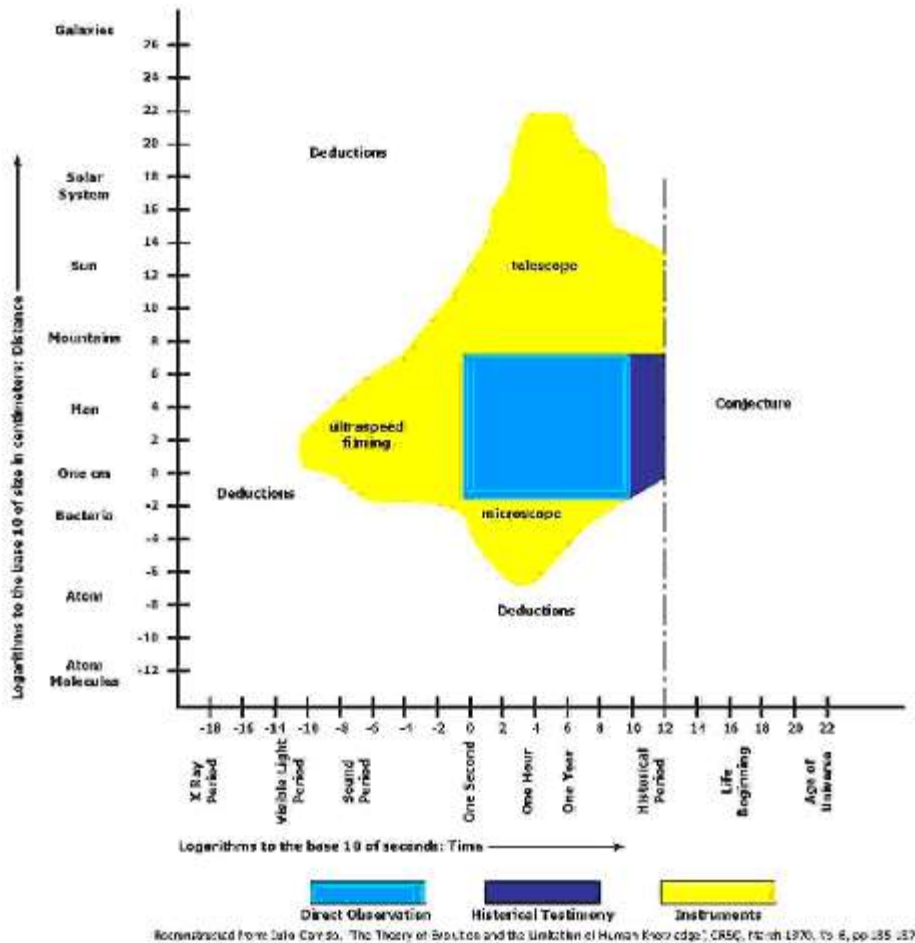


strength and He had the love He would put away all suffering from history. And He hasn't so either He's willing but unable, or He's able but unwilling, so you've got a contradiction in your God. This is a major problem in the Christian faith in the sense that it is an apparent difficulty.

We have the biblical view of history, and the pagan view of history, and at any given moment we're operating in one of these two frameworks. There is no such thing as a neutral person. Everybody holds to one or the other. The pagan holds that history is full of good and evil together, so he's got a problem. Because they don't believe ultimately in a creation of the Biblical kind, and they don't believe in a resolution of the Biblical kind, this goes on forever and ever. It always has been and always will be. So we have good and evil. I've used the emblem on the Korean flag, it's the yin yang symbol from the Orient, and that symbol is saying that all of history is darkness and light. It's a symbol of both; you have to have both of them to have reality. That's a false idea. What's the difference between the biblical and pagan position? We have two levels of existence. On one you only see one path of existence. On the other you see two levels - you see Creator and you see creation. This makes all the difference in the world. We have a Creator who is always good, forever and ever. So we have our eternity. The pagan says the universe is eternal because he can't separate the Creator from the creation. The universe came, in the beginning was gas, that's basically what the pagan view is, so there's always matter, just eternally existing, death eternally there. If there was life on another planet you'd have death there too, etc., and if you went out a million years in the future you'd still have death, if you went back 40 million years you'd still have death, death, death, death, you never get away from it. In the Orient they understand this. Do you know where this leads? This leads to disgust for reincarnation. In the Orient the idea is if I'm reincarnated and I'm reincarnated and I'm reincarnated, what do I come back to over and over? I always come back to this. Death. I'm reincarnated the 58<sup>th</sup> time, what happens again? I die. And I die again, and I die again. No matter what happens, reincarnation doesn't solve the problem, it just repeats it. In the biblical position we have an answer, but in the pagan position there is no answer and that's why salvation in the Orient in Buddhism, and the other religions there, is nirvana. Salvation is the dissolution of your existence; a drop goes into the ocean. What is that? That is spiritual suicide. That is ultimate salvation from a pagan viewpoint.

Now we come to the Christian position, and God is eternally good. The creation, when it left His hand was good, and there was no death and there was no sorrow. Then the fall came and the fall is not equal to creation, the fall was the point when the creature rebelled against the Creator and that started physical death. You have to take these events literally. If you don't take them literally you might as well kiss off the whole thing because you just lost the answer. If the Bible cannot be read in normal fashion, you ought to just chunk it. From the fall toward us, yes, now we have good and evil mixed. And we call this period of history abnormal. The pagan calls it normal. Normal existence to the non-Christian is both; normal existence to the Christian is only good. We are always upset by death, sorrow and suffering. Everybody really is because all men are created in God's image and even the pagan knows deep in his soul there's something abnormal about little kids shooting each other. Then we come to the judgment, that's the other end of history; you can't have one without the other. Christianity brackets evil between the fall and the judgment and from the judgment on God rips the good and evil apart. Now we have a solution. We don't have 58 reincarnations; we have an eternal separation of good and evil. People say that's horrible, that means some people go to Hell. That's right; it's great, because it separates good and evil. If you don't believe that, then you go back to paganism. You have to choose, it's one or the other view, there's no in between.

My point in reviewing all of this from the fall is that, in the Christian position, to walk by faith demands something. Let's look at what it demands. The OT prophets knew how to deal with their tension. I want to show you what we have to know to deal with ours. God is sovereign, God is righteous, God is just, He is loving, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable, and eternal. Those are His attributes. Those attributes answer to things in our soul, because we're made in God's image. Human choice answers to God's sovereignty. Human conscience answers to His righteousness and justice. Love answers to His love. Human knowledge answers to His omniscience. Let's look at human knowledge. The problem with human knowledge is that it's always limited. This is a diagram of all of human experience, whether you're a scientist or an ordinary person, no matter what experience you have you're always inside the box. There are always things further out that you'll never, ever experience. So you're always limited, that's human knowledge.



If human knowledge is always limited, then how do we answer the dilemma that we're walking by faith and not being irrational? That's the charge brought against Christians, that "you people" are naïve, because you are walking around and when you say you believe something, what you're really saying is I don't know. In one sense that's true. For example, I don't know all the details of why some kid shot someone, we may never know. We don't know all the particulars. We know the big scheme though, we know the frame of reference, and we can bracket the particulars. The problem here is that human knowledge is limited. So all men, whether Christian or not have to deal with this. The smart pagans in the West argue that faith equals irrationalism, i.e. in order to believe you have to accept that there is no answer, because human knowledge has just admitted you don't have the answer, so therefore when you say you walk by faith you are being irrational.

Let's answer that. If you just consider human knowledge this is correct, because if we don't have access to the answers - and by definition we are the

only ones who do the knowing - then isn't it true that belief is walking in irrationalism. But the answer is we're not the only knower. Who's the other "Knower?" God is, the Creator. Who is omniscient and has infinite knowledge? God does. Therefore, our limited knowledge does not force us into an irrationalism. We can say I can deal with this suffering situation because God is behind it. There is a loving God who has planned it. I'm not just saying hocus-pocus words, God has given adequate demonstration in history that He is omniscient and He's thought it all through and He's planned it. I can't know all the details but the point is that when I am walking by faith I am not being irrational. Faith is not weak knowledge. It is viewed by the public that when you believe you've retreated, you can't know it for sure so you just believe it. That's paganism, that's not Biblical. Faith recognizes the limitations of human knowledge and accepts the fact that we have a verbally revealing God contractually revealing Himself, giving us terms in His covenants that bracket the situation and tell us the big picture.

Now, I want you to see how this whole thing is so neatly answered by the way the OT ends and moves in to the NT. In our mortal lives we live with our fallen flesh in a fallen world where good and evil temporarily coexist. Key word: temporarily. That's just a summary of the basic Scriptural idea. Then the Scripture tells us more. It tells us there are six reasons why we suffer directly for what we do. There are also at least five reasons that aren't related to what we do. You say well, that's not very fair. We live in a fallen world, and suffering is not always in a one to one correspondence with your personal choices; sometimes it is. The six choices of Scripture are: (1) Effects of the Fall, whose choice? Adam. What's the result? Physical and spiritual death, sickness and natural disturbances in the creation. (2) Effects of Personal Sin, this is self-induced misery and it's the fruit of foolishness, and we all suffer from that one, bad choice. (3) Suffering by Association within Families and Nations, a nation ruled by idiots suffers. (4) Eternal Suffering in the Lake of Fire. People who die and do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are swept aside, and it's not because God's a meany. What is God's objective in history? To separate good and evil, to solve the evil problem. (5) Temporal Discipline of Believers. God's going to get His elect in shape. We have in both the OT and NT that it can be very severe, including death. God will kill believers, 1 Cor, 1 John and I'll show you examples of this when we get into the doctrine. (6) Judgment Seat of Christ, 1 Cor 3 where believers have rewards and then they lose them because of carnality, because of

rebellion. If you get out of the grace mentality, go over to gimmicks, and you find out gimmicks don't get rewarded, He's not interested in that. He's interested in you responding to His grace. Six sobering reasons.

On the other side there are five other reasons why we suffer. In an average situation a number of these are all going on, you'd have to be omniscient to know all that was going on. (7) Evangelistic Wake-Up Call. How many of us can give testimony to the fact that we're Christians today because God hit us over the side of the head with a 2 x 4, woke us up. That's an evangelistic wake-up call. Many of us can give testimony to that kind of suffering. (8) A Nudge to Advance Spiritually, and some of us have to suffer because of that. We're taking things for granted, or God wants to accelerate our spiritual growth, so He'll kick us in the rear end a couple of times to make us move. (9) Evangelism of Unbelievers. What I mean here is that God will introduce suffering into our lives because He thinks that we can handle it. We don't know why it's happening, we take it to the Lord, we walk by faith and off to the side somewhere unbelievers are watching. And they see how you take all this stuff and they can't do that so that attracts them to the Lord Jesus Christ. (10) Edification of Believers. Sometimes we suffer and other believers watch us suffer and that encourages us to see them handle it by God's grace. (11) This is a spooky one, Resolution of the Angelic Conflict. In this one, God allows something to happen in your life and it seems totally unrelated to anything. You haven't done anything wrong and you just got dumped on. The Bible relates that the human race is being observed, we're on center stage and the angels are in the audience watching us and they learn from us.

These are patterns. The word "pattern" is there because it goes back to God who is omniscient. God is omniscient and He has a pattern to history, including our personal histories. Do you see? Make the transition from what we've observed in the big scale of OT history, that these guys are sitting there, they're looking at all the stuff that's going on, they're looking at it very carefully and they're asking, what is God doing in the middle of all this? They are models for us because we have our own personal histories and we can do the same thing. We don't have direct inspiration, but here we've got eleven possible reasons we're facing a suffering situation. You can review those and say okay, I see the big picture. The big picture is the diagram that we've given, evil is bracketed and one day it's going to be separated from the good. That's my ultimate answer. But then down here I have these patterns and

that fine tunes my understanding of what's going on, it's not all the particulars, but I do see patterns.

In all of this we haven't answered one question and the alert non-Christian will say excuse me, but why did God let this evil thing happen? Why did God create a history with billions of people dying? And we don't know why. We can only give the Biblical answer which is: He did it for His glory. What? Do you mean to say that God created a history in which millions of people would die, innocent babies, all kinds of diseases, and He did it for His own glory? Yes, that is the Biblical answer. Let's not be shy about it, let's not back off and say well, we don't really mean that. Yes, we really do mean that, that's what the Scripture says and that's where the Scripture leaves it. So you wind up saying God has a good and sufficient reason for it. That's all the answer we've got right now.

Now we're ready to go to Rom 3. The OT saints knew less than we do and they had a mystery that we no longer have. I want you to see that these guys handled themselves magnificently when faced with their mystery that God has solved for us but didn't solve for them. What we're going to argue is that God resolved this OT mystery in the NT, therefore our mystery, i.e. the mystery of evil, will be resolved in the future to our satisfaction. It will be resolved. The answer to the problem of why did He make the universe knowing evil would enter it, we don't know the answer right now, but one day we will see why and we will praise Him for creating the history in which there was a Hell, cancer, death and suffering. We don't know why today but I'll take you to a smaller problem, the OT mystery and watch how He solves it.

The 'dual track' ministry of the prophets emphasized the tension between God's election and Israel's sin. The prophets announced that God was going to resolve the tension but they did not spell out just how He would come into an eternal fellowship with a sinful people. How can you have a "holy God" come into eternal unbroken fellowship with a "sinful people?" It's the reverse of the question, how can a loving God send people to hell? Do you know what the answer to that is? How can a holy God send people to heaven? That's the other side of the coin. And in the OT they had this problem.



But in Rom 3:25, let's see how Paul says that there was an OT mystery that the saints of the OT never could figure out. It is talking about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins, "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God," this sentence, the end of verse 25 is OT forbearance of God, this is how OT saints were saved, "to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over" past tense, "the sins previously committed." Somehow that was happening in the OT, and it caused great pondering by godly saints. How can this holy God forgive me? How can he forgive me!! How can He forgive our nation? How does He pass over sins committed? Paul answers that in verse 26, "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ." Here's the deal, what Paul says is that the cross of Jesus Christ answers the OT question. Because on the cross the Lord Jesus Christ takes the sin of the sinner upon Himself, and dies on the cross and trades His righteousness for the sin of the sinner. It's a transaction, we don't know all the details but the cross solves the unresolved dilemma in the OT.

What is my argument? The argument is this: that the OT saints had to walk, really with the mystery, and they probably had pagans saying, you believe in this holy God, well I know what you're like, how do you have the right to claim that you're going to be in eternal fellowship in the kingdom of God forever and ever and I go to Hell, how can you say that? The OT saint said I don't know how, He said in the covenant He's going to do it; I'm convinced He's going to do it. Oh, well, you're just being irrational, that's hocus-pocus stuff. No, it's not because God has it all worked out He just hasn't told me yet.

So the idea of rational reason does exist, it's just located in God not me, so it's a debate over where omniscience is located. Is it in man or in God? If omniscience exists in God then we're talking about a rational plan. And the plan comes to pass in the historic cross outside the walls of Jerusalem in a dramatic moment. And what Paul argues is that now we know what the OT saint could never have known. Therefore, he concludes, verse 27, "Where then is boasting?" In other words, it's done in such a magnificent way that human works are excluded, period. Not one work that you and I do amounts to a hill of beans in this solution. This has nothing to do with your personal



good works, they don't add a thing to this. This is Jesus Christ's atonement on the cross and His righteousness given to us, and that's the basis of my security with God. It has nothing whatsoever to do with any good works, any merit on my part.

Not only did God resolve this mystery He did it in such a stunning way Satan didn't even know, the most brilliant creature didn't know what was being pulled off. Who was it that set up the scheme to kill Christ? Do you think Satan would have done it if he knew what was going to happen? No, he got aced. C. S. Lewis had a neat way of illustrating this in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Remember how Aslan makes a deal with the witch over Edmund. Edmund was a traitor, he's a picture of all of us, we're traitors, and we belong to Satan. So Aslan makes a deal with the witch and what it amounts to is he's going to die a substitutionary death for Edmund. He goes at night; it's dramatic, the white witch and her hoards laugh, they mock and they slay him on the stone table. Then they go off to take over Narnia and you see Lucy and Susan there with this slain lion, they start to walk away and behind them the table cracks and Aslan appears in glory, the sun behind him. It's the climactic event of all history, Aslan's alive and he begins to explain that the witch knew the deep magic that went back to the beginning but she didn't know the deeper magic that went back before creation because if she had she wouldn't have done what she did. Because what she did was play right into his hands. It's a brilliant moment, it's stunning, it's the cross of Christ and we must never take it for granted.

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