

# **Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus, Biblical Theology, Session 7, The Mosaic Covenant, Part 2**

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This is Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus in his teaching on Biblical Theology. This is session 7 on The Mosaic Covenant, Part 2.

We began the last lecture introducing the Mosaic Covenant by talking about its pedagogical purpose, pedagogical toward Christ.

And certainly, if one had to talk about any purposes of the Mosaic Covenant, that would be the most important. But there were other purposes too, certainly to constitute a people, to liberate them, to liberate them, and then constitute them as a people with a law. And then, though, there's another fairly immediate purpose, and that is the conquest.

Well, the conquest is a fulfillment of a promise, as we've noted. And it doesn't hurt to consider the covenant background again. The Lord tells Abraham, know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own.

We now know that that's Egypt. And they'll be enslaved and mistreated. And we now know the Egyptians did that.

But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves. And we've seen that the Lord has done that. And afterward, they've come out with great possessions.

You, Abraham, however, will go to your fathers in peace and so on. Your descendants will come back here in the fourth generation. For the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.

Now, sometimes, people will look at the conquest. And if you look, if you think in terms of just war theory, which apparently got its start with Augustine. And it's not a bad framework for thinking about warfare.

Augustine, I'll just mention three key points in the theory of just war. One reason is that there has to be sufficient provocation. So, if somebody blows a hole in the side of one of your destroyers, you don't necessarily go to war over it.

Another is that there has to be a proportional response. So again, if that happens, you don't nuke the country's capital. Another concern is the treatment of civilians and noncombatants.

You try your best not to harm them. Well, if we look at the conquest in those terms, I think we have to agree it completely fails on the human plane. Because what's the provocation? Israel was not provoked at all.

They had no reason to go in and invade the Canaanites and take their land. And so if there's no provocation, the question of proportionate response doesn't even arise. But then, what about noncombatants? Well, the Lord tells them you kill them all.

Have no mercy, men, women, and children. That seems pretty severe and, in human terms, completely unjustifiable. And so, some people think of it in terms of genocide.

If, however, we realize that Israel is not the offended or aggrieved party, the Lord is the aggrieved party. He's the one who has been offended by their rebelliousness and sin. And so whatever response he is going to give will be proportionate.

And even if that includes the extermination of all the people because the judge of all the earth will do what is right. That's kind of hard for Christians, especially to swallow, but I think we have to understand the reason for it and its principle. I remember when I was a student doing supervised ministry with a pastor.

He said to me once, he said, you know, I think all Christians are universalists at heart. They really want everybody to be saved. And I can understand, that's not a bad thing, but they've got to know the gospel, they've got to know the Lord to be saved.

But what's going on here? The Lord says the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure. Well, a couple of things to look at just as an overview, and then we'll come to the key issue, which I will submit to you as faith. But there is a covenant foundation for this.

He judges and defeats, God does, the people, the foe who keeps his people in bondage. Then, he'll use his people to bring judgment on his enemies. And in this, the people, then Israel, judging the Canaanites, are like Moses, waging war against the Egyptians, against God's foe.

God's judgment and warfare against these enemies are just, and they are proven by Rahab's counterexample. So, faith is the key issue here in the judgment on the Canaanites and in the eschatological judgment, too. Rahab is a great exception.

Rahab says to the spies, I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to Sinai, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted, and everyone's courage failed because of you.

For the Lord, your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now, that's a very revealing statement for a couple of reasons. First of all, I think it's right to consider that this statement here, the Lord, your God, is God in heaven above and on earth below, is Rahab's statement of faith.

So, in Hebrews 11:31, she shows up on what's called the honor roll of faith. In the ancient Near East, people had this concept, this stock phrase of the great gods of heaven and earth. She's saying the Lord, your God, is God in heaven above and on earth below.

I'm not saying she has a full-blown theology here, but she senses that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the only true God. She's basically throwing away the pantheon. She's throwing away the religious concepts that she grew up with and that everyone else grew up with.

So that's faith. That's amening God in terms of Genesis 15:6. It's amening his being and doing to the extent that she can with what she knows. She amens God.

That's faith. She's embracing, she's owning what is invisible, but in terms of Hebrews 11:1, it is, in fact, the most substantial thing of all. The other thing is we heard it.

We all know what Yahweh, your God, did. Well, if they all know, why aren't they all behaving the way she does? Why aren't they all on board? And so, what's going on there? There's a difference between her reaction, which is one of amening God, and theirs, which, in spite of what they know and in spite of their fear, they resist. And, of course, they're destroyed.

And that's an indication that Jesus tells us in Luke 18:8, in effect, that that's the way it's going to be when he returns. When the Son of Man returns, when he comes, will he find faith on the earth? The answer is no. And so, faith is the deciding issue.

The Lord will keep the world going as long as there is somebody who can exercise faith in him. The time will come when that will not be possible anymore. No one will believe him.

They will love the lie rather than the truth. No matter how winsome the Lord makes himself, he makes it clear that he is, how good he is, no one's going to believe in him. When that time comes, there's no reason to keep it going anymore because it'll just go from bad to worse.

So, the judgment will come. But we are saved by faith, and the world is judged for a lack of faith, the lack of being willing to amen or align with God. On that day, the

world will be completely unrighteous in terms of righteousness and aligning with God.

So, as we noted, Rahab is commended for her faith, and it's good to have the verse, actually, too. Well, they're going to go over. They're going to conquer the land. What happens if, in the future, they start to behave like the Canaanites, if they disobey, which, of course, is what happens? Well, the Lord says that they have to annihilate them first of all.

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you're entering to possess, drives you out before many nations, drives out before you many nations, the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, Stalactites, Stalagmites, all those nations larger and stronger than you. When the Lord your God has delivered them over to you, you've defeated them, and you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them.

Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Well, what's the reason for that? They will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.

So don't look at them with pity, don't serve their gods, that'll be a snare to you, and so on. And it's not as though this is kind of the Lord is guessing, saying, listen, do this as a precaution because, you know, they might be okay, you look around, most of the people most of the day, what do they do, business, they have families, you know, they're okay, but this might happen. No, he knows this will happen because this is their mindset, this is their spiritual orientation, and it's not as though it hadn't happened already.

At Peor, they were led astray to worship Baal, and with disastrous consequences. So, this just shows this can happen. If you get false leadership and false influence, it can lead people astray.

People are, like it or not, people are sheep. That's why Jesus said to Peter, feed my flock, you know, look after my sheep. I'm the good shepherd.

I was in a church once with a crusty old New Englander who didn't like that idea. He said, well, what's wrong with that? He said, well, sheep are kind of stupid. And I say, yeah, well, spiritually we are stupid, you know, what do we know spiritually without the Lord, without his shepherding? So, but anyway, that's the danger, and that's why this, that's just for Israel's good, that's why this has to be done.

Again, the judge of all the earth will do what is right, and of course, Sodom and Gomorrah is really a type of eschatological judgment. Well, it's not as though Israel is

going to do this alone. This was the mindset, there's, I should say, that is the mindset that led to the big setback in numbers 13 and 14.

They looked at the enemy who was powerful, formidable, or the report of the enemy, and they looked at themselves, and they basically thought, how can we do this? And that was totally the wrong way to look at it. The Lord's saying you didn't believe in me. You didn't believe I could do it.

So here, you may say to yourselves, these nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out? Don't be afraid of them. Remember what the Lord did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt, the greatest power in the world at the time.

You saw with your own eyes the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, and so on. The Lord your God will do the same to all the people you now fear. And moreover, even using natural agents, the Lord will send the hornet among them until the survivors who hide from you have perished.

Don't be terrified by them; before the Lord your God is among you, a great and awesome God. The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you, but little by little. You'll not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you.

So, there are practical considerations in this, but the Lord is going to accomplish it. He'll throw them into confusion until they are destroyed. This is another point that I'll just touch on because we don't need to go into it a lot here, but we read in Joshua 11, we remember how we read that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart as a judgment on his own resistance.

And that brought about the results of deliverance that the Lord wanted for his people. In Joshua 11, we read that the Lord hardened the hearts of the people in the northern half of the promised land so that they would resist Israel and go to war and be defeated. So, the Lord can psychologically interfere with someone that he's judging, and that's worth remembering, too.

You know, I remember an anecdote about Dunkirk when I was in England some years ago, when all those British troops were stranded- something nearly 300,000 troops. The Germans were about 20 miles away, their Panzer divisions and Hitler suddenly gave the order to stop. And the soldiers on the ground were frustrated, the generals, because they knew that there was nothing standing between them and Dunkirk.

They could go and capture all this big, this vast British army. But Hitler was afraid that his troops had moved too fast, and he was afraid maybe there were other troops out there of the Allies that could close in on them, and their locations weren't known, and they could defeat them. So, he hesitated.

He called a halt. Well, that gave time for all those boats, large and small, to come over from England and deliver those troops from Dunkirk. Those men came back a few years later to fight again.

I learned at the time, that is, when I was over in England, I learned about this, that people in every church in England were praying about that at the time. And I think that's a great example. It's got to be the Lord psychologically interfering.

So here you've got Hitler, a guy who's on the brink of conquering the world or having world domination, and he hesitates. Why does he do that? I think the Lord psychologically interfered with him. So, it's just a hint, and this too, at how vain it is for human beings to think they can outwit the Lord, or they're too powerful, you know, they can do what they want.

The heart of the king is ultimately in the hands of the Lord. Well, we see the result after the conquest, the central conquest, of the southern half of the Promised Land. Joshua conquered all these kings and their lands in one campaign because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.

Now, incidentally, I published an article some years ago that argued that that translation should read; he conquered them once. The Hebrew, it says one blow, but it can mean one time, or once, or with one blow, it's a little ambiguous. But if one translates that he conquered them once, then that actually makes sense with Judges 1, where you realize that this was an ongoing campaign.

So I think the picture is that with the conquest of the southern part of the Promised Land, there was a decisive victory. They basically won, but there was still a lot of mopping up and fighting to do, which stands to reason. Well, okay, so they're in there, and they conquer the land. What are they to do? This is all, of course, in Deuteronomy; this is what's going to happen.

What do you do with the idols once you're over there? Remember, in Deuteronomy 12, there's the warning: you destroy all that stuff; you don't do as they do. Well, this is what you are to do to them. Break down their orders, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles, burn their idols in the fire, the images of the gods you are to burn in the fire, do not covet the silver and gold on them even, do not take it for yourselves or you'll be ensnared by it, for it's detestable to the Lord your God.

Similarly, then, as we said in Deuteronomy 12, destroy all the high places on the high mountains and the hills under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Later, of course, in Israel, this is exactly what they reverted to; they worshipped in the high places, and the Lord brought judgment on

them for it. Break down all this stuff, destroy it, put it in the fire. You must not worship the Lord your God in their way, and that's what they later did.

They worshipped the Lord in the high places; it was a pagan mentality. We read later that the Philistines, in a battle with David, abandoned their idols, and David and his men carried them off. You get the later fuller information in Chronicles that he also burned them in the fire.

It's an interesting side note that when a pagan army conquered another army or another kingdom, the Assyrians gave the most complete records of this. They would take the idols of the defeated kingdom captive, and even sometimes you'll read that they inscribed the name of Ashur, the chief Assyrian god, on the idols, which is a way of saying, okay now, just as the people in this conquered kingdom are my vassals, the Assyrian king's vassals, their gods are the vassals of my god Ashur. And so you've got to understand these people believed that these idols were real gods, they represented, they embodied real gods, and so they kept them, and they figured now we'd beaten them, they're on our side, they will fight for us in the future. The Lord's saying that's all nonsense, you don't do that, you burn them, you don't capture them, you don't keep them, you destroy them.

Well, this does entail warnings, though, because if they end up behaving like the Canaanites, they'll be treated like Canaanites by the Lord. So, what do we read here in Leviticus? Don't have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife, defile yourself with her, and don't give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech; that's burning your firstborn in the fire. Don't lie with a man as one lies with a woman. That's detestable.

Don't have sexual relations with an animal. Don't defile yourself in any of these ways because this is how the nations I'm going to drive out before you become defiled. So, there's this litany of sins that the Canaanites were practicing, and the Lord is saying, if you start behaving like them, I will treat you like them.

And so, the land was defiled by these sins, so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants; that's the way he's putting this proleptically, but you must keep my decrees and laws, you don't do any of these things. If you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. In Deuteronomy 8, similarly, if you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed.

Like the nations the Lord destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the Lord your God. So, if they behave like Canaanites, he will treat them like Canaanites. Similarly, he will visit them with plagues such as were visited on the Egyptians.

The Lord will afflict you. This is in the body of covenant curses toward the end of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, like Hittite treaties, ended with a long list of curses that would befall if the vassal were disobedient.

And these are among those curses. The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, festering, sores, and the itch, and so on. He will bring on you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you.

They will be slaves in Egypt as before. The Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There, you will offer yourselves for sale your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.

This later happens when they go back to Egypt after the conquest of the southern kingdom. So again, we remember that judgment is warfare. And so in this case, if they are disobedient, if they behave like pagans, the Lord will wage war against them, in effect, as he waged war against the Canaanites and earlier against the Egyptians.

Okay, well, we now have a covenant that really sets the stage effectively for the rest of the Old Testament, the Mosaic Covenant. That seems to me to be a convenient place to raise this issue. What is the relationship between covenant and history? Scholarship wonders and talks about Old Testament history or the models in the ancient Near East to which it might correspond.

I would suggest that it comes very much from the realm of covenant or treaty in the ancient world. We have two basic types of history writing, two basic genres in which we find history writing in the ancient Near East. One is in the historical prologues of the ancient treaties.

In the Hittite treaties, the historical prologue is often the longest section. It gives the history of relations between the parties before they enter the covenant. This is true in Egyptian treaties, too.

The ones we have are parody treaties with the Hittites. The royal Hittite royal annals give extensive accounts of relations and warfare between Hittite, Suzerain, and rebellious vassals. And Assyrian annals do the same.

And Egyptian annals do the same. So, the picture here is, I think it's actually, it's, when we look, this is what history is in the ancient Near East. This is where we find it.

I think this has a lot of explanatory power. It clarifies things quite a bit. So if we look at the Old Testament, and indeed the New, we'll just talk right now about the Old.



If we look at the Old Testament, we find a series of divine-human covenants. After that, we have narrative historical material that tells about life under those covenants. When the covenants are made, they also have their historical prologues, or in some cases, like the Noahic covenant.

In that case, actually, in particular, you have a historical background but not a historical prologue. But in any case, that's where you are; that's what the history of the Bible is. You get some history in terms of what the Lord has done preparatory to this covenant, what he's done for the vassal.

And then you've got the history of life afterward under that covenant. So obviously, in terms of the Adamic and Noahic covenant, that history is still going on. But within the Bible, it still goes on, too, until the Eschaton.

This is also true. Narrative accounts precede the Old Testament treaties and provide historical backgrounds for them. And this is clear in these cases.

It's also true that narrative accounts follow the treaties and portray the history of the vassal and covenant. So, this is exactly what we've been saying. Historical preface is sometimes included, or a prologue is sometimes included in royal annals.

The historical prologue material is part of the covenant and gives the history of matters before the covenant is cut. Analistic accounts give the history of matters after the covenant is cut. So that's true in the ancient world.

It's true in the Bible. And I'll just put this up for illustration here. But in the Prolegomena of Volume 1, I've tried to chart this out and its essentials.

How you have, for instance, here historical background, then you have the covenant, then you have further Torah, and then life under the Abrahamic covenant, which really goes on until the new covenant is cut and fulfills it, and so on. When you're trying to understand something like this, it's always good to, and it's great if you can find genres from the ancient Near East that match. And when you apply those, or when you look at the Old Testament or the Bible in light of them, you find that they have great explanatory power.

And I think that's true in this case. Sort of the Occam's razor principle, the thing that most clearly and simply explains the data, is probably correct. So, I think these are the genres of history writing that we find in the Bible.

They're all covenant-related, so the foundation of history writing is covenant. And to speak in the broadest possible terms, if we have an Adamic covenant, the foundation of all of world history is that covenant. That's where it all gets started.

The fact that that covenant continues means we still have a planet; we still have a history, and we're making history every day. Good history, bad history, it is what it is. So, it's all based on the reality of the divine human covenant.

The Bible, then, as we've argued from the beginning, is not all one covenant. But, one might say, characterize it as a large set of royal annals, which depict the conduct of the king's vassals under the Adamic covenant; certainly, in Adam, all die. So that's still going on in First Corinthians. It's still going on today.

Also, the analistic accounts and records portray the great king's wars. Wars of intervention to establish covenants on a people, a temple presence among them, and ultimately to restore all things as at the beginning, hence the major paradigm, as we've characterized it, of such repeated activity. And, as we've noted, prophets are key figures in such divine interventions and covenant making and covenant management, as well as the management of life under the covenant.

So, we're saying that covenant is really the foundation of historiography in the Bible. Covenant is also the foundation of prophecy. And certainly, covenants are instituted through covenant mediator prophets, as we have termed them, Adam, Noah, and Abraham.

And then some prophets also are covenant lawsuit messengers, but not until the Mosaic covenant, because that's where God has a people for whom he must raise up prophets, both for guidance and, sadly, for prophetic rebuke and lawsuit. Institution of prophecy in the Mosaic covenant, while certainly it's given through the covenant mediator prophet Moses, as we've noted, later though, and even then, but later especially, the Lord works through prophets to administrate his covenants. And so, even under Moses, there are other prophets here.

The Pentateuch, the Mosaic material, has to do with the Mosaic covenant, which is mediated by a prophet. And so, the people of God are being constituted as the people of God in a covenant relationship here, as a nation. It's going to be its own nation, a sort of free nation, if you will, under God.

They're going to have prophetic guidance, as we've said. And so, the Lord does not leave them clueless as to what to expect in terms of prophetic guidance. And we had a glimpse of that with Deuteronomy 18.

But there are several passages in the Pentateuch where we get some of that kind of information. What is prophecy? What happens? Well, here's one of Moses' objections in Exodus 4, that, you know, how can I do this because I can't speak, and so on. And as we've said, you know, he ends up saying, well, send someone else to do it.

And the Lord says, well, what about Aaron? I know he can speak well. He's on his way to meet you. You'll speak to him and put words in his mouth.

I'll help both of you to speak and teach you what to do. This both does play out. This plays out this promise.

He'll speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. And so, that encapsulates the essence of a prophetic dynamic. So, Moses is going to be God to Aaron, who's going to be a prophet to Moses, and Pharaoh will be the audience.

So, here's the dynamic. God will speak through a prophet to an audience. In Moses' case, Moses will be giving, will be, you know, Aaron will be speaking for Moses to Pharaoh.

And so, this is the first utterance of a prophetic dynamic in the Bible, and it forms the basis for the prophetic dynamic and the major paradigm that we've outlined. So, this is the rudimentary instruction, just in case anybody has any doubts. This is what prophecy is.

Well, then, in Numbers 12, when the uniqueness of Moses' prophetic authority is challenged, the Lord says to Miriam and others who are challenged here, always, listen to my words. When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. This is not true of my servant Moses.

He's faithful in all my house. With him, I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles. You've got to understand that face-to-face is an idiomatic expression here.

It means I speak to him personally. We know that Moses didn't see the Lord's face. Actually, he's got to see the afterglow of his passing, the glory, and yet he was in the Lord's presence.

But I speak to him face to face, clearly not in riddles. He sees the form of the Lord. Then why are you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Well, Moses here is clearly in a different league.

He'll reveal, the Lord will reveal himself to other prophets by dreams, by visions and dreams. These apparently are characterized as riddles or dark speech. However, I think that could also be another category.

So, let's suggest visions and speech that are dark, hard to understand, and enigmatic. Well, clearly, the Bible bears out that people will have these experiences later. Isaiah 1 says this is the vision that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, had.

And, of course, in that case, though, it's talking about the whole book. So that's just something to understand about the Hebrew word. *hazon* is the word vision, and that's what it means.

It comes from a verb that *haza*, which is to see in the supernatural realm. And so one old term for a prophet there was a participle of that verb, a *hose*, a seer, as we would say, a S-E-E-R, one who sees into the supernatural realm. And so sometimes I like to tell my students that when the people didn't want to hear what the prophet said, they would say, no way, *hose*.

But in any case, this term, *hazon*, clearly is talking about the whole book. So, the term *hazon* can mean a vision. It can also mean more broadly revelatory information.

And that's what we've got here. Some of it is visionary, apparently, that Isaiah sees. Isaiah 2 is a good example of that.

And so Isaiah 9:5, which is part of that overall vision or revelation, may be well characterized as dark speech. When Isaiah produced those words by the Spirit, for us a son is born, a child is given, the government will be on his shoulder, his name will be called, or he will call his name, Wonder, Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. From a Christian perspective, that's very clear to us.

That's an incarnational prophecy. But there's no way to know that Isaiah understood that's what it was. And there's certainly no way to understand that the people who read his book or heard these words knew what that was.

In fact, you know, later, we read in John's gospel that when he made himself equal with God, they were going to stone him. So, I think this was something that was hidden. They didn't understand it.

We can now understand it. But that, I think, would suit well the description of dark speech. Visions.

Let me just talk about those a little bit, too. Visions. We have an idea of what a vision is.

And that is, well, there are two kinds, I think. We'll call one open vision, which is a term that's sometimes used. That is when the prophet's eyes are open, and suddenly heaven breaks in, and he sees something.

Ezekiel 1's a great example of this. Ezekiel's sitting there by the Kebar Canal, and suddenly, from the north comes this storm cloud, the storm Theophany. The heaven opens.

He sees the Lord on his chariot throne. Nobody else sees that. It's an overwhelming experience for him.

But it's an open vision. He sees it with his eyes open. People have had visions with their eyes closed.

Daniel's night visions, or call them dreams, if you will. Presumably, his eyes were closed. I'll tell you one vision that happened with me in church, actually.

We were worshipping and my eyes were closed. I'm there worshipping, you know, good old charismatic style. But actually, it's kind of funny because the one Hebrew term for worship is Yadah, which is from the word hand.

So, it's like handing it to the Lord, you know, giving him the glory that's due to him. But wherever you come from theologically, I mean, this happened in the Bible. I would submit it happens today.

Here was the experience I had. I had a vision of a wrist and a razor blade. And I heard, I believe, the Lord telling me someone here is thinking about doing this.

So, there was a break in the worship, and I spoke about it. After the sermon and after the service was over, a man who was in the Salvation Army came up to the Lord and the pastor. That's got to be a Freudian slip, right? I came up to the pastor and said, well, I'm the man.

And so, we went and prayed with him, and the Lord brought him relief. And he was never troubled by that again, but he'd been plagued with that thinking for weeks. So, these things can happen.

And, but that's another kind of vision then, that's with your eyes closed. So these are biblical categories, though. And these are things that are being said here.

Look, I will reveal myself, the Lord says, by visions, dreams, enigmatic speech, perhaps. But Moses is in a different league. He stands in my presence.

He hears directly from me. That's not a privilege of many people. Okay.

Later, as we mentioned in Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 18, the Lord is giving warnings about what they don't do over there. No seers, no necromancers, no mediums, and so on. He's forecasting the prophet like Moses who will come.

And then he comes back to the current scene and says, if, however, a prophet comes along and what he says forecasts doesn't happen, you don't need to respect him. He's not from me. Deuteronomy 13 earlier gives other guidance regarding prophets.

And you get both of these in Deuteronomy because just as you get an emphasis on against idolatry in Deuteronomy they are going over very soon into an idolatrous context. So, you get more specific instructions about prophecy in Deuteronomy because soon Moses will be gone, and they will need prophetic leadership. And they're going to have to be able to evaluate it when it comes along.

When someone comes along and claims to be a prophet, they're going to have to be able to know, well, how can I decide? How can I know that this person is or is not a prophet from the Lord? Well, Deuteronomy 13 is the first of the two passages, and that takes that up. If a prophet or one who foretells by dreams appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if it comes to pass, well, let's just stop there. This basically means that the person is predicting something out of the ordinary, miraculous, and it happens.

Well, you'd think, well, surely that's enough. I won't even say that it's necessary, but let's say, okay, it's necessary, but it's not sufficient because the prophet's adherence to the word of the Lord has also got to be part of it.

And so if he then says, let's follow other gods, gods you have not known, and let us worship them, well, that's the giveaway. That makes it clear. You must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer, for the Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him, the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul.

The Lord your God you must follow, and him you must keep, revere, keep his commands and obey him, serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death because he preached rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. He has tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow.

You must purge the evil from among you. The verb there is literally, you must burn the evil from among you. Well, okay, so the prophet or dreamer foretells something, and it happens.

But then he says, let's follow other gods. The Hebrew idiom is to walk after, and it's a covenant idiom, and that's important. Because the idiom to walk after this is something that Israel was supposed to do.

They were supposed to walk after the Lord. It's a covenant idiom. The vassal walks after the suzerain.

And so, we have this in a letter about Hammurabi saying that ten kings walk after Hammurabi of Babylon. That means they take their cue from him. They follow his lead.

He's their suzerain, and they're his vassals. And so, it's a very covenant idiom.

It's used that way much throughout the Old Testament. And so, if you're talking about walking after a different God, that basically means you're going to take a different God as your king, as your suzerain. And so, this is treason.

It's high treason. If Israel goes along with this, what's going to happen? It will bring the covenant curses, which, in fact, is what happens because they do end up worshipping and walking after Baal and other gods. And so, the covenant curses, the judgments do come.

But it's important to understand that this has very much to do with the form of the kingdom. The form of the kingdom under the Mosaic covenant becomes a nation-state. And it may help to think of an analogy here.

Historically, in the world, in a modern nation-state, if somebody is counseling behavior that is treasonous, the overthrow of the king, the government, whatever, that means the destruction of the state as it is. That means the destruction of the legitimate leadership of the state that God has allowed to have that authority. Typically historically, nations punish this by death.

The point is that if the treasonous person were allowed to continue fomenting rebellion, treason would lead to the destruction of the existing order and its overthrow. So that can't be permitted. That's what the Lord is saying here in effect.

If a prophet comes along and does this, people will be impressed by the sign of wonder. So, they think, well, this guy must be the real deal. And he's saying to follow Baal, so let's do that.

It's going to bring the curses. It's going to bring about the end of the kingdom. And so, it's for their own good that he counsels this.

So this judgment, however, has very much to do with the form of the kingdom, which is a nation-state. The form of the kingdom now is the church. And the church doesn't have the power of life and death.

And so, there's a huge difference here. We will try to illustrate this by reading what we read in Galatians. Because in Galatians 1, Paul says, well, look, if even we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one, we preached you, let him be eternally condemned, anathema.

Let him be out of the church. God judges him. We don't put him to death.

As we've already said, so now I say again, if anybody's preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned. So, the form of the kingdom, the Old Testament form, is a nation-state. It requires a death penalty.

The New Testament form of the kingdom is a church. We do not have the death penalty. And if somebody thinks, well, what about Ananias and Sapphira? Well, that's something the Lord did because they lied to the Holy Spirit, as Peter makes clear.

And so, the Lord does that, he's going to do it. That may be involved in Paul's warning, too, that if you take part in the Lord's Supper inappropriately, without faith, that's why some of you have fallen asleep, which I think means they've died. If God wants to bring a judgment on someone, he'll do that.

But the church doesn't have the power to do that. And so, when Peter pronounces that judgment, he's not making it happen. He's simply pronouncing as a prophet something the Lord is now going to do, and the Lord does it.

So, the form of the kingdom determines the form of the judgment. This is true with the form of warfare, too, as we've indicated. The form of warfare under the Old Covenant was warfare, fighting with weapons and killing people.

And that had to do with the establishment of the state. Sometimes it was involved in maintaining the state against enemies. The form of the kingdom now is the church, and so we don't advance the kingdom of God with weapons.

Historically, this is the problem with Islam, one of the problems. It's based on an Old Testament model, in a sense. If you don't believe, you die.

If you don't convert, you die. The church is not the form of the kingdom of God, really, and that's so the church doesn't wage war in that way either. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, as Paul says.

Well, we've talked about the covenant foundation of historiography and the covenant foundation of prophecy. There's also a covenant foundation to the poetry that we find in the Bible. Here, I'm using the categories that were developed by Hermann Gunkel, a German scholar from the late 19th and early 20th century.

Just as a side note here, Gunkel was a very brilliant guy. He looked at the Psalms, and he began to realize that there are some Psalms that look very similar in terms of their elements. Out of that, he proposed different genres of Psalms.



And for the most part, I think he's quite on target. A more contemporary book that uses his categories, which is quite Gunkelian in its approach, is by Bernard Anderson, *Out of the Depths*. The one snag with Gunkel is, in terms of the Psalms, that he really was of a very liberal scholarly type, and he didn't believe in prophecy at all.

And so, he takes all the Psalms that historically have been considered to be messianic Psalms as royal Psalms. That is to say, they only had to do with a king in Israel at that time. And if some New Testament writer, say, uses Psalm 110 as a messianic Psalm and calls it that, or Psalm 2, Hebrews 1, says, you know, comparing the sun to angels, well, to which of the angels did he ever say, you're my son, this day I've begotten you, quoting Psalm 2:7. Well, that's what the writer of Hebrews thought.

But that has nothing to do with what was really going on. So, in that sense, it's a very unspiritual view of Psalms and certainly not believing in prophecy. Another snag about Gunkel, just so you know, is that there were two big influences on Gunkel in terms of the way he saw literature.

One of them was Edward Norton, a late 19th and early 20th-century scholar of the Hellenistic world, the Greco-Roman world. And Norton's approach was to say that, actually, style doesn't have a lot to do with authorship. It has to do mainly with genre.

And so, in the ancient Near East, this is clearly borne out. Because you've got, for instance, a tradition of royal annal writing in Assyria. You could look at royal annals a thousand years apart.

They use the same stock phrases and the same style. You could say the same person wrote them. But we know that's not true.

The ancient world was different. In our world, we prize individuality, imagination, and newness. That's not the way it was with them.

So that influence showed up in the Psalms. Gunkel is saying that we have Psalms here that are of the same genre. They might be by different authors, but it's the same genre.

Anybody probably could have composed a hymn, a very simple form. Call to praise God or some God, reason for doing it, and you resume the call. ABA is very simple.

So, I say anybody could have composed one. Maybe not everyone could compose a good one, but the genre was there. Anybody could do it.

And so, that's good. When it came to Genesis, though, he was very influenced by the Grimm brothers in Germany, who were collecting fairy tales, legends, and sagas from

the Middle Ages, German, and other tales. And so, he then looked at Genesis in that light.

He said, well, these patriarchal narratives, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all that, are just stories told around a campfire. They're legends, and they're sagas. Who knows if there's even any kernel of truth in them.

So very destructive to the historicity of Genesis. So, it's a mixed thing with Gunkel. But when you come to the Psalms, he's developed some good categories.

And so, we use them here because there are some of them that have to do with the suzerain. Hymns, enthronement psalms, as they're called.

It's another thing. It's not that Yahweh becomes king. He doesn't get enthroned.

He is king. But anyway, psalms about God on the throne. Royal psalms or we would say messianic psalms, but they're royal, too.

I think Psalm 2, for instance, was probably composed. It's been proposed that Psalm 2 was composed for the occasion of Solomon's accession to the throne. That certainly makes sense.

But that's only prefiguring, though, the real son of whom the Lord says, you are my son, this day I've begotten you. So, when he says that to Solomon if that's the right take on Psalm 2, it's an adoptive sonship. This is what is promised in 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic covenant, as we'll see.

When ultimately, it's fulfilled in Christ, Hebrews 1, you see it, that's the real deal. He really did beget that son. Salvation history psalms review the saving work of the Lord in Israel's history.

Well, there's also poetry that has to do with the vassal's life under the suzerain. And so, there are songs about Zion and songs, community laments. The laments are when the community or the individual, one or the other, is undergoing hardship, attack, unjust oppression, or whatever.

And so, the person cries out to the Lord for help. And then the Lord and there's usually too a vow to say if you do deliver me, help me, then I will do this, you know, I'll whatever, offer sacrifices, whatever. Not that the Lord needs that, but that's, you know, the person's motivated to thank God in some way.

Psalms of trust in the Lord, individual thanksgivings, and so on. Other sorts of poems, including wisdom poems and liturgical poems. Well, we mentioned wisdom poems, and so that can conveniently bring us to the covenant foundation of wisdom, which

is to say that the wisdom of God that can help one arises out of the covenant revelation that he is given, in which you know something about him, and you can know something about how to relate to him.

And one of the parts about relating to him, of course, is fearing him in the sense that we've said. Not being scared stiff of him but giving him proper reverence. Even the Assyrians use their Palahu in Assyrian, is to fear.

The Assyrian kings would claim that Ashur chose me to be his fearer, i.e., his worshiper. Not that I'm afraid of him, although you do have a proper fear of him, but you reverence him. You recognize there's a difference between him and you.

That's what the fear of the Lord is here. So that's the beginning of wisdom, as we're told. Moses, talking about the covenantal revelation of the Lord, namely the laws, observed them carefully.

This will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. Not quite that Israel was to be a missionary force to the world, but at least Israel was to represent the Lord well by obedience to the wise laws he had given them. And of course, they failed to do that.

This was, again, leading to the pedagogical nature of the law, showing that they couldn't do it. Well, for us, of course, though, in the new covenant, the deal is better because we have the revelation of Christ, and we have the revelation of the Spirit of Christ within us. And so, Paul can write, my purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And so, he has become all that for us. And in terms of the ministry of the church, so that's to say that you and I, having the Spirit in us, have the blessing of being able to have wisdom imparted to us from the Lord. The Spirit can guide us into all truth.

We can understand what's true. He can remind us of things from the scriptures. He can just motivate us, move us even, as Ezekiel 36, 27 foretold, I will put my Spirit in you at some future date, sometime after the exile, and move you to obey my laws and decrees.

That's all very good. It's wonderful. That's something they didn't have under the old covenant because that's what's foretold as the future in Ezekiel 36, when they were under the old covenant, Ezekiel 36:27.

But also in the church, to one, there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, and to another, the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit. In the church today, these terms, the message of wisdom and the message of knowledge, are the most commonly used words of knowledge or words of wisdom. And again, for those who understand and accept that the Holy Spirit still does these things in the church, and you don't agree, that's okay.

If your theology precludes it, I think that's a mistake. But I hope that doesn't mean you compromise the presentation here. But let's say this certainly was true in the early church at a minimum.

So, what would that be? I think the word of knowledge might be the revelation of knowledge through a prophet in the church about something that might help somebody, who knows, might even expose a sin and lead them to repentance. Word of wisdom, I suppose, would be something along the lines of a word of guidance. This would be the thing that the Lord would have you do.

So whether you take that as something that still happens today or something in the early church, that's my best understanding of that. This perhaps is a nice note to end this lecture on because this is really part of the wonderful dynamic of the new covenant, and that's one that we will be looking at. But it gets initiated. It gets brought about by the great David, great David's greater son, who is truly the great David, if you will.

The beloved, which is what the term David means, and we'll look at that. But we'll be looking at the Davidic covenant before we get to that last and greatest covenant.

This is Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus in his teaching on Biblical Theology. This is session 7 on The Mosaic Covenant, Part 2.