

Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 12, New Covenant in Revelation and the People of God

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 12 on the New Covenant in the book of Revelation and the People of God in the Old Testament and New Testament.

When we look at the new covenant in the New Testament, we said we need to look at it in light of the already but not yet structure of the New Testament, and we find that's true in the New Testament treatment of the New Covenant that most of the texts we've looked at have demonstrated the inauguration, the already aspect of the New Covenant that has been inaugurated in Christ and fulfilled among his people.

But I want to look at one text just very briefly that we've already looked at that demonstrates the consummation of the New Covenant, the not yet aspect, and that is Revelation 21 and verse 3. And I'll read it again, and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, look, God's dwelling place is now among his people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. So, here are just a couple of brief things to say about this.

Number one, this takes place clearly in the context of the consummated new creation. So now we find God's people dwelling in God's presence on a new earth, in a new creation, and in a new covenant relationship. Second, to support that, we've already recognized that Revelation 21.3 is a quotation of or direct allusion to Ezekiel chapter 37 and verses 26 and 27, the new covenant in the context of Ezekiel's new covenant.

So now, though, again, we actually saw Paul quoting this text in combination with Leviticus 26 back in the second Corinthian six in the context of the already inaugurated new covenant. Now we see John picking up that same text from Ezekiel 37, and perhaps he has Leviticus 26 in mind, too. But now John quotes Ezekiel 36, 37 in the context of the consummated new creation.

So now we find God's people living in a new creation in a new covenant relationship with God dwelling in their midst. And once more, as we recognized in the book of Ezekiel, the climax of the new covenant was God living with his people, God dwelling with his people. Although Ezekiel saw that in terms of an eschatological temple, chapters 40 through 48.

Now John sees it in terms of the people themselves, the new Jerusalem people themselves being the temple of God. So, this verse, in a sense, prepares for the rest of Revelation 21 and 22 that describe the people, new Jerusalem themselves, where God is present. And we saw that rather startling, at least to Jewish ears, that rather startling statement in 21, 22, and I did not see a temple because God and the Lamb were its temple.

So, Revelation 21 is the long-awaited goal of redemptive history, where God now dwells in a consummated new covenant relationship with his people. So now the new covenant, which was inaugurated in Jesus' ministry, his death and resurrection, and among his people, now finds its climactic and consummated fulfillment in God's new covenant dwelling, his new covenant relationship with his people in a new creation, where sin has been completely removed, and God dwells with them in an uninhibited manner. So again, to summarize the new covenant, we've seen that the new covenant is the fundamental or covenant itself more broadly.

Covenant is the fundamental structure, if not the main theme or center; it's certainly kind of the underlying fundamental structure of how God relates to his people and how God brings blessings to his people. The new covenant then seems to provide a kind of overarching covenant that brings fulfillment and expression; all the other covenants, the series of God's historical covenant dealings with his people, now find their ultimate fulfillment in the establishment of the new covenant. And that new covenant gets fulfilled first of all, in Jesus Christ and his ministry, his death, and resurrection and extends to his people now, but that anticipates and not yet to mention that anticipates the ultimate consummated new covenant dwelling of God with his people in a new creation, which is where Revelation 21 and 22 appropriately and the Bible.

Now, what I want to do is move on to another theme that is very closely related to the new covenant, as was a temple. And that is the theme of the people of God. Now, people of God are probably to be seen as and should be seen as a key if again, if not the center of the dominant theme of the New Testament theology is certainly a key theme in biblical theology and New Testament theology because all throughout the scriptures, we find God is creating a people with whom he will enter into a relationship.

And we see that theme developed in the new Old Testament and into the New Testament as well. And like the other themes, I want to start by tracing the theme briefly throughout the Old Testament, again painting fairly broad brushstrokes, but we'll look at a number of texts in a little more detail. And once more, I say this every time, but a number of texts that we look at will be ones that we've already developed in relationship to other themes.

But I want to begin by looking at the theme of people of God in the Old Testament. The starting point for looking at the theme of the people of God is the book of Genesis, and one and two, where we find the first people of God, Adam and Eve, where we find God entering into a covenant type of relationship with his people, with Adam and Eve. So, Adam and Eve are not just the first created beings.

Yes, they are, but they are the first people of God. They are the people that God intends to enter into a relationship with. But we saw early on, we saw back in our survey of the Old Testament, or our survey of Genesis one and two, and three, at the very beginning of this course, we saw that Adam and Eve began a pattern of sin and exile that will be repeated later on.

That is, Adam and Eve sin by disobeying God, the stipulations God gives them, disobeying their covenant relationship, refusing to obey, trusting in God's promises, and refusing to obey God's word. And because of that, they are expelled or exiled from the garden, from God's presence. So, then the question that becomes related to this theme is, how is God going to create people? How is God going to restore a people with whom he will enter into a relationship, with whom he will take up residence and dwell? So again, this theme is connected with the covenant; it's connected with temple dwelling, it's connected with creation.

How is God going to reestablish a people, and how is God going to enter into a new relationship with them? In a sense, the next stopping point just very, very briefly could be once more the flood narrative, where God judges humanity but preserves a remnant, preserves someone through which he demonstrates his commitment to creation, to his people, and eventually through which he will begin to establish a relationship. But certainly, the next significant starting point is Genesis chapter 12, and God's choosing of Abraham, who becomes the father of the nation of Israel. And Abraham, I'm sorry, Genesis chapter 12 begins with God calling Abraham to leave the land he now lives in, as we saw, and he will take him to a new land, which he will give him and his ancestors.

But part of God's promise to Abraham, too, is that he will make Abraham a great nation. So it is through Abraham that God is beginning to create a people. It is through Abraham that God is beginning to restore his intention for humanity in Genesis 1 and 2. One thing that we're going to see is that you find this progressive narrowing effect, starting with Adam and Eve and all of creation.

Now, out of all humanity, God selects a certain individual through whom he will, through whom a nation will emerge, that will ultimately bless all the nations of the earth. However, the Abraham narrative also introduces another important theme, which is that Israel is called or chosen by God. So once more, God takes the initiative to call or choose a people.

For example, later on in the biblical narrative in Deuteronomy chapter 7, and verses 6 through 8, we read this: For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than the other people, for you are the fewest of all peoples.

But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out of Egypt with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. This introduces the important theme that God chooses: God calls his people to be his own treasured possession. God takes the initiative to choose his people, and we'll see that theme becomes very important later on when we get into the New Testament.

But Abraham is certainly the appropriate starting point. Actually, Genesis 1 and 2 would be our starting point, but the narrative of Abraham is certainly an important starting point for God beginning to create, renew, and reestablish a people with whom he will enter into a covenant relationship. Abraham is chosen and called by God; his people are his chosen possession, and they are called by God. The next important event, perhaps, would be the Exodus, the Exodus from Egypt, where in the Exodus we find an event that is paradigmatic of Israel's redemption.

It signifies God redeeming his people Israel; that is God's call, and the choosing of his people is now realized in God redeeming them out of Egypt. We saw that in the Deuteronomy 7 passage that we just read. The reason that God redeemed his people and called them out of Egypt was precisely because he had chosen them through Abraham, their ancestor. He had chosen them as his treasured possession.

And now God's calling and choosing of his people finds its expression in God redeeming his people out of Egypt. So, Exodus chapter 6 and verses 6 and 7. Exodus 6, verses 6 and 7, we read, Therefore say to the Israelites, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with outstretched arms and mighty acts of judgment.

I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. There's part of the covenant formula. I will be your God and I will take you as my people.

So again, people in the covenant are inextricably linked together. I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

So, God's redeeming his people from Egypt. Again, this text introduces us to other themes, redemption, the new Exodus, and other themes that will develop later on in this course. But clearly, God's unique covenant relationship with his people, the fact

that they are his people, he is their God, seems to be the motivation for him redeeming them and releasing them from bondage in Egypt.

Another way of looking at it in these texts, but throughout the rest of the Old Testament as well, we find basically what is going on when you look at the biblical narrative, I think, is that Israel functions as the new Adam. A number of scholars have also recognized this. Most recently N.T. Wright, a New Testament scholar, in some of his writings.

But Israel basically is functioning as a new Adam. That is, what Adam was supposed to do as God's image bearer, and Adam and Eve were supposed to do as God's image bearers, in giving obedience to God, in ruling over all creation in the land that God had now created and given to them as his gracious gift, in extending God's rule and glory throughout all of creation, in entering into a covenant relationship with God, now is beginning to be realized and fulfilled in God choosing the nation of Israel, starting with Abraham, and then the great nation that would come from him. God is now beginning to reestablish and fulfill his original intention for humanity in Genesis 1 and 2. So again, much like Adam and Eve, Israel now becomes God's covenant people.

God enters into a relationship with them. He will be their God, and they will be his people. The nation of Israel is supposed to be a light to all the nations, beginning even with Genesis 12.

All the nations were eventually to be blessed through Israel, so God's intention was not just to deal with the nation of Israel and to exclude everyone else, but they were to be a blessing to all nations. Later on, and in much of the prophetic literature, you find that Israel was to be a light to the nations. They were to function as a light to all of the nations of the world, ultimately in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12.

So, like Adam and Eve, they were to spread God's rule and God's glory throughout the entire earth, so that through Israel, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. However, like Adam and Eve, the nation of Israel perpetuates the cycle of sin and exile. So much in the same way that Adam and Eve sinned; they failed to keep the covenant obligations, and they were expelled and exiled from the garden, land, and temple where God was present with his people.

In the same way, the nation of Israel sins; they failed to keep the covenant obligations, and they are expelled and exiled from the land, removed from the temple, and from God's presence. Although one of the differences is God's presence actually leaves the temple as well, especially in the book of Ezekiel, Zechariah, God's presence abandons and leaves the temple in a sign of judgment. So, Israel was to function as, again, sort of a new Adam.

What Adam and Eve were supposed to do, now God calls Israel to do. We've already mentioned the significance of the covenant formula. The covenant formula throughout Scripture, we already saw that in the text I read as early as Exodus 6, God calling them to be his people and God being their God.

The covenant formula is probably one of the most significant expressions of God's intention to create a people. The covenant formula expresses the fact that God is now gathering and creating people who will belong to him. That formula, I will be your God, you will be my people, or I will be their God, and they will be my people, is at the heart of the covenant and establishes what is at the very center of this covenant relationship.

God is going to be their God, and he is now looking for a people. He is now creating a people. He is now gathering people with whom he will enter into a covenant relationship.

He will be their God, and they will be his people. We looked at the covenant formula in Leviticus 26, in Jeremiah, Ezekiel chapter 37, and numerous other places. We find the covenant formula expressing God's intention to create a people so he can be their God and they can be his people.

Once more, this is meant to be the fulfillment of what God intended in Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 1 and 2, God was creating a people. He doesn't use the language, but you can almost use the language to describe what was going on there. God created people so that he could be their God and they would be his people.

Yet again, they failed in that endeavor on their side of the relationship and were exiled because of sin. But now God is once more gathering a people to fulfill his original intention for humanity in Genesis 1 and 2. One thing we've already noted is that we'll see how this develops throughout the rest of the Old Testament, but particularly into the New Testament. Notice how the theme of the people of God begins broadly in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. I've already mentioned this, but to summarize, God's dealings with his people and His intent to establish a people begin broadly with Adam and Eve in the context of the entire creation.

Then, it narrows itself out of all humanity. We saw this in the Deuteronomy text, for example. Out of all humanity and out of all people, God chooses certain people, starting with a specific individual.

Then, it began to broaden and include the entire nation of Israel. But then it ends broadly again to embrace all the nations of the earth and to embrace all creation and all peoples. So this begins broad, gets narrow, and then becomes broad again.

We'll see this in the New Testament as well. The way it's going to work is once more, God begins broadly with Adam and Eve in the context of all creation; he narrows his choice to Abraham and the nation of Israel. Although there are prophetic expectations that this will broaden out, where Israel will once again be a light to the nations and all the nations of the to actually, I will argue, fulfill the promises of Israel.

Jesus will embody the promises and the intentions of God's people, Israel. Then it will broaden out again, sort of like an hourglass, starting broad, becoming narrow, and then broadening out. But the promises are once more narrowed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Then, they will broaden out to include Jews and Gentiles, all who have faith in Jesus Christ and now become the true people of God. So broad, narrow, broad, Adam and Eve, creation, narrow, Abraham and Israel, narrow, Jesus Christ, and then broadens out again to embrace all of creation, including Jew and Gentile, who respond in faith to Jesus Christ. We'll see, too, part of that scheme as well is that the people of God also share in the already but not yet dimension and also share in the fulfillment, first of all, in Christ, and then being fulfilled in his people who belong to him in faith.

We'll see that, too, as part of this narrowing and then this broadening in the development of the theme of people of God. What I want to look at next in relationship to the Old Testament, then, is following Israel's repetition of the plight of Adam and Eve, where, again, Adam and Eve are called to be God's people. They fail because of disobedience, and they are exiled.

Then Israel comes along as the new Adam to accomplish what Adam and Eve were supposed to do, to become God's people. They also sin and fail and are exiled. That, then, leads us to the prophetic expectations of the restoration of Israel from exile, but also prophetic expectations of the inclusion of the Gentiles as well, that Israel was ultimately, in conjunction with God's intention that Adam and Eve would spread God's glory and presence throughout the whole earth, and in conjunction with Genesis 12, that Abraham would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, we do see in the prophets, then, an expectation that Gentiles would also be included in the salvation that God would bring.

But I want to start by looking at some of the prophetic expectations of the restoration of Israel from exile. And one place to begin is the book of Isaiah. And, again, the picture is that Israel has now been; both the southern and the northern kingdoms were carted off into exile because of disobedience, removed from their land, removed from God's presence, and now the prophets anticipate a restoration of God's people from exile.

Isaiah chapter 2, for example, Isaiah, the first section of the book, warns the people of what will happen, that they are about to go into exile because of disobedience,

and then some of the later parts of the book envision them in exile but also even addressing a situation after the exile. But in this section, chapter 2, right at the very beginning, although Isaiah chides the people of Judah for their rebellion and their sinfulness, in the midst of their judgment, chapter 1 is largely a series of judgments on or critiques of Israel, in the midst of that, in chapter 2, we read this. Chapter 2, and starting with verse 2, in the last days that would be in the future, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains.

It will be exalted above the hills, and all the nations will stream to it. Many people will come and say, come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths.

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and settle disputes for many people. They will beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks.

Nations will not take up swords against nations, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Now, this text is also an important one for the inclusion of the nations who come to Jerusalem, but it clearly addresses the restoration of God's people.

For those who are about to go into judgment because of sin and rebellion, now, at the very beginning of his book, the author sounds a note of hope, restoration, and salvation when God's people will be restored to Zion. That will then function to attract the nations to come to learn the ways of the Lord. Isaiah chapter 43, I just jumped ahead to Ezekiel, Isaiah chapter 43, another text, much of 40 through the end of the book, especially 40 through 55, addresses return from exile and restoration of the land of God's people.

But 43 verses 5 and 6, Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, give them up, and to the south, do not hold them back.

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. So now God's people are described as children or sons that God will call back and bring from exile, bring back to the land in an act of restoration.

49, just one other text of 49, Isaiah, still the book of Isaiah. Chapter 49 and verses 8, starting at verse 8. This is what the Lord says: In the time of my favor, I will answer you, and in the day of salvation, I will help you. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances.

To say to the captives, come out, and to those in darkness, be free. They will feed beside the roads and will pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them.

He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. I will turn all my mountains into roads, all my highways will be raised up. See, they will come from afar, some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Aswan.

Shout for joy, you heavens! Rejoice, you earth! Burst in song, you mountains! For the Lord comforts His people and will have compassion on His afflicted ones. So now His people are afflicted because they're in exile, but Isaiah 49 anticipates a day when God will restore them in rejoicing. God will restore His people to the land and covenant with Him.

We noted Isaiah chapter 60. We've read parts of that already, but arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. Verse 3, nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look about you, all assemble and come to you.

Your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on their hips. Then you will look and be radiant, and your heart will throb and swell with joy. The wealth of the seas will be brought to you; to you, the riches of the nations will come.

There are other texts that I could read in the rest of chapter 60, but all of Isaiah 60 anticipates a restoration of God's people back to the land, back to a covenant relationship with Him. We find something similar in Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37. Again, I don't know that I want to read all of that, but Ezekiel's chapters 36 and 37 are also in the context of the restoration of God's people.

Again, the reason I'm reading some of these texts is so that you'll be able to pick up on the language and themes when you get to the New Testament and see how they develop there. This is Ezekiel 36, again, the word of the Lord came to me, son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their action. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight, so I poured out my wrath.

Verse 19, I dispersed them, I judged them. Verse 19, then verse 22, therefore says the Lord, this is what the sovereign Lord says, it is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I'm going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations. Verse 23, I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations.

Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the sovereign Lord. For I will take you out of the nations, I will gather you from all the countries, and bring you back to your own land. Then, the New Covenant text sprinkled water, giving them a new heart.

Verse 28, then I will give you the land I gave your ancestors, linked back to Abraham's promises in Genesis 12. You will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness, I will call for the grain and make it plentiful, and will not bring famine upon you.

I will increase the fruit of the trees and crops so that you will no longer suffer disgrace. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds and will loathe yourselves for your sins and your detestable practices. I want you to know I am doing this for your sake, declares the sovereign Lord.

So, there's more that we could read. And then, in chapter 37, Ezekiel says something similar through the metaphor of dry bones that are raised up and come together, and then flesh comes on them, and then God breathes His Spirit, His covenant Spirit into them, and then we find the covenant formula as well in Ezekiel 37. Then, there is also a reference to the Davidic Covenant, where David rules over them in chapter 37 and verse 24.

So, Ezekiel likewise anticipates a time when God will gather His people out of exile, who have been exiled and dispersed because of sin, like Adam and Evar, God will gather them back into their land, renew His covenant, and restore His covenant relationship with His people. They will once more be His people, and He will be their God. Jeremiah 31.

In Jeremiah 31, in the context of the covenant relationship with Israel, we saw once more, again we won't go back and read that, but in Jeremiah 31, God intends to restore His covenant relationship with His people, to bring them back to the land, and to make them His people. He will be their God, and they will be His people. Now, what is important in a number of these texts as well, especially the Jeremiah 31 text and the Ezekiel text, is that this also assumes the joining of the northern and southern kingdoms in prophetic texts.

God will bring the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah together. He will restore His promises to His people, both the northern and the southern kingdoms. If you remember your Old Testament history, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms, but we find the prophetic with their own kings and their own places of worship, but we find the prophets anticipating a time when they will be restored, and God will keep His promises to both peoples and join them together as one nation.

We could point to a number of other texts, but the prophetic texts consistently anticipate a time when God will restore His people and enter into a restore-His-covenant relationship in a new covenant, where He will be their God, and they will be His people, once again in fulfillment of God's promises made to Abraham, which in turn were a fulfillment of God's original intention for creation in Genesis 1 and 2. In addition to and in the context of the prophetic expectations of the restoration of Israel from exile, as I mentioned already, we also find numerous expectations of the inclusion of the Gentiles. That is once more, I think, in fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2, where God's intention was for Adam and Eve to spread God's rule and His glory throughout all of creation, now we find that salvation and restoration not only to God's people, Israel, but is also to include Gentiles as well. The starting point for this is Genesis 12:1-3, where God promises to take Abraham from his land, bring him into a new land, to make his name great, to make him a great nation, and to bless him, but also all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him.

Now, what I think is going on in the prophetic literature is that we have begun to see that worked out even in the prophetic text. Where the prophetic text anticipates the inclusion of Gentiles, this ultimately should be seen as the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him and through this great nation that would come from him. And as I already said, that, in turn, is to be seen as a fulfillment of God's intention for humanity and for His first creation in Genesis 1 and 2. So, to simply mention a couple of prophetic texts, we've already read Isaiah chapter 2, where in Isaiah chapter 2, the author anticipates that when Zion is restored, all the nations, he says, the mountains of the Lord's temple will be established, it will be exalted above the hills, and all the nations will stream to it.

Many nations, many peoples will come and say, come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in His paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Isaiah chapter 56, Isaiah chapter 56, and verses 6 through 11. And by the way, more than any of the other prophets, and this might be why Isaiah plays such a key role in the New Testament, more than any of the other prophets, Isaiah anticipates or emphasizes the inclusion of Gentiles in salvation and the turning of Gentiles in the eschatological salvation that God will establish—verses 6 and 7 of Isaiah 56.

And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be His servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it, and who hold fast to My covenant, these I will bring to My holy mountain, and I will give them joy in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on My altar, for My house will be called a house of prayer

for all the nations. The sovereign Lord declares, He who gathers the exiles of Israel, I will gather still others to them, besides those already gathered.

So, Isaiah particularly anticipates a time when God will, again, restore not only His people, Israel but will serve to attract and bring in other people and other nations. Nations will stream to Jerusalem, and nations will come to worship God, and nations will come to respond in obedience and to share in the new covenant salvation that God provides for His people. I think there's also a reference in Ezekiel chapter 36.

Ezekiel chapter 36 and verse 23. In Ezekiel 36, as we've already seen on numerous occasions, being in the context of God restoring His relationship to His people. Notice 23, although it is not explicitly in reference to the salvation of the nations, of the nations coming to Jerusalem to learn the ways of the Lord, as we saw in chapter 2 of Isaiah.

But Ezekiel 36:23 does have this reference. I will show the holiness of My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name that you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the sovereign Lord.

When I am proved holy through you before their eyes, we also already looked at Isaiah 60 and Isaiah 60 in the context of the restoration of Israel, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restoration of God's people to their land, it also includes numerous references to the inclusion of the nations, of the nations coming. Sometimes the picture is varied in Isaiah.

Sometimes, the nations appear to come to serve Israel. Sometimes, they come to participate in the Sabbath and in the ways of Israel. But sometimes, they experience salvation, especially in chapter 2 of Isaiah.

But clearly, Isaiah and even Ezekiel 36 seem to anticipate the inclusion of the nations in the salvation that God now will bring to His people, Israel, when He restores them. In fact, Israel itself will function to be a light to all the nations, to bring them in, in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, of being a blessing to all the nations. Two other texts that also play a role in the New Testament, but two other texts that also appear to anticipate the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation are Daniel chapter 7 and verse 14.

Daniel 7 verse 14. I'll back up and read verse 13. In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

He approached the ancients of days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power, and all the nations and all peoples of every

language worshiped Him. So, notice that all people, all nations, and peoples of every language worshiped Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Then, the other one I could add would be Zechariah chapter 14.

And this is the last one we'll refer to, although there are other texts that we could look at. But in Zechariah chapter 14, which again is a text dealing with the restoration of God's people, Zechariah 14 also pictures those from nations coming to share in the eschatological salvation that God brings when He restores His people, Israel. So, when we look at the prophetic expectations of restoration of God's people, we see those two themes among others.

We see those two dominant themes in our relationship with the people of God. God will restore His people, Israel, from exile. He will bring them back to the land.

He will enter into a covenant relationship with them. He will be their God. They will be His people.

Yet at the same time, the prophets consistently expect that people from other nations, other peoples, will also be included in salvation in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that Israel would be a blessing to all the nations. All the nations would ultimately be blessed through the promises made to Abraham, which we once more saw. That's a fulfillment of God's intention for creation and humanity from Genesis chapters 1 and 2. So the prophetic texts then leave us with the expectation of the restoration of God's people in a covenant relationship with Him, and then the expectation of people from other nations, of Gentiles being included in that as well.

Now the question then ends, how is that going to be fulfilled? How will that take place? That brings us then to the beginning of the New Testament theme of the people of God. And there are actually, to introduce the New Testament development of the theme people of God, ending with the prophetic expectation of a restoration of God's people, and also the inclusion of the Gentiles, there are a variety of theological models, again, for understanding the theme people of God in the New Testament, especially as it relates to the people of Israel, the people of God in the Old Testament, and the prophetic expectations of the restoration and the fulfillment of the promises of restoration. A couple of these we've already mentioned in connection with New Covenant, but one approach is what is known as Classical Dispensationalism.

Classical Dispensationalism understands in its historical form, Classical Dispensationalism understood a fair amount of discontinuity between the people of God in the Old Testament, Israel, and the people of God in the New Testament, the

Church. And the two were not the same, and the two were not to be confused. God had made promises to the nation of Israel that he would keep with Israel, and only Israel, literally in the terms in which they were given.

So, when we get to the New Testament, what we find is a people that is something different, which is not to be confused with the nation of Israel, but is a people that will basically inherit spiritual promises, the promises of forgiveness and salvation, etc. But we find in the Old Testament the people of Israel that is ethnically defined and is not to be confused with and is to be kept separate from the people of God, the Church, in the New Testament. Now, there's a variety of ways that is understood within Dispensationalism.

We said there is what is known as Progressive Dispensationalism. Some Dispensationalists say that there's more continuity. They would still say, yes, there is a future for National Ethnic Israel, but the Church in some sense is connected to, and there's continuity between the New Testament people of God and Old Testament Israel, even though they would still maintain some discontinuity that there is a future for Ethnic Israel.

One other movement is often known as Replacement Theology. You often hear people talking about Replacement Theology, and that is that the Church actually replaces the nation of Israel. God made all these promises to Israel, and because of Israel's rebellion and refusal to obey, we now find those promises, and the prophetic expectations of the fulfillment of those promises, now transferred to the Church, the new people of God.

So, the Church actually replaces Israel as the heirs to the promises made to Israel. They are the true new Israel, and they actually replace the Old Testament Israel and now inherit the promises made to Israel. So that's often called Replacement Theology, and you'll often hear people talk about that, and many people still advocate a sort of Replacement Theology.

With those two poles, in a sense, and there are other conceptions of the relationship between Israel as the people of God and the Church that we could talk about, but with that as sort of our backdrop, I want to raise the question then, and want to talk about what is, as we look at the New Testament, what is the New Testament's understanding of the people of God? What is the New Testament's understanding of the relationship between the people of God and the New Testament, what is often called the Church, and the people of God of the Old Testament Israel? The starting point, in my opinion, is the person of Jesus Christ, as we've seen with most other biblical-theological themes. So, I want to begin with the Gospels and demonstrate once more that the promises of God restoring, establishing, and creating a people begins with Jesus Christ as the true Israel, as the one who fulfills and embodies God's intentions and God's promises to his people in the Old Testament. The starting point

for that is Matthew chapter 2, and I won't read all of Matthew chapter 2 because, hopefully, the story is fairly well known to you.

We read it a lot at Christmas time, of course, and hear sermons on it. But quite a bit is actually going on in Matthew chapter 2, and the primary point I want to make, and I'll just look at a couple of texts, I won't read the whole section, but the primary point I want to make is Jesus' infancy, chapter 2, recounting the movements of Jesus in his infancy, just following his birth. Jesus' movement in chapter 2 seemed to reflect and almost reiterate and repeat Israel's own history.

So you'll notice, for example, Jesus, following his birth, Jesus goes down to Egypt, he comes out of Egypt, and you find that quotation in chapter 2 and verse 15: out of Egypt I've called my son. We also read the account of Herod. When he realizes that the Magi have outwitted him, he decides to kill all the baby boys two and under to try to destroy Israel's savior; deliver back in chapter 1, Joseph was commanded to call Jesus, Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. So you have Jesus being the deliverer, sort of a new Moses, who would save his people, but like Moses and like the nation of Israel, actually, like Moses, a foreign ruler tries to kill him and destroy him and kills all the baby boys just like Pharaoh did, and then Jesus and his family go down to Egypt, and God calls them out of Egypt, brings them out of Egypt, just like he did Israel.

In fact, that quotation, out of Egypt I called my son, is a reference to God calling Israel out of Egypt, literally out of Egypt, from the book of Hosea, Hosea chapter 11 and verse 1. Interestingly, you go back and read the book of Exodus, in which God frequently calls Israel his son. So now it's as if the author of Matthew wants to say that God is working to fulfill his promises for Israel through his greater son, Jesus Christ, by having Jesus basically reiterate and repeat and rehearse Israel's history by connecting him with both Moses and Israel. So, Jesus is the savior, the deliverer, sort of a type of deliverer like Moses, who will save his people.

He, like Moses, escapes the death threats of a foreign ruler; this time, it's Herod instead of Pharaoh, who decides to kill all the baby boys to make sure he gets Israel's deliverer. And like Egypt, like the nation of Israel, Jesus then is in Egypt, and God calls him out and brings him out of Egypt so that Jesus Christ is clearly seen as, again, sort of rehearsing Israel's history. This becomes even more clear in chapter 4 of Matthew.

In chapter 4 of Matthew, we read of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and Matthew begins by saying that Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him, the devil came to him and said, if you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Again, son was a name applied to the nation of Israel. Now Jesus is the son of God, and Satan now tests that by saying, if you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread. And Jesus answered, it is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Then Satan takes him to a high temple, to the height of the temple, and tells him to jump down. And Jesus replies, it is also written, do not put the Lord your God to a test. Then Satan takes him to a very high mountain, shows him all the kingdoms, and says, I will give these to you if you worship me.

And then Jesus says, away from you, Satan. For it is written, worship the Lord your God, and serve him only. Now, the thing I want to mention about this text is a couple of things.

First of all, once more, we see Jesus rehearsing Israel's history. But not only Israel's history, but I would argue Adam and Eve's history as well. Notice the point I want to make; notice the pattern again of testing or temptation and sin and exile.

So, Adam and Eve are tempted and tested in the garden by Satan; they sin, and they are exiled. Israel comes along as the new Adam, God's intention to accomplish what Adam and Eve failed to do. They also are tempted and tested, they sin, and they likewise are expelled or exiled from the garden. Now Jesus comes along, and he is tested and tempted, yet Jesus passes the test.

He does and accomplishes what Adam and Eve failed to do and what Israel failed to do. Now, Jesus passes the test in his temptation. Notice the reference to the 40 days and 40 nights that have connections back to Israel's temptations, testing, and wandering in the wilderness.

Notice also, as I said, the references to the Son of God. Israel was the Son, and now Jesus is the true Son of God in a unique way. The last thing I want you to notice is the scriptures that Jesus quotes when he is tempted. This is more than just a suggestion that the best way to combat temptation is through quoting scripture.

Yes, that's true, and that can certainly be derived from here. But when you look at these Old Testament texts, they are all in the context of what applied to Israel. And so, Jesus then, I think, chapter 4 of Matthew, is presenting Jesus as the new Israel, as the one who accomplishes what Israel failed to do.

Israel failed the test through sin, as Adam and Eve have. Now Jesus comes along as the new Israel, and we might say as the new Adam, and he passes the test and now accomplishes what Adam and Eve failed to do and accomplishes what Israel failed to do. So, the starting point, then, I think, is going to be to understand that Jesus is the new Israel.

Jesus embodies and fulfills God's intention for Israel and Adam and Eve. Now that all finds its climax and fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ, in the next section, we'll look at some more examples from the New Testament as to how, especially from the beginning with the Gospels, the people of God theme is fulfilled, not only in Jesus but then in his followers as well.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 12 on the New Covenant in the book of Revelation and the People of God in the Old Testament and New Testament.