

The Role of Progressive Revelation As an Introduction to The Old Testament

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Introduction

Before a student of the Old Testament can understand the truths in it from a proper hermeneutical standpoint, He or she must have some basic knowledge about the structure of the revelation which it contains. Unfortunately the Bible did not fall from heaven as a theological textbook, or as a religious history book laid out as a text book might have been laid out. The Bible is very unique in that it was written over a period of several thousand years, by different human authors, all claiming to be delivering the truth of God, or the revealed will of God. It is a Book of Books. In this case the Old Testament is composed of 39 separate and distinct books.

Some of the old Testament is History - such as the books of Chronicles and the book of Exodus. Some of it is poetry - such as Psalms and the Song of Solomon. Some of it is prophecy - such as Isaiah and Amos. Some of it is Theology - such as portions of Genesis, portions of Exodus, portions of Psalms and portions of the major Prophets like Isaiah 53. In short it is a very diverse set of writings.

The purpose of this paper is to underscore the fact that the Bible is not a mere textbook, but it is a living book which has at its center the idea that God has revealed Himself and His truths progressively over a very long period of time. The bible is not organized chronologically, so it may be difficult for some students to realize that Job comes before Genesis, and The History of Abraham comes before the History of Moses.

The general concept of progressive revelation is simply the notion that each portion of scripture builds upon previous older portions, and unfolds the truths of God linearly and vertically at the same time. We will discuss this in more detail in the course of this paper. Progressive Revelation is a key to understanding the Bible.

I. God Reveals Himself

God is a transcendent being. By this we only mean that he is far above any ones ability to fully comprehend. He dwells on High and as such, in a sense, He is aloof and separate from His people, but He hasn't stayed that way forever. He decided to reveal Himself to mankind. And this involved His stooping down to our level.

He did not reveal Himself all at once, because man could not bear the sight of the Lord of the universe. His self-revelation or self-disclosure as some call it, came in bits and pieces along a linear timeline which lasted thousands of years.

The most common division of the Old Testament is that it is divided into four sections:

- A. 5 books called "LAW" - Genesis Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- B. 12 books called "HISTORY" - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
- C. 5 books of "POETRY" and "WISDOM" - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon
- D. 17 books of "PROPHECY" - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

This division is the most common, but some divide the prophetic books into the major and the minor prophets. We consider that division unnecessary.

God has Revealed Himself in:

1. History

Someone has said: "History is His-Story". Such is the case, because God took so long to reveal himself, and His plan. The whole thing is wrapped up with history, as a tapestry is woven out of many colors of thread, but forms a whole and beautiful work of art. So, history itself is the unfolding of the plan and purposes of God. "For the Lord of Host hath purposed, an who shall disannul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Isaiah 14: 27.

We mention history because when reading and interpreting the Bible it is important to consider things in their Historical setting. If you take events and prophecies out of their historical context, they will lose their meaning, and will be degraded into something which was less than God originally intended. So we have to have both historical context and historical setting.

2. Setting

Everything has it's own setting. This is important to know, because without it everything will be taken out of context in a different way. It is important to set the stage for each Biblical event with a proper setting. How were the people living? What was happening at the time of the event? Who were the people to whom God was speaking? Or to whom were the events happening, and why? What was their manner of living? What was their customs? What were their laws? What moral issues were happening at the time? How did they deal with it? Who was involved? What are the archeological findings pertinent to the situation? What was everyday life like? In the case of prophecy, who was it addressed to? And what would have been it's immediate signification? What would have been it's long term signification?

Setting is just as important as history, because without it, you've taken things out of a social and moral context. One example would be the case when God rained down fire and brimstone on the cities of the plain. It is impossible to understand the divine judgment without understanding the social and moral ills of the cities. They had degenerated into a sex-crazed society. They put off all values for sexual morality, and discarded any righteousness of God which they might have known. The setting justifies the Divine judgment which God rained down upon them. We absolutely must consider setting in all cases of Biblical Interpretation.

“The Bible is not a collection of timeless truths which can be combined with each other forthwith without any regard for their original setting and purpose. We cannot simply cull them from all parts of the Bible and add them together to make a doctrine. The meaning of a statement is partly dependent on it's context. We must make sure that a verse is understood in the light of the whole passage from which it is taken, when considering what it is saying about a particular doctrine.”¹

¹ Alexander, David and Pat; Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible; pgs. 66-67

3. Theology

I have already indicated that the Bible is not a theological text book. However, it is a book which contains theology and theological constructs. Every form of Christian theology, (Biblical, Systematic and Dogmatic and Experiential), depends upon the Bible for its doctrinal development.

As we study the introduction to the Old Testament we will be, at the same time, sketching and highlighting an outline of theological concepts.

II. God's Revelation is Progressive

“The Bible is the account of how God spoke to a variety of people in their own particular situations over a period of centuries. It is a historical record, not a systematic tabulation of doctrine.”² This speech of God toward men builds little by little, and thus we call it “progressive”

1. Why it is not static?

It is not arranged like a thesis or term paper with points A. B. and C. and Sub-points a). b). and c). It is built rather like bricks in a house...“here a little, and there a little, line upon line, and precept upon precept” Isa. 28: 10,13. It started roughly in 2165 BC. with the birth of Abraham and goes all the way to 425 BC. with the completion of the Old Testament Canon.

God chose to reveal His truth in this progressive manner so as to accommodate the spiritual development of mankind. The Bible presents men after the fall of Adam as “dead in trespasses and sins” Eph. 2: 1. “Who’s foolish hearts are darkened” Rom. 1: 21. And who are sitting in darkness Matt. 4: 16.

So God, gave His doctrines, precepts and teachings little by little to man, because man was not spiritually capable of receiving it all at once. Even today, long since the canon of scripture has been completed, We still learn little by little the things of God’s Word.

² Ibid; pg.66

2. Why it took so many thousands of years?

Part of the reason for the vast number of years it took to compile the Bible, is the fact that it contains so much information. Some of the information can only be known by studying it's writings. For instance the Bible portrays historical statements and details which can only be known by the Bible itself. Ancient histories, such as the passages describing the Fall of Satan (Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28); and the passages describing the creation of the world, the creation of man, and mans fall into sin (Genesis 1-3) are totally dependent on special revelation. We could not know anything about these ancient histories without the direct revelation of God.

Then there is the matter of the predestinating purposes of God. Christians believe that God has a plan for the universe. While God is above time, and is not subject to time, He has chosen to work out his plan in and throughout time. The ultimate design of His plan centers around His full self-disclosure in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the plan of salvation. God's plan has as it's core the idea that men can be saved through the mediatorial work of the God-man Jesus Christ.

This plan of salvation as wrought out in history, is beyond the capacity of any one man to design and implement. Moses, was a great deliverer and spiritual giant, but his writings only scratch the surface of the expression of God great purposes. He laid many of the early stepping stones of truth, but others came after him adding to, and building upon what he records. For instance, we know that Moses delivered the basic concepts of creation and the Fall, but these doctrines are not fully developed till we get to the New Testament, (See Romans and Hebrews). In the mean time God continued revealing things little by little throughout the Old Testament.

3. Why it is Organized as an Unfolding Adventure ?

William Graham Scroggie wrote a wonderful outline of the Bible called "The Unfolding Drama of Redemption"³ His idea was to outline the Bible according to its great underlying purpose, which according to Scroggie is the plan of redemption. His work is thoughtful and full of insight. While you may not agree with everything, (especially his dispensationalist) you will still appreciate Scroggie's methodology. He approaches the Bible from what He calls the synthetic method:

³ Scroggie, W. Graham; [The Unfolding Drama of Redemption](#)

“This view we speak of as *synthetic* to distinguish it from *analytical*. The words *synthetic*, *synthesis*, and *synthesize* are widely used to express the idea of putting two or more things together. In logic it means the process of reasoning from the whole to a part; from the general to the particular. In Philosophy it means the action of proceeding in thought from causes to effects; from principles to their consequences. In Chemistry it signifies the formation of a compound by the combination of its elements. In physics it connotes the production of a complex musical sound by the combination of its component simple tones. In surgery it refers to the operation of reuniting broken or divided parts of bone or soft portions of the body. In Biology it tells of groups formed of members whose structural characters partake of the characteristics of other often antagonistic groups.

In general, by synthesis is meant the putting together of parts or elements so as to make up a complex whole; a constructing of something new out of existing materials.

By *synthetic* Bible study is meant, that method whereby the various parts are viewed together, are seen in their relation to one another, and are regarded as constituting a whole. It is, as we have said, the opposite of the analytic method.

In analysis details are separately regarded, but in synthesis these details melt into the picture of the whole. Analysis moves from the specific to the general, but synthesis from the general to the specific. The analytic is the microscopic method; the synthetic is the telescopic method. Analysis concentrates on the infinitesimal, but synthesis concentrates on the infinite.”⁴

So , in this paper we are looking at the Old Testament, not microscopically (so as to study every little detail), but telescopically (So as to gain an overall picture of its structure and plan). We will be considering the Old Testament as a great adventure, unfolding over the centuries.

⁴ Ibid. Pg. 2r

III. Understanding the Old Testament as The Unfolding Adventure of God's Revelation

1. The Groupings of the Books

We have already indicated that Old testament can be divided into four types of books - Law, History, Poetry and Prophecy. For our purposes now we are going to choose the division used by Doctor Maclear in His Old Testament History Book.

1. From the creation to the Dispersion of mankind
2. The Patriarchal Age
3. From the Settlement of the Israelites in Egypt to the giving of the Law
4. The Mosaic worship and polity
5. From the departure of Sinai to the death of Moses
6. Joshua and the conquest of Western Palestine
7. Period of the Judges
8. From the time of Samuel to the accession of David
9. The reigns of David and Solomon
10. Kingdoms of Judah and Israel
11. From the Captivity to the Close of the Canon⁵

This outline seems to me to be detailed enough to cover all the main points, and broad enough to fit in with the idea of studying the Old Testament synthetically.

2. The Analysis of the Books

This portion of our study is simply a synopsis of Old Testament Content. It is intended as an overview or introduction to the Old Testament.

1). From the creation to the dispersion of mankind Genesis 1-10 and the book of Job.

This period spans from earths earliest ages and goes to the time when God dispersed men to all different localities of the earth using the confusion of tongues at Babel. It is a fascinating account of creation and the earths earliest inhabitants. We see here the doctrine of God as creator and Sovereign Lord over creation. We

⁵ Maclear, G.F.; [A Classbook of Old Testament History](#); Table of Contents

learn about the fall of man into sin, and the rapid spread of depravity over all the earth.

Also included in this period is the destruction of the earth by a global Flood, and the rise of Idolatry in the earth.

The narrative of Job fits into this period, and shows us the extent of suffering possible to the human race. Job is like a miniature drama, and is a moving account of Job's great faith and the philosophies of his friends. The outstanding verse is "Though He slay me yet shall I trust Him" Job 13: 15.

2). The Patriarchal Age Genesis 11-50

This is the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These men are known as the patriarchs of the Bible. They are the founding fathers, so to speak. Outstanding during this period was the fact that the Biblical forefathers were nomads, who roamed the earth, and had no land which they could truly call home. They were "pilgrims and Sojourners, dwellers in tents" (Hebrews 11: 9). They walked by "faith and not by sight" 2Cor. 5: 7. But God promised to give them a land, and it is a principal part of the Abrahamic covenant.

This period goes all the way to the death of Joseph in Egypt. And it is a period where Monotheism became the religion of these descendants of Abraham. Worship is prescribed during this period, and the practice of offering bloody sacrifices of animals is established as the means for approaching God.

3). From the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt to the Giving of the Law Exodus 1-20

The narrative here centers around the birth and calling of Moses to be the deliverer of the children of Israel out of Egypt. The revelation of God to Moses in the burning bush is the first real glimpse in the Bible of the absolute holiness of God. Important here, also, is the account of the last night in Egypt, and what has come to be known as the Passover, when the death angel passed throughout the land of Egypt executing the last plague killing the firstborn in the land. The Israelites were protected by the application of blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. This period is attended by some of the greatest miracles of the Bible, most of which were worked by Moses and His rod. The great deliverance at the Red Sea, is one of the greatest miracles of the Bible. People who make this mean only the reed sea, rob the Bible of one of its premier wonders.

4). The Mosaic Worship and Polity Exodus 21-Leviticus 27

This is a complex period where literally hundreds of laws are laid out for the people of God. The Civil and Moral Code is spelled out in great detail, along with the formulation of a calendar which included various Holy times and seasons. Sacrifices are spelled out for various things, and the house of God became the tabernacle, which was constructed according to a divine plan. The priesthood administered the offerings and vessels of the tabernacle. This period is rich with types and shadows of the Lord Jesus which we shall deal with later. Under Moses Israel became a Theocracy, or a government by God Himself.

5). From the Departure from Sinai to the Death of Moses Numbers 10 - Deuteronomy 32

This period is the period of the wilderness wanderings of the Children of Israel. It includes Kadesh-Barnea and the mission of the spies which were sent in to spy out the land, and the irradication of Sihon and Og. War with the Midianites broke out and the account takes us to the death of Moses, who was not permitted to enter the Holy Land because of personal sin.

6). Joshua and the conquest of Western Palestine Joshuah 1-21

The children of Israel pass over the river Jordan into the promised land in a miraculous manner similar to their crossing over the Red Sea. The waters parted and they passed through dry shod. This period involves several battles in the southern and central mountains, and the division of the land among the various tribes.

7). The period of the Judges - book of Judges

Joshua dies and this period records the government of the people fell into the hands of various judges, foremost among whom is Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, and Barak. The invasion of the Midianites is recorded along with the colorful history of Gideon who led to their defeat with a very small army. The Philistines appear in the southwest and the story of the life of Samson is told. He is a Nazarite and the feats of his great strength make for some very interesting reading.

8). From the Time of Samuel to the Accession of David - Book of 1 Samuel

This includes the account of Eli and Samuel and very importantly the election of the First King - Saul. Several wars are recorded during this period...the battle of Michmash, the battles with the Amalekites and the battle later on with David at Mount Gilboa. This period also includes the story of David and Goliath, a story with eternal lessons, and which most Sunday School students can recount.

9). The Reigns of David and Solomon - 2Sam 2-2kings 11

This period is the Golden Age of Israel. David built Israel into one of the great nations in the world. He reigned first at Hebron, and later at Jerusalem. He built a great Army and a palace in Jerusalem. His son Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem and reigned during an extended period of peace and prosperity. Solomon is considered to be the wealthiest man in the Bible, and possibly in the whole history of the world.

10). Kingdoms of Judah and Israel - miscellaneous passages in Kings, Chronicles and the book of Jonah

This period is known as the divided kingdom. There are periods of hostility, and periods of alliance. During this period Elijah was the outstanding Prophet of God, and he challenged the false worship of Baal. Elisha, the successor to Elijah also served God during this period. Both kingdoms fall into decline before the power of the Assyrians, and are carried away captive to Babylon

11). From the captivity to the close of the Canon - Daniel - Ezra and Nehemiah

This portion of the history includes the story of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, Balshazzar and Darius. It includes the captivity in Babylon and Persia, and also the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. This period takes us all the way up to the close of the Old Testament canon. It is believed that Ezra the scribe formulated the completed canon.

The prophets fit into this scheme as follows:⁶

Contemporary in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles - Amos, Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah,

⁶ Adapted from: Alexander, David and Pat; Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible pgs. 374 and 375

Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk

Contemporary in Lamentations, Ezra and Nehemiah - Obadiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi

IV. Unifying Factors

There are certain broad and sweeping factors that unify the Old Testament. We it not for these factors the writings would be a disjointed hodgepodge. We have already indicated that Christ is the key which unlocks the Bible. There are excellent and comprehensive works which explore the Christology of the Old Testament.⁷ We will only make an attempt at summarizing some of these unifying factors.

1. Types and Shadows

Habershon refers to types as a “Series of pictures”⁸. Later on, the same author teaches, that these pictures are intended to teach “spiritual lessons”. These lessons can teach many kinds of truths, but are centered around typical characters, incidents, the tabernacle and the temple and the Lord and His work.⁹

Another author instead of calling them “Types” refers to “Divine Emblems”¹⁰ I actually like this term much better, because people are more apt to understand the notion of an “emblem” rather than the notion of a “Type”. I also prefer the word “Shadow”, which is why I have included it here. A shadow is not a substance, but is the evidence of a substance. Even so the shadows of the Old Testament are evidences of the substance of Christ, and of the plan of salvation.

Walter Wilson, who wrote a book titled: “Wilson’s Dictionary of Bible Types”, calls them “Types, shadows, signs and symbols.”¹¹ Almost all authors discussing this subject of “Typology” is agreed that their interpretation is symbolic rather than literal. The most massive work on Typology remains Benjamin Keach’s book “Preaching From the Types and Metaphors of The

⁷ Hengstenberg; The Christology of the Old Testament

⁸ Habershon, Ada R.; The Study of the Types ; pg. 9

⁹ Ibid. Pgs. 11-12

¹⁰ Simpson, A.B.; Divine Emblems pgs. 9-10

¹¹ Wilson, Walter; Wilson’s Dictionary of Bible Types; Pg. 5

Bible”. He is 100% for the notion that these things are spiritual, symbolic and not literal. That is why he treats most of them as metaphor rather than as literalizations. Hyper-literalization of every portion of scripture destroys those things which are clearly metaphorical.

I will give two examples of a type here. It comes from Genesis 3, where it is said “Her seed...shall bruise thy head” v15. All scholars are agreed that this is the first promise of redemption to be found in the Bible. They are also agreed that this is the first promise of the Messiah. It was not to be taken literally. Eves literal seed did not accomplish this trampling under foot of the serpent. It is a figure revealing the mystery of the incarnation and the victory of Christ over the Satan himself. It is clearly a type. Later on in the same chapter God, kills innocent animals to make coats of skins for Adam and Eve. These are also considered to be types of Christ’s shed Blood. The Lamb is slain, so the sinner does not have to be slain. The lamb bears the iniquity of the sinner, and his blood expiates the guilt.

These two sample types should show the reader that there is a wealth of symbolism and metaphor in the Bible. These things tie the Old Testament up with the New Testament. Scroggie says: “The Old is in the New explained, and the New is in the Old contained.”¹²

2. Prophecy

The prophecies of the Old Testament often find fulfillment in the New Testament. The Bible is filled with them. The following is a suggestive list of prophecy and fulfillment. It is not exhaustive. I simply include it to illustrate the unifying factors of the Bible. I am listing only prophecies which concern Jesus Christ Himself, because Christ is indeed the key who unlocks the Bible.

All these prophecies find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ the Messiah:

Gen.3: 15 - He was to bruise the serpents head.

Gen. 22: 18 - He was to descend from Abraham.

Gen. 49: 10 - He was to be from the tribe of Judah

Isa. 9: 2 - He was to be the light of the world.

Isa. 9: 6 - He was to be a Son Given, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Isa. 7: 14 - He was to be born of a virgin, and was to be called Immanuel - God with us.

Num. 24: 17 - A Star was to attend His birth.

¹² Scroggie, Wm. G.; The Unfolding Drama of Redemption; Vol. 3, pg. 75

Isa. 11: 1 - He was to be a shoot out of Jesse and a branch.
 Micah 5: 2 - He was to be born in Bethlehem.
 Isa. 60: 3 - The wise men were to find him.
 Hos. 11: 1 - He was to be exiled in Egypt.
 Isa. 61: 1-3 - He was to preach good tidings.
 Isa 40: 11 - He would gather His sheep, and carry them in His bosom.
 Zech. 9: 9 - He would ride a donkey into Jerusalem (See also Ps. 8:2)
 Isa. 52: 10 - He was to be the light of the world.
 Isa 52: 13-14 - He would be exalted through His suffering.
 Isa. 53: 3 - He was to be a man of sorrow, despised and rejected.
 Isa. 53: 7 - He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.
 Isa.53: 8 - He was to be “cut off” out of the land of the living, (“cut off” indicates murder see Dan. 9: 26).
 Ps.41: 9; Zech. 11: 12-13; Jer. 19 - Judas is predicted.
 Isa. 50: 6 - He was to be scourged and spit on.
 Ps.22: 16 - His hands and feet were to be pierced.
 Ps. 22: 6-8 - He would be mocked by the passer byers.
 Ps. 22: 18 - His Garments were to be gambled for.
 Ps.69: 21 - He would be given vinegar and gall to drink.
 Ps.22:1 - He was to be forsaken by God the Father.
 Ps 31: 5 - His dying words were predicted.
 John 19: 32-37 - Not one bone was to be broken (Look up Ps. 34: 20).
 Zech. 12:10 - He was to be pierced with a spear.
 Isa. 53: 9 - He was to lay in the tomb of a rich man.

These verses should be enough to show that prophecy is a unifying factor in the Bible.

3. Old Testament Christology

Christ is seen throughout the Old Testament. Of particular importance is the Angel of the Covenant and Melchizedek.

“The Hebrew noun *malakh* means “messenger” or “angel”, from which comes the phrase *malakh Yahweh* or the angel of Yahweh... He is described in terms that are suitable only to a distinct Person of the Godhead (Judges 6: 12, 14). The Divine angel first, and most often, appears in the patriarchal period, the period of Theophanous. His appearance to Hagar in Genesis 16: 7 is the first such instance. Here the Angel speaks about Yahweh as if He were a third party (v. 11), and yet Hagar calls this angelic messenger by the names of Yahweh and God(v. 13 cf. 21: 17). In 22: 11 the angel again speaks, but as being Himself God 9v.16; so to in 31: 11, 14). It was He who redeemed Jacob from all evil (48: 16). The explanation that some have offered is that the Angel simply acts

for God and speaks in God's name, just as did the prophets (cf. Isa. 1: 2). But while such an interpretation might account for some of the above references, it proves inadequate for others; for example, the very first reference. For it states in context that Hagar followed Yahweh with her eyesight and that she gave a name to the God who was speaking with her, things that are never said of any prophet."

"The evidence from the Mosaic period renders it impossible to view the angel as a mere representative of deity. The Angel of Yahweh, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3: 2), not only says He is God (v. 6), but, as the One who called from the bush, He is designated "God" by the inspired text (v.4). It is specifically said of Him that Moses was afraid to look upon God (v.6); and the place of His localization received divine reverence (v. 5). If, as an alternative explanation, it is suggested that the Angel might be simply Yahweh, the Father Himself, in some temporary manifestation, verse 4 proceeds to declare: "And when Yahweh saw that he (Moses) turned aside to see, Elohim called unto Him out of the bush." That is, the Elohim-Angel is, in the text, differentiated from Yahweh. Exodus 23: 20-21, moreover, describes the Angel as sent by Yahweh (and so distinct from Him); but it then goes on to state that God's name is in Him and that the Angel has the uniquely divine power to forgive sins (cf. Lk.7: 49; and Mk.2:7).. Again in Numbers 22:31, Yahweh opened the eyes of Balaam to see the Angel of Yahweh (distinct); but what the Angel says (v.35) is what God says (v.38). Compare also Exodus 14: 19 and Numbers 20: 16 in which the Angel is said to lead Israel, while in other passages it is God who so leads. It is indeed possible that when visible appearances of God occur elsewhere in Scripture (as Ex. 33: 22; cf Gen. 18: 1) the actual subject may again be *Malakh Yahweh*, even though the term itself may not be used. For no man can see God and live (Ex. 33: 20), but Christ is the One who declares Him (Jn.1: 18)."¹³

Melchizedek appears in the book of Genesis, and He is regarded somewhat controversially. Some people think that He is merely a type of Christ. Others believe that he is an angel (possibly the Angel of the Covenant). And still others feel that He is God. I believe the latter, and here's a few points which I feel prove that He was indeed God in the flesh (A theophany which is an old Testament appearance of God Himself). Consider the following:

- 1). In Genesis 14 He is clearly worshipped by Abraham
- 2). He is referenced in Psalm 110: 4 as a priest "forever". This is quoted in Heb.5: 6,10; and Heb. 6: 20.
- 3). Hebrews 7 says that he has neither Father, Mother, nor beginning of Days or end of days. This means that He is eternal.
- 4). He is called the King of Peace, and the King of Righteousness Heb 7: 2.

¹³ Payne, J.Barton; The Theology Of The Older Testament; Pgs.167-168

- 5). He is said to be “like unto the Son of God” Heb. 7: 3.
- 6). His priesthood is said to be forever Heb. 7: 3, 17.
- 7). He receives tithes in heaven Heb. 7: 8.
- 8). His priesthood is superior to that of Aaron Heb. 7: 11-12.
- 9). He is said to be living thousands of years after Abraham Heb.7: 8 “He liveth”.
- 10). Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek Heb. 5:5-6; 7: 11-12.

4. Moral Code

The unity of the Bible comes out further in the moral Code of the Old Testament. The Codices of law were twofold. There was the ceremonial Law, and the Moral Law. The ceremonial embodied all of the laws pertaining to the Tabernacle and later the Temple. Included were the laws for clean and unclean, the laws for handling the vessels and the tabernacle, dietary laws, health laws, laws regulating sacrifices, laws regulating agriculture, laws regulating feast days, Sabbaths, the calendar etc. These social laws or ceremonial laws, were not permanent. The Moral Code, however, is quite permanent.

The Hebrew word for “Law” is *torah*, meaning “A pointing out, a direction, or an authoritative direction from the Lord.”¹⁴ Rushdoony does an excellent job at showing the permanence and validity of the Moral Law code of the Bible. (Although I do not agree with his reconstructionism doctrines).

The moral code is given in Exodus 20. It is known as the Ten Commandments. The perpetuity of these commands are without question. Rushdoony says that it is impossible to have a relationship with God without laws.¹⁵ “If we deny the law, we deny the king”¹⁶ Jesus said that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it Matt. 5: 17. Isaiah said “To the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” Isa. 8: 20.

Every time revival happened in the Old Testament, there was a renewed commitment to God’s Law. Look up 2Kings 23:3; 2Chron.34:31-32. In the New Testament the commitment is renewed again, but it says that the law would no more be written on tables of Stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart Rom. 2: 15. This is the principle promise of the New Covenant according

¹⁴ Rushdoony, Rousas John; The Institutes of Biblical Law; pg.670

¹⁵ Ibid.pg 670

¹⁶ Ibid pg. 676

to Jeremiah 2Cor. 2: 3; Jer. 31: 33. That God would write His laws in our hearts.

The definition of “Law” is direction. God ordained the moral code, to give a God ordained direction to life. It is a marvelous divine provision. Yet the Bible clearly teaches that no man can keep the law, except for Jesus Christ. He is the law giver, and the law keeper. He alone is sinless.

Forsaking the Law means to forsake God’s instructions and His wisdom. We live in a society where this has happened. If asked, most people could not even tell you what each of the ten commandments are. They might be able to rattle off two or three, but it is doubtful if many can quote all ten. As a result of this lawlessness, relativism pervades society. Men do that which is right in their own eyes, and they forsake the concept of obeying the law of God. Christians should not be like that.

Over and over in the Old Testament we find the serious consequences for disobedience to God’s Laws. On one occasion the ground opened up and swallowed a family of lawbreakers Numb. 16: 33. Proverbs says: “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination” Prov. 28: 9. That is sort of where we are socially in this Godless society. Even prayer becomes a mockery and an abomination.

V. Biblical Theology vs. Systematic Theology

When you go through the Old Testament you formulate most naturally a Biblical Theology. This seems to be the most normal way to perceive of God’s word. We read it chapter by chapter and verse by verse, and in so reading we develop our own conclusions.

Such a methodology does not systematize the material. So what systematic theology does is bring all the material together into compartments for sorting. All the verses about God go into the God department (Theology Proper). All the verses about sin go into the sin department (Harmartiology). All the verse about Christ go into the Christ department (Christology) and so we formulate our doctrine systematically.

The things we are going to be treating in this chapter combine both concepts. Some of the material would fall under Biblical Theology, and the rest of it would fall under systematic Theology. Both of these systems are valuable, but our purpose now is to consider the components.

1. The Covenants

There are essentially three covenants which we find in the Old Testament - the covenant with Noah, the covenant with Abraham, and the Covenant with Moses. A fourth one is held by some, and it is the New Covenant announced to Jeremiah. We will also consider this. A covenant is a contract between two parties. We are looking at the covenants between God and man. Some would site a covenant with David, but actually he is the fulfillment of the covenants with Abraham and Moses.

These covenants reinforce the idea of progressive revelation. They repeated and expanded in subsequent generations.

1). Covenant with Noah - Gen. 9: 8-17. Noah participated in a covenant with God, which was made for all men even unto the end of the world. It was a universal and unconditional covenant. In which God promised to never again destroy the earth by a flood of water. It is a unilinear covenant. God made the promise to Noah, and issued a token as a sign of the covenant (A rainbow). This covenant is still in effect. We are reminded of it every time we see a rainbow.

2). Covenant with Abraham - Gen. 12:1-7; Gen 17:1-14.
God's covenant with Abraham, concerns his seed. God promised to multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and to give him the promised land. This very important covenant is repeated to his descendents, Isaac Jacob, and is the foundation for most of the divine dealings with the children of Israel.

3). Covenant with Moses - Ex. 19-20
A covenant of Law.

4). The New Covenant - Jer. 31-34
“God, in the call of Abraham, inaugurated a redemptive enterprise for the whole world, and that He to that end established the Abrahamic Covenant. Also...that although He left the covenant people without ordinances and laws for more than six hundred years, He made with them at Mt. Sinai a second covenant, not disannulling the first, but subjecting the chosen people to a course of discipline through numerous regulations and restriction. It was through the prophet Jeremiah that God announced His intention of making yet a third covenant with His people, to take the place of that made at Sinai”. Look up and study Jeremiah 31: 31-34

2. Dispensationalism

Within the last hundred and thirty years, a new method of Bible interpretation has come forth. It is known as dispensationalist. It's first proponent was J.N.Darby, and it was widely popularized by C.I Scofield in his reference Bible.¹⁷ It is closely associated with Premillennialism, and in the history of doctrine it would be considered a new one. Our purpose here is not to condemn or approve of the system, but simply to point out it's methodology of interpreting the Old Testament. This is Scofield's definition of a dispensation: "A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. Seven such dispensations are distinguished in the Bible".

The Dispensations are also referred to as Ages. They are as follows:

1. Innocence - From Adam and Eve to the judgment of mans expulsion from the Garden, and the curse.
2. Conscience - From Gen 3: 15 to the judgment Flood of Noah.
3. Government - From Noah to the judgment at Babel.
4. Promise - From the call of Abraham to the judgment of Bondage in Egypt.
5. Law - From Moses to the judgment of Sin at Calvary.
6. Grace - From Pentecost to the judgment of Christ's second coming.
7. Millenium - From the Second Coming to the Final Day of Judgment.

(Note: some interpreters also include a dispensation following grace called the Tribulation. It is understood as a 7 year period only).

There is much in this system of interpretation which we disagree with, but it does offer an explanation (or a Philosophy) of History. It teaches the concept of progressive revelation very clearly, but because of it's close ties with a premillennial eschatology, many orthodox theologians reject it. My opinion is that we should take what is good and leave the bad. I value the concept of progressive revelation, and dispensationalist definitely embraces it, although I don't blindly follow all of it's teachings, because much of it is false. I do acknowledge their understanding and valuing of progressive revelation. You can decide for yourself, but be very careful.

¹⁷ C.I.Scofield, The Scofield Reference Bible; Oxford University Press

3. Theocracy

Theocracy bears mentioning, because it is a unifying concept in the Old Testament. God said “I will be your God, and you shall be my people” Lev. 26: 12; Jer. 7: 23; 11: 4; 30: 22; Ezek. 36: 28. This Government by God over his chosen people is termed “Theocracy”. Israel was the only nation in the world who had a divine government. God was their ruler. He was their Absolute Monarch, Dictator. Everything centered around Him. All of their Laws were from Him. All of the proscribed ordinances for worship were from Him. Their educational system was from Him. Their sanitation system was from Him, and their health laws were from Him. He governed every area of their lives, including sex.

This is a unifying factor in the Bible, because it so pervades everything that you can't escape it. God rules the Universe, therefore He rules Israel. It is because of this that Israel willingly embraced the laws of God. The book of Judges is one example of Israel's strong proclivity to the Law of God. It describes the apostasy of Israel from Gods rule and reign (Judges 2: 1-2,10,15,17; 3: 7-8; 5: 8; 6: 1-25; 10: 13-14; chapters 19 and 20). 21: 25 says: “In those days there was no King in Israel (meaning God), everyman did that which was right in his own eyes”. Forsaking God the King, they went a whoring after false Gods and human kings. God the King of the Universe was supposed to be the King of Israel. His blessings are upon them when they truly acknowledge and own God as King. His cursings are on them when they backslide and go after other Gods.

It is interesting to note that Jesus Christ demands just this same kind of relationship with His New Covenant people. The Lordship of God overarches all of human history. His Sovereignty is supreme.

4. Law and Grace

I was originally going to discuss Law separate from Grace, but I have decided to link them together, because they are together throughout the Bible. Some people call the Old Testament - Law, and the New Testament -Grace. This is an unfortunate dichotomy. Both Law and Grace are together in Both Testaments. In fact, there is a sense in which God's laws are grace, and in which God's grace is law! The two cannot readily be separated. When God gave the Law to Moses, he did so in grace and mercy. Grace means the unmerited favor of God, and on Sinai he expressed His grace for His people in a way which has not been equaled until Calvary where Christ's Grace bore the full penalty of the Law. Both Testaments are Law and Grace combined. If you disconnect these two things, you will never properly understand the Bible.

VI. The Old Testament in the New

The multiplied quotes of the Old Testament within the pages of the New Testament is a very interesting phenomenon. Our Lord and The Apostles, along with others such as John the Baptist and Zecharius, Quote abundantly from the Old Testament. These quotes are preserved in the New Testament, and they take the interpretation of Old Testament things to a much Higher level of development. These quotes add validity and meaning to the Old Testament, and they expand our doctrinal formulations and understanding of the things discussed. We will consider briefly the New Testament development of some old Testament Themes.

1. The Covenant of God

There is the Old covenant, and the New covenant. Jeremiah 31: 31-34 is a prophecy about the renewal of the Old Covenant in the New Covenant. God has only one plan of salvation, and this prophecy tells about how it would move forward in the New Testament.

Jesus indicated that there would be a new opening of eyes and understanding. Look up Matt. 13: 16-17; John 16: 12-13; and Eph. 3: 4-6. The New Covenant has replaced the Old - Heb. 7: 18; 8: 6-13; 10: 9.

Hebrews 8: 6-13 deals specifically with Jeremiah 31: 31-34. This should be coupled with Hebrews 10: 14-20. This is a New Covenant from human viewpoint. God always had it in mind.

2. The People of God

God has always had a people on the earth. In the Old testament they were called Israel. In the New Testament they are called the Church. They represent the same thing, that God in His electing Grace has a people known as "The Remnant". When Elijah was feeling sorry for himself saying that he alone was left, and that there were no more faithful servants, God said that he had 7000, who had not bowed the knee to Baal! 1Kngs 18: 18; Rom. 11: 4. There was a remnant of true believers. When Christ was crucified, and everyone forsook Him, there was a remnant who believed and remained faithful. Paul say that "they are not all Israel that are of Israel" Rom. 9: 6. In other words the true people of God are hidden within the outwardly visible Israel. Not everyone who was a physical descendent of Abraham, is a child of God. Abraham was not a Jew! And the Jews were not the Children of Abraham By

Faith Gal. 3: 7. They were children of his flesh only. The flesh does not make you a child of God Jn. 1: 13. Every believer, and only the believers are the true Jews, or the True children of God.

3. The Kingdom of God

God's Kingdom is eternal - Ps. 145: 13. It is composed of people who are born from above - John. 3: 3-6 It is a kingdom whereby God reigns in the heart of His People. In the Old Testament that reign was manifested in the tabernacle and the temple. In the New Testament that reign is manifested in the new Temple..."God dwelleth not in temples made by hands" Acts 7: 48; 17: 24. "What know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit" 1Cor. 6: 19.

The Gospel of the Kingdom was preached to Abraham - Gal. 3: 8. This redefines the Abrahamic Covenant, and is proof that the kingdom of God has come (Lk.10: 23-24; Mark 1: 15; Rom. 1: 1-3). The long awaited Messiah has come, and he sits on David's throne . Look up Acts 2: 23-31. This is a wonderful example of how the Old Testament appears in the New Testament.

VII. Conclusion

We have only begun to scratch the surface in this Old Testament Introduction, but we are confident that it will spur any readers on to dig deeper throughout its wonderful pages. The best way to understand the Old Testament is to read it. If it is read honestly and openly, then God will make its glorious light to shine in our hearts.

As far as the matter of progressive revelation is concerned, we will let the New Testament through some final light upon this subject.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the Fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom He also made the worlds" - Heb. 1: 1-2 Never forget that Christ is the object behind all of God's progressive revelation.