Introduction to the Book of Exodus

Title

The English title “Exodus” for the second book in the English Bible is not a translation of the title of the second book in the Hebrew Bible. This English title “a departure, exit” transliterates the title in the Septuagint, which named the book for its central focus, which was the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The Septuagint title is the origin of the Latin Vulgate’s term “Exodus.” In actuality, the name of second book in the Hebrew Bible is \(w\ell\cdot l\ell(h)\) \(sm\ell\) (תרי ישמעל-energy), “these are the names,” which is the first phrase in the book. This book however, records much more than this event, which is described in 13:17-15:21. Rather, it also describes the circumstances of Jacob’s family before the Exodus, namely the journey from Egypt to Sinai and some of the events this family experienced there.

Exodus describes not only God’s great deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt but also God establishing a covenant with them at Sinai. He not only gives them a law to follow but also institutes a sacrificial system, which not only provided a means to enter His presence but also taught Israel about His character and nature.

This book records the nation building a tabernacle in obedience to God’s instructions, which was designed as a place for Israel to meet God and to demonstrate that He was present with the nation.

Lastly, Exodus describes the great failure of Israel despite the great privilege that God had given the nation. The nation learns not only of God’s holiness but also His love and grace in the face of such failure.

Author

Liberal scholarship rejects Mosaic authorship. John Hannah writes, “Liberal scholars approach the book in one of three ways. First, scholars after Julius Wellhausen attempt to isolate the literary origins of the book, assuming three sources over a lengthy time span. This is commonly known as the documentary approach or JEDP theory (but there would be no ‘D’ source in Ex.). (Cf. ‘The Authorship of Gen.’ in the Introduction to Gen.) Second, the form-critical approach attempts to discover in the text small literary units through an understanding of the history behind the forms. In this way these scholars attempt to determine the date of the original writing of the book. Third, the traditionalist-critical school argues for a long, oral transmission of the accounts, though the exact recovery of the accounts is unlikely. These three approaches are similar in their basic assumptions: Moses probably did not write the book, the exact nature of the
events is difficult to determine, and the date of compilation is late.” (Walvoord and Zuck; The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, pages 102-103; Victor Books, SP Publications, 1985)

To reject Mosaic authorship for the book of Exodus is to deny the inspiration of the Bible since both the Old and New Testaments confirm Mosaic authorship. First of all, the book of Exodus explicitly states that Moses wrote the book of Exodus since God commanded Moses to write the events of Joshua’s military campaign against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:14). Exodus 24:4 also states that Moses wrote down everything the Lord communicated to him on Mount Sinai. This was called the “book of the covenant” (24:7). The Lord told Moses to “write down these words” in Exodus 34:27 and it is recorded in 34:28 that Moses “wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant.”

There is also the testimony in other parts of the Pentateuch which verify Mosaic authorship such as in Deuteronomy 31:9, which states that “Moses wrote down this Law (for)…the priests.” Deuteronomy 31:24 makes crystal clear that “Moses finished writing in a book the words of this Law from beginning to end.”

Then there is the testimony of Mosaic authorship in other books of the Old Testament. David commanded his son Solomon to obey God’s “laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses” (1 Kings 2:3). Ezra read from “the Book of the Law of Moses” (Nehemiah 8:1) and Nehemiah 13:1 states that the Pentateuch is called “the Book of Moses.”

The Lord Jesus Christ confirms Mosaic authorship of the book of Exodus by introducing a quotation from Exodus 20:12 and 21:17 with the words “Moses said” (Mark 7:10). He cites Exodus 3:6 by using the words “have you not read in the Book of Moses” (Mark 12:26).

The Date of the Exodus

Biblical scholarship is divided over the date of the Exodus. Some maintain it took place during the thirteenth century B.C. in 1290 during the reign of Rameses II while others contend that it took place in the fifteenth century B.C. in 1466 during the reign of Amenhotep II.

There are several major factors which lead one to believe that the Exodus took place in 1446 B.C. First of all, according to 1 Kings 6:1, the exodus of Israel from Egypt occurred 480 years prior to the laying of the foundations of Solomon’s temple. This Solomon undertook in the fourth year of his reign, in 966 B.C. Therefore, the exodus took place in 1446 B.C.

Charles Dryer writes, “Perhaps the strongest evidence in favor of an early date is the statement of 1 Kings 6:1 which dates the beginning of the construction of the temple. ’Now it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons
of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over
Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month that he began to build the
house of the Lord.’ Whitcomb dates the fourth year of Solomon’s reign to 966 B.C.
Thus 480 years prior to the fourth year of Solomon would place the Exodus at
1445 B.C. Since the statement of 1 Kings 6:1 is so straightforward, one wonders
why the early date for the Exodus would ever be questioned. And yet questions are
raised. ‘Against this line of reasoning stands the plain statement of 1 K. 6:1 that
there were 480 years between the Exodus and the building of the Temple. If the
reasoning is correct, how can that figure be explained? Commonly it is seen as a
round figure, the sum of twelve generations of forty years each. The presence of
two stock numbers, twelve and forty, is enough to create some presumption in
favor of this explanation. Although there is no direction in the text that the number
should be interpreted as an approximation, neither is there any evidence that the
Hebrew people during the judges period had any need for, or any inclination to
keep, an exact overall chronology.’ (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia;
1979; “Chronology of the Old Testament” by J.N. Oswalt, 1:676) This argument is
very tenuous. First, Oswalt argues in a circle. He takes the 480-year figure, divides
it into two figures (12 and 40), and then argues that the presence of these “stock
numbers” points to the fact that the number is an approximation. But where in the
text are the numbers 12 and 40? He produced these himself from the 480 figure
(i.e., 12 x 40 = 480). Yet the text itself does not have these ‘stock numbers’; it
simply has 480. Second, Oswalt, fails to account for the specifics of the text in
which the ‘480’ is couched. This was also ‘the fourth year of Solomon’s reign.’
‘the month of Ziv,’ and ‘the second month.’ These are hardly ‘approximations.’
Rather the author of 1 Kings was citing a specific date for the beginning of the
temple’s construction. Should not this ‘create a presumption’ in favor of a literal
interpretation of the 480-year figure? Third, Oswalt is arguing from silence when
he intimates that the people during the Judges period did not keep accurate
chronological records. Judges 11:26 indicates just the opposite. Jephthah knew the
exact amount of time that Israel lived in Heshbon (300 years). Evidently he did
have ‘an inclination to keep an exact overall chronology.’ Furthermore, 1 Kings
6:1 was recorded during the monarchy; and a glance at 1 and 2 Kings reveals that
the writer was concerned with chronology. Based on his use of numbers elsewhere
in the book it seems probable that he intended the 480 year figure to be interpreted
literally. Wood provides a telling critique of this position. ‘This explanation,
however, must be rejected by one who holds to a high view of inspiration. The text
in no way states or implies the thought of twelve generations. It refers merely to
the definite number 480, which means that any idea of generations must be read
into the text, One is minded to say that if this plain number can be reduced so
dramatically by this manner of analysis, then many other biblical numbers can be
similarly adjusted by parallel methods, making Scriptural numbers very uncertain indeed.’ (Leon J. Wood, A Survey of Israel’s History; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970; page 89) Those who would seek to reinterpret 1 Kings 6:1 do so on the basis of external archaeological evidence. Thus they are seeking to reinterpret the biblical data to “match” the archaeological data. This is a very dangerous position because archaeology is a very inexact, changing science. Unless there is good textual or contextual evidence to the contrary, it is better to let the Bible stand on its own.” (Bibliotheca Sacra, volume 140, number 559; July 1983)

Another major factor which leads one to believe that the Exodus took place in 1446 B.C. is that during the time of Jephthah, Judges 11:26 reveals that Israel had been in the land for 300 years. So 300 years plus the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness with some time to conquer Heshbon places the Exodus in the middle of fifteen century.

Charles Dryer writes, “The second argument in favor of the early date are the words of Jephthah in Judges 11:26. ‘While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?’ Jephthah was saying, in effect, that Israel had been occupying the city of Heshbon (and other villages) in Moab for 300 years. These cities were taken by Israel just before their invasion of Canaan (cf. Num 21:25–35). The possession of Heshbon occurred approximately 340 years before Jephthah. The problem for those who hold the late Exodus date is obvious. If the Exodus took place in 1280 B.C., then Jephthah would have been a judge in 940 B.C.—during the reign of King Solomon! However, if the Exodus took place in 1445 B.C., then Jephthah judged in 1105 B.C., well within the period of the Judges. How does one who holds to a late date for the Exodus answer this? Some use a mixture of agnosticism and circular reasoning, They begin by assuming that the Conquest occurred around 1240-1220 B.C. Since Jephthah’s remark (made ca. 1100) would mean the Exodus occurred about 1400, his remark cannot be interpreted literally since it does not square with the ‘evidence.’ That is, they must reinterpret Scripture to ‘fit’ their archaeological scheme. ‘But here again, we do not know the basis of Jephthah’s figure—it could, again, be an aggregate of partly concurrent periods (e.g., for Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh?), but we have no indications on which to build…. Empty speculation is profitless, and sound method would counsel one to await fresh light on matters of this type. No-one is compelled to produce a complete answer when there is simply not enough information to do so.’ (Kitchen, Ancient Orient, pages 74-75) Davis makes a notable observation on the context of Judges 11 in which Jephthah’s statement occurs. It is a prose section involving talks between two nations, both of which are aware of the historical situation of Heshbon. ‘It is scarcely possible, however, that Jephthah should make
such a blunder in the midst of important international negotiations. His knowledge of the Torah is evident from the context of Chapter 11 of Judges. It is doubtful that Jephthah could have exaggerated this number as it was used in the argument to the king and have gotten away with it. The King of Ammon had some knowledge of the historical precedence involved in Israel’s occupation of the territory of Transjordan (cf. Judg 11:13). Again it would be well to point out that numerical information given in the passage under question does not appear in a poetic section and therefore probably reflects sober fact.’ (Davis, Moses and the Gods of Egypt, page 31) It seems best to accept the testimony of Judges 11:26 at face value. There is nothing in the context to argue against a normal interpretation. Thus the early date of the Exodus seems to accord better with the biblical data.” (Ibid.)

Furthermore, another major factor which leads one to believe that the Exodus took place in 1446 B.C. is that Paul’s comments in Acts 13:19-20 are irreconcilable with a thirteenth century date for the Exodus. In this passage, he teaches that the Exodus itself along with the Israelite conquest under Joshua and the career of Samuel down to the date of David’s capture of Jerusalem took 450 years, which would include 1446 to 996 B.C.

The events in Palestine in 1400 B.C. correspond with the conquest under Joshua. Archeological evidence suggests that Jericho, Ai, and Hazor were destroyed about 1400. Waltke writes “All the accredited Palestinian artifactual evidence supports the literary account that the Conquest occurred at the time specifically dated by the biblical historians” (Bruce K. Waltke, “Palestinian Artifactual Evidence Supporting the Early Date of the Exodus,” Bibliotheca Sacra 129. January-March, 1972:47).”

Despite this evidence, there are still those arguing for a thirteenth century date. Hannah writes, “Arguments for a late date of the Exodus (ca. 1290) are answerable. First, advocates of the late date refer to the enslaved Israelites being forced to build the “store cities” of Pithom and Rameses (1:11). Archeological evidence, it is argued, suggests that these cities were built in the reign of Rameses II (ca. 1304-1236 B.C.), who then would have been the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. However, those two cities were built at least 80 years before the Exodus. (Moses, 80 years old at the time of the Exodus, 7:7, was not born until after the events recorded in 1:11.) This would place the building of Pithom and Rameses before the rule of Rameses II. This means that the city of Rameses could not have been named for the monarch. How then is the reference to Rameses to be explained? Rameses may have been a common name during the time of the Hyksos kings of Egypt (1730-1570 B.C.) Rameses means ‘begotten of Ra [Re],’ the Hyksos’ sun god. Also the name of the city was originally spelled Raamsees (Heb., ra’amsēs; cf. asv, nasb) whereas the Pharaoh’s name was spelled Rameses or Ramesess (Ra-μεσ-συ). Second, advocates of the later date for Exodus argue that
conditions in the Transjordan area do not coincide with an early date for the Exodus. Archeologist Nelson Glueck found no evidence of settlements in Edom, Moab, and Ammon from 1900 to 1300 B.C. Therefore Moses could not have encountered strong opposition there until later (in the 13th century). Two replies may be given to this argument. Settled populations need not have existed at that time; the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites may have simply had military control of those territories though they were semi-nomads. Commenting on Numbers 20:14-17 Unger noted that “there is nothing in the passage which would demand a developed urban life in Edom or require the building of stout fortresses” (Archaeology and the Old Testament, p. 151). Also Glueck’s methods have been questioned by other archeologists and more recent findings suggest that some settlements were in the area, particularly at Tell Deir -Alla (H.J. Franken and W.J.A. Power, “Glueck’s Explorations in Eastern Palestine in the Light of Recent Evidence,” Vetus Testamentum 21. 1971:119-23). Third, late-date Exodus advocates argue that archeological evidence points to widespread destruction in Palestine in the 13th century but not in the 15th century. However, with the exception of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor, Joshua’s military tactics did not involve destruction of the cities conquered (cf. Josh. 11:13). Waltke notes, ‘Other historical events could account for these layers of destruction; namely, the raids into Palestine carried out by Merneptah of Egypt circa 1230 B.C. or the raids of the People of the Sea circa 1200 B.C. by the Israelites in their continuing seesaw struggle with the Canaanites during the time of the Judges’ (“Palestinian Artifactual Evidences,” pp. 35-6). 2. The date of Jacob’s entrance into Egypt. If the date of the Exodus is 1446 B.C. then certain biblical notations help establish other important dates. Since the duration of the wilderness sojourn was ‘430 years to the very day’ (Ex. 12:40-42), Jacob moved to Egypt in 1876. 3. The date of the writing of the Book of Exodus. The journey from Egypt to the Sinai wilderness took exactly three months (Ex. 19:1-2). It would seem logical that Moses composed the book during or shortly after the encampment at Sinai (1446 B.C.). Thus the book covers events that occurred sometime before Moses’ birth in 1526 (chap. 2) to the events surrounding Mount Sinai (1446). (Walvoord and Zuck; The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, pages 104-105; Victor Books, SP Publications, 1985)

Gleason Archer gives an extensive treatment of the date of the book of Exodus and refutes the arguments of J. Finegan who argues for 1290 date for the Exodus. He writes “J. Finegan lists five major arguments in support of the 1290 date: (1) the discrepancies between the Amarna Letters and the Hebrew record (in Joshua, Judges, Samuel); (2) the apparent absence of an agricultural civilization in Edom, Moab, and Ammon during the fourteenth century; (3) the impossibility of reconciling a 430-year sojourn with a Hyksos date for Joseph’s career; (4) the lack
of evidence that Thutmose III did any building in the Delta region; (5) the mention of the city of Raamses in Ex. 1:11. These will be dealt with one by one. As to (1), Finegan points to the fact that the letters from King Abdi-Hepa of Canaanite Jerusalem in the Amarna correspondence’ indicate that his city was in imminent danger of capture by the Habiru; yet 2 Sam. 5:6–9 shows that the Israelites did not capture Jerusalem until David’s reign. Hence the Habiru could not have been the Israelites, but an earlier, non-Israelite force of invaders. But the fallacy in this argument is obvious. The armies of Joshua did indeed menace Jerusalem, for they routed the Jerusalemite troops (together with their allies from Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon) at the battle of Gibeon, and their king, Adoni-zedek, was subsequently flushed out of hiding and put to death (Josh. 10). But neither the letters of Abdi-Hepa nor the Hebrew account in Joshua states that the city itself was captured or destroyed. Not until after Joshua’s death, apparently, did the army of Judah storm Jerusalem and put it to the torch (Judg. 1:8), and even then they did not permanently dispossess the Jebusites (Judg. 1:21). As to (2), Finegan refers to the surveys of Nelson Glueck in the Transjordanian region, which failed to uncover any evidence of urban civilization or fortifications between 1900 and 1300 B.C. This means that there could have been no strong Edomite kingdom to oppose the Israelite advance up the east bank of the Dead Sea (cf. Num. 20:14–21) back in 1405 B.C. Nor would there have been any strong Moabite-Midianite coalition to face under King Balak (Num. 22–25), nor any armies of Sihon and Og to crush (Num. 21). But Glueck’s investigations were largely in the nature of surface exploration, and could hardly have been called thorough. Moreover, there has come to light more recently a new line of evidence which seems to belie his deductions. In the Biblical Archaeologist for February 1953, G. Lankester Harding reported the discovery of an ancient tomb in Amman (BA XVI, no. 7: “Archaeological News from Jordan”) containing numerous artifacts (including black pricked ware, button-base vases, oil flasks, scarabs, and toggle pins) dating from about 1600 B.C. In Harding’s Antiquities of Jordan (1959) he also speaks of characteristic Middle Bronze pottery and other objects found at Naur and Mount Nebo. A sixteenth century tomb was discovered at Pella in 1967 (ASOR newsletter, Dec. 1967). A Late Bronze Age temple was uncovered under a runway at the Amman airport in 1955 (CT, 22 Dec. 1971, p. 26). Franken’s excavations at Deir Alla and those of Siegfried Horn at Heshbon have shown that the pottery of Transjordan was quite dissimilar from that produced on the west bank of the Jordan at the same period. Yamauchi suggests that Glueck mistakenly assumed the homogeneity of pottery from both regions and thus may have introduced confusion into his interpretation of the data (ibid. See H. J. Franken and W. J. A. Power [VT, xxi 71, pp. 119–23]; “Glueck’s Exploration in Eastern Palestine in the Light of Recent Evidence”). J. Bimson states, ‘I am forced to conclude, therefore, that there
is no reason to date the Conquest in the 12th century B.C. Evidence from et-Tell does not support such a date, since it is not clear that there was a deliberate destruction of the Iron Age village at that time’ (Redating the Exodus and Conquest, p. 65). Further excavation will no doubt uncover more products of this intermediate period and demonstrate once again the fallacy of hasty conclusions on the basis of superficial investigations. As to (3), the difficulty of reconciling the viziership of Joseph with the Hyksos period in Egypt (since Joseph’s career must have fallen in the first half of the nineteenth century according to the early date theory, and the Hyksos rule did not begin until 1730 or so), this discrepancy is freely admitted. But as has been already pointed out, the internal evidence of Ex. 1 points to the Hyksos dynasty as furnishing the “new king who knew not Joseph,” and the Twelfth Dynasty as being the probable time of Joseph’s career. Therefore the point taken raises no difficulty whatsoever to a 1445 date for the Exodus. As to (4), the lack of evidence of building activity in the Delta during the reign of Thutmose III (1501–1447), there are several significant indications from archaeological discovery which point in a more positive direction. It is a well-known fact that Thutmose III erected two red granite obelisks in front of the temple of Ra’ in Heliopolis (situated at the base of the Delta); one of them now stands in London and the other in New York City. Since he describes himself in them as “Lord of Heliopolis,” it is fair to assume that he did conduct building operations in that city. Moreover, a scarab from the Eighteenth Dynasty refers to the birth of Amenhotep II (Thutmose’s son) as having taken place in Memphis (twenty-three miles below Heliopolis). This raises a strong presumption that Thutmose maintained his headquarters there from time to time, at least, and probably did so for the purpose of strengthening his fortifications and staging preparations for his numerous Asiatic campaigns. It is inconceivable that he could have made fourteen or more campaigns in Syria if he had not built extensive barracks, depots, and other structures to accommodate his troops. The land of Goshen with its large reservoir of manpower must have often been commandeered for these construction projects. Even as far south as Thebes, the tomb of his vizier Rekhmire shows Semitic slaves hard at work making and transporting bricks. As for Amenhotep II, discoveries at Bubastis (the Pi-beseth of Ezek. 30:17) uncovered by Naville in 1887–1889 included a red granite slab representing Amenhotep in worship before Amon-Ra’, ‘he who dwells in Perwennefer.’ This calls to mind the close relationship which Amenhotep bore to the naval dockyard at Perwennefer near Memphis, over which his father had appointed him a commandant in his youth. W.C. Hayes concludes that he maintained large estates at Perwennefer, and resided there for extended periods of time. In one inscription (ANET, p. 244) he speaks of riding from the royal stables in Memphis to visit the Sphinx at Gizeh. All this points to frequent royal residence in the Delta during the reign of Thutmose III.
(the pharaoh of the oppression) and Amenhotep II (the pharaoh of the Exodus)—conformable to the early date theory. In regard to (5), the appeal to the treasure city of Raamses in Ex. 1:11, ‘we have seen that there is no possibility of reconciling the Mosaic narrative as it now stands, with a 1290 date.’ This labor upon the city of Raamses must have been carried on prior to the birth of Moses, unless the Ex. 1:15 account is out of chronological sequence and the name ‘Raamses’ was an anachronism (and the strength of this whole argument is that this name was not an anachronism). Yet between 1300, the approximate date of the accession of Rameses II to the throne, and the year 1290 there is no room for the eighty years of Moses’ life prior to the event of the Exodus itself. Therefore the 1290 date cannot be seriously considered as a theory reconcilable with the accuracy of the Hebrew account. Actually the prime advocates of this view do not, as a rule, hold to the reliability of the Mosaic narrative, but (as in the case of Meek and Albright) deny that the Joseph tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) ever sojourned in Egypt, but rather the Levites alone, or possibly the tribe of Judah also. On the strength of the Israel stela of Merneptah the adherents of the 1290 date have rightly urged that the Israelites must already have been settled in Palestine at least by 1229 B.C., and that this makes it very difficult to hold the older theory that Merneptah (1234–1225) was the pharaoh of the Exodus. It is a necessary inference from the Merneptah stela that Israel was already in Palestine, dwelling among the Hittites, Ashkelon, Gezer, and the Horites (11.26ff.). Kyle’s suggestion (in the ISBE article on the Exodus) that “Israel is laid waste, his seed is not” refers to the program of killing off the male babies of Israel eighty years before, while still enslaved in Egypt, is hardly worth serious consideration. The presence of the Hebrew nation in Palestine by 1229 (or the fifth year of Merneptah) carries with it certain significant consequences. If the scriptural record of forty years’ wandering in the wilderness be correct, then the Israelites could not possibly have left Egypt after 1269 B.C., or in the thirtieth year (approximately) of Rameses II. The Hebrew text implies that Moses was absent in Midian and Horeb at least thirty years, more probably forty. Compare Ex. 7:7, which states that he was eighty at the time of the Exodus, and Acts 7:23, which states that he was about forty when he slew the Egyptian. In other words, Rameses II could barely have ascended the throne when this incident took place and Moses had to flee from Egypt; more likely it would have occurred before Rameses’ accession. But the clear implication of Ex. 4:19 (‘Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead which sought thy life’) is that the king who sought Moses’ life had but recently died. The whole tenor of the narrative in Ex. 2 leads us to expect that it was the pharaoh of 1:22 who after ‘many days’ passed away in 2:23. Whether this was the case, there is the greatest improbability that Merneptah’s raid would have met with success against the triumphant Israelites under General Joshua in 1229 just as they were first entering the promised land. It is far more
likely that the Egyptian expedition would have taken place after the initial phase of the conquest was over. This would push the Exodus back at least to the 1290 date, and make it utterly hopeless for Rameses II (who reigned from about 1300 to 1234) to serve as the “pharaoh of the oppression.” Moses could not have spent forty years in exile during the ten years between 1300 and 1290; yet it was evidently that same king who had sought Moses’ life who ‘after many days’ had died. No other known pharaoh fulfills all the specifications besides Thutmose III. He alone, besides Rameses II, was on the throne long enough (fifty-four years, including the twenty-one years of Hatshepsut’s regency) to have been reigning at the time of Moses’ flight from Egypt, and to pass away not long before Moses’ call at the burning bush, thirty or forty years later. In character he was ambitious and energetic, launching no less than seventeen military campaigns in nineteen years, and engaging in numerous building projects for which he used a large slave-labor task force. His son, Amenhotep II, who doubtless hoped to equal his father’s military prowess, seems to have suffered some serious reverse in his military resources, for he was unable to carry out any invasions or extensive military operations after his fifth year (1445 B.C.) until the modest campaign of his ninth year (according to Memphis stela, at least—the chronology of this reign is a bit confused). This relative feebleness of his war effort (by comparison with that of his father) would well accord with a catastrophic loss of the flower of his chariotry in the waters of the Red Sea during their vain pursuit of the fleeing Israelites. In further confirmation of Amenhotep II as the pharaoh of the Exodus we have the ‘Dream Stela’ of Thutmose IV (1421–1412), his son and successor. Although Adolf Erman demonstrated quite convincingly that the inscription itself comes from a later period (Sitzungsberichte der königlichen preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1904), nevertheless there can be little doubt that it represents faithfully the substance and much of the actual wording of an authentic inscription set up by Thutmose himself in the fifteenth century. Apparently the older stela had been seriously damaged and was copied (as well as its condition would allow) in a later century, when once again the sand was removed from the Sphinx at Gizeh. In this text the god Har-em-akht (‘Horus in the horizon’), in whose honor the Sphinx was thought to be made, appears to young Thutmose in a dream while the latter was a mere prince in his father’s household. He promises him the throne of Egypt upon the implied condition that he will remove the sand from the Sphinx. It is quite obvious that if Thutmose IV had at that time been the oldest son of his father, Amenhotep II, there would have been no need for a divine promise that he should some day become king. He would naturally have succeeded to the throne if he simply survived his father. It is a necessary inference, therefore, that the oldest son of Amenhotep must have later predeceased his father, thus leaving the succession to his younger brother Thutmose IV. This well accords with the record in Ex.
12:29 that the eldest son of pharaoh died at the time of the tenth plague. But even more conclusive than this is the situation in Goshen during the reign of Thutmose III as compared to that which existed under Rameses II. In the time of Rameses, some of his main building activity was right in the region of Wadi Tumilat, or Goshen, and this meant that Egyptians must have been living all around this region and in the midst of it as well. But the details of the plagues of flies, of hail, and of darkness (Ex. 8:22; 9:25–26; 10:23) make it clear enough that Goshen was at the time of the Exodus inhabited almost exclusively by the Hebrews, and plagues which befell the rest of Egypt made no appearance at all in Goshen. So far as we can tell from the archaeological evidence presently at hand, there were no Egyptians living there during the reign of Thutmose. We come now to a consideration of the date when the Late Bronze or Canaanite city of Jericho (City D in Garstang’s survey) met with destruction. John Garstang, who did the most extensive excavation at this celebrated site, came to the conclusion that this destruction took place around 1400 B.C. In the burial grounds belonging to this level, Garstang found numerous scarabs, but none of them later than two bearing the name of Amenhotep III (1412–1376). Moreover out of more than 150,000 fragments of pottery found within the city itself, only one piece was found which was of the Mycenean type. Yet Mycenean ware began to be imported into Palestine in increasing abundance from 1400 onward. The archaeological criteria for the reign of Amenhotep’s successor, Amenhotep IV or Akhnaton (1376–1362), are distinctive, plentiful, and well established; but the Jericho evidence did not include a single fragment characteristic of his reign. Garstang also described the outer walls of this city as having been constructed of large, heavy stone, and observed that they had toppled outward, as if by a violent earthquake. There is considerable doubt, however, as to whether those walls belonged to this Late Bronze city or to an earlier one, for more recent excavation by Kathleen Kenyon indicates the presence of Middle Bronze sherds in the earth fill between the inner and outer layer of this rampart. Yet there is no reason why a wall built in the Middle Bronze II period might not still have been in use by Late Bronze times, ca. 1400 B.C. Although many have objected to Garstang’s early date for the destruction of Jericho, their objections have largely been influenced by subjective preference for a later date (a preference partially based upon the time of the destruction of Lachish, Bethel, and Debir in the thirteenth century). In reply to such criticisms, Garstang wrote in the preface (p. xiv) to his 1948 Story of Jericho: ‘We are aware that varying opinions have appeared in print which conflict with our interpretation of the date of the fall of Jericho about 1400 B.C. Few such opinions are based on first-hand knowledge of the scientific results of our excavations; while many of them are devoid of logical reasoning, or are based upon preconceptions as to the date of the Exodus. No commentator has yet produced...
from the results of our excavations, which have been fully published in the Liverpool Annals of Archaeology, any evidence that City IV remained in being after the reign of Amenhotep III…. We see no need therefore to discuss the date as though it were a matter for debate.’ One specious objection which is sometimes raised to the 1400 date for the fall of Jericho is derived from the mention of iron implements found in it, according to Josh. 6:24. The argument runs as follows: 1400 falls within the Late Bronze Age; since iron was used in Jericho, its fall must have occurred during the Iron Age (which began in the thirteenth century). But it does not necessarily follow that iron was unknown during the Late Bronze Age; it might simply be that it was in such short supply that bronze had to be used by most people in most places. This is borne out by the fact that Josh. 6:24 speaks of the iron ‘vessels’ in the same breath with articles of gold and silver; therefore we may legitimately infer at that time iron may have been scarce and expensive. Actually we know that iron was well known as early as Sumerian times, and the Semitic word for “iron” (barzel, Hebrew; parzillu, Akkadian) may even have been of Sumerian origin, since the Sumerian spelling for the word is ö·AN.BAR. This indicates a knowledge and use of iron in the Mesopotamian Valley at least as early as the twentieth century B.C. Furthermore, iron objects have actually been found at Tell Asmar dating from about 2500 B.C., and also at Dorah in northwestern Turkey from about the same period there was discovered an iron-bladed sword with an obsidian hilt. Perhaps the most serious difficulty with the 1445 theory is to be found in the dates which are presently assigned to the destruction of some of the other cities which Joshua’s forces are said to have captured, such as Lachish (Josh. 10:32), and Debir (Josh. 10:38). At Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir), the Late Bronze city seems to have been leveled in the reign of Merneptah (1234–1225), for there was found there not only a scarab of Rameses II but also some receipt ostraca with the notation, ‘Year four.’ The style of script is believed to be characteristic of Merneptah’s time, and this might therefore indicate the date 1230 B.C., although this inference is scarcely compelling. As for Debir or Kirjath-sepher, identified with Tell Beit Mirsim, a scarab was found of Amenhotep III (1412–1376), Finegan (LAP, p. 140) cites no other evidence than this for his assumption that the layer of ashes upon the Late Bronze layer represents a destruction shortly before 1200 B.C. As for the destruction of Ai, described in Joshua 8, this was explained by Albright and his followers as a confusion with Bethel, since on archaeological grounds the site of Ai (Et-Tell) is said not to have been occupied at all between 2200 B.C. and a brief village settlement sometime between 1200 and 1000 B.C. (Finegan, LAP, pp. 136–37). But Bethel, a mile and a half away, was destroyed by a tremendous conflagration some time in the thirteenth century, and the fact that Joshua makes no mention of the capture of Bethel lends color to the belief that it was confused with Ai. There are several observations to be made concerning these three sites. In
the first place, Josh. 10:32 says nothing about the physical destruction of the city of Lachish. (Tell el-Hesi, wrongly identified by Petrie and Bliss with Lachish, has now been tentatively equated with Eglon; therefore its destruction-level is irrelevant to the date of the Exodus [ASOR Newsletter, April 1970, p. 3—J. E. Worrell]); Josh. 10:32 only speaks of the slaughter of its inhabitants. The devastation dating from 1230 B.C. may represent a later assault in the time of the Judges after the depopulated city had been reoccupied upon the departure of Joshua’s troops. The same observation also applies to the destruction of Debir; Josh. 10:38 says nothing about leveling the walls or putting the city to the torch. Moreover, the evidence cited by Finegan seems to confirm the early date theory as much as the 1290 date, since Amenhotep III was on the throne during the 1400 entry of Canaan by the Israelites. As for the question of Ai, the identification with Bethel seems more tenuous, for Bethel was a hallowed and well-known religious center to the Hebrews from the time of Jacob onward, and it is most unlikely that they would ever have confused its location with that of Ai. In fact, this theory is quite untenable in view of Josh. 7:2, which states explicitly that Ai was on the east side of Bethel. The ancient historian would hardly have confused Bethel with an Ai which did not then exist as an inhabited site in the fourteenth or thirteenth century. If ‘Ai’ was really Bethel, then what was the ‘Bethel’ mentioned in Josh. 7:2? It is more reasonable to assume that Et-Tell is not the true site of Ai, and that we must look to further exploration to discover the true location. The date of Bethel’s destruction is therefore quite irrelevant to the dating of the Exodus. One final problem attaching to the early date theory of the Exodus has to do with the complete silence of Judges concerning the Palestinian expeditions of Seti I and Rameses II. If these invasions actually took place and the territory of Canaan was actually subjected to the Egyptian power after the Israeliite conquest had taken place, why are the Egyptians not mentioned along with all the other oppressors? If lesser powers like the Moabites, Ammonites, North Canaanites, and Philistines were mentioned, why were the Egyptians completely omitted during the interval between 1370 and 1050 (when Saul began to reign)? But if the Exodus actually took place in 1290 and the Conquest in 1250, there would be no silence to explain away, for the Israelites would not have entered upon the scene until after Rameses’ conquests, the year 1279 marking the signing of his famous nonaggression pact with the Hittites. In reply to this persuasive argument, it should first of all be pointed out that neither the 1290 date nor the 1230 date accounts for the failure of Judges to mention the invasion of Merneptah aforementioned (see p. 244). The same is true of the expeditions of Rameses III (1204–1172 B.C.) in Palestine. Yet this noteworthy monarch of the Twentieth Dynasty boasts in his inscriptions of having reduced both the Tjeker (Palestinians) and the Philistines to ashes (ANET, p. 262), and his bas-reliefs show him on his victorious progress to Djahi (the
Phoenician coastline) to do further exploits. Monuments from his reign were discovered in the excavation of Beth-shan, at the eastern end of the plain of Esdraelon. How are we to explain this complete silence about Rameses III? Certainly not by the late date theory of the Exodus; for even according to that method of reckoning, the reign of Rameses III would have occurred in the time of the Judges. The only possible inference is that the Hebrew record did not see fit to mention these Egyptian invasions which took place after the Conquest. But if this was indisputably true of the incursions of two pharaohs (Merneptah and Rameses III), why may it not have been true of the two others (Seti I and Rameses II)? Also it is possible that the Hebrews did not mention the Egyptians because the two had little or no contact. The Egyptians were most active along the coastal plain of the Mediterranean, which the Hebrews seldom held. Primarily the Hebrews occupied the hills of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Second, it is possible to work out a fairly satisfactory synchronism between the Egyptian history of the Nineteenth Dynasty and the earlier period of the Judges. Garstang has advanced the interesting theory that the periods of “rest” referred to in Judges were times of Egyptian supremacy, but that the Hebrew historian purposely avoided mentioning the Egyptians as such because of an inveterate antipathy to a nation which had so cruelly oppressed his ancestors in Goshen. Periods of oppression, then, came when Egyptian power in Canaan was weak and the tribes of the area became restive, oppressing Israel. On this view (which is essentially embraced by Unger and Payne) the oppression by Cushan-Rishathaim of Aram-of-the-Two-Rivers represented a Hittite advance (the Hittites having subdued North Mesopotamia by that time), which took place during the reign of Tutankhamen (Unger) or Amenhotep III (Payne). The eighty years’ peace following the assassination of Eglon by Ehud (Judg. 3:12–30) coincided in part with the pacification of the land by Seti I in 1318, followed by the long reign of Rameses II. The quiet period ensuing upon Barak’s victory over Sisera (ca. 1223–1183 according to Payne) may have been facilitated by the strong rule of Rameses III (1204–1172). Garstang suggests that the “hornet” which is to drive out the Canaanites before the Hebrews (according to Ex. 23:28; Deut. 7:20; Josh. 24:12) is a covert reference to the Egyptian power, since the bee or hornet was the symbol of pharaoh as king of Lower Egypt in the hieroglyphic spelling of that title (bꜣty in Egyptian). This is somewhat dubious, however, on exegetical grounds. But the fact remains that the early date theory does permit easy synchronism between the periods in Judges and the known sequence of events in Egyptian history. (The late date theory, on the other hand, makes complete nonsense of the chronology of the book of Judges.) An additional factor which favors a 1445 Exodus is found in the Amama Letters.” (Archer, G. L. (1998). A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (3rd. ed.].); pages 241-252; Chicago: Moody Press)
Historical Background

“Egypt” is the proper noun *mitsrayim*, which means, “double straits.” Genesis 10:6 records that “Mizraim” was the second son of Ham and was the ancestor of the ancient Egyptians as indicated in that his name was the customary name for Egypt in the Bible. The Egyptians were not descendants of Ham’s son, Canaan but rather of his son Mizraim and thus they were not Canaanites.

Genesis 10:13-14 records the genealogy of the sons of “Mizraim” better known as Egypt.

**Genesis 10:13** Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim 14 and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines and Caphtorim). (NASB95)

Ancient Egypt stretched a distance of about 550 miles from Aswan northward to the Mediterranean Sea, which would include the narrow Nile Valley, which was from Aswan to Memphis.

It was divided into three geographical sections: (1) Upper Egypt in the south (2) Middle Egypt in the center (3) Lower Egypt or Delta in the north.

Upper Egypt is very narrow and surrounded by mountains, which rarely take the form of peaks and the northern coast of Egypt is low and barren, and without good harbors.

The political history of Egypt traditionally begins with Menes, the Upper ruler who conquered Lower Egypt according to Egyptian tradition. The history of dynastic Egypt can be divided into the Old Kingdom (2700-2200 B.C.), the Middle Kingdom (2100-1800 B.C.) and the New Kingdom (1550-1069 B.C.).

The pyramids were built during the Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom coincides with the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph whereas the birth of Moses and Exodus of Israel took place during the New Kingdom.

The historical setting for the period of bondage was the Late Bronze Age, the period from 1550 to 1200 B.C. Fortunately, we have detailed knowledge of this era from extensive Egyptian records. Egyptologists describe this era as the “New Kingdom,” which included the Eighteenth through Twentieth Dynasties (1567–1085 B.C.), although the last of these capable rulers was Rameses III who reigned about 1175 B.C. During this time the kings of Egypt established an empire whose reach stretched north to the Euphrates River.

The eighteenth dynasty of Egypt was the setting for the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and was founded by Amosis or Ahmose (1570-1546) who expelled the Hyksos from the land of Egypt. The Hyksos were ethnically akin to the Israelites thus it is no wonder that he feared them making an alliance with Egypt’s enemies like the Hyksos.
Amosis’ successor was Amenhotep I (1546-1526) who was succeeded by Thutmose I (1526-1512) who was a commoner who married the king’s sister. He was more than likely the author of the decree of infanticide because though Moses was in imminent danger of death, his brother Aaron, who was born three years earlier (Exodus 7:7) appears to not been in danger of death. Therefore, the Scriptures and history teaches us that Thutmose I was responsible for the decree to kill the Hebrew infant boys.

Now Thutmose II (1512-1504) married his older half-sister Hatshepsut but died young under mysterious circumstances. However, he named a successor to be his coregent and heir, namely his son Thutmose III (1504-1450), who was the most distinguished ruler during the New Kingdom period. He was the son of a concubine and married his half-sister, the daughter of Hatshepsut and Thutmose II. He achieved great military victories including 16 campaigns in Palestine alone. The first twenty years of his reign were dominated by his powerful mother-in-law, Hatshepsut. She herself was forbidden by custom to be Pharaoh but nonetheless function in this role. She pulled the strings in the early years of Thutmose III, which he detested but was powerless to oppose. He demonstrated his contempt for her after she died by removing every inscriptional and monumental reference to her and her reign.

This woman was the daughter of Pharaoh who rescued Moses. Only she of all known women of this period could have boldness and courage to violate an ordinance of the king. Hatshepsut’s birth date is unknown but she was probably several years older than her husband, Thutmose II, who died in 1504 while in his late twenties. She could have been in her early teens by 1526 when Moses was born and was thus able to effect his deliverance.

Thutmose III was a minor when he came to power in 1504 and was younger than Moses. Thus, Thutmose III and Moses were surely rivals. This is demonstrated by the fact that Thutmose III was quick to try to kill Moses when he killed an Egyptian.

Moses exile took place in 1486 when he was forty years old (Acts 7:23). He spent forty years among the Midianites of the Sinai and Arabia. Only after the death of Thutmose III, did Moses return to Egypt (Exodus 2:23; 4:19). Thutmose III died in 1450 and was succeeded by his son Amenhotep II (1450-1425). It was this Pharaoh who was the Pharaoh of the exodus.

Further support of this is that the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty made their principle residence at Thebes, which was far to the south of the Israelites in the Delta. Amenhotep made his home at Memphis and reigned there for much of the time. This would place him in close proximity to the land of Goshen, where the Israelites resided and which would make him accessible to Moses and Aaron.
So the Exodus according to the biblical chronological data took place in 1446 B.C., which took place during the reign of Amenhotep II of the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt. Exodus 7:7 tells us that Moses was 80 just prior to the Exodus and 120 at His death according to Deuteronomy 34:7. Since Moses’ death was at the very close of the wilderness period, it occurred in 1406. Simple calculation yields a birth date of 1526 B.C. for Moses, thus he was born in the very year of the death of Amenhotep I.

The daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose I (1526-1512), Hatshepsut adopted Moses. Hatshepsut was the half-sister of Thutmose II (1512-1504) who died under mysterious circumstances. Thutmose II named his son Thutmose III (1504-1450) as coregent and heir when he knew he was dying. Hatshepsut dominated the first twenty years of the reign of Thutmose III.

So, Moses had been reared as a foster son of Hatshepsut and there is the very likelihood that Moses posed a real threat to the younger Thutmose since Hatshepsut had no natural sons. That is, Moses was in all likelihood a candidate to the next Pharaoh and only his Jewish origins could stand in his way. Therefore, Thutmose and Moses were rivals and Moses the one favored by Hatshepsut.
Thutmose III ruled throughout the years of Moses self-imposed exile after killing an Egyptian in defense of a fellow Israelite (1504-1450 B.C.).

**Purpose of the Book of Exodus**

The central theme of the book of Exodus is the Lord’s miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. By this deliverance, God revealed that He is immanent meaning that He is intimately concerned about the affairs of mankind and His people. The Exodus of Israel demonstrated God’s omnipotence (6:1; 9:13-16) and His great compassion for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (15:13).

The book of Exodus continues the story that began in Genesis, which records God calling Abraham and establishing a covenant with him which was reconfirmed to his son Isaac and his son Jacob, which promises that a great nation would come from them. The nation of Israel was founded upon the promises to these patriarchs. Thus, Exodus presents the fulfillment of the promise to make a great nation from these men.

The book of Exodus records the Lord establishing a covenant with the nation of Israel while under Moses, which is called the “Mosaic Covenant.” The Abrahamic covenant was unconditional whereas the Mosaic Covenant was not but rather was conditional. This covenant, which is also called the “Mosaic Law” reveals God’s holiness and righteous and justice as well as His grace and love.

Exodus also records the Lord giving instructions to Israel to build a tabernacle in which to meet and worship Him. This tabernacle also emphasized God’s holiness, righteousness and justice as well as His grace and love. The Lord also instituted sacrifices which would serve to teach Israel about His holiness, righteousness, justice, love and grace.

The central figure in the book of Exodus is of course Moses. He acts as a mediator between a holy God and a sinful people delivered the grace of this holy God. He serves as a type of Christ (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15).

**Moses**

The Old Testament tells us that Moses was 80 just prior to the Exodus (Exodus 7:7) and was 120 at his death (Deuteronomy 34:7). His death was in 1406 B.C. because it was at the very end of the wilderness period. Therefore, his birth date was 1526 B.C. His birth was in the very year of the death of Amenhotep I.

Like Abraham, Moses was a man of great faith and this he declared openly several times in his life. In fact, Moses is listed in God’s Hall of Fame of Faith Hebrews 11.
Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned. (NASB95)

The life of Moses is divided into three equal portions of forty years each (Acts 7:23,30,36): (1) Life in Egypt: Moses’ birth, adoption into the home of Pharaoh, and the avenging of his countrymen. (2) Exile in Midian (Arabia): Middle years of Moses’ life where he was married, call by God to service, and culminating in his return to Egypt as a prophet of God. (3) In the Wilderness as Leader of Israel: Leader of the nation of Israel involving his leading the Exodus, the journey to Sinai, receiving the Law at Sinai culminating in his death. Stephen gives a brief summary of Moses’ life in Act 7.

Moses was a genius in several areas: (1) Music: Ex. 15; Deut. 32 (2) Literary: Wrote the Pentateuch (3) Administrative: Led 2 million Jews for 40 years (4) Military: He delivered the Egyptian 18th Dynasty from the famous Ethiopian invasion after 3 regular armies had been wiped out. (Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews Chapter 10, paragraph 1) (5) Architectural: He built the “treasure” cities of Egypt.

No other Old Testament figure can compare with Moses. He is called in Scripture the “servant of the Lord” (Nm. 12:7-8; Deut. 34:5; Josh. 1:1) and he alone spoke “face to face” with the Lord. Therefore, he is the first and greatest of the prophets because of this fact (Ex. 33:7-23; Nm. 12:7-8; Deut. 34:5; Josh. 1:1).

Moses was the great lawgiver and in fact, the Jews called the Law given to them by God as “the law of Moses” (1 K. 2:3; Neh. 8:1; Mal. 4:4). He was a man zealous for the Lord (Nm. 16-17) and was described as the “meekest man on earth” (Nm. 12:3). He interceded on Israel’s behalf when it sins, and on more than one occasion risking his own election for the sake of the people (Ex. 32:32; Nm. 11:10-15).

Moses was born during eighteenth dynasty of Egypt during the reign of Amenhotep I. Amosis found the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt. He expelled the Hyksos, whose name according to recent scholarship means, “rulers of foreign lands,” rather than “shepherd kings.” The Hyksos were not Egyptian and their traditions, customs and lifestyle were as different from those of the Egyptians as
their names. The Hyksos domination of Egypt falls in the period between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses.

Joseph did not live during the reign of the Hyksos kings but rather during the reign of Egyptian kings. This is indicated by the fact that Joseph shaved himself before presenting himself to Sesostris II following his release from prison. If Joseph shaved his beard before appearing before a Hyksos king, it would have been an insult. The Egyptians shaved themselves and did not have beards.

Also indicating that Joseph did not live during the reign of Hyksos kings is that Genesis 43:32 tells us that Joseph segregated his brothers apart from the Egyptians because “Egyptians did not eat with Hebrews.” Joseph’s imprisonment occurred during the 12th Dynasty of Egypt during the reign of Sesostris II (1897-1878 B.C.).

Following Joseph’s death, the Hebrew-Hyksos relationship was amicable because they honored the memory of Joseph who was of course, a Hebrew. Amosis defeated the Hyksos and his successor Amenhotep I did not sympathize with Joseph’s countrymen the Hebrews since his predecessor had just defeated the Hyksos.

Amenhotep I instituted repressive policies against the Hebrews out of fear that they would overrun the country because the population of the Hebrews had exploded while in Egypt. He instituted slave labor among the Hebrews to accomplish his building projects and eventually resorted to genocide requiring the slaughter of all newly born Hebrew males (Exodus 1:15-16), of which Moses was one.

*The Prophecy of Israel’s Oppression in Egypt*

The book of Genesis records the fulfillment of a prophecy that the Lord gave to Abram, which is recorded in Genesis 15:12-16.

**Genesis 15:12** Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. (NASB95)

The “sun going down” symbolizes and anticipates the declining fortunes of Abram’s descendants who were eventually enslaved in Egypt.

As we will see his descendants will be the nation of Israel who will be enslaved in Egypt for over four hundred years.

The “deep sleep” symbolizes and anticipates that the promise of the land would not be fulfilled until after Abram has died and been raised from the dead and inherits the land with the Promised Seed, Jesus Christ during His millennial reign.

Arthur Pink, “By this deep sleep we learn how God was showing the patriarch, symbolically, that not during his natural life would he inherit the land; instead, he must go down into the grave and inherit it together with the Promised Seed. In his awakening from this ‘deep sleep’ Abram received a veiled promise of resurrection
from the dead and the horror of great darkness as of the grave (cf. Heb. 2:15) from which he recalled again to the light of day. In a word, the way of blessing, to the inheritance, was through death and resurrection” (Gleanings in Genesis, page 170, Moody Press).

The “terror and great darkness” symbolizes and anticipates Israel’s future enslavement and mistreatment in Israel.

Genesis 15:13 God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.” (NASB95)

“Know for certain”: (1) Qal infinitive absolute complement form of the verb yadha (yaw-daw) (2) 2nd person masculine singular qal imperfect form of the verb yadha.

The infinitive absolute stands before the finite verb of the same root in Genesis 15:13 in order to intensify the certainty or force of the verbal idea. Thus indicating that the Lord wants Abram to “know for sure or for certain” that his descendants would be strangers in the land of Egypt and in fact enslaved there and oppressed for over four hundred years.

So to the English speaking person this construction literally means, “knowing, you shall know” but to the Hebrew mind, it simply means, “know for certain.”

The Lord is presenting a prophecy of the future enslavement of the nation of Israel which would be descended from Abram.

This prophecy is a revelation and based upon the Divine Decree of God. The decree of God is His eternal and immutable will regarding the future of the descendants of Abram. This decree is simply a declaration of God’s sovereign will that is based upon His omniscient knowledge of all the facts concerning what will take place in the future concerning Abram’s descendants who would be the Israelites.

The Lord knew that Abram’s descendants would be enslaved in Egypt since He is omniscient meaning He knows perfectly, eternally and simultaneously all that is knowable, both the actual and the possible and thus has all knowledge of every event in human and angelic history.

“Your descendants” is a reference to the nation of Israel and the “land” in which the nation of Israel would be strangers in and would be enslaved to and oppressed for four hundred years is Egypt.

“Four hundred years” is a “round” number for the more precise figure of four hundred thirty years appears in Exodus 12:40-41; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:16-17.

Genesis 15:14 “But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.” (NASB95)

“The nation” is a clear reference to Egypt (Ex. 6:6; 7:4; 12:12).
“I will judge the nation (Egypt)” is a reference to the Lord judging Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt through the ten plagues for not letting Israel leave as God had commanded Pharaoh as recorded in Exodus 6-14.

Exodus 6:6 “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.’” (NASB95)

Exodus 7:4 “When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments.” (NASB95)

Exodus 12:12 “For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments -- I am the LORD.” (NASB95)

“They will come out with many possessions” was literally fulfilled as recorded in Exodus 12:35-38 and demonstrates that the Lord is just and gives retribution to those who have been unjustly treated and enslaved.

Exodus 12:35 Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing 36 and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. 37 Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. 38 A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock. (NASB95)

Genesis 15:15 “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.” (NASB95)

“You shall go to your fathers in peace” is a figure of speech called “euphemy” by which a harsh or disagreeable expression is changed for a pleasant and agreeable one.

The Lord employs the expression “you (Abram) shall go to your fathers in peace” instead of the more harsh expression “die” since the Lord considers physical death an enemy, which He will destroy with the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:51-57; Heb. 2:14-15).

The term “sleep” is often used by the New Testament writes for death (Jn. 11:11, 13; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Thess. 4:14-16).

Abram would “not” see the promise of the land fulfilled in his lifetime but would have to accept the promise by means of faith and receive the fulfillment of this promise when he will be in a resurrected body during Christ’s millennial reign.
Although Abram would not see the fulfillment until he was raised from the dead, the Lord assures Abram that he would enjoy a long life and would be spared the afflictions that his descendants would go through in Egypt.

The phrase “old age” literally means, “gray-headed” and “good” denotes a prosperous life (Jdg. 8:32; 1 Chr. 29:28).

**Genesis 15:16** “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” (NASB95)

“They” is a reference to Abram’s descendants, namely, the Israelites who will return from the slavery of Egypt to the land promised to Abram and his descendants.

“Generation” is the noun *dor,* which denotes a “cycle of time, a life span,” which in the context of Genesis 15 is calculated to be one hundred years since Abram had his first child at one hundred years of age (Gen. 21:5).

Therefore, the “fourth generation” indicates that after four hundred years Abram’s descendants, i.e., the nation of Israel would come back into to the land of Canaan promised to Abram by the Lord.

Exodus 6:16-26 records that it was exactly in the fourth generation that the children of Israel left Egypt and returned to Canaan.

The Lord gives the reason for the delay in Abram’s descendants possessing the land of Canaan, namely, that the “iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” The “Amorite” is a figure of speech called “synecdoche of the part” where a part is put for the whole, thus the term “the Amorite” is put for the ten nations listed in Genesis 15:19-21, of which “the Amorite” was a part of (cf. Gen. 48:22; Nm. 13:29; 21:21).

Discoveries at the ancient Ugarit, north of Tyre and Sidon, have revealed Canaanite religion promoted child sacrifice, idolatry, prostitution in the name of religion and all kinds of occultic and immoral practices. Therefore, it was an act of justice in the Lord dispossessing the Amorites, also known as the Canaanite.

The Lord does not dispossess and judge a nation immediately until He has given it grace in the sense of giving it a sufficient amount of time to repent.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (NASB95)

Once a nation has completely rejected God’s grace and every opportunity to repent and accept Christ as Savior, it will become totally and completely saturated with evil (see Lev. 18:24-28; 20:23) and then the Lord sends judgment.

Also, the Lord gave grace to the antediluvians and used Noah to preach the gospel to them for over a hundred years and once they rejected the gospel, the Lord sent the Flood (Gen. 6:5, 12; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5). The Lord also did not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah until He was satisfied Himself not even a quorum of
righteous were left in those cities (Gen. 18-19). Therefore, Israel’s conquest of Canaan is based upon the Lord’s absolute justice and not on naked aggression.

Bob Deffinbaugh, “Here is an important principle, and one that governs the possession of the land of Canaan. God owns the land of Canaan (Leviticus 25:23), and He lets it out to those who will live according to righteousness. When Israel forgot their God and practiced the abominations of the Canaanites (cf. II Chronicles 28:3, 33:2), God put them out of the land also.” (Genesis, page 118).

Later on Israel’s history, the Lord justly permits her to be driven from the land of Canaan as well by Assyria, Babylon and Rome (Deut. 28:36-37; 2 Kgs. 24:14; 25:7). The judgment and dispossession of these ten nations called the “Amorite” who are also called the “Canaanite” would be a fulfillment of Noah’s prophecy in Genesis 9:24-27.

**Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant**

The book of Exodus also records God beginning to fulfill His promises in the Abrahamic covenant. He promised to make a great nation out of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The story of Abraham is recorded in Genesis 11:27-25:11. Abraham was born around 2161 B.C. in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:31). His father’s name was Terah (Gen. 11:27) and he also was born in Ur. He was a prophet of God according to Genesis 20:7.

Abraham had two wives with his first being Sarah according to Genesis 11:29 and his second was Keturah according to Genesis 25:1-6. Sarah bore him one son, the son of promise, Isaac (Genesis 21:1-4) from whom came Jacob whose name was later changed to Israel. The nation of Israel descended from Abraham’s son Isaac and his grandson Jacob.

Keturah bore Abraham six sons (Genesis 25:2) and through Jokshan, Abraham had two grandsons and three great-grandsons (Genesis 25:3), for a total of five children of Jokshan and through Midian, Abraham’s fourth son through Keturah, he had five grandsons (Genesis 25:4). These sons that Keturah bore Abraham formed one branch of the Arabs.

He had a son through his concubine Hagar and his name was Ishmael, who was the progenitor of one branch of the Arabs (Gen. 16; 17:20; 21:13; 25:12-18). Therefore, Abraham was the progenitor or father of the Jews and the Arabs since both these groups descended from him through his wives, Sarah and Keturah and his concubine, Hagar.

His name was originally ‘Abram,” which means “exalted father,” but was changed by God in Gen. 17:5 to “Abraham” after God had established His covenant with him. The name Abraham means “father of a multitude,” and this he
was indeed though he and his wife Sarai were childless up until the time that Abraham was hundred years old (Gen. 21:5).

Abram was a fairly common name in those days and means, “exalted father” or “my father is exalted.” It was given to him by his father Terah to honor the moon god Nannar, which Terah worshipped and not the God of the Bible. On the other hand, the name Abraham means, “father of a multitude” and became a declaration of God’s purpose and of His covenant with Abraham, which God would accomplish by making Abraham prolific so that not only populous nations but also kings would be among his descendants.

Abraham is one of the heroes of faith and In Hebrews 11:8, he is mentioned as the fourth member in God’s Hall of Fame.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. (NASB95)

Romans 4:11 says that he is the “father of all them that believe” thus indicating that he is the progenitor of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, which would of course, include Christians.

Abraham is called in Scripture “the friend of God.”

James 2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. (NASB95)

At times in his life, Abraham did not walk in faith as demonstrated in Genesis 12:10-20 where he left the land of Canaan without the Lord’s direction because of the famine in that land. Also, out of fear for his life told the Egyptians that Sarah was his sister and not his wife. This led to Pharaoh attempting to add Sarah to his harem but the Lord intervened.

Genesis 20 records Abraham committing the same sin but this time with the king of the Philistines, Abimelech and again the Lord delivered him.

Genesis 13 records Abraham’s magnanimous behavior towards Lot. Genesis 14 records Abraham courageous rescuing of his nephew Lot from the Eastern Kings and his meeting with Melchizedek. Genesis 18 records his intercession for Sodom, which delivered his nephew Lot and his daughters.

There were seven crises in the life of Abraham, which tested his love for the Lord, his faith in the Lord and his obedience to the Lord: (1) God commanded Abraham to leave behind his parents as recorded in Genesis 12:1 and Hebrews 11:8. (2) God commanded Abraham to live among the Canaanites as an alien (see Genesis 12:1-8; Hebrews 11:9-10). (3) Abraham’s faith was tested in that he had to choose between living in the land of Canaan, trusting that the Lord would take care of him even though there was a famine in the land or leave the land of Canaan and go to Egypt. (4) Abraham had to separate from his nephew Lot as recorded in
Genesis 13:5-18. (5) God commanded Abraham to send away Ishmael whom he loved dearly as recorded in Genesis 17:18-21 and 21:12-14. (6) Abraham’s faith was tested in that he had to wait twenty-five years for the birth of Isaac and had to trust that God could deliver on this promise even though he and Sarah were biologically unable to have children together because of their advanced age (see Romans 4:18-22). (7) God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac after he waited so long for him to be born (Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:17-19).

Abraham is also the recipient of covenant promises from God as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3, 6-9; 13:14-18, 15:6, 18-21; 17; 22:15-18. These covenant promises are called by theologians the “Abrahamic covenant,” which was originally established with Abraham when he left Haran and is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3.

The Abrahamic covenant was originally established with Abraham when he left Haran and is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. In His covenant promises to Abraham, the Lord emphasized to Abraham that he would not only be a progenitor biologically but also one spiritually.

Let’s look at in detail the “Abrahamic” covenant, which was originally established with Abraham when he left Haran and is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3.

Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you. 2 And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing. 3 And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (NASB95)

The Abrahamic covenant contained three categories of promises: (1) Personal (2) National (3) Universal and Spiritual.

(1) Personal: “I will bless you and make your name great” (Gen. 12:2), which refers to the fact that the Lord would make Abraham a famous character with a great reputation among men and before God. This fame and reputation is expressed in that Abraham is called a “father of a multitude” in Genesis 17:5, a prince of God in Genesis 23:6, the man in God’s confidence in Genesis 18:17-19, a prophet in Genesis 20:7, the servant of God in Psalm 105:6 and the friend of God in 2 Chronicles 20:7 and James 2:23.

(2) National: “I will make you into a great nation” (Gen. 12:2), which refers to the nation of Israel.

(3) Spiritual and Universal: “And all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3) refers to the fact that through Jesus Christ, Abraham would be a blessing to all mankind (Deut. 28:8-14; Is. 60:3-5, 11, 16) since it is only through Jesus Christ that one becomes Abraham’s seed and heirs of the promise (Gal. 3:29; Eph. 2:13, 19).
The phrase “and you shall be a blessing” is “not” a promise since the verb hayah, “you shall be” is in the “imperative” mood expressing a command and literally means, “so become a blessing” indicating that Abraham had a responsibility to walk by faith, which is expressed by obedience to the Lord’s commands.

The promises “I will bless them that bless you and the one who curses you I will curse” refers to the fact that the Lord is identifying Himself with the cause of Abraham and guaranteeing protection for Abraham and his descendants.

“Bless” is the verb barakh, which appears five times in Genesis 12:1-3 and means, “to endue with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc.” Therefore, the verb barakh indicates that Abraham and his descendants were endued with power by the Lord for success, prosperity, fecundity (offspring in great numbers) and longevity.”


The Lord blessed Abram in the sense that the Lord multiplied his descendants so that his posterity was great in number both, racially and spiritually. Also, the Lord blessed Abram in the sense that the Lord multiplied his possessions and livestock and prospered him financially. The Lord blessed anyone who was associated with Abraham.

The phrase “I will bless you” was fulfilled “temporally” according to Genesis 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 24:34-35 and it has been fulfilled “spiritually” according to Genesis 15:6 and John 8:56.

“Name” is the noun shem, which refers to a person’s character, reputation and fame among men and in the kingdom of God.

The promise “I will make your name great” refers to the fact that the Lord would make Abraham a famous character with a great reputation among men and before God. This fame and reputation is expressed throughout Scripture in that Abraham is called a “father of a multitude” in Genesis 17:5, a prince of God in Genesis 23:6, the man in God’s confidence in Genesis 18:17-19, a prophet in Genesis 20:7, the servant of God in Psalm 105:6 and the friend of God in 2 Chronicles 20:7 and James 2:23.

Again, the phrase “and you shall be a blessing” is “not” a promise since the verb hayah, “you shall be” is in the “imperative” mood expressing a command and literally means, “so become a blessing” indicating that Abraham had a responsibility to walk by faith, which is expressed by obedience to the Lord’s commands. The imperative mood of the verb hayah indicates that others would be
blessed when Abraham walked by faith and was obedient to the Lord. Therefore, the imperative mood of hayah teaches us that the Lord wants us to be a blessing to others and this is accomplished by obedience to the Lord, which expresses our faith in the Lord.

The promises “I will bless them that bless you and the one who curses you I will curse” identifies the Lord with the cause of Abraham. Therefore, blessing Abraham would be equivalent to doing it to God whereas those who curse Abraham would be cursing God.

The promises “I will bless them that bless you and the one who curses you I will curse” refers to the fact that the Lord would bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse him.

The promise “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” refers to the fact that through Jesus Christ, the Promised Seed of Genesis 3:15, Abraham would be a blessing to all mankind (Dt. 28:8-14; Is. 60:3-5, 11, 16) since it is only through the Lord Jesus Christ that one becomes Abraham’s seed and heirs of the promise (Gal. 3:29; Eph. 2:13, 19). This promise was the Gospel of salvation proclaimed to Abraham (Gal. 3:8) and reaches back to the divided “families” (10:5, 20, 31) of the earth at the Tower of Babel who were alienated from God due to sin and rebellion and the deception of Satan but who would be blessed through faith alone in Christ alone.

Galatians 3 teaches that Gentiles and Jews who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior become the “spiritual” posterity of Abraham and heirs according to the promise made to Abraham in relation to the nations.

The promise “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” gives us further information regarding the Promised “Seed” of Genesis 3:15 who would destroy the works of the devil and would deliver Adam and Eve’s descendants from sin and Satan and indicates that the human nature of Jesus Christ would originate from the line of Abraham.

Up to this point in Genesis, the human nature of Jesus Christ is identified as coming from the line of Seth (Luke 3:38) and Shem (Gen. 9:24-27; Luke 3:36) and now Genesis 12:3 states that Jesus Christ would be a descendant of Abraham.

The promise “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” refers to God’s plan to reverse the curse of Genesis 3 and all the effects of the Fall of Adam and is God’s promise of salvation to the human race and is repeated five times in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). This covenant with Abraham was reaffirmed and confirmed after Abraham’s faith was tested (Gen. 22:15-18) and was confined to the Jews who are the racial descendants of Abraham (Gen. 17:1-14).
The “Abrahamic” covenant has several applications in different areas of theology: (1) Soteriology: Study of salvation (2) Resurrection (3) Eschatology: Study of events that are future to the rapture of the church.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians that Christian believers enter into the blessings promised to Abraham (Gal. 3:14, 29; 4:22-31) and his argument is based on this same covenant promise made with Abraham (Rom. 4:1-25). Paul taught that after the Fall of Adam, God revealed His purpose to provide salvation for sinners (Gen. 3:15) and which purpose was progressively revealed to man and the promise made to Abraham represented a significant and progressive step in that revelation.

In Matthew 22:23-32, the Lord refuted the Sadducees unbelief in the resurrection by stating that God had revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex. 3:15), with whom He had entered into covenant relationships. Thus since these men had died without receiving the fulfillment of the promises (Heb. 11:13) and since the covenants could not be broken, it was essential for God to raise these men from the dead in order to fulfill His word.

In Acts 26:6-8, Paul united the “promise to the fathers” with the resurrection from the dead.

Dwight Pentecost writes concerning the “Abrahamic” covenant and eschatology, “The eternal aspects of this covenant, which guarantee Israel a permanent national existence, perpetual title to the land of promise, and the certainty to material and spiritual blessing through Christ-and guarantee Gentile nations a share in these blessings-determine the whole eschatological program of the Word of God” (Thy Kingdom Come, page 81, Victor Books).

The “Abrahamic” covenant serves as the foundation for the message delivered to the nation of Israel by the Old Testament prophets and writers. The “Abrahamic” covenant marked the “patriarchal” dispensation, which ended with Exodus of Israel and the giving of the Law at Sinai. The “Abrahamic” covenant is declared to be eternal or everlasting in Genesis 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chronicles 16:17 and Psalm 105:10 and is confirmed repeatedly by reiteration and enlargement.

The “Abrahamic” covenant was solemnized by a divinely ordered ritual symbolizing the shedding of blood and passing between the parts of the sacrifice (Gen. 15:7-21; Jer. 34:18). This ceremony assured Abraham that his seed would inherit the land in the exact boundaries given to him in Genesis 15:18-21.

The Lord gave circumcision to Abraham and his descendants to distinguish those who would inherit the promises as individuals through faith from those who were only physical seed of Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14).

The “Abrahamic” covenant was confirmed by the birth of Isaac and Jacob who also received the promises repeated in their original form (Gen. 17:10; 28:12-13).
A comparison of Hebrews 6:13-18 and Genesis 15:8-21 records that the “Abrahamic” covenant was immutable and was not only promised but solemnly confirmed by an oath from God.

Genesis 12:6-9 records Abraham’s journey through the land of Canaan, which the Lord had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

**Genesis 12:6** Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. (NASB95)

The Lord identifies the land of Canaan as the land that was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:1.

Now, remember, this promise was not yet fulfilled since the Canaanites were still occupying the land, thus Abram had to continue to trust the Lord to deliver on His promise. Many times the promise often seems long and delayed and the believer must simply continue trusting the Lord day by day and trusting that His timing is always perfect.

**Psalm 37:34** Wait for the LORD and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you will see it. (NASB95)

Throughout his lifetime, Abraham had to rest in the promise that the Lord made to him that he and his descendants would possess the land of Canaan and he had to trust the Lord to fulfill this promise in His perfect timing.

**Genesis 12:8** Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev. (NASB95)

Genesis 13:14-18 records the Lord promising land to Abram and is called in theology, the “Palestinian” covenant, which is the sixth covenant in history God has made with men. The “Palestinian” covenant is in fact an extension of the “Abrahamic” covenant, which is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3.

Like the “Abrahamic” covenant, the “Palestinian” covenant that the Lord established with Abram denoted the Lord’s gracious undertaking for the benefit of Abram and his descendants. Like the “Abrahamic” covenant, the “Palestinian” covenant was “unconditional” meaning that its fulfillment was totally and completely dependent upon the Lord’s faithfulness. We will note this covenant in detail in the next section.

**Genesis 13:14** The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 16 I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number
the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” (NASB95)

Genesis 15:1-6 records the Lord’s guarantee to Abraham that he would have a child and that his descendants would be innumerable.

**Genesis 15:1** After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.” 2, Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” 4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” 5 And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” (NASB95)

The Lord guarantees Abram that the promises would be literally fulfilled by a child of Abram’s own and to drive the point home, the Lord compares the number of the stars of the universe to the number of descendants of Abram there will be in the future.

Bruce K. Waltke, “The representation of offspring like the uncountable stars is not just an amazing promise but an assurance of God’s creative and sovereign power” (Genesis, A Commentary, page 242; Zondervan).

The promise of Genesis 15:4-5 not only pertains to Abram’s “natural” progeny (cf. Deut. 1:10; 10:22; Heb. 11:12) but according to Romans 4 it refers to his “spiritual” progeny (cf. Gal. 3:29).

**Deuteronomy 10:22** “Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.” (NASB95)

**Galatians 3:29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (NASB95)

**Genesis 15:6** Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (NASB95)

Abram’s faith in the Lord in Genesis 15:6 and the Lord imputing His righteousness to Abram as a result of his faith is employed by the New Testament writers as the pattern of a sinner’s justification (Rm. 4).

**Romans 4:3** For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” (NASB95)

“Believed” is the verb `aman, which is in the “hiphil” (causative) stem meaning, “to cause to have confidence in, to trust.”
The object of Abram’s faith is the Lord Himself who alone can make this guarantee to Abram because He sovereign and omnipotent and omniscient. Although, the New Testament writers employ Genesis 15:6 to teach that justification is through faith alone in Christ alone, it does “not” mean that Genesis 15:6 records the moment when Abram first got saved. There at least three reasons for this.

First of all, Abram had already obeyed the Lord’s call to leave Ur and Haran (Acts 7:2-5; Gen. 12:1-5). Secondly, the Lord had entered into a covenant agreement with him as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:4-5, which is something the Lord would never do with an unbeliever. Thirdly, the perfect tense of the verb ‘aman, “believed” demonstrates that Abram’s faith did “not” begin after the events recorded in Genesis 15:1-5 since it represents the state of Abram trusting in the Lord, which flowed from his initial faith in the Lord the moment he got saved in Ur of the Chaldeans.

Bible Knowledge Commentary, The Old Testament, “Abram’s faith is recorded here because it is foundational for establishing the Abrahamic covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant did not give Abram redemption; it was a covenant made with Abram who had already believed and to whom righteousness had already been imputed” (page 55, Victor Books).

“Reckoned” is the verb chashav, which refers to the Lord imputing His righteousness to Abram and as a result it refers to His “viewpoint” of Abram as a result of Abram’s faith in Him in delivering on His promise to give Abram a son.

Imputation is the function of the justice of God in crediting something to someone for cursing or for blessing. At the moment of spiritual birth, God imputed His righteousness to the believer so that he is “positionally” the righteousness of God meaning God has given His righteousness as a gift to the believer and that God views the believer as righteous as Himself.

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction. (NASB95)

The righteousness of God is received through faith in the gospel concerning Jesus Christ since in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God, Jesus Christ is revealed.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” (NASB95)

The Bible teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the believer’s righteousness.
1 Corinthians 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. (NASB95)

The righteousness of God can never be attained by anyone through human power and dynamics or by keeping the Mosaic Law but rather it is received as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ who is the righteousness of God incarnate (Romans 4:1-5).

Genesis 15:7 records the Lord reconfirming His promise to Abram to give him the land of Canaan.

**Genesis 15:7 And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.”** (NASB95)

Therefore, the phrase “I am the Lord” expresses the unimpeachable authority of the Lord’s declaration to give Abram the land of Canaan in order to possess it.

Covenants made by kings in the days of Abram began with the king identifying himself and giving a brief historical background and this the Lord does by beginning His covenant with Abram by identifying Himself to Abram as the One who brought him out of the idolatry of Ur of the Chaldeans.

Genesis 15:7 records the Lord reiterating and confirming His original promises to Abram recorded in Genesis 12:7 and Genesis 13:14-17 to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan. The northern border of the land of the Canaanites went as far as Sidon, which is 120 miles north of Jerusalem and the southern border extended to Gerar, which is about 11 miles south-southeast of Gaza, which was on the coast 50 miles southeast of Jerusalem.

In Genesis 15:7, the promise by the Lord to Abram to give him the land of Canaan is a reference again to the “Palestinian” covenant.

**Genesis 15:8 He said, “O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?”** (NASB95)

Abram’s question recorded in Genesis 15:8 was motivated by faith and was simply a question asking for more details or more accurately the specific means by which the Lord would accomplish giving him the land of Canaan. Therefore, Abram’s question in Genesis 15:8 does not indicate that Abram doubted how the Lord would fulfill His promise but rather he simply asked for confirmation as to the specific the means he will accomplish giving Abram the land.

In Genesis 15:9-21, the Lord gives Abram quite a few details surrounding the specific means by which the Lord would bring about Abram possessing the land of Canaan. The specific means by which the Lord will give Abram the land of Canaan would be through the unconditional covenant that the Lord initially made with Abram in Genesis 12:1-3 and 13:14-17, which would be enlarged and amplified and confirmed as demonstrated in the covenant ceremony recorded in Genesis 15:9-21.
Also, the specific means by which the Lord will give Abram the land of Canaan would be through suffering as indicated by the Lord’s prophecy in Genesis 15:13-16 that Abram’s descendants, specifically, the nation of Israel would suffer in Egypt for four hundred years before they would finally leave Egypt and then enter the land of Canaan to possess it.

Also, although not specifically mentioned but it is implied, is that it would be through resurrection from the dead that Abram would personally enter into possessing the land of Canaan, which will take place during the millennial reign of Christ.

Genesis 15:9 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.” (NASB95)

“Your descendants” is a reference to the nation of Israel and the “land” in which the nation of Israel would be strangers in and would be enslaved to and oppressed for four hundred years is Egypt.

“Four hundred years” is a “round” number for the more precise figure of four hundred thirty years appears in Exodus 12:40-41; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:16-17.

Genesis 15:15 “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. 16 Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” 17 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. (NASB95)

The flaming torch symbolizes the Lord’s presence and the fact that the torch alone passes through the pieces teaches Abram that this covenant that the Lord is making with him is “unconditional” meaning its fulfillment is totally and completely dependent upon the Lord’s faithfulness.

Genesis 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.” (NASB95)

“Your descendants” refers to the “regenerate” Israel or Jews racially who are saved who entered into this covenant that the Lord made with Abram by believing
in Promised “Seed,” as their Savior namely, Jesus Christ. Never in Israel’s history has she secured these boundaries and thus this promise awaits its fulfillment during the millennial reign of Christ. According to Genesis 15:18, the boundaries of Israel during the millennial reign of Christ would be the river of Egypt on the south and the Euphrates River in Iraq in the north.

Genesis 15:19 “the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.” (NASB95)

In Genesis 17:1-8, the Lord enlarges again upon the covenant He made with Abraham not only promising him that he would have many descendants but he would also be the father of many nations, which has been fulfilled in a two-fold sense: (1) Biological (2) Spiritual.

Genesis 17:1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. 2 I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.” 3 Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.” (NASB95)

The promise to make Abraham a father of many nations was fulfilled in a “biological” sense through Hagar and the Ishmaelites (Gen. 17:20; 21:13; 25:12-18); through Keturah and the Midianites and others (Gen. 25:1-4); through Isaac and Rebekah, the Edomites (Gen. 25:23; 36:1-43); through Isaac and Rebekah, the Israelites (Gen. 12:2; 18:18).

The Lord’s promise to make Abraham a father or progenitor of many nations was fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled in a “spiritual” sense through those individuals who exercised faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:15-29). This is how the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that in him “all the families of the earth would be blessed” would be accomplished.

The “Seed” God covenanted with Abraham found its fulfillment uniquely in the Lord Jesus Christ (see Galatians 3:16).

Genesis 17:6, “I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you.” (NASB95)

The Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:6 that “kings will come forth from you” is a reference to primarily the kings of Israel (Gen. 35:11; 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:8-16) and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Genesis 17:7 “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” (NASB95)
The promise recorded in Genesis 17:7 “I will establish My covenant with him (Isaac) for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him” indicates that the Promised Seed, the Savior, Jesus Christ would come through the line of Isaac rather than Ishmael.

Genesis 17:8 “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” (NASB95)

Genesis 17:9-14 records the Lord giving Abraham and his descendants the ritual of circumcision to observe as a sign to ratify the covenant that He established with Abraham when he left Haran. Then in Genesis 17:15-22, we saw that the Lord promised Abraham that his wife Sarah would be the progenitrix or the mother of numerous nations and kings. Genesis 22:15-18 records the Lord reconfirming the promises of this covenant and then enlarges upon them.

Every time Abraham made a sacrifice for God the Lord responded by giving Abraham more: (1) God commanded Abraham to leave his hometown and as a result God rewarded him with a new one (Gen. 12:1; Heb. 11:8). (2) Abraham offered the best of the land to Lot and separated from Lot and as a result God rewarded him by giving him more land (Gen. 13:5-18). (3) Abraham gave up the King of Sodom's reward (Gen. 14:17-24) and God gave Abraham more wealth (Gen. 15:1-6). (4) God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac after he waited so long for him to be born (Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:17-19) and as a result the Lord rewards Abraham by enlarging upon the previously made covenant (Gen. 22:15-18). In each case, where Abraham was obedient to God, God rewarded Abraham with a deeper and more intimate fellowship with Himself.

Genesis 22:15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son.” (NASB95)

The Lord’s statement “by Myself I have sworn” indicates that the Abrahamic covenant, which will be reconfirmed and enlarged upon in Genesis 22:17-18 is “unconditional” and “guarantees” its fulfillment.

The phrase “declares the Lord” expresses the Lord’s faithfulness in fulfilling that which He has promised, indicating that the Lord is “guaranteeing” the fulfillment of the covenant promises to Abraham and his descendants.

The reason for the Lord guaranteeing the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham is given in the Lord’s statement “because you have done this thing.” This statement refers to Abraham’s obedience to the Lord’s command in Genesis 22:2 “Take now your son, your only son whom you love and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”
The word “only” in Genesis 22:2 and 16 is incorrectly translated since Abraham had many sons (Ishmael through Hagar, see Genesis 16; Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah through Keturah, see Genesis 25:1-2) and so Isaac was not an “only” child.

“Only” is the adjective *yachidh* and means, “uniquely born one” and this interpretation is supported in that Isaac was a “miracle” baby since his mother was ninety years old and his father was one-hundred years old when he was born.

Furthermore, John 3:16 employs the adjective *monogenes* translated “begotten” in the NASB and is used to describe God the Father’s Son, Jesus Christ as being uniquely born of a virgin.

Hebrews 11:17 employs *monogenes* translated “begotten” in the NASB but like the word in John 3:16, it means, “uniquely born one” since it is used to describe Isaac who was born to parents who were well past the age of having the capacity to procreate. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin and Isaac was born of parents who were in their old age and so like Jesus Christ, Isaac was unique.

**Genesis 22:17** “indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.” (NASB95)

In Genesis 22:17, Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit employs two infinitive absolutes to express the fact that the Lord is “guaranteeing” the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham as a result of his obedience to God’s command to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac.

“I will greatly bless you”: (1) Piel infinitive absolute complement form of the verb *barakh*, “blessing” (2) Second person common (neither masculine nor feminine) singular piel imperfect form of the verb *barakh*, “I will bless” (3) Second person masculine singular pronominal suffix, “you.”

In Genesis 22:17, the verb *barakh* means, “to bless in the sense of enduing someone (Abraham) with power for success, prosperity, fecundity, longevity, etc.” Therefore, the verb *barakh* indicates that Abraham and his descendants were endued with power by the Lord for success, prosperity, fecundity (offspring in great numbers) and longevity.”

The Lord blessed Abraham in the sense that the Lord multiplied his descendants so that his posterity was great in number both, racially and spiritually. Also, the Lord blessed Abraham in the sense that the Lord multiplied his possessions and livestock and prospered him financially.

The phrase “I will bless you” was fulfilled “temporally” according to Genesis 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 24:34-35 and it has been fulfilled “spiritually” according to Genesis 15:6 and John 8:56.

The infinitive absolute *barakh* stands before the finite verb of the same root in order to intensify the certainty or force of the verbal idea expressing the certainty.
that the Lord would fulfill the promise to bless Abraham. So to the English speaking person this construction literally means, “blessing, I will bless you” but to the Hebrew mind, it simply means, “I will greatly bless you.”

“I will greatly multiply”: (1) Hiphil (causative) infinitive absolute complement form of the verb *ravah*, “multiplying.” (2) First person common (neither masculine nor feminine) singular hiphil (causative) imperfect form of the verb *ravah*.

The infinitive absolute stands before the finite verb of the same root in order to intensify the certainty or force of the verbal idea expressing the certainty that the Lord would fulfill the promise to multiply Abraham’s descendants. So to the English speaking person this construction literally means, “multiplying, I will multiply” but to the Hebrew mind, it simply means, “I will greatly multiply.”

“Your seed” refers to not only Isaac but also those who like Abraham exercise faith alone in Christ alone, which would include the church and regenerate Israel and regenerate Gentiles who lived in dispensations outside of the church age and ultimately it refers to Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the Scriptures teach that the “seed” of Abraham is four-fold: (1) Abraham’s biological or racial descendants, which would include: (a) The Ishmaelites through Hagar (Gen. 17:20; 21:13; 25:12-18) (b) The Midianites and others through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4) (c) The Edomites through Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 25:23; 36:1-43). (2) Abraham’s biological or racial descendants the Israelites of Jews through Sarah and Isaac and Rebekah and Jacob (Genesis 12:2, 7; 18:18; Rom. 9:6-9). (3) Abraham’s spiritual descendants, which would include those individuals, both Jew and Gentile racially, who exercised faith alone in Christ alone (Gal. 3:6-29). (4) The Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16).

The comparative clause “as the stars of the heavens” echoes the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5 and is used to compare the Lord’s promise to Abraham to multiply his descendants with the number of the stars of the universe.

The promise of Genesis 15:4-5 not only pertains to Abram’s “natural” progeny (cf. Deut. 1:10; 10:22; Heb. 11:12) but according to Romans 4 it refers to his “spiritual” progeny (cf. Gal. 3:29).

The comparative clause “as the sand which is on the seashore” echoes the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 13:10 to multiply his descendants as the dust of the earth and drives the point home regarding the Lord’s promise to greatly multiply Abraham’s descendants.

The prophecy that Abram’s descendants would be as the dust of the earth in a “near” sense was fulfilled in the days of Solomon (see 1 Kings 4:20) and will be fulfilled in a “far” sense during the millennial reign of Christ (see Hosea 1:10).

The Lord’s promise to Abraham that “your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies” is a prophecy that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the great enemy of God and His people would be defeated, namely, Satan, thus
fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 (see Colossians 2:15; Philippians 2:6-11; Ephesians 1:15-22).

In the ancient world, to “possess the gate” of one’s enemies was to have access to a walled city and possessing control of the city. The term “enemies” refers to Satan and the kingdom of darkness who at the present time temporarily rule this world (Eph. 2:1-3; 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:19; Rev. 12:10). The Lord Jesus Christ has defeated Satan with His death and resurrection and at His Second Advent, He with His church, and the elect angels will imprison Satan and the fallen angels and assume control over planet earth for a thousand years (see Revelation 19:1-20:6). In another sense, this prophecy also refers to the fact that regenerate Israel will be delivered by Jesus Christ from the armies of the hostile Gentile nations and antichrist during Daniel’s seventieth week and will become head of the nations during the millennial reign of Christ (see Zechariah 14:16-21).

Genesis 22:18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (NASB95)

“Your seed” is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord statement that “in your seed (Christ) all the nations of the earth will be blessed” echoes the Lord’s promise in Genesis 18:18 and is an enlargement upon the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that in Abraham “all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Galatians 3:8-14 reveals that the promise in Genesis 18:18 that “in (Abraham) all the nations of the earth will be blessed” and the promise in Genesis 22:19 that “in your Seed (Christ) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” are references to the fact that Abraham’s descendent, Jesus Christ, would bring salvation to the Gentile nations through faith in Him.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us -- for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE” 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (NASB95)

Genesis 22:19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba. (NASB95)

Abraham returned with Isaac as he believed he would since according to Hebrews 11:17-19, he reasoned that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

Genesis 28:13-15 records Jacob receiving from the Lord reconfirmation of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and reassurance that the Lord would protect and prosper him in exile in Paddan Aram.

Genesis 28:10 Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his
head, and lay down in that place. 12 He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. 14 Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (NASB95)

The promises to Jacob that are recorded in Genesis 28:14 echo the promises given to his father Isaac, which are recorded in Genesis 26:4. They also echo the blessing that his father Isaac pronounced upon him before he left home, which is recorded in Genesis 28:3-4. The Lord’s promises to both Jacob and Isaac and the blessing of his father bestowed upon him before he left home were a “reconfirmation” of the promises made to Abraham that are recorded in Genesis 12:2-3, 7, 13:14-18, 15:1-6, 18, 17:1-8 and 22:17.

In Genesis 26:3-4, Isaac received reconfirmation of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant by means of a theophany. In Genesis 26:23-25, the Lord appeared in a theophany to Isaac at Beersheba and gave him reassurance by reconfirming to him the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. In Genesis 28:3-4, the blessing that Isaac bestowed upon Jacob before he left home echoes the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. In Genesis 28:14-15, God’s reiteration of the promises to Abraham and Isaac assures Jacob of God’s faithfulness.

The Lord is reassuring Jacob in his time of adversity that like his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac, that he would receive divine protection and would be prospered by the Lord. The Lord’s reiteration to Jacob of the promises He made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac would reassure Jacob that the very God who protected his grandfather and father and prospered them would do so for him.

The Lord’s reiteration to Jacob of the promises He made to his grandfather and father would confirm to Jacob that he was in the Messianic line. So these promises to Jacob would reassure him that the God of his grandfather Abraham and that of his father Isaac would not abandon him.

“Your descendants” refers to Isaac’s “biological” descendants, which would be the nation of Israel and it refers to his “spiritual” descendants, which would be anyone, Jew or Gentile who believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior. In a “near” sense “Your descendants” refers the nation of Israel (saved and unsaved) and in a “far” sense it refers to saved Israel during the millennial reign of Christ.

The comparative clause “like the dust of the earth” echoes the Lord’s promises to Abraham in Genesis 13:10 to multiply his descendants “as the dust of
the earth” and “as the sand on the seashore” in Genesis 22:17 as well as the promise to Isaac in Genesis 26:4 to multiply his descendants “as the dust of the earth.”

The comparative clause “like the dust of the earth” drives the point home to Jacob regarding the Lord’s promise to greatly multiply his descendants and would indicate quite clearly to him that the Lord has a plan for his life and would give him assurance during his time of adversity!

The prophecy that Jacob’s descendants would be as the dust of the earth in a “near” sense was fulfilled in the days of Solomon (see 1 Kings 4:20) and will be fulfilled in a “far” sense during the millennial reign of Christ (see Hosea 1:10).

Like his grandfather Abraham, Jacob receives these promises of numerous descendants while he was childless. In fact, at this time, he wasn’t even married!

The Lord’s promise to Isaac that he “will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south” echoes the Lord’s promise to his grandfather Abraham that is recorded in Genesis 13:14-15 and pertains to the “Palestinian Covenant.

The Lord’s promise to Jacob that he and his descendants would spread over the land of Canaan would reassure him that he would be returning to Canaan. The Lord is promising Jacob that He would bring him back to Canaan even though he is fleeing from it at this particular time.

“Spread out” is the verb parats, which is a military term meaning “to break out” and implies that the descendants of Jacob who would be the nation of Israel would through military conquest take possession of the land of Canaan. This military conquest of the land of Canaan was accomplished to a certain extent in Israel’s history under Joshua. But it will find its ultimate fulfillment when the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent who at that time will destroy anti-Christ, the false prophet, and the Gentile armies surrounding Israel during the Tribulation period (aka Daniel’s seventieth week) and will establish His millennial reign.

Genesis 28:14 “Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (NASB95)

The Lord’s promise to Jacob that in him, “all the families of the earth be blessed” is a “universal” promise and indicates that Jacob would be in the Messianic line meaning that the Lord Jesus Christ in His human nature would descend from him.

The promise “in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed” should be translated “in your Seed or Descendant all the families of the earth shall be blessed” since the word for “descendants” in the Hebrew text is in the singular making the promise Messianic. This promise is a “reconfirmation” of
the “universal” promise the Lord made to Abraham, which is recorded in Genesis 22:18.

The Lord statement in Genesis 22:18 that “in your seed (Christ) all the nations of the earth will be blessed” and the promise to Jacob in Genesis 28:14 that “in Your Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” echoes the Lord’s promise in Genesis 18:18. It is an enlargement upon the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that in Abraham “all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Galatians 3:8-16 reveals that the promises in Genesis 18:18, “in (Abraham) all the nations of the earth will be blessed,” Genesis 22:18, “in your seed (Christ) all the nations of the earth will be blessed,” Genesis 26:4, “by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,” Genesis 28:14, “in Your Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ who would bring salvation to the Gentile nations through faith in Him.

Genesis 28:15 records the “personal” promises that the Lord made to Jacob.

Genesis 28:15 “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (NASB95)

Genesis 35:9-13 records the preincarnate Christ appearing to Jacob and reconfirming the change of his name to “Israel” and reconfirming the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Genesis 35:1 Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments 3 and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.” 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem. 5 As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. 6 So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. 7 He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother. 8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth. 9 Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. (NASB95)
Jacob would be “blessed” or in other words, “endued with power for success, prosperity, fecundity and longevity” by means of the Word of God since the Word of God is “alive and powerful” according to Hebrews 4:12.

God would bless Jacob through six promises, which are contained in Genesis 35:10-12. Therefore, the statement “He (God) blessed him (Jacob)” means that Jacob would be the recipient and beneficiary of the omnipotence of God, which would be manifested in time by the Lord fulfilling six promises through Jacob and his descendants (spiritual and biological), which are recorded in Genesis 35:10-12.

Genesis 35:10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name. Thus He called him Israel.” (NASB95)

The statement “You shall no longer be called Jacob but Israel shall be your name” echoes the Lord’s statement to Jacob at Peniel after wrestling with Jacob, which is recorded in Genesis 32:28. After Jacob wrestled with the Lord at Peniel, the Lord changed Jacob’s name to “Israel” and here the Lord reiterates and reaffirms to Jacob that this is still the case.

The name “Jacob” means, “heel catcher” implying someone who is a “deceiver” and a “supplanter,” which is a person who takes the place of another by force, scheming or strategy.

“Israel” is the proper noun yisra’el, which means, “one who fights and overcomes with the power of God” since the Lord states the reason for the name is that Jacob has fought with both God and men and has prevailed. Therefore, the promise “You shall no longer be called Jacob but Israel shall be your name” is not only a promise but a reaffirmation to Jacob that would impress upon him the need to live his life in a manner that is consistent with the meaning of his new name. He would live his life in a manner that is consistent with the meaning of his new name by appropriating by faith in prayer the promises that God had given to him just as he did prior to being reunited with Esau (See Genesis 32).

By means of His Word, the Lord would fulfill His first promise to Jacob and empower him to live in a manner consistent with the meaning of his new name yisra’el, “Israel,” which means, “one who fights and overcomes with the power of God” (See Genesis 35:10).

The bestowal of the name “Israel” upon Jacob constituted the essence of the blessing that he requested from the Lord recorded in Genesis 32:26. The name yisra’el, “Israel” memorializes the historical event of Jacob wrestling the preincarnate Christ, and which wrestling match symbolized Jacob’s struggles in life with men, which in reality were with God.

The name “Israel” represents the character of his new divine nature whereas the name “Jacob” represents the character of his old Adamic sin nature, which will be permanently eradicated at his physical death. Therefore, the emphasis of the
name change to “Israel” implies that Jacob would experience the fulfillment of these six promises during the millennial reign of Christ when he will live permanently in his new nature that God gave him, which is signified by the name “Israel.”

Genesis 35:11 God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you.” (NASB95)

The title El Shaddai, “God Almighty” emphasizes the omnipotence of God and describes the Lord as being able to bring to pass that which He has promised to Jacob (Romans 4:20-21).

The expression “God Almighty” (Hebrew: El Shaddai) was first used by God of Himself when speaking to Abraham as recorded in Genesis 17:1 and was used by Isaac when blessing Jacob as recorded in Genesis 28:3. Therefore, the title El Shaddai, “God Almighty” signifies that the six promises contained in Genesis 35:10-12 echo Isaac’s prophecy about Jacob, which is recorded in Genesis 28:3-5 and also recalls the covenant with Abraham recorded in Genesis 17:1-8.

The Lord’s promise to Jacob that he would “be fruitful and multiply” echoes the prophecy of Isaac concerning Jacob, which is recorded in Genesis 28:3 and means that the Lord would give Jacob the capacity to be prolific in that he would be the progenitor of a multitude of children in both a biological and spiritual sense. This promise means that the Lord would endue Jacob and his descendants with the ability to be prolific in terms of posterity.

By means of His Word, the Lord would fulfill His second promise to Jacob that he would “be fruitful and multiply” and endue him with power for success, prosperity, fecundity (offspring in great numbers) and longevity (See Genesis 35:11).

The promise “a nation…shall come from you” in a “near” sense refers to the nation of Israel (saved and unsaved) and in a “far” sense it refers to saved Israel during the millennial reign of Christ. By means of His Word, the Lord would fulfill His third promise to Jacob that he would be the progenitor of “a nation,” and endue Jacob with power to be the progenitor of the nation of Israel (See Genesis 35:11).

The promise “a company of nations…shall come from you” was fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled in a “spiritual” sense through those individuals who exercised faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-28).

The expression “a company of nations…shall come from you” refers to a community of nations that will originate from Jacob and echoes the Lord’s promise to his grandfather Abraham that he would become “the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:4-5) and “the father of nations” (Genesis 17:6).
The Lord’s promise to Abraham to make him “the father of a multitude of nations” and Isaac’s desire that the Lord would make Jacob a “company of peoples” and the Lord’s promise to Jacob that “a company of nations...shall come from you” would be fulfilled in both a “biological” and “spiritual” sense.

In a “biological” or “racial” sense, the “company of nations” that would originate from Jacob would be the nation of Israel. In a “spiritual” sense the “company of nations” that would originate from Jacob be all those who exercise faith alone in Christ alone who would be composed of all nations and races, both male and female, slave and freeman (John 3:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-28). This is how the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that in him “all the families of the earth would be blessed” would be accomplished.

In the same way, that Abraham became a father in a “spiritual” sense to those individuals who exercised faith in Christ so also Jacob would become the father in a “spiritual” sense to all those who exercised faith in Christ. By means of His Word, the Lord would fulfill His fourth promise to Jacob and endue him with power to be the progenitor of “a company of nations” in a “spiritual” sense through all those who exercise faith alone in Christ alone.

The promise that “kings shall come forth from you” echoes the Lord’s promise to Abraham, which is recorded in Genesis 17:6, 16 and is a reference to primarily to the kings of Israel (Gen. 35:11; 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:8-16) and the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the promise that “kings shall come forth from you” is a reference to the Kings of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, it is therefore related to the “Davidic” Covenant, which like the “Abrahamic” Covenant, was an unconditional covenant meaning its fulfillment was totally dependent upon God’s faithfulness. By means of His Word, the Lord would fulfill His fifth promise to Jacob and endue him with power to be the progenitor of the kings of Israel and the greatest King of them all, the Lord Jesus Christ (See Genesis 35:11).

Genesis 35:12 “The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.” (NASB95)

The promise of “land” is a reference to the “Palestinian Covenant.”

“Your descendants” refers to Jacob’s “biological” descendants, which would be the nation of Israel and it refers to his “spiritual” descendants, which would be anyone, Jew or Gentile who believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

In a “near” sense “Your descendants” refers to the nation of Israel (saved and unsaved) and in a “far” sense it refers to saved Israel during the millennial reign of Christ. By means of His Word, the Lord would fulfill His sixth and final promise to Jacob and endue him and his descendants (spiritual and biological) with power to possess the land of Canaan (See Genesis 35:12).
Though Jacob was still a resident alien in the land of Canaan, it was really his according to God’s promise and would be possessed by him and his descendants through faith in Christ during the millennial reign of Christ.

**Genesis 35:13** Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him. (NASB95)

Genesis 46:2-4 records Israel/Jacob receives a theophany, divine reassurance and promises (46:2-4).

**Genesis 46:1** So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” 3 He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.” (NASB95)

“God” is not the usual *Elohim* but rather the singular form of the noun, which is *El* in order to express a contrast between the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who is the one and only true God and the foreign gods of the Canaanites and the Egyptians.

God identifies Himself to Israel as “I am the God of your father” in order to reassure Israel that he will be protected by Him just as He protected his father Isaac.

The prohibition “do not be afraid to go to Egypt” that was issued to Israel/Jacob indicates that the patriarch was fearful of leaving the Promised Land.

The explanatory clause “for I will make you a great nation there” gives the reason why Israel should not be afraid and would give him assurance that it was according to the will of God that he and his family migrate to Egypt.

In Genesis 46:3, God is assuring Israel that everything is ok that he will be protected from the Egyptians and reassures him that God will make his descendants into a great nation while in Egypt in accordance with the promises made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. The assurance that God gave Israel that He would make Israel’s descendants into a great nation while in Egypt is a positive declaration or guarantee from God intended to give Israel confidence and courage.

This statement “I will make you a great nation there” is a reference to the “Abrahamic” covenant since it reconfirms the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 and 18:17-18 that God would make Abraham’s descendants into a great nation.

“Nation” is the noun *goy*, which is in the singular referring to Abraham’s “national” posterity (Gen. 18:18), the nation of Israel that would originate from Abraham and Sarah’s son Isaac and Isaac’s son Jacob.

“Great” is the adjective *gadhol*, which refers both to numbers and to significance or impact the nation of Israel would have on both human and angelic history.
Therefore, the “national” posterity of Abraham, the nation of Israel has been a
great nation in history during the reigns of David and Solomon and will be
significant according to prophecy since she will be the head of the nations during
the millennial reign of Christ (See Isaiah 2:1-4).

Israel has had a huge impact upon human history in that she was the custodian
of the Old Testament Scriptures, the recipients of the covenants of promise, the
Law (Rm. 9:1-5) and the nation from which the Savior, Jesus Christ would
originate (Jn. 4:22).

Prophetically, the promise “a great nation” in a “near” sense refers to the
nation of Israel (saved and unsaved) and in a “far” sense it refers to saved Israel
during the millennial reign of Christ.

Genesis 46:4 ‘I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring
you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.’ (NASB95)

The statement “I will also surely bring you up again” is a reference to the
“Palestinian” Covenant, which was a confirmation and enlargement of the original
“Abrahamic” covenant and amplified the land features of the “Abrahamic”

The promise “I will also surely bring you up again” is “national” promise in
that it is a guarantee that the Israelites will return to the land of Canaan. It is a
“personal” promise in that it is a guarantee that Israel himself would return to the
land of Canaan not only in a coffin (See Genesis 49:29-32) but more importantly
that he and all of born again Israel will live in the Promised Land in resurrection
bodies during the millennial reign of Christ.

New Dispensation

The book of Exodus records God establishing a new dispensation, namely the
dispensation of Israel, i.e. the Law. Dispensations are the divine outline of history.
A dispensation is a period of human history defined in terms of divine revelation.
According to the Bible, history is a sequence of divine administrations. These
consecutive eras reflect the unfolding of God’s plan for mankind.

A dispensation is a period of history where God has designed a particular plan
for man and man is tested as to whether or not he will be obedient to that particular
plan. Since God has revealed to us in His Word information pertinent to each
dispensation, we can determine what the near and distant future impact will be on
world events (Dt. 29:29). The English word “dispensation” is an anglicized form of
the Latin dispensation, which the Vulgate uses to translate the Greek word.
According to the Oxford English Dictionary the English word contains 3 principal
ideas: (1) The action of dealing out or distributing. (2) The action of administering,
ordering or managing; the system by which things are administered. (3) The action of dispensing with some requirement.

In further defining the same word theologically, the same dictionary says that a dispensation is “a stage in a progressive revelation, expressly adapted to the needs of a particular nation or period of time...also, the age or period during which a system has prevailed.”

Scofield Reference Bible states on page 5, “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.” The English word dispensation is an anglicized form of the Latin dispensation, which the Vulgate uses to translate the Greek word. According to the Ryrie, “A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.” (Dispensationalism Today, page 29).

The dispensations are economies instituted and brought to their purposeful conclusion by God.

To summarize: (1) Dispensationalism views the world as a household run by God. (2) In this household-world God is dispensing or administering its affairs according to His own will and in various stages of revelation in the process of time. (3) These various stages mark off the distinguishably different economies in the outworking of His total purpose, and these economies are dispensations.

The dispensationalist follows the principle of interpreting the Bible literally, and does not allegorize away the Bible, thus he is consistent in his interpretation. It recognizes that God’s message to man was not given in one single act but was unfolded in a long series of successive acts and through the minds and hands of many men of varying backgrounds.

Dispensationalism recognizes distinctions in God’s program in history. The dispensationalist follows the principle of interpreting the Bible literally, and does not allegorize away the Bible, thus he is consistent in his interpretation. It recognizes that God’s message to man was not given in one single act but was unfolded in a long series of successive acts and through the minds and hands of many men of varying backgrounds. This principle of progressive revelation from God is seen in the pages of Scriptures (John 1:17; Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 1:1-2):

There are four words in the Greek New Testament that pertain to the subject of dispensationalism. The first word is the noun oikonomia, “management of a household” (Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25). In the papyri the officer (oikonomos) who administered a dispensation was referred to as a steward or manager of an estate or as a treasurer. Thus the central idea in the word dispensation is that of managing or administering the affairs of a household.

Another word that contributes to the doctrine of dispensations is the noun aion, “Age, a divine category of history” (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26). The next term used in the Greek New Testament that relates to the doctrine of dispensations
is the noun *kairos*, “Era, chronological order of history” (Luke 21:24; 1 Thess. 5:1; Eph. 2:11-12). The last word we will note is *chronos*, “time as a succession events” (Rom. 16:25; 1 Pet. 1:20).

As far as the use of the word in Scripture is concerned, a dispensation may be defined as a stewardship, administration, oversight or management of others’ property. A dispensation is primarily a stewardship arrangement.

The essence of dispensationalism is the distinction between Israel and the Church. This arises out of the dispensationalist’s consistent utilization of normal or plain interpretation.

*Classification of the Dispensations*

Theologians may debate the issue of where precisely to divide the dispensations on the timeline of human history. Some disagree on how to classify biblical distinctions, thus arriving at different numbers of dispensations. Some scholars even reject the doctrine in order to perpetuate tradition or justify a particular emphasis.

The recognition of historical eras in the Bible unlocks the Scriptures, revealing profound truths with tremendous positive impact on our lives. When Biblical distinctions are overlooked, particularly those between Israel and the Church, there are adverse practical and theological repercussions.


(II) Christocentric: New Testament Dispensations (from the birth of Christ to the yet future resurrection, or Rapture of the Church) (A) Hypostatic Union: Birth of Christ to His death, resurrection, ascension and session (the era of the New Testament Gospels; B.C. 4-30 A.D.) (B) Church Age: Pentecost to the Rapture (30 A.D.-Rapture) (1) Precanon period (the era commencing with the Book of Acts and continuing until John wrote Revelation, completing the canon of Scripture;
A.D. 30-96) (2) Postcanon period (the current era governed by Christ’s Upper Room Discourse [John 14-17], the New Testament epistles, and Revelation 2-3; from A.D. 96 to the Rapture).

(III) Eschatological: Dispensations after the Rapture of the Church (A) Tribulation: Rapture of the Church to the 2nd Advent of Christ (approximately 7 years from the Rapture of the Church to the 2nd Advent of Christ; prophesied in the Old Testament, Christ’s Olivet Discourse [Matt. 24-25], and Revelation 6-19) (1) Satan’s Failed Utopia (from the Rapture until Satan’s expulsion from heaven) (2) Great Tribulation (from Satan’s expulsion until the 2nd Advent of Christ). (B) Millennium (the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth from His 2nd Advent of Christ to the end of human history, prophesied throughout the Old Testament and in Revelation 20) (C) Eternal State (following the final dispensation of human history, Revelation 21-22)

Mosaic Covenant

The book of Exodus also records of course God establishing a covenant with Moses and Israel at Mount Sinai. A covenant is a compact or agreement between two parties binding them mutually to undertakings on each other’s behalf. Theologically (used of relations between God and man) it denotes a gracious undertaking entered into by God for the benefit and blessing of man, and specifically of those men who by faith receive the promises and commit themselves to the obligations, which this undertaking involves.

The word used most often in the OT to express the covenant concept is the Hebrew noun brith. A general characteristic of the OT brith is its unalterable and permanently binding character. There 2 categories of covenants: (1) Conditional (2) Unconditional.

The fulfillment of unconditional covenants depended entirely upon the faithfulness of God rather than the man whereas the fulfillment of a conditional covenant depended upon the faithfulness of man.

In a conditional covenant, that which was covenanted depended on the recipient of the covenant for its fulfillment, not on the one making the covenant. Certain obligations or conditions would need to be kept by the recipient of the covenant before the giver of the covenant would be obligated to fulfill what was promised. This type of covenant has an “if” attached to it. The Mosaic Covenant made by God with Israel is an example of a conditional covenant.

In an unconditional covenant, on the other hand, that which was covenanted depended for its fulfillment solely on the one making the covenant. That which was promised was sovereignty given to the recipient of the covenant on the authority and integrity of the one making the covenant, entirely apart from the
merit or response of the receiver. It was a covenant with no “if” attached to it whatsoever.

Now we need to clarify an important aspect of an unconditional covenant. An unconditional covenant which binds the one making the covenant to a certain course of action, may have blessings attached to it that are conditioned on the response of the recipient. That response is simply faith or to trust that God will deliver on His promise.

We must understand that an unconditional covenant may have certain blessings attached to it. Faith or trusting God to deliver on His promises is the condition. Faith manifests itself in obedience to God’s Word. The fulfillment of unconditional covenants does not depend on the continued obedience of the recipient but rather the integrity and faithfulness of God who instituted the covenant.

Facts about the covenants to Israel: (1) Literal (2) Eternal (Except Mosaic) (3) Unconditional (Except Mosaic) (4) Made with a covenant people Israel (Rm. 9:4; Eph. 2:11-12).

So God has made eight covenants with man throughout history and they all relate to the earth. Each one introduces a new dispensation. Six of them were given to individual men and are named after them, as in the case with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and David and went into effect during their lives except the one given to David, which took effect at the birth of Jesus. Each one has a time element and runs out or expires at a particular time. Four of these covenants are known by a “sign.”

Four Covenants marked by a “sign”: (1) Noahic: Rainbow (2) Abrahamic: Circumcision (3) Mosaic: Sabbath (4) Davidic: Son.


Eight is the number associated with Resurrection and Regeneration. It is the beginning of a new era or order. Once these eight covenants have all been literally fulfilled, and then human history will come to an end, followed by the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth.
The nation of Israel originated with Abraham but is named after his great grandson Jacob whose name was changed by the Lord to Israel after appearing to him at Bethel (Gen. 35:9-10).

The name Israel means “prince with God.” The story of Jacob is recorded in Genesis 25-49. Although Abraham is accounted the father of the nation, the Israelite tribes traced their lineage from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob. The promises to Abraham were conveyed through Isaac (not Ishmael his half-brother) and Jacob (not Esau his twin). With Jacob, however the line separates into 12 parts which the 12 sons or tribes of Jacob, each of which has a part in subsequent Israelite history. The blessings of Jacob (Gen. 49) indicate specific callings.

Judah was to be the governing tribe (49:10) since the human nature of Christ would be descended from David from this tribe. Any regenerate individual in these 12 twelve tribes is an heir to the covenant promises. The history of Israel is in fact the history of the ben ‘isra el, “the sons of Israel.” Twelve tribes: (1) Reuben (2) Simeon (3) Levi (4) Judah (5) Zebulon (6) Issachar (7) Dan (8) Asher (9) Naphtali (10) Joseph (11) Benjamin (12) Joseph.

The Exodus of Israel marked the beginning of the dispensation of Israel. It is the second of the theocentric dispensations, the first being the dispensation of the Gentiles, which extended from Adam to the Exodus. The dispensation of the client nation of Israel is broken into 6 periods: (1) Theocratic Kingdom: Exodus to Samuel (B.C. 1441-B.C. 1020) (2) United Kingdom: Saul to Rehoboam (B.C. 1020-926 B.C.) (3) Northern Kingdom: Jeroboam to Hosea (B.C. 926-B.C. 721).

In B.C. 721, the Northern Kingdom was removed entirely by the Assyrians under the fifth cycle of discipline. Southern Kingdom: Rehoboam to Zedekiah (B.C. 926-B.C. 586), Babylonian Captivity: (B.C. 586-B.C. 536). No client nation to God during the Babylonian captivity. The Babylonian captivity was the period of "visible" heroes: Daniel, Ezra, and Zechariah. The Jews did not observe the Sabbatical years and therefore, were sent into captivity for 70 years. Restoration of Israel as a nation: Judah (B.C. 536-B.C. 4). They were not allowed to be a client nation to God. They were under Rome who ruled the known world at that time. Judah was only a 3rd class Roman province. From 4 B.C., the Birth of Christ, to 70 A.D., the Jews were given a grace opportunity. God administered the 5th cycle of discipline to Israel in 70 A.D. when the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

The nation of Israel was the custodian of the OT canon of Scripture. The OT Scriptures were divided into 3 sections: (1) The Torah (2) The Prophets (Nabhiim) (3) The Writings (Kethubim). The 1st section is called the Torah meaning “the Law” contained: (1) Genesis (2) Exodus (3) Leviticus (4) Numbers (5) Deuteronomy. The 2nd section were the Prophets which were divided into 2 sections: (1) The Former Prophets (2) The Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets:
(1) Joshua (2) Judges (3) Samuel (4) Kings. The Latter Prophets were divided into 2 categories: (1) Major (2) Minor. Major Prophets: (1) Isaiah (2) Jeremiah (3) Ezekiel. The Minor Prophets were also called the Twelve because they were all contained in 1 Book: (1) Hosea (2) Joel (3) Amos (4) Obadiah (5) Jonah (6) Micah (7) Nahum (8) Habakkuk (9) Zephaniah (10) Haggai (11) Zechariah (12) Malachi. The 3rd and last section was called the Writings: (1) The Poetical Books: Psalms, Proverbs and Job (2) The Five Rolls (Megilloth): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther and Lamentations (3) The Historical Books: Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah (1 book) and Chronicles.

**Law of Moses**

The “Law of Moses” was given to offspring of the Patriarchs, namely, Israel. The Mosaic Law is what we are most concerned about in relation to the New Testament believer and consisted of 365 negative commands and 248 positive for a total of 613 commands.

These commands can be divided into three parts or sections as we noted earlier: (1) The moral code (2) The ceremonial code (3) Civil or political code. Therefore, we can see that the Law governed every possible area of life of Israel.

Now, we must emphasize that the moral principles contained in the Mosaic Law given at Mount Sinai were merely the codified expression of the eternal moral law of God as it was given to Israel to govern her life as a nation in order to experience God’s blessing under the Abrahamic covenant. There are obviously various forms of human laws, those prescribed by man through human government or custom (see Luke 20:22; Acts 19:38).

While human government is an institution ordained by God’s will or law, some of the laws of man are direct expressions of the will of God, but still constitute laws by which men are often bound by the governmental system in which they live (Romans 13:1-7). Of course, where such laws conflict with God's laws, then we are obligated to obey God instead (Acts 4:19-20).

The fact that the Mosaic Law has been terminated does not mean that there is no law in this age of grace even though the nature of this law is quite different from the standpoint of incentive, motivation, and means. In fact, the epistles speak of “the perfect law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25), “the royal law” (Jam. 2:8), “the Law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2), and “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2). This consists of the many commands found throughout the epistles, which comprise this law. These too cover all areas of the believer’s life to direct him in the will of God in today’s world.

The moral principles embodied in the law of Moses Paul identifies as “the righteousness of the law” (Romans 8:4), and demonstrates that such principles are
the goal of the Spirit-directed life in the same context in which he teaches the believer is not under the Mosaic law (Romans 6–8).

The New Testament clearly speaks of and anticipates the reign of Christ on earth when He will rule in perfect righteousness and justice (Isa. 11:4-5), which obviously implies that there will be laws, which will govern the lives of individuals during the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

**Isaiah 2:3** Come, let’s go up to the LORD’s mountain, to the temple of the God of Jacob, so he can teach us his requirements, and we can follow his standards. (NASB95)

For Zion will be the center for moral instruction, the LORD will issue edicts from Jerusalem. In the progress of His revelation and the development of His plan, there have been various dispensations administered by God with different regulations or laws giving precise instruction for each dispensation. The way God has run each dispensation has varied, however, in each case, different people were addressed with the commands differing in quantity and character, but always with specific instruction.

A great deal of flexibility is found in the use of the term *nomos*, “law” in the Greek New Testament. This term is used of the entire Old Testament (John 10:34; 12:34; 1 Corinthians 14:21).

Technically neither the Psalms nor Isaiah are a part of the Old Testament “law,” but sometimes the term “law” was applied to the entire Old Testament because it constituted God’s special revelation of instruction for Israel and ultimately for man.

The term *nomos* is used with such terms as the prophets, and writings, again as a title for the entire Old Testament Scripture, but in this way it looks at them in their division (Luke 24:27, 44). It is especially used of the first five books of the Old Testament or the Mosaic Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). (Compare Luke 2:23; John 8:5; 1 Corinthians 9:9; Galatians 3:10).

The term is used of the entire specific Mosaic code given to the nation Israel to govern and guide their moral, religious and secular life, and covers parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (Deut. 4:8, 44-45). The term is used of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17).

The term *nomos*, “Law” is used of a principle, force or influence that impels one to action or behavior (Romans 7:21, 23a, 25) and is used of law in general (Romans 3:27 and possibly Romans 5:13b). Though part of the Law was mediated by angels, God is the origin and source of the Mosaic Law, which stems from the eternal and holy character of God, which is true even of the natural law written in the heart or conscience of man (Exodus 31:1b; Acts 7:53; Romans 2:14-16; Heb. 2:1-2).
Three-Fold Division of the Mosaic Law

It is common to divide the Mosaic Law into three parts as we noted earlier, but though this is helpful for analysis and the study of the Mosaic Law and the way it functions, such a division is never stated as such in Scripture but rather it is seen as a unit.

Part 1: The Moral Law or the Ten Commandments. This part of the Law governed the moral life giving guidance to Israel in principles of right and wrong in relation to God and man (Exodus 20:1-17).

Part 2: The Ordinances or the Ceremonial Law. This was the spiritual portion of Law, which guided and provided for Israel in her worship and spiritual relationship and fellowship with God. It included the priesthood, tabernacle and sacrifices (Exodus 25-31: Leviticus).

Part 3: The Judgments, or the Social Law. This part of the Law governed Israel in her secular, social, political, and economic life (Exodus 21:1–23:13).

The Mosaic Law was an indivisible unit, and is that which was terminated by the Lord Jesus (Romans 10:4).

Though the Law is usually divided into three parts, as described above, it is important to see that it was an indivisible unit. Thus, when Paul stated that we are not under the Law, this included all three parts, including the Ten Commandments.

Some will agree that parts of the Old Testament Law have been done away, but assert the Ten Commandments are supposedly still in force today. But all three parts of the Law were designed to function as a unit to guide Israel in all of its life.

The Ten Commandments cannot be separated from the rest. Further, even though most recognize this three-fold division, the Jews so numbered all the commands that they approached the Law as a unit. The Jews did not view the Law as having a three-fold division but rather they divided the 613 commandments of the Law into twelve families of commandments which were then subdivided into twelve additional families of positive and twelve additional families of negative commands. Further, that it is a unit is evident by the fact that the recognition of any of its features, i.e., as a meritorious system of righteousness with God, obligates the person to fulfill the entire Law, as we are taught by both Paul and James (cf. Galatians 3:10, 12; 5:3; James 2:8-11).

Further evidence that the Law is a unit is the penalty of death for disobedience is attached to all three parts of the Law. Noticing the penalties attached to certain commands further emphasizes the unitized character of the Law. When the command to keep the Sabbath (one of the “commandments”) was violated by a man who gathered sticks on that day, the penalty was death by stoning (Num. 15:32-36). When the people of Israel violated the command concerning the Sabbatical Year for the land (one of the “judgments”), God sent them into captivity...
where many died (Jer. 25:11). When Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord (one of the “ordinances”), they immediately died (Lev. 10:1-7). Clearly these commands from various parts of the Law were equally binding and the punishment equally severe. Therefore, the Law was an indivisible unit.

*Mosaic Law was Conditional*

The Mosaic Law was a conditional covenant made specifically for Israel alone to govern her life in the Promised Land. From the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.12) we see Israel was a chosen nation, an instrument of God to become a channel of blessing to all nations. The Lord was her Theocratic King who was to rule and guide the nation in her destiny that she might not become polluted or contaminated by other Gentile heathen nations and could thus fulfill her purpose. For this reason the Mosaic Law was instituted to direct Israel as a nation in all spheres of her life: (1) Morally (2) Socially (3) Politically (4) Economically (5) Religiously.

The indwelling presence of the old Adamic sin nature, made it possible for anyone to obey completely the Mosaic Law. However, in the spirit of the Law it did set forth moral principles which were applicable and would bring blessing to all people anywhere and at any time when applied and used as a standard of right and wrong.

There were certain economic provisions in the Law to govern and protect the economic life of Israel in their promised land. For example there was the right of property ownership, free enterprise, protection of the poor which guarded against the evils of great concentrations of wealth in the hands of a few with the consequent impoverishment of others. But the poor were provided for in such a way as to avoid the loss of free enterprise and the individual’s initiative by high taxation as well as to avoid making leeches out of men who refused to work. However, the strict application of these laws to our world is impossible since the original conditions in which God directly intervened cannot be reproduced, at least not until the millennium.

Yet, politicians and economists could study and learn much from these laws and principles. The foundation and basis of the Mosaic Law is the covenant God made with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In several places in Exodus and Deuteronomy, there a references to the Abrahamic Covenant which establish the fact that the giving of the Law at Sinai was based on the covenant with Abraham and God’s continuing plan for the nation of Israel as a priesthood nation (cf. Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 4:4-8 with Ex. 2:24-25; Deut. 4:36-38; 29:31; 1 Chron. 16:15-19).

God had given many promises to bless the descendants of Abraham and the heathen Gentile nations through them and these divine promises were reiterated
and expanded to Abraham and to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 12:1f; 15; 17:1ff; 26:24f; 28:13f).

The Abrahamic covenant is a unconditional covenant meaning that its ultimate fulfillment is dependent on God’s sovereign and faithfulness to His promises to Abraham regardless of Israel’s continued disobedience (cf. Ezek. 20:1-44). The Mosaic Covenant, however, was a conditional covenant. Though its ultimate fulfillment is dependent on God, for any generation to experience the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, there had to be faithfulness to God. Thus, enters the Law, a conditional covenant given to Moses for the nation of Israel after their redemption out of the land of Egypt. It was through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant (the Law) that Israel would be able to experience the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant in the Promised Land.

For obedience there would be blessings; for disobedience, cursing (cf. Deut. 28:30). The Mosaic Law is holy, good, and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14) but it was only temporary as the book of Hebrews so clearly teaches. As such, the Mosaic Law was designed to maintain a proper relationship between God and His people Israel (blessing versus cursing), but only until the coming of Messiah and the establishment of a New Covenant.

**Christ Fulfilled the Law Mosaic Law**

Several passages of Scripture clearly establish that the coming of Christ has brought an end to the Mosaic Law.

**Romans 10:4** Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, which instituted a new law or principle of life, i.e., the law of the Spirit, the one of liberty and grace (Rom. 8:2, 13).

This fact was also clearly settled by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, which was convened to investigate the issue of the Law and its place in the life of believers.

The council came about because some were saying “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved,” and because even certain of the Pharisees who had believed were also saying “It is necessary to circumcise the Gentiles and to order them to observe the law of Moses.”

The conclusion of the council, consisting of apostles and elders, was to reject the concept of placing New Testament believers under the yoke of the Law (Acts 15:6-11). The only thing the Jerusalem Council asked was that Gentile believers control their liberty in matters that might be offensive to Jewish believers, but they did not seek to place the believers under the yoke of the Law for they realized the Law had come to an end (Compare Romans 14).
In 2 Corinthians 3:6-13 Paul declares three times that the Mosaic system is done away or abolished (vss. 7, 11, 13).

Finally, the book of Hebrews demonstrates that the old covenant of the Mosaic Law was only temporary and has been replaced by the coming of Christ whose ministry is based on. A better priesthood, one after the order of Melchizedek, which is superior to Aaron’s, and a better covenant with better promises (see Hebrews 7-10). The old covenant was only a shadow of heavenly things, and if it had been able to make men perfect before God there would have been no occasion for a second or new covenant (see Hebrews 7:11-12; 8:1-13). This change in the priesthood also necessitates a change in the Law, which demonstrates that the Law has been terminated or done away.

A careful reading of the New Testament shows us that nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated as obligations for believers with the one exception being the command to keep the Sabbath. If the Mosaic Law has been done away, then why are these commandments repeated in the New Testament? Further, some commandments outside the Ten Commandments are even repeated in the New Testament.

For instance, as a motivation for loving others, Paul referred to four of the Ten Commandments because they demonstrate this principle, but then, to summarize, he mentioned one from Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Law was never designed to be a permanent rule of life but rather was simply a tutor or guardian to guide Israel and reveal her need for the Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:7, 11; Galatians 3:23-24; Romans 10:4). The Mosaic Law is weak because it is dependent on sinful man’s ability and is especially weak when adopted as a system of merit (Romans 8:3).

Impotence of the Law to Help Sinners

The Mosaic Law stands in contrast to the grace of God as now manifested in the coming of Christ (Romans 6:14; 7:6; 8:3; Galatians 3:12). Though given to Israel to govern her life in the promise land for blessing instead of cursing, there was an attendant purpose in the giving of the Mosaic Law to Israel, and which purpose still stands to this day. Namely, the Law was designed to demonstrate to men their total helpless and hopeless condition before a holy and righteous and just God and to lead him to the Savior.

The Mosaic Law was given only to Israel (Exodus 19:3; Leviticus 26:46; Romans 3:19; 9:4) and was not given to the Gentiles of the Old Testament or the Church (Acts 15:5; 15:24; Romans 8:14; Galatians 2:19). The Mosaic Law
cannot justify an individual before God (Romans 3:20-28; Galatians 2:16) and could not provide eternal salvation for men (Galatians 3:21-26).

The Mosaic Law could not provide the Holy Spirit and could not solve the problems of the old sin nature (Romans 8:2-3) and it could not make perfect, or permanently deal with sin (Hebrews 7:19) nor could it sanctify (Galatians 3:21; 5:5; Romans 8:3). Therefore, as Paul says in Galatians 3:19-24, the Law was designed to be a temporary guardian until the coming of Christ, the Suffering Messiah Savior. However, Israel approached the Law as a system of merit, shifting from a faith basis to a works basis (Exodus 19:8; Romans 10:3).

Even today, people often try to use the Law as a means of establishing their own standing before God. But the Word of God emphatically teaches us that the Law brings a curse (Galatians 3:10-12), brings death, it is a killer (2 Corinthians 3:6-7; Romans 7:9-10), brings condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:9), makes offenses abound (Romans 5:10; 7:7-13), declares all men guilty (Romans 3:19), and holds men in bondage to sin and death (Galatians 4:3-5, 9, 24; Romans 7:10-14). This is because man possesses an old Adamic sin nature that can never fulfill the righteousness of the Law, especially in the spirit of the Law. Therefore, mankind always falls short as Romans 3:23 tells us, and becomes condemned or guilty before a Holy God (Romans 3:19).

Paul taught that the law is weak through the human flesh since it contains the sin nature (8:3).

Romans 8:1-4 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (NASB95)

Paul teaches outside of the book of Romans that the law never justifies people (Gal. 2:16; 3:11). He teaches that the law is sin’s strength (1 Cor. 15:56).

Three-Fold Use of the Law

In the study of the Bible, there are three specific purposes that surface in the proper use of the Mosaic Law. First of all, in a general sense, the Mosaic Law was given to provide a standard of righteousness (Deuteronomy 4:8; Psalm 19:7-9) and in the process, it revealed the righteousness, holiness, and goodness of God (Deut. 4:8; Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; Rom. 7:12-14).

The Law given at Mount Sinai to Israel was to reveal a holy God and to demonstrate the reality of an infinite gulf that separated man from Him.
Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. (NASB95)

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (NASB95)

Secondly, the Law was given to identify sin and reveal man’s sin and bankrupt condition as guilty before God (Rom. 3:19f; 7:7-8; 5:20; Gal. 3:19).

As J. Hampton Keathley Jr. states, “Like the blood-alcohol test is designed to prove men are drunk, so the Law is designed to prove men are sinners, under the wrath of God.”

God’s holy Law reveals to man just who and what he is, namely, sinful and separated from God by an infinite gulf that he is unable to bridge in his own human strength.

Lastly, the Law was given to shut man up to faith, i.e., to exclude the works of the Law (or any system of works) as a system of merit for either salvation or sanctification and thereby lead him to Christ as the only means of righteousness (Galatians 3:19-20, 20-24; 1 Timothy 1:8-9; Romans 3:21-24).

The ceremonial portion of the Law did this by pointing to the coming of a suffering Savior, “for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

By keeping the Law, we are speaking about the true sense as God intended it, not as Israel and man tend to take it. The Law demonstrated to the Jew his sin (and so all mankind) and that he was shut up under that sin but was also designed to guide him, indeed to drive him to Christ. Then, the Social Law, regulated his life by showing him how to live socially, not to give him merit before God, but to enable him to experience the blessings of the covenant rather than the cursing as God warned in Deuteronomy.

Part of the purpose of the Law was to point men to the coming Savior through its shadows and types. Through the moral law, man could see God’s holy character as well as his own sinfulness and the infinite gulf that separates God and man. Through the ceremonial part of the Law (the priesthood, sacrifices, and tabernacle), man could find the solution to his sin by faith in what this part of the Law represented, a suffering Savior, one who would die as the Lamb of God. But even though no one could perfectly keep the Law, it was also designed for Israel’s immediate blessing by setting forth-righteous principles that would show them how to love God and their fellow man. This would produce a stable and secure society as well as a testimony to the nations (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). Thus, in 613 commands the Mosaic Law represented an ethical code given by God to Israel to govern the nation until the coming of Messiah, but at their heart, they represented the moral law of God, namely, righteous principles vital to humanity.
Today, we are not under this code, but many of its righteous principles, the eternal laws of God, have been carried over and are part of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ (Romans 8:2) or the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2). In this, some of the former commands are carried over (Romans 13:9), some new commands and guidelines are added (Ephesians 4:11f; 1 Timothy 3:1f; 4:4), and some have been revised, as in the case of capital punishment, which is to be exercised by human government (Romans 13:4).

It needs to be emphasized that the end of the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments, does not cancel or detract one iota from the eternal moral law of God. Remember, the moral principles of the ten laws did not begin with Sinai but are as eternal and immutable as the character of God. To understand this should dispel the fears of those who think the abolition of the Mosaic Law leaves only a state of lawlessness.

The moral principles embodied in the law of Moses are called “the righteousness of the law” (Romans 8:4), which demonstrates that such principles are the goal of a life directed by the Spirit and the Word, and in the same context, Paul teaches that the believer is not under the Mosaic law (Romans 6-8). Therefore, the born-again Jew of the first century moved entirely from the Mosaic Law into the new economy of grace instituted by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

The Law is still good from the standpoint of its main function and purpose (1 Timothy 1:8-10; James 2:1-10; Galatians 5:1-3; 6:1), which is how James uses the Law, to reveal sin (James 2:9), to get believers out of self-righteous legalism, and move them into a walk by faith in a living Savior.

The believer is never saved by keeping the Law (Galatians 2:21) and he is not under the Law as a rule of life, i.e., sacrifice, Sabbath keeping, tithing (Rev. 6:14; Acts 15:5, 24). Therefore, he does not walk by the Law but by the Spirit, which is the new law for the New Testament saint (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:5), which is law of liberty through faith in the power of God.

The believer is dead to the Law (Rom. 7:1-6; Gal. 2:19) by virtue of his identification with Jesus Christ in His death, who fulfilled the Law. He is to fulfill the righteousness of the Law, i.e., the spirit of the law as seen in Christ’s words in Matthew 10:37-40 love for God, and love for one’s neighbor (James 2:9). But this can only be fulfilled through knowledge of the Word of God and the filling of the Holy Spirit, which furnishes the power or ability needed to live the Christian life according to the eternal moral law of God. Therefore, church age believers are under God’s new law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2-4).

Christ fulfilled the Ten Commandments by living a perfect and sinless life and so when man trusts in Christ as his Savior, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to that individual so we have justification (Romans 4) resulting in the fact that the Law can’t condemn us (Romans 8:1; 7:1-6; Romans 5:1; 4:4-8). Christ fulfilled the
ceremonial ordinances, the shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place, which demonstrated that God was also perfect justice and sin must be judged, but God provided His Son, the precious Lamb of God. The penalty, which the Law exercised, was paid in full at the Cross.

Again there is no condemnation because the believer is “in Christ” (Col. 2:14; Romans 3:24-25). Christ also fulfilled the Social Law, but now He replaces it with a new way of life fitting to our new salvation. He gives provision for the inner man, namely, the indwelling Holy Spirit who provides us the capacity to experience sanctification so that we may experience also the righteousness of the Law (Romans 8:2-4).

Christ is the end of the Law and church believers are not under the Mosaic Law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Since the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the Law by His person and work at the Cross, church age believers are under a new law, namely, the obligation to walk by the Spirit of Life through faith in the Word of God (Romans 8:2-4). If we are led by the Spirit, then we are not under the Law (Galatians 5:18).

Against such, i.e., the fruit of the Spirit, there is no law because the believer is then operating under the highest law, the standards are met as we walk by the Holy Spirit and grow in the Word (Gal. 5:22).

After salvation by grace there has always been the grave danger of reverting to Law or legalism by taboos and tactics of coercion, or some form of human manipulation (Galatians 3:1-3). To go back to the Law as a way of life puts one under the control of the flesh, it nullifies true spirituality by faith in the Holy Spirit, and defeats the believer, which results in human good and domination by the sin nature or the flesh (Galatians 5:1-5; Colossians 2:14f).

The fact that the Christian is not under the Mosaic Law does not mean, of course, that there is lawlessness or no proper sense of morality or ethics in the Christian life but rather quite the opposite is true. But in dealing with the subject of morality or ethics, it must be understood that the clear teaching of the New Testament is that the moral life the Christian is responsible for is that no one can be saved by virtue of his own works (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Furthermore, the morality of the Christian life is to be the result of the living in the nature of Christ by obedience to the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God. In the New Testament, then, completely adequate teaching is provided as to the principles of conduct the Christian will follow if he truly presents his body “a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) and walks “by means of the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:9). Titus 2:11-14 provides an outline around in which to group these principles.

First in this passage it is stated that God’s grace brings us salvation but His grace then teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly. These are three
important lines of responsibility: the believer is to live soberly with regard to himself (Romans 12:3); righteously with regard to his fellow men; and godly with regard to the Lord.

The same truth can be more or less expressed in a somewhat different way: We should seek to live in accordance with the precepts of grace because (1) this will please God (Hebrews 13:16) and will demonstrate our love for Christ (John 14:15); (2) it will help others (Matthew 5:16; Titus 3:8,14); (3) it will bring true joy and blessing to our own hearts (John 15:10-11).


The following is a list of “negative” duties towards God: (1) Do not have idols (1 Cor 10:7, 14; Eph 5:3; Phil 3:19; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 6:17; Heb 13:15; 1 John 5:21). (2) Do not receive false teachers (2 John 10). (3) Do not mock or speak against God (Gal 6:7; Col 3:8).

The following is a list of “positive” duties towards one’s fellow human being: (1) Love all, especially our brethren (John 15:17; Rom 12:10; 1 Cor 16:14; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:23; 4:7 {1 John 4:7}). (2) Be sympathetic and compassionate (Eph 4:32; Phil 2:4; Col 3:12). (3) Forgive and forbear (Rom 12:19; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13). (4) Deal honestly and fairly (Rom 12:17b; 13:7 {Rom 13:7}; 13:13 {Rom 13:13}; 1 Thess 4:12; Jas 2:1). (5) Do good to all and help all (Rom 12:13; Gal 6:2, 10; 1 Thess 5:15; Titus 3:1; Heb 13:16; Jas 4:17; 3 John 11). (6) Tell the truth (Eph 4:25). (7) Be courteous and live peaceably with all (Rom 12:18; 1 Pet 2:17; 3:8 {1 Pet 3:8}). (8) Treat others as we would like for them to treat us (Luke 6:31; Rom 12:17a). (9) Provide a good example for others (1 Cor 8:9, 13; Phil 2:15). (10) Urge other believers to good works and seek to restore backsliders (Gal 6:1; Heb 10:24).

The following is a list of “negative” duties towards one’s fellow human being: (1) Do not lie or bear false witness (Eph 4:25; Col 3:9; Titus 2:3). (2) Do not steal (Eph 4:28; 1 Pet 4:15). (3) Do not murder (1 Pet 4:15). (4) Do not commit adultery or fornication (1 Cor 6:18; 1 Thess 4:13). (5) Do not judge others or speak evil of
them (Rom 14:13; Titus 3:2; Jas 4:11; cf. John 7:24). (6) Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Cor 6:14). (7) Do not have fellowship with professing Christians who live in scandalous sin (1 Cor 5:11; 2 Thess 3:14). (8) Do not go to law with other believers (1 Cor 6:1f). (9) Do not glory in men (1 Cor 3:21). (10) Avoid troublemakers and useless disputes (Rom 16:17; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:12). (11) Do not have unpaid debts (Rom 13:8).


The following is a list of “negative” duties towards one self: (1) Abhor evil (Rom 12:9; 1 Thess 5:22). (2) Avoid pride (Rom 12:3; Jas 4:10; 1 Pet 5:6). (3) Do not conform to or love the world (Rom 12:2; 1 John 2:15). (4) Do not fellowship with evil (Eph 5:11). (5) Do not sin through anger (Eph 4:26). (6) Do not worry (Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7; 1 John 4:1,27). (7) Do not be lazy (Rom 12:1). (8) Do not use filthy speech (Eph 4:29; 5:4 {Eph 5:4}). (9) Do not become drunk (Eph 5:18). (10) Do not complain (1 Cor 10:10; Phil 2:14).

There are also miscellaneous duties that the believer is responsible for in that he has duties towards animals and responsibilities with regard to human government and special duties devolving upon particular classes, such as the unmarried, husbands, wives, children, servants.

**Paul’s Teaching in Romans Regarding the Purpose of the Law**

In the book of Romans, Paul taught extensively on the purpose of the Law. He taught that the law in the form of the entire Old Testament canon was given, not as the way of deliverance, but actually condemned the human race (3:19).

**Romans 3:19** Now, we know for certain that whatever the Law says, it speaks for the benefit of those under the jurisdiction of the Law in order that each and every mouth may be silenced and in addition all the unsaved
inhabitants of the cosmic system may be demonstrated as guilty in the judgment of God. (My translation)

The law makes the sinner aware of sin in his life (3:20).

Romans 3:20 Because each and every member of sinful humanity will never be justified in His judgment by means of actions produced by obedience to the Law for through the Law there does come about an awareness of the sin nature. (My translation)

The introduction of the Law increased the transgression of Adam in the sense that the Law exposed man’s sinful nature to disobey the revealed will of God and in fact stimulated man’s sinful nature to disobey the revealed will of God.

Romans 5:20 Now, the Law was an addendum in order that the transgression might increase but where personal sin increased, grace infinitely abounded. (My translation)

The apostle Paul teaches in Romans 4:15 that the purpose of the Law was to bring about wrath but where there is no law, there is no violation.

Romans 4:15 For, the Law, as an eternal spiritual truth, produces righteous indignation but where there is, at any time, the total absence of the Law, neither, is there, as an eternal spiritual truth, violation. (My translation)

No one will ever be justified by obedience to the law because of the presence of the sin nature (3:20).

Romans 3:20 Because each and every member of sinful humanity will never be justified in His judgment by means of actions produced by obedience to the Law for through the Law there does come about an awareness of the sin nature. (My translation)

In Romans 7:1, in which Paul poses a rhetorical question to the Jewish Christians in Rome and asks if they are ignorant of the fact that the Mosaic Law has jurisdiction over a person as along as he lives.

Romans 7:1 Or, are some of you in a state of ignorance concerning this fact spiritual brothers (specifically, I am now addressing those who are very familiar with the Law through instruction), namely, that the Law does, as an eternal spiritual truth, have jurisdiction over a person during the entire extent of time they do live? (My translation)

That Paul is addressing the Jewish Christians in Rome specifically in this passage, which is indicated in his parenthetical statement “I am now addressing those who are very familiar with the Law through instruction.” Thus, when he uses the term “Law” he is referring specifically, to the Mosaic Law, i.e. the Jewish law and not to an axiom of political justice both Jewish and Roman.

Now, even though Paul’s comments in verses 1-6 are specifically directed towards the Jewish Christians in Rome, these comments would also be of benefit
for the Gentile Christians as well in that it would protect them from the Judaizers’ legalistic teaching, which the Galatian church fell victim to (See Galatians 5).

Then, in Romans 7:2, Paul presents the principle found in the Mosaic Law that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives but if he dies, she is discharged from her marriage contract with her husband.

**Romans 7:2** For example, the married woman is always bound by contract to the husband while he does live. However, if the husband dies, then she is, as an eternal spiritual truth, discharged from the contract with respect to her husband. (My translation)

Paul teaches in Romans 7:3 that if a Jewish woman’s husband dies, then she is not an adulteress if she remarries.

**Romans 7:3** Therefore, based upon what has been previously stated, if while her husband does live she enters into marriage with another man, then she will, as a certainty, cause herself to be known publicly as an adulteress. However, if her husband dies then she is, as an eternal spiritual truth free from the contract with the result that she is, as an eternal spiritual truth not an adulteress if she enters into marriage with another man. (My translation)

In Romans 7:4, Paul teaches that in the same way that a Jewish wife is discharged from the marriage contract with her deceased husband and free to marry another so the Christian has been discharged from the Law and was married to Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 7:4** Therefore, my spiritual brothers, all of you without exception have also been put to death by means of Christ’s body with the result that all of you have been entered into marriage with another, the one who was raised from the dead ones in order that we might produce fruit for the benefit of God the Father. (My translation)

In Romans 7:4a, he teaches that the Jewish Christians in Rome were dead with respect to the Mosaic Law through the body of Christ or in other words their identification with Christ in His physical death. Then, in Romans 7:4b, the apostle teaches that the Jewish Christians in Rome and all Christians for that matter have been married to Christ in order to bear fruit for God the Father.

Next, in Romans 7:5, Paul taught the Roman believers that prior to their conversion to Christianity, when they were in bondage to the sin nature, the sinful passions of their sin natures produced personal sin as a result of their permitting these desires to be operative in their human bodies.

**Romans 7:5** For you see, when we were once in a perpetual state of being in bondage to our flesh, the sinful desires, which were aroused by means of the Law were perpetually allowed to be operative in the members of our body resulting in the production of fruit related to spiritual death. (My translation)
This passage describes the Roman Christians prior to their conversion to Christianity whereas Romans 7:6 describes their present status of having been freed from the Law, having died to it and now having the capacity to serve in newness of the Spirit.

Next, in Romans 7:6, Paul teaches the Jewish Christians in Rome that they have been discharged from their legal and moral obligations to the Mosaic Law as a result of being identified with Christ in His physical death. Consequently, he teaches that they are forever in a state of being slaves for the benefit of the Father.

This he teaches was by means of the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit the moment they trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior and never by means of the useless observance of the letter of the Law.

Romans 7:6 But now in our present state, we have been discharged from the Law as a result of having died with respect to that which we were once in a perpetual state of being bound. Consequently, we are, as an eternal spiritual truth, forever slaves for the benefit of God the Father by means of the extraordinary work of the Spirit and never by means of the useless observance of the letter, which is the Law. (My translation)

In verse 7, Paul poses a rhetorical question that anticipates the false inference from his teaching in Romans 5:20, 6:14b and 7:5 that the Law is equivalent to the sin nature. He empathically rejects the idea that the Law is sinful but rather that it made him aware of his sin nature and then presents an example with the tenth commandment that prohibits coveting and identifies it as a sin.

Romans 7:7 Therefore, what is the conclusion that we are forced to? Is, the Law, in the state of being identical with the sin nature? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would have never become aware of my sin nature except by means of the Law. For example, I would never have been able to identify covetousness if the Law had not said, “You shall never covet.” (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:8, Paul teaches the Christians in Rome that because the sin nature seized a base of operations through the tenth commandment, the sin nature produced in him each and every kind of covetousness. At the conclusion of the verse he begins to explain why this is the case.

He states that apart from the Law, personal sin is dead in the sense that it can never be charged to the account of the sinner when the Law is not in effect.

Romans 7:8 In fact, because the sin nature seized a base of operations by means of the tenth commandment, it produced in me each and every kind of covetousness for you see apart from the Law personal sin is, as an eternal spiritual truth dead. (My translation)
Then, in Romans 7:9, Paul teaches that when the tenth commandment became a reality in his life, his sin nature suddenly became active and consequently, he died spiritually.

Romans 7:9 However, at one time, I used to be alive apart from the Law but when the tenth commandment became a reality (in my life), the sin nature suddenly became active. Consequently, I became spiritually dead. (My translation)

In this passage, he teaches that his awareness of the significance of the tenth commandment awakened his sin nature and he died spiritually. For a Christian to die spiritually is to lose fellowship with God, which is restored through the confession of sin (1 John 1:9).

Next, we read in Romans 7:10 that Paul surprisingly discovered through his own personal experience as a Christian that the tenth commandment prohibiting coveting, which was intended to give life instead resulted in his experience temporal spiritual death.

Romans 7:10 In other words, this commandment, which was for the purpose of life, was surprisingly discovered through my own personal experience to result in temporal spiritual death. (My translation)

In Romans 7:11, he teaches that because his sin nature seized a base of operations through the commandment, it deceived and killed him.

Romans 7:11 For you see because the sin nature seized a base of operations by means of the tenth commandment, it deceived me and in addition by means of it, put me to death. (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:12, Paul presents a positive inference from his teaching in verses 7-11 by stating that the Law is holy and the tenth commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Romans 7:12 Therefore, indeed, the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth holy. Furthermore, the tenth commandment is, as an eternal spiritual truth holy and in addition righteous as well as good. (My translation)

In this passage, Paul refutes in emphatic terms the erroneous conclusion that could be inferred from his teaching in Romans 5:20, 6:14b and 7:5 that the Law is equivalent to the sin nature by stating that the Law is holy and the tenth commandment is also holy, and righteous as well as good.

In Romans 7:13a, Paul poses a rhetorical question that anticipates an erroneous conclusion that could be inferred from his teaching in verses 7-12 that the commandment caused him to lose fellowship with God. This false assertion, he emphatically refutes and declares that it was the sin nature, which caused him to lose fellowship with God. Then in Romans 7:13b, he teaches that the Mosaic Law was given to expose man’s sinful nature and the sin nature’s extraordinarily sinful character.
Romans 7:13 Therefore, did that which is good cause temporal spiritual death in me? Absolutely not! On the contrary, the sin nature caused temporal spiritual death in me in order that the sin nature would be exposed by repeatedly producing temporal spiritual death in me by means of that which is good in order that by means of the tenth commandment, the sin nature would demonstrate itself extraordinarily sinful in character. (My translation)

In Romans 7:14, Paul acknowledges that the Law is spiritual but that he is unspiritual because he still possesses as a Christian a sin nature.

Romans 7:14 For you see, we acknowledge this fact, namely that the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth spiritual. However, I myself, as an eternal spiritual truth, perpetually exist in a state of being unspiritual, sold as a slave under the authority and dominion of the sin nature. (My translation)

Next, in Romans 7:15, Paul reveals that he does not practice obedience to the Law that he desires to do but rather commits sin in violation of the Law, which he hates.

Romans 7:15 For you see, I habitually produce what I by no means understand because I by no means habitually practice the very thing that I habitually desire to do. On the contrary I habitually commit the very thing that I do hate. (My translation)

Then in Romans 7:16, Paul presents even more evidence to his readers that he possesses a sin nature by arguing that if he practices sin, which he hates, then he agrees with the Law’s assessment of his conduct that it is sinful and testifies that it is perfect.

Romans 7:16 However, if, and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument I habitually commit the very thing that I by no means habitually desire to do as I’ve already admitted to. Then, I do agree with the Law. I do testify that it is, as an eternal spiritual truth perfect. (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:17, he presents the logical conclusion that he possesses a sin nature that agrees with his claim in verse 14 that he possesses a sin nature and which logical conclusion is based upon the evidence presented by him in verses 15-16.

Romans 7:17 So then, as previously stated, based upon the evidence presented, I myself do no longer produce it but rather, the sin nature, which does perpetually dwell in me. (My translation)

In Romans 7:18, Paul states to the Christians in Rome that he recognizes that nothing good dwells in his physical body because the desire to do God’s will is present in him but the power to do so is not.

Romans 7:18 For you see, I know as a fact through experience, namely that absolutely nothing good, as an eternal spiritual truth, dwells in me, that is, in my flesh because the desire is, as an eternal spiritual truth, present in me,
however, the capacity to produce that which is perfect, is, as an eternal
spiritual truth absolutely not. (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:19, he acknowledges that he does not do what he desires to
do but rather the evil he does not want to do.

Romans 7:19 For you see, the good that, I habitually desire to do, I by no
means habitually accomplish. On the contrary, I habitually practice the very
evil that I by no means habitually desire to do. (My translation)

Next, in Romans 7:20, Paul concludes that his sin nature is the source of evil in
his life.

Romans 7:20 So then, as previously stated if, and let us assume that it is
true for the sake of argument, I habitually commit the very thing that I myself
by no means habitually desire to do and of course I’ve demonstrated this is
ture and have already admitted to this. Then, I myself do no longer produce it
but rather the sin nature, which, does perpetually dwell in me. (My
translation)

Lastly, Paul in Romans 7:21 relates to the Christians in Rome that he
discovered a spiritual principle that when he desired to obey the Law that evil was
present in him in the form of the sin nature.

Romans 7:21 Therefore, I surprisingly discovered through my own
personal experience the principle: when I, at any time, desire to accomplish
that which is perfect that evil is, as an eternal spiritual truth, present in me.
(My translation)

Romans 10:1-5 Spiritual brothers, indeed, the desire produced by my own
heart and in addition my specific detailed request on behalf of them is always
for their deliverance. Because I testify concerning them that they possess a
zeal for God, however by no means according to an experiential knowledge.
Because they have in the past rejected the righteousness originating from God
the Father and continue to do so up to the present moment. In fact, because
they have in the past zealously sought to establish their own and continue to
do so up to the present moment, they never submitted to the righteousness
originating from God the Father. Because (faith in) Christ is, as an eternal
spiritual truth, the purpose of the Law resulting in righteousness for the
benefit of each and every member of the human race to those who at any time
do exercise absolute confidence (in Christ). Because Moses writes concerning
this particular righteousness, which is based upon obedience to the Law (as
constituting a source of justification): “The person who obeys them will cause
himself to live by means of them.” (My translation)

In Romans 10:5 Paul presents the reason why faith in Christ resulting in the
imputation of divine righteousness and justification has always been the ultimate
purpose of the Law rather than obedience to the Law and to support this he begins
to cite a series of Old Testament passages. The first passage he uses is Leviticus 18:5 in which Moses writes concerning the righteousness that is based on obedience to the Law that the Jew who obeys the commandments of the Law perfectly will live by them or in other words, obtain eternal life. Of course, every person born into the world is spiritually dead and possesses a sin nature, making it impossible to render the perfect obedience that the Law requires.

God never intended the Law to be a means of salvation according to Galatians 3:21, which that “if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.” However, the Law did come with promises of life as a result of obedience as we noted in Leviticus 18:5 and Matthew 19:16-17.

The Scriptures teach that if a person obeys perfectly the Law, he will live.

Leviticus 18:5 So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD. (NASB95)

Ezekiel 20:11 I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live. (NASB95)

Galatians 3:10-12 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.” Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.” (NASB95)

The Lord Jesus Christ taught the Jews that if they obeyed perfectly the Law that they would obtain eternal life.

Matthew 19:16-17 And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” (NASB95)

Luke 10:25-29 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.” But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (NASB95)

The Law would have given life to anyone who obeyed it perfectly. However, as we noted before, man has no capacity whatsoever to render perfect obedience to
the Law since he possesses a sinful nature. Thus, the Law promises life even though God did not give it with this intention since He knew sinful man had no capacity to render perfect obedience to it.

God never intended obedience to the Law to be the means of salvation but the Law did come with promises of life if obeyed perfectly as we noted earlier. Thus, we can infer that the Law would have given eternal life had it been perfectly obeyed.

So in this sense the Law promises life even though God did not give the Law with this intention since man’s sinful nature makes it impossible for him to obey the Law perfectly.

The Word of God is life thus if a Jew kept the Law, which is a part of the Word of God, then he would experience eternal life.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (NASB95)

John 6:67-68 So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.” (NASB95)

Philippians 2:14-16, Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. (NASB95)

1 John 1:1 Who has always existed from eternity past, who we have heard, who we have witnessed with our eyes, who we observed, even our hands touched concerning the Word who is the life (of God). (My translation)

The Law would give life to a Jew if they obeyed it perfectly. The Law required perfect obedience because the Law is the perfect expression of God’s perfect character and integrity and His holiness. However, the Jew did not have the capacity to render perfect obedience to the Law because they like all men are sinners by nature.

Romans 3:10 As it stands written for all of eternity, “there is, as an eternal spiritual truth, absolutely none righteous, not even one.” (My translation)

Romans 3:23 For each and every person has sinned consequently, they are always failing to measure up to the glory originating from God. (My translation)

In Romans 8:4, Paul teaches that the Father’s purpose for Christ’s physical death was so that the righteous requirement of the Law, i.e. perfect obedience might be fulfilled in those Christians who conduct themselves in submission to the Spirit rather than the sin nature.
Romans 8:1-4, Therefore, there is now, as an eternal spiritual truth, never any condemnation, none whatsoever for the benefit of those in union with Christ who is Jesus. Because, the life-giving Spirit’s authoritative power, by means of (the death and resurrection of) Christ, who is Jesus, has set you free from the sin nature’s authoritative power as well as spiritual death’s. Because with reference to the Law’s inability in which it was always powerless through the flesh, God the Father accomplished by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. In fact, with regards to the sin nature, He (the Father) executed the sin nature by means of His (Son’s) human nature. In order that the Law’s righteous requirement would be fulfilled in us, those of us who are not, as an eternal spiritual truth, conducting our lives in submission to the flesh but rather in submission to the Spirit. (My translation)

In Romans 8:4, the noun *dikaioma* means, “righteous requirement” and refers to perfect obedience, which the Law requires. It refers to the Law’s demands for perfect obedience.

As we have noted earlier, no human being with the exception of Jesus Christ of course, was able to render perfect obedience to the Law because of the presence of the sin nature in all of humanity. Christ rendered perfect obedience to the Law, which constituted His loving God perfectly and His neighbor perfectly. The Christian fulfills the righteous requirement of Law positionally because of his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Apart from the Spirit, Christians can’t fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law “experientially” as clearly delineated by Paul in Romans 7:14-25. However, they can when they are in fellowship with God through the power of the Spirit. Therefore, the Christian fulfills the righteous requirement of the Law, i.e. the perfect obedience of Christ to the Law positionally through his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. He experiences this union and identification by appropriating by faith through the power of the Spirit his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. This constitutes experiencing sanctification, salvation, righteousness and fellowship with God.

Christ’s perfect obedience to the Law has become the Christian’s perfect obedience because Christ’s death destroyed the sin nature and the baptism of the Spirit identified the Christian with Christ in His death and resurrection. The Father’s purpose for sacrificing His Son on the Cross was so that the righteous requirement of the Law would be fulfilled in Christians experientially. Specifically, it would be fulfilled in those Christians who are not conducting their lives in submission to the sin nature but rather in submission to the Spirit.

In regards to this, the New Testament writers have much to say under the inspiration of the Spirit. The Scriptures teach that the believer is to walk or live his life on earth by faith in the Word of God and not by sight.
2 Corinthians 5:7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. (NASB95)

Just as the Christian received the Lord Jesus as his Savior by exercising faith in Him for eternal salvation, so after salvation he is to live by the same principle of faith (Compare Ephesians 2:8-9 with Colossians 2:5-7).

Colossians 2:5-7 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. (NASB95)

Paul in Romans 13:8 issues a prohibition that is related to the believer’s financial obligations. He also issues a command that is related to his moral or spiritual obligation to his fellow human being, both believer and unbeliever. The prohibition should always be met whereas the command is a debt that can never be fulfilled since it is the royal family of God’s honor code and is the Christian way of life.

Romans 13:8 All of you continue making it your habit to owe absolutely nothing to anyone except to continue making it your habit of divinely loving one another because the one who, at any time does divinely love the other person fulfills the Law. (My translation)

Paul’s statement in Romans 13:9 serves to advance upon and intensify his statement at the end of verse 8 that loving one’s neighbor fulfills the requirement of the Mosaic Law.

Romans 13:9 In fact, this group of commandments: “You must never commit adultery, you must never commit murder, you must never steal, you must never covet,” (and if, and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that there does exist any other commandment and we know that one does) is, as an eternal spiritual truth summarized by this command: “You must love your neighbor as yourself.” (My translation)

In Romans 13:9, Paul cites four of the Ten Commandments that are related to the believer’s conduct in relation to the entire human race and alludes to a fifth and does explicitly mention it that also is related to the believer’s conduct in relation to the entire human race. Therefore, he is citing these commandments to advance and intensify his argument from verse 8 that loving one’s neighbor fulfills the Law in that obedience to these prohibitions is a manifestation of loving one’s neighbor.

The apostle is teaching in Romans 13:9 that when the believer obeys these four commandments, he is manifesting the fact that he loves his fellow human being as he would himself or herself. Consequently, the implication is that if they do not obey any one of these commandments then they don’t love their neighbor as they would their own selves.
Romans 13:10 teaches that divine-love never commits evil against a neighbor, therefore, love fulfills the Law.

**Romans 13:10** Divine-love never, as an eternal spiritual truth commits evil against a neighbor. Therefore, divine-love fulfills the Law. *(My translation)*

This passage teaches that the Law and the love of God are not mutually exclusive since operating in God’s love will fulfill all that the Law requires. When the believer is operating in the love of God and thus fulfilling all that the Law requires, he is simply responding by faith to the Spirit’s revelation in the Word of God that he is the object and beneficiary of God’s love before and after being justified through faith alone in Christ alone. This faith manifests itself in obedience to the Spirit’s command in the Word of God to love your neighbor as yourself and appropriates the power of the Spirit so as to give the believer the capacity to obey this command that summarizes all that the Law requires from the believer in relation to his fellow human beings.

*Paul’s Use of the Law in 1 Timothy 1:8-10*

The apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1:8-10 teaches one of the uses of the Mosaic Law, which was being misapplied by certain pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of the Law. These verses belong to a section that begins in 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul wrote this epistle to address a problem with certain pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine, which was directly related to the misuse of the Law. In this verse Paul reveals that when leaving Macedonia, he urged Timothy to stay on in Ephesus to command certain Ephesian believers to not teach false doctrines.

1 Timothy 1:3, *Since I requested you to stay on in Ephesus when I myself was about to depart for Macedonia in order that you may command certain individuals not to teach at any time, false doctrine, continue making it your habit of performing this task.* *(My translation)*

This verse is an elliptical causal clause meaning that Paul does not explicitly command Timothy to command certain Ephesian men to not teach false doctrines but rather he only presents the basis or the reason for doing so. This verse is an urgent request for Timothy to fulfill the task of confronting the false teachers in Ephesus. It presents the basis for Timothy commanding certain Ephesian believers to stop teaching false doctrines. The emphasis is not upon a comparison between Paul urging Timothy when leaving Macedonia to stay on at Ephesus in order to instruct certain men not to teach false doctrines and Timothy doing exactly that now that Paul has left him in Ephesus. Rather, his emphasis is that he wants Timothy to continue commanding certain Ephesian believers to not teach false doctrines because he commanded him to do so upon leaving for Macedonia. His emphasis is as to why he wants Timothy to confront these false teachers. This is to
help support Timothy in this task since he is emphasizing in this causal clause his apostolic authority that he received from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. To reject Paul’s instructions was to reject the Lord Himself.

“To stay on in Ephesus” implies that Paul wanted Timothy to continue confronting those teaching false doctrines in Ephesus. It expresses the concept of perseverance.

“When I myself was about to depart for Macedonia” refers to Paul traveling from Ephesus to the Roman province of Macedonia. It emphasizes the immediacy of Paul departing for Macedonia indicating that Paul requested that Timothy remain at Ephesus in order to command certain Ephesian not to teach false doctrines when he was about to depart for Macedonia. It also implies that Paul was in Ephesus when he urgently made this request of Timothy.

“In order that you may command certain individuals not to teach at any time, false doctrine” is a purpose clause that indicates that Paul’s purpose for urgently requesting that Timothy stay on in Ephesus was so that he could command certain Ephesian believers not to teach false doctrine. The purpose is further described in verse 4 indicating that Paul wanted these Ephesian believers who taught false doctrines to also not occupy themselves with myths and interminable genealogies. It implies clearly that Paul has delegated authority to Timothy to rebuke and hold these false teachers accountable since this word indicates that the false teachers in Ephesus are under Paul’s apostolic authority and are thus Christians. The fact that Paul is commanding these unidentified individuals to stop teaching false doctrine clearly implies that they are believers since Paul would not have authority over a non-believer. It also indicates that they were pastors since Acts 20:28 records Paul predicting to the pastors in Ephesus that some of them would become apostates.

“Certain individuals” refers to unidentified Christian pastor-teachers who taught false doctrines in fulfillment of Paul’s prophecy recorded in Acts 20:28. It means that there was more than one pastor in Ephesus who was teaching false doctrines. However, it does not mean that all the pastors were doing so.

“Not to teach at any time, false doctrine” speaks of the act of teaching that which is contrary to the apostolic teaching of Paul. It does not refer to the style of teaching or manner of teaching but the content of teaching. It describes the content of the teaching of these pastors in Ephesus as fundamentally and essentially different than Paul’s apostolic teaching. This prohibition denies any idea of these Christian pastors in Ephesus teaching heretical doctrines.

Verse 4 further describes the purpose for Paul urgently requesting that Timothy stay on in Ephesus. In this verse, Paul states that not only did he not want these Ephesian pastors at any time to teach false doctrine but also not to occupy themselves with myths and interminable genealogies. He goes on to state that these
myths and interminable genealogies merely promote speculation rather than help them fulfill their responsibilities of administrating God’s household. So this verse begins a description of the content of what these pastors in Ephesus taught who had strayed from Paul’s teaching.

This verse is connecting Paul’s prohibition that certain Ephesian pastors were not to teach at any time, false or heretical doctrine with the prohibition for these same pastors to not pay attention to myths and useless genealogies. It makes clear that Paul does not want these unidentified pastors in Ephesus to at any time “occupy their minds” with myths.

“Myths” describes the content of the teaching of these unidentified pastors in Ephesus as falsehood in contrast to Paul’s gospel, which is absolute truth since it is inspired by the Holy Spirit as well as rooted in historical events (crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ) and an historical individual (Jesus of Nazareth). It has nothing to do with Gnosticism since the phrase “teachers of the Law” and Titus 1:14 describing these myths as Jewish indicate that the myths and genealogies mentioned by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:4 were Jewish in nature.

“Useless genealogies” refers to a listing of descendants of a particular individual. Specifically, it refers to the genealogies in the Old Testament. Paul was not against the study of the genealogies of the Bible since they can teach us quite a bit about God’s creation, His desire to redeem mankind, and His sovereign control over history. The apostle was against the misuse of genealogies.

Though it is true that the Old Testament genealogies were important with respect to the claims of Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Jewish Messiah and taught the sovereignty of God over the human race, they did not promote the administration of God’s household by these pastors. They would not help these pastors to fulfill their responsibilities.

The causal clause “because the nature of which, as an eternal spiritual truth, promote pointless arguments rather than the administration of God’s household” refers to these unidentified individuals in Ephesus fulfilling their stewardship as pastor-teachers. Specifically, it refers to the administration of God’s household, which is the church. It refers to leading the church in Ephesus.

“Continue making it your habit of performing this task” is a supplied ellipsis and should be inserted into the translation at the end of verse 4. It refers to Paul commanding certain pastors in Ephesus not to at any time teach false doctrine. It implies that Timothy was already about performing this task when this letter arrived from Paul. Timothy was being faithful!

Verse 5 records Paul writing to Timothy that the goal of his and Timothy’s instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

1 Timothy 1:5 However, the result, which this command produces is, as an eternal spiritual truth, divine-love from a pure heart as well as a conscience
that is divine good in quality and character and in addition a sincere faith. (My translation)

This verse is contrasting the negative ungodly results of some unidentified pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine and being occupied with myths and useless genealogies and the positive results if they are faithful in administrating God’s household. The negative result of the former is that the church in Ephesus will be involved with pointless arguments. The positive result of the latter is the church will function in God’s love for one another since the result of obeying Paul’s apostolic teaching is love for God and love each other.

The noun telos in 1 Timothy 1:5 does not mean “objective” or “purpose” but rather “result” since Paul is contrasting the negative ungodly results of these pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine and being occupied with myths and useless genealogies and the positive results of their being faithful in administrating God’s household. The negative result of the former is that the church in Ephesus will be involved with pointless arguments. The positive result of the latter is the church will function in God’s love for one another since the result of obeying Paul’s apostolic teaching is love for God and love each other.

In 1 Timothy 1:5, the noun agape means “divine-love” and refers to the Ephesian believers’ divine-love as it functions towards each other since Paul is contrasting the negative ungodly results of these pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine and being occupied with myths and useless genealogies and the positive results of their being faithful in administrating God’s household.

“From a pure heart” teaches that a pure heart is the source from which God’s love is exercised towards one’s fellow Christian. This prepositional phrase teaches that when the Christian obeys the command to love one another as Christ loved him it is from a heart that is experiencing fellowship with God and being influenced by the Holy Spirit. This prepositional phrase refers to the state of the Christian’s soul that does not have any known sin in its stream of consciousness. It refers to the believer experiencing fellowship with God and being influenced by the Spirit. It speaks of the believer bringing his thoughts into obedience to the Spirit.

“A conscience that is divine good in quality and character” refers to the Christian’s conscience or whose standards are in accordance with the Father’s will because the Christian is being influenced by the Spirit. The Christian is filled with or influenced by the Spirit when they bring their thoughts into obedience to the teaching of the Spirit, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God.

Therefore, the conscience, where the norms and standards reside, is divine in quality and character because the teaching of the Spirit as recorded in the Word is the basis for the norms and standards. It describes the Christian’s conscience as
being intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent because their norms and standards are based upon the teaching of the Spirit in the Word of God.

This prepositional phrase indicates that loving one’s fellow Christian as Christ loved all men also finds its source in a conscience that is divine good in quality and character. This means that loving one’s fellow Christian as Christ loved all men originates from not only a pure heart but also a conscience that is divine good in quality and character, which is the result of being filled with the Spirit and letting the Word of Christ richly dwell in your soul.

“A sincere faith” speaks of the Christians’ post-conversion faith in the Word of God or in other words, their faith in the Spirit’s teaching that is revealed through the communication of the Word of God. It does not refer to saving faith or faith in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation but rather the Christian’s faith in the Word of God after their conversion since in context Paul is addressing the conduct of Christians as a result of their pastors teaching sound doctrine rather than false doctrine.

Also, in context, pistis is used in relation to the Christian obeying the command to love his fellow believer as Christ loves, which is accomplished by exercising faith in the Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God and specifically, the command to love one another as Christ loves. Obedience to the Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God to love one another as Christ loved is the direct result of the believer exercising faith in the Spirit’s teaching since obedience to the commands of the Word of God are the direct result of exercising faith in the Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God.

Next, in 1 Timothy 1:6, Paul points out to Timothy and the Ephesian church that because some pastors in Ephesus have deviated from practicing divine-love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith, they turned aside to pointless talk.

1 Timothy 1:6 Certain individuals, because they have deviated away from these things, turned aside to pointless talk. (My translation)

“Certain individuals” refers to a particular group of unidentified pastors in Ephesus. The causal clause “because they have deviated away from these things, turned aside to pointless talk” means that the reason why these pastors turned aside to pointless talk was because they deviated from practicing God’s love in the power of the Spirit from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Therefore, the reason why these unidentified pastors in Ephesus were teaching false doctrine and were occupied with Jewish myths and genealogies was that they themselves were not obeying the command to love one another. The reason why they were failing to administrate the household of God by teaching the church to
love one another from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith is that they themselves were not doing so. They were out of fellowship with God themselves and as a result they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to teach the Christians in Ephesus to love one another from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. The fact that they did not obey the Lord’s command to love one another is reflected by the fact that they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to teach the church in Ephesus to love one another from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Furthermore, they were out of fellowship and not exercising love towards their fellow Christians. Thus, they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to the Lord to administrate the church at Ephesus by teaching the command to love one another because they were no longer operating in faith.

So because these unidentified pastors in Ephesus strayed from obeying the command to love one another, which stems from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith, they turned aside to fruitless discussion, which in verse 4, Paul describes as “pointless arguments.”

“A pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith” are a related to the mind and the way the Christian thinks, his or her mindset. Therefore, these pastors did not operate in God’s love and administrate God’s household in Ephesus by teaching the command to love one another because they were not thinking right and they were not thinking right because of a lack of faith in the Word of God.

Thus because these pastors were not exercising faith in the Word of God and as a result were not obeying the command to love their fellow Christians as Christ loves and not fulfilling their responsibilities to teach the same, Paul exhorts Timothy to fight the good fight of faith and issues the following exhortations throughout the epistle. Therefore, these unidentified pastors in Ephesus were not exercising faith in the Word of God, which manifested itself through false teaching, being occupied with Jewish myths and genealogies resulting in pointless arguments. This lack of faith manifested itself by not fulfilling their responsibilities to administrate the household of God, which is accomplished by teaching the command to love one another.

Then, in verse 7 Paul further describes these unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were teaching false doctrine because they were occupied with Jewish myths and useless genealogies. Thus, they were failing to fulfill their duties of administrating the church in Ephesus by communicating Paul’s apostolic teaching.

1 Timothy 1:7 by desiring unsuccessfully to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either the things which they are making a habit of communicating or the things concerning which they make a habit of confidently asserting for the benefit of only themselves. (My translation)
In this verse, he identifies this particular group of pastors as wanting to be teachers of the Law but yet they don’t understand what they are saying or the things they confidently affirm. This further indicates quite clearly that these pastors had fallen victim to the Judaizers who dogged Paul throughout his ministry. Therefore, the heresy in the Ephesian church was of a Jewish nature.

This verse is connected to verse 6 in the sense that it describes how this “certain individuals” mentioned in that verse were turning aside to pointless talk. As we noted these individuals were pastors in Ephesus who Paul describes in verses 3 and 4 as teaching false doctrine because they were occupied with myths and useless genealogies that were Jewish in nature. Thus, they were victims of the Judaizers.

In verse 6, Paul describes why these pastors turned aside from Paul’s gospel to pointless talk, namely they deviated from obeying the command to love their fellow Christ as Christ loves and were not fulfilling their responsibilities to administrate the household of God by teaching this command to their congregations.

Now in verse 7, Paul describes how or the means by which they turned aside to pointless talk, namely, by desiring to be teachers of the Mosaic Law. So the expression “by desiring unsuccessfully to be teachers of the Law” is participial clause that expresses the means by which these unidentified pastors in Ephesus were turning aside from teaching the command to love one another to pointless talk.

“Even though they do not understand either the things which they are making a habit of communicating or the things concerning which they make a habit of confidently asserting for the benefit of only themselves” is a concessive clause that implies that these unidentified pastors in Ephesus lacked understanding or were simply ignorant of the true purpose of the Mosaic Law even though they desired to be teachers of it. This implication is indicated by Paul’s statements in verses 8-10, which deal with one of the usages of the Mosaic Law.

So as Mounce correctly observes “verses 3-7 set the historical state for the epistle.” (Page 28) Certain pastors in Ephesus were not faithful in fulfilling their responsibilities to administrate the household of God (verse 4) by teaching false doctrine (verse 3) because they were occupied with myths and useless genealogies (verse 4) that were Jewish in nature as implied by their desire to become teachers of the Mosaic Law (verse 7).

Paul’s purpose for urgently requesting that Timothy prohibit these pastors from doing these things was love. If they obeyed this prohibition and again fulfilled their responsibilities to administrate the household of God, they would communicate Paul’s gospel and teach the command to love one another.
So by attempting to be teachers of the Mosaic Law and not communicators of the gospel and sound doctrine, there were disputes and arguments taking place among believers in Ephesus. On the other hand, if they had remained faithful, no such thing would have occurred unless their audiences rejected the apostolic teaching in the first place. These individuals were not faithful because of a spiritual problem that they had, namely they were out of fellowship with God and had rejected Paul’s apostolic teaching themselves.

In verse 8, the apostle Paul begins a brief discussion of the correct application of the Law by rebuking the misuse of the Law by those unidentified pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of it. He begins this discussion of the Law by affirming that what he writes about in this discussion is the accepted and common understanding and teaching of the apostles and the Christian community.

1 Timothy 8 But we affirm as a confirmed and accepted fact that the Law does, as an eternal spiritual truth exist in the state of being useful, if one at any time does for their own benefit make use of it lawfully. (My translation)

This verse presents a contrast with Paul’s previous statements in verses 6 and 7. In verse 6, Paul describes why certain unidentified pastors in Ephesus turned aside from Paul’s gospel to pointless talk, namely they deviated from obeying the command to love their fellow Christ as Christ loves and were not fulfilling their responsibilities to administrate the household of God by teaching this command to their congregations. Then, in verse 7, he describes how or the means by which they turned aside to pointless talk, namely, by desiring to be teachers of the Mosaic Law. Now, in verse 8, he makes the statement that the Law is good if one uses it lawfully or correctly applies it. In verses 9-11, he presents who the Law was intended for and presents a vice list to characterize those who the Law is intended for.

Therefore, the apostle is contrasting the misuse of the Law by these pastors in Ephesus who aspired to be teachers of the Law with the correct application of it, which he and Timothy and the other apostles taught and was accepted by the Christian community throughout the Roman Empire in general.

It is introducing a series of statements that end in verse 11 that stand in direct contrast with his statements in verses 3-7, which describe certain unidentified pastors in Ephesus who desired to be teachers of the Mosaic Law and were teaching false doctrine by being occupied with Jewish myths and the pointless application of the genealogies of the Old Testament. So the contrast is between Paul’s apostolic teaching with regards to the proper use and accurate application of the Mosaic Law with the improper use and misapplication of it by these unidentified pastors in Ephesus. The misapplication of the Law by these pastors makes it absolutely imperative that he presents the proper application of it.
1 Timothy 1:8 is a fifth class condition that teaches the spiritual principle that the Law is useful if one uses it correctly.

The protasis: “if one at any time does make use of it lawfully.” The apodasis: “we affirm that the Law does, as an eternal spiritual truth exist in the state of being useful.”

The protasis of this fifth class condition that helps to compose verse 8 indicates that for the Mosaic Law and in particular the moral code aspect of the Law to have its proper result it must be used in accord with this three-fold purpose. This principle helps to expose the error of those pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of the Mosaic Law. In other words, it is useful if one understands and applies its three-fold purpose. In particular if one understands that it reveals God’s perfect standards, personal sins committed by man and his sinful nature as well as his need for the Savior. This usage of the Law is reflected in Paul’s statements in verses 9-10.

In the apodasis, what Paul is asserting about the Law in verses 8-11 is inspired and confirmed by the Holy Spirit and accepted by the apostles and their disciples in contrast to those pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of the Law and were not using it properly.

When Paul speaks of the Law in this verse, he is referring to the Mosaic Law and specifically to the moral code or Ten Commandments. This is indicated by the fact that when Paul uses the term nomos he usually has the Mosaic Law in mind or the Old Testament as a whole. Secondly, when he speaks of the law in verses 8-10, it has the same ethical concerns as those of the Mosaic Law.

The list of vices in verses 9-10 is similar to the Decalogue as Knight points out (page 81) who also points out that “when Paul elsewhere speaks of ‘law’ and gives ethical lists, it is the Mosaic moral law that is in view (cf., e.g., Rom. 13:9ff.)” (page 81).

Thirdly, in verses 4, Paul has already mentioned that these pastors in Ephesus were occupied with myths and useless genealogies, which we noted were Jewish in nature. The noun nomodidaskalos means “teachers of the Law” which is another clear indication that nomos in verse 8 refers to the Mosaic Law.

The fourth reason why nomos is referring to the Law is that Paul is contrasting his use of the Law with these unidentified pastors who misused the Law and wanted to be teachers of the Law. The reference to genealogies in verse 4, which occur in the Pentateuch indicate that nomos refers to the Mosaic Law.

Lastly, the word’s articular construction indicates to the reader that nomos is “well-known” to them and not Roman law or law in general.

When Paul says that the Law is “good,” he means that it is “useful.” This is indicated in that Paul is contrasting his use of the Law with that of those pastors in Ephesus. Also, this word appears in the apodasis of a fifth class condition. The
protasis speaks of using the Law correctly and the apodasis affirms that the Law is useful if one uses lawfully. He is saying that the Law is useful if it is used correctly.

1 Timothy 1:9-10 continue the discussion of the Mosaic Law and in particular the Moral Code portion of the Law, i.e. the Ten Commandments. Paul is speaking about the Law from its condemnatory purpose meaning that the Law was designed to reveal man’s sinful nature and God’s holy character and that man does not measure up to God’s perfect holy standards. This condemnation by the Law was to lead the sinner to Christ.

1 Timothy 1:9 For you see, one must affirm this fact, namely that the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth, by no means established for the benefit of the righteous but in fact, for the benefit of those who break the Law, for the benefit of those who are insubordinate, for the benefit of those who are irreverent and for the benefit of those who are sinful by nature and practice, for the benefit of those of those who are unholy and for the benefit of those who are worldly, for the benefit of those who murder their father and mother, for the benefit of murderers, 10 for the benefit of those who are fornicators, for the benefit of those who are homosexuals, for the benefit of those who are kidnappers, for the benefit of those who are liars, for the benefit of those who are perjurers and in addition, if, and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that any other does oppose itself to that which is sound doctrine and we agree that there is. (My translation)

So in these verses he teaches that this moral code does not apply to the Christian who has been declared righteous through faith alone in Christ alone. Rather, it is for those who are non-Christians who need the Law to show them their sinful nature and that they don’t measure up to God’s perfect standards and that they are in need of the Savior.

Paul is not implying that Christians are at liberty to break the Ten Commandments, i.e. the Decalogue, rather he is merely pointing out that the Christian’s way of life is not governed by this aspect of the Mosaic Law. Again, he is speaking about the Law from the perspective that it was designed to condemn the sinner and thus lead them to Christ.

He teaches in his other epistles and mentions in 1 Timothy 1:5, the Christian’s life is governed by the Spirit and in particular the command of our Lord to love God with one’s entire being and love one another as He loves through the power of the Spirit. These two commands summarize the teaching of the Word of God.

Therefore, those pastors emphasizing obedience to the Ten Commandments to live righteously are missing the point or misapplying the Law. The Christian’s lifestyle is to be governed by walking by faith in the Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God and in particular obeying the Lord Jesus Christ’s command to love one
another as He loves through the power of the Spirit and not simply by obeying the Ten Commandments. These apostate pastors in Ephesus were following the Judaizers’ doctrine and were being selective with regards to their obedience to the Law by emphasizing strict observance to the Ten Commandments.

So Paul is teaching in verses 9-10 that the Decalogue is not for the “righteous,” i.e. the sinner justified through faith in Christ, i.e. the Christian but rather for those who are unsaved since this moral code is designed reveal God’s holy character, man’s sinful nature and lead the sinner to Christ for salvation. These pastors were teaching in error that observance of the Law is to govern the Christian’s lifestyle.

“For you see, one must affirm this fact” is an epexegetical clause meaning that Paul is defining or explaining more explicitly why the Law is useful if one makes use of it lawfully. He is defining how this principle is true or in other words, he is attempting to define in explicit terms this principle, or how this is the case. It indicates that Paul is explaining more explicitly this principle that the Law is only useful if one makes use of it lawfully.

“The Law” refers to the Mosaic Law and specifically to the moral code or Ten Commandments. The anarthrous construction of nomos is emphasizing a particular aspect of the Mosaic Law, namely, the moral code or Ten Commandments. This is indicated by the fact that the first three couplets are offenses against God that correspond to the first four of the Ten Commandments and the remaining vices, which are offenses against people, correspond to the next five commandments.

“Namely that the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth, by no means established for the benefit of the righteous” is emphatic presenting a spiritual axiom that the Law was by no means established by God for the righteous.

“The righteous” refers to the Christian and describes their state of possessing the “absolute” righteousness of God through imputation as a result of exercising faith alone in Christ alone. It describes those sinners who have been declared justified as a result of receiving the imputation of righteousness as a gift the moment they exercised faith alone in Christ. It speaks of the positional stage of transforming the Christian into the image of Christ.

The adjective dikaios does not refer to the Christian living in the righteousness of God or in other words experiencing divine righteousness but rather it refers to the positional aspect of righteousness. In other words it refers to the state of the sinner who possesses divine righteousness as a result of being declared justified by God as a result of receiving the gift of righteousness through imputation the moment they exercised faith alone in Christ alone.

This is indicated not only by the meaning of the word, which we noted above in detail, which is emphasizing the state of possessing righteousness but also because Paul is contrasting this word with the unsaved. In the adversative clause, he
presents a list of sins that are in violation of the Ten Commandments and characterize the unsaved.

The Law was designed to reveal God’s holy character, man’s sinful condition and lead the sinner to Christ. The Christian, i.e. the justified sinner is already convinced that they are a sinner and have come to Christ. Thus, they benefited from this purpose of the Law. The unsaved have not. Thus, when Paul presents the vice list in verses 9b-10, it is a list of sins that characterize those who have not yet responded to this three-fold purpose of the Law. Paul is saying that those who have already been declared righteous have no need for this three-fold purpose of the Law. However, those who are characterized by the lists of sins in verses 9b-10 still have need of the Law since they have not yet come to Christ, which the Law was designed to lead them to. Therefore, the unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were attempting to be teachers of the Law and were teaching adherence to the Ten Commandments were misapplying the Law by emphasizing obedience to the Law as the basis for the Christian way of life.

1 Timothy 1:9b-10 is an adversative clause. It is contrasting those who are righteous, i.e. the Christian with those who are not. This contrast is also emphatic emphasizing that the Law is for the unsaved. It is expressing an emphatic contrast between the Christian’s relationship to the Law and the relationship that the unsaved have with respect to it.

In this adversative clause Paul employs a rhetorical device known as a vice list in order to make clear to the Ephesian church, which particular group of people that the Law benefits. This vice list does not emphasize sin but a certain group of people, namely the unsaved in contrast to the Christian who is righteous through faith in Christ. This list identifies the unsaved as benefiting from the three-fold purpose of the Law. This vice list corresponds to the Ten Commandments, i.e. the Decalogue. Specifically this corresponds to nine of the Ten Commandments.

The vice list that appears in 1 Timothy 1:9b-10 is given in four pairs, followed by a series of six individual terms and concluded with a general catch-all category. This list characterizes the unsaved since it stands in contrasts with dikaios, “for a righteous person” which speaks of the sinner who is declared righteous through faith in Christ, i.e. the Christian. Thus, for these unidentified pastors in Ephesus to attempt to apply this moral code to those already in the Christian community through faith in Christ was in error.

The noun didaskalia, “doctrine” refers to the content of what the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles taught. This term appears often in the Pastoral letters referring to the content of Christ’s teaching and His apostles in contrast to those who taught false doctrine or doctrine that was not in accord with the Lord’s teaching and His apostles (1 Timothy 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Timothy 3:10, 16; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10).
The verb *hugiaino*, “sound” describes apostolic teaching as being free from error or falsehood and is used to describe Paul’s apostolic teaching in contrast to the false doctrine taught by certain unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were occupied with Jewish myths and useless genealogies of the Old Testament. Like *didaskalia* which it modifies, this word also appears often in the Pastorals to describe the soundness of the content of the Lord Jesus Christ’s teaching and His apostles in contrast to those who taught false doctrine and were occupied with myths and useless genealogies and being teachers of the Law (1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2).

These two words together refer to accepted and authoritative apostolic teaching that is free from error or falsehood since it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and promotes spiritual growth in the body of Christ. This is in contrast to the false doctrine taught by these unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were occupied with Jewish myths and useless genealogies and sought become teachers of the Law.

**Structure**

The book of Exodus is composed of two main parts. The first part appears in chapters 1-19 and records the Lord delivering Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, which was in fulfillment of the prophecy the Lord gave to Abraham. The second part records the Lord establishing a covenant with Israel through Moses.

Douglas Stuart writes, “An important qualification must be made to any statement about the structure of Exodus: the book itself is not a separate, independent work but a subsection of what has virtually always been understood as a five-part work, the Pentateuch. Exodus follows closely on Genesis, so that Exodus 1 constitutes not the beginning of an entirely new work but the beginning of a new section of a larger work that has yet other sections. Likewise, Exodus 40 hardly brings to a conclusion the major written enterprise Moses had in mind for his audience but concludes only the portion that brings the reader to the point that the tabernacle is built and ready for use as Israel’s worship center. When we speak of the structure of Exodus, therefore, we must remember that it is a substructure—the bigger picture is that of the first five books of the Bible, one integral part of which is the section we call Exodus. Bifid composition of books is a rather common biblical phenomenon. Sometimes the two parts of a book are organized so that they contain almost the same amount of material, as in the close balance between Ezekiel 1–24, which deals with predictions of the fall of Judah and Jerusalem, and Ezekiel 25–48, which reveals God’s plans for the future after that great turning point in Israel’s history. In other places the division may be more for convenience, allowing the approximate halving of the length of an otherwise substantial scroll (as in 1, 2 Samuel, 1, 2 Kings, 1, 2 Chronicles, and possibly even
Ezra-Nehemiah). Bifid books are also sometimes divided into a first part that establishes some sort of situation and then a second part that shows the consequence of what has been established. This is exemplified in the bifid book of Joshua. It contains in chaps. 1–12 the story of the conquest of the land of Canaan (establishing general control of the promised land), and in chaps. 13–24, the story of the division of that land among the tribes (a consequence of being able to control the land). This is somewhat parallel to the situation in Exodus, where the first part (chaps. 1–19) establishes the freedom from human enemies by God’s gracious deliverance, and the second part (chaps. 20–40) provides the consequence of that freedom: the opportunity to become God’s people and adhere to his covenant requirements. Other examples of bifid composition may also be noted. Isaiah is arranged with a more chronological focus in that its first part (chaps. 1–33) contains mainly oracles intended to explain the coming demise of Israel and Judah up to 586 BC, whereas chaps. 40–66 present the more distant focus of hope for a renewed relationship with God after the unleashing of the covenant curses by way of the great Babylonian exile. This, too, is at least partly parallel to the organization of Exodus, since the focus of the first part of Exodus precedes chronologically the focus of the second part. Even New Testament epistles are often bifid; in fact, all of Paul’s are, to one extent or another. He tended to write his letters beginning with theological exposition and ending with paraenesis, or put more simply, beginning with doctrine and ending with duty, and the two sections are usually roughly balanced. By no means is bifid composition a wooden method. It is simply a general organizing principle, useful in a primarily oral culture, where the grouping of materials into two discernible blocks helped people keep that material in mind by associating the various contents within either “half” of the book with like contents in that same half. There is no reason to think that bifid composition has some sort of great advantage over other patterns (such as the prologue-dialogue-epilogue structure of Job, or the acrostic-chiastic structure of Lamentations, or the threefold woe-weal pattern of Micah, or the six disputations of Malachi). Like those alternative patterns, bifid composition is just a convenient structural device. Within the broad parameters of a bifid biblical book, any number of subcategories and special, particular elements may be found. Thus Isaiah may include several prophecies in chaps. 1–33 that point toward the time after the fall of Jerusalem, prophecies that could, in other words, have been placed in chaps. 40–66; and he can also include (although we cannot tell if the decision was his or that of an inspired editor) descriptions of his interaction with Jerusalem and its king in chaps. 34–39 as a kind of hinge linking the two main parts of the bifid structure. In Exodus, Moses included some narrative within the mainly legal/covenant “half” (e.g., the story of the ratification of the covenant in chap. 24 or the story of the breaking of the covenant in chap. 32) when so doing suits the purpose of informing
the reader of how important or how difficult it was for the Israelites fully to agree to and to honor the covenant they had been graciously provided by their God. Moses also included some law within the earlier, pre-Sinai covenant part of the book, since it pleased God to start revealing that law (e.g., regarding the Passover) at the time of the first occasion of observing it (see comments on chap. 12).


Text

The text of the book of Exodus is well preserved in the Masoretic tradition. All modern English translations are based on this tradition. More than likely Ezra brought back from Babylon to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. a carefully preserved and well-edited copy of the Pentateuch and the former prophets. This is undoubtedly why the text is in such good shape.

The book of Exodus was considered by the Jewish people as inspired by God and was thus considered a part of the Old Testament canon. It was copied many times before it came down to the form we now know as the Masoretic Text (MT). The Septuagint confirms quite a bit of the MT readings. However in some places there are longer readings.

John Durham writes, “The texts from Exodus that appear in full or fragmentary form in the Dead Sea Scrolls show little variation of significance from the readings of the Masoretic text. The text of the Book of Exodus has on the whole been well preserved despite its antiquity, no doubt owing chiefly to the fact that much of the book achieved by use what was effectively a canonical status quite early in the history of the growth of the Old Testament. The usual kinds of textual error are to be found in the Hebrew text of Exodus, and some of these are pointed out in the notes that follow the translation below, but a comparison of the significant problems posed here with those present in certain Psalms, or in parts of the Books of Kings, Isaiah, or Ezekiel, for example, indicates that the text of Exodus is remarkably free of serious textual difficulty. The language of the Book of Exodus is biblical or “classical” Hebrew. For the most part, the Hebrew of Exodus is straightforward and generally devoid of philological and grammatical complication. The major problem posed by the language of Exodus has to do with terms that appear to be quite correctly transmitted, but for which a precise significance is now unknown. There is no large number of these, however, and by far the bulk of the text of Exodus can be translated both clearly and easily. The few obscure terms are discussed in either the notes or the commentary below. Most of the Book of Exodus is written in prose forms, either as narrative or as lists of
apodictic and casuistic laws or as detailed sequences of cultic specification. One consequential section is in poetic form (15:1b–18, 21), and there is one three-line poetic stanza that some translators render as prose (so rsv Childs, 554). These poems are certainly among the oldest parts of the book, and there is a possibility that some sections now preserved in prose form were originally in poetic form, as for example the decalogue, expanded from its original ‘ten words,’ or early recitations of the mighty acts of Yahweh’s deliverance from Egypt and sustenance in the wilderness. Indeed, Pss 105:24–45; 106:1–23; and 136:10–16 may provide later examples of such poetic originals.” (Durham, J. I. (2002). Vol. 3: Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated.)
Outline of the Book of Exodus

I. Deliverance of God’s People from Slavery in Egypt (1-18)
   A. Israel is oppressed in Egypt (1)
      1. Setting: Israel in Egypt (1:1-7)
      2. Persecution: Egypt persecutes the Israelites (1:8-22)
   B. God Raises Up a Deliverer (2-4)
      1. Birth and Protection of Moses in Egypt (2:1-10)
      2. Escape to and Exile of Moses in Egypt (2:11-4:17)
      3. Moses returns to Egypt (4:18-31)
   C. God Defeats Pharaoh (5:1-12:36)
      1. Moses confronts Pharaoh (5:1-7:13)
      2. God Judges Egypt (7:14-12:36).
   D. God Delivers Israel from Egypt (12:37-18:27)
      2. Israel Crosses Reed Sea (14)
      3. Israel Celebrates Deliverance from Pharaoh’s Army (15:1-21)

II. Israel Receives Revelation from God (19-40)
   A. God Establishes a Covenant with Israel (19-31)
      1. Setting for the Giving of the Law (19)
      2. Decalogue (20:1-21)
      4. Ceremonial Regulations (24:12-31:18)
   B. Israel’s Failure and Restoration (32-34)
      1. Israel Breaks the Covenant (32:1-33:6)
      2. God Renews Covenant with Israel (33:7-34:35)
   C. Construction of the Tabernacle (35-40)
      1. Preparation for Construction (35:1-36:7)
      3. Completion of Tabernacle (39:32-43)
      4. Assembling at Tabernacle (40:1-33)
      5. God Dwells with Israel (40:34-38)