

# Reading the Old Testament History Again... and Again



2011 Ryan Center Conference

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# Why re-read OT history?

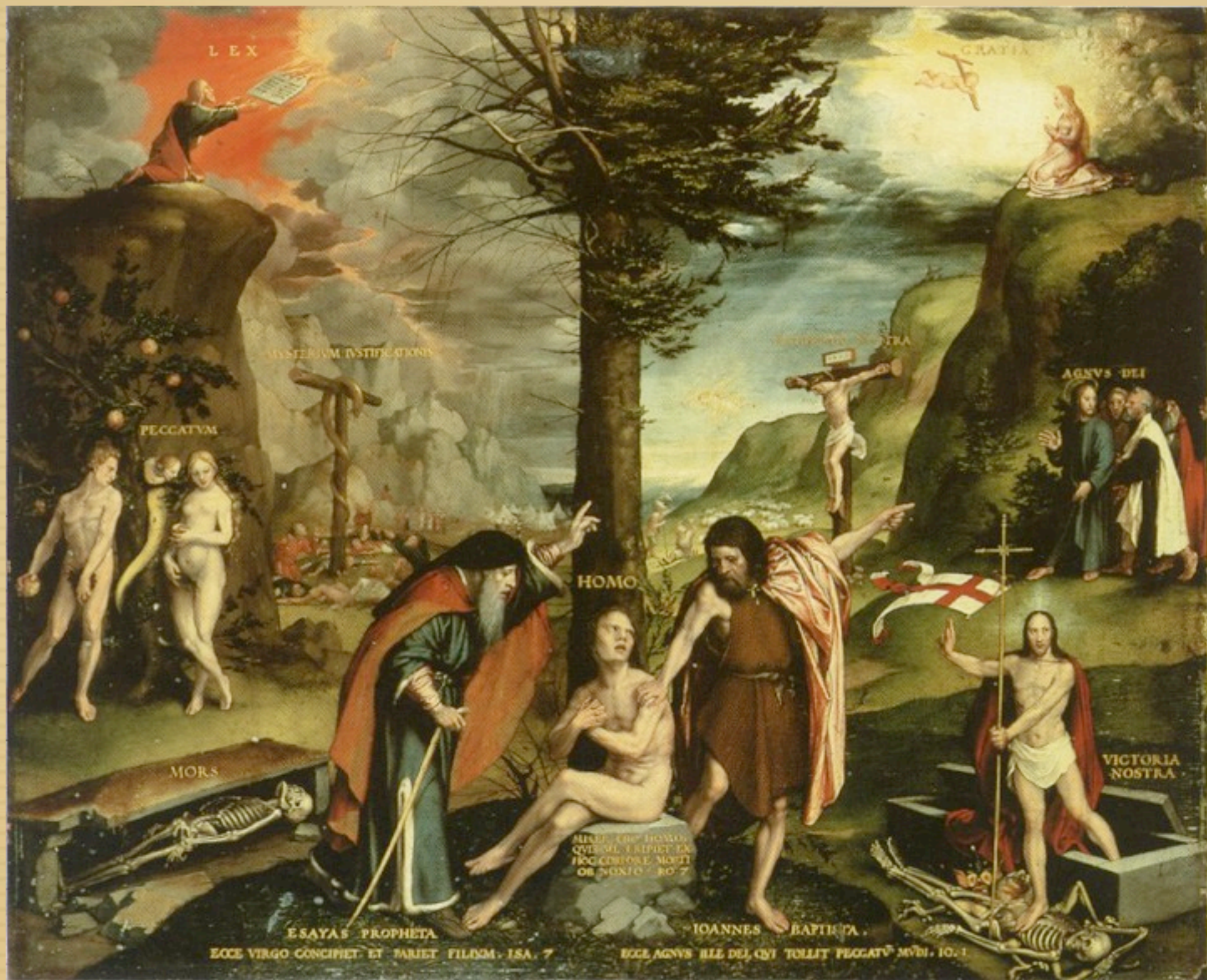




# Why re-read OT history?

- ~ There's so much more to discover there.
- ~ It's the key to reading the New Testament better.
- ~ There's transformation to pursue.

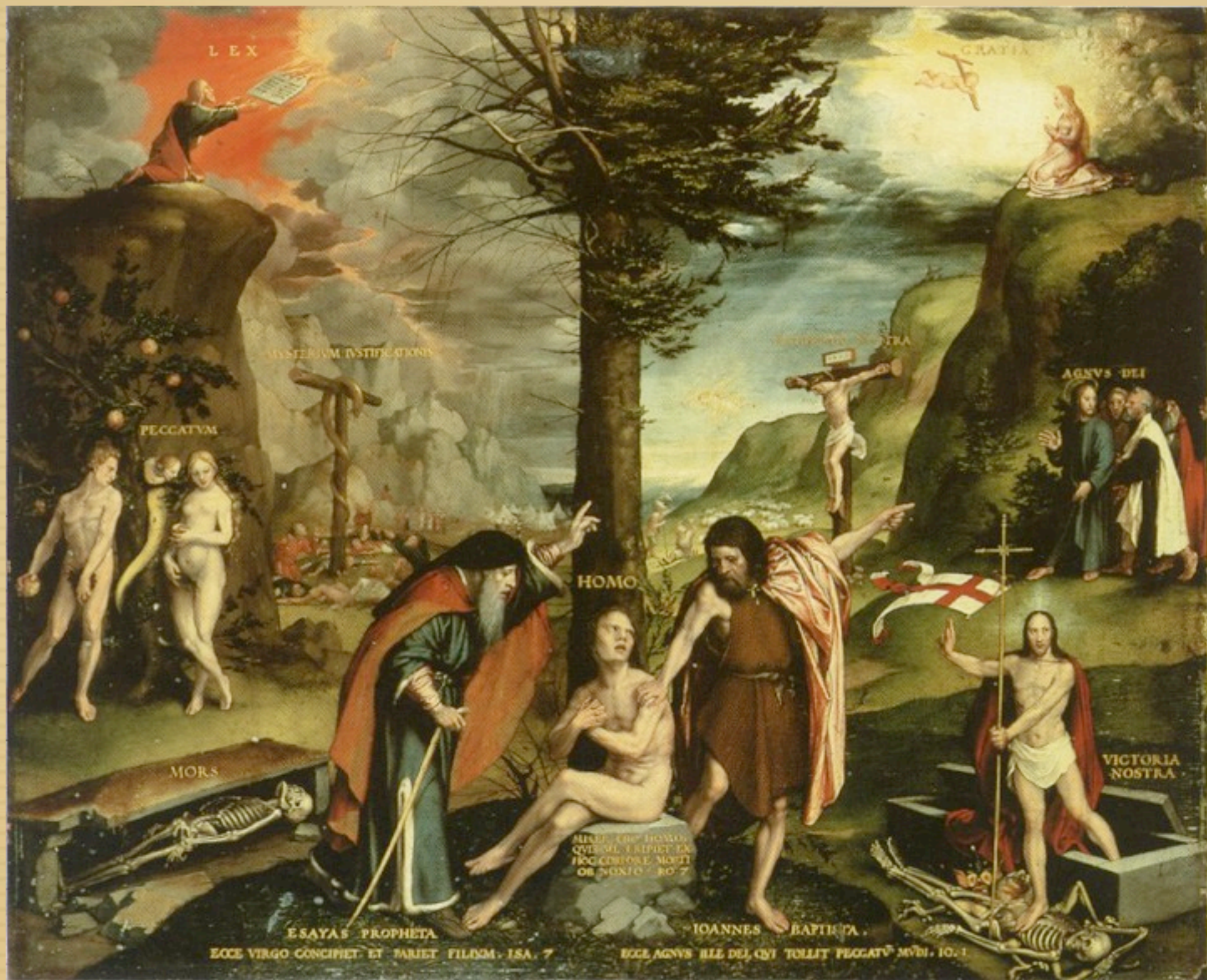




*In both the domains of nature and faith, you will find  
the most excellent things are the deepest hidden.*

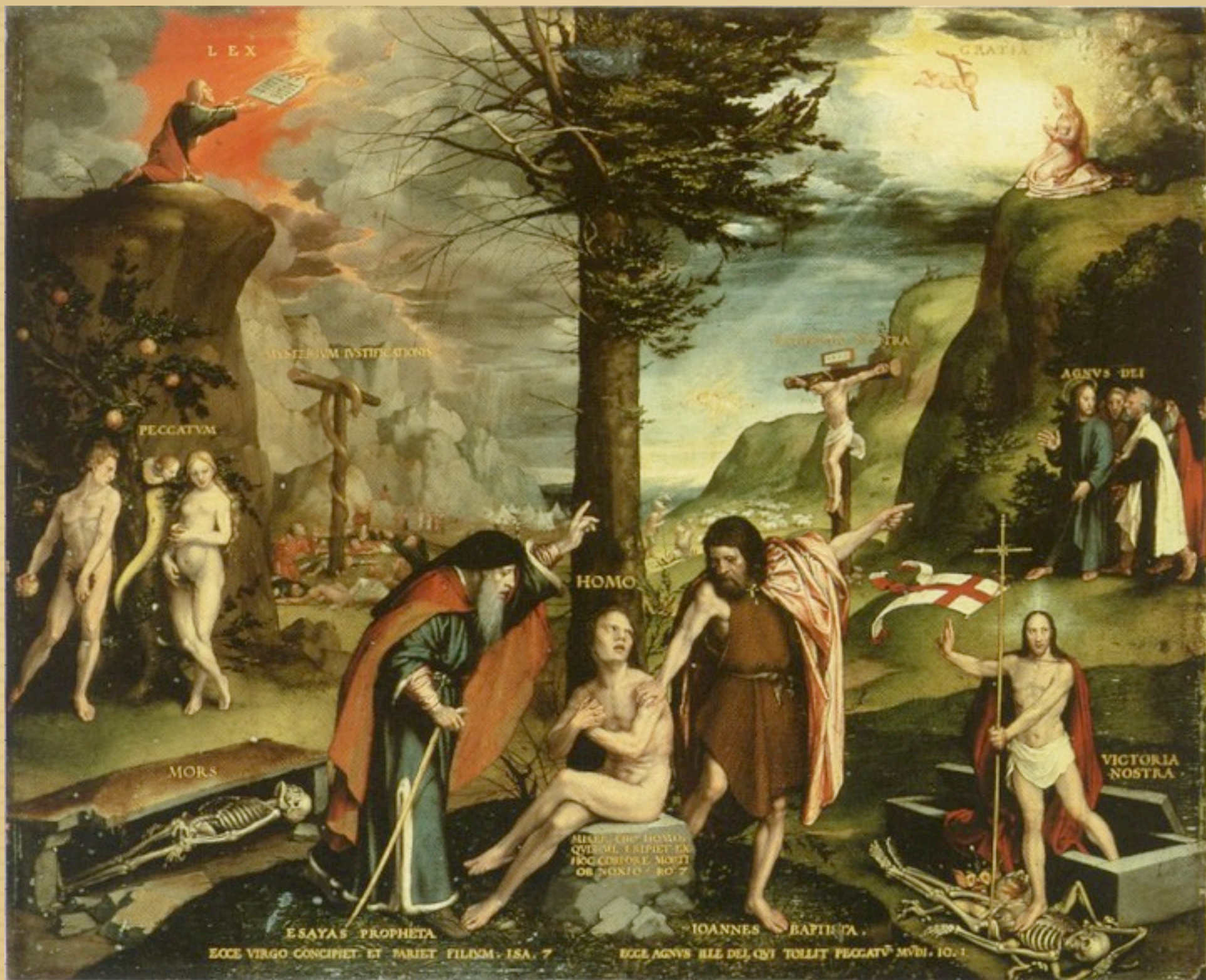
Erasmus, *The Sages*, 1515





“Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”  
 Luke 24:44





*God wishes to move the will rather than the mind. Perfect clarity would help the mind and harm the will. Humble their pride.*

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 1669



# Familiar Approaches:

- ~ Humanize the story to moralize the characters.
- ~ Analyze the story to principalize the result.
- ~ Allegorize the story to abstract its meaning.





# Genesis 22: A Case Study





After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” <sup>2</sup> He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, 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 shall tell you.”



“By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, <sup>18</sup> and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”



# As Story; As Literature

- ~ Question: “Did God inspire the forms of biblical literature or merely the content?”  
-Dr. Leland Ryken,  
Professor of English,  
Wheaton College





# Epochs of Form: OT & NT History

- ~ OT: Age of Story, Legend and Myth  
(Covenant orientation)
- ~ NT: Age of Word and Spirit  
(Gospel orientation)



# Navigating the Layers of the Stories

- ~ Basic Narrative Timeline
- ~ Salvation-Historical Frame
- ~ Literary Character of OT History



# Narrative Movements: 16 Major Episodes

(from Graeme Goldsworthy's *According to Plan*)

1. Creation by Word: Genesis 1 and 2
2. The Fall: Genesis 3
3. First Revelation of Redemption: Genesis 4-11
4. Abraham Our Father: Genesis 12-50
5. Exodus: Our Pattern of Redemption - Exodus 1-15
6. New Life: Gift and Task - Exodus 16-40; Leviticus
7. The Temptation in the Wilderness: Numbers; Deuteronomy
8. Into the Good Land: Joshua; Judges; Ruth
9. God's Rule in God's Land: 1 & 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-10; 1 Chronicles; 2 Chronicles 1-9
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12. The Second Exodus: Ezra; Nehemiah; Haggai



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1. The New Creation for Us: Matthew; Mark; Luke; John
2. The New Creation in Us Initiated: Acts
3. The New Creation in Us Now: New Testament Epistles
4. The New Creation Consummated: The New Testament



# Salvation-Historical Frame:

## Six Covenant Milestones

1. Adamic Covenant (Gen. 1.26-30, 2.15-17, 3.15)
2. Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9.1-17)
3. Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15, 17, 22)
4. Israelite Covenant (Exodus 19-20, 34)
5. Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7)
6. New Covenant (Isaiah 65.17-25, Jer. 31.31-34, Ezekiel 36.22-28)



# Literary Character of OT History

- ~ English Bible: 5-12-5-5-12
  - ~ Pentateuch
  - ~ History: Joshua - 1 & 2 Chronicles
  
- ~ Hebrew Bible: TaNaK
  - ~ Theological History - TORAH (e.g. Genesis & Exodus)
  - ~ Prophetic History - Former Prophets (e.g. Judges)
  - ~ Pastoral History - Memorial Writings (e.g. 1 Chronicles)



# Jacob wrestles the Angel.





















# Moses





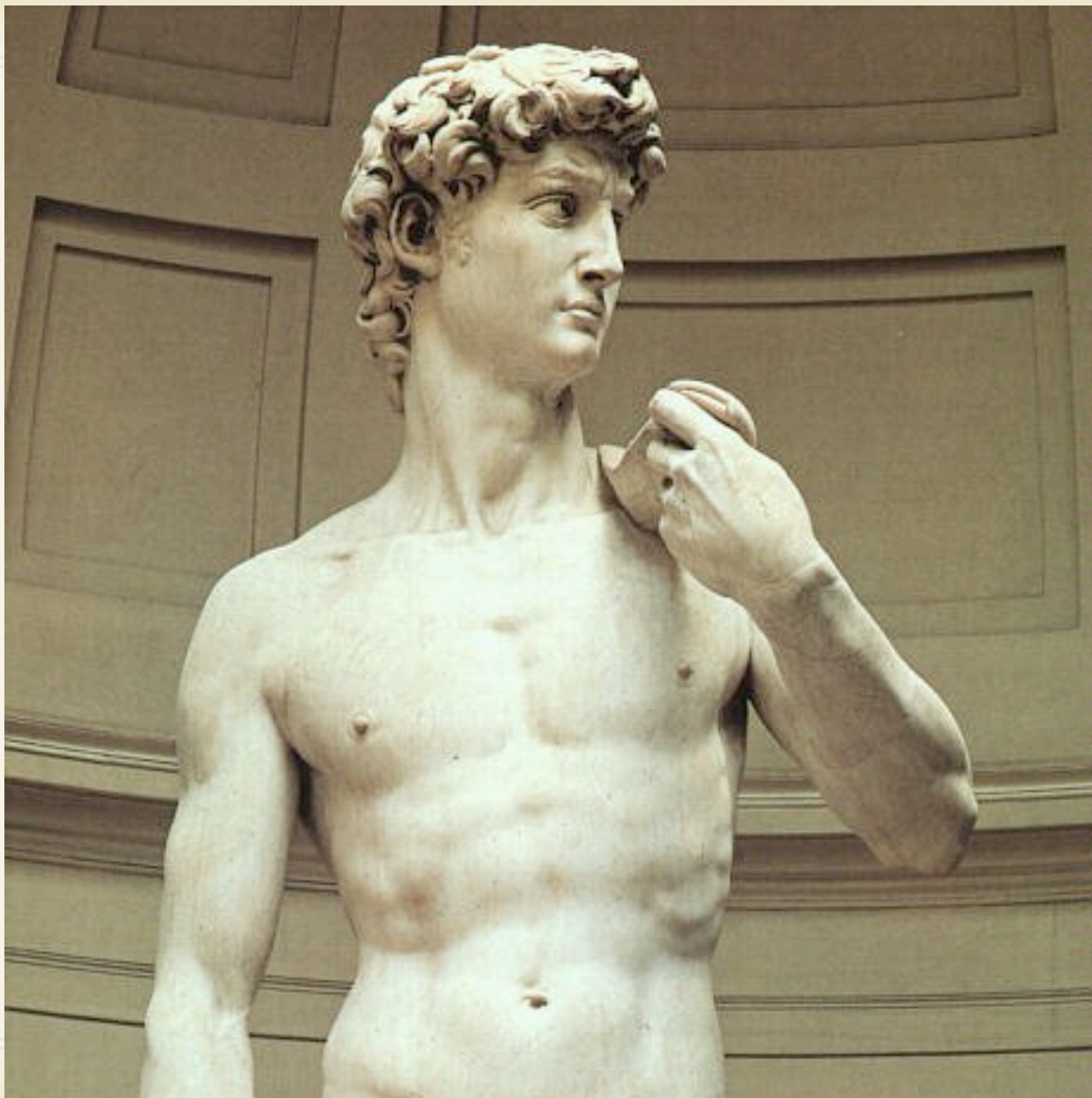
# King David













# Two Examples:

~ Jacob - Isaiah 2.1-5

~ Judah - Micah 5.1-5



# Protecting the Mystery

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the *mystery* of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.



# READING THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY AGAIN... AND AGAIN

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Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 1669

### 1. INTRODUCTION: Letting the Story Live

- a. Why read the OT History again... and again? (Hans Holbein the Younger, *An Allegory of the Old and New Testaments*, 1532-5)
  - i. There's so much more to discover there. [Erasmus quote]
  - ii. It's the key to reading the New Testament better. Luke 24:44 – “Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”
  - iii. There's transformation to pursue. [Pascal quote]
- b. Familiar Approaches to OT History: Character Studies and Moral Lessons
  - i. Humanize the story to moralize the characters.
  - ii. Analyze the story to principalize the result.
  - iii. Allegorize the story to abstract its meaning.
- c. Case Study: Genesis 22 difficult to accommodate for a moral lesson.
- d. Reading the Bible as Story; Reading the Bible as Literature:
  - i. Question: “Did God inspire the forms of biblical literature or merely the content?” – Dr. Leland Ryken, Professor of English, Wheaton College
  - ii. Epochs of Form: OT and NT History
    1. Old Testament: Age of Story, Legend and Myth (Covenant orientation)
    2. New Testament: Age of Word and Spirit (Gospel orientation)

### 2. OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE: Navigating the Layers of the Story

- a. Narrative Movements: 16 Major Episodes (from Graeme Goldsworthy's *According to Plan*)
  - i. Creation by Word Genesis 1 and 2
  - ii. The Fall Genesis 3
  - iii. First Revelation of Redemption Genesis 4–11
  - iv. Abraham Our Father Genesis 12–50
  - v. Exodus: Our Pattern of Redemption Exodus 1–15



- vi. New Life: Gift and Task Exodus 16–40; Leviticus
  - vii. The Temptation in the Wilderness: Numbers; Deuteronomy
  - viii. Into the Good Land Joshua; Judges; Ruth
  - ix. God's Rule in God's Land: 1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1–10; 1 Chronicles; 2 Chronicles 1–9
  - x. The Fading Shadow: 1 Kings 11–22; 2 Kings
  - xi. There Is a New Creation: Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Esther
  - xii. The Second Exodus Ezra; Nehemiah; Haggai
  - xiii. The New Creation for Us: Matthew; Mark; Luke; John
  - xiv. The New Creation in Us Initiated: Acts
  - xv. The New Creation in Us Now: New Testament Epistles
  - xvi. The New Creation Consummated: The New Testament
- b. Salvation-Historical Frame: Six Covenant Milestones
- i. Adamic Covenant (Gen. 1.26-30, 2.15-17, 3.15)
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  - vi. New Covenant (Isaiah 65.17-25, Jer. 31.31-34, Ezekiel 36.22-28)
- c. Literary Character of Old Testament History: Genres of History in the *TaNaK*
- i. English Bible: 5-12-5-5-12
    - 1. Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
    - 2. History: Joshua – 1 & 2 Chronicles
  - ii. Hebrew Bible:
    - 1. Arrangement of the *TaNaK*:
      - a. **Torah** (Law) – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
      - b. **Nebi'im** (Prophets) –
        - i. Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings
        - ii. Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve
      - c. **Kethubim** (Writings) –
        - i. Poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs
        - ii. Five Scrolls (Megillot): Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther
        - iii. Historical Books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles
    - 2. History in the *TaNaK*:
      - a. Theological History – TORAH (e.g. Genesis & Exodus)
      - b. Prophetic History – Former Prophets (e.g. Judges or 1 & 2 Samuel)
      - c. Pastoral History – Memorial Writings (e.g. Esther or 1 & 2 Chronicles)
3. Timeless Stories from the Old Testament: Some Examples from artistic attempts
- a. The Lives of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – Gen. 12-50
  - b. The Exodus Event – Exodus
  - c. The Failures of the Judges – Judges
  - d. A Tale of Two Kings: Saul and David – 1 Sam. 9-15; 16-31



- e. Faith in Exile – Daniel & Esther
  - f. Faith among the Ruins – Ezra & Nehemiah
4. Two Examples: Jacob and Judah
- a. Jacob – Isaiah 2.1-5

2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, 3 and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

- b. Judah – Micah 5.1-5

Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops;  
siege is laid against us;  
with a rod they strike the judge of Israel  
on the cheek.

2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to be ruler in Israel,  
whose coming forth is from of old,  
from ancient days.

3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has given birth;  
then the rest of his brothers shall return  
to the people of Israel.

4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord,  
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.  
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth.

5 And he shall be their peace.

5. CONCLUSION: Protecting the Mystery – Ephesians 1.3...7-10

1.3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the *mystery* of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.



## **Appendix 1: MAJOR EVENTS OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY**

1. The Patriarchs – 2100-1700 BC
2. Egyptian Sojourn – 1800-1450 BC (1290)
3. The Exodus – 1446 BC (1290)
4. Wilderness Wanderings – 1446-1406 BC (1290-1250)
5. Period of the Judges – 1406(1250)-1050 BC
6. The United Kingdom – 1050-930 BC
7. The Divided Kingdom – 930-722 BC
8. Fall of Northern Kingdom – 722 BC
9. Kingdom of Judah – 722-587 BC
10. Fall of Jerusalem – 587 BC
11. The Exile – 587-538 BC
12. Return to Israel – 538-535 BC
13. Temple Rebuilt – 517 BC
14. Restoration Efforts (Ezra & Nehemiah) – 458-425 BC



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16. **The New Creation Consummated:** The New Testament

#### **Creation by Word**

*Genesis 1 and 2*

In the beginning God created everything that exists. He made Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden of Eden. God spoke to them and gave them certain tasks in the world. For food he allowed them the fruit of all the trees in the garden except one. He warned them that they would die if they ate of that one tree.

#### **The Fall**

*Genesis 3*

The snake persuaded Eve to disobey God and to eat the forbidden fruit. She gave some to Adam and he ate also. Then God spoke to them in judgment, and sent them out of the garden into a world that came under the same judgment.

#### **First Revelation of Redemption**

*Genesis 4–11*

Outside Eden, Cain and Abel were born to Adam and Eve. Cain murdered Abel and Eve bore another son, Seth. Eventually the human race became so wicked that God determined to destroy every living thing with a flood. Noah and his family were saved by building a great



boat at God's command. The human race began again with Noah and his three sons with their families. Sometime after the flood a still unified human race attempted a godless act to assert its power in the building of a high tower. God thwarted these plans by scattering the people and confusing their language.

### **Abraham Our Father**

*Genesis 12–50*

Sometime in the early second millennium BC God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia to Canaan. He promised to give this land to Abraham's descendants and to bless them as his people. Abraham went, and many years later he had a son, Isaac. Isaac in turn had two sons, Esau and Jacob. The promises of God were established with Jacob and his descendants. He had twelve sons, and in time they all went to live in Egypt because of famine in Canaan.

### **Exodus: Our Pattern of Redemption**

*Exodus 1–15*

In time the descendants of Jacob living in Egypt multiplied to become a very large number of people. The Egyptians no longer regarded them with friendliness and made them slaves. God appointed Moses to be the one who would lead Israel out of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. When the moment came for Moses to demand the freedom of his people, the Pharaoh refused to let them go. Though Moses worked ten miracle-plagues which brought hardship, destruction, and death to the Egyptians. Finally, Pharaoh let Israel go, but then pursued them and trapped them at the Red Sea (or Sea of Reeds). The God opened a way in the sea for Israel to cross on dry land, but closed the water over the Egyptian army, destroying it.

### **New Life: Gift and Task**

*Exodus 16–40; Leviticus*

After their release from Egypt, Moses led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. There God gave them his law which they were commanded to keep. At one point Moses held a covenant renewal ceremony in which the covenant arrangement was sealed in blood. However, while Moses was away on the mountain, the people persuaded Aaron to fashion a golden calf. Thus they showed their inclination to forsake the covenant and to engage in idolatry. God also commanded the building of the tabernacle and gave all the rules of sacrificial worship by which Israel might approach him.

### **The Temptation in the Wilderness**

*Numbers; Deuteronomy*

After giving the law to the Israelites at Sinai, God directed them to go in and take possession of the promised land. Fearing the inhabitants of Canaan, they refused to do so, thus showing lack of confidence in the promises of God. The whole adult generation that had come out of Egypt, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, was condemned to wander and die in the



desert. Israel was forbidden to dispossess its kinsfolk, the nation of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, but was given victory over other nations that opposed it. Finally, forty years after leaving Egypt, Israel arrived in the Moabite territory on the east side of the Jordan. Here Moses prepared the people for their possession of Canaan, and commissioned Joshua as their new leader.

### **Into the Good Land**

*Joshua; Judges; Ruth*

Under Joshua's leadership the Israelites crossed the Jordan and began the task of driving out the inhabitants of Canaan. After the conquest the land was divided between the tribes, each being allotted its own region. Only the tribe of Levi was without an inheritance of land because of its special priestly relationship to God. There remained pockets of Canaanites in the land and, from time to time, these threatened Israel's hold on their new possession. From the one-man leaderships of Moses and Joshua, the nation moved into a period of relative instability during which judges exercised some measure of control over the affairs of the people.

### **God's Rule in God's Land**

*1 and 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1–10; 1 Chronicles; 2 Chronicles 1–9*

Samuel became judge and prophet in all Israel at a time when the Philistines threatened the freedom of the nation. An earlier movement for kingship was received and the demand put to a reluctant Samuel. The first king, Saul, had a promising start to his reign but eventually showed himself unsuitable as the ruler of the covenant people. While Saul still reigned, David was anointed to succeed him. Because of Saul's jealousy David became an outcast, but when Saul died in battle David returned and became king (about 1000 BC). Due to his success Israel became a powerful and stable nation. He established a central sanctuary at Jerusalem, and created a professional bureaucracy and permanent army. David's son Solomon succeeded him (about 961 BC) and the prosperity of Israel continued. The building of the temple at Jerusalem was one of Solomon's most notable achievements.

### **The Fading Shadow**

*1 Kings 11–22; 2 Kings*

Solomon allowed political considerations and personal ambitions to sour his relationship with God, and this in turn had a bad effect on the life of Israel. Solomon's son began an oppressive rule which led to the rebellion of the northern tribes and the division of the kingdom. Although there were some political and religious high points, both kingdoms went into decline. A new breed of prophets warned against the direction of national life, but matters went from bad to worse. In 722 BC the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the power of the Assyrian empire. Then, in 586 BC the southern kingdom of Judah was devastated by the Babylonians. Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed, and a large part of the population was deported to Babylon.



## **There Is a New Creation**

*Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Esther*

The prophets of Israel warned of the doom that would befall the nation. When the first exiles were taken to Babylon in 597 BC, Ezekiel was among them. Both prophets ministered to the exiles. Life for the Jews (the people of Judah) in Babylon was not all bad, and in time many prospered. The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel indicate a certain normality to the experience, while Daniel and Esther highlight some of the difficulties and suffering experienced in an alien and oppressive culture.

## **The Second Exodus**

*Ezra; Nehemiah; Haggai*

In 539 BC Babylon fell to the Medo–Persian empire. The following year, Cyrus the king allowed the Jews to return home and to set up a Jewish state within the Persian empire. Great difficulty was experienced in re–establishing the nation. There was local opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. Many of the Jews did not return but stayed on in the land of their exile. In the latter part of the fourth century BC, Alexander the Great conquered the Persian empire. The Jews entered a long and difficult period in which Greek culture and religion challenged their trust in God’s covenant promises. In 63 BC Pompey conquered Palestine and the Jews found themselves a province of the Roman empire.

## **The New Creation for Us**

*Matthew; Mark; Luke; John*

The province of Judea, the homeland of the Jews, came under Roman rule in 63 BC. During the reign of Caesar Augustus, Jesus was born at Bethlehem, probably about the year 4 BC. John, known as the Baptist, prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus. This ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing began with Jesus’ baptism and lasted about three years. Growing conflict with the Jews and their religious leaders led eventually to Jesus being sentenced to death by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. He was executed by the Romans just outside Jerusalem, but rose from death two days afterward and appealed to his followers on a number of occasions. After a period with them, Jesus was taken up to heaven.

## **The New Creation in Us Initiated**

*Acts*

After Jesus had ascended, his disciples waited in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began the task of proclaiming Jesus. As the missionary implications of the gospel became clearer to the first Christians, the local proclamation was extended to world evangelization. The apostle Paul took the gospel to Asia Minor and Greece, establishing many churches as he went. Eventually a church flourished at the heart of the empire of Rome.



## **The New Creation in Us Now**

### *New Testament Epistles*

As the gospel made inroads into pagan societies it encountered many philosophies and non-Christian ideas which challenged the apostolic message. The New Testament epistles shows that the kind of pressures to adopt pagan ideas that had existed for the people of God in Old Testament times were also a constant threat to the churches. The real danger to Christian teaching was not so much in direct attacks upon it, but rather in the subtle distortion of Christian ideas. Among the troublemakers were the Judaizers who added Jewish law-keeping to the gospel. The Gnostics also undermined the gospel with elements of Greek philosophy and religion.

## **The New Creation Consummated**

### *The New Testament*

God is Lord over history and therefore, when he so desires, he can cause the events of the future to be recorded. All section of the New Testament contain references to things which have not yet happened, the most significant being the return of Christ and the consummation of the kingdom of God. No clues to the actual chronology are given, but it is certain that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. The old creation will be undone and the new creation will take its place.