

## Three Circles and the Theme of Representation / COB / 09.15.13

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### Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** When I was growing up, I lived next to a woods, which was awesome. I loved climbing trees, and we had Maple, Oak, Birch, Elm. I loved walking in the woods, catching crayfish in the running creek, and silently stalking the neighbor children; not with any evil intent, you understand, I just liked imagining I was a native hunter. To my mind, there is nothing more beautiful than an unspoiled stretch of glorious trees reaching toward God.
- † **[Slide 2: Woods in Autumn]** What if you lived next to beautiful forest and had no idea, because you were entirely focused on individual trees, or even parts of those trees? A single tree or one aspect of that tree can be beautiful in itself, but it would be a terrible loss to miss out on the beauty offered by an entire forest, because you never looked at it as a forest, but only as a collection of trees or a source of leaves.
- I think we do this with the Bible. We focus hard on parts of the bible, sometimes even individual verses, but we forget that the Bible itself is one long glorious narrative.
  - Over the next three weeks, I want to look at a few passages – a few trees, as it were – including Psalm 2 and Psalm 110. But the beauty of Psalms 2 & 110 is that if they are trees which will allow us to reveal the whole forest, they are single Bible passages that open the door to revealing the theme and plot of the whole Bible.
- † **[Slide 3: Ps.2 timeline]** Psalm 2 theologically draws on the entire history of the Old Testament from the creation of man to the covenant God made with King David thousands of years later, and then, it projects forward a thousand years into the New Testament, because it was used by the Apostles to understand who Jesus is, and its content is about what will happen thousands of years later still, in our day and when Christ comes back. I want to prove these things to you next week, and show you why it is vitally important for you to understand them.
- **[Slide 4: Ps.110 influence]** Psalm 110 is the Old Testament passage most quoted by the New Testament authors. It is tremendously important to understand if we want to appreciate who Jesus is and what his plans are. We will study this psalm in two weeks, after we learn Psalm 2.
  - But first, before we look at these trees that reveal the forest, I want look at a theme that runs through the forest – or Bible – as a whole, because understanding how the Bible all works together will also help us to understand the psalms. Just as these single trees reveal the forest, catching a glimpse of the forest will help us to clearly see our trees over the next two weeks.
  - **[Slide 5: purpose summary]** Ok, I am not going to talk anymore in metaphor. But even though I will be speaking more clearly going forward, I want you to know that it's ok if you don't understand everything we discuss today. We are going to move quickly through a lot of material, and I will not be able to substantiate all of it today. And every week, my goal is not that you will understand everything that I say, but that each of you gets something from God.
  - Let me tell you right now three things I hope you will see; you can look for them as we go through the material. First, God has a purpose for mankind to reflect God's character and represent God here on Earth. Second, what God has revealed of his plan to fulfill this purpose has changed at times, but the purpose has remained the same. Third, Christ uniquely fulfills God's purpose, but we also play a part.
- † Let's Pray and then we will get right to it...

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## Adam as image

† **[Slide 6: Genesis 1.26-28]** We begin where it all began, in Genesis 1.

- *Genesis 1.26-28 NET: Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth.”* <sup>27</sup> *God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.* <sup>28</sup> *God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.”*

† When God created people, he did so in his own image. Have you ever pondered what that means?

- **[Slide 7: creation of mankind]** God gave us qualities to make us like God in several ways, not the least in that God gave us rational, creative, and moral capacity, self-awareness and self-determination, and even divine awareness. God created people to a much higher level than anything else on Earth.
- God did this so he could invest in us some of his authority and responsibility on Earth, to rule over the rest of creation. God desired us to reflect his character, to literally *be* his image on Earth, so that we could adequately represent him here as his surrogate leaders.
- There is a chain of command implicit in this, which we can illustrate with the three circles diagram. God righteously ruled over man. Man was to reflect God’s character and represent God while righteously ruling in God’s name as head of the household over the human family. Man with the human family were to reflect God’s character and represent God while righteously ruling in God’s name over the rest of the world.
- In God’s system, there would be promise and command: People were to trust the promises of God and obey God’s commands which would tell them how to reflect God’s character on Earth.

† When God commanded people to be fruitful and multiply, his intention was not that we merely create more people, but that we multiply the image of God! Like every living thing, man and woman will reproduce after our own kind, so generations will be like their parents. But mankind was made in God’s image, so we should be like our Father, God, and should raise our children to be the same.

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## Adam as flawed image

† **[Slide 8: Genesis 3 Sin Effects]** This was a good set up for people, with God providing all they needed and deluxe accommodations in the Garden of Eden. Sadly for you and me, Adam and Eve messed this up.

- In Genesis 3, there is an account of how the devil – an evil angel in the guise of a snake – influenced Eve to do something which God had forbidden. In doing something forbidden by God, Eve sinned because she did not reflect God’s character, but this also was a sin because Eve was supposed to represent God and rule over the snake, not allow a creature to guide her.
- Having made this mistake, Eve influenced her husband, Adam, to do the same. Again, the specific act was forbidden and thus a sin because Adam failed to reflect the character of God, but it also was a sin because Adam was supposed to be the head of the family – representing God by looking out for his family’s wellbeing – not allowing his wife to lead him into sin.
- Instead of God ruling over man, man ruling as head of the family, and the human family ruling in God’s name over the rest of the Earth, we had a snake telling the family what to do and the family telling the man what to do, and none of it was what God wanted them to do. A big mess.

† And it gets worse! As a result of this act of defiance against God’s created order, among other bad things, the devil now gained control of the Earth from man; the Earth now suffered under a curse from God; people now were separated from God; and people now were corrupted in nature. All of that is still in effect in the world today! And that is the great single tension driving the entire plot of our Bible narrative.

† **[Slide 9: Genesis 3.15 promise]** When this crisis happened, the protagonist of our narrative, God, made a promise to deal with it, even as he was telling Adam and Eve that they would suffer and die for it.

- In Genesis 3.14, God addressed the deceptive serpent. In v.15, God apparently begins speaking through the serpent to the devil, also called Satan, who was behind the serpent’s actions [HCSB]: “I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”
- It might not seem clear from this one verse, but the prophets of Israel elaborated on this promise that there would come a descendent – or “seed” – of the woman, who would someday conquer the devil and deliver people and the Earth from the effects of sin. God promised a Deliverer!
- As the apostle John wrote in 1 John 3.8 [NIV], “...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.”
- In effect, this was a promise that someday, one man would come who would truly reflect the image of God and represent God by righteously ruling the Earth in God’s name, thus fulfilling God’s original purpose for mankind.
- The next few chapters of Genesis tell how, despite all the advantages God gave them, people continually failed to reflect God’s character, to represent God well to the rest of creation, or to obey the created order of God. They needed their deliverer.

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## Abraham

† **[Slide 10: Genesis 12.1-3]** In Genesis 12 God adapted his plan, and he continued to develop this new conception of his plan through the rest of Genesis.

- Genesis 12.1-3 NIV: “The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’”
- **[Slide 11: Covenant with Abraham]** Essentially, God chose one family out of all people to represent him, the family of Abram, later called Abraham. God promised he would bless and protect the family of Abraham as it grew; and, in fact, God was going to grow this family into a great nation, which would be called Israel; and through Israel, God would bless all the other families or nations of the Earth.
- Later God would reveal that this last promise – to bless all the nations through Abraham and his family – implied that a descendent of Abraham would be the promised Deliverer, the seed of the woman, who would defeat the devil and reverse the effects of sin.

† **[Slide 12: Covenant with Abraham II]** You should see continuity in the narrative, continuity in God’s plan, because this covenant God made with Abraham is practically identical in scope to the covenant God made with Adam: Israel was to reflect God’s character; Israel was to represent God and rule over the other nations in God’s name.

- In Genesis 18.19 [NIV], God revealed, “For I have chosen him [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just...” God’s intention was that Abraham’s family would reflect God’s character.
  - God said to Abraham in Genesis 22.17-18 [NIV], “... Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” God’s intention was that Abraham’s family would represent God and righteously rule over the other nations.
  - Just like with Adam, there was a chain of command implicit in this, as we again indicate with three circles: God righteously ruled over the King [or head of the family]. The King was to reflect God’s character and represent God while righteously ruling in God’s name over Israel. The King with Israel was to reflect God’s character and represent God while at least influencing, but ultimately righteously ruling in God’s name over the rest of the world.
  - At first, there was no king in name, but Abraham and the other patriarchs ruled like kings over their family, and there would always be someone who was supposed to be in charge, even if he was not called a king.
- † **[Slide 13: Israel’s failure]** Sad to say, despite all the advantages God gave Abraham and his family, which came to be known as Israel, they often failed to reflect God’s character, to represent God well to the rest of the nations, or to obey God’s chain of command in any sense. In fact, instead of depending on God and being a blessing to the other nations, they often turned to the other nations for help. Their sin showed they still needed the Deliverer.
- † **[Slide 14: Moses through Judges]** After Abraham’s family had struggled for many years, God began equipping the nation further. First, he placed Moses in charge, miraculously delivered Israel from its bondage in Egypt, and provided a detailed system of law to help them understand God’s character and what it meant to reflect that character and represent God to the rest of the world. Despite all this, the people still frequently rebelled.
- When Moses died, God appointed Joshua to lead the people back into the land God had given Abraham, and miraculously defeat their enemies. Even before Joshua died, there was already rebellion again.
  - After Joshua’s death, there was a time during which several “judges” ruled and then the first king, named Saul, but throughout this time, the people repeatedly failed to reflect God’s character, failed to represent God to the other nations, and failed to obey God... the same old story. Often, instead of listening to God and representing God to the nations, Israel let the pagan nations influence them. Their sin showed they still needed the Deliverer.

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## David

- † **[Slide 15: 2 Samuel 7]** When Saul as king failed miserably to reflect God’s character or to represent God by righteously ruling over the nation of Israel, God abandoned him and anointed David to be the next King. David made mistakes, but he had a heart for God, he was God’s king.
- God made another covenant with David. 2 Samuel 7:12-16 [NASB] tells us what God told the prophet Nathan to say to King David: “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My loving-kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your

house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”

- **[Slide 16: David as king]** We will look at this covenant more next week, but – again – we see amazing continuity in God’s plan. This covenant, built on the one with Abraham, had all the important elements you would expect in a covenant from God. The king would reflect God’s character, representing God and ruling Israel in God’s name; and there would be the same chain of command, with God over the king, the king representing God as he ruled over Israel, and Israel with their King representing God to the Gentile nations.
- † There also was more detail about the promised Deliverer, the seed of the woman, who would be a descendent of David and Solomon and be a king of Israel who would rule forever. You might not see this the connection in this passage, but that’s how the prophets who came later interpreted it.
- For example, Micah 5.2 [NIV] says, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Bethlehem was the city of David’s people.
  - Isaiah 9.6-7 [NIV] says, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”
- † This brings us to the time period in which David wrote Psalms 2 & 110. Hopefully, you can see that all of the Old Testament up to the time of David in 2 Samuel is integrated, telling one narrative of God’s unfolding plan to have people represent him.
- † That’s a whirlwind tour through much of the history in the Old Testament! I hope I have not confused you. If I have, or if you have questions or doubts about what I am saying, be encouraged that this will all come together over the next two weeks. Psalms 2 & 110 will prove much of what I am saying here, but I wanted to spend this week looking at these ideas, so that when we got to the psalms, they would be easier for you to understand.
- We will look at these amazing psalms over the next two weeks. But first, I want to show you that this theme of representation continues even beyond David, into the New Testament.

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### **Jesus will fulfill the models of God’s plan.**

- † **[Slide 17: model 1]** The first thing to make clear is that Jesus is the true image of God the Father, because he is the divine Son.
- Colossians 1.15 [NIV] says, “The Son is the image of the invisible God...”
- † The first model of God’s plan is fulfilled in part now by Christ as our stand in to be God the Father’s image and representative. This model will be completely restored after the resurrection, when all of God’s people are redeemed in body and fully transformed to be like Christ in character, fully following Christ’s leadership.
- † **[Slide 18: model 2]** It was from the representative people of Israel that Jesus the Messiah [or Christ] came, so as to be that perfect man representing God the Father [Matthew 1.1-17], to be the deliverer of mankind from the effects of sin [John 3.16], and, eventually to bring about the new creation [Revelation 21.1].

- † God promised King David that a descendent of his would rule forever [2 Samuel 7.12-16], and this was also later predicted by the prophets. That this king would be Jesus was announced by the angel Gabriel when he explained to Mary that she would be giving birth.
  - Luke 1.32-33 [NIV]: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”
  - When Jesus was doing his ministry, he offered to fulfill this Davidic Kingdom to Israel and many people recognized who he was [John 12.13], but ultimately the nation of Israel rejected him [John 1.11; Acts 4.27].
  
- † Though anointed as king, Christ is not reigning on earth yet. Because of rejection, the messianic kingdom has been postponed until Christ returns. Christ is still the anointed king, but he is not reigning here on earth, on David's throne.
  - Christ called Satan the ruler of this world for now [John 12.31; 14.30; 16.11]. When Christ returns, he will usher in his kingdom, including sentencing Satan and his followers to punishment [Matthew 25.31; Revelation 19.15; 20; Psalm 2; 110].
  - When Christ returns, he will return as the Davidic king of Israel, which will represent God to the rest of the nations and righteously rule in God's name, restoring this model of God's plan.
  - Matthew 25.31 NET: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.”
  
- † **[Slide 19: model 3: church]** In the New Covenant time period before Christ returns, Christ is purifying for himself a people in the church, so there will be a people to reflect God's character and represent God [Colossians 3.9-10; Romans 8.29].
  - Titus 2.14 NET: “He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good.”
  - 1 Peter 2.9 [NET] says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”
  
- † Christ also is head of the church, and God the Father has placed everything and everyone under his authority [Ephesians 1.22; Colossians 1.18; Matthew 28.18; John 3.35].
  - Ephesians 1.22-23 NIV: “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”
  - Because we know Christ has been anointed by God the Father as the permanent king over Israel, through which he will rule over all people, and because we recognize Christ as head of the church, we in the church obey Christ as our king, so that under his direction we do reflect God's character and represent God to the rest of the nations.
  - This is an extension of God's purpose to have a representative people [three circles]: Christ reflects God the Father's character and represents God the Father as he righteously rules over the church, and the church with Christ is to reflect God's character and represent God to the rest of the world.
  - Every believer in Christ today bears the responsibility of being made in God's image, the responsibility of reflecting God's character and representing God to the rest of the world. In the

church age, the multi-ethnic church temporarily has replaced national Israel as the representative people of God.

- † Christ the Son of God is the key to fulfilling all three of God's plans for achieving his purpose. Christ alone is the completely pure man who truly is the complete image of God the Father; Christ alone is God's anointed eternal King of Israel; Christ alone is the head of the church; so Christ alone is the unique top representative of God the Father in all three models. But, as the people of the church, we still have a part to play as we follow Christ in trying to fulfill our purpose of reflecting God's character and representing God to the rest of the world.

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### **Jesus brings salvation as part of fulfillment of God's plan and promises.**

- † **[Slide 20: salvation]** Let's turn our thoughts for a few minutes to the issue of salvation, another theme that runs all through the Bible narrative. Because we are so marred by sin, God had to promise a deliverer to set things right and redeem his people.
- † Salvation has always been a gift from God based on the work Christ would do on the cross. All that God has asked of us is to believe in his promise of grace. Over time, God progressively has revealed details of this promise, so the content of our faith has grown more explicit.
- † We know now that Jesus is the promised Deliverer. Jesus is the prophesied descendent of Eve who will smash Satan, the son of David who will reign, the long awaited Messiah or Christ.
  - When Jesus walked the Earth, those who had faith in God's Old Testament revelation could see clearly the evidences Jesus gave for his identity and could believe his teachings about what he offered in the way of deliverance. Thus, faith in Jesus himself was the trust needed for salvation.
  - In John 6.40 [NET], Jesus said, "For this is the will of my Father— for everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him to have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."
- † This salvation by grace through faith is God's plan to complete his purpose of having a people to represent him and reflect his character.
  - When we come to faith in Christ, we are justified – declared righteous in God's sight, because God accounts to us the righteousness of Christ – and then the Holy Spirit begins the process of progressive sanctification – purifying our character throughout our lifetime to become more like Christ, more like the image of God we were created and saved to be – and this is completed upon death with our glorification. Our salvation and redemption becomes complete with the resurrection and redemption of our bodies when Christ returns.
  - Thus God is working to make us into his people now, to fulfill the church model, and ultimately to make us into a people with the character of Christ for when Christ returns to establish his kingdom, to fulfill the earlier models.

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### **Conclusions**

- † **[Slide 21: take away]** Here is what I hope you will take away from today:
  1. God's purpose from the beginning has been to create for himself a people who would reflect his character and represent him well on Earth.
  2. Right now, God's people are the believers in Christ, whom God has gathered into the church. Our goal each day should be to reflect God's character and represent him well.

3. When Christ returns, he will complete our transformation; he will rule over Israel and through Israel over the nations, and all his people from throughout history will finally be able to reflect God's image and represent God well. This will fulfill God's purpose for us, at last.

† **[Slide 22: title]** Let's pray...