

Biblical Worldview Scope for *Bible 4: The Pathway of Promise*

This document is our answer to the question, “What must a student understand and value in order to comprehend a fourth-grade survey of the Old Testament from a biblical worldview?” What follows is a list of the themes that we believe are essential for fourth-grade students to understand and internalize. We anticipate that students will be required to *recall* and *explain* these themes early in the course. However, as these themes recur, require students to *evaluate* ideas within these themes, *formulate* a Christian understanding of them, and *apply* what they have learned about these themes to real-life situations. We hope to achieve high levels of internalization whenever students are required to apply their learning.

All our themes are developed according to a Creation, Fall, Redemption structure, which forms the backbone of the “story” part of our worldview definition. Through Creation, Fall, Redemption is not an explicit theme in this course, the entire course is telling the first part of the Creation, Fall, Redemption story and therefore should be emphasized throughout the course.

Presence of God

Creation

The Bible speaks of God’s presence in two main ways. First God is omnipresent: All of God is always everywhere. Second, God is specially present with his people. God created mankind in fellowship with Himself. Man was made in God’s image. God spoke with man in the garden (Gen. 2:16–28) and may have walked with Adam and Eve daily (Gen. 3:8). The garden is associated with God and His presence; it is the “garden of God” (Ezek. 31:8, 9).

Fall

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were thrust out from the presence of God. They no longer had the special fellowship with God that they had before the Fall. Their sin had separated them from God. Throughout the Bible’s storyline, this theme of sin separating sinners from the presence of God is repeated. After God judged Cain for his murder of Abel, “Cain went out from the presence of the Lord” (Gen. 4:16). Later, Israel and Judah’s sins caused God to exile them from the Promised Land and remove Himself from the temple, the symbol of God’s presence. The exile from Eden and the Promised Land point forward to the ultimate exile from the new creation, the fulfillment of God’s temple and land promises. Sinners in hell will be deprived of God’s special presence for eternity.

Redemption

Enjoying the presence of God is the chief part of redemption. Without the presence of God, even rule over a restored creation or enjoyment of His other promises would not be redemption. From the beginning, God revealed that His presence could not be restored without dealing with the problem of sin through sacrifice. In the Old Testament, the tabernacle and temple were the central symbols of God’s presence, and they taught that nobody could approach God without a sacrifice or without a priest. God also sent prophets to proclaim His Word to the people. These sacrifices, priests, and prophets all look forward to Christ, who is *the* sacrifice, our great High Priest, and the climactic Prophet. Through Him, believers will enjoy the presence of God for all eternity (Rev. 21:3).

Kingdom

Creation

God created all things, and He is the King of His creation. God also created man, male and female, and blessed them with the mandate to rule over all the earth in submission to God's greater rule. He placed the first humans in the Garden of Eden, and they were to rule over the rest of God's perfect world so it flourished like that garden. To achieve this goal, God blessed humans with the commission to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.

Fall

Instead of ruling over creation in submission to God, Adam and Eve rebelled against their King and tried to rule over creation as if they were God. Ever since Adam and Eve's sin, humans have tried to rule over the world apart from God. They do whatever is right in their own eyes. Human rebellion has brought the world under God's curse. The more humans rebel, the more the effects of sin are felt. Even God's chosen people and chosen line of kings failed to submit to the Lord, showing the need for the Redeemer.

Redemption

Immediately after man sinned, God promised that a Seed of the woman would exercise dominion over the serpent and decisively defeat him. Much of the rest of the Old Testament traces out God's provision for that Seed to be born. He was to be of the line of Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Israel, Judah, and David. His triumph over sin and Satan were prophesied. In the meantime, God built up the kingdom of Israel and the Davidic house to move His plan of redemption forward. In contrast to sinners who have seized power by trampling down the weak, God raises up the humble and brings down the proud. It will be the humblest Man, the divine Son who became the perfect Man, who will rule over all creation under God's greater rule.

Covenants

Creation

A covenant "is an enduring agreement which establishes [or formalizes] a defined relationship between two parties involving a solemn, binding obligation to specified stipulations on the part of at least one of the parties toward the other, which is taken by oath under threat of divine curse, and [often] ratified by a visual ritual."¹ When God created man, He created him to be part of a covenant relationship. The blessing of this covenant is that mankind would fill and rule over God's world and would obtain eternal life. To obtain this blessing, mankind had to obey God's law, especially the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam served as the head of the Adamic Covenant.

Fall

As the head of the Adamic Covenant, when Adam sinned, he sinned as the representative of all mankind. All humans are born sinners, facing eternal death and in need of salvation. Indeed, as man's sin increased and filled the earth, God judged the entire earth with the Flood. Human sin would leave humans liable to this kind of world-destroying judgment repeatedly were it not for the Noahic Covenant, in which God promised to delay world-destroying judgment until the end.

The Mosaic Covenant, made with the nation of Israel, also revealed the depth of mankind's sin problem. This covenant's blessings were dependent upon obedience to the covenant laws. Conversely, it promised covenant curses for anyone who violated the laws of the covenant. Israel's failure to keep the laws of the Mosaic Covenant showed that even a people chosen by God and gifted with His laws, kings, priests, and prophets could not achieve God's standard. They highlighted the need of all mankind for a Redeemer.

¹ Daniel C. Lane as cited in Greg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 64, first brackets added by Allison, second by myself.

Redemption

God's plan for a Redeemer unfolded in a series of covenants. The Noahic Covenant promised that the earth would be a stable place for God to work out the plan of redemption. He will not send another worldwide judgment, despite mankind regularly deserving judgment. Man was again blessed with a mandate to rule and fill the world. In a fallen world, he is given the responsibility of executing capital punishment on those who kill other humans. But fulfillment of the covenant promises did not depend on human obedience to the Noahic Covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant promised that that God would bless Abraham and all nations through his seed. Abraham's physical seed was promised a land. Kings would come from him who would rule in submission to God. Though God expected obedience from those in the Abrahamic Covenant, God had unconditionally committed Himself to fulfilling the promises of this covenant. Though Israel broke the Mosaic Covenant and came under its curses, God's good law revealed His will for His people and pointed forward to the sacrificial work of Christ.

The Davidic Covenant further specified that God's coming King would be from the Davidic dynasty. Though many of the Davidic kings were unfaithful, God's promise to raise up a faithful Davidic king would not fail. Because Israel broke the Mosaic Covenant, the New Covenant was needed and promised. In this covenant, God promised a new heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who accept it.