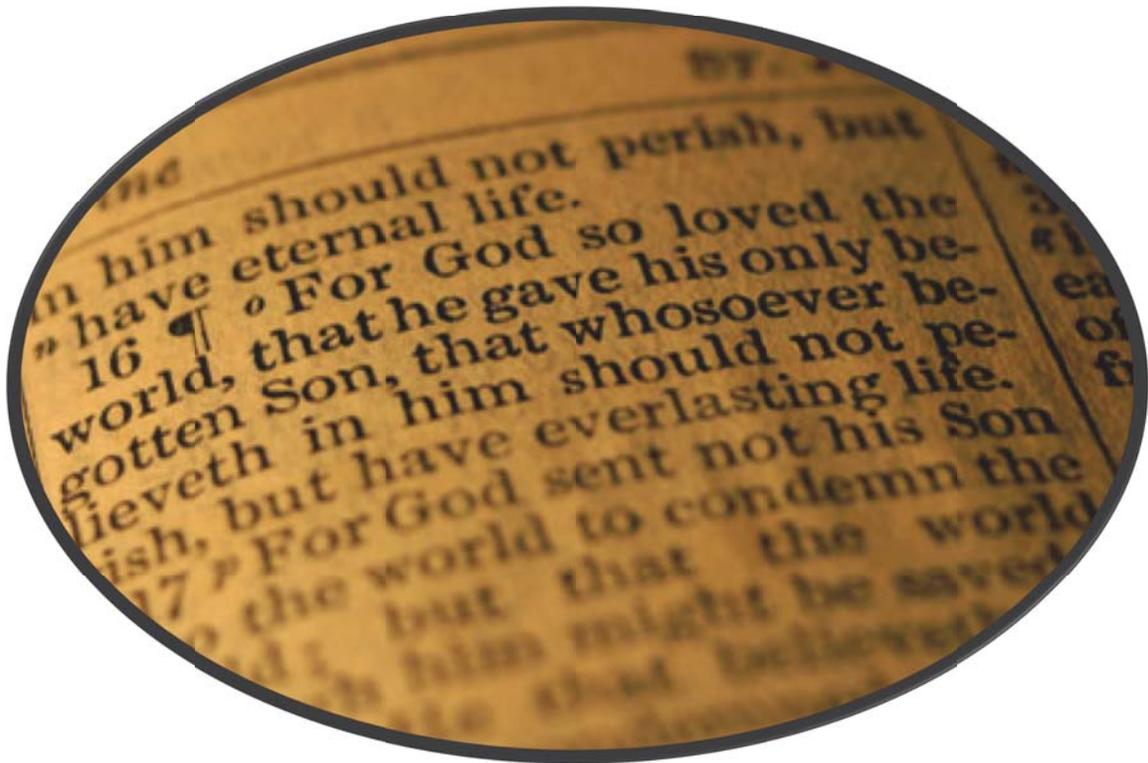


THE HEART OF GOD

THE MESSENGER OF THE
COVENANT



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Heart of God: The Messenger of the Covenant
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Introduction to *The Messenger of the Covenant*

The four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – tell the story of the coming of the New Covenant and the Kingdom of God, brought to earth and established in history by the Messenger of the covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the lessons that follow we will glimpse, by way of review, how the Old Testament anticipated the coming of Christ, and then how the gospels, and other books of the New Testament, showed Jesus to be the fulfillment of all the promises of God.

Both God and Man, Jesus of Nazareth was fully qualified to fulfill the promises of God's covenant, as well as all the obligations incumbent upon His people. In His Person, and by His work, Jesus brings together all the unifying threads of Scripture and opens the way into the covenant and presence of God for all who believe in Him.

The Heart of God studies provide a road map through the Scriptures, unfolding key unifying threads and following the development of those matters closest to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Genesis to Revelation. Through all our study we'll see how the Scriptures lead us to Jesus, and how He, in turn, brings into the presence of our heavenly Father and His Kingdom. There, as we encounter God and His glory, the Spirit can transform us increasingly in to the very image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

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1 Old Testament Review (1)

Read and meditate on Genesis 12.1-3, Genesis 15.1-21, and Deuteronomy 7.6-9.

The New Testament begins with the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messenger of the covenant and God's Messiah. In Him all the unifying threads of Scripture find their focal point and perfection. The whole of the Old Testament points forward to Christ, while the whole of the New Testament looks back to His work and forward to His return. To appreciate this more fully, we need to do a brief review of themes from the Old Testament.

For reflection

1. Summarize the promises of God. Peter describes these promises as “exceedingly great and precious.” Do you find them to be so? Explain. Why should we expect that all the promises of God should find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1.20)?
2. In Genesis 15, how did God obligate Himself to fulfill His covenant with Abram? How can you see that Jesus fulfills both God's end of this arrangement and the obligations of His people?
3. Meditate on John 1.1-18. The Apostle John says that the Word of God “tabernacled” in our midst (v. 14), using the same Greek word that is the root of the Old Testament (Septuagint) word for *tabernacle*. In what ways did the tabernacle of the Old Testament point forward to Jesus? How does Jesus fulfill the purpose and promise of the tabernacle?
4. Meditate on John 2.19-21. In what ways did the Old Testament temple point forward to Jesus? Why was Jesus justified in applying the image of the temple to His own body?
5. Meditate on Deuteronomy 7.6-9 in the light of John 3.16. How did Jesus embody what Moses explained in Deuteronomy 7.6-9?

Summary

When we're reading the Old Testament we must first be careful to understand the text in its original setting, and how it was intended for its original readers or hearers. But if this is all we do with the Old Testament, we will end up moralizing the texts and creating a religion of works. We must let the Old Testament point us forward to Christ, so that we see in Him the fulfillment of everything the Old Testament teaches. Suggest some guidelines to help you in seeing Jesus as you are reading or studying the Old Testament.

Closing Prayer

Oh, give thanks to the LORD!
Call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples!
Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
Talk of all His wondrous works!
Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!
Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!
Remember His marvelous works which He has done,
His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,
O seed of Abraham His servant,

The Heart of God: The Messenger of the Covenant

You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!
He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
He remembers His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,
The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,"
When they were few in number,
Indeed very few, and strangers in it.

Psalm 105.1-12

2 Old Testament Review (2)

Read and meditate on Ezekiel 16, Jeremiah 31.31-34, and Malachi 4.1-6.

The weakness of the Old Testament was not in God's ability to keep His Word and fulfill His promises. God was able to walk the covenant path perfectly (Gen. 15). The problem was in His people. They *could* not keep His Law, and thus could not realize His promises, so they were forever dashing themselves on the rocks of God's unchanging Word and setting themselves up for His wrath. But God was not content to leave them this way.

For reflection

1. Ezekiel 16 provides a concise overview of Old Testament history. As you read through this again, note the interaction between God's glory, God's people, and God's work of redemption. How would this chapter have impacted those faithful Israelites who were still hoping in the promises of God? How does this chapter – and all the history of Old Testament Israel – point forward to Christ?
2. Meditate on Deuteronomy 5.29, Deuteronomy 30.1-10, and Jeremiah 31.31-34. What was Israel's "heart problem," and how did God promise to fix it? Do you suppose Jeremiah's message would have left faithful Israelites asking, "Yes, but *how?*" Explain.
3. Ezekiel 36.26 and 27 gives more insight into how God intends to solve Israel's heart problem. Compare this to Joel 2.28-32. What will God do "in the last days" (Joel 2.28, "afterward," NKJV; cf. Acts 16, 17)?
4. Meditate on Isaiah 52 and 53. How many different ways does this passage point forward to the work of Jesus Christ? With what will the servant "sprinkle many nations" (Is. 52.15)?
5. The Old Testament closes on a note of great hope (Mal. 4.1-6). After that, God would be silent for 400 years. What would faithful Israelites have been looking forward to, as they set their hope on God's Word to Malachi? How can you see this passage pointing forward to Jesus?

Summary

The Old Testament was never intended as God's *final* Word to His people. He continually pointed forward to a coming day in which He would do more for His people so that they might realize the fullness of His covenant. How has our brief survey of this first part of the Scriptures helped you in your reading of the Old Testament?

Closing Prayer

Praise the LORD!

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!

For His mercy endures forever.

Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?

Who can declare all His praise?

Blessed are those who keep justice,

And he who does righteousness at all times!

Remember me, O LORD, with the favor You have toward Your people.

Oh, visit me with Your salvation,

That I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones,

That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation,

That I may glory with Your inheritance...

The Heart of God: The Messenger of the Covenant

Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the Gentiles,
To give thanks to Your holy name,
To triumph in Your praise.
Blessed be the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 106.1-5, 47, 48

3 The Mission of Christ

Read and meditate on Isaiah 42 and 43, John 1.1-18, Luke 1.67-75, and 1 John 3.

In Jesus Christ God fulfilled His promises to His people, glorified Himself, and unleashed the power of love on earth. He is the promised Messenger to bring the Good News of the New Covenant to the world.

For reflection

1. Summarize the role of the Servant of God as you see this revealed in Isaiah 42 and 43. What does He come to do? How does He do this work? What will be the result of His coming?
2. The Apostle Paul wrote that God sent His Son to earth in the fullness of the time – that is, at *just the right time* (Gal. 4.4). From what you know about the world of Jesus’ day – the situation in the Roman world, the plight of the Jews, and so forth – what made these days the *fullness of the time*? That is, how was the world “just right” for the coming of God’s Messenger?
3. According to 1 John 3.8, 9, why did God’s Messenger come into the world? From the rest of 1 John 3, what was to be the result of that great work?
4. From Luke 1.67-75, how can you see that the New Covenant, brought to earth by God’s Messenger, is actually the fulfilling of the Old Testament covenant, which began formally with Abraham? What does this suggest about the status of the promises God made to Abraham (cf. Rom. 4.13-16)?
5. In what ways are we able to see the glory of God in His incarnate Word (Jn. 1.1-18)? How can you see that in Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant, God pulls together all the unifying threads of divine revelation – His people, His glory, and His redemptive work?

Summary

The coming of Jesus meant the realization of all God had promised in the Old Testament. It meant the end of the reign of sin and the beginning of the Kingdom of love. It meant the coming of light to drive back the darkness of unbelief, and the inauguration of the rule of righteousness, peace, and joy throughout the earth. Does it seem to you that, in our day, we need to be renewed in the message of the Messenger of the Covenant? Explain.

Closing Prayer

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.
Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust,
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.
Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works

Which You have done;
And Your thoughts toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in order;
If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered.
Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
My ears You have opened.
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
Then I said, "Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book it is written of me.
I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law is within my heart."
I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness
In the great assembly;
Indeed, I do not restrain my lips,
O LORD, You Yourself know.

Psalm 40.1-9

4 The Person of Christ

Read and meditate on John 1.1-18 and Philippians 2.1-11.

As the Messenger of God's covenant, Jesus of Nazareth is uniquely qualified to bring God's promises to fulfillment. Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus unites heaven and earth in His own Person, thus fulfilling in broad outlines the covenant purposes of God.

For reflection

1. Meditate on Matthew 1.1-23 and Luke 1.26-55. The New Testament is emphatic that Jesus of Nazareth is *both* God and Man, but it does not explain *how* this can be so. But do we really need to know *how*? Can we accept that there are some things about the union of God and Man in Christ that *only God Himself* can fully understand? Explain.
2. Meditate on John 1.45-51 and Genesis 28.12-17. Because Jesus is both God and Man He is able to bridge the gap separating the temporal and eternal, earthly and heavenly, material and spiritual worlds. What differences can you cite between Isaac's dream and Jesus' appropriating that dream unto Himself? How does this incident guide us in reading the Old Testament (cf. Jn. 5.39)?
3. Meditate on Luke 4.16-21 and Isaiah 61.1-11. In Isaiah 61.1, the word *anoint* is from the Hebrew word for *Messiah*. By applying this Old Testament passage to Himself, what was Jesus saying *about* Himself and His mission?
4. Meditate on John 8.53-59 and John 18.3-6. Jesus claims the name *I AM* for Himself. What is the significance of this? Did the people who heard Him understand what He was saying about Himself?
5. Meditate on John 18.33-37. How did Jesus position Himself with respect to the promised coming of the Kingdom of God (cf. Gen. 49.8-11; Dan. 2.44, 45; Dan. 7.13, 14; Is. 9.6, 7)?

Summary

It is impossible to read the New Testament and conclude anything other than that Jesus' disciples, and His contemporaries understood Him to be making some extraordinary claims. Those claims point to His unique role as Son of God and Son of Man, to bring God and His people together – for glory of the One and the eternal blessedness of the other. Why did Jesus *have* to be God and Man in order for this to be the case?

Closing Prayer

Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”
He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”

“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.’”
Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2

5 The Work of Christ

Read and meditate on Psalms 22, 69, and 110.

The psalms outline the work which the Messenger of the covenant would do as Messiah and King of Israel. We shall see that the New Testament is careful to anchor its own account of the work of Jesus Christ in just such passages.

For reflection

1. In John 17.1-4, Jesus declared that He had come to earth to do a particular work, and that He had (or was about to) bring that work to completion. What was the work Jesus came to do, and how does this work relate to God's covenant?
2. The work of Jesus was intimately involved with the coming of God's Kingdom. Meditate on Matthew 4.17, Luke 4.43, and Matthew 6.33. How would you describe the place and priority of the Kingdom of God in the work Jesus came to do?
3. Review 1 John 3.8 in the light of Matthew 12.22-29. Look also at Colossians 2.13-15. What did this aspect of the work of Jesus involve?
4. Meditate on John 3.5-21. Note Jesus' comparison of Himself to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21.4-9). What did Jesus have to do for people to be born again?
5. Meditate on Isaiah 53 and 2 Corinthians 5.21. What did Jesus accomplish by His work on the cross?

Summary

The Messenger of the covenant came to earth to bring the New Covenant to full realization. Son of God and Son of Man, He came to destroy the works of the devil, overthrow and plunder his domain, and establish His own Kingdom of increasing righteousness, peace, and joy. To do this He would have to die for the sins of His people, and rise again for their justification. How can you see all the unifying threads of Scripture coming together in the work of Jesus Christ?

Closing Prayer

The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
Your people shall be volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
"You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek."
The Lord is at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.
He shall judge among the nations,

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He shall fill the places with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many countries.
He shall drink of the brook by the wayside;
Therefore He shall lift up the head.

Psalm 110

6 The Triumph of Christ

Read and meditate on Psalm 22 and Isaiah 54.

As David and Isaiah foresaw, the death of the Messenger of God's covenant would lead to great rejoicing and to magnifying the glory of God.

For reflection

1. Meditate on Matthew 28.1-8 and John 20.11-18. Recall the events of Genesis 3. Why did Jesus first entrust the news of His resurrection and triumph to Mary Magdalene? What does this "great reversal" portend for the world?
2. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in glory (Luke 9.28-31). This account reaches back to the past to talk about the present and anticipate Christ's ultimate victory. How do you see this? How does this incident help us in thinking about the unity of Scripture and God's purpose in sending Christ?
3. Meditate on Matthew 27.45-53. What aspects of the triumph of Christ are intimated in these verses? What did Jesus' death, and coming resurrection, accomplish?
4. Meditate on Acts 1.1-8 and Psalm 110. Having ascended to the right hand of the Father, what is Jesus presently doing? What is our role, as His people, in this work?
5. Meditate on Philippians 2.5-11. From this passage, summarize the work and triumph of Christ. What is the ultimate objective of Jesus' work?

Summary

Jesus Christ has triumphed over death, over the grave, over the devil, and over sin. He is exalted in glory, ruling at the right hand of God; and one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. We His people are sent forth (Jn. 20.21), like the dew of the morning, armed with the Word of the Lord, to bring refreshing grace to the world and subdue every enemy of the Lord. How would you describe the state of this high calling in your own life?

Closing Prayer

I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,

And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom is the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.
All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done this.

Psalm 22.22-31

7 The Focal Point of History

Read and meditate on Daniel 7.13-27, 1 Corinthians 15.20-28, and Revelation 19.

It's increasingly clear that Jesus, the Messenger of the covenant, is the central theme and fulcrum of all Scripture. Scripture teaches that He is also the focal point and driving force of all history.

For reflection

1. In Daniel's vision, the Son of Man received a Kingdom and gave it to the saints of the most High God. What happens then? According to this vision, where is history going?
2. In 1 Corinthians 15.20-28, Paul builds on the vision of Psalm 110 – a vision both of *refreshment* and *struggle*. In what ways does this complement Daniel's vision? Where does the vision of Psalm 110 end up? Who is directing all this?
3. Meditate on Matthew 28.18-20, Acts 1.8, and Matthew 6.33. How does the Kingdom of God relate to human history? What is our role in the unfolding of history?
4. Meditate on the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43. Is the world, and its history, a weed field, waiting to be burned, or a wheat field to be sown, tended, cultivated, and harvested? Explain.
5. According to Revelation 19, how does human history end? Then what? How should we be preparing to enter into the consummation of history?

Summary

History is the stage on which Jesus is working out the implications of God's covenant for all nations and peoples. We are part of that process, as agents and ambassadors of His Kingdom. We know where history is going, and it is our duty and calling, having been sent as Jesus was sent (Jn. 20.21), to seek, embody, and proclaim the rule of King Jesus until He comes. What does this require of you?

Closing Prayer

Praise the LORD!
Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty firmament!
Praise Him for His mighty acts;
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the lute and harp!
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!
Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with clashing cymbals!
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 150

For reflection or discussion

1. What do we mean by saying that Jesus is the Messenger of the covenant?
2. Why is Jesus uniquely qualified to fulfill this role?
3. What work did Jesus do to fulfill the covenant of God?
4. What are the implications of Jesus' work for the lives of His followers? For the course of human history?
5. What are the most important lessons for you from this study of Jesus as the Messenger of the covenant?

Glory to Glory

We are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ *from* the glory we encounter in God's Word *to* the way we live for His glory in the world (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31).

What have you encountered *of* God's glory in our readings and meditations in this week's studies? That is, how has He shown Himself *to* you more clearly?

How do you expect this *experience* of God's glory to help you *live more consistently for* His glory in the daily details of your life?

What have you learned about yourself from this week's study to help you in knowing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom? To equip you for serving Christ in your [Personal Mission Field](#)?

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Thank you.