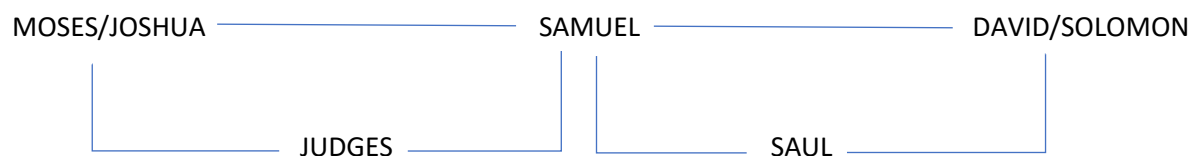


The Era Between Moses and Samuel

Figure 8. Samuel and the New Era



Samuel has the distinction of being the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24). The Lord called him to be his prophet (1 Sam.3:1-14), and as a prophet he embodied the spirit of Moses (Jer.15:1). He was recognized as God's "servant", by whom the Lord spoke to his people individually (1 Sam.9:6) and nationally (7:2-4; 8:1-22). Samuel's prophetic ministry was so unique that all the tribes heard about it: "And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord" (3:20).

The Lord raised up Samuel in this crisis in Israel's history. He served Israel as Yahweh's "judge", "priest", and " prophet". Samuel became Israel's priest after the tabernacle in Shiloh was destroyed and the ark taken by Philistines (1 Sam.4:1 - 7:1). Samuel, like Moses, interceded for Israel (7:9). He continued to do so even after Israel had initiated a wrong course (12:17, 19,23). As the last of the judges (Acts 13:20) and the first of the prophets (3:24), he served as a transition figure between the era of the judges and the kings. Samuel was a faithful judge who lived up to the theocratic ideal, shaped Israel's political life, unified the tribes, and victoriously fought the Philistines (1 Sam.7:13b-17). But he did not give Israel her "rest".

Samuel: The Guardian of the Theocracy

Samuel became the role model for the prophets as the guardian of the theocracy.(see figure 8.) He showed a pastoral concern for all twelve tribes (1 Sam.4:1), brought revival to Israel (7:6; 12:18-19), led Israel in worship, and guided the tribes with his counsel. He also led Israel into a period of international stability and national peace of prosperity.

In his position as God's spokesman to the people and to the theoretic king, Samuel defined the role of the prophets as guardians of the theocracy. He rebuked Saul's resistance to his prophetic authority (1 Sam.13:1-14) and declared God's judgment on Saul and his descendants (15:22-26). Also, like Moses and Joshua, Samuel exhorted Israel to remain faithful to Yahweh in his farewell speech, lest God's courses overtake them (12:1-25).

Centuries later Israel still remembered Samuel's legacy. The Chronicler comments on Josiah's celebration of the Passover, "The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the Kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem" (2 Chron.35:18). The psalmist places him next to Moses and Aaron as God's priest.

Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel was among those who called on his name;
They called on the Lord
And he answered them.
(Ps.99:6)

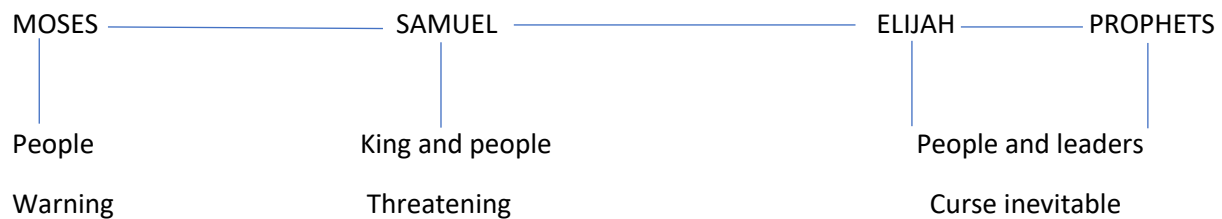
Elijah: The Covenant Prosecutor

Elijah the Tishbite lived during another period of crisis. Ahab had married Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, who had introduced Baal worship and pagan culture into Israel. Ahab followed the political ambitions of his father, Omri, who had begun making Israel into a political military power of international renown. Ahab's administration had opened Israel to a grand future of economic prosperity and military might, as Israel had become a "power" among the nations. The people had rejected the covenant and the way of revelation and had become enamored with a new way of life. *Realpolitik* had triumphed!

Elijah: The Beginning of the End

Elijah has a distinct role in the history of redemption. Though he left no prophetic book, Elijah has a special place next to Moses. If Moses is the fountainhead and Samuel the rapids of the prophetic stream, then Elijah shaped the course of the classical prophets. (see Figure 6.) The stories surrounding Elijah incorporated in 1 Kings 17-21 and 2 Kings 1:1-2:11 present us with one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament (see Figure 9.)

Figure 9. Elijah and the Prophets



Alone and exhausted, persecuted after the Mount Carmel experience (1 Kings 18), Elijah made his way to Mount Horeb (19:7). Overcome with despair, he had been ready to die, but was called to meet with the Lord at Mount Sinai. There the great prophet of Yahweh stood by the place where Moses had received the revelation and had seen the glory of the Lord. Elijah's return to Mount Sinai marked the end of one era, one that was characterized by divine patience, and the beginning of another, one that was characterized by purification. Israel had shown herself to be a nation hardened in unbelief. The situation had changed dramatically from the days when Moses repeatedly interceded on her behalf. Unlike Moses, who *interceded* on behalf of Israel (Ex.31 - 34), Elijah *accused* God's people of infidelity. The days of God's patience were drawing to an end. A new era was coming!

Elijah: The Message of the Classical Prophets

On Mount Sinai Elijah brought three charges and a personal lament against Israel: They "(1) have rejected your Covenant, (2) broken down your altars, and (3) put your prophets to death with the sword. (4) I'm the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (1 Kings 19:10, 14). Yahweh came to Elijah in the voice like a "gentle whisper" (v.12) to which the prophet responded with awe, sensing the presence of Yahweh.

The theophanic phenomena (wind, fire and earthquake) are to be interpreted in relation to the three charges and to the three instruments of Yahweh's judgment on Israel: Jehu, Hazael, and Elisha (1 Kings 19:11-17). Judgment would come through (1) internal political forces in Israel, represented by Jehu; (2) external military forces, represented by the Aramean Hazael; and (3) the prophetic ministry, symbolized by Elisha. God's response (1 Kings 19:15-18) outlines Israel's history: the fall of the Omride dynasty (1 Kings 20 - 2 Kings 13), the troubles associated with the dynasty of Jehu (2 Kings 9:1 - 15:12; see Hos.1:4-5), and the oppression by the Arameans and the ultimate fall of Israel in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:5-6).

Elijah is the beginning of a long line of prophets who charged God's people with breaking the Covenant and pronounced God's judgment on them. Through Elijah primarily directed his message to the king, his ministry extended beyond Ahab to *all* Israel. He was God's first covenant prosecutor, for he charged Israel with its failures to conform to the Covenant expectations (1 Kings 18:21). (see Figure 6.) The issue is no longer between prophet and king; it is between prophet and people, as it

was in the days of Moses and Samuel. The prophet no longer warns and threatens; he proclaims judgment and the reality of the Covenant courses. This is the essence of the prophetic lawsuit (rib).

God's revelation also contains words of encouragement. In response to Elijah's lament about being the only remaining true believer, Yahweh assured him that he will "reserve seven thousand in Israel - all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18). The Lord promised to preserve for himself a remnant of godly people who submit themselves to his revelation. Yahweh declared to his servant Elijah that he is free in judgment - even to the point of holocaust, genocide, or execration - but he is also free in maintaining his covenants and the promises with the remnant.

As covenant persecutor, the prophets stood between the Lord and the people. They listened in on the divine council while observing god's movement in history. The prophet of God was both a man "in his time" and "out of his time". As a man "in his time", he delivered a prophetic cultural context. As a man "out of his time", he spoke of events that pertain to the establishment of God's Kingdom, the judgment of the wicked, and the vindication of the godly remnant.

The Spirit of Elijah

Elijah is a significant individual in redemptive history. The Holy Spirit empowered him and gave him a concern for the spiritual condition of his people. Elijah longed for people whose heart would be loyal to the Lord as he discerned the necessity of judgment and purification (see Mal.4:5-6). His ministry is continuous with Moses and with all the prophets who served after him as "covenant prosecutors", including the literary or classical prophets. The spirit of Elijah was with Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and with all the other prophets before, during, and after the Exile. He was with John the Baptist (Mal.4:5, Matt.11:14; 17:10-13) and the apostles, and he is still present with all who proclaim God's word faithfully.

REVIEW

The prophetic ministry is a direct continuation of the revelation of God through Moses, The fountainhead of Old Testament revelation. Moses desired for God's people to form a counterculture, a new community transformed by divine revelation and by the Spirit. The prophetic message was consistent with the Mosaic revelation, for it applies more explicitly the blessings and the courses of which Moses had spoken and supplemented the existing canonical writings with a new word from God.

Old prophetic utterances were to be tested by God's revelation to Moses. The prophets applied and further developed the essential elements of the Mosaic revelation: the judgments and blessings, the call for covenant loyalty, and the hope in the grand future prepared for the people of God. The prophets, like Moses, called for a commitment to Yahweh that must lead to "conflict with civilization".

A major development took place with Samuel, who was the role model of the Old Testament prophetic movement. He declared the word of God to all Israel and anointed their first two kings. As a guardian of the theocracy, he led Israel into revival and peace. Samuel sought to guard the theocracy established by God's covenant at Mount Sinai, and he spoke God's word to king and people alike. His ministry consisted of intercession for the people, application of the courses and

blessings of the Mosaic covenant, and a godly life. And yet, Samuel, too, was an eschatological prophet; he longed for greater spiritual sensitivity, discernment, and a rest that would outlast him.

The prophets after Samuel spoke God's word with little apparent result. Israel and Judah readily adopted the mantic and magical practices of the pagans. They adopted to the worship of many gods and adulterated the revelation of Yahweh. Finally, Elijah arose and brought a covenant suit from the Lord at Mount Sinai. From that point, the prophets turned increasingly away from the kings to the people with the express purpose of calling forth a remnant.

The prophetic message of the classical prophets includes a statement of God's legal suit against his people, and announcement of judgment, a call for repentance, and a proclamation of the good news of God's deliverance. They affirmed that Yahweh in faithful in his commitment to renew the covenants, to usher in his kingdom, and to fulfill his promises. The prophets were God's appointed covenant persecutors, but in this function they did not cease praying that God's people might turn to the Lord, undergo a transformation by the Spirit, and enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom.

Review of Chapter 2

THE PROPHETIC TRADITION

The prophetic tradition developed during Israel's long story in the land, in exile, and in the postexile era. The preexilic prophets gradually were pushed away from the structured of society in both Israel and Judah. They critically stood up against the temple, the king, the programs, and the structures of their time. Although they loved the covenant, the temple, and pure worship of God, they opposed the perversion of worship, the stagnation of God's people, and the misinterpretation of the covenant. They did not ask God's people to adopt new religious values but explained the magnificence of the older revelation in the light of the new revelation.

The prophets spoke God's word to people in crisis. During war, siege, famine or other adverse times, they addressed living people and applied God's message to the issues at hand. Each prophet had a distinct vocabulary, individual gifts, and a unique personality. But the Spirit of God transcended the human temporal perspective. In spite of the diversity in personalities, literary modes, and historical circumstances, the Spirit of God used and transformed the variety in the prophetic messages into a revelation for God's people in any age.

The prophetic tradition reveals variety and unity. The tradition was comprised of various emphases, distinct contributions, and watershed-like developments. Each prophet was an individual with a distinctive call and message of God. However, this concern for distinctive characteristics should not mislead us to pay exclusive attention to the differences. R. E. Clements rightly rejects the Wellhausenian assumption that the prophets were individualists. The true prophets formed a tradition that was founded on the covenantal structure. Clements states, "For the prophets and the psalmists the covenant tradition formed the heart of their religion." But the false prophets never developed a lasting tradition. Their false hopes were shattered in the fall of Samaria and of Jerusalem. Their interpretations proved wrong.

The prophets announced God's judgment and salvation. They declared that Israel and Judah would have to experience the Exile, through which process God would gather a remnant and constitute a new community. This new community would need continual purification in preparation for the Day of Judgment (the Day of the Lord).

The postexilic events foreshadow the coming kingdom of God and of his Messiah. The messages of the postexilic prophets have much in common with the preaching of our Lord and his disciples. First, they preached the reality of *judgment* on the Day of the Lord. Second, they made an offer of *grace*, *salvation*, and full *participation* in the righteous kingdom of Yahweh and of his Messiah. Third, they called for a lifestyle of *discipleship*, *purification*, and *preparation* for the kingdom-to-come. Fourth, they announced the *presence* of Yahweh, the covenant, and his kingdom. Fifth, they also called for perseverance to live godly lives and to hasten the day of the establishment of the kingdom. Yahweh will bring in the new heaven and new earth. His kingdom is secure! This is the message of the classical prophets.

Review of Chapter 3

PERSPECTIVES ON PROPHECY

The hermeneutic of this chapter may be summed up in twelve theses.

1. The promises of God, as confirmed in the covenant with creation, Abraham, Moses, and David, are the object of hope of God's people before and after the coming of the Messiah, our Lord. (See figure 20.)

2. The prophets develop and apply the promises of God. The Old Testament prophets have very few predictions that may be directly applied to their time or to any nation, person, or event. The prophetic message may best be seen as a collage of prophetic utterances in which each prophecy or oracle has its own setting and may not be isolated from the holistic interpretation of the book as a whole. (see figure 20.)

The predictions take the form of promise, and the promises are temporal expressions of God's eternal plan. Beecher makes the point by stating that "every fulfilled promise is a fulfilled prediction; but it is exceedingly important to look at it as a promise, and not as a mere prediction." Similarly, Gurdon C. Oxtoby writes,

The essential Christian position is one of fulfillment rather than prediction... *The marvel is not that any prophet foretold. The marvel is that Jesus fulfills...* The wonder is in the consummation that has come about because of Christ. To glorify prediction rather than fulfillment is to misunderstand the nature of the forecast, and to miss the significance of the Christian gospel. (see figure 20.)

Figure 20. Progressive fulfillment

Hope: Promises of the Father

Focus: Jesus Christ

Power: Spirit of restoration

Tota Scriptura: Old and New Testaments

Progressive fulfillment

Involvement of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Continuities and discontinuities

Tokens of eschatological realization in history of redemption

Freedom of God

Correlation of Creation and redemption

Involvement of humans: Submission, interpretation, application

3. The prophetic word is God's word of hope to his people before and after Christ. The prophets bore witness in their different emphases to the groundwork of God's redemption as well as to God's wisdom in working out his promises. This sheer vastness in size of the prophetic word should guard against oversimplification. They called on their contemporaries to look to the Lord for the fulfillment of the promises in accordance with his immutable plan. Certainly tensions exist between the enjoyment of the covenant promises and the fullness, as Bright reminds us,

So, like Israel of old, we have to leave in tension. It is the tension between grace and obligation: the unconditional grace of Christ which is proffered to us, his unconditional promises in which we are invited to trust, and the obligation to obey him as the church's Sovereign Lord.

The focus of the hope in the fulfillment of God's promises is Jesus Christ, the midpoint of redemptive history. The language of hope comes to expression when we recognize that the language of eschatology is the language of metaphor. When we speak of what God has prepared for his people, as witnessed to be Moses and the prophets and by Jesus and his apostles, we cannot use the language of sight. We must use the language of vision, which is an extension of metaphor. Frederick Ferre has defined the language of metaphor as an expression of men's finitude and God's freedom.

Surely it is meaningful for each man to hope that the metaphor he adopts as his own... are not without basis of similarity... The rest he must hold only as a hope and a constant reminder of the finitude over the knower... The rest... he must be content to "leave in God's hands".

The elements of prophetic hope include (1) the anticipation of God's rule in Zion, (2) the universal acknowledgment of God's rule and the eradication of idolatry, (3) the revelation of God's glory and splendor, (4) the abolition of evil and tyranny, (5) the sanctification of God's name and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, (6) the hope of the imminent coming of the day of salvation and judgment, and (7) the hope of salvation and fulfillment of the promises.

4. The working out of God's plan is progressive as the promises become more and more specific and as they are more fully enjoyed by the godly. This means that the benefits of God's conferred on the postexilic community were greater than those granted the preexilic people and

also that the present benefits in Christ are greater than those of the postexilic era of restoration. Nevertheless, we keep Beecher's caution in mind.

If one affirms that the promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, he ought not to separate that fulfillment from the rest of the eternal fulfilling movement. The idea of a long line of fulfillment is not a hypothesis offered for the solution of difficulties, but a part of the primary conception of a promise that is for eternity.

5. Though the promises are eternally operative and the fulfillment is progressive, the interpreter of the prophetic word must carefully listen to the prophets as God's witnesses in time and space. The prophetic word is God's Word addressed to his people in a culturally and historically conditioned context. The study of the word invites our listening to the prophetic speech in other historical context. The speech forms are diverse but essentially may be classified as oracles of judgment and oracles of salvation. As forms of prophetic speech the oracles address real people living in a historical context. The horizons of this historical context are twofold. First, Elijah's charges against Israel at Mount Horeb mark the evident inauguration of the messages of judgment, in which all the prophets share as covenant prosecutors. Second, the new era after the Exile marks the era of catharsis, renewal, and eschatology.

6. The prophets consistently call on the people of God to be open to the new acts of God and to evaluate the old acts in the light of the new. This way of looking at the world is what Sanders calls "the hermeneutic and prophetic critique". The prophetic message uniformly warns most strongly against human structures and institutions, especially religious ones. The contest between the power of man and the power of the Spirit always leads to human bondage because the Spirit is free. Those who are truly liberated experience the eschaton. Yet the faithful before and after Christ live in the tension of the present reality of salvation and the glorious, eternal fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ.

7. The work of Christ is *continuous* with the work of God in the Old Testament but *discontinuous* with the religious structures of humankind. The coming of Christ marks the watershed in redemptive history. In Christ's coming the eschaton rushed in more evidently as the glorious Son of God became flesh. The distinction between Old and New may be explained by the difference in emphases: national and universal, material and spiritual, type and antitype, prefigurement and reality, promise and fulfillment. Yet as long as we await the universal, spiritual, and real fulfillment, we, too, live in hope of the promise that Jesus is the fulfiller of the promises of God.

The emphasis on the spiritual in the New Testament may be explained as arising from a context in which people were preoccupied with their physical existence and the material outworking of God's plan in a grant messianic age. However, our Lord did refer to the physical-material fulfillment of the promises, as he taught, "Blessed the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5, cf. Ps. 37:11; Rom. 4:13). Hence caution is in order not to generalize a hermeneutic from Augustine's saying, "The Old is in the New revealed and the New in the Old concealed." The argument goes like this: Since the New Testament reveals that the sacrifices and institutions in the Old Testament are types, shadows, and symbols of the ministry of Our Lord, the New Testament revelation eclipses the Old Testament revelation.

A. B. Davidson represents those who read the Prophets in the light of the New: "And the thing itself being come, to which they pointed, they have now themselves fallen away." This hermeneutic assumes that the New Testament addresses all concerns of the Old Testament, the New Testament scholars are in general agreement on its meaning, which they are not, and that the Fulfillment is here. The danger of this separation of the Testaments lies in the shift in focus from Jesus Christ as the fulfiller to the New Testament as the fulfillment, from the church industrious to

the church victorious, and from anticipation of the coming of Our Lord to a glorification of Jesus' earthly and present ministry.

8. The interpretation of the prophetic word as a part of *tota Scriptura* is not just an option for those who are so inclined; it is the imperative for the church of Jesus Christ. True discipleship demands that the disciples of Christ long for the consolation of Israel and for the restoration of all things. Kirkpatrick writes that "the great lines of thought" of the Prophets come together in Christ "in a wholly new combination, the spring of fresh forces and larger hopes for the world." This implies that a transformation of the prophetic message takes place in the coming of Our Lord and in the apostolic mission. But the advance in the progress of redemption only enhances the place of the Prophets as the "old" becomes "new"; that is, "It is not fulfilled and exhausted, but fulfilled and illuminated".

The fresh combination of the manifold teaching of the prophets and of our Lord and the apostles inspires the reader of Scripture to greater hope and longing for the coming of Our Lord, who alone is the reality and who is Lord in the outworking of the Father's plan of redemption. The New Testament affirms the place for eschatological hope, as C. K. Barrett puts it,

This conviction that God has yet greater things to do than the great things He has already done for us, that He is the God of the future as well as the past, is supplemented in New Testament eschatology by the equally strong conviction that God is no more confined to the future than He is to the past, and that, being *free* at all times, He has acted as decisively and as revealingly, in the midcourse of history as He will do at its end; or, in other words, that the end of history, and with it God's unique and conclusive action which declares not only His own character but also the meaning of all history, has already begun.

9. The freedom of God demands that interpretation of the prophetic word, in conjunction with the teaching of our Lord and of his apostles, be conducted with the greatest humility. Even though the Lord has revealed his plan of redemption, he has not given a diagram for interpreting the unfolding or progression of this plan to his people. Torrance warns us most urgently against treating the Scriptures like calculus,

However, there is no formal or hermeneutical way of anticipating such a disclosure in the future on the ground of what has already been disclosed, for precisely the same reason, namely, that biblical statements indicate far more than they can express. The ultimate Truth of God to which they point beyond themselves is so unlimited in his intelligibility and freedom that he breaks through the calculus of our predictions and keeps on disclosing himself in quite unexpected ways.

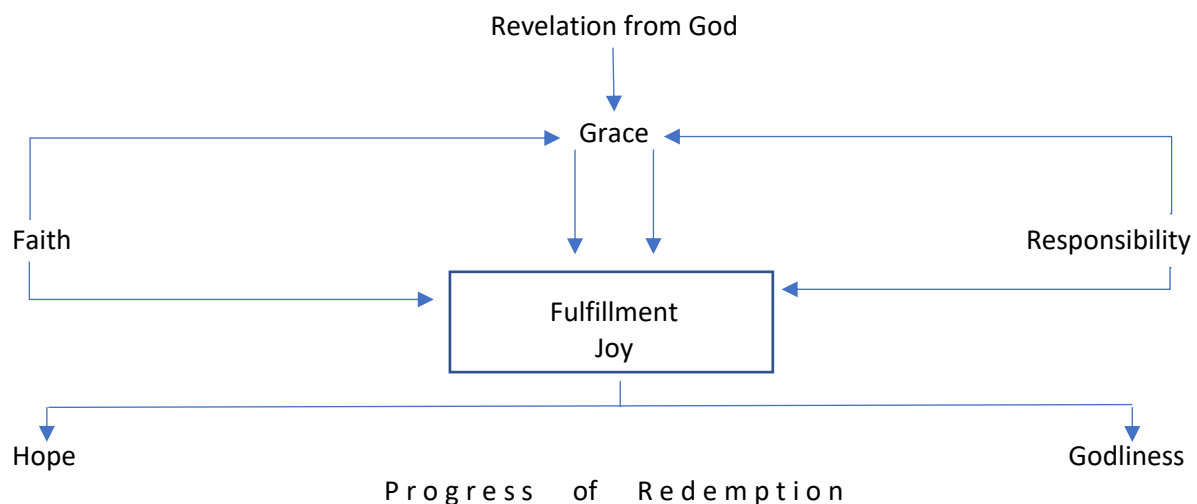
10. The proper response to the freedom of God is the imitation of Christ, including a hungering and thirsting for the righteousness of the kingdom of God and a zeal for his kingdom and glory. Redemptive theology may risk the reduction to the present and the removal of the longing for the age to come. But the context of redemption within the framework of creation intensifies the tension between creation in alienation and the promises of a holistic redemption. Thus a proper regard for creation as the sphere of God's operation leads to a longing for a restoration of order. God's new order in this world will bring harmony, the rule of God, and the everlasting bliss of the people of God. Hence, Schmid proposes to look at all theology as an expression of creation theology: "All theology is creation theology, even when it does not speak expressly of creation but speaks of faith, justification, the reign of God, or whatever, if it does so in relation to the world. And it must do that as long as it makes any claim of being responsible."

11. God has revealed aspects of his plan of redemption of creation, but not the comprehensive knowledge. In Jesus Christ he has further confirmed his commitment of cosmic salvation (John 3:16). Although all lines of promise converge in Jesus Christ, we do not know how all promises will be realized in that God is free. The freedom of God and the failure of systems of

human interpretation must be constant reminders not to absolutize, principalize, or systematize the glorious future into a grand scheme. So von Rad writes, "God's power in history is complete... But God's sovereignty in history is hidden; it mocks the most clever and profound human criteria and confronts man with impenetrable riddles... God is mobilizing history for his great future." This means also that those who deny a place for ethnic Israel in the purposes of God *and* those who work out the details of this plan are guilty of playing God. Beecher reminds us that since the promise is eternally operative and since we are not yet at the end of eternity, we are "not qualified to say whether in this particular the promise corresponds with the fulfillment." John Bright correctly defines *eschatology* in the broad sense as faith in the Lord who will fulfill all his promises.

12. The prophetic message has a bearing on the parameters of biblical hope and on the proper response to the hope. Through the progressive revelation of God (preexilic, exilic, postexilic; in Christ, and apostolic), there is a constant factor whose significance increases with the increment of the acts of God in redemptive history. Figure 21 outlines this for us.

Figure 21. Revelation and Redemption



The greater the revelation, the greater the grace; the greater the grace, the greater the faith; the greater the faith, the greater the responsibility; the greater the responsibility, the greater the fulfillment; the greater the fulfillment, the greater the joy; the greater the joy, the greater the hope; and the greater the hope, the greater the desire for godliness.

The *parameter* is distinct from the *perimeter* of the prophetic message. The perimeter, is the outer boundary, pertains to the revelation of the God who acts sovereignly and freely in establishing his kingdom, regardless of man's responsiveness. He is faithful and assures the people of God in all ages that his work of redemption will come to fruition, that his acts have a purpose, and that his purpose is hidden in his secret counsel. The plan of God calls for a response from the godly community, and this response must be commensurate with the revelation given. Hence the parameter expands in proportion to the revelation and acts of the Lord.