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Provision of Food and Clothing for the Wandering People of God: A Canonical and Salvation-Historical Study

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1. Introduction

“You will never see a hearse with a U-Haul behind it.” This is a colloquial way of saying that no one can take their earthly riches with them when they die. That is easy enough for most people to understand and it closely approximates this pastoral saying: “we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world” (1 Tim 6:7). But the next statement from Paul is a much more difficult statement: “but if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content” (1 Tim 6:8).¹ This “we” carries the force of a command that applies to all Christians.² This is similar to the extra-biblical writer Sirach who stated: “The basic necessities of human life are water and fire and iron and salt and wheat flour and milk and honey, the blood of the grape and oil and clothing” (NRSV, Eccclus 39:26).³ What is surprising is the absence of shelter, which one expects to be connected with food and clothing.⁴ As

¹ I assume Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. The literature on the matter is voluminous. According to Raymond F. Collins, the Pastoral Epistles should be considered “double pseudonymous” because the recipient and the author are “literary fictions” in *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (Louisville: WJKP, 2002), 10. For a study on the implications of one’s position see Stanley E. Porter, “Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: Implications for Canon,” *BBR* 5 (1995): 105-123. For a rejoinder to Porter see Robert W. Wall “Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: A Response to S.E. Porter.” *BBR* 5 (1995): 125-128.

² William D. Mounce comments “By saying ‘we,’ Paul generalizes the truth to all believers... it carries the force of a command,” in *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Dallas: Word, 2000), 343.

³ For a brief note on Eccclus 39:26 and a broader discussion of the Israelite diet see Nathan McDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 61.

⁴ For a reference to food, clothing, and shelter in *Digesta Iustianiani* (Digest of Justinian) see Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTSMS 85; New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995),

Craig Bartholomew explains, “To be stable and inhabit a place, humans must build to make sure of stable inhabitation.”⁵ For Paul, it is only the most basic elements of life—food and clothing alone—that constitute the condition upon which a Christian should be content. Why these items (food and clothing) alone? Where do these conditions in 1 Tim 6:8 come from? Is there an over-arching narrative in which this proverb can be placed or is it simply an isolated pastoral maxim?

1.1 Why This Study?

Most commentaries attempt to answer these questions in two problematic ways. First, some read the reference to being content with “food and clothing” in an *atomistic* fashion—the saying is removed from over-arching issues and narratives. These often note that there are parallels between Paul’s call to be content with such simplicity and the teachings of Jesus and Stoic teachers. In the area of the Old Testament, studies of food rarely interact with the combination of “food and clothing” together.⁶ Second, some read the section about material possessions in 1 Tim 6:1-10 as having a certain metanarrative or eschatology behind it but they are not *consistent* in their application of an eschatological perspective. For example Phillip H. Towner views 1 Tim 6:8 as a pastoral maxim that endorses “a simple lifestyle.”⁷ Yet more than a simple life is entailed in the “eschatological understanding of human life” that Towner states is present in the context.⁸ Likewise, Thomas C. Oden’s pastoral commentary is unusual in that he places the whole

86. Braun also provides notes on urban homelessness in Ancient Greek cities on pg 87.

⁵ Craig G. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 40.

⁶ Recent monographs on food in the ancient near east only interact a handful of times with wandering, clothing, or shelter. See Nathan McDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), passim; Cynthia Shafer-Elliott, *Food in Ancient Judah: Domestic Cooking in the Time of the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Acumen Publishing, 2012), passim. Likewise, monographs on food and theology also do not interact with the combination of food and clothing (or shelter). See Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), passim.

⁷ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 401.

⁸ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 400.

pericope of 1 Tim 6:7-10 in the context of “pilgrimage.”⁹ Again, the relationship between “food and clothing” is not clear or developed. The authors are not necessarily to blame because a commentary is simply not suitable for drawing out larger themes. The problems of *atomistic* readings and *inconsistency* leave a lacuna in the literature on contentment with food and clothing.

1.2 Methodology

With respect to methodology, we will argue that contentment with “food and clothing” alone is a sub-theme or minor theme that is part of an even larger theme about the identity of God’s people in the OT and the NT. Identity is in turn connected to sin, redemption, and the whole panoply of God’s grace and judgment. By referring to “God’s people” we establish continuity across Israel and the church while respecting the diversity of the covenants and their elements of discontinuity. Thus, the scope of this study intends to go beyond 1 Timothy and tie together threads that run through the canon’s narrative plot of salvation-history.¹⁰ This study will only trace references that explicitly tie the provision of food and clothing together. Only a few instances go beyond this to include conceptual references or inferences (i.e. nakedness infers a lack of clothing). Space prohibits a study of feasting, table fellowship, and the role Jesus’ body (Eucharist/Holy Communion); these will have to be left for another day.

1.3 The Central Argument

The central thesis of this study is: *God’s people have always been pilgrims on this earth; this identity is the basis for the simple provision of food and clothing.* In order to support this thesis we will make two broad moves that will seek to cover the sweep of the canon of Christian scripture with an eye to events of covenantal significance. First, we will briefly articulate the larger matter of identity under which the matter of “food and clothing” can be traced. Specifically, we will argue that ever since the Fall, the people of God are defined as pilgrims or wanderers. The second part will receive the bulk of our attention as we seek to defend our thesis throughout the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New covenants. The second part will demonstrate

⁹ Thomas C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Interpretation series; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 105.

¹⁰ For an argument that the canonical plot of salvation-history can be reduced to: 1) creation, 2) Fall, 3) redemption, and 4) consummation see David H. Wenkel, “The Most Simple and Comprehensive Script for the Theo-Drama of Scripture: Three Acts or Four?” *SBET* 30:1 (2012) 78-90.

that the two things that God's provides his people with throughout all covenantal relationships is food and clothing.

The Wandering People of God

In this section we will establish a foundational part of our thesis: *God's people have had a pilgrim identity ever since the Fall in the Garden of Eden.* By briefly examining highlights from the contours of salvation-history, we will demonstrate that God's people identified themselves as wanderers. Traveling without arriving at a final destination is so important that the patriarchs and their progeny cannot describe themselves without referring to it.

2.1 *Wandering Out of the Garden*

After Yahweh discovers Adam and Eve hiding in the trees of the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), he queries them until they confess to their sin. After this, Yahweh speaks to each party: the serpent, the woman, and to Adam. Each divine discourse from Yahweh in Gen 3:14-19 is a (covenantal?) curse of some kind. The last consequence for gaining the knowledge of good and evil is that Adam and Eve are cast out. Yahweh "drove out the man" from the Garden (Gen 3:24).

After this act of judgment comes the first reference to the provision of food and clothing. Instead of sewn leaves (Gen 3:7), Yahweh provides clothing of animal skins for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). Although Adam and Eve cannot eat from the "tree of life," they are sent out specifically to "work the ground" for food (Gen 3:23-24). Interestingly, there is no provision made for shelter or a home. This first reference to food and clothing in the canon is significant because it demonstrates that when Adam and Eve's covenantal relationship with Yahweh changed, the concern for providing food and clothing appears.

The reason why this study begins with Genesis 3 is that Adam and Eve's covenantal relationship to Yahweh changed when sin was introduced into the Garden. Before sin was introduced clothing was not needed because there was no shame associated with nakedness. Sin also caused a disconnect between *place* and *identity*.¹¹ Previously Adam and Eve had a permanent and special place in the Garden of Eden. This garden was a special place with boundaries

¹¹ Here I use the word "place" in a technical sense. According to Bartholomew, a "place" is a concept that includes geographic, concrete, relational, cultural, and social boundaries (*Where Mortals Dwell*, 1-3, also 31).

within the whole inhabitable earth.¹² Before sin, Adam and Eve always had a permanent place or home in the Garden.

Genesis 3 defines Adam and his progeny, both righteous and unrighteous, as those who live “east of Eden.” With the advent of the righteous line of Abel and the rebellious line of Cain, the death of Abel results in the punishment that Cain “shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth” (Gen 4:12). Cain is the epitome of one who truly lives “east of Eden” (Gen 3:16). His wandering or displacement is pronounced and permanent.

In sum, the narratives of Genesis 1-4 define all of humanity as “wanderers” from Eden. Once sin enters into the world, the identity of those possessing eternal life can no longer assume they have a place to call home.¹³ In cases such as Cain, there is a pronounced and permanent life of wandering. *Wandering arises because place and identity are divided by sin and covenantal judgment.*

2.2 Wandering Out of Ur

As the narrative of Genesis continues, wandering is used by Yahweh not only for judgment as in the case of Cain, but for redemption. The first words that Yahweh says to Abram are “go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Gen 12:1). From this moment on, Abram’s (later Abraham) is identified as one who wanders. For example, the covenant that Yahweh makes with Abram promises (1) a great nation, (2) a land, and (3) a seed.¹⁴ What is important to note is that this land—the land of Canaan—is the “land of your *sojournings*” (Gen 17:8). Of even more significance is Abraham’s own self-identification as a wanderer. In Abraham’s explanation to Abimelech about calling Sarah his sister, he notes “God caused me to *wander* from my father’s house” (Gen 20:13).¹⁵

¹² Whereas Genesis 1 could be construed as a “place story” over and against an “earth story” so that the whole earth is understood as habitable, it is clear that even before the Fall, the creation of the Garden of Eden provided a “home” or an especially inhabitable place within the sphere of the whole earth. For a discussion of “space” and “displacement” as it relates to Genesis 1-3 see Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 10, 24, 29.

¹³ “Displacement is at the heart of God’s judgment” in Genesis 3 according to Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 29.

¹⁴ Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N.T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *SBJT* 14:3 (2010): 36-48.

¹⁵ It is possible that Abraham is speaking at an “all-time religious low” by using a plural Hebrew phrase in Gen 20:13 with reference to Elohim

2.3 *Wandering Out of Egypt*

From the patriarch Abraham comes the covenantal people of God who follow in the pattern of wandering. As Abraham's progeny grows into the great nation of Israel in Egypt, they are delivered by the "finger of God" (Exo 8:19) who works through Moses and Aaron. Israel's identity in Egypt is bound up in the language of slavery and wandering. Even Pharaoh views the nation as wanderers (Exo 14:3). An important text that connects food and clothing together is found in the instructions for the Passover (Exo 12:7-13). These instructions include blood on the doorposts as well as a meal eaten with clothes on. This meal was to be eaten "in haste" as a preparation for leaving Egypt (Exo 12:11). The Passover is a memorial about God's grace on the place or home of Israel (Exo 12:27). But it is also a time of preparation for those about to leave their home with only a full stomach and clothes on their backs.¹⁶

After being delivered from Egypt, this great nation then enters a covenant at Mount Sinai. As Moses delivers the laws of this covenant, he encourages the nation to reflect upon their identity as wanderers: "you shall make response before the Lord your God, 'A wandering Aramean was my father...'" (Deut 26:5). Not surprisingly, this indicative is the basis for an imperative that follows: "you shall rejoice in all the good that the Lord your God has given you... and the *sojourner* who is among you" (Deut 26:11). Once Israel is "home" in the land of milk and honey, they must honor those who wander among them because they were (and are) wanderers themselves.

2.4 *Wandering Out of the Wilderness*

Israel is going home... or so it seems. The progeny of Abraham have grown into a great nation that has been delivered from Egypt. It is now time to possess the homeland of Canaan. The book of Numbers records how Israel comes right up to the border of Ca-

(e.g., "the gods caused me to wander from my father's house"). For a detailed exegetical study see Andrew J. Schmutzer, "Did the Gods Cause Abraham's Wandering? An Examination of *התעו אתי אלהים* in Genesis 20:13," *JOT* 35:2 (2012), 149-166.

¹⁶ "Thus the entire meal and its manner and posture of consumption were to indicate faithful readiness for a speedy departure." Stuart Douglas, *Exodus* (NAC; Nashville: B&H, 2006), 278. For a contrary position see R.A. Cole who denies that the unleavened bread was for nomads or travelers anticipating a "desert march" in: *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973), 116.

naan and then refuses to obey and take possession of it. The result is that Yahweh's anger is kindled against the nation so much that they are disciplined: "he made them *wander* in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone" (Num 32:13). What is significant about this passage is that wandering both defines Israel's identity and is used to change their identity. In other words, the very act of continuing to wander in the desert will chasten them so that a wicked generation is removed. The threat of further wandering remains in Num 32:15 as the Lord says to Israel: "For if you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness." In the end, Israel does possess the land. They do come home but this is never truly *home*. Israel is never completely successful in removing the evil people of the land or establishing the borders.

2.5 Wandering Out of Jerusalem

The identity of God's people as wanderers or sojourners on the earth is a concept that carries into the New covenant community which is established through the death and resurrection of Christ. According to Hebrews 11, the members of the New covenant (the church) have elements of *continuity* and *discontinuity* with those were under the covenants of Abraham and Moses. With respect to continuity, the people of God may wander on this world without a homeland in "deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb 11:38), but this is done through *faith*. The crucial element of discontinuity is that those who wandered by faith under the old covenant did not ever see the final *fulfillment* of what God promised (Heb 11:39). Wandering in the New covenant era is not based on the fact that they do not have a homeland. On the contrary, through Christ they see that they already possess a homeland that cannot be taken away. As the disciples carried the gospel of out Jerusalem, Judea, to the ends of the earth they share the news that anyone may share in the New Jerusalem that will come down from heaven (Revelation 21). This New covenant reality may be explained in terms of inaugurated eschatology: God's people already possess the homeland that they do not yet live in.

2.6 Summary

The arc of the large contours of salvation-history across the canon begins with wandering out of Eden and ends with God's

people receiving the eternal city of the New Jerusalem.¹⁷ First, humankind is forced to wander away from the homeland of the Garden of Eden. Yet, Yahweh's gracious election and call of Abraham directs him to an unknown land of milk and honey. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's identity can largely be described as "dwelling in tents" (Heb 11:9, cf. 1 Ch 16:20, 2 Ki 21:8). Although Abraham and his progeny never receive the promise, they continually looked for an eternal city "whose designer and builder is God" (Heb 11:10). Canonically speaking, this eternal city is clarified as the New Jerusalem where God's people will eternally be identified as "home."

The Provision of Food and Clothing Alone

We have just established that God's people have consistently identified themselves as wanderers. In instances such as Deut 26:11, this status is the basis for the command to welcome the stranger or sojourner who visits Israel. In other words, the indicative is the foundation for the imperative. In this section we interact with this relationship. We will establish that the salvation-historical storyline repeatedly urges and commands that because God's people are pilgrims or wanderers, they should be content with food and clothing alone. When we trace "contentment" with food and clothing through the canon we will be evaluating vocabulary and concepts that refer to the necessities of life. The evidence we are interested in must be the pairing of bodily sustenance (food) and some sort of wearable protection (clothing).

It is not uncommon to find the two ideas of food and clothing joined together in extra-biblical and secular literature (cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.104; 10.131).¹⁸ When it comes to the context of the NT, this raises the question of whether the biblical writers drew from Stoic sources. For example, the Greek word *autarkes* (contentment) that is used in 1 Tim 6:8 is also used by Stoics for self-sufficiency. Some have attempted to answer this issue by referring to a "Christian sense" of contentment that is not based on circumstances.¹⁹

¹⁷ G.H. Guthrie notes that "the wandering people of God are traveling toward the heavenly kingdom and city," in "Old Testament in Hebrews," *Dictionary of Later New Testament & Its Developments* (eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 841-850.

¹⁸ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC vol. 46; Dallas: Word, 2000), 344.

¹⁹ Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 204.

But this does not seem to make sense of the command to consider one's circumstance of having food and clothing. Perhaps it is better to state that the Stoics differ on the *object* of their contentment.

Next, we must acknowledge that the presuppositions and larger issues of canonicity, authorship, and divine inspiration will influence how one deals with canonical data about contentment.²⁰ While acknowledging these presuppositions, there is also an objective element: the text. The NT writers testify through echoes, allusions, and citations that they were influenced mostly the OT and the teaching of Jesus and not by Stoic philosophy.²¹ Having clarified our key terms, we will consider this pattern through the (1) Abrahamic covenant, (2) Mosaic covenant, and (3) New covenant.

3.1 The Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant demonstrates that food and clothing are the essential elements required for the wandering patriarchs. Abraham's three-fold covenant promises from Yahweh include: 1) innumerable descendants, 2) the land, and 3) blessing the nations. The promise of "the land of Canaan" is repeated in the call to Abram in Gen 12:1-9 and 15:1-21.²² At first glance, this promise of a "place" or Promised Land would seem to negate our thesis that the patriarchs were largely identified as wanderers who saw shelter as secondary to food and clothing.

Is Abraham a nomad or a man-with-a-place? Perhaps the best answer is "yes." There are several reasons to understand the Promised Land as a place that is home but not home. It is a land of and for shelter that only provides temporary relief. First, the "Promised Land is a place with ever-expanding frontiers" that encompasses the whole world.²³ Abraham and his family do not control the whole land or remove the former inhabitants. Second, even within the Promised Land, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are journeying

²⁰ To say that the author of the PE [pastoral epistles] must be drawing more from the secular Greek than from the Christian background (Brox) is to make a judgment based more on one's general approach to the PE than on the text. Throughout the PE Paul has drawn on imagery from both sources." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 343.

²¹ Thomas Lea states, "Although his [Paul's] statements would resemble the teachings of the Stoics, he was clearly influenced more by the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus than by Stoic philosophy," in *1 & 2 Timothy* (NAC Vol. 34; Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1992), 169.

²² For example see Gen 12:7 "Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said 'To your offspring I will give this land'."

²³ Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 46.

(Gen 12:4-9).²⁴ Bartholomew states, “Abraham remains a resident alien (Gen 21:34) in Canaan.”²⁵ Abraham’s family (besides Lot) lived in tents (Gen 13:18; 18:1, 6). There are plenty of references to water throughout the Abraham narratives but no direct references to “food and clothing.” It is only when the Abrahamic covenant is connected with Jacob that we see such a reference.

When Yahweh speaks to Jacob in his dream of the ladder connecting heaven and earth he reminds Jacob that: “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south (Gen 28:13-14). Yahweh identifies himself as the God of Abraham and then immediately proceeds to the promise inherent in the covenant established with Abraham: he will have innumerable descendants. When Jacob awakes from the vision of the “gate of heaven” he makes a vow:

If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have setup for a pillar, shall be God’s house. (Gen 28:20-22)

It is not clear if this vow was made in faith. On the one hand, Jacob’s character is still characterized by craftiness at this point. On the other hand, he really speaks in awe of Yahweh’s power and glory (Gen 28:16-17) and offers a tithe back to God (Gen 28:22).²⁶

Jacob’s vow is based on his current and anticipated state as a wanderer who wants to return to his father’s house (Gen 28:21). His situation of distress is so dire that he predicates Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness upon (1) the end of wandering, and (2) provision of food and clothing. The point must not be missed, Jacob will only be content and will only declare “the Lord is my God” if these conditions are met. Of course, the narrative immediately pictures Jacob lifting his eyes and seeing a well with three flocks of sheep beside it (Gen 29:1-2). The rest, they say, is history. Yahweh’s provision is gracious and abundance flows into Jacob’s hand through

²⁴ Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 47.

²⁵ Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 49.

²⁶ Derek Kidner argues that Jacob’s vow is primarily positive in *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 169. Gordon Wenham points out that Jacob’s offering of a tithe imitates Abraham and sets a pattern for Israel to follow in *Genesis 16-50* (WBC 2: Dallas: Word Inc., 1998), 225.

multiplication of livestock. After this fulfillment, the “angel of God” (Gen 31:11) directs Jacob to arise and return to his father’s house (Gen 31:13), thus completing Yahweh’s faithfulness to the vow in Genesis 28. When Jacob finally arrives safely home in Shechem, in the land of Canaan, he sets up an altar and is faithful to his vow, calling it “El-Elohe-Israel” (God, the God of Israel) (Gen 33:18-20).

To summarize, we find that Abraham and Jacob are wanderers. We also see that Yahweh’s provision of food and clothing constitute all the material possessions that Jacob believes will justify God or prove his faithfulness to the covenantal promises made with Abraham. During Jacob’s wanderings outside of Canaan, there are only these things on his mind: food and clothing and a safe return home. Thus, early in the arc of salvation-history, we see a connection. God’s people who are wandering away from home are provided with two essential things: food and clothing.

3.2 The Mosaic Covenant

Abraham’s progeny follows Moses out of the land of Egypt and meets with Yahweh at Mount Sinai. A covenant relationship is established that builds upon the covenant with Abraham while adding an abundance of laws and stipulations. These external requirements should have flowed from an internal change of the heart toward God: “circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart” (Deut 10:16). In the NT, Paul argues that at least one important reason for these heavy requirements was to increase sin among Israel so that God’s graciousness toward them would be all the more clear (Rom 5:20-21). In a pericope that relates to Yahweh’s desire for Israel’s obedience to flow from a circumcised heart, we find that the pilgrim identity of the nation is the foundation for how strangers and sojourners should be treated.

Before Yahweh dictates the character he wants to see in Israel, he details his own actions in Deut 10:12-22. Yahweh reminds the people of his perfection: he is “God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty and the awesome God” (Deut 10:17). After Yahweh holds himself up as the most glorious being he states: “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing” (Deut 10:18). The very next statement means that Israel is to imitate Yahweh’s character based on (1) Yahweh’s own nature, and (2) their own identity as a people born out of wandering. Thus, Israel should “love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (Deut 10:19). In this discussion of the very heart of the Mosaic

covenant is the truth that Yahweh himself provides for those who wander with the basic necessities of life: “food and clothing.”

When Israel lives out their election by faith and by a circumcised heart, they too, should love those who wander. When Israel fails to live out this calling to love and obey Yahweh through a circumcised heart, they end up in exile. Isaiah warns that when Jerusalem falls because of sin, even those who are left will be without food and clothing (Isa 3:7). The dispersion of the exile is so devastating that it prevents Israel from wandering together. They must wander as those who are scattered until Yahweh’s gracious hand gathers and restores them.

When John the Baptist appears in the wilderness of Judea as the last prophet of the Mosaic covenant era, he preaches that Israel must bear fruit as true children of Abraham (Luke 3:8).²⁷ The crowds who hear his preaching ask the question: “what then shall we do?” Luke records his answer as: “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to likewise” (Luke 3:11). By providing food and clothing to those who are in need, the people who truly repent will be bearing the fruit that God requires. John’s demands echo the demands of the circumcised heart and the gracious nature of Yahweh in Deuteronomy 10. John’s summary of the requirement of the Mosaic law is one of the strongest texts for our case because it demonstrates that the provision of food and clothing for those in need is not a trivial matter.

In sum, those who have a circumcised heart will love the stranger or wanderer by providing food and clothing. Israel, of all people, should be ready and willing to do this because her own identity is bound up in being rescued from being homeless in Egypt.

3.3 The New Covenant

The provision of food and clothing for those who wander is close to the heart of the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, and as we shall see, the New Covenant. In this section we will examine the relationship between identity and contentment with food

²⁷ O. Palmer Robertson argues that John the Baptist’s function as a “voice crying in the wilderness” connects Israel’s experience of wilderness wanderings. In the past, Israel needed to endure the wilderness in order to possess the promised land, now Israel must endure the wilderness if they are to receive the Messiah and his blessings in *God’s People in the Wilderness: The Church in Hebrews* (Fearn, Christian Focus, 2009), 23.

and clothing in the teaching of (1) Jesus, (2) Paul, (3) James, and (4) Revelation.

3.3.1 *The Teaching of Jesus*

Jesus identifies himself and those who follow him as homeless wanderers most clearly in Matt 8:18-22. This should not be surprising because Jesus is the Israelite-par-excellence. As the embodiment of Israel, we should expect that Jesus has “nowhere to lay his head.”²⁸ The irony of this is highlighted by Jesus’ title of himself as the “Son of Man” (Matt 8:20). One would expect that the Danielic Son of Man is the ruler and judge of nations, not a wandering vagabond. Except and only, in Jesus, these are not mutually exclusive conditions. But this lack of permanent housing does not mean that Jesus and his followers will be starving. Jesus’ teaching on not being anxious about “food and clothing” provides another example where food and clothing are conceptually tied together.²⁹ The long parallel passages from Jesus in Matt 6:25-33 and Luke 12:22-31 are almost completely dedicated to anxiety about food and clothing. This pair can be clearly seen in the Sermon on the Mount/Sermon on the Plain:

And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food (τροφή), and the body more than clothing (ἔνδυμα). (ESV Matt 6:25-26 // Luke 12:22-23)

The people of God are set contrast to those who are outside of the New covenant community. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, the “Gentiles” are those who are outside of the covenant community. The Gentiles are those who “seek after all these things,” specifically food and clothing (Matt 6:32).³⁰ But God’s

²⁸ Robert H. Mounce states, “Jesus is simply pointing out that those who follow him will feel homeless” in *Matthew* (UBCS; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 77

²⁹ Walter L. Liefeld finds a strong parallel between 1 Tim 6:8 and Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 204.

³⁰ We find a very interesting parallel in the pseudepigraphical *Letter to Aristeas*. “Hence the leading Egyptian priests having looked carefully into many matters, and being cognizant with (our) affairs, call us ‘men of God.’ This is a title which does not belong to the rest of mankind but only to those who worship the true God. The rest are men *not of God* but of meats and drinks and clothing. For their whole disposition leads them to find solace in these things.” (Let. Aris. 140) *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*

people are clothed by God himself, just as the fields and birds are fed by God. God's people are those who pray for and receive their "daily bread" (cf. "The Lord's Prayer" in Matt 6:11). And when the Seventy-Two go out on a mission for Jesus, the only things they need are food and clothing, the essential items for life.³¹ Jesus arguably serves as a pattern that continues in Acts.³²

Jesus' discourse about food and clothing also picks up the thread left dangling since Genesis 1-3. Jesus' statement that life is *more* (πολύς) than food and clothing (Matt 6:25) is of particular importance. Whereas food and clothing are the two vital requirements for wanderers, something else is necessary. Within the larger context of the meta-narrative of exile and wandering out of Eden, this suggests that the end is in sight. The presence of the Kingdom of God eclipses the needs of wanderers because this kingdom will eventually result in the restoration of God's people at the consummation of all things.

3.3.2 The Teaching of Paul

Paul's teaching about contentment with food and clothing in 1 Tim 6:1-10 is also based on pilgrimage and wandering. For example, Paul teaches in 1 Tim 6:8 "but if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."³³ Some view 1 Tim 6:8 as a pastoral maxim or proverb that endorses "a simple lifestyle."³⁴ Yet, this does not likely account for literary elements surrounding the proverb. Thomas C. Oden's pastoral commentary is unusual in that he

(ed. Robert Henry Charles; Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 2004), 2:108.

³¹ When the Seventy-Two went out on mission from Jesus, all the synoptists agree that they should not carry extra food or clothing. Louise Wells, *The Greek Language of Healing from Homer to New Testament Times* (BZNW 83; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 212.

³² David P. Moessner summarizes Luke's plot in Acts as "stories of the journeying of the people of God whose leaders imitate their Prophet Messiah in proclaiming the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God" in *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 296.

³³ Walter L. Liefeld comments on 1 Tim 6:8: "This embodies Jesus' strong teaching against greed and regarding trust in God for material needs in Luke 12:13-34 (see also the prayer, 'Give us today our daily bread,' and other teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 6:9-13, 19-34" in *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 204.

³⁴ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 401.

places the whole pericope of 1 Tim 6:7-10 in the context of “pilgrimage.”³⁵ Paul also states in the preceding verse in 1 Tim 6:7 “for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.” This idea strongly echoes Job 1:21 and Eccl 5:15.³⁶ Indeed, the allusions near 1 Tim 6:8 from the LXX invoke the pilgrimage from nakedness to nakedness.³⁷ This passage in 1 Tim 6:8 parallels how 1 Tim 1:15-16 sets Christ’s eternal life in contrast with “this present transient existence.”³⁸ Howard Marshall’s comments are also tantalizing as he notes that Paul’s comments in 1 Tim 6:6-8 are about “our passage through” this world.³⁹

This raises the question: how does this fit into the larger picture that spans the whole canon of Christian Scripture? Likewise, Gordon Fee notes that the statement about bringing “nothing into the world” is “primarily eschatological.”⁴⁰ Again, due to fragmented nature of commentaries, we are left with a vignette but no story; a small eschatological scene but no meta-narrative. In the textual unit that spans from 1 Tim 6:1-10, Paul warns against false teaching and false views of material possessions. This unit reflects the two-fold relationship between indicative and imperative. First, Paul establishes the indicative or our identity in terms of our eschatological journey from nakedness to eternity: we brought nothing in and we take nothing out (1 Tim 6:7). The identity of every person, whether realized or not, is that of someone who truly possesses nothing. Eschatology is crucial to the entire thought process of the larger textual unity of 1 Tim 6:1-10 because it establishes identity.

On the basis of this identity as naked-possessors-of-nothing established in 1 Tim 6:7, Paul moves on to the pastoral imperative in

³⁵ Thomas C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Interpretation series; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 105.

³⁶ Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC 14; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 127.

³⁷ For a discussion on the difficulty of defining the terms “echo” and “allusion” and the unlikely prospect that scholars will agree see Dennis L. Stamps, “The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as a Rhetorical Device: A Methodological Proposal” in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley Porter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 12-14.

³⁸ George M. Wieland, *The Significance of Salvation: A Study of Salvation Language in the Pastoral Epistles* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 103.

³⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 648.

⁴⁰ Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (UBCS; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 143.

1 Tim 6:8: “if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.” His pastoral indicatives about the love of money continue to build through this textual unit. For example, given the status of all people as naked-possessors-of-nothing, the “desire to be rich” is a “senseless... desire.” By identifying the indicative and imperative relationship, one can see the logic of the senselessness or foolishness of the desire to be rich.

3.3.3 *The Teaching of James*

James opens his short epistle with an address to the “Twelve tribes in the Dispersion” (Jam 1:1). Douglas Moo argues that the combination of the reference to the “Twelve tribes” in conjunction with the phrase “in the diaspora” or “scattered among the nations” was written to evoke continuity with the true people of God who are wandering apart from “their true, heavenly, ‘homeland.’”⁴¹ If the recipients are Gentile Christians, they are appropriating the story of Israel as their own; they are pursuing a heavenly promised land. But the early date of James suggests a literal meaning and not a figurative one. The recipients are most likely Jewish Christians who have been persecuted and forced out of Palestine. In either case, James identifies his first century reader as a wanderer.

In the second chapter James addresses the works that will demonstrate that a living faith has justified the believer. In other words, James describes the good deeds that will flow from the faith of those who call Abraham their father (Jam 2:21).

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly *clothed* (lit. “naked” γυμνός) and lacking in daily *food* (τροφή), and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (Jam 2:14-17)

The reference in Jam 2:15 to “daily food” likely envisions a person who is “habitually underfed” or consistently lacking in daily provision.⁴² The nature of salvific faith will seek to meet these basic needs along with the gospel message. It is hard not to remember that James is writing to those in the dispersion. James is writing to wanderers to remind them to take care of those are lacking basic

⁴¹ Doug Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 50.

⁴² Moo, *The Letter of James*, 125.

provision—a state consistent with other wanderers. This may parallel the requirement to care for the stranger under the Mosaic covenant in Deut 10:12-22. In the Mosaic law, the kindness required for strangers is derived from Israel's own experience. So also in Jam 2:14-17, the requirement to provide food and clothes is close to the heart of faith. The faith that provides such basic needs to others will provide evidence that this faith is active, alive, and saving.

3.3.4 The Teaching of Revelation

The book of Revelation provides further evidence that food and clothing are the necessary requirements for wanderers because this book clarifies the end of the story. The most important text for our purposes is the apocalyptic scene before God's throne in Rev 7:15-17. This text finally unites all of God's people, from every tribe and nation, in worship to God and the Lamb (Rev 7:9-10). Out of this unity comes a question from the elders to the Seer: "who are these clothed in white robes, and from where have they come? (Rev 7:13). The answer to the Seer brings together the following conditions: 1) they will have robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, 2) God will shelter them with his presence, 3) they shall hunger and thirst no more (Rev 7:14-17). Space does not allow us to draw out of the intertextual relationships found here (Isa 4:5-6; Isa 49:10; Ps 121:6). The promises of shelter for God's people, including Israel find their culmination in the place before God's throne.

The New covenant relationship established through Jesus ultimately re-establishes what was lost. Specifically, identity and place are finally united in the New Heavens and the New Earth. The final consummation of all things results in a final destination where wandering and displacement ends. The inhabitants of the city that comes down from heaven dwell with God's presence as Jesus is the co-inhabitant of the city.⁴³ Revelation details the provision of a final destination for wanderers: the New Jerusalem, the New Heavens and the New Earth (Revelation 21).⁴⁴

⁴³ "Place is never fully place without God as co-inhabitant." Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 31.

⁴⁴ Although Revelation makes many references to provision of food and clothing, they are found together.

3.4 Summary

To summarize, the New covenant community's identity finds great continuity with the salvation-history of Israel. Jesus, Paul, and James all view food and clothing as an important provision for those in the New covenant community. In each of the teachings about food and clothing, the imperatives are based on indicatives about the wandering status of the people of God. Jesus teaches on the Mount that his disciples possess something more than life, so they should not worry about the basic necessities of life. They possess a homeland by faith that they do not yet see. Of course, this provision is not guaranteed absolutely until the restoration of all things. Paul himself takes pains to describe his condition of being naked and hungry for the sake of the gospel (2 Cor 11:27). Perhaps we can conclude that God's provision of food and clothing is not guaranteed in this life, but it is normative. In addition, there is no difficulty in noting that faith in God's provision (Matt 6:25-26) does not exclude the means of people giving to those in need (Jam 2:14-17).

Conclusion

What is surprising about the results of this study is that the provision of food and clothing plays a minor of but significant role in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New Covenants. In Deuteronomy 10, Yahweh's own righteous character is based on his provision of such things for the wanderer. On the one hand, human needs are quite narrow and no provision for shelter or housing is given. While family units of Christians should view living in a house as normative, it should not be a surprise or shock when this is not the case. On the other hand, those who lack food and shelter may have grounds for a *holy* discontentment. This too must be qualified with the fact that Paul himself went naked and hungry for the sake of the gospel (2 Cor 11:27). Yet, there is a sense in which contentment is not purely spiritual. As William D. Mounce states, "1 Tim 6:8 limits human needs to food and clothing, and therein lies God's obligation."⁴⁵ And when we hear the message of James correctly, those who have a living faith will seek to act on God's behalf by providing food and clothing to those in need.

When we place the saying in 1 Tim 6:8 in the canonical context, we see a larger and more significant pattern at work. Yahweh's people have always been on the move—"wandering about in de-

⁴⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 366.

serts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:38). The silence about shelter or housing for God’s people is continually deafening. But the silence about such provision only highlights the tenor of texts such as Revelation 21 that describe the eternal city. The people of God possess no permanent home. But they move toward the New Jerusalem—their permanent city and homeland. Until they reach that destination they only need the basics: food and clothing. The wide canonical and salvation-historical pattern through the successive covenants of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus points to the idea that: *until the consummation of all things, God’s people are pilgrims on this earth and their identity as wanderers is the basis for God’s simple provision of food and clothing.*