

Rooted in God's Word

Bible Overview

Your Name

**For everything that
was written in the
past was written to
teach us, so that
through the
endurance taught in
the Scriptures and
the encouragement
they provide we
might have hope.**

Romans 15:4

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Intro

The Bible

**66
books**

**40+
authors**

Written
over
**2000
yrs**

**Multiple
styles**

Why this series?

As Christians we believe that the bible is the word of God – it is the one true story of God, the world and us. God does not hide himself from us, but rather reveals himself to us through his scripture through the power of the Spirit. The bible is much more than just a book or a story. It is the key to understanding our place in the world and is our way of understanding and knowing God all the better.

All of us will feel that it is not always easy to read the bible or see what it is trying to tell us. Even Peter felt that about Paul's letters!

[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Pet 3:16

Part of the reason for this is that the overarching story is not always clear to us and so we are lost before we start. The main aim of this resource is to help us understand the big picture of the bible, so we can see the big themes

Seeing the Big Picture

Each section will have a page which summarises the narrative in that part of the bible

Understanding What it Means

There is also a section summarising what each section teaches us – based on talks given at Youth

Applying it to your life

Each section ends with some questions to think about that help you figure out what it means for your life

Why Study the Bible?

The Truth

About God, the world and humanity

All your words are true

Psalm 119:160

All Scripture is God-breathed

2 Tim 3:16

All About Jesus

**You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me...
...if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.**

John 5:39,46

Relevant

for how we live –
the power to
change our lives

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

Is the bible true or even relevant?



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



Have you always trusted the bible?

When was the first time you trusted what
the bible said?

It was written by over 40 human authors – are they
trustworthy?

Aren't there lots of books that have been excluded?

Is the bible relevant today when it was written
such a long time ago?

Isn't it complicated / boring
to read?

NOTES



Lined writing area for notes.

PRAYER POINTS



Lined writing area for prayer points.

QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

Lined writing area for questions on your mind.

The God Who Made it All

Genesis 1-2

**In the beginning God
created the heavens
and the earth.**

Genesis 1:1

The Timeline

Day 1

God
created
light, day
and night



Day 2

God
created
the sky



Day 3

God
created
land and
vegetation



Day 4

God created
the sun,
moon and
stars



God created by speaking

Many times God said, "it was good"

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Colossians 1:15-16

Day 5

God created fish and birds



Day 6

God created animals and, in his image, humanity



Day 7

God rested



Humans created in God's image and given responsibility to take care of creation

God saw "it was very good"

The God Who Made it All

KEY POINTS

- **It all starts with God** – active, powerful but also personal and relational (as a Trinity)
- **Humanity is the pinnacle of God's creation** with value in our identity and a clear role in God's world

Read the Bible Genesis 1:1-2:3

Intro

I wonder what your favourite subject is? When I was at school, my favourite subjects were always the sciences because just loved finding out how the world works and I'm a bit of a nerd! And one of the things I always wondered was how did the great scientists come up with their ideas.

- How did Newton figure out so much about motion?
- How did Einstein figure out the laws of relativity and gravity?

Now, maybe you don't like science but maybe you do have a favourite author, musician, artist or sportsperson – do you ever wonder how they came up with ideas for their books, their music, their art or how they come up with their gamechangers?

The God who Made it All

As great as all of those people are, today, we have the privilege of getting to know God, the one who made the whole universe. The one who invented the whole thing into existence. The one who came up with all of the ideas that Einstein, that Newton that any of those heroes had, before they were even born. Our heroes had the world and other people for their inspiration – God inventing everything out of nothing!

He is the one we meet today in this first chapter of scripture

Before we go ahead and do that, I want to recognise that there is a lot of disagreement and questions that people have about this bit of scripture. Between scientists and Christians; and even between bible-believing Christians.

- Does genesis 1 contradict what science is saying?
- Are the days seven literal days?
- And many more...

We don't have time to go into those debates in detail now but do speak to your leaders if you have questions on that

Those debates are important but most Christians would agree that the primary focus of genesis 1 is to answer different questions and reveals truths of far bigger consequences than those that science points to

- The question of who is this God who made it all?
- The question of who are we? And why are we here?

Science is focussed on observing very specific things and can't answer these big questions. That is what we are going to explore in this chapter and marvel in the wonder of it all because it is exceptional and amazing! And I hope that you will see the wonder of all of that in what we look at today. It may only be a limited number of verses but there is so much truth packed in – so let's get stuck in!

If you go through Genesis 1:1-2:3 and highlight everything God does, you will see that God is active and the central character of this first chapter of the bible. He creates, He speaks, He delight, He separates, He Names, He blesses, He rests and so on...

What does that show us about him and his character and nature?



He's Perpetual

The first thing we learn about God is that he's perpetual – that he simply is!

In the beginning, God... – Genesis 1:1

The bible doesn't try and prove that God exists. What we learn is that he has always been there – he was there before the creation of the world. He has always been and will be forever more.

He's Powerful

The second thing we learn about God is that he is unbelievably powerful. He creates the whole universe by speaking! Every day of creation God says, "let their be"...and it was so. Have a look at Genesis 1

- v3 – let there be light
- V6 – let there be a vault (or the sky)
- V9 – let the waters gather (to create the land and seas)
- V11 – let the land product vegetation
- V14 – let there be lights in the sky (to create the sun, moon and stars)
- V20 – let the waters teem with life and let the birds fly
- V24 – let the land produce living creatures
- V26 – let us make mankind

It shows us the power of his word – through it, God made the whole universe! Just to bring it to life look at v16 – "he also made the stars". What a crazy understatement – the billions of stars in the night sky that many people devote their lives to studying and understanding – all covered in just 5 words! It shows that he is above everything – he is more powerful than anything that he created. This is completely different to many other belief systems, who worship nature

He's Personal

In spite of all of this power, we also discover that God is personal – he's amazingly involved in his creation and cares about it! Three examples of where we see that:

- i) He names things – look down at Genesis 1:5 – he names the day and the night – he is intimately involved in what he has made
- ii) He delights in what he creates – again and again we hear God say that what he has created is good! He cares that he is careful and meticulous in making something good
- iii) He is a trinity – he is one God but three persons – we see this in v26 where God says “let us”, we see it in verse 2 where we see the Spirit of God hovering over the waters.

On that last point you may be wondering how is Jesus involved in all of this! To understand that we have to go to the New Testament where it says

For in him [Jesus] all things were created...all things have been created through him and for him.

Colossians 1:16

You see – it's clear – everything is made through him and everything is made for him! He is right at the heart of creation and actually all of creation for Jesus!

He's Provider

We also discover that God is a provider and his creation is unbelievably generous to those who inhabit it. He blesses living things and people in v22 and v28 and wants them to be fruitful in number and to multiply to fill the earth! And in v29-30 he gives people and all living creatures food to eat

He's Perfect

The last thing we learn about God is that he is perfect.

God saw all that He had made, and it was very good

Genesis 1:31

There is no hint of death or decay or hate or oppression in these verses to mention!

So what do we learn about the God who Made it All – he is a God who is perpetual, powerful, personal, provider and perfect. And he doesn't hide it – creation itself doesn't hide it

The heavens declare the glory of the God, the skies proclaim the works of his hands

Psalms 19:1

When I see a beautiful place, the mountains, the sea, the sky, I am amazed by the beauty of it and the wonder of it and I am more amazed by who God is because it is all pointing the God who made it all! Next time you see something amazing, remember that!

What Truths Do We Learn About Humanity

Made in God's Image

We also learn lots about humanity - both about who we are and why we're here. The first thing we learn is that we are made in God's image - look down at verse 27

God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them - Genesis 1:26-27

It doesn't matter whether you are young or old, black or white, short or tall or any of those things. God is a God of diversity and each and every one of us is made in his image. That should have a big impact on how we view ourselves and those around us. Christians should have be completely different to others and shouldn't discriminate against other people because everyone is made in the image of God.

We Matter to God

Secondly - we see that we matter to God. We've already seen that God provides for us by blessing us and providing us with food but there is more than that - God is intimately involved in giving us life. See in chapter 2 verse 7 - God breathes life in Adam's nostrils.

I don't know how much you know about knitting?! It's not a skill that I have but I do know that you have to use your hands to do it, that you get very close to what you're making, that you need to take care to do it in the right way (otherwise it all unravels) and that it takes time...in short, it's a lot of effort. Yet, that is exactly the image used of God in Psalm 139 when he is forming each and every one of us inside our mothers womb. He cares intimately about us and we matter to him - that is a truth worth clinging onto!

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mothers womb
Psalm 139:13

We Have a Job to Do

Lastly, we see that God has given us a job to do - look at verse 28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. - Genesis 1:28

God gives humanity the responsibility to rule over creation and take care of it on behalf of God. This should have big implications for us as we think about how Christians should respond to climate change and the environment

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Made it All

What truths do we learn about God?

Read Genesis 1

- He is active, powerful but also personal and relational
- God is a Trinity – One God, Three Persons
- His power is his word
- He is above everything that he has made

How does Jesus fit in?

Colossians 1:16

John 1

- Jesus is the agent of creation.
- Everything was created through him and for him

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Genesis 1:26-29

- We are the pinnacle of creation
- We are made in God's image
- We have a role to rule over creation

How should we respond?

- To have the right view of God as a generous but powerful provider
- To have the right view of ourselves and treat others and the world around us in that light

Questions to Think About

?

- Highlight every time God does something in Genesis 1. What does this teach you about who God is?
- What is special about humanity? How does this mean we should relate to
 - i) God
 - ii) Other people
 - iii) Creation?
- How does Genesis 1 help us work out a Christian response to
 - a) Climate Change
 - b) Racial Inequality?
- How you would explain the Christian view of creation to a non-Christian friend?

Identity: Equality and Our Worth



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



Who does the bible say we are?

Why should Christians care about equality?

How does this apply to racial equality?

What does the bible say about our role in the world?

**How should this shape our response to climate
change?**

NOTES



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PRAYER POINTS



A large, light beige rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing prayer points.

QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

A large, light beige rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing questions on your mind.

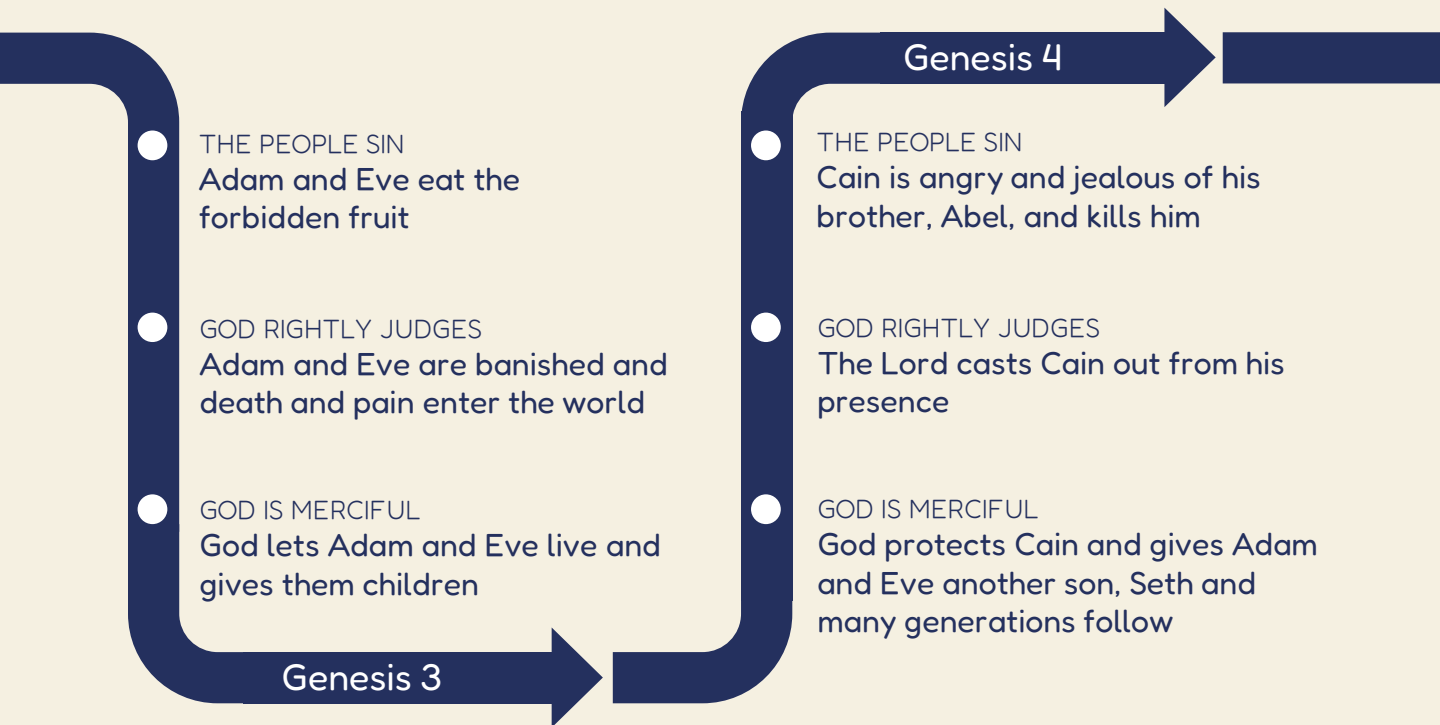
The God Who is Patient with Rebels

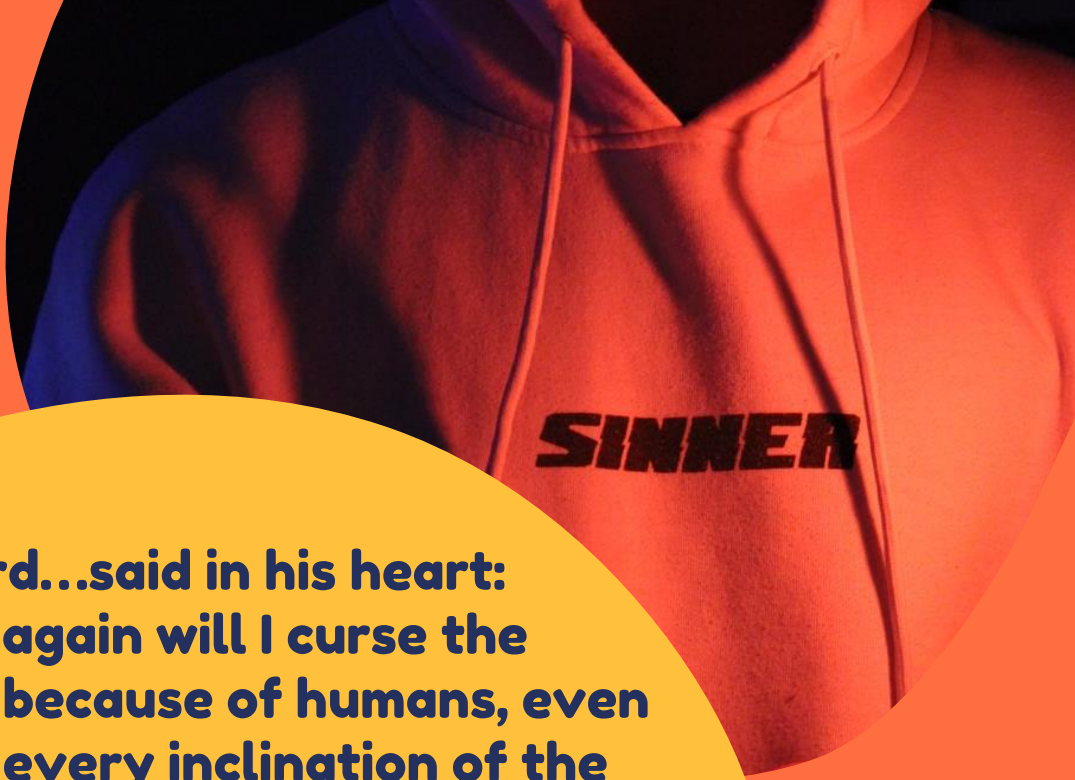
Genesis 3-11

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time

Genesis 6:5

The Timeline





**The Lord...said in his heart:
“Never again will I curse the
ground because of humans, even
though every inclination of the
human heart is evil from
childhood.**

Genesis 8:21

Genesis 10-11

- THE PEOPLE SIN
People had corrupted their ways
and the world was full of violence
- GOD RIGHTLY JUDGES
God sends a flood to destroy the
earth
- GOD IS MERCIFUL
God lets Noah’s family and the ark
live and renews the world

Genesis 5-9

- THE PEOPLE SIN
People build a tower to the heavens
to make a name for themselves
- GOD RIGHTLY JUDGES
God confuses their language and
scatters the people across the world
- GOD IS MERCIFUL
God makes great promises to
Abraham (see later!)

The God who is Patient with Rebels

KEY POINTS

- **Our hearts are sinful** – we think we know best and want to take control
- **Sin's consequences are disastrous** breaking relationships
- **God's grace restores** – he is always the one to pull us out of the mess

Read the Bible Genesis 3

Intro

They say it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert in something

I wonder what sort of things you're an expert at?

- Playing an instrument perhaps?
- Maybe winning at games on your phone?
- Or playing sport?
- Or maybe eating tasty food?!

Well today I am very experienced in the topic we'll be discussing. Actually, the sad truth is that it is that I'm an expert in what we are looking at today – sinning. And that is the case for you too.

You see it's right there in one of the bleakest verses in the whole of the bible

every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time
Genesis 6:5

Every thought, only evil, all of the time

It's a heavy topic and when I was looking into becoming a Christian I thought it was offensive. Not only do these Christian people want me to follow Jesus but they think I'm evil! Despite this shock, it's vital that we understand the depth of our sin because unless we do that we can't appreciate what Jesus has done for us. So that's what we will look at in this chunk – the first sin and the consequences that follow.

In the last chapter, we were marvelling in the glory of creation – a creation which reveals the glory of our God, who we saw is perpetual, powerful, personal, provider and perfect. So amazing is he that all creation declares his glory.

On top of that we saw that we as humans are the pinnacle of God's creation - Made in God's image; We matter to God; and we are given a responsibility to rule over the world under God

But much like a lottery winner who spent all of their riches on things that don't last; the first humans took everything good that God gave them and rejected it

So, let's get stuck into Genesis 3 to see what went wrong.

The Serpent

Immediately we see that we are introduced to a new character, the serpent

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made – Genesis 3:1

We later learn he is Satan. He is the one who prompts Adam and Eve to sin. There are two things to keep in mind here about Satan and the serpent

- 1) The verse is very clear that the serpent is a created being – he is not equal to God – he is under God and inferior to him
- 2) We also know that at the start creation was 'very good' with no evil, which I know will lead to all sorts of questions such as where did he come from? How did the serpent fall? These are big questions – please speak to a Christian friend or leader to help you grapple with them!

The First Sin

There are four characteristics of the first ever sin and they form a bit of a pattern for all sins that follow – we'll take a look at each in turn



Doubting God's Word

Have a look at what the serpent says in the second half of verse 1 –

Did God really say, "you must not eat from any tree in the garden?"
Genesis 3:1

It is the first question in the bible – asked with just the right amount of doubt and scepticism to cause an element of doubt in Eve's mind. Did God really say that? Did he really restrict you like that? Two disturbing things about Satan's question

- 1) **He elevates** – he smuggles in the assumption that we as humans can judge what God has said
- 2) **He exaggerates** – God did forbid one fruit but Satan says – "Did God really say that you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" – he is painting God out to be a spoilsport who wants to restrict Adam and Eve

When do we doubt God's word? When we don't like what it says? When it challenges us?

Doubting God's Goodness

Which leads onto the second area, doubting that God has our best interests at heart. Let's have a look at Eve's response – she starts off well enough

We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden – Genesis 3:2-3

Well said and all true enough. But then, she adds something completely new,

"and you must not touch it..." – Genesis 3:3

God hadn't said anything about this in chapter 2:17 – the only thing God forbids is eating the fruit. He doesn't say anything about touching it. It's as if God's one command has got under her skin and she is complaining about how mean God is. Aren't we like this sometimes? Complaining about God rather than thanking him for the good things he has given us? Why does God want me to do this? Why has God put me in this situation?

Now you might be thinking that Eve's response isn't that bad, is it? But what should she have said – "Get away from me! Why are you questioning God?! God is so generous to me and has given me SO much!"

Doubting God's Judgement

Thirdly doubting God's judgment. Take a look at v4

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. – Genesis 3:4

The serpent having painted God out to be a spoilsport, now paints him out to be a softy who won't follow through on what he has said. Again, do we not fall into this trap – picking and choosing which aspects of our lives we submit to God – God surely wouldn't punish me would he for that little thing?

Wanting to Be God

Fourthly, wanting to be God – replacing worship of him with worship of other goals / things. Have a look down at v5-6

"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. – Genesis 3:5-6

You see, this is right at the heart of what it means to sin – Adam and Eve wanted to be like God – they wanted and desired to be his equal – rather than acknowledging that he is far greater than they could ever be. They prioritised worship of themselves and their wisdom over worship of God. They are effectively saying, if we have this wisdom, then we don't need God and wouldn't that be great. Even though God has shown them nothing but love and generosity. That is why the betrayal is so bad.

The Consequences of Sin – Relationships Shattered

Relationship Shattered – Between Man and Woman

We see the relationship between Adam and Eve is shattered. Have a look at v7 –

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. – Genesis 3:7

They are no longer open with each other and they need to cover themselves up. They begin squabbling and blaming each other. And in v16 we see the disunity between man and woman, with love replaced by rule – “your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”

Relationship Shattered – Between Humanity and God

Secondly, breaking the relationship between themselves and God. Have a look at v8 – they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Why? V10 – they are afraid because they are naked. Hiding from the one who created you and knows everything – that’s bad enough but it gets worse – in v12 – Adam blames God – “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree”

Relationship Shattered – Between Humanity and Creation

Thirdly, we see the relationship between humanity and creation is shattered.

- There is enmity between serpent and humanity v15
- Humanity has to toil and work the ground for food v17

God’s Response

He Judges

We learn that God is a God who judges. First, he judges the serpent

- Cursed are you above all livestock v14
- You will crawl on your belly v14
- Enmity between you and the woman v15

Secondly, he judges humanity

- Pain in childbearing v16
- Painful toil of the earth v17
- Death (for dust you are and to dust you will return) v18
- And ultimately banishment from his presence v23

He’s Merciful

But we also learn that God is full of mercy. An important bible word which means not punishing someone when in reality they deserve punishment.

- He promises a serpent crusher v15 – he is promising that one day one of Eve’s descendants will come and crush the serpent and defeat evil – this is of course referring to Jesus and what he will do to evil on the last day of history
- He continues to provide Adam and Eve with clothes in v21
- He lets them live and at the start of chapter 4 they give birth to Cain and Abel – God could have wiped them out immediately but he doesn’t because of his mercy

This pattern of sin, judgment and mercy is one that we see repeating in these first few chapters of Genesis – take a look in your books on p17-18

We won't go into each of those areas in detail but you can see that it's always people who go wrong and it's always God who has to put things right. Firstly by judging (because he is perfect) but secondly and crucially by showing his grace. We will see these themes repeated throughout the bible and will come to them again

It's a grace that we see most fully in the Lord Jesus and it will take him and everything he has done to save us from our sins. Take a look at Romans 5:18-19

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass [through Adam] resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act [Jesus death] resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous. – Romans 5:18-19

We have to stare our sinfulness in the face – we have to acknowledge that it is serious – we have to acknowledge the illness of sin – if we don't do that we will never truly be healed. But the great hope that we have is that there is a doctor who can and will cure us – all we need to do is admit we are sick

PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS FOR YOUR LEADER OR FRIEND

The Checklist – The God Who is Patient with Rebels

What truths do we learn about God?

Genesis 6:5-8
Genesis 8:15-21

- God is just – he judges sin and wickedness and the consequences are broken relationships
- God is gracious – in spite of human rebellion, God by his grace restores

How does Jesus fit in?

Genesis 3:15

- Jesus is the only way to access the fullness of God's grace and forgiveness for our sins

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Genesis 6:5

- Sin entered the world through our hearts
- We desire control and want to make our own rules
- Each and every one of us is deserving of God's judgement

How should we respond?

- Repent
- Rely on Jesus for salvation

Questions to Think About



- Do we reflect Adam and Eve's sins in our lives? How?
 - i) Doubting God's word
 - ii) Doubting God's goodness
 - iii) Doubting God's judgment
 - iv) Wanting to be God
- What are the consequences of that sin?
 - a) Relationship with God
 - b) Relationship with each other?
 - c) Relationship with creation?
- How serious do you think sin in? What is the solution to this sin?

How can a good God allow sin?



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



How does God allow suffering into the world?

Is sin really a problem?

Why didn't God design a world without sin?

How can you believe in a God who is violent and judges people fiercely?

What is the answer to suffering and pain?

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The God Who Makes Outrageous Promises

Genesis 12-19

**“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”**

Genesis 12:2-3

The Timeline

Genesis 12:1-9

God calls Abram, at the age of 75, to leave his home and promises a land, a people and blessing

Genesis 15

The covenant is confirmed with a sacrifice made by God

Genesis 17

The covenant is sealed by circumcision Abram is called Abraham and Sarai is called Sarah

Genesis 12:10-20
Abram goes to Egypt, lying about Sarai, his wife, calling her his sister

Genesis 13
Abram goes to the Negev and separates from his nephew, Lot

Genesis 14
Abram rescues Lot by defeating 5 kings and gives Melchizedek, the high priest, a tenth of everything

Genesis 16
Abram has a son, Ishmael, by Hagar, Sarai's slave

Genesis 18
The Lord appears to Abraham at Mamre and Abraham intercedes for Sodom

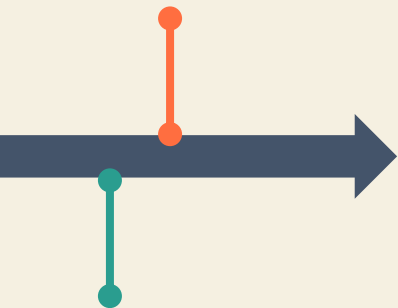


**If you belong to Christ,
then you are Abraham's
seed, and heirs according
to the promise.**

Galatians 3:29

Genesis 21

**Sarah becomes
pregnant and has a
son with Abraham,
called Isaac**



Genesis 19
Sodom
and
Gomorrah
destroyed



What is a covenant?

**A partnership where two
parties make binding promises
to each other**

In the bible, these are often made between God and his people and are accompanied by ceremonies, oaths and signs. You can think of them as the backbone of the bible story

5 Key covenants

Noah

Gen 8:20
-9:17

Abraham

Gen 12,
15, 17

Moses

Exodus
19-24

David

2 Sam 7

New

Jer 31:31-34

The God who Makes Outrageous Promises

KEY POINTS

- **Planned rescue** – God’s rescue plan was established before the creation of the world
- **Unbreakable promise** – of a flourishing kingdom (people, land and blessing) made by God to Abraham
- **We are heirs** – through the Lord Jesus, ultimately we are heirs of this promise

Read the Bible Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15:8-21

Intro

What is the biggest promise you have ever made? What about the biggest promise you have ever heard?

- Maybe it was the vows made at a wedding? Where two people who love each other commit their whole lives to loving and serving each other whatever happens?
- Or maybe you were struck recently by the promise made by the late Queen on her 21st birthday? To serve the nation for her whole life whether it be long or short Can you imagine giving your whole life to something?!

The God who Makes Outrageous Promises

Well – whatever it was – here we see a much bigger promise – a promise made by God. So far in the Bible story, we’ve seen the God who Made it All and we’ve seen the God who is Patient with Rebels. Today we see the God who Makes Outrageous Promises. So let’s dive in and see just how remarkable this promise was!

An Outrageous Promise because...

...it’s undeserved

...of it’s scale

...it’s unbreakable

...it is ours

Outrageous...because it is undeserved

Do you remember what we saw about the human heart last time?

every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time
Genesis 6:5

Every thought. Only evil. All of the time. God was right to judge humanity for this at the flood or when he confused peoples languages at the tower of Babel. He is well within his rights to wipe out humanity once and for all but he doesn't and that is remarkable enough but then he goes and makes this massive promise!

Sometimes we can lose sight of just how amazing it is that God makes promises to undeserving people. We confuse our position and relationship with God. But we would do well to remember some key truths:

- 1) **God's mind cannot be changed** – sometimes we think that our prayers or what we have done can influence God's choices but this is not true – we know that God is the same yesterday, today and forever and we know Eph 1:4 – “he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” – God's always had a rescue plan in mind this isn't a plan B
- 2) **God doesn't need us** – sometimes we can think that God created us because he was lonely and needed some creatures to look after or worse we think that by doing what he asks we are doing him some sort of favour. Both are false – God doesn't need us – he is complete and whole without us!
- 3) **We need God** – probably the most common trap we fall into is thinking that we are ok without God – that we can be independent and do things by our own strength. Nothing could be further from the truth – we rely on him for everything

Those truths in mind, we realise that God wasn't forced to make any promise but he chose to do so because he is loving and full of grace and mercy. An outrageous promise because we didn't deserve it

Outrageous...because of its scale

The second reason the promise is remarkable is because of its sheer scale and magnitude. Let's take a look at Genesis 12:2-3

*² “I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”*
Genesis 12:2-3

There are three components to that big promise crucial to this idea of a nation that God has promised to Abraham

- 1) **People** – take a look at Gen 15:5 *“Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”*
- 2) **Land** – take a look at Gen 15:18 *“To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates”* – a vast amount of land for one family! And particularly fertile land as well!
- 3) **Blessing** – flick back to Gen 12:3 *“All people on earth will be blessed through you”* – God will pour his blessings on Abraham and all people will be blessed through him!

This theme of people, land and blessing is one that is repeated throughout scripture and is one that we will come back to a few times to see just how God comes through on his promises

Outrageous...because it's unbreakable

The third reason the promise is remarkable is that it is unbreakable

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram – Genesis 15:8

That word 'Covenant' is a word to describe two people making a serious and binding promise to one another. That's what the business the animals split in two is all about in Genesis 15. God is saying if he doesn't keep it, then he will be split in two like those animals. And it doesn't depend on what Abraham or his descendants do! The promises depend only on God and his actions and we will see that come to life next time and it is very exciting

Outrageous...because it's ours too

What relevance does this promise made 1000s of years ago have to us? These promises are actually way, way bigger than Abram. These promises are promises of The Kingdom of God. It is a promise of how the effects of the fall will be reversed. The ultimate fulfilment of these promises is that God's people will live in God's place, under His rule, for all eternity.

In the new testament we are told about how Jesus is actually the person who fulfils these promises. And that, if we trust in Him, WE are inheritors of these promises too!!

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. – Galatians 3:29

That is very exciting – we are included in these promises if we believe and trust in Jesus.

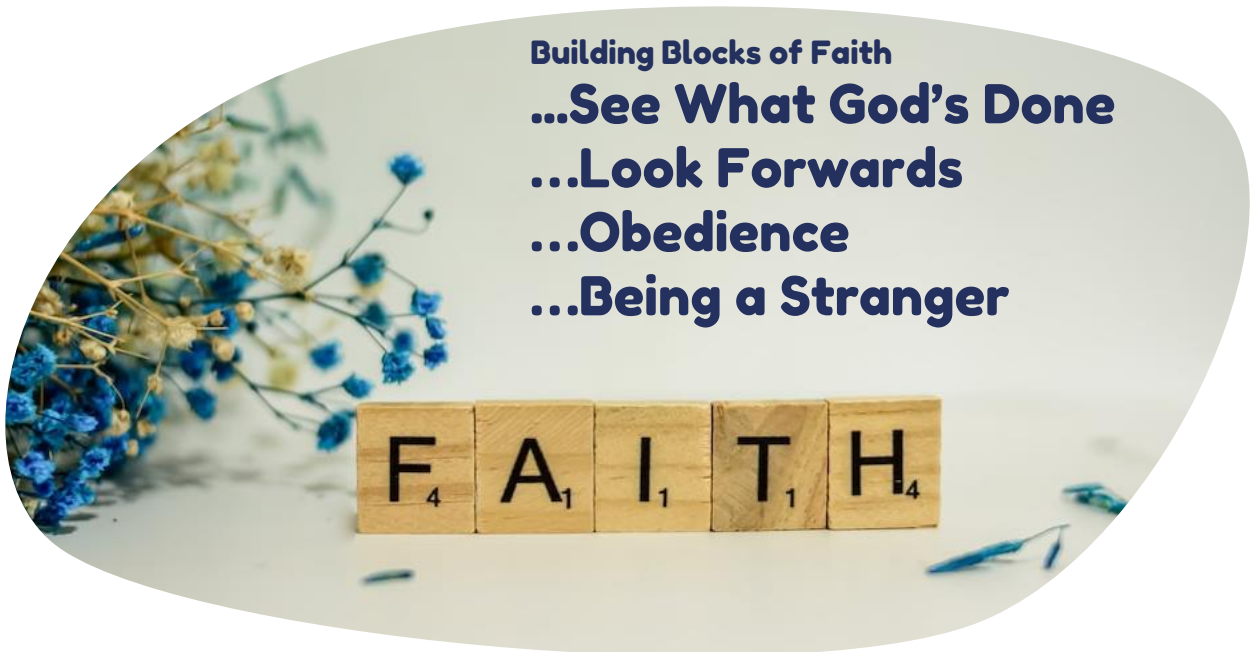
How do we believe and trust in the promises that God makes to us? Well – you can't do much better than to focus on Abraham and how he believed what God promised to him! Lets flick forwards to Hebrews to help us understand Abraham's faith all the better

Read the Bible Hebrews 11:8-19

Building Blocks of Faith – Abraham’s Example

Abraham is a brilliant role model because he is imperfect – we see him fail numerous times throughout Genesis, like the time when he pretends Sarah is his sister and Pharaoh sleeps with her. But we also see that he is righteous (seen as clean and un sinful) in the eyes of the Lord in spite of these mistakes because he believes. “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

Abraham shows us what faith in God’s promises is! What are the building blocks of his faith



See what God has done

Faith is based on looking backwards on what God has done. Some people think of faith as blind, as based on something we wish was true but as Christians our faith is based on evidence

What evidence did Abraham have?! Well – he’s seen God’s creation. A creation which reveals the glory of our God – a God who is perpetual, powerful, personal, provider and perfect. So amazing is he that all creation declares his glory (Ps 19).

Looking Forwards

Faith is based on looking forwards. It might seem crazy and people around you might think you are mad but faith is completely worth it in the end. Abraham was focussed on exactly that, the end – take a look at verse 10

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God – Heb 11:10

Abraham is able to be committed and obey God because he is fixing his gaze on the future. A future world where God’s promises to us will be fulfilled. The remarkable promise of a people, land and blessings that we were just looking at!

A time when Gods people will live in God's place, under his rule for all eternity – where there will be no suffering or pain and we will be in his presence! What do you spend your time worrying about? Do you have your eyes fixed on eternity and the perfect world God promises in the new creation?

Obedience

Abraham shows us that faith leads to obedience. The key to obedience is all about looking at God has done and what he will do! But it doesn't stop with just nice thoughts. It leads Abraham to obey God in his actions – see v8

by faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going
Heb 11:8

God commands Abraham and Sarah, to get up and go, on a very long journey, without what? A map, which if you think about it, is bonkers? In today's world it would be God saying, right get up and go, but leave your phone or satnav behind.

Sarah, is described in verse 11, as past childbearing age, which if you read Genesis, you think, absolutely right, she's 90 years old. And Abraham, how is he described in v12 – “And so from this one man, and he as good as dead”. Which again, when you read Genesis, you find out that Abraham is 100. Two old lifeless bodies, will give life and have a son – that's what God is asking them to believe. But even bigger than that, God says their decedents will be, 11:12, as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

To the eye it seems crazy, out of your mind. What do you think their neighbours said when the 'For Sale' sign went up outside their house?

Neighbour - “Oh, alright Abe, where you off to then, new job, promotion”

Abraham - “No, actually we are taking God at his word, and leaving home.

Neighbour – “Oh, OK, and where's that then”?

Abraham – “Oh, not sure yet”.

Neighbour – “Sorry, you're not sure!!! A God you can't see, has called you to a place you can't see. Sounds like pie in the sky to me Abe – aren't you all a bit too old for all that”

Abraham's response might have been, well they can see the For Sale sign, jolly glad they can't see the maternity bag all packed. But here's Abraham and Sarah, teaching us how to hold onto God's commands, and promises,

God commanded Abraham to go. What commitment is God asking of us. Well, it is to believe and trust in him! Have you believed and trusted in him?

Being a Stranger

Faith means being ok to be a stranger

Q. Did you notice how Abraham and Sarah's were described from the passage we just had read to us?

⁹By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country...¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. – Heb 11:9,13

As foreigners and strangers. The author of Hebrews is saying, as a Christian, that's how you should feel, not because of your ethnicity, class etc, but because of your identity as a child of God.

In this world your daily experience should be the feeling that you are different, not because you are better or superior in any way to others, but because you follow Jesus, and what he says is always number 1.

- Number one, when it comes to making decisions about, how you spend your money and time.
- Number one, when it comes to how you approach your studies or work
- Number one when it comes to how you relate to your body
- Number one when it comes to how you treat those around you

If you do that, you'll truly stand out from the rest of the world. Abraham and Sarah made God #1 in their lives and listened to him. Are you willing to be a stranger by making Jesus Number 1 in your life?

So, believe and trust in Him!

Abraham would have known God's character as creator, he would have known God's judgment from the flood he had sent, and he would have known God's mercy because God saved Noah and his family and so he believed in God's promises/

But we have so much more evidence of what God has already done in the world than what Abraham had. And it's all here in the Bible. So soak it up and put your belief and trust in Jesus!

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Makes Outrageous Promises

What truths do we learn about God?

Genesis 12, 15 and 17

How does Jesus fit in?

Galatians 3:14-16, 26-29

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Gen 16; Gal 3:29

How should we respond?

- God has a rescue plan that he established before the creation of the world
- God makes unbreakable promises that depend on him alone
- It is his choice and will
- Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham
- If we belong to Christ, we are children of God through faith and ultimately all heirs of the promises to Abraham
- God works through his people and he chooses sinners to work out his plans (Abraham had good qualities but he was far from perfect!)
- Believers are heirs of Abrahams promise
- We should accept Christ in our lives to enjoy the promises to Abraham

Questions to Think About

?

- What does God promise to Abraham?
- How do you feel about God's promise? What have you done to deserve these promises?
- Acts 17:24-25
 - A) Can God be manipulated?
 - B) Does God need us?
 - C) Do we need God?How do these truths help us understand the significance of the promises?
- What big promises does God make to you? e.g. John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Philippians 4:6-7

The God Who Keeps His Promises

Genesis 22-Joshua

You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed

Joshua 23:14



TABERNACLE

An elaborate tent structure at the centre of the Israelite camp where God comes to dwell (Ex 29:45-46)

13 chapters in Exodus detail the construction of the tabernacle¹ – God's dwelling place must be just right. Behind a curtain in the tabernacle is the Most Holy Place, containing the ark of the covenant, a gold covered chest, containing the tablets of the ten commandments



LAW

God gave the law through the ten commandments to show Israel how to enjoy life as redeemed people (Ex 19-20)

God first saved Israel and then gave the law. The law reveals the character and standards of God, reveals our sin and so reveals our need for a saviour



SACRIFICE

The system of sacrifice was designed to deal with Israel's sin, with animals taking the judgment they deserved (Lev 16)

Sacrifices are offered in the tabernacle everyday for the sins of the people. Every year on the Day of Atonement, there is a special ceremony – the only day that the High Priest is allowed in the most holy place



PRIESTS

The priests stood in for the Israelites as go-betweens, responsible for sacrifices, praying, teaching and even finding out God's will for them (Ex:28)

God calls all Israel to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6) but specifically singles out Aaron and his sons to serve as priests with this privileged position

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

Genesis 22-36

God works through a dysfunctional family

- God tests Abraham by demanding he sacrifice Isaac but spares him and a ram is sacrificed instead
- **Twins** Isaac married Rebekah and they have twins, Esau and Jacob
- **Trickery** Jacob tricks Isaac into giving him the blessing that should have gone to the older brother, Esau
- Jacob has 12 children, who are to become the 12 tribes of Israel
- **Treachery** Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons and Joseph taunted them until they sold him into slavery to Egypt
- The Lord was with Joseph and he rose to a high position in Egypt – his family joined him when there was a famine in the land

Persecution The Israelites grew in number, so the Egyptian leader, Pharaoh, oppressed them

Moses (an Israelite) is raised by Pharaoh's daughter but flees from Egypt after killing an Egyptian

Presence God appears to Moses at the burning bush revealing his name, Yahweh ("I am who I am") and God sends him to Pharaoh

Plagues God warns Pharaoh to "let his people go" and when Pharaoh refuses, God sends 10 plagues on Egypt

Passover God substitutes punishment on the Israelites with the sacrifice of a pure lamb

Parting of the Red Sea God clears a way for the Israelites and finally defeats the Egyptian army

Salvation from Egypt

Exodus 1-15

God rescues the Israelites from the Egyptians

Blessings at Mt Sinai

Exodus 16-40,
Leviticus,
Numbers 1-10

God blesses the Israelites but they reject him

- **Grumbling** the Israelites complain about the lack of food and water, wishing they were back in Egypt
- **God provides** manna, quail and water
- **Giving of the Law** God gives the Israelites the 10 commandments
- God plans for the tabernacle, where he can dwell with his people
- **Golden calf** Israel breaks God's law by worshipping an idol

Whining The Israelites complain about God's gifts

Wandering in the Wilderness God prohibits the grumbling generation from seeing the promised land

Joshua appointed by God to get the people into the promised land

Watching Joshua sends spies, who were protected by Rahab, the prostitute

Waging War with God's help, the Israelites conquered the land, including the fall of the walls of Jericho

The Israelites settle in the land

Journey and Conquest

Numbers 11-36,
Deuteronomy, Joshua

God leads the Israelites into the land defeating their enemies

The God who Keeps His Promises

KEY POINTS

- **God is supreme and trustworthy** – He keeps his promises and is more powerful than the most powerful humans
- **People are flaky and unfaithful** – The people grumble and complain and turn back from God
- **We can access God's blessings through Jesus** – we no longer need the rituals and ceremonies to relate with God

Read the Bible Psalm 105

Intro

We're at the 4th chunk of our bible overview and we've spent all of the time so far in Genesis and even then not even half through!! You might be wondering if you we are ever going to be done!

It's been really good to spend the time in Genesis because the accounts of creation and the fall and the promises God makes to Abraham form such a strong foundation for the story to come. They reveal deep and profound truths about who God is and who we are. We've seen that God Made it All, that he is Patient with rebels and that he makes big promises!

But today we will see the God who Keeps His Promises and to do that we are accelerating and covering a vast swathe of Israel's history all the way from Abraham in Genesis 20 all the way through the conquest all of the land by the book of Joshua. There are some mega blockbuster old testament events, ideas and concepts that come up in this period and I am very glad that King David wrote Psalm 105 for us to give us a bit of an overview of what happened. We'll use the Psalm to help us but we will be darting around those books as well, so be prepared.

The God who Keeps His Promises

There is a lot that happens in this chunk of scripture – if you want a quick overview turn back a page and read what it says on p38. The big theme of Psalm 105 and this whole chunk of the bible is how God keeps his promises – look at verse 8,

He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations – Ps 105:8

What about you? Have you ever made a promise that you didn't keep?

- Maybe you didn't mean it when you said it like some of our politicians!
- Or maybe you really wanted to keep it but couldn't. You might even have gone out of your way to try and keep it but for whatever reason, you couldn't. The bus was late, there was a global shortage of the product you wanted, circumstances changed.

Well today we see that God always keeps his promises to his people – he isn't like us at all – his word is true and endures forever. And because he is who he is – he delivers on his promises!

Look at what Joshua says just before he dies, when God has delivered the Israelites into the promised land –

You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. – Joshua 23:14

Not one promise has been broken. Do you remember the outrageous promises God made to Abraham? Of People, Blessing and Land? Well, they have all been fulfilled!

Promise Kept – People

Take a look at Psalm 105

- V14 – *He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings:*
- V24 – *The Lord made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes,*
- V37 – *He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold, and from among their tribes no one faltered.*

God made them into a large nation of people from one family and when they were oppressed by the Egyptians he saved them out of their slavery

Promise Kept – Land

- Have a look at v44 “he gave them the lands of the nations”

The Israelites were a rag-tag assortment of slaves – and had limited (if any) military might. But again and again the Lord won them victories until they took possession of the promised land under Joshua

Promise Kept – Blessing

God also blesses his people. You can see it partly in verse 45 – he gives them the land, so

- v45 – *that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws.*

God want to bless his people with his presence

- Exodus 29:45 – “I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God”

The Israelites are unbelievably blessed by God but there is a problem – he is perfectly holy and they are sinners. But God blesses them so they can have access to him. This is why God establishes the system of sacrifice, priesthood and the tabernacle – so that he can make his dwelling among them without destroying them! More on those things in a bit!

So God came through on his promises – he grew a people, he delivered them a land and he blessed them by making them distinct and making his dwelling among them. Let's spend a bit of time thinking about how God fulfilled those promises and that will help us to learn more about who he is!

...because He is Powerful

These books reveal just how much power God has over the world. We already saw in v14 that God rebuked kings and allowed no-one to oppress Isaac, Jacob and Joseph but then in Exodus, God takes on Egypt. They were the most powerful nation of the time. They built the pyramids – massive monuments that showed their power and might above all nations around them. But God defeats them.

⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his army
he has hurled into the sea.

The best of Pharaoh's officers
are drowned in the Red Sea.

⁵ The deep waters have covered them;
they sank to the depths like a stone.

⁶ Your right hand, Lord,
was majestic in power.
Your right hand, Lord,
shattered the enemy.

Exodus 15:4-6

i.e. he is more powerful than the most powerful nations in the world. We might look at the world and marvel at the might of the USA or of Russia but God is greater!

Now you might think that the plagues are slightly random what's all this business about frogs and gnats?! God not only takes on the rulers and the kingdom of Egypt but he also takes on the gods of Egypt and again he triumphs! I'm no Egyptologist but take a look at the plagues – they all show that God is more powerful than the corresponding Egyptian God. Take a look in Psalm 105

- v28 When God sent darkness, He showed Himself greater than Ra (the sun God) and Nut (the sky goddess).
- v29 When God turned their waters into blood, He showed Himself greater than Osiris (god of the Nile) and Khnum (the guardian of the Nile).
- v30 When God made their land abound with frogs, He showed Himself greater than the goddess Hekt (the frog-goddess of fertility).
- v31 When God sent swarms of flies and gnats, He showed Himself greater than the fly-god Uatchit.
- v32 When God sent hail for rain, He showed Himself greater than Geb, the god of the earth; Nepri, the goddess of grain; and Anubis, the guardian of the fields.
- v34 When God sent locusts without number, He showed Himself greater than Shu, the god of the atmosphere, and Min, the deity of the harvest.

God was sending a message to the Egyptians and to his people that there are no other Gods before him – he is the most powerful.

And then in v36, God brings the last and most devastating plague – striking down the firstborn. It is a fate deserved by all families – including those of the Israelites but God gives the Israelite families a way to be spared. A spotless blemishless lamb is to take the place of the firstborn – God saves his people by letting the lamb take the punishing

...by choosing sinners

We also learn that God works his plan out through sinners. He chooses imperfect people to work out his plan. For example, he works through Israel – there was nothing special about the nation of Israel. He works through them in spite of their sin.

⁶ Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.
– Deut 9:6

This applies to the big heroes of the bible as well, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua – yes they had their pluses but they were also deeply flawed and all of their successes come from God. Take Joseph for example. His brothers sell him into slavery but the Lord was with Joseph it says many times *“The Lord was with Joseph”* (Ex 39:2, 3, 21, 23) – even when the odds seem against him – when he is in slavery, when he is falsely thrown into prison but even so because the Lord is with him, he is put in charge of Egypt

He actually also works through the Egyptians. See Exodus 9:16, where God says to Pharaoh

¹⁶ But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.
– Ex 9:16

...reflecting his holiness

The other thing we learn about God in how he fulfils his promises is his holiness

*Who among the gods
is like you, Lord?
Who is like you—
majestic in holiness,
– Ex 15:11*

What does it mean for God to be holy? In the bible it says God is Holy, Holy, Holy (Isaiah 6:3) – so holy, that the angels repeat it three times. So what does it mean?

- Firstly, It means he is completely separate and different to all others. Completely in a class of his own. Not even comparable
- Secondly, it means he is morally pure
- Thirdly, he is holy all the way through – there is no part of him that is not holy

We see God's holiness through the giving of his law which reflect his holy and perfect character. We can think of God's laws as restrictive or burdensome – but actually they are a big blessing to us. They reveal his holiness and his character And if you think about it they provide freedom

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome – 1 Jn 5:3

If murder or stealing or adultery were ok, would we feel safe to live our lives?!
These laws provide freedom

But God's holiness creates a problem – he is so holy and his people are so sinful that if they were to come into his presence, they would be destroyed – see what God says to Moses when Moses asks to see his glory

you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live. – Ex 33:20

But God wants to make his dwelling among his people and bless them with his presence so God sets up a whole system for the Israelites so that he can be with them without destroying them

- There's the **tabernacle** - an elaborate tent structure at the centre of the Israelite camp where God comes to dwell. There are 13 chapters in Exodus detail the construction of the tabernacle¹ – God's dwelling place must be just right, Behind a curtain in the tabernacle is the Most Holy Place, containing the ark of the covenant, a gold covered chest, containing the tablets of the ten commandments
- There's the system of **sacrifice** which was designed to deal with Israel's sin, with animals taking the judgment instead of them - Sacrifices are offered in the tabernacle everyday for the sins of the people. Every year on the Day of Atonement, there is a special ceremony – the only day that the High Priest is allowed in the most holy place
- And lastly there are the **priests** – who stood in for the Israelites as go-betweens, responsible for sacrifices, praying, teaching and even finding out God's will for them – God calls all Israel to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6) but specifically singles out Aaron and his sons to serve as priests with this privileged position

But there are big limitations to the way this is all set up. Access to God remains limited! Only the Israelites have God dwell among them (and even within the Israelites only a very small number of people can be in God's presence for a very short amount of time!) Sacrifice of animals (even perfect lambs) do not fully compensate for the sins of humans. What's more is that evil continues to abound.

That's where the Lord Jesus comes in

- **Saving by Substitution**
He is the perfect Passover Lamb, who takes on the sin of the whole world as he dies on the cross - just as the Israelites were spared death by a Lamb dying instead, so we are spared death by Jesus dying for us
- **Saving by Defeating the Enemy**
On his return when he will destroy evil once and for all – just as God destroyed the enemy of the Israelites, the Egyptians, so God will destroy evil once and for all
- **Providing Access to God**
Jesus through what he's done smashes open access to God through him – as it says in John, he is the way the truth and the life. He is the perfect priest and sacrifice – as you will see in Hebrews 10. And rather than God making his dwelling in the tabernacle – God makes his dwelling in his people through the Holy Spirit

Read the Bible Psalm 106

The People who Are Flaky

If God is supreme, trustworthy and keeps his promises, then the people of Israel are anything but that! The contrast between Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 could not be greater – it's astonishing! God is trustworthy but his people are flaky and forgetful.

The psalmist (that's what you call the person who wrote the psalm) admits his sin and that of his ancestors

*"We have sinned, even as our ancestors did;
we have done wrong and acted wickedly"*

– Ps 106:6

The writer of the psalm wasn't there with his ancestors he wasn't even born and it could seem like he is pointing the finger at them. But actually he is looking in the mirror and seeing that he is not that different from his ancestors – he is a sinner too – We have done wrong and acted wickedly. Should we lift up the mirror as well and see if we reflect the sin of the Israelites? Lets have a look at the nature of their sin.

They forget

It all starts with forgetfulness

*"they gave no thought to your miracles;
they did not remember your many kindnesses"*

– Ps 106:7

These Israelites had seen all of the miracles that God had done – the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea and yet they forgot! It wasn't that they didn't believe in God or that they didn't believe that he was good but they simply forgot.

It's easy to think the Israelites were a bit daft but are we not like the Israelites sometimes – quick to forget what God has done for us? We might remember today but we are very quick to forget! When the week starts and you're back at school, seeing all your friends – it's easy to let the world take over. This is why it's so important that you read your bible and fill your mind and your life with all of the things God has done. I don't know how many of you make a habit of regularly reading the bible but why not pick it up? Now is a good a time as any! Don't forget like the Israelites forgot. We're not saved by reading the bible but we won't grow unless we do!

They're ungrateful

The second sin is that of being ungrateful with God's goodness

*"In the desert they gave in to their craving;
in the wilderness they put God to the test."*

– Ps 106:14

This is talking about the time where the Israelites complain about the food God has given them for their journey. In Numbers 11:4-5, it says

⁴ The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat!"⁵ We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

Numbers 11:4-5

They are unsatisfied with what God has given them and want more! Isn't that like Adam and Eve in the garden who were given every fruit in the garden apart from one and they crave and eventually eat the one that they can't have. God is happy to give them what they want but he warns them it won't satisfy them and eventually they fall ill

"So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease among them."

Psalm 106:15

Again do we not think like this sometimes. Just as the Israelites look to slavery in Egypt with fond eyes, do we not sometimes look at non-Christians and think that it is better for them.

But it is not so. God has given us so many gifts and riches. We are so much more lucky than the non-Christians around us – we know that the Lord Jesus died for us guaranteeing everything for us. We have the bible and God's spirit in us to keep pointing us in the right direction – let the word change you and the spirit guide you through it!

They're jealous

The next sin that we see is jealousy

*"In the camp they grew envious of Moses
and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the Lord"*

– Ps 106:16

When are you filled with jealousy or envy? The bible tells us to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). Jealousy does the opposite we are sad when others succeed or happy when others fail. How do you feel about someone when they are the ones to score a goal or get an award or be recognised. Do you rejoice with them or do you mourn? Are you sad that you didn't get the glory? How do we counteract that? Look at the example of the Lord Jesus. Jealous people look to take glory from other people. Jesus came to earth to give his glory to other people and give them everlasting life as a result.

They replace God

The last sin we will look at is replacing God with worshipping other things – also called idolatry

*"At Horeb they made a calf, and worshiped an idol cast from metal.
They exchanged their glorious God for an image of a bull, which eats grass."*

– Ps 106:19-20

The God who made them, the God who saved them. Their glorious God, they replaced with a statue of an animal made of gold

We may not worship golden statues but do we not put other things in place of God? Success, money, popularity, fun? There's often nothing wrong with idols. They are good gifts of God. The problem comes when we put these things ahead of God.

There are a few questions you could ask yourself to figure out what your idols are:

- Where does your mind go when you are free?
- What are you proudest of? What do you want to get out of life?
- What makes you angry if you blocked from it?
- What are you most worried about losing?
- What sort of things stop you from coming to youth on a Friday or a Sunday? They could be your idols.

So 4 sins of the Israelites we have looked at

- Forget God's miracles
- Ungrateful of God's goodness
- Jealousy of other people
- Replace God with worshipping other things

I know that if I look at myself in the mirror, then I also commit these very same sins...I don't know about you. It is heavy looking at all of this sin but the psalmist starts and ends the psalm by asking God for forgiveness

*Remember me, Lord, when you show favor to your people,
come to my aid when you save them,*

Psalm 106:4

*Save us, Lord our God,
and gather us from the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.*

Psalm 106:47

If you feel like a sinner, then you are in good company – you are with this author of this psalm and you are with me. And the great news for me and for you is that we can pray this prayer and we know that because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, that we will be saved

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Keeps His Promises

What truths do we learn about God?

Exodus 19-20

How does Jesus fit in?

Hebrews 10

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Numbers 11

How should we respond?

- God's heart goes out to the Israelites when they are being oppressed by Pharaoh
- God is a promise keeper – i) He grows and saves his people; ii) He blesses his people; iii) He delivers a land
- The blessings to the Israelites were partial because of the people's sin and God's holiness, however, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, we who trust in him have full access to God's blessings
- God's people are powerless vs. the enemies they faced
- God's people are flaky, unfaithful – grumbling and turning away at any opportunity
- Believe and trust in God
- Rely on God to come through and work out his perfect plan

Questions to Think About



- What does it mean to you that God keeps his promises to his people? Psalm 105:1-6
- How do the rituals of the Israelites point towards Jesus? Particularly sacrifice and priesthood – Hebrews 10:1-18
- Are you ever like the Israelites in the desert – complaining and grumbling about God? Which situations? Exodus 16:2
- How does Psalm 106 show us our need for Jesus?

Isn't Christianity all about following rules?



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



What do we learn from the 10 commandments?

**What is the problem with trying to follow them?
Who could keep them perfectly even if they
wanted to?**

**What is the solution to that problem? How is the
Christian faith about more than just rules?**

So, what was the point of the rules?

NOTES



Lined writing area for notes.

PRAYER POINTS



Lined writing area for prayer points.

QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

Lined writing area for questions on your mind.

The God Who Anoints Kings

Judges-1 Kings 11

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

Judges 21:25



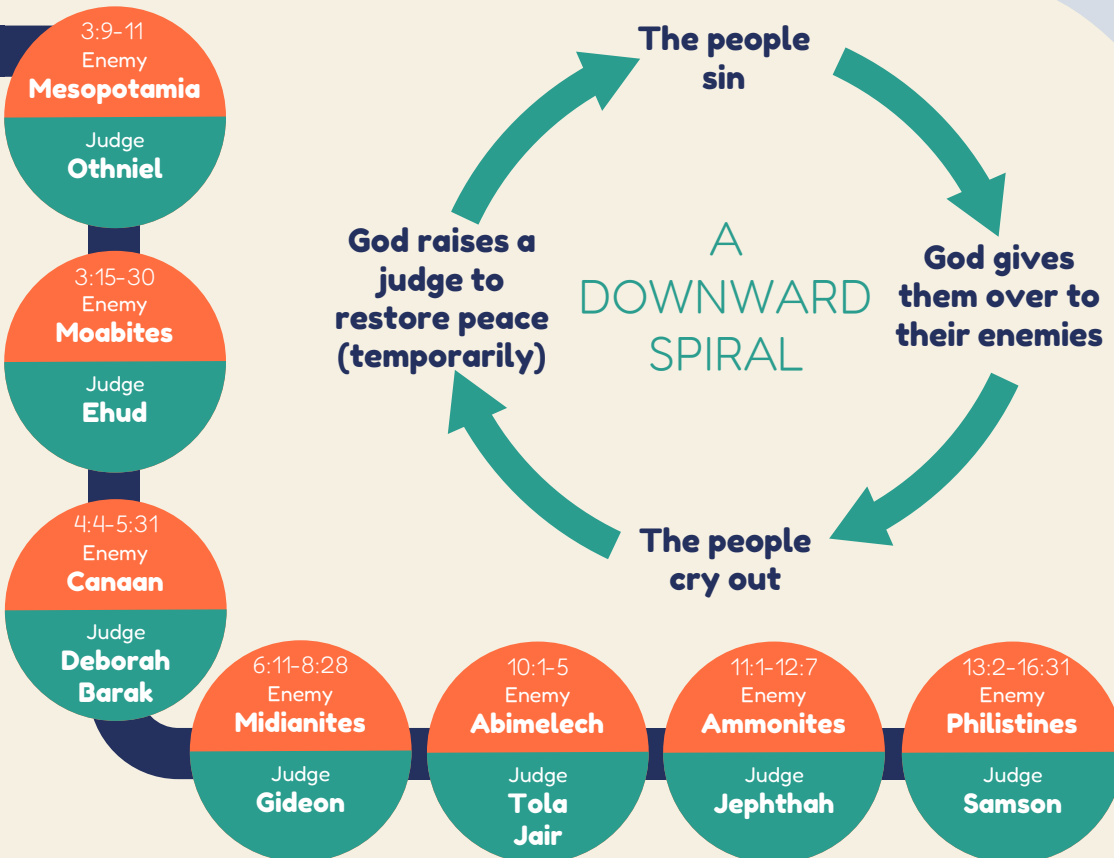
Judges

Those who put things right

¹⁶ Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders...¹⁸ Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived Judges 2:16, 18

Often deeply flawed people, who's successes came from God

The Judges



There was also Shamgar, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon



The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
 2 Samuel 7:11-13



King
A humble servant chosen (anointed) by God to rule – 100% devoted to God and his people
 Deuteronomy 17:14-20

1 Samuel
Saul

The People's King

- The people reject God as king and want a king like the other nations
- God tells Samuel to anoint Saul, a tall handsome Israelite, as king
- Saul defeats the Ammonites at Jabesh
- Saul is dishonest, proud and lacks integrity and disobeys God
- Saul feels threatened by David and tries to kill him
- Saul is wounded by the Philistines and falls on his sword

1 Samuel 16 -
 2 Samuel
David

A King According to God's Own Heart

- David is chosen by God and anointed by Samuel
- David shows his faith in God and defeats Goliath
- David endures suffering as he is chased down by Saul
- David enjoys success and blessing as king and unites Israel
- God makes a covenant with David (see 2 Sam 7 above)
- David commits adultery with Bathsheba and kills her husband, Uriah
- David repents and regrets the consequences

1 Kings 1-11
Solomon

A Wise King Distracted by Wives and Wealth

- Solomon is a seeker of God and the wisest of all mankind
- His wisdom brings justice and prosperity according to God's promises
- He builds a glorious temple, the place of reconciliation for the whole world
- The temple is where God's name is to be honoured
- Solomon amasses great wealth and many wives
- Solomon turns from God, building idols to please his wives



The God who Anoints Kings

KEY POINTS

- **God plans for a king** to rule over his kingdom
- **God is full of grace** even as the people keep on sinning in the time of the Judges
- **God brings rest** through David and Solomon but its temporary because of the king's sin
- **Jesus is the perfect king** whose rule brings his followers righteousness, peace and joy

Intro

As we end Joshua – things are on a high note. The people have made it into the promised land – all thanks to God keeping his promises. Remember the verse.

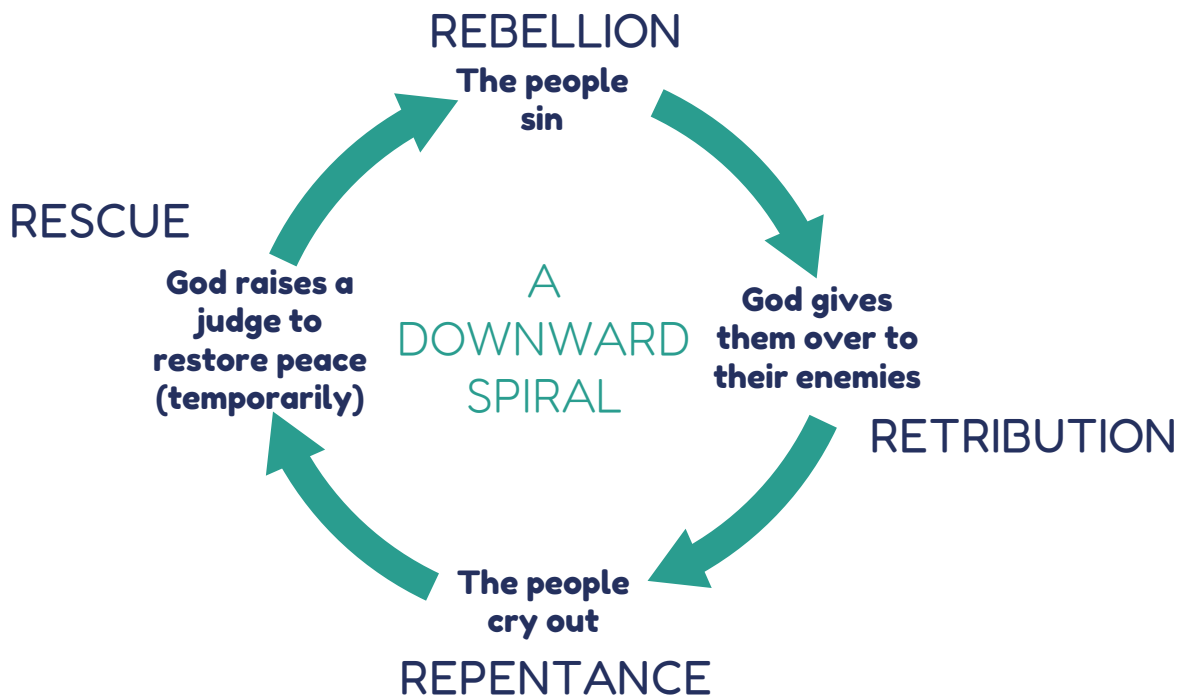
“Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed”
Joshua 23:14

But in Judges we see His people undoing all that good work. In Joshua we have a wonderful picture of God's covenant faithfulness, in Judges Israel's rebellion.

Read the Bible Judges 3:7-11

The Rollercoaster of Rebellion

There's a downwards spiral that we see repeat again and again throughout the book of judges – the rollercoaster of rebellion as you can see in the picture below



Hopefully that pattern was clear to you in those verses!

Rebellion v7 → Retribution v8 → Repentance v9 → Rescue v9-11

It's a pattern that repeats throughout the book of Judges - have a look a few pages back in your booklets

if Israel were left to their own devices they would have been defeated by their enemies but God rescues them again and again by raising these Judges. They are far from perfect and in fact many of them are horrible, sinful people. And they die with nobody to replace them...so Israel falls back into sinfulness

What's the big problem – everyone is doing as they see fit – why, well Judges 21:25

In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit. Judges 21:25

But God plans for a king!

I suspect in normal life that we wouldn't think very much about the king or about the monarchy. But recently, with the accession of King Charles, people have been asking all sorts of questions – what sort of King will Charles be? Do we even need a king?

Well, God has a very specific sort of king in mind. And it's probably very different to the sort of King that you have in mind. So let's explore at the next chunk of scripture

Read the Bible Deuteronomy 17:14-20

What sort of king?

The sort of king that God has in mind is probably very different to the sort of image that pops into your head when you think of royalty and monarchs. There are 5 key features that God's king must have according to that passage in Deuteronomy

**Not like the
nations**

v14

**No fast cars
(horses)**

v16

**Not many
wives**

v17

**No massive
riches**

v17

**But must
love the law**

v18-20

In the next few chunks of scripture we are introduced to three kings – let's have a look to see what sort of kings they are!

Saul

1 Sam 8:4-5
1 Sam 15:10-11
1 Sam 15:26

The people's king...who went a bit wrong

David

1 Sam 16:7
1 Sam 17:45-50

A king according to God's own heart

Solomon

1 Kings 10:23, 26
1 Kings 11:3-11

A wise king distracted by wives and wealth

- **Saul** – the people's king – he may have been tall and a mighty warrior but he was dishonest, proud, lacking in integrity and worst of all disobeyed God
- **David** – a king according to God's own heart – chosen and anointed by God – shows his faith in God in defeating the Goliath and loves God's law – he enjoys much success as king
- **Solomon** – starts his reign well as a seeker of wisdom and builds a massive temple to the Lord but amasses great wealth and many wives – exactly in the way the king described in Deuteronomy 17 isn't meant to and eventually, he's led astray and worships the gods of his wives

But what is the problem? They are all sinners – even David, the greatest king of the Israelites is a sinner. Listen to what Nathan the prophet says to King David

⁹ Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 2 Samuel 12:9

King David was a great king, who loved God's law but even he sinned when he made love with another man's wife and then killed that man

Read the Bible 2 Samuel 7:11-16; Acts 2:29-36

You see, Jesus is a king greater than David – he is resurrected from the dead. Why because he is utterly sinless – so even though in dying, he took on the sins of the whole world, he came back to life. David may have been a great man – but he didn't do that.

*God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah
Acts 2:36*

Jesus is the perfect king – who was exactly the sort of king that God had planned for

- Not like the nations – Nothing like the military kings of the day
- No horses – he rode a donkey
- No wives
- No massive riches – born in a stable
- But filled to the brim with God's law

And above all – this Jesus is king of kings and Lord of lords. See what it says in Revelation 1:4

Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth – Revelation 1:4

That is to say he rules over the entire world – even over the rulers of today. We might think what they are doing is mad but we know that Jesus rules over all of it! Not only is he in control of all of it but one day these people will need to answer to him!

That is very reassuring to me – that he is in charge as king over the world. And I hope it is to you too! And like any good king, he will be there for his people – those who believe and trust in him – and to those of us who believe and trust in him we know we can be sure of eternal life!

So be bold. Be bold to live a life for him. Spend time in God's word. Spend time loving those around you more than your wishes and goals. Be bold in telling people about your king.

Whatever happens, he has your back! He is our true and perfect king!

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Anoints Kings

What truths do we learn about God?

1 Kings 8:56-57

- He is full of grace
- He brings rest for his people and fulfils all of his promises
- His plan is bigger for David was bigger than David could imagine

How does Jesus fit in?

2 Sam 7:11-16

Acts 2:29-36

- Jesus is God's perfect king and heir promised to David
- David was sinful, Jesus was sinless
- David was mortal, Jesus came back to life

What truths do we learn about humanity?

2 Samuel 11-12

- The people keep falling back into sin again and again
- Human kings fail, even with all of God's support – David committed adultery and murder; Solomon is led astray by his wives foreign gods and his wealth

How should we respond?

- Repent of our sins
- Bow to the perfect king

Questions to Think About



- Why do the people in the time of the Judges keep falling back into sin? Do you find yourself forgetting God and what he has done for you?
- Deuteronomy 17:14-20 – Who and what must God's king love or not love?
- 1 Sam 8:4-5 and 1 Sam 15:10-11,26 – Who do Israel choose?
- Who is God's perfect king and how does this compare to king David? 2 Sam 7:11-16 and Acts 2:29-36

The Big Question

The God who Gives Wisdom

PROVERBS AND PSALMS



OVERVIEW

THE PSALMS

Songs and hymns written over Israel's history – covering many of the themes of the bible, including

Praise

Personal Experience

Prophecy

THE PROVERBS

Sayings presenting two competing paths that are personified by two women – Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly

The fear of the Lord is
the beginning of wisdom

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



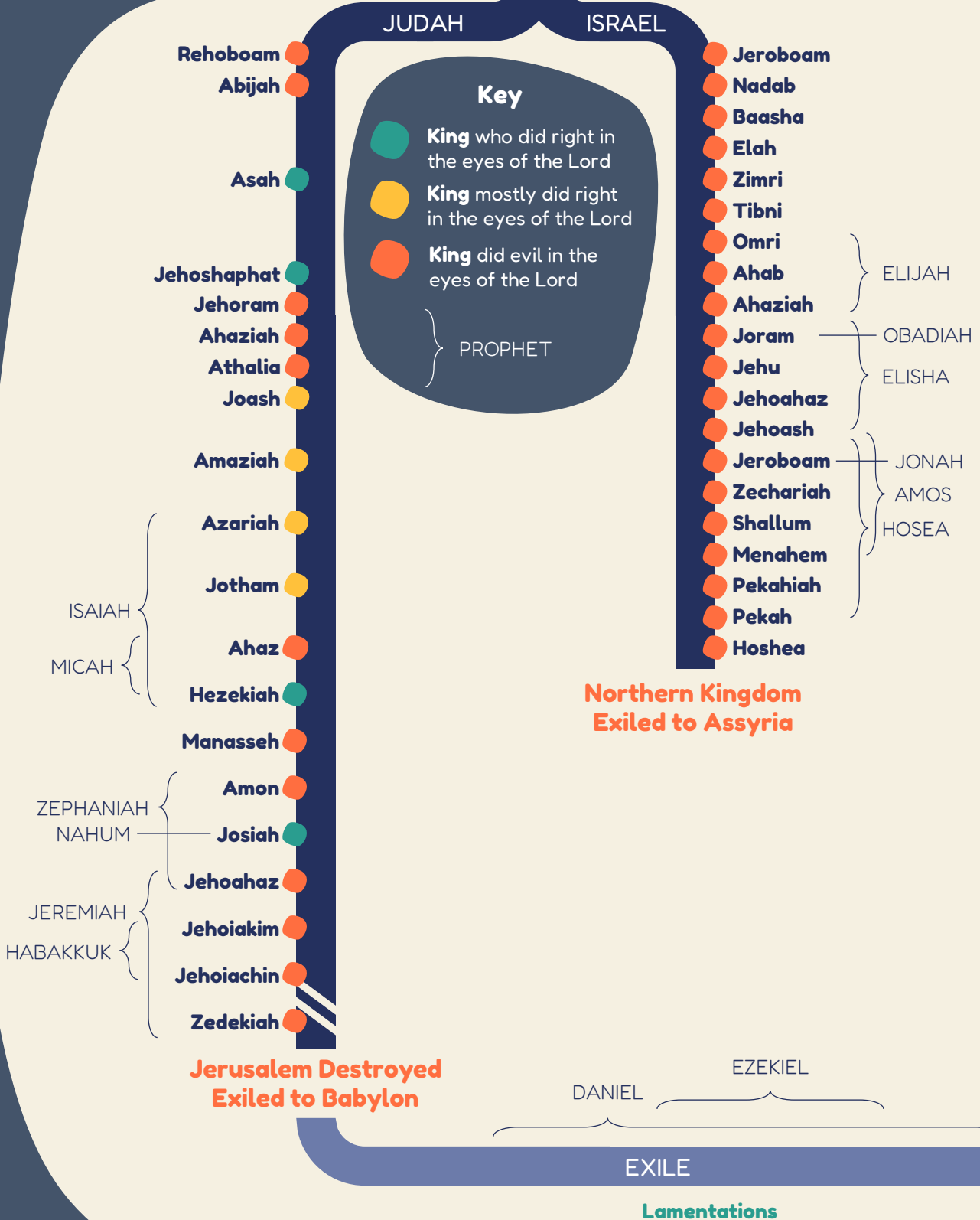
QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The God Who Speaks Volumes

1 Kings 12 - Malachi

- Saul
 - David
 - Solomon
- } SAMUEL
} NATHAN

The Kingdom Splits





Prophet

A person chosen by God to act as his mouthpiece on earth

THEY SPEAK ON 4 TIME HORIZONS

IN THEIR TIME: TO ALERT PEOPLE OF THEIR SINS CALLING FOR REPETENCE

JEREMIAH
2:5-8; 4:1-4

FUTURE: OUTLINE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE SINS

JEREMIAH
4:5-31

FUTURE: POINT TO THE FUTURE HOPE IN JESUS

ISAIAH 9,
ISAIAH 53

FUTURE: POINT TO THE FUTURE HOPE IN THE NEW CREATION

ISAIAH
65:17-24

Esther

SOME DO NOT RETURN TO JERUSALEM

ZECHARIAH

HAGGAI

MALACHI

Return to Jerusalem

Temple Rebuilt

Walls Rebuilt

Ezra

Nehemiah

The God who Speaks Volumes

KEY POINTS

- **The prophets warn** Israel of their sin and the consequences of not obeying God
 - **The prophets look forward** to a full restoration, i) through Christ and ii) in the new creation
- We know have the Spirit** to point out our sins and to point us to Jesus

Read the Bible Isaiah 1:1-20

Intro

At the end of last week – Israel was as mighty as they'd ever been! Israel was finally a strong nation, with a king and a temple. With power and wealth. All because of what God had done to build them up. Look at what the bible says about King Solomon, the son of King David.

*²³So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.
²⁴And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 1 Kings 10:23-24*

The king and therefore the nation were wealthier than all the kings of the world and wiser too. Far from being the country every laughed about, everyone now looked up to the nation of Israel and their king

But then we saw that Solomon, though he was wise and wealthy he was led astray by wives who did not follow God

⁶And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. 1 Kings 11:6

He does what is evil in the eyes of the Lord. Though God had given him wisdom and wealth beyond imagining, he worships other gods – the gods that his wives tell him to worship, those he worshipped rather than the Lord God who had given him everything! What happens next?!

- Turn to your books on p61-62 to see an overview of what follows – I'm not going to attempt to pronounce the names of all of these kings – maybe you could practice that in your own time! But I'll give you a quick overview of what happens
- Firstly, as a result of Solomon's sin, when he dies the kingdom splits in two, as God promises he will make it do – there is the Northern Kingdom, Israel and the Southern kingdom, Judah

- The Northern kingdom is full of wicked kings who do evil in the sight of the Lord, and eventually this kingdom is invaded by the Assyrians
- The southern kingdom, Judah, isn't much better – there are some kings who were righteous and attempted to drag the people back to worshipping God (such as Hezekiah and Josiah) but that wasn't enough to correct the course of a people and series of kings who were quick to forget what God had done for them and were quick to sin. This kingdom is eventually invaded by the Babylonians who destroy the temple and the city of Jerusalem

And the Israelites find themselves in exile in Babylon, living in a foreign land ruled by those who believe in other gods – that's the context of Daniel and Esther

Then eventually when Babylon is invaded by the Persians, who under an open-minded king allows the Israelites back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city wall – albeit a much smaller scale than what was originally there. A small number of people are restored but the majority remain stubborn and do not follow the Lord

An action-packed chunk!

Throughout this period, God spoke to his kings and to his people through the prophets. The likes of Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Amos, Jonah, Micah and many, many more. But what exactly is a prophet?

- A prophet is simply someone chosen by God to speak for him on earth
- We often think of prophets as people who tell the future but that is only part of what they do, as we will see!

Now, I don't know about you, but when I used to do an exam paper or a test, I'd always do the easiest questions first and then if I had time and if I could figure it out, I'd come back to the harder ones. Now of course, that often meant I didn't get the hardest ones done.

It can be that way with the books of the prophets – lots of Christians struggle with the prophets for a number of reasons – i) the writing is intense; ii) there are a lot of names, places and history in it which can be hard to figure out; iii) there is often a lot of talk of judgment in these books

But as with all of the bible it is worth reading what the prophets have to say and just like with a complicated exam question – it is a lot easier if you are given the key to answering the question

The Prophets Speak on 4 Time Horizons

So here's a timeline to help us see the time horizons on which the prophets are writing and if we can figure that out, it can massively help us figure out what they are talking about

1. **IN THEIR TIME** to alert people of their sins calling for repentance
2. **FUTURE:** judgment of sins of Israel and the nations
3. **FUTURE HOPE:** salvation in Jesus
4. **FUTURE HOPE:** restoration in the New Creation

Horizon 1 – **IN THEIR TIME** to alert people of their sins calling for repentance

The first horizon that the prophet is speaking to is to those around him – his fellow Israelites. He wants to shine a light on their sins and call them to repent. Have a look at v4

*Woe to the sinful nation,
a people whose guilt is great,
a brood of evildoers,
children given to corruption!
They have forsaken the Lord;
they have spurned the Holy One of Israel
and turned their backs on him.*

Isaiah 1:4

God's people have turned their backs on him! And Isaiah wants to show them that this is the wrong way to go!

Once he's shown them their sins, he shows them the right way to go by calling on them to repent of their sins and to learn to do what is right...

*¹⁹If you are willing and obedient, (that is to learn to do what is right – seek justice, defend the oppressed, take up the cause of the fatherless and the widow)
you will eat the good things of the land;
²⁰but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword.”
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.*

Isaiah 1:19-20

If the Israelites repent and change their ways, then they will flourish but if they do not, they will perish

Horizon 2 – **FUTURE:** judgment of sins of Israel and the nations

Which leads us onto the next time horizon. Which is the judgment on Israel and the nations if they were to go on sinning

Isaiah paints out these consequences in remarkable detail throughout his book and we don't have time to go into all of the detail now but I'll highlight a couple of things.

Firstly judgment of the Israelites sin

⁵Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the Lord Almighty: ⁶The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. Isaiah 39:5-6

Isaiah is predicting the fall of Judah to Babylon and as we saw on the timeline at the beginning, that is exactly what ended up happening. It sends shivers down my spine when I realise that Isaiah is writing / prophesying more than 100 years before that event!

Secondly, the prophets don't just focus on the Israelites but on the nations around them too – and talk about the judgment that they will face

*Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms,
the pride and glory of the Babylonians,[a]
will be overthrown by God
like Sodom and Gomorrah.*

Isaiah 13:19

Again, incredible stuff – that is exactly what happens many, many years later when Cyrus the Persian invades and takes over Babylon

Horizon 3 – **FUTURE HOPE:** salvation in Jesus

But there is also much hope in the prophets – Horizon 3 points forwards to salvation – the prophets point to a saviour – the future hope we have in Jesus

Take a look at what Isaiah says – they may be familiar verses to you but they are incredible truths about Jesus and what he came to earth to do – take a look...

*⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

Isaiah 53:5-6

It's a tantalising taster of Jesus – the one we've been waiting for since the start of this series – the one we have been meeting through the OT and who we will see as a man after half term! It is only through Jesus that our sins are forgiven and we are made right with God.

You can see it right there in the verse – he was pierced (as Jesus was on the cross) for our transgressions (our sins), he was crushed (as Jesus was on the cross) for our iniquities (our sins) and by his wounds (from the nails through hands) we are healed. Even though it was us who like sheep have gone astray – the Lord laid on him, on Jesus, the iniquity of us all – all of our sins and the punishment that we deserve.

Again how incredible is it that Isaiah is writing these words about 700 years before Jesus was born!

Horizon 4 – **FUTURE HOPE:** restoration in the New Creation

And beyond that the prophets point to a final day of restoration and a new creation where everything will be made right

*17 "See, I will create
new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered,
nor will they come to mind.
18 But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight
and its people a joy.
19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem
and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying
will be heard in it no more.
20 "Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred
will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach[a] a hundred
will be considered accursed.
21 They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
or plant and others eat.
For as the days of a tree,
so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands.
23 They will not labor in vain,
nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the Lord,
they and their descendants with them.
24 Before they call I will answer;
while they are still speaking I will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
and dust will be the serpent's food.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,"
says the Lord.*

Isaiah 65:17-25

Now I don't know about you but if you look at the news – it is a sad, sad world we live in today – so much pain and suffering and inequality. But here Isaiah is talking about a completely restored world. A world with no crying or weeping. No suffering or death. What a world that will be! It is a world that we who believe and trust in the Lord Jesus can look forward to – more exciting than half term, or the end of exams or the summer holiday or the world cup. On that day everything will be restored and I for one look forward to that!



Read the Bible Daniel 3:16-28

Living as foreigners

Living as Christians in 21st century London can feel a bit like being a foreigner. It often feels like everyone thinks differently to you. I wonder what things you find hardest about being a Christian at school. The things you came up with probably weren't topics that our friends Shad, Mesh and Ab had to deal with. But there is more in common between them and our situation than you might think.

But nonetheless they lived as outsiders in the land of those who had captured them. Imagine for one moment being in their shoes. They were taken from their homes all the way to Babylon, an impressive and mighty city with a massive gate, big fancy buildings and advanced technology they could never imagine. Not dissimilar to London today. They would have been in awe at the place. They would also have been outnumbered – everyone around them believed in other things and not in their God. Again not dissimilar to London.

The pressure for Shad, Mesh and Ab to bow to what everyone around them was doing must have been intense!

Especially when the king, Nebuchadnezzar, commands them to worship a massive gold image – almost 30 meters high and 3 meters wide – that he has built.

Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?

Daniel 3:15

But Shad, Mesh and Ab, show incredible faith and courage in the face of this adversity. Take a look at verse 16-18

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us[c] from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

Daniel 3:16-18

They know what God has done for them and they know that God is a faithful God and so they believe and trust in him and refuse to worship any other Gods. They are an amazing example of faith to us in the face of the harshest opposition.

Nebuchadnezzar then orders the furnace to be heated 7 times hotter than normal and has Shadrach, Meshach and Abner thrown into the fire but see what happens in v27

“They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.”

Daniel 3:27

God had saved them from this punishment. So amazed was Nebuchadnezzar, that he goes from opposing them and God to worshipping God – in v28, he says “Praise be to God!”

You see – even when we think we are being opposed and there is no way out, God will be with us, as he was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abner. We’d do well to remember their faithfulness (myself included!) but we’d do even better in times of opposition to remember God’s faithfulness as the prophets pointed to – what he has already done for us in the Lord Jesus and what he will do for us in the future.

PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Speaks Volumes

What truths do we learn about God?

Isaiah 53

- God raises prophets to warn Israel of the consequences of their sin but also point to a future hope in Jesus and the new creation
- God gives his people a chance to repent
- God works in his exiled people

How does Jesus fit in?

Isaiah 9;
Isaiah 53

- Jesus is the fulfilment of the restoration of Israel
- He is the solution to our sinfulness – the perfect sacrifice that puts us right with God

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Isaiah 53

- The kings are led astray, want to rule like those around them and follow other God's
- Foolishly, the kings trust themselves over God
- We are like sheep who have gone astray

How should we respond?

- Ask for the spirit to work in our hearts, revealing our sin and pointing us to Christ and our future hope in the new creation

Questions to Think About

?

- Isaiah 1:1-17 - The prophets were there to warn the Israelites of their sin. What sins does Isaiah warn the Israelites of? Highlight them / underline them as you go. The Spirit does the same in our lives. What areas of your life is the spirit pointing to?
- Isaiah 53:4-6 – The prophets were also there to point the Israelites to a future hope. What is your need for this hope?
- Daniel and his companions were living in a foreign land and faced much opposition but God worked in their lives (see Daniel 3:16-28). How is this an encouragement to you in your context?

The God Who Became Human

Matthew-John

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

The Perfect Life

Jesus born to Mary as a refugee in a stable

Jesus preaches at the temple aged 12

Jesus grows up, working as a carpenter

Jesus baptised

At around 30, he begins his ministry

Jesus tempted in the wilderness

Jesus calls his disciples to follow him

Jesus teaches, including his sermon on the mount, and performs many miracles

Jesus transfiguration reveals his glory

Jesus returns to Jerusalem ahead of his crucifixion

Fully Human

Jesus came into the world as a baby, and grew up as a child – he was fully human – body, mind, soul.

Lk 2:52
Jn 4:6-7
Mt 26:37

Fully God

Jesus is fully God seen in his perfect relationship with his father, with power over everything seen in his miracles and teaching

Mt 3:16-17
Mk 5:1-20
Lk 8:22-26
Jn 10:25-39

Sinless Life

Jesus was tempted and yet did not sin. He lived a perfectly 'righteous' life, pleasing to his father with no fault

Mt 4:1-11
Jn 8:29
Lk 22:42
Jn 19:4

Compassion

Jesus cared for people – healing them and even bringing people back from the dead. He spent time with the lowest in society

Mk 2:17
Lk 7:13-15
Mk 6:34
Mt 14:14

Teaching

Jesus teaching shines a light on who we are in our hearts but also on who he is and what his kingdom is

Mk 10:17-27
Mt 5:28-29
Mt 13:1-50
Mt 26:63-64

Goal in Mind

Jesus ultimately came to earth with a goal in mind that he was determined to fulfil – see the next session (!)

Mt 16:21-28
Mt 17:22-23
Mt 20:17-19
Mt 26:1-2

...and there are many more aspects to his life – it would be impossible to summarise them all!

The Name that is Above Every Name

Jesus

Jesus means "The Lord saves"
Matt 1:21

Messiah or Christ

Both words mean the anointed one. Anointing was what was done to kings as they took office in the old testament. He is the promised king!

Lord and God

Jesus is himself God and when his disciples realise this, they call him "My Lord and My God"

Son of Man

The most common name Jesus gives himself. It both means that he is a human but is also reference to Daniel 7, where the son of man is given authority and a kingdom by God

Son of God

Jesus is the eternal Son of God – he has a closer relationship with the Father than anyone else. Israel and David were also called children of God but with Jesus this title goes further

The Lamb of God

In a reference to the Passover lamb, Jesus takes away the sins of the world through his death on the cross

...and many more!!!

Jesus says I am...

SEVEN WAYS JESUS TALKS ABOUT HIMSELF AND HOW WE NEED HIM

The bread of life

Jn 6:35 Without food, you will die. In the same way, without Jesus there is spiritual death

The light of the world

Jn 8:12 Without light we can't see where we should go – Jesus lights up a way for us to go

The gate for the sheep

Jn 10:7 We are like sheep who have escaped and each gone our own way – Jesus is the gate we need to find to get home

The good shepherd

Jn 10:14 A good shepherd would risk his life for his sheep. In the same way, Jesus lays his life down for us, his sheep

The resurrection and the life

Jn 11:25 Jesus is the answer to death – if we believe in him, we will be raised to life when we die

The way, the truth and the life

Jn 14:6 This world is full of lots of confusing voices telling you what to do – Jesus says he is the only true voice to follow

The true vine

Jn 15:1 If the branches (us) are not connected to the vine (Jesus), we are useless, dead branches which cannot bear fruit

The God who Becomes Human

KEY POINTS

- **Jesus is the one we have been waiting for** – serpent-crusher, Abraham’s seed, David’s heir, the Messiah, God and human, the perfect prophet, priest and king
- **He is perfect** – embodying perfect relationship i) with God, ii) with humanity and iii) with creation
- **He restores relationships for us** – if we accept his grace

Intro

There are many ways of looking at Jesus life but there is no way we can cover it in full today. Even the authors of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) couldn't cover everything – see what John says at the end of his gospel

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

John 21:25

So today we'll be focussing in on four scenes that reveal a bit about who Jesus is, how amazing he is (and how that is very different to who we are!) and if you're hungry to find out more, then please do read the gospels because you will see lots more of Jesus there!

Does anyone remember the consequences of the fall and the relationships that were shattered?

- Between us and God – Adam and Eve hide from God
- Between us and creation – Adam and Eve have to fight against the earth for food and death enters the world
- Between us and each other – Adam and Eve are ashamed of each other and are in conflict with each other

And this consequence of sin has been a stain on human history ever since Adam and Eve and it continues to be so today

There has only been one human being who embodies perfect relationships with God, creation and humanity and that is Jesus himself, the God who became human.

We will see through the scenes that we look at that

1. Jesus has a perfect relationship with God - he is God but he is also perfect in his relationship with the other persons of the trinity with the father and the spirit
2. Jesus has a perfect relationship with creation – he rules over it and commands it
3. Jesus has a perfect relationship with us – he shows compassion on humanity and offers himself to save all those who want him



Read the Bible Matthew 3:13-4:11

Scene #1 – Jesus Baptised and Tested

So, first – lets take a look at Jesus baptism. What is baptism and it's purpose – well Matthew helps us understand

Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River Matt 3:6

Baptism was a symbolic washing clean from you sins – in Matt 3:6. But Jesus himself is without sin, so for him the reason is different. In 3:15, Jesus responds by saying it is right and fitting for him to be baptised and so it must be so – he is saying that even though he is the son of God and has all of the power – he is nonetheless committing his life to i) being obedient to his father in heaven and ii) identifying himself with sinners (even though he is without sin)

And at his baptism, we see that Jesus has perfect relationship with the other persons of the trinity

Just as we saw at creation we can see all three persons of the trinity come together at this event. It's a bit like we all have families who we might speak to and spend time with very often but publicly, we are generally seen together for the big occasions and celebrations – like a baptism! It must have been amazing to see.

- Jesus, the Son, being baptised, v16
- The spirit of God, descending from heaven like a dove to rest on Jesus, v16 – what does that mean – it means that the spirit is with Jesus as he performs his ministry
- And God the father's voice ringing out from heaven, saying "This is my son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased" – v17 – why is God the Father, well-pleased with Jesus – well it's because of his obedience – which we will see in a bit

So we see that Jesus has a perfect relationship with the other persons of the trinity

We then see just how remarkable Jesus's obedience is. And we will compare and contrast his response to what we saw in the old testament

The first temptation is all about what Jesus will do in the face of hunger. We see in v2, Jesus has fasted for forty days and forty nights and so he is hungry. It's important to see in that verse that though Jesus is God – he is also fully human – so he experiences very human things – like hunger! In that situation, the devil says to him, "turn these stones into bread"

Now imagine that you have the power to click your fingers and you could have any meal you wanted turn up. What would you pick – Nandos, McDs, Slims? Or a delicious bowl of mangetout?!! Now imagine that you'd fasted for forty days and you were unsurprisingly hungry – would you not immediately, if you had the power to do so, would you not summon a feast. For me, I think I'd struggle to last forty minutes, let alone 40 days! Yet Jesus resists and says

"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Matt 4:4

There is nothing as sustaining for us as the word of God – as good a gift to us food is, God’s word is an even greater gift.

Remember back to the Israelites, when they leave Egypt and get hungry – what is their attitude and how different is it to Jesus!

The whole community grumbled...if only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt
Exodus 16

The next two temptations are all about Jesus using his power to gain earthly influence and power

- In v5-6, the devil tempts Jesus to jump off the highest point of the temple to show the crowds below how great he is
- In v8-9, the devil ups the stakes and tempts Jesus with ruling over everything

Both times, Jesus resists the temptation but more than that rebukes the devil

Do not put the Lord your God to the test Matt 4:7

Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’ Matt 4:10

Again, how different is that to Adam and Eve – who are tempted by the knowledge they would get from the one fruit that God had forbidden them from eating.

- Did they resist temptation? No
- Do they rebuke the devil? No
- Do they give in to the temptation? Unfortunately, yes, they do exactly as the devil wants them to in Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Genesis 3:6

So we see Jesus’s obedience – he has all of the power in his fingertips but he doesn’t use them to give himself power or comfort.

But instead to work out his Father’s plan – a life of pure obedience and a life of service

For even the Son of Man (one of the titles that Jesus gave himself) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

His response to the temptation and indeed the rest of the gospels show us that Jesus lives a life that is completely free of sin, which is why he can take the punishment for our sins on the cross!



Read the Bible Mark 4:35-41

Scene #2 – Jesus Calms the Storm

This is probably a familiar story to you but lets dive in!

“That day when evening came, he [Jesus], said to his disciples [his closest friends], ‘Let’s go over to the other side [of the lake]’. Mark 4:35

He’s been teaching crowds of people on the edge of the lake all day. So v36:

“Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him”. Mark 4:36

So this wasn’t done in secret. It was a public event. There were other boats around as well. Jesus wasn’t a mysterious figure – he did everything in the open and was seen by many. He was a real person, who really existed and really did all these amazing things and there is lots of evidence that proves this – if you are in doubt, speak to a Christian friend!

“A furious squall [storm], came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern [the back of the boat], sleeping on a cushion”. Mark 4:37

Imagine you’re on the lake. It’s evening, so it’s already dark. But it just starts to get a bit darker as the clouds move in. Now this lake, by the way, is about 13miles by 8miles. So it’s big – it’s more like a sea, and you’re a long way out.

And then the wind start picking up. You can just hear the wind whistling through the boat. And the waves lapping against the sides. And you’re starting to get worried.

You go on for a few more minutes, and it gets even darker. It’s almost pitch black. Now this is no joke. Several of Jesus’ disciples were professional fisherman. They didn’t get scared for nothing. They know what they’re doing. And they know this is a life and death situation.

And then the thunder starts. And the wind gets louder and the waves start coming up the side of the boat. The waves come crashing into the boat. And the disciples are desperate. They’re terrified. They wake Jesus and say “Don’t you care if we drown?”

“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm”.

He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid?’ Do you still have no faith?’ They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’

Mark 4:40-41

So, who is this Jesus? What do we learn from this scene

- Firstly, He was a **real** person in history, 2000 years ago. If you punched him in the nose, he'd have a nosebleed. If you tickled him, he would laugh. He got happy and sad and lonely and tired (that's why he fell asleep in the boat). He had brothers and sisters. He was probably about my age when this incident took place. He was a real human being, just like us.
- BUT... he was **extra-ordinary**. He acts like he's the creator of the universe. He speaks like he's God. He controls every atom in your body before you do. He's sees right into our soul and knows everything, all of our secrets, all of fears, all of our hopes and dreams. Unimaginably powerful. And therefore...
- **Terrifying**. Don't think of Jesus as a nice, cosy, safe kind of person. He was wild, and dangerous, and way beyond our control. Unimaginably powerful. Terrifying.
- But **good** - he oozed goodness everywhere he went. And joy and life. He was great company. What did he do with his terrifying power? He used to it to save his friends. Don't you care if we drown? Yes of course he cares, and he's going to rescue you. He wants you to trust him

Read the Bible Luke 7:11-16

Scene #3 – Jesus Raises the Widow's Son

This is an amazing story of Jesus - both in terms of his character and of his power. We see that he shows a perfect relationship with humanity. He has compassion on this grieving widow. Being a widow is hard enough – you've lost your husband – but to lose your son as well, a young man, who probably protected and provided for his mother – this woman must have been in a world of pain, which I hope none of us have to experience and Jesus has compassion on her.

When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her Luke 7:13

You might think that the most powerful human ever to have existed wouldn't have time for people – surely he has better things to do but no, Jesus is full of compassion and his heart goes out to this widow and so Jesus raises her son from the dead,

¹⁴“He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Luke 7:14-15

It says something amazing of how personal Jesus is – not just far removed and uncaring but close and personal and deeply sympathetic. We see many more examples of his compassion in the gospels – as he spends time with and associates with those in most need of forgiveness and healing. Jesus shows amazing compassion and has a perfect relationship with humanity.

But we also see here that Jesus has perfect command over all creation! He can command a dead person to come back to life. Dead people stay dead but Jesus has the power to bring them back!

Do you notice what Jesus says to the widow in v13 – he says “Don’t cry”. If there is one thing you don’t say to someone who has lost someone, particularly a child, it is “don’t cry” – losing a child is so incredibly sad and the parent absolutely has the right to grieve. But Jesus can say it – why? Well because he can do something about! With a few words he can bring this young man back from the dead and in v15, give him back to his mother.

Everyone dies – it is a fact of life. The Lord Jesus is the only person who can reverse that – which we see in this story. Jesus is powerful over creation!

Read the Bible Luke 9:21-22

Scene #4 – Jesus Predicts His Death

Jesus compassion is ultimately shown to us in the main event of his life - his death on a cross and his resurrection on the third day. All his life has been leading up to this point – see how he uses the word “must” twice in v22 – he must suffer and he must be killed. His death is absolutely central to his mission and we can’t fully understand his life unless we understand his death and resurrection. We will look both events in more detail in the next chunk, We also see in these verses the reaction to Jesus. You are either like the crowd who saw Jesus raise the widows son who are in awe of Jesus and love him or you are like the teachers of the law who want to see him dead.

And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” Luke 9:22

If you have understood his message and his gospel you will either hate him or love him. There is no middle ground. If you feel indifferent to him, I would challenge you to read the gospels and make a decision for yourself.

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Became Human

What truths do we learn about God?

John 3:16

- He loves the world so much that he sends his one and only son to earth to carry out his rescue plan

How does Jesus fit in?

John 14:6

- He is the one we have been waiting for
- He lives a perfect life; embodying perfect relationships in a way Adam and Eve cannot
- He offers us a route into these perfect relationships if we trust in him

What truths do we learn about humanity?

John 3:16-21

- We cannot restore ourselves
- We have a choice – light or darkness
- If we choose him, he will save us

How should we respond?

- Believe and trust in Jesus!

EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



- Take a post-it note – what do you think most people think about the Lord Jesus?
- Take a post-it note – what most amazes you about the Lord Jesus?
- What amazes you about Jesus from these 3 scenes?
a) Matt 3:13-4:11; b) Luke 7:11-16; c) Luke 9:21-22
- What is your favourite scene of Jesus life?

Jesus – what's the evidence?



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



**Did Jesus really live?
Isn't his story just made up?**

What was the evidence that He is God?

**Where's the evidence for His Death and
Resurrection?**

Even if it is true, why does it matter?

How can I find out more?

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



For the young people

QUESTIONS FROM YOUR GROUP

The God Who Is Victorious

Matthew-John

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...²²in Christ all will be made alive.

1 Cor 15:3-4, 22

The Cross



The cross is the climax of the bible (and human history) – everything before has been pointing towards it, everything after is in light of it. Through the cross Jesus fulfils many of the promises in Old Testament

He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Colossians 2:13-15

- Sunday: Jesus enters Jerusalem, cheered by crowds
- Weds: Judas is bribed to betray Jesus
- Thurs: The last supper. Judas betrays him. Peter denies him.
- Fri: the chief priests tell the people to shout "Crucify Him"
- Fri: Soldiers mock and beat him and put on a crown of thorns
- Fri: Jesus is crucified and dies on the cross

Matt 21-27; Mark 11-15; Luke 19-23; John 12-19



The Resurrection



Dead people stay dead.

That is until Jesus rose from the dead. Through the historical events of the resurrection, Jesus defeated death once and for all and gives all who believe in him the certain hope of eternal life.

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

55 “Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”

1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 55

- The women find the tomb empty and are told by men “in clothes that gleamed like lightning” that Jesus is risen
- Peter doesn't believe the women and also discovers that the tomb is empty
- Jesus appears to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus
- Jesus appears to the disciples (apart from Thomas) - he eats with them and opens their minds
- Thomas doesn't believe the others and one week later, Jesus appears to Thomas
- Jesus helps the disciples catch fish and cooks them breakfast
- Jesus appears to the disciples and a large gathering in Galilee
- Jesus commissions the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations

Matt 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21



The Ascension



⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.

Luke 24:50-51

- Jesus appeared to the disciples over 40 days teaching them of the kingdom
- Jesus ascended to heaven before their eyes

Luke 24, Acts 1

The ascension of Jesus means that he can send the Spirit and take up his rightful place at the right hand of the father to rule over everything

The God who is Victorious

KEY POINTS

- **The cross is the power of God** – the climax of history – the one act which restores everything
- **The resurrection beats death** – guaranteeing eternal life for Christ's followers
- **Praise Him** – he has secured everything for us – there is nothing we can add - repent and believe!

Read the Bible Luke 23:26-49

The Cross

*“Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”
When he had said this, he breathed his last.” Luke 23:26*

So here we are – at the cross – the very symbol of our faith as Christians – and with very good reason. The cross is the climax of the bible and of all of history – it is what the whole bible has been leading up to everything since is lived in light of it.

What I aim to do today is to see three Cs that help us to understand the cross.

- We will see that the cross is crucial – there is no other way for the problem of sin to be dealt with
- Secondly, that the cross was cruel – somebody perfect had to take the punishment that our sin rightly deserved and that was what Jesus did on the cross
- Thirdly, that the cross is complete – it is the most powerful act that opens up forgiveness of sins and access to God to ALL people

It is because of these 3Cs, that the cross demands a response from us. We either accept the grace offered to us or we reject it. It is as simple as that.

The Cross is Crucial

Do you remember what Jesus said to his disciples last week? Do you remember the last scene? He said to them

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed”. Luke 9:22

Do you remember the importance of that word – must? Indeed the word crucial itself is based on the Latin word for cross!

But why is it crucial – well it's because of the condition of the human heart – it is because of our sinfulness. Do you remember what was said about the human heart in Noah's time?

every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.
Genesis 6:5

And it is a theme we saw repeated again and again and again throughout the old testament – God's people would turn their backs on him and on each other and sin was everywhere. Even King David, the greatest king the Israelites had fell into sin and had a heart of evil. I know that I can say with confidence that my heart is full of sin and evil – as much as I hate to admit it. And if you examine yourself enough, you will see that the same is sadly true of you.

And the issue is that God is perfect and needs to judge this sin – we saw this judgment throughout the old testament, when God sent the flood or confused peoples language or defeated Israel's enemies. And the ultimate punishment is clear

The wages of sin is death – Romans 6:23

And if it ended there, that would be a problem but thankfully and because of what happened on the cross the verse continues

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:23

And we will see how the cross and resurrection accomplishes this for us!

The Cross is Cruel

You see, God is still the same just and righteous God and he cannot leave sin unpunished. In order to satisfy God's judgment, someone needs to take on that punishment and that is what Jesus does so amazingly for us on the cross.

²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood. Romans 3:25

That word atonement harks back to the atonement cover of the tabernacle in the old testament – it is all about paying for the unclean-ness of the Israelites – in an even greater way Jesus, pays for our sin, atones for our sin, pays for our sin through the shedding of his blood

Now the cross of Christ was a terrible, horrible thing. It was far removed from the neat and tidy crosses that we are used to seeing which are nice and clean with straight edge. No, the cross that Jesus was crucified on was most likely a rugged cross dripping with his blood.

- We see from the other gospels that Jesus was flogged and forced to wear a crown of thorns – he would have been whipped almost to death
- He is then forced to carry a cross but we see in 23:26, that he is too weak to do so and Simon, from Cyrene in Africa is forced to carry the cross for Jesus.

- And then at the cross itself, nails were driven through his hands and his feet and then when he was lifted up, the pressure and the forces on him would have made it almost impossible to even breathe

It might be a bit grisly and disturbing but the people but it is important to face up to how painful and horrible the cross really was. It had to be because our sin is so serious and so terrible that God himself, though he lived a perfect life, had to be tortured and killed to give us a hope of being saved.

But in spite of that and knowing what he would face, Jesus is willing to do his father's will and face the suffering.

- He could have called 12 legions of angels instead
⁵³ Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? Matt 26:53
- He even refused to take a drink that would numb the pain
There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. Matt 27:34

God the Son was willing to go through that pain and even to die for you and for me. God the Father wanted His Son to go through that pain and even to die for you and for me. That is the truth that John 3:16 is getting at,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the most evil deed ever committed on this planet. At the same time, however, the crucifixion of Jesus was the best thing that ever happened on this planet.

The Cross is Complete

The cross is the only thing that has the power to save us and restore things to a new relationship – see what it says in Colossians

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:19-20

You see, the cross restores all things and reconciles all things to God

Do you remember what the Israelites had to do? They had the sacrifices, and the tabernacle and the priests in order to have a relationship with God but that relationship was severely limited!

- Only the Israelites have God dwell among them (and even within the Israelites only a very small number of people can be in God's presence for a very short amount of time!)
- Sacrifice of animals (even perfect lambs) do not fully compensate for the sins of humans

See what it says in Hebrews

It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins Hebrews 10:4

we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:10

Jesus death on a cross completes what the rituals of the old testament could not! That is why when Jesus dies it says “the curtain of the temple was torn in two.” Access to God is no longer through the rituals of the old testament but rather by putting our trust in Jesus Christ!

If you want evidence of how complete, how completely outrageous, how completely brilliant the cross is, take a look at the example of the criminal that Jesus was crucified with

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.[d]” ⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
Luke 23:42-43

This criminal simply asks Jesus to remember him. And Jesus response is actually a bit shocking and completely outrageous – he says, “today, you will be with me in paradise”

That is the amazing power of grace. The criminal lived a life full of sin – that is what defines him in the bible, we don't even know his name or precisely what he did but to deserve the cross it was probably very serious (murder, theft, rape – this was not a pleasant man). He didn't do anything to deserve being saved, he simply asked the Lord Jesus to remember him.

And yet, Jesus gives him everything, immediately! The cross of Christ throws open the doors to anyone and everyone regardless of what they have done or who they are to join Jesus in paradise. Will you believe in him?

You see the criminal realised that the cross deserves a response because it is crucial, it is cruel and it is complete. That same offer is given to us today – will you ask Jesus to remember you? Will you ask for his forgiveness? If so, you too can be saved!

- It doesn't matter who you are – the cross is for you
- It doesn't matter what you have done – the cross is for you

For anyone who says that Christianity isn't relevant – the cross is the most relevant historical event that has ever happened. It is the climax of the bible and of history. Everything in the bible was leading to it and everything that has happened since is in light of it. And in fact it is our route to eternal life

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

OK – so the cross has the power to save me from my sins...but how do we know that it will give us eternal life? Well – that is where the resurrection fits in



Read the Bible Luke 24:1-9; 36-49

But the story didn't end with the cross – if it did it would mean that Jesus had been defeated by sin and death – so on the third day we breathe a sigh of relief when we hear that the tomb is empty

He is not here; he has risen! Luke 24:6

You might think to yourself (as many people do) that this is all a bit far-fetched isn't it – surely it was a hoax but the number of people Jesus appeared to; the number of different times; the number of different formats all mean the evidence for the resurrection is overwhelming.

Here in Luke we see that Jesus appeared to disciples and he invites them to touch and see in v39, and then in v42, they seem him eat some fish!

What the resurrection means for us is even more staggering. It means that we can be confident that we will have eternal life ourselves. 1 Peter sums it up pretty well

Firstly, Jesus resurrection gives us new birth into a living hope – because of Jesus death we can have amazing hope now.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3

Secondly, the resurrection gives us an inheritance in heaven that can never perish, spoil or fade. It's not like material possessions or money which can deteriorate over time! It is an inheritance of eternal life – not just any eternal life but one without suffering or pain

⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 1 Peter 1:4

But thirdly in verse 6, we must wait for this

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 1 Peter 1:6

You see – through the cross – Jesus paid the punishment for our sins, so that we can have a relationship with the father and then through the resurrection – Jesus defeats death once and for all – guaranteeing for us eternal life!

An eternal life that will be free of suffering and of pain, where we can have a full and complete relationship with God. What do we need to do to get that eternal life? We need to realise how rotten and broken we are and like the criminal on the cross, we need to ask Jesus to forgive us. If you want to do that – it's easy – say sorry for your sins and ask God to forgive you.

The Checklist – The God Who is Victorious

What truths do we learn about God?

1 Corinthians 15:57

How does Jesus fit in?

John 19-21

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Galatians 6:14

How should we respond?

- “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”
- God doesn’t take the cup from Jesus – it is his will to offer everyone the chance to be saved
- The unexpected king, who saves us all
- Servant – he came to serve not to be served
- Victorious – Jesus secures his victory over sin through his death on the cross and over death through his resurrection
- Mighty – he has all power and authority
- Ultimately fulfils Gods promises to Abraham, Moses and David
- We can boast in nothing other than the cross of Christ and his resurrection
- He has accomplished everything
- Praise Him!

EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



- What do the cross and resurrection mean for you?
- What does the cross do to ‘all things’ in Colossians 1:15-23?
- How are the cross and resurrection the climax of the bible and of human history? Fulfilling the promises:
 - A) People – Ephesians 2:11-13
 - B) Blessing – Ephesians 2:14-18
 - C) Place – Ephesians 2:19-22
- How would you explain the cross and resurrection to your friends (max 15 words)?

What difference does Jesus make?



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



What difference does Jesus make to the course of human history?

To your life?

To the lives of non-Christians?

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



For the young people

QUESTIONS FROM YOUR GROUP

The God Who Equips His People

Acts - Jude

¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

John 14:12

The Holy Spirit

God – the third person of the trinity – a precious gift who works in us



- **He Convicts** us of sin, God's righteousness and judgment
- **He Converts** by opening our eyes to the things of God
- **He Unites** us with Christ through baptism
- **He Glorifies** Jesus, pointing us to what he has done
- **He Sanctifies** us so we can be obedient to Jesus
- **He Equips** us for Christ-like service
- **He Promises** and seals our inheritance of eternal life

¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.

John 16:13-15

The Timeline

Acts 2
God sends the Holy Spirit at Pentecost



Acts 3-7
The church is established in Jerusalem by Peter



Acts 7
Stephen proclaims the gospel and is stoned



Acts 8
Church scattered; Ethiopian converted



Acts 9
Saul converted on the road to Damascus





The Church

Not a building or a place but a global people. A community chosen by God for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together

⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:4-5

Acts 10-12

The church enlarged to Judea and Samaria



Acts 13-21

The church extends overseas, including to Cyprus, Lystra, Philippi, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus



Acts 21-28

Paul arrested but the church continues to grow



The God who Equips His People

KEY POINTS

- **Equipped with the Spirit** – Jesus leaves his people with his Spirit to guide and lead them – a truly great gift
- **Equipped by Each Other** – Jesus intended for his people to work together in ‘the church’ to create disciples of all nations
- **God grew the church** against all the odds

Read the Bible Matthew 28:18-20

Intro

I wonder if you have ever been given a job to do which feels completely overwhelming? Maybe, you have to tidy your room, but it's such a tip you have absolutely no idea where to even start? Or maybe you had a bunch of homework due Monday which you totally forgot about until bedtime on Sunday night, and it seems like you'll never be able to make a dent in it?

Well, I think Jesus' disciples would know exactly how you feel. Let me explain: Last week we were looking at Jesus' death and resurrection and we saw how God won a victory over sin and death on the cross.

Imagine yourself in the shoes of his disciples. These are the same guys who've been through a whole lot very recently! They watched their best friend die in front of them, they were crushed, afraid that the same thing would happen to them, and then overjoyed when Jesus rose from the grave, all in the space of 3 days! What an emotional rollercoaster.

Shortly after that, and before he was taken up into heaven, Jesus gave the disciples an absolutely mammoth job to do. An overwhelming task

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matt 28:18-20

This bunch of guys from Galilee have to make disciples of all nations! You can imagine what they're thinking "How on earth are we supposed to do that?!" And actually if we believe and trust in Jesus it's a task for us too – how on earth are we going to do that?

But alongside this huge job he's given the disciples, he also gives them a huge promise: I will be with you always. Jesus promises that he will not leave his disciples alone with this task, he's going to be right there with them. To see how the disciples faced this task, we are going to look at Acts-Jude in our bible overview.

That's a lot of ground to cover – 22 books! Let's break it down a little. Firstly there's the book of Acts which was written by Luke – of Dr Luke fame. In Acts Luke describes what the apostles were doing after Jesus went to heaven and how the church began. After Acts there are 21 different letters which were written by the apostles to church communities based in cities around the Mediterranean, to continue teaching them and encouraging them in the gospel. These books are great for us too, teaching us about what it looks like to live for Jesus.

We could do a whole series on each and every one of these 22 books, but today we only have a little while, so we need to think about the big picture. If we look at all of these books together – what is it that God is telling us about? A big part of it is that we as Christians are not alone...but God has equipped and prepared us for every good work

- Firstly, by sending the holy spirit to live in us
- And secondly, by building up the church

Read the Bible Acts 1:3-9; Acts 2:1-12; Acts 2:37-41

The Holy Spirit

In Acts chapter 1, Luke picks up the story of the disciples after Jesus' resurrection, in the month or so after he rose from the dead until he was taken up into heaven. And here we get a little more insight into those last conversations between Jesus and the disciples.

In Acts 1 v 4-9, we see that Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes on them, and in v8 that they will then be witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And they do what they're told! The disciples waited in Jerusalem for the Spirit which Jesus promised them.

Chapter 2 tells us about what happens on the day of Pentecost. Let's look more closely at Chapter 2 and the verses which describe the coming of spirit.

² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit Acts 2 v 2-3

A sound like the blowing of a violent wind filling the house, fire resting on each of the disciples. Do those themes ring any bells in our minds? Where else in the bible do we have those same images? We see them a lot in the OT

For example, in Exodus 19 when Moses is on Mount Sinai we read that “there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast” and that “Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire.”

Later in Exodus, in chapter 40 the Israelites have just finished setting up the tabernacle according to God's instructions, and then we read that “cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” and that “the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night” to guide the Israelites on their journey to the promised land.

So these images of wind/cloud/storm, and fire, tell us something very important. They tell us that God is present. But unlike in the OT where God's presence is filling a place or a building- Mount Sinai or the tabernacle or the temple- God's presence now fills His people directly: the tongues of fire rested on each of the disciples.

This has amazing implications! If you are a Christian today and the Holy Spirit is living in you, you do not need to go to a church or a temple to experience God's presence, because His presence is with you constantly. We are like little roaming temples filled with the presence of God, taking His presence with us wherever we go.

Let's look now at the rest of the passage which was read. The disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit in v4, then something fairly extraordinary happens! They begin to speak in other languages, and (v11) all the people who were there heard the disciples declaring the wonders of God in their own language.

Let's think a little about context. v5 tells us that there were people in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. They would have been gathering there for the feast of Pentecost. Pentecost is the Greek translation of the Jewish festival 'feast of weeks'. It's one of the holy days God tells His people to observe in the old testament, where Jews were to bring offerings to the Lord in Jerusalem. Think again about Jesus' command to the disciples in Ch1 v8: be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. And now they're surrounded by people from 'every nation under heaven'! That's seems like no accident to me – God has brought 'the ends of the earth' right to the disciples' doorstep!

So the disciples speaking in other languages means that all these people 'from the ends of the earth' were able to hear the good news of Jesus in a way they could understand. And what happens when they hear? (v37) they are cut to the heart and ask Peter what they should do. He replies that they are to repent and believe, and receive the Holy Spirit. In other words, he gives them an opportunity to respond to the call to follow Jesus.

So the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is what enabled the disciples to begin their work on that massive task Jesus had given them, and shows us how Jesus' promise in Matthew that He would be with them always was fulfilled – it was fulfilled by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

It's important that we know that Jesus' instructions and promises were not just an instruction for the disciples though, it is an obligation for all of us. The mission of all God's people is to share the good news of salvation in Jesus with all people, so that they have a chance to respond to God's call. And we have the same Spirit as the disciples had to equip us to do this.

Let's pause here for a moment here to think a bit more about the Spirit's work.

We know we have the same Spirit, but what happened in the disciples in Acts 2 seems pretty exceptional! I don't know about you, but I've never seen a tongue of fire rest on anyone or heard anyone suddenly start proclaiming the gospel in a language they didn't know a minute before. But the Spirit is still working powerfully today, and we do experience Him and His presence in many very important ways, which are central to Christian life.

It's important that we know who the Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is not a force, or some intangible power, but is one of the eternal persons of the trinity, equal with the Father and Jesus. And yet I think He is perhaps the person of the trinity we spend the least time thinking about, or maybe understand the least.

So, what exactly are the important ways in which we experience the Holy Spirit when He dwells in us? What is his role in the life of a Christian in 2022? Of course, there are many different ways in which the Spirit works in us and we don't have time to discuss them all, but I think that there are 3 very important ones which are central to the books of the bible which we're looking at today, and we can summarise them like this – the Holy Spirit gives us new birth, a new character, and a new role

New Birth

New birth is a bible description of someone becoming a Christian. Before we become a Christian, the bible says we are spiritually dead; but when we trust in Jesus, God gives us a new birth – we are spiritually alive! Do you remember Ephesians,

God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved Ephesians 2:4-5

What's the Spirit's role in that? He shows us our sinfulness. We are often blind to our sin but spirit shows us the evil that is in our hearts and helps us to take it seriously. Have a look at John 16:8

When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment John 16:8

But He also points us to the solution in the Lord Jesus. The spirit's job is to point us to the Lord Jesus – his life, death and resurrection and in doing so shows us the solution to our sin and death

he will guide you into all the truth...He will glorify me John 16:13-14

If you are a Christian this morning, then you have already experienced the Holy Spirit working this miracle in you! This is what he did in me and what he has done in everyone who has or will believe and trust in Jesus and it is amazing!

New Character

Secondly, new character. Once we have believed, the Holy Spirit sets to work on our character. Romans 8 tells us that it is God's desire that anyone who has trusted in Him should become more and more like Jesus throughout their life, being 'conformed to His likeness'. The Spirit produces Godly fruit in our lives as described in Galatians

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control Galatians 5:22-23

The fancy bible word for this process of becoming more like Jesus is 'sanctification'.

Do you remember the analogy of the spiritual sat nav that Trev talked about when we looked at Romans last year? The Spirit is the one who is giving the directions and, if we will listen to Him, he directs us to walk in god's way. Often the way he gives us those directions is by helping us to understand what God wants to say to us in the bible.

This is a slow process that happens over a whole lifetime, and will never even be complete in this life. We will never be completely conformed to Jesus' likeness until the new creation. But the work of the Spirit in our lives, no matter how gradual, always makes a noticeable difference to our character.

The transformation when someone becomes a Christian is amazing – they stop thinking only about themselves; they think of God and of others...I know for me, I became less obsessed with success and work; I began to serve others rather than myself, even if that meant putting myself out of my comfort zone

New Role

Thirdly, the holy spirit gives us a new role. If you are a Christian you are part of God's church, and being part of His church comes with a new job which the Holy Spirit equips us to do! One of the jobs he gives us is the same as Jesus gave the disciples: to go and make disciples of all nations. One of Peter's letters puts it like this:

you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9

We are a chosen people why? So we can declare the praises of God to the world. And just as He did in the disciples, the Holy Spirit equips us to spread the good news of Jesus.

- So speak to your friends about Jesus
- So invite your friends to youth or to church



Read the Bible Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor 12:12-20

The Church

Even more than that, both in Jerusalem and in the other cities the letters of the apostles are addressed to, the church was displaying something which was radically different to the culture of the Roman empire around them. In Roman culture, women, slaves, the poor and children were all low status individuals, but in the church these communities of people were brothers and sisters in Christ – being treated as equals regardless of their differences. As Paul says in Galatians

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

That unity of believers in the Holy Spirit, or ‘one-ness’ as Paul says in Galatians, is also what we see in v42 of Acts 2 when we are told that the believers devoted themselves to fellowship. The believers have a shared faith in Jesus and unity in the Spirit, and are therefore committed to fellowship with each other, to serving each other and working together for the glory of God. For all the differences between people, the need for the cross and the hope in the resurrection is what binds Christians together – everything else is secondary to that.

That’s what the passage we read in 1 Corinthians is about too. We are so ‘one’ in Jesus that in the church we are like many parts of one whole. The illustration Paul gives is of one body with many parts. Look at v17-18.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

1 Cor 17-18

An eye, an ear, a nose... Each one is needed for something different, and has an important function in the context of the whole body. Paul’s point is that God in his wisdom has called all Christians to be part of his church, his body, and equipped each of us with different gifts or abilities which enable us to serve each other, to build each other up and encourage each other in our Christian journeys, and also to help us to work together more effectively to create disciples of all nations.

So what does all this mean for us here this morning? Well for a start it means that church is not just a place we go to on Sunday because our parents tell us to. Church is not a place at all, is a group of people who trust in Jesus and have unity in the Spirit.

Importantly is also means that church is also not just about what you can get out of it. Of course there is much that we can get out of church that is good and vital – we can be taught God’s word and worship him with other believers which are great gifts from God. But I think if that is all we are doing, if we are only in church for our benefit, and not also for the benefit of the other people around our small group table, and everyone in this room, then we have fundamentally misunderstood what it means to be part of the church.

Being part of Christ's body is about sharing our gifts with each other. Your leaders serve you by using their time and energy to come here on a Friday night and Sunday afternoon to teach and encourage you in your faith.

I want to end with this challenge for you. The bible says that the Spirit has equipped each of you with a different gift which is important for building each other up and for the work of making disciples of all nations.

The challenge is this: what is your gift, and how might you be able to use it to serve the church?

PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Equips His People

What truths do we learn about God?

John 14:12-31

- God doesn't leave us to fend for ourselves but rather sends us His Spirit to work in us

How does Jesus fit in?

Colossians 1:18-21

- Jesus is the head of the church
- The Spirit points us towards Jesus – what he has done for us and how our sins contrast from his perfect life

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Ephesians 2:8-10

- God prepared good works for us to do in advance
- The church is made up of many members with each member having their own gifts to contribute

How should we respond?

- Thank God for the Spirit and ask Him to take control of our lives

EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



- How would you describe the Holy Spirit to your friends?
- How would you describe the church to your friends?
- Read John 14:12, Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20. How do you feel about these responsibilities? How does the presence of the Spirit help?

How to Live as Saved People



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



**How should being saved change how a
Christian lives their life?**

How does a Christian make this change?

**Isn't this a very restrictive and
boring life to lead?**

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



For the young people

QUESTIONS FROM YOUR GROUP

The God Who Judges Justly

Revelation 4-21

JUDGMENT IS SERIOUS

⁴⁰“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt 13:40-42

JUDGMENT DEALS WITH EVIL

n.b. Babylon represents non-Christian society that lives without God

**With such violence
the great city of Babylon will be
thrown down,
never to be found again.**

Revelation 18:21



Understanding Revelation

Revelation tells the same story from a set of different angles. Trying to read it as a story in order will be confusing! There are seven cycles that overlap with each other

INTRODUCTION

Prologue (1:1-8)

Letters to the Churches (1:9-3:22)

MAIN SECTION

CYCLE 1 – 4:1-8:1

7 Seals

CYCLE 2 – 8:2-11:9

7 Trumpets

CYCLE 3 – 12:1-14:20

7 Symbolic Histories

CYCLE 4 – 15:1-16:21

7 Bowls

CYCLE 5 – 17:1-19:10

7 Pronouncements on Babylon

CYCLE 6 – 19:11-21

White Horse Judgements

CYCLE 7 – 20:1-21:8

White Throne Judgements

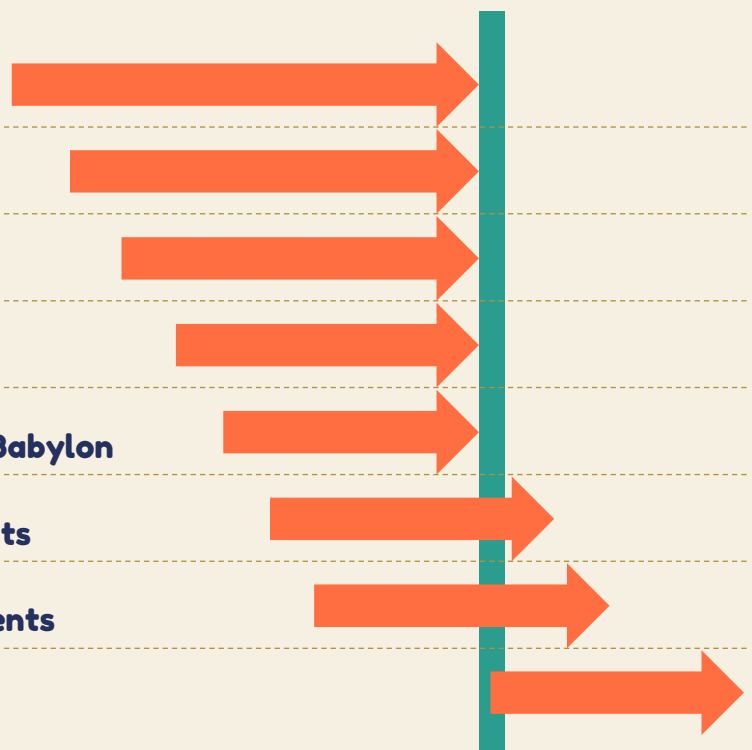
THE FINAL ACT – 21:9-22:5

The New Jerusalem

CONCLUSIONS

Final Instructions (22:6-21)

Jesus
Return



Apocalyptic Literature

Revelation is written in a style called apocalyptic, which is a bit different to what we normally read.

It means it is full symbols and imagery. It is all about revealing or unveiling new truths to us

The God who Judges Justly

KEY POINTS

- **Jesus will return as judge** – to win a final victory over evil
- **One choice matters** on that day – will you stand behind Jesus and what he has done for you or will you stand for yourself
- **God's judgment is extreme and final** – so hurry and spread the gospel to save your friends and family

Read the Bible Revelation 14:6-20

Intro

Many churches don't like to talk about judgment – it isn't exactly a light topic and it is a bit complicated.

Revelation is a type of literature called apocalyptic literature – which puts truth into picture language to make it understandable and show how out of our normal reality this will be. All these symbols and comparisons can be difficult to interpret. Have no shame in reading alongside a commentary to understand what it is saying.

Revelation is also not written in a linear fashion, which again makes it slightly tricky to read. There are 7 cycles but they are talking about parallel timelines – have a look on the previous page for more info.

All of that said it is very important to look at it and get our head around it. Why? Two reasons – Jesus was the person in the bible who spoke most about hell

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matt 10:28

Why does he talk about it? Well, If we understand the coming judgment fully, we will see the importance and the urgency for us to do something about it

you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.
1 Thess 5:2

You see, no one ever expects to be burgled and the day of judgment will be the same. It will come suddenly and so we need to be ready for it.

So, lets turn our attention to the passage – Revelation 14 – here we see three angels who reveal three things about the coming judgment. Judgment by the **supreme judge**; which **sorts sin out**, with **serious consequences** for unbelievers

Supreme Judge

Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water

Revelation 14:7

He is the one who made everything – the heavens, the earth, the sea, the springs of water. He has that awesome power and so when he comes to judge it is absolutely right to fear him and give him glory. And he is right to judge because it is all his and we are the ones who have rebelled. God is the landlord but we have not acted like tenants but rather tried to be landlords ourselves. He will have the final say!

Sorts Sin Out

⁸A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,” which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

Revelation 14:8

Now this is what I mean about the symbolism – what is all this talk of Babylon and wine and adultery – let’s unpack it a bit.

- “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great” – Babylon = a symbol for all of godless society. People who refuse to acknowledge God, take what he says seriously). That could be oppressive governments that persecute Christians; it could be the culture which is there in the background that says that the individual is the greatest and can do anything. This verse is saying that all of that will be fallen
- The verse continues – this godless society “which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” What does that mean?! It means that people were attracted to the godless existence of Babylon. Why? Because you could be your own god and decide what was right and what was not. It was addictive like wine. It was maddening because people couldn’t see the truth of God and what he has done.
- But it also led to injustice and as the verse says ‘adulteries’ – if you were well off and, in the elite, you’d fool yourself into thinking ‘this is the life’. If you weren’t, you’d be crushed by trying to reach those levels.

How similar is that to London, to the world as it is in 2022! It is a good thing that all of this evil. All of this pain will be dealt with at the final judgment.

Serious Consequences for Unbelievers

⁹A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, ¹⁰ they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”

Revelation 14:9-11

Again – lets unpack it

- “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand” – this is who the angel is talking about. Now yes, there are people who actively and openly worship satan who fall into this camp but actually, this group is anyone who doesn’t worship the one true God. If you reject God, by default you are worshipping something that isn’t him – whether that is money, power, popularity, family, fun or whatever – and that means you have fallen for the devils temptation – do you remember how Jesus didn’t!
- What happens to these people – well read on “they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath.” Again what is this talk of wine. 2000 years ago or so, it would have been common to dilute wine with water but here we see the wine of God’s fury is at full strength. The angel is basically saying – look – you know the old testament where God judged through a flood, through plagues, through the destruction of Jerusalem – well that is nothing compared with what is coming. There he was pouring out the wine of his fury at partial strength. Here it is full strength!

This judgment is deadly serious. If it wasn’t enough to say that it would be more serious than the old testament – we go on to see just how much more serious it is.

Picture #1 – Burning Sulphur

Have a look at verse 10 – “They will be tormented with burning sulphur” for how long, in verse 11, “And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever” – the punishment is severe - it says they will burn for ever! If you’ve ever touched something hot for even the briefest moment, you will know how painful that is! You have to run it under cold water for several minutes and even then it hurts. But this is burning sulphur...forever!

Picture #2 – The Sickle

The second image of how serious God’s judgment is, is an agricultural one

he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Revelation 14:16

The Lord Jesus himself is the one who will judge and his judgment of those who don’t stand behind him will be complete. Have you ever seen a sickle in action? It’s designed to cut every blade of grass that is in its way – and so it will be with the final judgment. If you want to stand in your own strength and not behind Jesus – you will be like grass in the face of a sharp sickle.

Picture #3 – The Winepress

“The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.”

Revelation 14:19

At the time of God's final judgement, those who have rebelled will be like ripe grapes – ready to be picked off the vine thrown into the winepress. How do you make wine? You crush it – so these people will be crushed. And the scale of destruction is significant – the blood will be as high as a horse's bridle for miles and miles and miles.

If you haven't got the picture yet – if you haven't put your faith and trust in Jesus, God's judgement is serious and inescapable.

That's all a bit much isn't it – how should we feel about all of that?

We should feel a tension here between longing for sin to be sorted (which is a very good thing) – we will see more of how good it is in the next chunk when we learn about the new creation

...but it is also sad that so many people are resistant to Jesus and will be judged. After all, Jesus wept over Jerusalem because he knew it would be judged (a punishment the city deserved). After all, we will know many friends and family who are not yet saved. It is very important to have the right attitude to this – it can be tempting to think of yourself as better than others or treat it as some sort of competition – knowing that you will beat lots of people around you. That is completely the wrong attitude – we must remember that we are beggars who have been given bread and our job is to show other beggars where to find the bread.

In verse 12, we see a bit of that tension because all this judgment will require “patient endurance” from those who follow Jesus. “Patient” because we have to wait for the glory of the new creation; “endurance” because watching all that suffering is hard

This talk of judgement also should spur us into action.

Judgment from a **supreme** judge, who **sorts sin out**, with **serious consequences** for those who don't believe

We should want to respond to it. And there are two ways to do that

- **Spare yourself** – accept the free forgiveness that the lord Jesus offers to us
- **Spread the word** – if you care for your friends and family you would want for them to join you in paradise and avoid the judgment they would otherwise deserve

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Judges Justly

What truths do we learn about God?

Revelation 4-21

- God's holiness demands that evil is dealt with and it will be decisively handled on the last day

How does Jesus fit in?

Revelation 4-21

- Jesus will return as judge on the last day
- Jesus is the one who warns us of hell the most (e.g. Matt 10:28)

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Revelation 4-21

- Our eternal status depends entirely on whether or not we choose to stand behind Jesus
- Nothing else matters

How should we respond?

- Repent and believe
- Share Jesus with our friends and family

EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



- What do you think of God's wrath and his anger in judgement (Revelation 14)
- How serious do you think it is?
A) How long will judgment last? (Revelation 14:20)
B) Can you escape judgment? (Revelation 22:11)
- How does the final judgment influence what you prioritise?

How to Live for the Last Day?



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS



What do you think of the final judgement?

How excited are you by the new creation?

What does this mean for how you live now and what you prioritise now?

How will this be different to what those around you are prioritising?

NOTES



PRAYER POINTS



For the young people

QUESTIONS FROM YOUR GROUP

The God Who Perfects Everything

Revelation 21-22

WHAT'S NEW?

Rev 21:1-8

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

Revelation 21:5

A NEW EARTH

A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

"I will be their God and they will be my people"

A NEW HEAVEN

THE NEW JERUSALEM

WHAT'S PARTICULARLY SYMBOLIC?

Rev 21:9-21

¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

Revelation 21:11

A SHINING CITY?

Shining with the glory of God

ALL OF THE TWELVES?

12 tribes of Israel and the 12 disciples

A CITY LIKE A CUBE?

Like the most holy place in the tabernacle

WHAT'S MISSING?

Rev 21:22-27

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 21:27

NO TEMPLE

because God and the Lamb are the temple

NO SUN OR MOON

For the glory of God and the lamb shine

NO IMPURITY

Will ever enter the city

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Revelation 22:4

WHAT'S CENTRAL?

Rev 22:1-5

THE WATER OF LIFE

Flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

THE VISION OF GOD

At last, we will see God's face and have a perfect relationship

The God who Perfects Everything

KEY POINTS

- **God will make things new and perfect**
There will be no suffering
It will be a physical renewal
God will be with us and we will see his face
- **It is the day to look forward to** and we should live this life in light of that

Read the Bible Revelation 21

Intro

I wonder what keeps you going through the school term? For lots of people, I'd imagine it's the countdown to the holidays!

In life – what keeps you going? School life gets tough, friendships fail, relationships fail, When we don't know what we're doing here, when we don't know what's going on up here, when people betray us behind our back, when we feel lower than anything on earth, What keeps you going?

We made it to Revelation! From Rebellion in Genesis, through the Old Testament, to Christ and his promise. He promised that one day soon, this Earth will be Restored and there will be a new heaven..... WHY?

Because he wants to be with his people, the Creator wants to be with you.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Revelation 21:3-4

No more tears, no more pain, no more death, no more confusing thoughts, no more betrayal, no more insecurity, no more comparing, no more gossip, no more anxiety. Everything will be made new. Now there's something to keep us going!

The new creation is this physical Earth and all of reality restored to its original intention, no sin, and we will be with God. See what Isaiah said 700 years before Jesus

*"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.*

Isaiah 65:17

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,

Revelation 7:9

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 10:28

You know there's a reason we like nice things. Nice cars, jewellery, hotels, buildings. The problem is we end up liking these things too much. They're all man made!

What's the New Creation going to be like? Verse 21 says the street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. Verse 11 says it shines with the Glory of God, that its brilliance is like that of a previous jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

Even Dubai doesn't have that! Next time you see nice things – let it remind you of the new creation and the place you will spend eternity in!

Better than all that is that God will be with us! V23 says no sun, no moon, no light bulb – God's Glory will be our light!

Get it? Physical reality, God Physically with us. Jesus was physically resurrected, not babies on clouds, real restored earth and restored bodies. There's not enough time to cover all the beauty of new creation but the main thing is – THIS REALITY IS NOTHING.

Imagine walking all the way around the world – that is a very very long way. Imagine all of the amazing scenery you will see along the way. This reality, this life is comparable to just the first step on that journey – barely enough to get you out of the front door!

The Lord wants to be with you for eternity – in a place of no weeping, no death. Can you even imagine it? We get a taste of things here and its broken.

What's worse is even though we know what is to come, we get so carried away here! On the first step of the journey. Right exam grades, good career, to enjoy this part so we can retire here! Find a perfect partner. God must get so frustrated with us!

Maybe freaks you out - forever? Thats okay - all we know is death, take that to the lord he;; understand you, But its pure peace.

There's a healthy bit of perspective - what does this mean for our time here on earth! There's something to keep us going. No more death, no more mourning, no more pain

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 21:27

Do you want to be there? Do you want to be in the place there is no pain? Do you want to live in the place designed by God himself?

Because he wants you there. He loves you more than you can ever love yourself! All it takes is to say sorry for all the wrong you done and believe that Jesus took the punishment we all deserve

This is too big to delay, talk to a leader, a Christian friend – we can chat to God. If you want to be there, but have questions or struggles – lets talk about it. Lets find those answers, God will help you find them!

PRAYER POINTS



QUESTIONS ON YOUR MIND

The Checklist – The God Who Perfects Everything

What truths do we learn about God?

Revelation 21-22

- He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end
- The Alpha – he was before everything and made everything
- The Omega – he is the end for everyone, whether they thirst for him or they do not thirst for him

How does Jesus fit in?

Revelation 21-22

- Presence in the new creation is only granted by trusting in Jesus and his sacrifice
- Jesus accomplishes God's purpose for creation – eternal rest with Him
- Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the firstfruits of the new creation pointing forward to the resurrection of believers to eternal life and the renewal of creation

What truths do we learn about humanity?

Revelation 21-22

- If we are in Christ, we are citizens of the age to come and so should set our minds there
- The new creation involves a resurrection of our physical bodies – we won't be spirits or ghosts but real people, living in a real place, enjoying real things!

How should we respond?

- Look forwards
- Wait eagerly

EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



- What are you looking forward to most about the new creation?
- Do you often think about the new creation? Why? Why not?
- If you spent more of your time looking forward to the new creation, how would that change some of the choices you make today? What would you prioritise? What would you deprioritise?
- How is the new creation a hope for those who are going through a tough time? Or a great time?

Tools to teach the series

(for leaders)

TALKS

Much of the teaching of this series will be through talks on Fridays. The aim will be to draw out the key points of the particular section of scripture. There is no way that we will be able to cover every detail, so the aim will be to focus on a handful of key truths.

SMALL GROUPS

The aim of small groups is to help the young people understand the key points of the talk but also crucially to apply those points to their lives. It is very important that you build on the questions that are sent out by the person doing the talk and tailor them for your small group. We will use small group time on Fridays and Sundays.

Q&A

We will host a number of Q&A sessions on Sunday afternoons that touch on some of the bigger questions. The host and panel should co-ordinate in advance to allow preparation. All leaders should ask their small groups to submit questions for the sessions.

LEADING

There is also an opportunity for those who are leading to encourage the young people and build up towards the talk or key messages on the day. There could be useful tips on how to read the bible or interviews with young people or leaders on why they read the bible or bible games.

How to Use this Book

THE NARRATIVE

For each section, the book aims to highlight the timeline and key events of the section, as well as defining key concepts and words.

FOR NOTES

There is plenty of space for notes in this book – both for you and the young people. Please use the space and encourage the young people to also do so

FRAMEWORK

The notes and suggested small group questions are intended as a framework for giving talks, leading sessions and Q&A sessions to cover the key points, while leaving flexibility in how to do that

USEFUL RESOURCES

This series leans heavily on a number of resources, which may be of interest for you or your small groups

- **God's Big Picture** – Vaughan Roberts
- **The Drama of Scripture** – Bartholomew, Goheen
- **The Symphony of Scripture** – Mark Strom
- **Whole Life, Whole Scripture: Journey through Scripture** – LICC (on the bible app)
- **“What on Earth is Going On? (The Bible's Big Picture)”** – All Souls Series
- **The God who is There** – D.A. Carson

And numerous specific articles, including:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-names-and-titles-of-jesus/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/publication/the-holy-spirit/>

And above all, **The Bible**

**Blessed is the one...
whose delight is in the law of
the LORD,
and who meditates on his law
day and night.
That person is like a
tree planted by streams of
water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not
wither—
whatever they do prospers.**

Psalm 1:1-3

**“Happy is the person
who possesses the
Bible! Happier still is
one who reads it!
Happiest of all is one
who not only reads it
but obeys it.”**

JC Ryle