

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

What to expect today

- **Learn why the Bible is important** to our faith, our growth, and the growth of the church.
- **Learn the storyline of the Bible** from Genesis to Revelation.
- **Learn why reading, studying and sharing the Bible is important to your spiritual health.**
- **Listen carefully and take notes.**

THE BIBLE'S IMPORTANCE

How do you make decisions each day? How do you decide to say “yes” to one thing and “no” to another?

- **Is God’s Word a lamp to your feet and a light to your path? (Psa 119:105)** The Bible lights the path we should take and the choices God wants us to make. The Bible is our lamp. (see Psa 119:131, Psa 81:10)
- **Jesus said, Don’t “live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matt. 4:4.** God’s Word is trustworthy, authoritative, reliable, and true. *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,”* 2 Tim. 3:16
- **Alive** – *“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword...it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”.* Heb. 4:12

READ ALOUD – First in English and then in your mother tongue

Psalm 61:1-8 CSB (Christian Standard Bible)

God, hear my cry;

pay attention to my prayer.

*[2] I call to you from the ends of the earth
when my heart is without strength.*

Lead me to a rock that is high above me,

*[3] for you have been a refuge for me,
a strong tower in the face of the enemy.*

*[4] I will dwell in your tent forever
and take refuge under the shelter of your wings. Selah*

*[5] God, you have heard my vows;
you have given a heritage to those who fear your name.*

*[6] Add days to the king’s life;
may his years span many generations.*

*[7] May he sit enthroned before God forever.
Appoint faithful love and truth to guard him.*

*[8] Then I will continually sing of your name,
fulfilling my vows day by day.*

- **Share what Psalm 61 is saying to you?**

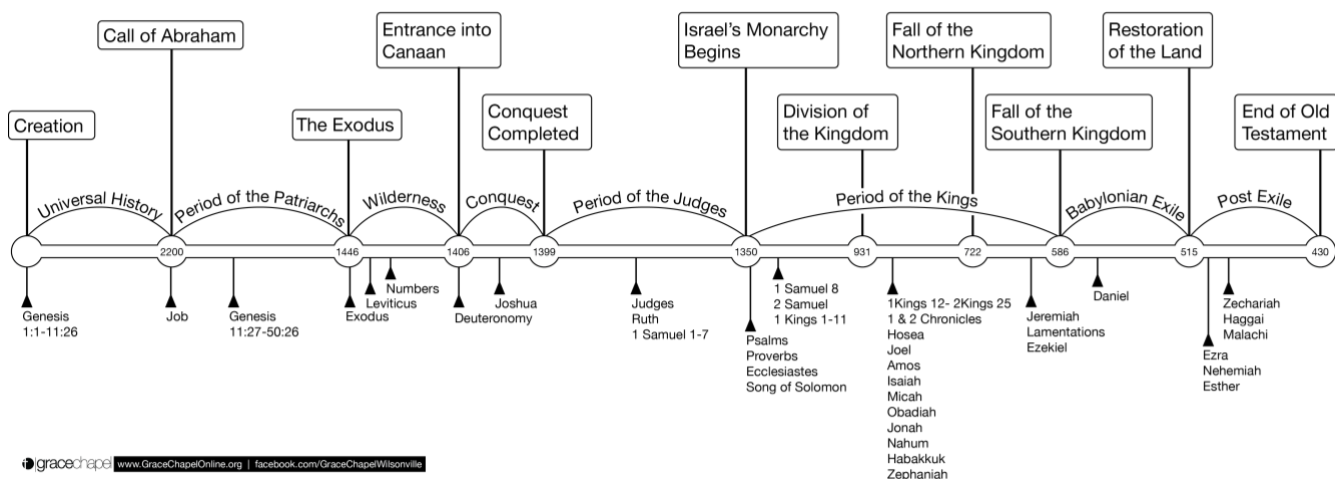
Who should read the Bible and why?

- **Everyone should read the Bible.** For centuries, the Bible has been treasured, memorized, reflected in laws, and translated into 1,500 languages. Today 6 billion people today have access to God’s Word.
- **For Christians it is more than an important book. It is the only authoritative source you can trust.**

THE BIBLE IS ONE BOOK BY ONE AUTHOR WITH ONE SUBJECT TELLING ONE STORY

- **ONE BOOK** made up of 66 individual books in the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). The Old Testament contains: 5 books of the Pentateuch (Genesis thru Deut.), 12 historical, 5 poetical and 17 books of prophesy. The New Testament 27 books: 4 "Gospels", Acts (history), 21 epistles or letters to churches and individuals (13 by Paul), and 1 prophecy (Revelation). **The Bible begins with the creation of all things and ends with the renewal of all things and offers the meaning of all history. Scripture is valuable as a whole (not just the parts).** The truth of any one Bible verse becomes clearer as we read more and understand more. The Bible is one book with many parts which fit together perfectly.
- **ONE AUTHOR: GOD.** The Bible is the story of **God's initiative and activity** in history - from before time to the end of time. It is one unified story of **God speaking thru men**. The Bible begins with God speaking (Gen. 1:3). 23,769 manuscripts of the Bible exist - more any other book. Each was preserved through the ages and are all virtually the same! Archaeological records prove over and over that what happened over the centuries in the Bible is true. **Even though the Bible was written by about 40 authors over 1,500 years, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, God's message is consistent throughout.** The Bible is based on real people, living in real places, at specific times. **The Bible is not the history of mankind but a history of God's work and plan for all of his people.**
- **ONE SUBJECT: JESUS** – *"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."* Luke 24:27 "John 5:39-40 NIV *"These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me to have life."* See also Heb 1:1-2: *"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..."* Heb 1:1-2. The Bible is God's record of His work in the world to redeem us through His Son. Christ unlocks the meaning of the Bible. **Each book points to Jesus.**
- **ONE STORY: The Bible is not a series of disconnected, good moral stories telling us how to live our lives like Abraham or David. Instead, the Bible is one big story centered on Jesus** telling us how our world became broken and how God through Christ will put things right. The OT over time reveals God's plan for a Redeemer and we see hints of the Messiah. But Christ is not fully revealed until the NT. **The Old Testament is about God's promise that a Savior will come and begins to reveal God's plan. The New is about the fulfillment of His promise to save the world through Christ. Scripture explains God's plan for us. We don't define how the world works. God explains His plan for each of us through the Christ. We cannot explain why we are here...only God can in Scripture. The Bible explains the world.**

TIMELINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT – 39 BOOKS



TIMELINE OF NEW TESTAMENT – 27 BOOKS

- 0 to 33 AD – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- 33-60 AD – Acts
- ~48 AD - James and Galatians (1st missionary journey of Paul)

- ~50 AD – 1st and 2nd Thessalonians (2nd missionary journey of Paul)
- ~58 AD – 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Romans (3rd missionary journey of Paul)
- ~60 AD – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (Paul in Rome)
- ~65 AD – 1st & 2nd Timothy, Titus, 1st and 2nd Peter, Hebrews, Jude
- ~90 AD – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, and Revelations

Note: exact dates unknown. Timeline based on general beliefs of scholars.

- **In summary, the Bible is one Book, by one author, with one subject telling one story. Without the Old Testament, we don't know who the characters are, and what God's plan is.** To support Christ's coming, the NT writers used 1600 direct quotations from the Old Testament and thousands more that were not direct quotes.

Why trust the Bible?

- **God reveals who He is, His ways, and His work for His people. He is our Creator and knows what is best for us. He has chosen to reveal what we need to know about Him through the Bible. The Bible tells us who we are as a people, why we exist, why we act in ways that are wrong, how we relate to God, what He treasures and how everything will one day be made right.**
- **God rules everything to accomplish His purpose:** sparrows Matt 10:29-31, feeding creatures Ps. - 104:27-30, (also Ps 147:8; Jon 4:6,9; Ps. 135:7; Luke 8:24). The world does not run by itself; God runs the world.
- **The Bible speaks to all of life: morals, sex, money, art, family, science, justice, mercy, politics, and much more.** We have the Bible and the Holy Spirit to help guide our thoughts and actions.
- **Scripture may not be understandable.** God knows everything and His ways are often mysterious. Plus, people and cultures a 1,000 years ago may not be easy for us to understand today.

THE BIBLE IS:

- **Trustworthy/True** – *“The law of the Lord is **perfect**, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are **trustworthy**, making wise the simple...By them(you are) warned; in keeping them there is great reward.* - Psa 19:7-11 (also John 17:17). *“...when you received the word of God...you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.”* (1 Thes 2:13)
- **Designed to help us mature and grow** – *“Then we will **no longer be infants**...blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning...of people in their deceitful scheming.”* Eph. 4:14. *“...⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them...at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up...”* Deut 6:4-8
- **To bear fruit** – *“...We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: **bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God**”* Col. 1:9-11
- **Not false teaching** – *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”* 1 Pet 3:15. *“...the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”* 1 John 2:14b. (see also Eph 4:13-14).
- **God's Word is Living! - God's Word is eternal. Man's word does not last. God's word does.** *“For you have been born again...through the living and enduring word of God.”* 1 Pet 1:23. *“...when you received the word of God... you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.”* (1 Thes 2:13). The Bible changes lives eternally.
- **God's Word is more reliable than your experiences, or your relationships, or society.** (Deut. 28:9-10)
- **We hope you read the Bible daily and listen for the Holy Spirit's voice? Through the Holy Spirit, the Bible can govern our lives, make our choices, challenge our beliefs, and shape us to look more like Jesus.**

LESSONS 1 through 8

OUR BIBLE STUDY THEME: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

There are many themes in the Bible. They are not contradictory but complementary.

Themes in the Bible

PEOPLE

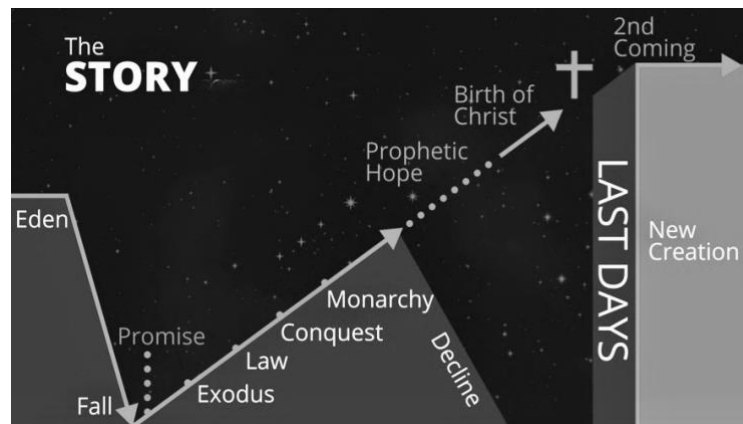
- **Prayer** – Prayer is a primary way God wants to have a relationship with us.
- **Priesthood** – Priests were instituted by God to offer sacrifices on behalf of believers. Because God is Holy, sinful people cannot come before Him. But because of Christ's sacrifice, all believers can come to God directly. (1 Peter 2:4-10; Heb. 13:15).
- **Covenant** – a promise or binding relationship made by God with His creation – Adam/Eve (implied), Noah, Abraham (seed of the Gospel Gal. 3), Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Messiah (new covenant).

PLACE

- **Sacrifice** – Sacrifices were how God dealt with His people to allow them to keep a “right relationship” between God and sinful humans. The sacrificial system began at Mt. Sinai. Examples of sacrifice are throughout the Old Testament - God sacrificing an animal to clothe Adam and Eve; Abraham's attempted to offer his only son. The ultimate sacrifice: God sacrifice of His only Son's Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-10; Heb. 13:15)

RULE/BLESSING

- **Obedience** – God is in authority over all the earth and its peoples. In the Old Testament, God's people were to obey His commands/laws and be blessed but if they disobeyed they were to be cursed. In the New Testament, we are to obey God because we love Him - not out of duty or just to do the right thing. We are to obey the “law of Christ,” which is a law of love (Gal. 6:2; John 13:34; Matthew 22:36-40).
- **Mighty Warrior who Conquers** – God is a mighty Warrior who judges righteously and punishes wrong. He controls the visible and invisible angelic host of Armies. He rules in heaven and earth. He sent the flood; delivered His people from Egypt; conquered Canaan; sent His Son as the “serpent crusher” who will finally conquer sin and death.



Today, our theme is “the Kingdom of God” which connects the whole Bible together through God's plan to save the world through Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God was one of the main themes of Jesus teaching.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD	GOD'S PEOPLE	GOD'S PLACE	GOD'S RULE & BLESSING
THE PATTERN OF THE KINGDOM	Adam and Eve	The garden	God's word; perfect relationship
THE PERISHED KINGDOM	No-one	Banished	Disobedience and curse
THE PROMISED KINGDOM	Abraham's descendants	Canaan	Blessing to Israel and the nations
THE PARTIAL KINGDOM	The Israelites	Canaan (and Jerusalem and temple)	The law and the king
THE PROPHESED KINGDOM	Remnant of Israel; inclusion of nations	New temple; new creation	New covenant; new king; great blessing
THE PRESENT KINGDOM	Jesus Christ: new Adam; new Israel	Jesus Christ: true tabernacle; true temple	Jesus Christ: new covenant; rest
THE PROCLAIMED KINGDOM	The new Israel: Jew and Gentile believers in Christ	The individual believer; the church	New covenant; Holy Spirit
THE PERFECTED KINGDOM	Multi-national family of God	New creation, new Jerusalem, new temple	Throne of God and the Lamb; perfect blessing

DEFINITION: The Kingdom of God is God's People living in God's Place and under God's Rule and Blessing. From the beginning God has wanted His people to live with Him in His Kingdom. God has revealed His Kingdom in stages throughout history. **In the next 8 lessons, God will progressively reveal the restoration of His perfect Kingdom:**

LESSON 1 – THE PATTERN OF THE KINGDOM or Model Kingdom – In the beginning, God established the Perfect Kingdom which is how the world is designed to be. – Genesis 1-2 (It's all good.).

- **Genesis 1:1** – *‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.’* God alone is eternal. He is the author of creation and rightful ruler of all things. He alone is worthy of worship. God, the Father, took the initiative; God, the Spirit, was hovering over the waters; and God, the Son, was present at Creation. (John 1:3; Col. 1:16)

- Genesis 1:31 **God said what He made was very good. All that God made matters to Him.** All things and all creatures do what He instructs. **God of the Bible is the central focus of all creation, not man.** God speaks only the truth and has absolute power. Only God can determine what is good or evil.
- Genesis 1:27-28 – ***“So God created mankind in his own image...”***²⁸ *God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...”*
- **We were made by God uniquely to share God's rule over creation and have relationships. God made a specific place for Adam and Eve – a garden. They were to enjoy a relationship with Him in a secure garden where they were to be provided for as they “fill the earth and (care) for it”.**
- Of all creatures on earth, mankind has a unique relationship with God. **We are completely dependent upon God even though we may not acknowledge Him.**
- **The Climax of creation, a day without end - “...so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.** ³ *Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”* – Gen 2:2. On the 7th day, God rested because everything needed was created and it was “very good.” He wasn't tired, but His work of creation was done. On the seventh day, there is no mention of a new evening or morning (Gen 2:2). Mankind was to rest with Him forever.
- **God provided for all of His creatures including Adam and Eve. God appointed them to rule the world with Him forever enjoying His rest.** They worked together to produce fruit from the earth.
- **Genesis 2:4-25 –focuses on Adam and Eve and their relationship to Him, each other and creation. The garden in Eden was as God designed it to be – the best way to live with Him. This is the model of His Kingdom.**

PERFECT RELATIONSHIPS – God created a perfect world with perfect relationships.

- **God <-> mankind** – Adam and Eve's relationship with God was perfect. He provided for their needs and set the only rule or law. ***“...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”***(Gen 2:17)
- **Man <-> Woman** – Their relationship with each other was perfect. **Genesis 2:25.** - *“Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”*
- **Human beings <-> all creation** – Relationship between humans and God's creation was perfect. Gen. 2:15 *“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”*
- **The world without sin and death was a blessing to all creatures and Adam and Eve.** His creation matters because He created it for good and His glory.
- **RECAP:** Before sin entered the world, the pattern of the Kingdom of God was this: **Adam and Eve were God's people, living with Him in God's place, the garden of Eden, and under God's Rule and Blessing in perfect relationship with Him.**

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>Pattern of the KINGDOM</u>
God's People	Adam and Eve
God's Place	Garden of Eden
God's Rule and Blessing	One rule; Perfect Relationship

LESSON 2 – THE PERISHED (DYING OR REJECTED) KINGDOM – THE FALL – Genesis 3-5 (It's all bad.); Genesis 6-11 (It gets worse.)

THE PERFECT KINGDOM DIDN'T LAST.

- From the beginning, God has desired to dwell with us in the place He created for us. If Adam and Eve had never sinned, they would have continued to enjoy fellowship and eternal rest with God, as they multiplied and expanded the Garden to fill the whole earth.

- Their sin brought death and struggle to earth. As a result of their sin, all will die and all our souls will be separated from our bodies. Our souls will continue to live either in hell or in heaven with Christ eternally in new bodies in a new earth which will be rid of all sin and evil! Once again, we will be God's people, in His place, under His rule and blessing.

WHY DID GOD'S ORIGINAL KINGDOM FAIL? AND WHERE DID EVIL COME FROM? – The talking snake

- **God is sovereign, holy and loving. Yet, an angel (Satan) rejected His authority.**

- **A serpent (Satan) rebels against God - Satan is not all knowing, eternal or present everywhere.** He rules demons (Mat 12:24) that tempt people (Col 2:15, 1 Pt 5:8-9) depending on their culture. Satan can manipulate matter and weather (Job 1; 2:8). He can influence legal trials and government structures (Rev 2:10, Job 1:17). He tries to trap Christians (1 Tim 3:7). He lies better than anyone (Joh 8:44, Col 2:15). He can kill Christians (Job 1:2), but not eternally (Rom. 8). **But he will be crushed** (Gal. 3:15). The Lord uses Satan's "thorns" to produce sanctification (2 Cor. 12:7; Rom 8:38). **Satan will be thrown into hell** in the end (Mat 25:41; 1 Joh 3:9). **Satan is resistible** (Jam 4:7). And one day, *"that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray...was hurled to the earth"* Rev. 12:9 (See Jude 6)
- **SATAN'S TACTICS are the same today – he wants us to turn toward him and away from our loving God.**
 - He distorts God's Word Gen. 3:1. *"Did God really say"* - It's not clear
 - He questions God's Word. Gen 3:4. *"You will not certainly die,"* - It's not true
 - He distorts motives. Gen 3:5. *"you'll be like God, knowing good and evil."* - It's not fair.
 - Satan lies to us. He says the sin we desire will be "good" for us. We fall for his trap. What we thought was "good" always leads to bad (sin) and finally death.

THE FALL – an act of rebellion

- **Knowledge of good & evil – Adam and Eve didn't chase the snake out of the garden. Evil/sin cannot be in the presence of God. Adam and Eve disobeyed God's one rule – don't eat of the tree of good and evil. They gained the knowledge of evil and everything was spoiled. They believed the snake and made their own law, breaking God's law. God cannot dwell with those who sin/rebel against Him. They were law-breakers AND law-makers.**
- God, not humans, makes the rules/laws. **Because they turned to Satan and their own desires, they turned from God toward Satan and themselves. We are their descendants and carry their sin nature. We are born into sin - rebels against God.** God removed them from His garden and they faced God's curse and judgment. They were deceived by a serpent and forfeited God's rest and were exiled into the wilderness where work was hard. God's plan has always been to restore humanity back to that seventh day rest.

Everything was broken.

- **Relationship between Man and Woman – broken – (Gen. 3; Romans 5:12-14)**
- They hide their nakedness - Gen. 3:7 – *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so, ...made coverings for themselves."*
- They feel shame and argue, Gen. 3:16b - *"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*
- **Relationship between Humans and creation - broken**
- *'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat from it.'*
- **Relationship between God and human beings - broken**
- Gen 3:17. *"...for dust you are and to dust you will return."* Gen 3:19. Now Adam faces toil and death. Life will be hard. God's judgement forces them and us to consider death or Life in Him. (2 Tim 1:10)
- They disobeyed. God removed them from Eden - Gen 3:17-18, 23.

But God pointed to the "serpent-crusher" Gen 3:15 – "He'll wound your head, you'll wound his heel." Despite their sin, God still loves them. A future son of Eve will destroy the evil one.

Humans are no longer God's people by nature, no longer live in God's place, have disobeyed His rule, and face His curse not His blessing. A perfect world was spoiled by sin. Harmony between humans and the created order ended. **The Bible is the story of God re-establishing His rule. But mankind is hostile to God's rule by continuing to believe Satan's lie. We want to be the ruler which brings us conflict and envy and pride and death.**

After Adam and Eve's sin, we see the spread of sin and death as God had said:

- Gen 4. **Cain murders Abel because God favored Abel's sacrifice.** God said to Cain, *"Why are you angry?...If you do right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not..., sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you..."* Gen 4:6-7.

- Gen 5. **Seth** is made in Adam's likeness (Gen 5:1-3), but a marred image of God; *'...then he died.'* (Gen 5:8)

- Gen 6-9 **The Flood; Noah's covenant (binding promise); Gen 11 - The nations rebel against God at Babel.**

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>Perished (Dying) KINGDOM</u>
God's People	No-one
God's Place	Removed from Eden
God's Rule and Blessing	Disobedience and cursed

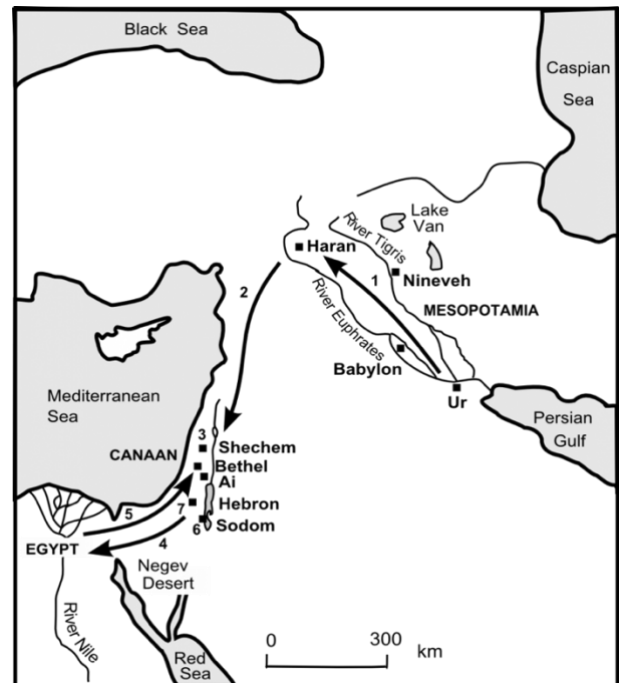
RECAP: After Adam and Eve's sin, **God's people now are no one**. Adam and Eve and their descendants **no longer live in God's place** as they have been removed from Eden. They are **no longer under God's rule and blessing** but instead are **disobedient and under His curse**.

LESSON 3 – THE PROMISED KINGDOM – Promise and Fulfillment – Genesis 12-17 (There is hope!)

- **God isn't responsible for the fall or mankind's evil, but He is active/sovereign/unchanging over it. And he will defeat evil and He will restore creation.** In the midst of sinful people, God works to carry out His plan for redemption...God never quits on us, even after we quit on Him.
- **God always had an ETERNAL PLAN** - Eph 1:4,9-10 – *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world...⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will..., which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ."*
- In Genesis 3-12, **God shows His mercy to Adam and Eve** (God requires a sacrifice and made them a covering for their nakedness), **Cain** (protection - Gen. 4:15), and to **Noah** (God's favor, covenant, and protection- Gen 6:8, 6:18, 9:15), **Babel** (scattered nations/languages - Genesis 11)...**Yet mankind (Gen 3-11) sinks deeper and deeper into sin. Through human history, our sin leads to God's judgement, our repentance, and God's mercy.** (Pattern: SIN, JUDGEMENT, MERCY/GRACE)

UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM (Abrahamic covenant)– People, Place and Blessing

- Abraham didn't know God. We don't know why God chose Abram, an idol worshiper. The world was evil, yet God revealed Himself to Abram.
- **God makes an unconditional promise to Abram** (built upon His promise to Noah) **which points to His plan for restoring His kingdom and raising up a future king.** Gen 12. The heart of the Bible is this promise.
- **By His grace, He chose Abraham.** Today He promises protection to us by His covenant with Abraham, which points a promised Savior – Gen. 3:15; Rom. 16:20 ("serpent-crusher") - *"...God...will soon crush Satan."*
- **The covenant with Abraham guides the rest of Bible. It is the seed of the Gospel** - Gal 3:7-9 *"God...announced the gospel in advance to Abraham..."* Through Abraham, God will justify Jew and Gentile by faith.
- **The promised Kingdom fulfilled by Christ – Gen 12:1-3 – Abraham** *"go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you. 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."* Abraham believed God's promise (Gen 15:6).
- **A promised people/nation, place and land.**
 - **Promised People/nation** – Gen 12:2 – *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you".* Also, Gen 17:7,10 - *"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.";* Gen 22:17; See also covenant with Moses: Exo 6:7; Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; Exo 19:3-6; Gal 3:7-9, 29; Heb 4:1, 9-10
 - **Promised Place** - The whole land – Gen 12:7; 17:6, 8 –*"I will make your very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you..."⁸ The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*; Josh 21:43-45; Acts 3:25-26; This land, between the River Nile and the Euphrates was already populated. It was a strategic



location around which empires rose and fell over the centuries – Canaan, Egypt, Phoenicians, Philistines, Hittites, Elam, Syria, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, Seleucids, Greece and Rome.

- o **Promised Blessing to nations** – Gen 12:3 the curse from the fall is replaced with the start of God's plan of salvation for all nations – its seal was circumcision. Gen 17:10-11

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>PROMISED KINGDOM</u>
God's People	Abraham descendants
God's Place	The Promised Land
God's Rule and Blessing	Blessing to Israel and nations

Abraham justified by faith – Gen 15:6; - “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as

righteousness.” Abraham is accepted by faith in the gospel promises of God - not by his goodness. God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled in part through Moses and David and ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

RECAP: God's people are Abraham's descendants, living in the Land promised Abraham, and under God's blessing to Israel and to the nations.

LESSON 4 – THE PARTIAL (IMPERFECT or NOT COMPLETE or RE-PRESENT) KINGDOM – Genesis 18 through 2 Chronicles. This Partial (Incomplete) Kingdom covers 1,000 years from Abraham to Solomon. God's promises to Abraham are partially (not completely) fulfilled in Israel's history.

God's covenant promises are beginning to be worked out. God is making a people for himself through Abraham/Sarah. Over and over, unworthy people become God's people. It is God who saves so no man can boast.

OUTLINE OF PARTIAL KINGDOM – Exodus -> Nation Born -> Law & Tabernacle->Canaan conquered->Kings rule

LESSON 4a – Focus is on GOD'S PEOPLE: GENESIS 18 - EXODUS 18

The Promise - 'I will make you into a great nation' - Gen 12:2 -Abraham-Isaac-Jacob-Joseph

GOD'S PEOPLE: The Partial (Incomplete) Fulfilment of God's promise - from Abraham to a nation rescued from Egypt.

- **Only God can fulfill His promises through Abraham (Gen 12 – 50)** – Abraham and Sarah must birth a son to fulfill God's promise. They try their own ways to produce an heir. But their plan is not God's plan (Ishmael). God told Sara, aged 90 years of age, that she would give birth to her only son, Isaac (Gen 18:12). Later, **God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son** (Gen. 22) (see also Heb 11:17-19). God tells Abraham and Isaac to go

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>Scripture reference</u>	<u>Key Events</u>	<u>PARTIAL KINGDOM</u>
4a - God's People	Genesis 18 – Exodus 18	The patriarchs; Joseph, Egypt and bondage; Exodus	People set free; God creates nation
4b - God's Rule & Blessing	Exodus 19 – Leviticus	Mt. Sinai, God's dwelling place, 40 years wandering	Law, Sacrifice, His Presence
4c - God's Place	Numbers - Joshua	Enter the Promised Land; Joshua, conquering Canaan but not completely	Land through Conquest but uncertainty
4d God's King	Judges – 2 Chronicles	Judges, “Everyone does evil”, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon	Judges, Samuel, Kings (God rules through His king)

to the mountain where 2,000 years later, scholars say, God, the Father, would give up His Son and God, the Son, would give Himself for us on the cross. God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac then God sent a ram in the place of Abraham's son. In Genesis, God sacrifices an animal after Adam and Eve sinned. Later, God tells the Hebrews to sacrifice a ram to save their first born son. (see John 10:11, 14; Micah 5:2, 4-5;) These all foretold Christ, the Good Shepherd, who was sacrificed for our sins once and for all times.

- God fulfills His promise through Abraham's descendants Isaac => Jacob => twelve sons which became 12 tribes, and eventually through his spiritual descendants through the work of His Son Jesus.
- Abraham lived long enough to enjoy Isaac, the promised son. But God told Abraham that it would be 400 years before his descendants would receive the Promised Land (Gen 15:13-16).

- **Joseph in Egypt.** – Later, through Joseph, God brought Jacob's family to Egypt to save them from starvation. Joseph tells his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good..." (Gen 50:20).
- **Exodus - Slavery, Redemption - Exo 1- 18 – Exo 2: 23- 24** – Abraham's descendants multiplied in Egypt. After 400 years, a new Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites - *"the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out...to God. God... remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob."*
- **God selected Moses to lead the descendants of Jacob out of slavery in Egypt. 500 years after God appeared to Abraham, his descendants are around 2,000,000 people. God continues to fulfill His promise to Abraham by redeeming (saving) his descendants. Throughout the Bible, we see this pattern of God rescuing and saving His people. God's rescue of the Hebrews begins at the burning bush: Exo 3:14 – "God said to Moses, ""I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Ex. 3:14.**
- **God is the hero of every story. Moses doesn't save Israelites. God redeems them from slavery. The Bible is a book about God...not about what man has done.**
- **GOD SAVES HIS PEOPLE**
- **1. by substitution – at Passover from Egypt, which is how Jesus saves us today. Exo 12 – PASSOVER LAMB saves the FIRSTBORN.** In Egypt, all die but those saved by blood of a firstborn lamb. Later, Christ's blood is required for our salvation. His perfect sacrifice was made in our place.
- **2. by conquest through the defeat of Pharaoh - Exo 14.** See also His defeat of Jericho, conquest of Canaan, and finally, Christ's death on the cross defeating evil, and His defeat of Satan when He returns.

As the Israelites leave Egypt, God destroys Pharaoh and his army as the parted waters of the Red Sea drown them. After a 3-month journey, God has the Israelites stop at Mt. Sinai for almost a year. On Mt. Sinai, God speaks to Moses: "[5] Now **if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, [6] you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**" Ex. 19:5-6.

RECAP Lesson 4a: The first promise is partially fulfilled as God rescues HIS PEOPLE – bringing them out of Egypt.

Lesson 4b - GOD'S RULE AND BLESSING: EXODUS 19 – LEVITICUS

The Promise - 'I will bless you' Genesis 12:2

GOD'S RULE AND BLESSING: THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT as Israelites receive God's law and the blessing of His presence.

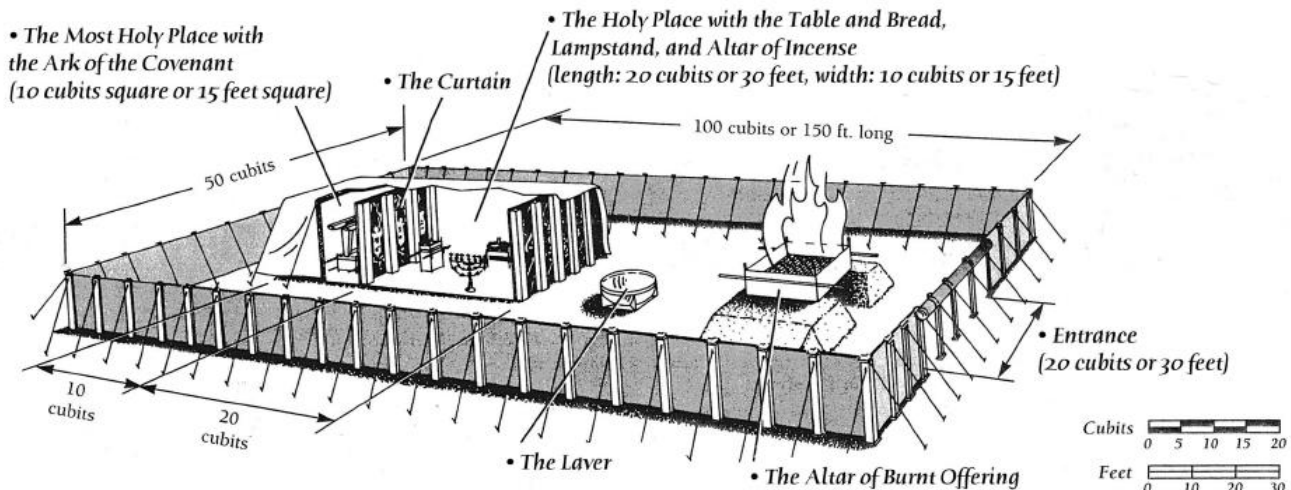
First, GOD'S LAW (OR RULE) - The Ten Commandments and Mt. Sinai - Exodus 20

- **God gave His people the 10 Commandments, which are a reflection of the character of God. The law was given to make us aware of our sin and show that we needed saving from God's wrath for our sin. God saved the Israelites from bondage before the law was given and before they knew the law. The law was not how they were saved. The law pointed the people and us that we need to be saved. The law does not save us but points us to the promised Savior. In Him we find saving faith. The law finds fulfillment in the gospel in Christ. It is salvation by works and salvation by faith that are opposites. God chooses to save who He will. In response, He calls us to obey His law, which is required if we want to enjoy God's covenantal blessing.**
- **The Israelites were to be His "kingdom of priests" and His "holy nation" to witness to the pagan nations around them. The law was preparing Israel to be a representative people to show the surrounding nations, the character and requirements of God. Israel is called to draw the nations to God's rule. God said to the Israelites, "Observe (these laws) carefully, for this will show your wisdom...to the nations, who will...say, "...What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us..." (Deut. 4). The Israelites were to enter the Promised Land which is a narrow strip of land (60 miles wide) centered between the great empires ruling the earth. To the west is the Mediterranean Sea, to the east a vast desert so it is the land bridge between Europe, Africa and Asia. See also 1 Kings 8:41-43; Isa 56:6-7.**
- **Obedience to His law is always better than our way. It is good to be under the law. God's law reflects God's holiness and proves our sinfulness.**
 - **The law reflects God's character and reveals in us:**
 - **What is wrong? by showing us our sin and disobedience. Rom 3:20 – "... no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin."**

- **And what is right? – by revealing His standards of how to live** - Matt 5:19 – “... anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands...will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices...these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” The law is not given to restrict us but to bless. God's law (His Word) does not bring loss but freedom and blessing.
- **And what is needed? – our Savior, the only one who obeyed the law** - Gal 3: 24 – “So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.” (John 1:14. Christ tabernacled (dwelled) with us.)

Second, GOD'S PRESENCE (BLESSING) among His people. The Tabernacle (to dwell) - Exo 25-31; 35-40.

- The Israelites lived in tents. God wanted to dwell with them in a tent or a tabernacle, which was a portable place of worship, in the midst of His people. But sinful people cannot live in His presence without being destroyed (see Mt. Sinai). **God wants to dwell with His people to provide for their well-being and blessing. God is not a spectator watching us.** (Haggai 2:18-23).
- **God designed the tabernacle which is an earthly copy of a heavenly sanctuary and a small copy of Eden** (Ex. 25:40; Heb 8:5 Heb 9:23-24).
- But how can a holy God be present among a sinful people – only through the blood of sacrifice? The penalty for sin has always been death as promised to Adam and Eve if they disobeyed God.
- **His dwelling place, the tabernacle, had an altar. Upon the altar, God accepted a temporary substitute (animal sacrifice) for the life of the sinner (the Israelites).** This temporary atonement for the people's sin postponed His judgement until sin is finally resolved in Christ. The sacrifices required each day were repetitive because their sin



was repetitive. An outer wall surrounded an area where the sacrifices took place. And a tent stood inside the outer wall which was divided into the Holy place and Most Holy Place where only the high priest entered through a curtain once a year.

- **To live in God's presence, a sacrifice is and was required – See Leviticus –Day of Atonement – an annual sacrifice for all the sins of the people.**
 - **Priest laid hands on an animal which represented the people and their sin**
 - **Priest killed animal as substitute for sin and presented its blood before God; the animal dies so they live**
 - This annual sacrifice and the daily sacrifices pointed to the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, our substitute on the cross. Those trusting Christ can come into the presence of God today through Christ. No longer do we need a high priest, once a year, to atone for our sins. God did not dwell in the hearts of people until Christ was resurrected...in the OT he only dwelled in a certain place.

RECAP Lesson 4b: The promise (rule and blessing) is partially fulfilled – God chooses to live (dwell) in the midst of His people in a limited relationship and under His rule (law) and blessing. Exo 29:45-46 - “Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God.” ⁴⁶They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt.”

Lesson 4c - GOD'S PLACE: NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY, JOSHUA – Summary: God led His people from Sinai toward Canaan. God's presence was with them. But the land was occupied and God's people lacked the courage to fight. They disobey God and God refused to allow the current generation to enter the Promised Land. So they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until Joshua leads them into the Promised Land.

The Promise - 'To your offspring I will give this land.' Gen 12:7

The Partial (Incomplete) Fulfilment – The Israelites move from Mt. Sinai, to the wilderness and finally into Canaan, the Promised Land.

- **NUMBERS: Disobedience and Delay – 40 years in the wilderness**
 - God led His people from Sinai toward Canaan. God's presence was with them. But the land was occupied and God's people lacked the courage to fight.
 - **On the way to the land 'flowing with milk and honey' (Num 13:27), the people rebelled, "...not one of them will ever see the land I promised..."** Num 14:23. Because of their Ingratitude and unbelief, they wander in the wilderness for 40 years until Joshua leads them into the Promised Land.
- **DEUTERONOMY: Blessings and Curses – Israelites are now ready to enter the Promised Land**
 - **Moses' farewell sermon** – overlooking Canaan, Moses points to a pattern of Obedience and Disobedience and tells the Israelites going into Canaan to:
 - **Obey and be blessed**, Deut 28: 1 – *"If you fully obey the Lord...and carefully follow all his commands...the Lord...will set you high above all the nations on earth."* God had rescued them. Now if they will obey Him, they can be used by Him and receive His blessing. But they do not honor their promise to obey God. (Exo. 19:8;24:3,7)
 - **Disobey and be cursed**, Deut 28: 63 – God said if they disobeyed, *"You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess."*
- **Book of JOSHUA: Conquest, Nation Established, Unfaithfulness and Uncertainty**
 - **Israelites take miraculous possession of the land – Josh 21:44** – *"The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn...the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵ (None) of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled."*
 - When the land was settled, Joshua called them to renew their covenant with God. Joshua said they would forsake God for foreign gods. They said, "No, We will serve the Lord." (Josh 24:21)

RECAP: God's Kingdom in God's place has been established in part.

- **God's people are in God's place and under God's rule and blessing. Israel is to be a people through whom God will make himself known to the world.**
- **Joshua's farewell sermon mirrors Moses' (Josh 23:12-13)** – Fear God and obey His law. *"But if you turn away and ally yourselves with...these nations that remain among you...the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will be...traps for you...until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you."*
- The Israelites must keep the covenant and prosper or be expelled. (Josh 5:13-14). **Israel exists to serve God's purposes not the other way around. Israel has taken possession of the land because God gave it to them as He promised. For now, the Israelites are in God's place.**

Lesson 4d - GOD'S KING to rule over the Israelites: JUDGES – 2 CHRONICLES

God did not mention a king to Abraham, but there have been hints beginning in Genesis 3. God's promise of a king or ruler is seemingly fulfilled by Saul, David, and Solomon. David and Solomon bring great periods of peace and prosperity but each fail to bring everlasting peace and the kingdom that God has promised.

The Bible up to this point has slowly revealed the promise of a King who will lead God's people:

- **The "serpent-crusher" Gen 3: 15** – One will come from woman who will crush Satan's head and defeat Him. Who is the serpent-crusher who will destroy evil?
- **A scepter from the line of Judah - Gen 49: 10** – *"... the obedience of the nations shall be his."*

- The king who is to rule under God submitting to God and read His Word daily – Deut 17: 18-19 – *“When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself...a copy of this law,...and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law...Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.”*
- God wants His king to do what God wants him to do. Who can meet God's standard? Christ alone.
- Who will be God's King? But, first - *“everyone did as they saw fit.”*
- The Partial (Incomplete) Fulfilment - Judges through- 1 Kings 11
 - JUDGES: Chapter 1 – The Israelites fail to dislodge all the Canaanites living among Israelites and the Amorites confine Israelites in their own land. This is not what God wanted so He does not drive out the remaining nations. See Judges 2:3 NIV - *‘I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you.’ ”*
 - A Cycle of Sin and Grace - Judges begins a 300 year period after Joshua has died. Israel returns to idols. They do not reflect God's character but develop gods who approve of what they do. Judges presents a people caught in cycle of sin, God's judges, they are defeated, they cry for mercy and God appoints a judge to bring peace in Land – Jud 3: 7-11. This cycle became progressively worse with Ruth's story being an exception.
 - The problem - *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.”* Jud 21:25
- Rejected King - 1 SAMUEL: A False Start – King Saul

The elders said to Samuel, ‘Appoint a king to leads us, such as all the other nations have’ - 1 Sam 8: 5

 - God is angry. They wanted a king, like the surrounding nations, rather than a king under God. (see Deut 17). God gives them what they ask for. **Saul is anointed and rejected by God. God rejected Saul because Saul rejected God's word.**
 - David is anointed... and forced to flee...but God's presence is with him. David, the anointed king, suffers and is rejected before he is recognized as the king.
- God's king David - 2 SAMUEL: The Reign of David – Under David, Israel enjoys peace and prosperity never seen in Israel. David isn't the “serpent-crusher” (but he is a partial (incomplete) fulfillment of the promise).
 - There is still one greater to come after King David. 2 Sam 7: 11b- 16 – *“the Lord himself will establish... his kingdom forever.¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. ... ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me...”*. God promises that a descendant of David will occupy the throne of Israel forever. (1 Chron 17:1-15 *“the Lord will build a house for you...”*; Psa 132:11; Acts 2:25-36))
- Solomon and the Golden Age - 1 KINGS 1-11: 40 year reign of peace and prosperity; pinnacle of Israel as nation. Solomon built a permanent dwelling place for God and the cloud of God's glorious presence filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11).

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>PARTIAL KINGDOM</u>
God's People	The Israelites
God's Place	Canaan (and Jerusalem and the temple)
God's Rule and Blessing	God's law and king

RECAP Lesson 4d: Promises partially fulfilled – God has provided a king who is to follow God's law. God has gathered His people in the land promised, and now they

live under God's rule and enjoy His blessing. The people now live in houses and God has a permanent place in His Temple. Solomon says, at the Temple dedication, (1 Kings 8: 56), ⁵⁶*“Praise...the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all...the promises he gave through ...Moses.”*

- But it doesn't last. **Solomon turns from God.** But this is not the end of God's story. This partial (incomplete) fulfillment of God's Kingdom points to something greater, Jesus Christ, and the perfect Kingdom God will establish through Him. But first prophets will predict this future King.

LESSON 5 – THE PROPHESED KINGDOM – (1 & 2 Kings; 2 Chron to Esther; Isaiah to Malachi) – Summary: The kingdom is split into two nations. Both nations are drawn to ways of the nations,. Both are destroyed along with Jerusalem/temple. Israelites are sent into captivity. God always leaves a faithful remnant of His people. Prophets of God prophesy that God will rule a new restored Jerusalem for a restored people through His coming king. Judgement and salvation will come to the nations through the prophesied Messiah. All of this is revealed in the prophetic books of the Bible (Isaiah to Malachi) written over 300 years – from Solomon's death to the return of the northern kingdom from Exile.

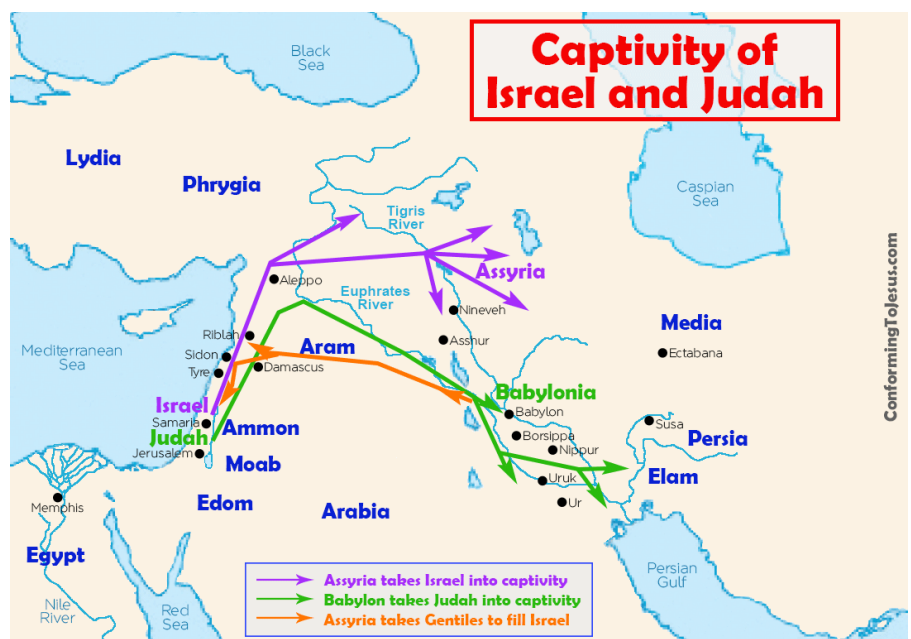
WHAT WAS THE PROPHETS' ROLE DURING THIS TIME? – God's spokesmen who called people to obey God or they would be judged by God, but they also offered hope. During this period, God spoke repeatedly to Israel and Judah through prophets. God said they were being punished for their sin but He still offered hope for the future. The prophets pointed forward to a time when God would fulfill every promise made through his King, the Messiah.

GOD'S SPOKESMEN Were to Speak God's Word (2 Pet 1:21 – "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God... by the Holy Spirit."). They were to guide the king so that the king ruled under God's authority. They also were to call His people to obey Him and His covenants. The prophets pointed to God's blessing for the obedient and God's curse for the disobedient. Instead of being a light to all nations, God's people rebelled. Finally, God could not tolerate their unfaithfulness.



THE PROPHETS' CONTEXT - King Solomon dies. Civil war began. The kingdom split in 922 BC into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Neither nation was strong.

- **ISRAEL – Northern Kingdom – ten tribes; capital city - Samaria**
 - **King Jeroboam** (1st northern king). His first act was to build a "temple" in Bethel and Dan where people worshipped golden calves - 1 Ki 12:28-30; 1 Ki 15:34, 16:19). **His idolatry was continued by his successors.** There were 19 kings and all "did evil in the eyes of the Lord".



- Kingdom was destroyed (722 B.C.) and people exiled to Assyria - After 200 years, the Northern Kingdom ceased to exist as a nation and became a mix of many nationalities. **2 Ki 17** (Hoshea last King of Israel); **"All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God. So, the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence."** 2 Kings 17:7, 18). Later called Samaria during the time of Jesus, the Jews despised the Samaritans.
- **JUDAH – Southern Kingdom – two tribes; contained God's Temple in Jerusalem and David's lineage.** Jerusalem on Mount Zion had become symbols of Israel's security and prosperity.

- **Some good kings- e.g. Josiah (2 Ki 22-23). But most were corrupt and disobedient.** None of the kings eliminated the places of worship to other gods erected in Solomon's reign. Manasseh worshiped Molech, which included children sacrifice by fire. He even built altars to pagan gods in the Temple.
- **Defeated by Babylonians and exiled in 597 and 586 BC.** In 586 BC, Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, razed the Temple and, sent many more into exile.
- *"By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept when we remembered Zion." Psa 137:12 Chron 36:15-21 – "The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. [16] But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. [17] He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians...God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar...They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and destroyed everything of value there. [21]*
- **In 538 BC, God had Cyrus, King of Persia, return exiles to Jerusalem. The new nation was weak and centered primarily around Jerusalem.**
- **God dismantled His partial (incomplete) Kingdom.** The Israelites are God's people exiled from God's place. They face the curse of God's judgement rather than His blessing. But God never abandoned His people.
- Here is a partial list of the 10 of the 17 prophetic books and prophets in chronological order:
 - Northern Kingdom – Elijah/Elisha, Jonah, 8th Century Amos, Hosea
 - Southern Kingdom – 8th century - Isaiah, Obadiah/Micah; 7th Century Jeremiah, in exile (Ezekiel, Daniel); 6th Century in return of remnant (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).

THE PROPHETS' MESSAGE – judgment and hope.

- A MESSAGE OF JUDGMENT –

- **God's judgment is the reason behind Israel and Judah's destruction Amos 2: 4-5, 6-16 – "Because they have rejected the law of the Lord and...have been led astray by false gods..., ⁵ I will send fire on Judah that will consume... Jerusalem."** Amos 2:4b-5)
- **God warns of consequences of disobedience, reminds them to repent and explains what will happen and why. To be faithful to His Word, He must judge His people.** Many of the kings of Israel thought they could avoid God's word by avoiding His prophet or control God by controlling the prophet but God will not be controlled. (see example 2 Kings 1)

- A MESSAGE OF HOPE – a glorious future, like the past but better. God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing. (Dan 7:14,18) God will not rebuild the partial (incomplete) kingdom but will establish what it pointed to, which is the Perfect Kingdom

– **GOD'S PEOPLE** – God's judgement was God's discipline (not divorce) as He points them to a new future and hope.

- **A new exodus** is promised to restore His people not in a national sense but as a spiritual people - Jer 16: 14-15 - *"...declares the Lord, "... I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors."*
- **A new Passover lamb** – Christ will die in the place of others - Isa 53: 6 *"We all...have gone astray, (and) turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*
- **All people are included** - Israelites AND all nations are included in God's salvation, fulfilling promise to Abraham - "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Gen 12:3: *"I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."* Isa 49: 6

- GOD'S PLACE – God will establish a place where God will meet with them after the Temple is destroyed in Jerusalem.

Just as God warned the Israelites in Lev. 26:32-45 – *"I myself will lay waste the land...I will scatter you among the nations...and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies...I will remember my covenant...with Abraham ...Yet...I will not reject them...."* Israel gave up the land because of unfaithfulness. (See 2 Chron 36:21 NIV – *"The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD..."* This sabbath rest would last for 70 years for the 420 years because of Israel's unfaithfulness. (420 + 70 = 490 years. 490 divided by 7 = 70 years of rest for the land.) (see Act 7:2-53; Heb 8:7-13; Heb 10:1-18)

Israel focused on the gift of the land where God's presence had dwelled in Jerusalem but not on God who gave them the land and rest. But God does not forget His promises. In Ezekiel 36:33-36, God said, *'On the day I cleanse*

you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt...They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited." Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed...I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.'

But the prophet's description does not sound like the old land of Israel. This "place" is describe as:

- **A new temple** – Ezekiel prophesies that there is a river flowing out from the Temple which gives life to the world, like the rivers flowing from Eden. Ezek 40-48
- **A new creation** Isa 65:17 - *"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."*

- GOD'S RULE AND BLESSING – God will fulfill His promise to establish His rule/blessing in a new covenant and king.

- **A new covenant** – God is faithful both to His promise to Moses to punish sins and His unconditional promise to Abraham to establish His kingdom of blessing to be introduced by a new King, the Son of David, the Messiah. *"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will **make a new covenant** with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah."* Jer. 31:31-34
- **A new king (Messiah)** - Isa 9:6 - There will be much rejoicing when the Messiah comes. *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*
- **RECAP of The Prophesied Kingdom: God's people are a remnant left waiting for a new temple and new covenant, king and blessing.**

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>PROPHESIED KINGDOM</u>
God's People	Remnant of Israel; inclusion of nations
God's Place	New temple = new creation
God's Rule and Blessing	New covenant-> new king-> great blessing

As God promised, the exiles return to Israel, but the prophesied Kingdom does not come.

- **There were great expectations. King Cyrus of Persia defeats the Babylonians and allows the people to return home to Judah 538 B.C.** Zerubbabel returned first upon Persian king Cyrus' decree and rebuilt the temple. A second group led by Ezra, 80 years later set the stage for a third group led by Nehemiah 13 years later who rebuilt the walls and re-ordered the Jews spiritual and economic - a miraculous accomplishment. Collectively, they rebuilt temple, taught the Law, and rebuilt the walls (Ezra 3:12). Unlike Solomon's Temple, God's presence did not fill the Most Holy of Holies.
- **But the people are still sinful. The promised time of salvation has not come as God's King hasn't come.** Yet, the Israelites dwelled in foreign lands and were still heirs to God's promises to Abraham and David. They are His people. They will be in His land. And they will lead to a worldwide blessing. (2 Sam 7:8-16). **Waiting for the king. Malachi insists the new King will appear. - Mal 3:1 "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple..."** 400 years pass by. We have no recorded Word from God during this time. During this time, Persia, then Greece, and finally Rome ruled over Israel just as Daniel predicted (Dan. 2). **During this period, the Israelites wanted to be free of other nations' rule, but their greatest need was repentance and deliverance from their sin through the promised Messiah.**
- **Over the years, God has given the Israelites glimpses of the meaning of God's promise to Abraham. But the Old Testament promises are not fully revealed except in Christ. But then, The King did come!**

LESSON 6 – THE PRESENT KINGDOM (Or the Kingdom Realized – "He is here!") - Matthew to John (the Gospels) –

- **The Old Testament = the promise ("HE is coming!!). The New Testament = the fulfilment in Christ.**
The Gospels = "HE is here! Acts = "Proclaim Him!" The Epistles = "Explain Him!" Revelation = "He's coming back!"
- **Jesus begins his public ministry with the words, 'The time has come... The kingdom of God is near' (Mk 1:15).**
The waiting was over. God's king had come to establish God's kingdom.

THE GOSPELS The life and death of Jesus – (what Jesus said, did and taught.) The promised King has finally come. All of God's promises are fulfilled in Christ! Now we see how the whole of the Bible fits together. God's promised King is born to save His people. His teaching and miracles proved that he was God himself in human form. Jesus saves God's people through substitution, by taking the punishment they deserve, so that God's people can be restored to perfect relationship with Him. Christ saves His people through conquest over death and Satan. The sacrifices of animals were not the perfect sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice saves us from sin eternally.

- **Matthew, Mark & Luke - synoptic gospels, verbal parallels**
 - Matthew: explains how Jesus fulfilled the OT Scriptures; primarily to Jews (Matt 1:22; 2:15, 17).
 - Mark: Jesus is the suffering, obedient servant who calls us to suffer to. (Mark 8:29; 8:31)
 - Luke: Jesus is the Savior of the world. Salvation is for all nations and types. Luke follows his gospel with the book of Acts - proclamation of the Gospel.
- **John - different style, unique material.** Jesus is the Son of God who gives eternal life. (John 8:12; 14:6; 20:31)
- **The gospels present same message:** Jesus, the Messiah, came to bring God's salvation to fulfill promises of Old Testament. Jesus teaches from Scripture (Luke 4:16-30) and fulfills prophecy by His actions (Matt 21:4)

JESUS IS THE FULFILMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT – Promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ

- **Matthew: Matthew: 1: 1** – begins – *"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham."* Matt 1:1. **The Messiah has come to fulfill promises** (Abraham & Daniel Gen 12; 2 Sam 7)
- **Mark:** See **Mark: 1: 2-3** quotes Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. *"as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way'...Prepare the way for the Lord..'"* Both prophets predict that a messenger, John the Baptist, would announce the King's arrival. Later Matthew proclaims, **"Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God."** ¹⁵ *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* Mark 1:14b-15.
- **Luke: Luke 1: 54-55** – Before Jesus birth, Mary says that through her baby, God has been *"merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."*
- **John: John: 1: 1** *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* Compare- *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* God's agent in creation comes to a fallen world to redeem it. *"The word became flesh and dwelt among us."* John 1:14
- **In summary, all the promises of the Kingdom of God made in the Old Testament are being fulfilled through Christ in the New Testament.** Paul says, *"No matter how many promises God has made, they are 'yes' in Christ."* (2 Cor 1:20). Jesus is the One slowly revealed from Gen. 3 through Israel's history in the OT.

RECAP Lesson 6: JESUS IS GOD'S PEOPLE, GOD'S PLACE AND GOD'S RULE AND BLESSING.

JESUS IS GOD'S PEOPLE – Jesus will stand before God in our place, representing His people.

- **Jesus is the true Adam** (Luke 3:23:38) – Fully man & a descendent of Adam, he is the only one tempted without sin. **If we trust in Christ, we're a new creation and not part of the sin nature of Adam's descendants - no longer headed by Adam but headed by Christ.** *"For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."* Rom 5:19
- **Jesus is the true Israel** – Israel was to be God's holy people reflecting His character and obeying His law, but they failed. Jesus is the true Israel. **We are the spiritual descendants of Abraham and place our trust in Christ.**
- **Jesus is the true vine (tree trunk or source of nourishment).** **Jesus is the vine through which all people must come.** - In the OT, the vine (trunk) was a symbol of Israel, but Jesus says to His disciples, ***'I am the vine (trunk) and you are the branches.'*** John 15:5. (see Hosea 10:1; Isa 5:1-2; Jer 2:21; Eze 15:6; John 15:1-5) The Father removes the fruitless branches and prunes the ones producing fruit that they may bear more fruit. It is the vine or the tree that gives fruit, and apart from Christ (the vine) we can do nothing.
- **Jesus is God's people - Jesus claimed to be the true Israel together with all who are joined to Him.** All people from any race and background are God's people who humble themselves and turn to Him in repentance and faith. All people - not just respectable Jews, but all people including outcasts and sinners.

JESUS IS GOD'S PLACE where God can be met.

- **Jesus is the true tabernacle (dwelling).** God's presence drew near to the Israelites in the tabernacle, but this was just a glimpse of what we can receive in Christ. John writes, *"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling (or tabernacled) among us."* John 1:14 (see also John 4:21-24)
- **Jesus is the true Temple,** the one to whom the temple pointed. *'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.'* John 2:19. Standing in the temple courts, Jesus said, *'whoever believes in me as Scripture said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.'* John 7: 37-38. This refers to the promise made in Ezekiel 47 in which from the temple a river would flow bringing life to all. Christ is that temple and the water is the Spirit that dwells within all who trust in Him.

JESUS IS GOD'S RULE AND BLESSING

The prophets announced that God's promises would be fulfilled by a new King, the Son of David, who would rule in a new age, in which the evil effects of the Fall would be undone.

GOD'S RULE – Only under God's rule can we be completely satisfied, but sin separates us.

- **Jesus is the new covenant** - Jesus introduces the new covenant – **He fulfills the law.** *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."* (Matt 5:17; Gal 3:13-14) *'Christ is the mediator of a new covenant...– now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.'* Heb 9:15. *"By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear."* Heb. 8:13.
- **Jesus is the true King – He is a descendant of David who was prophesied would establish God's rule and introduce a new age. The Kingdom of God has come because God's King has come.** At times, He does not look like a King but His greatest victory is when He defeats Satan.
- **Jesus is the Son of God – The miracles of Jesus point to the fact that He has divine power to heal the sick, raise the dead, calm a storm, no power can stand in His way. The demons tremble before Him.** Matt 12: 22, 28-29 – *"Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him,²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."²⁹*

GOD'S BLESSING

- **Jesus is the source of God's blessing – Enter His rest** - *'Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'* – Matt 11:28. We are to share in His rest, like Adam and Eve enjoyed before their sin. Hebrews 4:1-3 NIV – *"Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands...Now we who have believed enter that rest."*
- **Salvation through Conquest over Satan** – Paul says of Jesus, *"...having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"* Col 2: 15. His triumph is proclaimed to the world by His resurrection and then He ascended into heaven to reign at God's right hand. Because of His resurrection there is great blessing. He redeemed us, reconciled us, justified us, & provides us resurrection blessings. Those who trust Him will have **life after death** and enjoy what was lost since Eden – **eternal rest.**

GOD CAN BLESS IN A NEW WAY BECAUSE OF THE CROSS

SALVATION THROUGH SUBSTITUTION – Salvation through substitution is a theme in the Old Testament – Isaac, Passover Lamb, etc. Many promises of the Old Testament could not be fulfilled because there was no adequate sacrifice for our sin to quench God's anger. True salvation from God could only come if there was a perfect sacrifice.

The Cross - The story of the Bible depends upon one event - the cross. The cross forms the climax of the story of the Bible. The cross was not a failure but a triumphant success. **The cross is not an accident** – but God's plan. Jesus tells His disciples, *'The Son of Man must suffer many things...he must be killed and after three days rise again.'* Mark 8: 31 He doesn't have to die for any sin He has committed. He perfectly obeys the law's commands. **Christ is one with the Trinity** - **the Father orders salvation; the Son, accomplishes salvation; and the Spirit applies salvation.**

- **Through Jesus sacrifice, God's wrath is satisfied** or 'propitiated'. God cannot turn a blind eye to evil...he is angry at sin. Christ died as the perfect substitute (for us) and faced God's anger Himself. All of the sacrifices in the OT pointed to Christ, the Passover lamb. He died for sin once and for all. In His amazing grace, God, the Father, sent His own Son, Jesus, (with whom He shares a perfect relationship) to die as our substitute. On the cross Jesus faced God's anger against human sin so that sinners could take on His perfect relationship with God. As a result, **if we trust in Christ, we need no longer face God's wrath.** *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous*

for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit." Christ has redeemed us, justified us, and reconciled us AND has conquered the evil spiritual forces releasing us from bondage from death, and setting us free from Satan's power (Col. 2:15).

- **When Christ died (Mat 27:51-54), the 9 inch wide Temple curtain was torn** (Heb 9:11), the earth went dark (Zep 1:14-14), the dead rose, and the earth quaked. *"Christ has appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands"* (Heb 9:11).
- **Jesus is the perfect revelation of God; the radiance of His glory; the exact imprint of God's nature. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. Everything belongs to Him and exists for Him. He is the author of our salvation, the perfecter of our faith, and the only one in whom we can find life. He is the one who the answered the prophets call for a Messiah. Jesus is bigger than we can think. He is enough.**

THE NEW COVENANT provides for God to bless those who believe in His Son. Through Christ, we are forgiven. God is our father, and we can have fellowship with God by the Holy Spirit.

Through faith in Christ, we can enter into the new age introduced through His death and resurrection.

"...if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Cor 5:17. Praise be to God!

<u>Pattern of Kingdom of God</u>	<u>God's People</u>	<u>God's Place</u>	<u>God's Rule and Blessing</u>
<u>Pattern Kingdom</u>	Adam and Eve	The garden	God's Word: perfect relationships
<u>Perished (Dying) Kingdom</u>	No-one	Banished	Disobedience & curse
<u>Promised Kingdom</u>	Abraham's Descendants	Canaan	Blessing to Israel & the nations
<u>Partial (Imperfect or Incomplete) Kingdom</u>	The Israelites	Canaan and Jerusalem/temple	The law and the king
<u>Prophesied Kingdom</u>	Remnant of Israel; inclusion of nations	New Temple; new creation	New Covenant; new king; great blessing
<u>Present (He is here!) Kingdom</u>	Jesus Christ: New Adam; new Israel	Jesus Christ: true tabernacle/temp le	Jesus Christ: true king; new life; new covenant; rest

RECAP: Jesus is God's people, God's place and God's rule and blessing.

God's Kingdom is here, but it doesn't always feel like it. His Kingdom is not yet fully here. There is so much that spoils life on earth in our own hearts and throughout the world. **Jesus taught that He would leave the earth and then there would be a delay before He returned.** It is only when Jesus comes again that everything will be put right.

LESSON 7 – THE PROCLAIMED KINGDOM – Acts – Jude. Christ's disciples are to reproduce and expand the Kingdom bringing the message to all the earth and to multiply those living under His Kingdom rule.

THE LAST DAYS – Acts through Jude, teach what will happen between Jesus' first and second coming in the Proclaimed Kingdom.

Jesus is the one to whom all the promises in the Old Testament point. But while the Kingdom is here, it hasn't come fully. God's promises will only be completely fulfilled at Christ's second coming. We are living in the period before His return, called the last days. His death and resurrection did all that was necessary to put everything right again and completely restore God's kingdom. **But he did not finish the job when he was first on earth.** He ascended into heaven and made it clear that there would be a delay before he returned. **The last days** began on the Day of Pentecost when God sent the Spirit to equip his church to tell the whole world about Christ. We are **living in the Kingdom 'now' but 'not yet fully'**. Christ brought the Kingdom of God to earth (Luk 17:20-21) **AND YET** it awaits being made complete (Mark 10:17-30). Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent..." Mark 1:15. **The Kingdom of God is already in existence for Christians (Mark 1:14; Matt 13:1-14; Luke 17:20-21). But the Kingdom has not yet fully arrived.**

We are to pray for the Kingdom to arrive (Matt 6:10). When Jesus returns, it will be fully introduced and He will say to His people- Matt 25: 31, 34 – *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory... the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of*

the world." If we place our trust in Christ, we belong to the new creation today. But we haven't yet received all its blessings. For the time being we must live in the fallen world which bears the mark of sin and God's judgement against it. (Matthew 12:28; Luke 17:20-21 *"the kingdom of God is in your midst."*).

Jesus' parables about the Kingdom of God introduces it as a growing thing, planted by Jesus and growing by invisible divine authority. The Kingdom will grow into its fullness overcoming all resistance to God's reign. (Matt. 4:26-29; Matt. 13:31-32, 24-29, 36-42). The reign of God is hidden from the world, but one day He will rule over everything (Matt. 13:11). **The kingdom of God can be defined as the King himself, King Jesus. We are His people, His body, and so co-rulers. Yet the full expression of the Kingdom will come when Jesus returns to judge the quick and the dead. Then, we will have Christ for all time.** (Acts 1:11). Until He returns, His disciples have work to do. **The Kingdom grows when anyone "hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."** (Matt 13:23)

Between the 1st coming and the 2nd coming are the last days. We are living in the present age "now" AND in the "age to come" which is "now" but "not yet"

THE REASON FOR THE DELAY

- Why the delay? Why doesn't Jesus come sooner to finish the task? **What seems like a long time to us isn't to God.** - 2 Pet 3: 4,8 – *"They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised...But do not forget...With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day"*
- **God wants more people to hear and repent before it's too late.** - 2 Pet 3: 9 – *"The Lord... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* God has always wanted all people to know Him.

• CHRONOLOGY OF THE LAST DAYS

- SPIRIT SENT then GOSPEL PROCLAIMED TO ALL NATIONS then JESUS RETURNS!
- The age of the Proclaimed Kingdom began with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1: 8 – Jesus said, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Then Jesus ascended to heaven. While we await His return, the Holy Spirit points to Him until Jesus returns again.

THE SPIRIT AT PENTECOST – the sending of the promised Holy Spirit came when disciples gathered at Pentecost

- By the Holy Spirit they preached the Gospel in tongues/languages: a reversal of Babel.
- **A fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 – "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people... ²⁹ ...I will pour out my Spirit in those days."**
- **The age of the Holy Spirit – God has always been one God in three persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**
 - In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God lived only in special individuals for certain tasks
 - Now – the Holy Spirit fills all God's people for empowering witness
 - The gospel spreads in Acts through the work of the Holy Spirit: **"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** God extends His Kingdom by the Spirit in these last days.

1. BRINGS NEW BIRTH

- Jesus tells Nicodemus, **'No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.'** John 3: 3 We are rebels against God. We cannot repent and trust in Christ without the Spirit enabling us.
- Jesus teaches to be born again **we need to be 'born of the Spirit'** John 3: 5 – *"Jesus answered, "I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."*
- **The Spirit opens our eyes to understand the gospel, convicts of sin, and moves us to repentance and faith.** God, in Christ, always seeks us (Luke 19:10). No one comes to Christ unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). God's Word is how Jesus sanctifies His church and makes us holy (John 17:17; Eph 5:25-27)
- **All Christians have the Spirit living within them - Rom 8: 9 – "You...are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."**

2. EQUIPS US TO SERVE CHRIST

- **Enables us to witness to Christ.** On our own we are weak and frightened, but the Holy Spirit gives us courage to share the Gospel. **We are to witness to non-believers.** Non-believers may have natural or supernatural experiences that point them to Christ, **but for conversion to occur, the Holy Spirit must intervene for them to be born again, to change their heart (Ez. 36:26) and making them capable of understanding and turn toward God (2 Cor. 4:3-6).** We can't claim to be filled with the Spirit as individuals or churches if we are not active in evangelism, because the Spirit's great concern is to lead people to Christ.
- **Equips us for ministry to one another and gives gifts to build the church. Gathered Church and Scattered Church.** We are members of one body, designed by God to belong to local churches to work together for His glory. Each part of the body has an important contribution to make, each individual Christian has been gifted by God to build the church - 1 Cor 12: 7 – ***"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."***

3. PRODUCES HOLINESS

- **Puts to death our sins so we can live. Rom 8: 13** – *"For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."*
- **Redeems us to receive God's blessing - Gal 3: 14** – *"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."*
- **Offers salvation from sin** – "have been saved", "will be saved", and "are being saved"
 - **PRESENT AGE – UNDER SINS PENALTY – But 'Have Been Saved'** already, in the past, from the **PENALTY OF SIN** by the death of Christ on the cross. (Eph 2:8) But, sadly sin is real in our present life. Our sinful nature keeps tempting us to go back to our sinful ways.
 - We **"Are Being Saved"** from the **POWER OF SIN** because the Holy Spirit, living within us, gives us a new heart which hates sin and loves Jesus. The Spirit gives us new desires and resists the old nature. Rom 8:13
 - On judgement day, **in the age to come, in His presence, we 'Will Be Saved' from the PRESENCE OF SIN because all evil will be destroyed.** Our full salvation is yet to come.

A KINGDOM 'NOW' BUT FULLY 'NOT YET'

- **"NOW"** - 2 Cor 12: 9 – *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*
- **'NOT YET FULLY'** - Rom 8: 23 – *"Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies."*

During the last days the Kingdom of God is spreading as the Spirit is working as the Gospel is proclaimed. The Promises of the Kingdom of God are being fulfilled in remarkable ways.

RECAP Lesson 7: The Kingdom of God: God's people (the church) in God's place (the church) living under God's rule in direct relationship with Him through the Spirit and with blessings in Christ.

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>PROCLAIMED KINGDOM</u>
God's People	The Church- a new people, believers from all nations; the new Israel
God's Place	The Church – God's Temple (1 Cor 6:19) "our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit"); the individual believer; the church God's living temple
God's Rule and Blessing	Relationships with God in the Spirit despite our sin; new covenant; Holy Spirit; blessings in Christ who rules through the Gospel which is to go to all nations.

God's promise to bless all Abraham's offspring has been fulfilled. The battle against the flesh and Satan rages on. God doesn't promise us health and wealth in this present age. **As those who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, we "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies."** But wonderfully one day, the sin in our lives and the world will be gone forever, we will enjoy God's sabbath rest, and return to a better Eden in the new creation. This will come in the Perfected Kingdom.

LESSON 8 – THE PERFECTED KINGDOM – Revelation – The complete fulfillment of Christ's Kingdom is yet to come. One day Christ will reign over His people eternally – fully worshipped and honored as King and God will bring to

fullness the reality of the Kingdom. All will acknowledge His Kingship and those who obey will enjoy Him forever and those who are punished will be separated from Him forever.

THE STORY SO FAR

We have been tracing the theme of the Kingdom of God through the Bible and we have finally reached the summit - The Perfected Kingdom. God's promises, which were proclaimed in Old Testament history and announced by the prophets, are fulfilled in Christ. And in the last days, He sent His church to proclaim His Good News throughout the world in the power of the Spirit. By the Spirit, His followers have already received some of the blessings of the Kingdom. **But the fullness of salvation awaits His second coming.** In the new creation, the perfected Kingdom, He will put everything right! **In Revelation, we see the end of evil and the beginning of eternity, the judgement of Babylon and the beast, and our King slain but now triumphant. A new world revealed in the Perfected Kingdom!**

One day Christ will return. There will be a great division. His enemies will be separated from his goodness in hell, but his people will join him in a perfect new creation. Revelation describes a fully restored kingdom: God's people, Christians from all nations, in God's place, the new creation (heaven), under God's rule and therefore enjoying his blessing. And nothing can spoil this happy ending. It is no fairy story; they really will live happily ever after.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION – (a letter, a prophetic call, apocalyptic or symbolic) - Written by John at the end of the 1st Century during a time of great persecution for the church. The primary reason God gave us the book is to obey (14:2) rejoice in (19:7), be convicted and emboldened by it (2:16,21 and 2:10). This was God's message to the 7 churches. **He uses symbolism to convey its message.** It is called 'apocalyptic' literature. Apocalypse means revelation or 'unveiling'.

- **God gives John a series of visions. God shows what is going on behind the scenes of human history. These visions are to strengthen believers to persevere despite their suffering.**
- **The book begins with seven letters from the Lord Jesus to seven churches in Asia Minor. It is symbolic and represents the whole church in every age. Christ urges them and us to stay faithful.**

A THRONE IN HEAVEN – There was a throne in heaven!

God is in charge Rev 4: 2 – “At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.” Knowing Christ is on the throne should give us comfort. **God is in charge.**

- **Jesus the lamb who died for us, suffered and triumphed Rev 5:6 – “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne.”** His death guarantees that all those who suffered for Him on earth will also triumph with Him. We may not know what He is doing in the world, but we can trust Him.
- **Demands worship.** If we are wise, we will worship the Lord Jesus on earth whatever the cost. Rev 5: 13–14 *“Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth..., saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”...and the elders fell down and worshiped.”*

THE FINAL JUDGMENT – the last few chapters of the book take us to the end of time. God destroys the forces of evil (Rev 17 & 20) & introduces the new creation (Rev 21-22).

THE JUDGMENT OF...

- **Babylon -Revelation 17** introduces us to a woman named, Babylon, the great, the mother of prostitutes - **Rev 17:5.** She represents the world and a non-Christian society organized without reference to God. Babylon was the location of the Tower of Babel, a symbol of human pride. It was also the capital of the empire that destroyed Judah and took her inhabitants into exile. She is called a prostitute because she seduces people into unfaithfulness to live for her rather than to be faithful to God. We are tempted to be unfaithful as well, but we should resist for she is headed for destruction. *“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!”* **Rev 18:2**
- **The beast and the false prophet.**
 - God will destroy His other arch enemies: **the beast representing anti-Christian powers and the false prophet** representing anti-Christian ideology **and the Devil.** They are all thrown into a lake of burning sulfur where they can do no more harm. Rev 19:20-21 - Rev 19:20-21 – *“But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf...(and) were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse...”*

- Those who were opposed to Christ will also be judged. Rev 20: 15 – *“Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”*
- This judgement is terrible. Justice is done and evil is destroyed! As a result, God's final work of salvation can now be completed.

THE NEW CREATION – ‘A new heaven and a new earth’

Having seen God's judgement, John is given another vision. – Rev 21:1-4 – *“Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband... ⁴‘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.”*

Everything has been spoiled by sin, but God defeats evil and sin. **He is determined to restore everything, not just our souls but our bodies too as well as the whole created order.** With new bodies in a physical world, it will be a place in which all that spoiled life on earth has been removed (Acts 7:55; Luke 23:43; Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:11; Rev 22:1-5; 1 Cor 2:9; 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor 15:51; Luke 23:43). The final hope of Christians isn't going to heaven when we die. Heaven is where we are kept safe until the second coming. **Our ultimate destiny is to be raised on that day to join Him in the perfect new creation.** The death of the body is part of the curse of our sin nature. It is not the way God intended. The last enemy defeated will be death, when bodies are raised up on the last day (1 Cor 15:26, 44, 54-57; Philip. 3:20-21). Unbelievers will be raised up, though in bodies fitted for eternal punishment (John 5:29). The new creation, like the resurrection body, is the earth transformed by God's power into what he originally intended for it to be in the beginning. It is heaven come down to earth (Rev 21:1-8). There we will eat from the tree of life and live forever. **What will the new creation be like? We don't know but it will be imperishable, glorious, powerful body** (1 Cor. 15:42-44). God has only told us what we need to know to motivate us to be faithful to Him as we wait to go Home. (1 Cor. 2:9; 1 John 3:2, 1 Cor 15:51;)

PERFECT RELATIONSHIPS that marked the beginning of the world will be restored.

- **Human beings and creation** - Human beings and creation (the natural world) will enjoy harmony once more. We will rule over the created order as God had always intended - not in opposition to God but under Him and so nature will flourish. Revelation 22 uses imagery taken from Genesis 2 to describe a vibrant, fruitful world. A river flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Rev 22: 1-3 – *“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life...flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²...On each side of the river stood the tree of life,... ³No longer will there be any curse. **The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city...**”* Eden is restored.
- **Between Human beings** - there is now harmony between human beings
 - The new creation is a beautiful city where people dwell together in harmony in the new Jerusalem. “A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language.” **God's people will be a multi-racial, multi-cultural society uniting those that are divided in this fallen world.** Rev 7:9 See also - Rev 21: 9-10
- **God and human beings** - perfect relationship between God and His people. There is no temple as there is no need for one. God is everywhere and His people enjoy intimate communion with Him. *“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.”* Rev 21: 3. The bride of Christ is united with Her Husband.

<u>Kingdom of GOD</u>	<u>PERFECTED KINGDOM</u>
God's People	All nations; Multi-national family of God; a new humanity
God's Place	A new creation; New Jerusalem, new temple (perfect cube like the Holy of Holies; God will be everywhere. Rev 21:22)
God's Rule and Blessing	Throne of God and the Lamb, perfect, eternal rule of freedom and blessing

RECAP: The Perfected Kingdom of God - All the promises of God are fully fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is made perfect. God's people from all nations, live in God's place in a new creation under His rule and enjoy His blessing for ever. God will reward those who walk with Him and those who have used the gifts God has given them well.

Can you imagine what the new earth will be like? Now, we join God's people: **'Come, Lord Jesus.'** Revelation 22:20. Until then, we need God's help to persevere in faith and obedience. **'The grace of the Lord be with God's people. Amen.'** Revelation 22:21

"I can only imagine" by Bart Millard (a song)

*"I can only imagine. What it would be like when I
walk by your side...
What my eyes would see, when your face is before
me.
I can only imagine. I can only imagine
Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of You be still?
Will I stand in your presence, to my knees will I fall?"*

*Will I sing hallelujah? Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine. I can only imagine. I can only
imagine.
When that day comes, when I find myself standing
in the Son.
I can only imagine.
When all I will do, is forever, forever worship you.
I can only imagine. I can only imagine."*

If we can imagine being WITH God in the new earth, are we imagining what Christ has done for us today?

- John presents a vision of what being with God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit will be like. Glorious! But what about today. Today, we are to "represent Christ" to all we come in contact with. To be a representative people we must tell others about Him. We cannot always be "silent witnesses" and not tell others what Christ has done for us. To represent Him we must proclaim Him for He is a glorious, righteous, faithful King.

CONCLUSION

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH WHAT YOU LEARNED TODAY?

- **Know Christ** in all the Scriptures. The whole of Scripture is about Jesus Christ and God's plan to establish His Kingdom through Him. You can't know Christ fully without reading the Bible. We can't ignore God's voice and go after other voices. As God's sheep, we can hear His voice. We have the Holy Spirit that leads us to the things of God. Reading the Bible every day helps us to remember our dependence on God.
- **Read and Study the Bible Daily**
- **Read the very Word of God daily!** – If you are **saved** by faith in Christ (1 Co. 2:14-16), **seek** to be holy (1 Pet 1:14), **hunger** for God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2), and are **filled** with Spirit (Eph 5:18), then the Holy Spirit can guide your reading and point you to Him. If you are **not saved**, Satan can blind you to God's truth (2 Col 4:4). Our sin is why we need a Savior! **If you are not saved in Christ, now is your time to come to know Christ Jesus as your personal Savior.** "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of the glory of God..." (Rom. 3:23.)
 - **Read the Bible as early as possible in your day. Do not let "the world, the flesh, and the devil" invade your morning and your day. Your daily work will always seem more important than reading your Bible.**
 - **Ask for His help and pick a specific time early in your day.**
 - **Ask the Lord to speak to you while you read and ask Him to open your eyes. Psa 119:18.**
 - **Begin by reading a little at a time but be consistent. Reading the book of Mark or Luke. See how Jesus reacts to the poor and the powerful. Or read the Psalms. They are usually short. The Psalmists struggle like you do. They cried out to God even when God seem to abandon them.**
 - **Commit to read His Book and hear His voice every day.** Memorize a verse for each week.
- The Bible will help us to know God better, to bear fruit for His Kingdom, to defend ourselves against attacks by the enemy, to enrich our prayers and bring us joy in Him.
- Read a section and ask: What does the passage say? What don't I understand? What does the passage mean? What does it say about God and Christ? What sin should I confess? Is there a command to follow? How can I apply this to my life? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring you closer to Christ.
- **Do's and Don'ts** - Do read the Bible in order to really understand it...study the Bible. Read a verse in context with the chapter, book and the whole Bible.
- **Pay attention to its literary context.** For example, 1 Cor. 13 is often read at weddings but in context it is to encourage believers to pursue love more than spiritual gifts. **Pay attention to its historical context.** For example, in Mark 14:4-5, ointment poured on Jesus' head was worth over 300 denarii. A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer. **Pay attention to the type of writing.** For example, is it a psalm (poetry) or a gospel? When

David writes of God, "Smoke rose from his nostrils..." (Psalm 18:8), he is writing poetry. But when John writes, "he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple..." (John 2:15), he is recording what is actually happening in history.

- **Read the Bible as a historical book and as a relational Book.**
 - HISTORICAL: Ask where am I in the storyline? What happened before and after? How is this fulfilled in Christ?
 - RELATIONAL: What does this say about God/Christ and our relationship with Him? What does this say about my relationship with Him? How can I love Him more as a result of this passage?
 - **Share the Bible** - Use scripture for mediation and prayer individually, with family, with the church, with friends, with strangers - James 1:22-25; worship with scripture Psalms 148:13; for repentance/faith and obedience Romans 10:17, John 14:15-24; and to witness.
 - Encourage reading scripture in your worship services. As you talk with people during the week, share the Word with them to encourage and equip them. Be a minister of the Word! See 1 Cor 2:14; Psalm 119:18; Eph 1:17-19; 2 Tim 3:14-16; Matt 4:21-25; 2 Tim 2:7; Col 3:16; Act 17:11.
 - Pray a Psalm. Sing the Bible. Preach the Word.
 - Start reading the Bible with your family. Start a Bible study.
 - **God's Word is our essential spiritual food.** God's Word produces Life: **James 1:21** – *"get rid of...the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."*; **1 Pet 1:23-25** – *"For you have been born again...through the living and enduring word of God. ..."* *"All people are like grass...the grass withers... but the word of the Lord endures forever."*; **2 Tim 3:17** – *"so...(you) may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*
 - **Teach Christ** from all the Scriptures. You are equipped to see the big picture of the Bible. Now you can point people to Christ throughout the Bible. Review this handout at home and share it today with someone you know.
 - **Love Christ** through all the Scriptures. A deeper knowledge of the Bible impacts not just our heads but our hearts.
- The Bible is a relational book. The Holy Spirit uses it to grow our knowledge and love of God through Jesus.**

WISDOM LITERATURE

We have not covered five books of the Old Testament but they fit into God's story. They are about how life should be lived in His kingdom.

- **Job** deals with suffering and God's sovereignty. Though Job's questions about suffering and death are not answered, he submits to God and his fortunes are restored.
- **Psalms** are a book of praises focused on God, as the great king of the earth and of his people Israel. They are quoted in the N.T. more than any other OT book. Some point to Jesus (see Psalm 45:6-7; 22:1; 2; 89:19-29; 110).
- **Proverbs** speaks to wisdom & skills for living. The book offers practical wisdom, discernment, self-discipline, moral virtue, and one's relationship to God and others.
- **Ecclesiastes** examines everyday living. If God is removed: "Everything is meaningless." (1:2) The book stresses that there is only one thing that can satisfy man: to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecc 12:13).
- **Song of Solomon** is God's marriage manual. The book presents God's perspective on married love through Solomon and his Shulamite bride.

Partial Source: Big Picture course: www.godsbigpicture.co.uk. Link to

<https://www.africabibleministries.bible/latest-news>. All Bible quotes are *italicized* from the NIV.