



TO COVER

The Story of Restoration



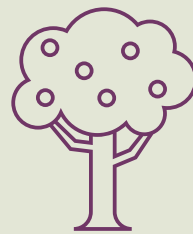
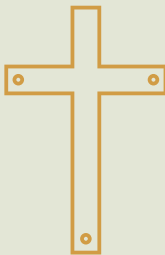
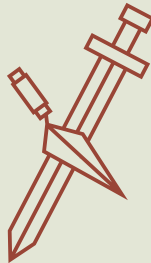
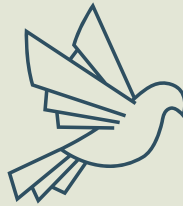
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The Story of Restoration



COVER to COVER

6 GETTING STARTED

12



CREATION

God's creation reveals His character and establishes our purpose.

18



FALL

Humanity's rebellion explains the world's brokenness and introduces God's promise of redemption.

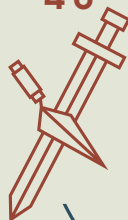
42



NEW COVENANT

God promises a new covenant that transforms hearts and restores relationship with Him.

48



RETURN

God brings His people home to restore worship, identity, and covenant relationship.

54



MESSIAH

The person and work of Jesus Christ prepares the way to restore all things.

CONTENTS

AND BIBLE TIMELINE

24



PROMISE

God's promises to Abraham give hope to all mankind.

30



LAW

The Law reveals God's character and humanity's inability to save itself.

36



KINGDOM

God's covenant with David anticipates the One who will set all things right.

60



CHURCH

God's people are united in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, and sent into the world on mission.

66



NEW CREATION

The restoration of all things fulfills God's original design for creation and humanity.



GETTING STARTED

HOW DO WE READ THE BIBLE?

Picture yourself walking in on a group of friends who are in the middle of watching a movie together. You want to join in and enjoy it with them but you are lost. You've missed the story's setup. You don't know the characters or the plot.

Reading the Bible can sometimes feel like this. When we read a few isolated verses, or a couple of chapters, or even study a whole book of the Bible without knowing the overarching story, Scripture can seem strange, confusing, or maybe even irrelevant to our lives.

ORIENTATION

One of the goals of this study is to provide a memorable overview of the Bible that connects its individual parts into a coherent whole. Each of the ten lessons centers around a key word that describes one of the Bible's major plot points – **Creation, Fall, Promise, Law, Kingdom, New Covenant, Return, Messiah, Church, New Creation.**

Becoming familiar with this overarching narrative orients us to the historical and theological flow of the biblical story. Once we grasp this storyline and how all the writings fit together, **we can pick the Bible up at any point and know right where we are and what's going on.**

REFLECT

What has reading the Bible been like for you? Exciting, confusing, boring, other?

ENCOUNTER

Another goal of this study is to facilitate an ongoing encounter with the main character of the Bible, God Himself. A relationship with God is the reason for life! But we could not know God if He had not revealed Himself to us. Christians believe that the Bible is God's self-revelation in written form. As God reveals Himself to us through His true and inspired Word, we can come to know Him rightly and experience a life deeply connected to Him. In John 17:3, Jesus said, **"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."**

In every relationship we can know about someone – facts about their life, what they do and say – but still not know them personally. This type of knowing is often called propositional knowledge. The knowing that Jesus refers to in John 17 is personal, experiential, and gained through direct encounter. This type of knowing is relational knowledge.

Through God's Holy Spirit who lives inside of us, we believe that both of these ways of knowing work together to help us experience the fullness of our friendship with Him. As we read and study Scripture together, let's rely on the Holy Spirit to directly "teach us all things" as Jesus promised in John 14:26. Let us encourage one another to move beyond simply knowing truth about God and to value and pursue a growing relationship with Him.

REFLECT

How have you typically approached knowing God through His Word? Through propositional knowledge or relational knowledge? Both?

PARTICIPATION

A third goal of this study is to recognize Scripture as an invitation from God to realign our own stories with His story. Human beings are "storied" people, designed to organize life into a narrative that helps us make sense of who we are, why we are here and how the world works. Yet often the stories we inherit and tell ourselves are incomplete and distorted. As Christians, we believe that the Bible is a collection of writings that tell the true story of reality through the lives of actual people interacting with God.

When we open our Bibles and read these stories, it's like looking into a mirror of our own relationship with God and through a window into the reality of God's Kingdom at the same time. The mirror of God's Word shows us our own struggles, questions, and distorted stories. The window of God's Word shows us the reality of God's Kingdom and invites us to realign our lives with its goodness, beauty, and truth. As we say "yes" after "yes" to the Holy Spirit, our lives are slowly "re-storied" and we become active participants in God's grand story.

REFLECT

Whose voice is shaping the story of your life — God's, someone else's, your own or past experiences? What are you hoping to learn and experience in this study?

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Unlike other studies you may have done, each lesson in this study starts with learning and discussing the lesson's content together during your group meeting time. Then the "homework" you are invited to do on your own each week continues with the same lesson's topic and is centered around personal reflection, prayer and response to what the Spirit is revealing to you.



GROUP LEARNING + PRAYER

Each group meeting follows this basic flow:

CONNECT

A time to reconnect with each other and look back to the previous lesson, sharing your personal reflections and how you responded to the Spirit.

GROW

A time to learn and discuss the lesson's content.

OVERVIEW AND TEACHING VIDEO

Each lesson has a written overview that can be read together. Then your group can watch a short teaching video accessed through the QR code provided.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Next there are 4–5 discussion questions that help your group to study and process Scripture together.

ENGAGE

A time to reflect and pray together about what you are learning.

REFLECT

These 1–2 questions help your group begin to think about how the lesson's content relates to your lives today.

PRAYER

The final section of the lesson provides a prayer prompt related to the lesson's topic and space to record prayer needs. It is vital for your group to establish the practice of praying together and to depend on the Spirit to lead, challenge, and guide you.

ON YOUR OWN

Because this study covers such a large amount of information, it can be tempting to prioritize gaining propositional knowledge or try to cognitively master the content. This “homework” section of the lesson is designed to draw you toward deeper understanding and a deeper relationship with God.

Here is the basic flow:

PRAYER

Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide us into truth (John 16:13). Pray continually as you read, reflect, and respond. Ask for eyes to see and ears to hear the Holy Spirit and all that He has planned to reveal to you.

LOOK TO JESUS

Read over the points that center on how this part of the Bible's coherent story points to Jesus.

REFLECT WITH JESUS

Reflect more personally on what the Spirit may be revealing to you through the questions provided.

RESPOND TO JESUS

Ask God what His specific invitation is for you as you seek to apply biblical truth in your life. Say yes! And begin to do what He is asking. Also, try the guided application prompt that is provided in each lesson.



Lord, inspire us to read your Scriptures
and to meditate upon them day and night.
We beg you to give us real understanding
of what we need, that we in turn
may put its precepts into practice.

Yet we know that understanding
and good intentions are worthless,
unless rooted in your graceful love.

So we ask that the words of Scripture
may also be not just signs on a page,
but channels of grace into our hearts.

Every Moment Holy, Vol. 3

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Gospel is the good news of how we can be reconciled to God through Jesus.

GOD'S DESIGN

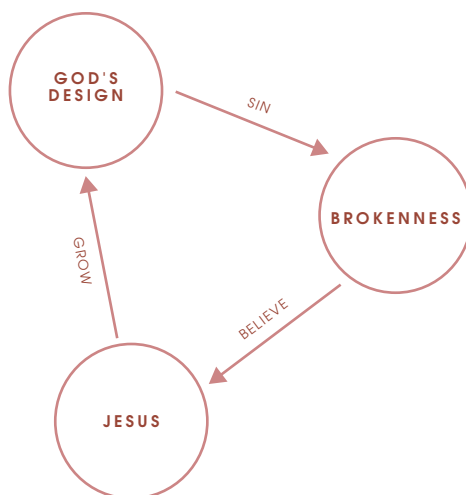
Out of God's great love, He created a world that was good. He made people to enjoy a deeply connected relationship with Him and to represent Him through our lives (Genesis 1:26-28, 31). As a loving Father, He communicated boundaries to protect us and to allow us to fully enjoy our relationships with Him and with other people (Genesis 2:15-17).

BROKENNESS

Yet, when we look around our world, brokenness and evil are evident everywhere – war, famine, disease, corruption. If we are honest, we also see brokenness and evil inside ourselves – deceit, hatred, greed, lust. This is because we have rejected God's design and chosen to follow our own way.

Our rejection of God and His ways is what the Bible calls sin (Romans 3:23).

Our sin results in separation from God which the Bible calls death (Romans 6:23a). Unless our sin is forgiven, we will remain separated from God forever.



JESUS

God does not want to leave us in our sin and brokenness!

God graciously provided a way to forgive our sin and to freely give us eternal life – a life connected to God both now and forever (Romans 6:23b; John 17:3).

God's only Son Jesus died in our place. He took upon Himself the penalty that we deserve because of our sin. Then, Jesus rose from the dead, and forever defeated the power of sin and death (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5).

BELIEVE

We respond to Jesus by believing in Him for the forgiveness of our sin.

To believe in Jesus means that you no longer try to earn God's approval through what you do, nor do you deny that you need forgiveness and rescue. Instead, you accept God's free gift of eternal life. Belief or faith is simply being convinced or persuaded that something or someone is trustworthy (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Everyone who believes in Jesus is forgiven of their sin and receives eternal life. We can now know God personally and experience the life we were designed to live (John 3:16-17).

Which circle or arrow best represents your life right now?

Have you put your trust (believed) in Jesus alone to receive forgiveness and be reconciled to God?



LESSON 1

CREATION



OVERVIEW

The entire Bible tells one beautiful, coherent story that will ultimately come to fulfillment in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In this study, we will explore the story of Scripture using a framework of ten words: Creation, Fall, Promise, Law, Kingdom, New Covenant, Return, Messiah, Church, New Creation.

Lesson One begins at the beginning: creation. **This lesson guides our understanding and appreciation of the purpose of creation and the character of the One who created all things.** The key concept will be the “image of God” and God’s purposes for His creation through His image bearers.



CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

- 1. What are you hoping to learn and experience in this study?
- 2. What has reading the Bible been like for you? Exciting, confusing, boring, other?
- 3. What are some reasons that the Bible can be challenging to read and understand?
- 4. Why is it important to know the story of the whole Bible?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

GROW

WATCH THIS TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER



Scan the QR code for a short teaching video!

HIGHLIGHTS

God created all things, and He created all things for a purpose.

Men and women, mankind, are the pinnacle of God’s creation. We are set apart from everything else because we are made in His image. Bearing His image gives us dignity and purpose.

A possible summary of the story of the Bible could read like this: God desires to glorify Himself by establishing His kingdom on earth through human representation. His purpose of glorifying Himself in creation will ultimately be accomplished through Jesus, and in Jesus through us.

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DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from the teaching video? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. **Read Genesis 1:1–5.** Why is it important to know God as Creator?

3. **Read Genesis 1:26–31** and **Psalms 8:3–6.** What does the Bible mean when it says that we were created “in the image of God”? In other words, what characteristics and abilities connect human beings with God in a way that is true of nothing else on earth?

4. **Read Numbers 14:21, Malachi 1:11,** and **Revelation 5:13–14.** Why did God decide to create anything? In other words, what was/is His purpose in creation?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

The Triune God created everything as an outpouring of His love, and He holds all things together by His power. He created mankind in His image to relate to Him as Father, reflect His character, and rule over His creation. As His image bearers, each person has unique value and is worthy of respect.



ENGAGE

REFLECT TOGETHER

1. How does our current culture answer the questions, "Why do we exist?" and "What is the meaning of life?" How does this compare to the biblical answers we just studied?

2. The term "glory" in Hebrew can be literally translated "heavy." How do we "glorify" God?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for one another to discover and embrace God's design and God's will for our lives.

A large grid of dotted lines for writing, consisting of 10 rows and 40 columns.

ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

LOOK TO JESUS

Read John 1:1–5. Jesus is the "Word" that was present and active at creation. It was through Him, by Him and for Him that all things were made.

Read Colossians 1:15–18. Jesus is called the "image of the invisible God." He is the perfect representation of the image of God. In other words, He is exactly what God intended for each of us. He is the model for what we will become (1 John 3:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Read Revelation 21:3. Jesus is not only present in creation, He is uniquely present with His people.



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. How does knowing God as a loving Creator change the way you relate to Him, how you think of yourself, and how you interact with others?

2. Do you believe that you were created for a purpose? Why or why not?

3. What ways do you try to measure your value instead of finding value from being made in God's image?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you have learned?

2. Read Psalm 19:1-6. Go outside and spend 10 minutes reflecting on creation. Take note of 10 things that you see and praise God for the things that He has made and how they reveal His good character.





LESSON 2

FALL



OVERVIEW

The last lesson introduced us to God's primary purpose in creation – to reveal His glory and majesty by establishing His kingdom on earth through human representation. Mankind, male and female, have dignity and purposeful lives because God created us in His own image.

The creation narrative ended with God looking upon all of creation and declaring it to be very good! However, reading Genesis 1-2 leaves us with a sense of disconnect. Somehow the world as we see and experience it does not always reflect the beauty and “goodness” of what God created. Why is this? **How did creation's initial perfection descend into a world of rebellion, suffering, injustice, pain, and hardship that we all know so well?**

This lesson will answer that question by introducing us to the first in a long series of human failures. We label this first failure as the “fall” because this word describes Adam and Eve's, and all later generations, fall from perfect intimacy with God. **While God had given mankind everything needed to flourish, Adam and Eve chose to seek life independently from their Creator, which resulted in physical and spiritual consequences for them and eventually for all of mankind.**

In this failure, and each subsequent failure, mankind has demonstrated inability and unwillingness to submit, obey and fulfill God's purposes. **And yet, in the face of repeated human failure, God has continued to reaffirm His intention to display His glory and establish His kingdom on earth through human representation.**



CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. Share about what you experienced as you spent time with God in His good creation.
2. What stood out to you from Lesson 1?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

GROW

WATCH THIS TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER



Scan the QR code for a short teaching video!

HIGHLIGHTS

Adam and Eve were tempted to doubt God's character, specifically His goodness.

Adam and Eve were tempted to believe that they could experience a better life apart from submission to their Creator and trust in His goodness.

Eve was deceived, but it was Adam's intentional sin that resulted in death spreading to all of humanity (Romans 5:12).

The consequences of the fall are both physical and spiritual. These consequences affect every person and every aspect of human experience – thought, emotion, conscience, will, and body.

God affirms His purpose for humanity and for His creation even in the face of Adam's sin.

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DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from the teaching video? Was anything said that was new, challenging, encouraging or confusing?

2. **Read Genesis 3:1–6.** What aspects of God’s character was the serpent trying to undermine? Compare the serpent’s temptations to God’s actual words in Genesis 2:16–17.

3. **Read Genesis 3:7–13.** What immediate consequences did Adam and Eve experience because of their sin?

Read Genesis 3:16–24. What additional consequences resulted from Adam and Eve’s sin for themselves, for mankind, and for the rest of creation?

4. **Read Genesis 3:14–15** and **Genesis 9:1–7.** Did Adam and Eve’s sin invalidate God’s purpose for humanity? Did it remove or alter God’s “image” in human beings?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

Death and brokenness reign in our world because of Adam’s rebellion, through which we inherited a stubborn commitment to make our lives work apart from God. As a result of this rebellion, which the Bible calls “sin,” and which is the universal experience of all people, mankind is hopeless and helpless. We cannot fix what has been broken. We cannot fix ourselves. We cannot fix the world we live in. We live in this brokenness. We need someone to rescue us.



ENGAGE

REFLECT TOGETHER

1. How do we see the effects of sin in the world today? How do you see this in your own life?
2. When we sin, is it because we inherited Adam's sin or is it because we choose to sin?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for one another that God would reveal the lies we are tempted to believe.

Pray for one another to be guarded and protected by God from the enemy's deceitful schemes.

ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

LOOK TO JESUS

Read Genesis 3:15. When the text says “He shall bruise you on the head,” this is the first hint at God’s redemptive plan. This is a preview of the gospel. Jesus will be “bruised on the head,” indicating He will recover from the harm (resurrection), but the serpent will be “bruised on the head,” indicating that he will not recover (Revelation 20:10).

Read Revelation 12:9; 20:10, 13-14. We have hope because God will fully conquer sin, death, and Satan (the serpent).

Read Romans 5:15–17. Although Adam opened the entire world to sin, Jesus provides a way to be restored to a right relationship with God. It is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ that we are restored.

Read Matthew 4:1-10. Compare the temptation of Eve to the temptation of Jesus.



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. How do you respond to your own failures and sin? Do you quickly accept fault and confess your sin to God and others, or do you tend to “live” in guilt and shame for a while? Or do you rationalize your sin and shift blame to others?

2. Why is it difficult for so many Christians to let go of their guilt and trust that God really has completely forgiven and cleansed them?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. What is God’s invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you have learned?

2. Spend some time confessing the ways you have contributed to the brokenness in the world.





LESSON 3

PROMISE



OVERVIEW

God created human beings to glorify Him by serving as His kingdom representatives on earth. They were created in His image for this very purpose. And yet, as we studied in the last lesson, this purpose was interrupted by humanity's fall into sin. **Adam and Eve's disastrous choice to disregard God's protection and disobey His command brought physical and spiritual death (that is, separation) to our entire race.**

Sin became the natural bent, the default, for all of Adam and Eve's descendants, as evidenced by mankind's rapid descent into pride, violence, and immorality. Mankind's united rebellion against God brought world-wide judgment upon their sin in both the flood (Genesis 6–9) and in God's scattering of humanity at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11). However, God's plans for His creation and for humanity remained unaltered. **But instead of working through all of humanity, which had become corrupt, God would begin to bring restoration to humanity through a single man through whom He would create a family and eventually a nation. The promises given to Abraham would form the basis for God's redemptive plan.**



CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from lesson 2: The Fall?
2. Did you find the confession exercise easy or hard? Encouraging and freeing, or discouraging? Why?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

GROW

WATCH THIS TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER



Scan the QR code for a short teaching video!

HIGHLIGHTS

God's redemptive program was revealed through the form of a "covenant" and the specific promises given through that covenant.

Covenants are formal agreements between parties. The specific form of the covenant God gave to Abraham was a "grant" covenant. God made the promises. God took upon Himself the obligation to fulfill the promises He made to Abraham.

God made the covenant with Abraham around 2000 BC.

Abraham believed God, and his faith (trust, belief) in God was "credited" as righteousness. The Apostle Paul used this event in Genesis 15:6 as a paradigm for all people, both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jewish people) to be reconciled into a relationship with God (Romans 4:1-5). We are all "justified," or declared to be in a right relationship with God, by God's grace through faith and not by our own works.

Abraham's faith would later be tested when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac. The Apostle James used this event in Genesis 22 as a paradigm for the testing and maturing of a Christian's faith (James 2).

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DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from the teaching video? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. **Read Genesis 15:1-6.** What did God promise to accomplish for Abraham and his descendants through this covenant?

3. **Read Genesis 15:7-21.** These verses in Genesis 15 describe the ratification of the “grant covenant” God made with Abraham in a manner that would have been familiar in the Ancient Near East. Why is it significant that God alone passed between the halves of the sacrificial animals in the form of fire and that God alone made the promises to Abraham, not Abraham to God?

4. **Read Genesis 15:5-6.** As we studied last week, all of Adam’s descendants have a fatal sin problem that prevents us from fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives. How does God’s promise and Abraham’s response provide a model for His ultimate solution to the sin problem (see Romans 4:1-5)?

5. **Read Genesis 22:1-14.** What was the relationship of Isaac to God’s covenant promises to Abraham? What does Abraham’s obedience tell you regarding what he believed to be true about God (see Hebrews 11:17-19)?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

God continued to further His intended purpose to establish His kingdom on earth through human representation by making a covenant with Abraham. Abraham is one of the most important people in all of biblical history. The covenant God made with this man and his descendants sets the foundation for God’s promises throughout the rest of the Bible. It is through this covenant that God’s purpose for humanity on earth will be restored and fulfilled for all peoples. Another way to think about the storyline of the Bible is **the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth through the fulfillment of His covenant promises.**



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. Do you ever feel like God is “testing” you like He “tested” Abraham? How does Genesis 22:1-19 inform the way we think about and respond to difficult circumstances? See also James 1:2-4, 12-18 and 1 Corinthians 10:13.

2. If salvation is by faith alone (see Ephesians 2:8-9), why does our obedience after salvation matter (see Ephesians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10)?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. What is God’s invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you have learned?

2. Write down 3 ways you have seen God faithfully keep His promises in your life. Spend some time reflecting and thanking God for these things.





LESSON 4

LAW

OVERVIEW

Lesson 3 introduced us to the Abrahamic Covenant, the foundation of God's gracious promises to Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob (later named Israel), and the twelve tribes that came from Jacob's sons. **The Abrahamic covenant included the promise of land (the promised land of Canaan), the promise of seed (descendants), and the promise of blessing (for Abraham's family and through him for all peoples).**

However, Abraham's descendants did not immediately inherit the promised land. Instead they journeyed south to Egypt to escape a famine. While there over the course of 400 years, the family became so numerous that they were perceived as a threat to the Egyptians. Their solution? Enslave the Jewish people.

But God miraculously delivered His people, now known as "Israel," from slavery. He brought them into the wilderness and He gave them another covenant through Moses. **This covenant, known as the Mosaic Covenant or The Law, served to form God's chosen people into a nation and to create a way of life for them to serve Him as a "kingdom of priests."**

CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from Lesson 3: Promise?
2. How would you summarize the story of Scripture so far? Specifically, how did God's original purposes for Creation become impacted by the Fall? And how did God's promise to one family set the course for a new redemptive plan for all of humanity?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

GROW

WATCH THIS TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER



Scan the QR code for a short teaching video!

HIGHLIGHTS

The Mosaic Covenant, or The Law of Moses, was given by God through Moses to the Israelites about 1500 BC.

The Law of Moses includes the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

The Mosaic Covenant was Israel's "constitution," moving them from being a family of loosely affiliated tribes into a nation.

The Mosaic Covenant taught Israel how to worship God, how to seek forgiveness and restoration with God after sinning against Him, and how they should treat one another and the nations around them.

In contrast to the Abrahamic "grant" Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant was in the form of an Ancient Near Eastern "sovereign-vassal" treaty (an agreement between a king and his people) in which the covenant promises were "conditional." If Israel desired to experience the promised blessings, they would be obligated to obey the "sovereign" (God). If they disobeyed, they would experience the consequences described within the covenant.

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DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from the teaching video? Was anything said that was new, challenging, encouraging or confusing?

2. **Read Exodus 20:1-17.** There are many other specific commandments given within the Law, but the Ten Commandments serve as a summary of The Law's basic principles. What do you observe in these Ten Commandments?

3. **Read Exodus 24:1-8.** Why was Israel's participation essential to this covenant?

4. **Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14.** What did God promise to do for Israel if they obeyed The Law?

Read Deuteronomy 28:15-20, 64-65. What did God promise would happen to Israel if they disobeyed The Law?

5. **Read Hebrews 10:1-4** and **Romans 7:8-13.** What were the shortcomings of the Mosaic Covenant?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

God gave The Law to Israel in order that they might enjoy His blessings and understand how to follow Him faithfully, while treating others with both justice and love. However, The Law would also reveal mankind's inadequacy. The Law exposed the reality that men and women have neither the desire nor the ability to follow God completely and faithfully. In this respect, the Law would ultimately point us toward Jesus Christ. In Him we can all, Jewish people and Gentile people (non-Jew), freely receive the gift of forgiveness of our sins and the indwelling, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit, not our own best efforts, that we experience both the ability and the desire to obey God and to enjoy Him.



REFLECT TOGETHER

2. **Read Deuteronomy 30:19-20.** In what specific ways can you “choose life” this week? In other words, how can you live in a way that honors God and enjoys His blessings this week?

Pray for one another to rest in God's acceptance of us through Jesus and stop striving to earn His love.

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

The Law shows everyone their need for Jesus in order to receive forgiveness of sins and to live a holy life (Galatians 3:21-22; Romans 8:3-4).

Jesus followed The Law as it was intended (Matthew 5:17). He then paid the debt for every sin of every person (Hebrews 10:11-14). As a result, He earned the right to establish a New Covenant, a better covenant (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6).



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. How do the promises of the Mosaic Covenant relate to the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant? Do they replace them, modify them, complement them, or stand completely independent of them (see Exodus 6:2-8; 32:7-14; and Galatians 3:15-18)?

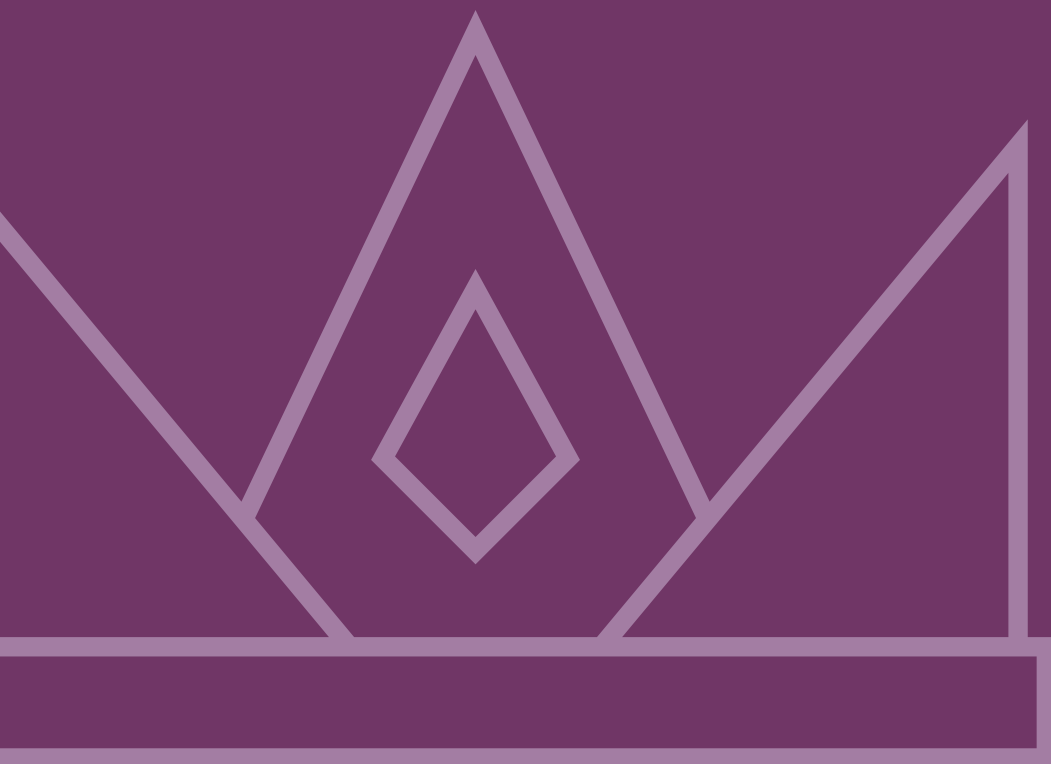
2. Should believers try to follow all, some or none of the Mosaic law? Why or why not (see Romans 6:14; Galatians 6:2)?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. What is God's invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you have learned?

2. Spend 30 minutes meditating on the law of Christ as it is described in Romans 12:9-21. Take notes of each of the commands given. Write down reasons why each of these commands leads to flourishing in your life.





LESSON 5

KINGDOM



OVERVIEW

Lesson 4 introduced us to the Mosaic Covenant, the second of God's four biblical covenants made with Abraham's descendants, the Israelites. The Mosaic Covenant, or The Law of Moses, was conditional. The Covenant promised blessings for obedience and discipline for disobedience. The Law was a good gift to Israel; however, The Law lacked two significant qualities. It did not provide the Israelites with the desire or the ability to consistently obey God. **Instead, The Law exposed Israel's sins and revealed their weaknesses.**

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness because they did not trust in God's goodness and His ability to defeat their enemies, Israel finally entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. They conquered many but not all of the peoples occupying the Promised Land who had rejected God and chosen to worship false gods. **And although Israel promised to obey the commandments given to them in The Law of Moses, they consistently disobeyed and experienced His discipline.**

Boldly, they came up with their own solution to break this cycle of disobedience, discipline and deliverance documented in the book of Judges. All they needed was a king like the kings of the nations around them.

And so God gave them the kind of king they were longing for, a man named Saul. Saul turned out to be a complete failure.

God then gave them a king "after His own heart," King David. **And to David God gave a covenant. The covenant promises extended through David to his heirs, to the nation of Israel and eventually to all nations.** One of David's heirs would become the ruler not only of Israel but of all the nations, and through that heir anyone who followed Him would experience all of God's promised blessings forever in His Kingdom.



CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from Lesson 4: The Law?
2. Was it easy or hard for you this week to believe that God is good and His way is best? Why?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

GROW

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Davidic Covenant was given by God to David and his descendants around 1000 BC.

Like the Abrahamic Covenant, and unlike the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant was given in the form of a grant covenant, since fulfillment of the promises would depend on the power and faithfulness of the one giving the covenant, God Himself.

The Davidic Covenant clarifies for us who will be the “seed” promised to Abraham through whom all of the promises will be fulfilled. The “seed” will come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and from the descendants of King David (2 Samuel 7:16).

God promised to David and his descendants a never-ending line of descendants (a “house”) who would always have the right to rule from Jerusalem (the “throne”) over the people of Israel (the “kingdom”).

David’s descendants for the most part did not obey God. David’s grandson, Rehoboam, was a foolish ruler. Because of his stubbornness, the kingdom split into two parts. From this point forward, the northern kingdom, known as “Israel,” would be ruled by kings who were not descendants of David. The southern kingdom, known as “Judah,” would be ruled by David’s descendants.

Similar to the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, the covenant with David becomes a major theme of Scripture from this point forward and greatly illuminates our understanding of the identity and calling of Jesus Christ.

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DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What insights or observations from the teaching video were most important to you? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. **Read 2 Samuel 7:1-7.** What was the concern that provoked David to approach God? Even though it seems like God redirected David's desire, what can we glean positively from David's example here?

3. **Read 2 Samuel 7:8-17.** The Davidic Covenant was given to David in the form of a "grant covenant." The promises of a grant covenant remain in effect until those promises are fulfilled. And the fulfillment of those promises is dependent upon the power and faithfulness of the one giving the covenant, God Himself. What promises did God make to David, to his descendants, and to the nation in this covenant?

4. **Read Psalm 89:1-4, 27-37 and 2 Chronicles 7:17-22.** How do you reconcile the unconditional nature of the promises made in this grant covenant with the exhortation and warning to each descendant to obey The Law or experience discipline?

5. **Read Isaiah 11:1-10.** What do we learn about the nature and scope of God's future kingdom?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

God gave an unconditional grant covenant to David, a man after His own heart, to establish one of David's descendants as king forever over His kingdom. This king would be the ruler who would eventually establish God's kingdom on earth and fulfill His covenant promises to Israel and to all peoples. However, none of David's descendants ever measured up to God's standards. Even the best of the kings were deeply flawed men. But their failure created a longing and a hope for a better future king. This hope will be fulfilled in Jesus, the Messiah, a descendant of David and the anointed Son of God.





REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. What are the qualities of a man or woman “after God’s own heart?” Do you have these qualities? How can you grow in these qualities?

2. Would you say that Jesus is presently the king of your life? Why or why not? Who or what most influences your decision-making?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. Create a list of the top 4-5 people/things that influence how you think and the choices you make. Where does Jesus fit in that list?

2. If your priorities are disordered, confess this to the Lord using Psalm 51 as your guide.





LESSON 6

NEW COVENANT



OVERVIEW

In the previous lesson we studied the Davidic Covenant, the third of God's four biblical covenants with Abraham's descendants, the Israelites. **In this covenant, God promised to give David a never-ending line of descendants (a "house") who would always have the right to rule from Jerusalem (the "throne") over the people of Israel (the "kingdom").** This three-fold promise was eternal and unilateral, meaning God obligated Himself alone to fulfill the promises. Yet God reserved the right to temporarily remove David's descendants from the throne if they disobeyed the Mosaic Law.

And David's descendants did in fact disobey the Law. There were periods of repentance and revival under kings who tried to follow the Law. **But most of David's descendants, and all of the non-Davidic rulers in the northern part of the kingdom, rebelled against God and led His people away from Him.** The result was exile, the consequence predicted in the Law for unrepentant abandonment of God.

However, God's original purpose for His creation and for humanity did not change. And His redemptive plan as promised to Abraham and David did not change. **While in exile, experiencing God's discipline, He reiterated His covenant promises to His people in the form of a New Covenant.** This new and better covenant would empower His people to obey Him fully and to receive all of the promised blessings that would ultimately extend to all nations.



CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from Lesson 5: Kingdom?
2. If you had the power to immediately change one thing about yourself or your circumstances, what would you change?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

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HIGHLIGHTS

These prophetic passages in the Old Testament related to the New Covenant were written around 600 BC during the Jews' years of exile. They introduce us to the New Covenant, the fourth and final biblical covenant. God promised this covenant to both Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom) even while they were experiencing His discipline of removal from the Promised Land because of their sin.

The timing and setting of the New Covenant promises reinforce the truth that God is faithful. He will always keep His promises to His people, even when His people fail to keep their promises to Him.

Like the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, the New Covenant was and is a grant covenant since fulfillment of the promises depends on the power and faithfulness of the one giving the covenant, God Himself. This is unlike the Mosaic Covenant which was a conditional, sovereign-vassal covenant.

The New Covenant promises reiterate and illuminate our understanding of the Abrahamic and Davidic promises – land, seed and blessing. The promises also include a new provision of the desire and the ability to obey Him. And they include the hope of a full and final removal of sin, as opposed to the temporary setting aside of sin's debt through the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant.

Unlike the previous covenants, the New Covenant was not immediately ratified, and its promises were not put into effect. Instead, God allowed the hope of this future covenant to inspire His people to eagerly wait for His Messiah to come.



DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What insights or observations from the teaching video were most important to you? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. **Read Jeremiah 31:31–37.** How is the New Covenant different from and better than the Mosaic Covenant/Law? How do these verses reinforce the enduring, eternal nature of the New Covenant?

3. **Read Ezekiel 36:22–38.** What is the chief motivation that drives God to bless His people both spiritually and physically?

4. Looking back on what we have studied so far, how does the New Covenant relate to:
The Abrahamic Covenant (see Genesis 12:1–3 and 15:5 with Ezekiel 34:26–29 and 36:37–38)?

The Mosaic Covenant (see Hebrews 7:18–19 and 8:6–13)?

The Davidic Covenant (see Ezekiel 37:24–28 and Acts 2:29–33)?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

The Law was good in that it revealed much about the character of God and showed His people how to worship Him. The Law made sin clear and obvious through explicit commandments. But in exposing people's sin, it also exposed humanity's brokenness and unwillingness to fully follow God. The King of Israel and the people of Israel consistently chose their own way over God's way. As a result, they were exiled from the Promised Land. However, even while under discipline, God promised restoration and fulfillment of His covenant promises through a New Covenant. What the old lacked (provision of desire and ability; see Deuteronomy 5:28–29), the New would provide through forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit.



ENGAGE

REFLECT TOGETHER

1. How does God's provision of a new heart and the Spirit in us change the way that you live?
2. What do we miss when we believe the spiritual life is merely about behavior modification?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for one another to experience freedom in God's gracious forgiveness and the power to joyfully obey God in all things through the power of His Holy Spirit.

ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

LOOK TO JESUS

Jesus was the initiator of the New Covenant. Through His death on the cross that paid the debt of our sin and through the power of His resurrection, the spiritual blessings are initiated (Luke 22).

The church experiences the spiritual blessings of forgiveness of sins and the indwelling, empowering Holy Spirit because Jesus established a New Covenant (Galatians 3:16).

Though the promised Holy Spirit dwells in us, giving us the desire and ability to obey, we still experience the competing desires of our “flesh” (Romans 7:14-25). This battle raging in us will not be fully resolved until the New Covenant promises are completely fulfilled and we are “glorified” (1 John 3:2).

The physical and material blessings will be given when Christ returns and reigns from the Davidic throne over all the earth.

This covenant provides hope for Israel and the Church, because it points to the day when Christ will abolish sin and make all things new!



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. Much of this portion of Israel's history is about waiting: waiting for God to speak; waiting for God to deliver; waiting for the Messiah to come. How have you responded to times of waiting in your own life? Did anything make the waiting easier or help you endure?

2. Why is hope so important for all of us? Where do you look for hope besides the Lord? How would your life be different if your source of hope was Jesus Christ?

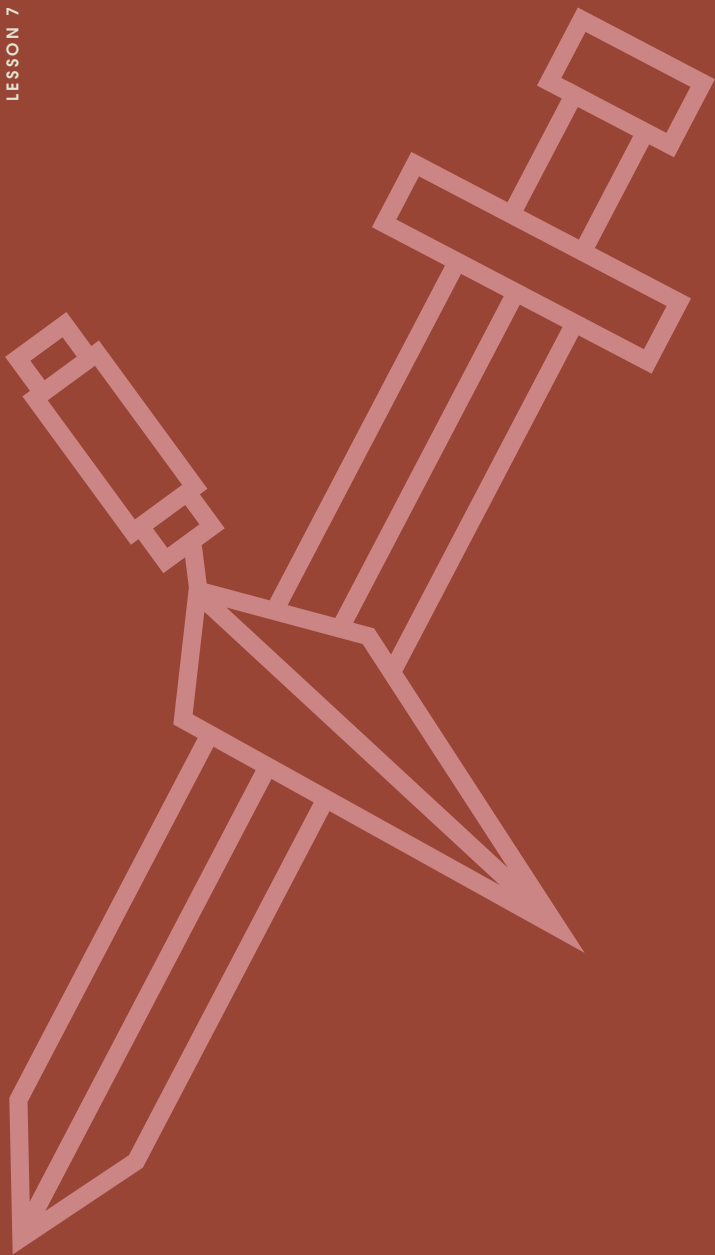
RESPOND TO JESUS

Thank God that your debt of sin has been completely forgiven through Jesus.

Memorize and meditate on Ephesians 2:8-10. Thank God that you no longer have to work to earn His favor.

Share with a friend or family member what you learned this week about the New Covenant.





LESSON 7

RETURN



OVERVIEW

Lesson 6 introduced us to the New Covenant, the last of God's biblical covenants with His people. Promised through the prophets while Israel was in exile (around 600 BC), the New Covenant would supply what The Law could not: the desire and the ability to obey God. **The New Covenant also began to reveal that this new desire and ability would only be possible through the full forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit.** Yet this covenant was not immediately put into effect. God let the hope of it inspire His people to wait expectantly for the Messiah who would serve as mediator of this new covenant along with its blessings.

But before the Messiah could come, the exile had to end. After seventy years in Babylon, exactly as Jeremiah had foretold, God stirred the heart of a pagan king, Cyrus of Persia, to send His people home. Over roughly the next century, the Jews returned to the Promised Land in three waves led by Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They rebuilt the temple, recovered God's Law, and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. God had kept His promise to bring His people home.

And yet the return was bittersweet – the new temple was a shadow of the temple built by Solomon, no descendant of David sat on the throne, and the people remained under foreign rule. The full restoration the prophets had promised had not yet arrived. Through Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, God gave His people a final word – a promise that He would send a messenger, "Elijah," to prepare the way before the great day of the Lord. And then God went silent. **For roughly four hundred years no prophet spoke as God's people waited for Him to keep His word and send their Messiah.**



CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from Lesson 6: New Covenant?
2. Have you ever returned to a place after a long time away (an old home, school, or town) and found that it was not quite what you remembered or expected it would be? What was that experience like?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

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HIGHLIGHTS

After seventy years of exile, God moved Cyrus, king of Persia, to allow the Jews to return to the Promised Land around 538 BC, fulfilling the words of Jeremiah, and even of Isaiah, who had named Cyrus more than 150 years before he was born (Isaiah 44:28–45:1; Jeremiah 29:10).

The return came in three waves: Zerubbabel led the first group to rebuild the temple (completed 516 BC); Ezra returned to restore the people to God's Law; and Nehemiah returned to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (around 445 BC).

Renewal centered on worship and the Word. When Ezra read the Law aloud, the people wept in conviction, rejoiced in hope, and strived to reorder their whole lives around God's Word (Nehemiah 8).

Yet the return was incomplete. The second temple was far less glorious than Solomon's; no king sat on David's throne; and the people remained subject to foreign empires. They still struggled with sin, enemies, discouragement, and distraction, to the point of even building their own "paneled houses" while God's house lay neglected (Haggai 1:2–9).

This gap between the promise and the present was meant to deepen Israel's longing for a greater and final restoration: the fulfillment of the New Covenant and the coming of the Messiah.

Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament (around 430 BC), called the people back to The Law and promised that God would send a messenger as forerunner to prepare the way before "the great and awesome day of the LORD" (Malachi 3:1; 4:4–6).

Then God did not speak through a prophet for roughly four hundred years, which we call the "silent years" between the Old and New Testaments. The silence was not abandonment but preparation. God had promised to speak again, which He did through John the Baptist and His own Son (Mark 1:1–4; Hebrews 1:1–2).

The return from exile demonstrated partial fulfillment of each of the covenants (Jeremiah 29:10–14; Haggai 2:6–9; Ezekiel 37:24–28).



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DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What insights or observations from the teaching video were most important to you? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. **Read Ezra 1:1–4.** How does God display His sovereignty and covenant faithfulness in the way He brings His people home? What does it mean that He “stirred up the spirit” of a pagan king (see Jeremiah 29:10–14)?

3. **Read Nehemiah 8:1–12.** What place does God’s Word have in the renewal of His people? Why do you think the people first wept and then were told to rejoice? What does true repentance and worship look like here?

4. **Read Haggai 1:2–9.** The returned exiles were busy building their own “paneled houses” while the house of God lay in ruins. What does God’s call to “consider your ways” expose about their priorities? What does it expose about ours?

5. **Read Malachi 3:1 and 4:4–6.** What does God promise in His final word before the 400 years of silence? Who is the “messenger” / “Elijah,” and how does the New Testament identify him (see Matthew 11:13–14; Luke 1:16–17)?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

In the return from exile, God proved Himself faithful to His covenant word. He had fulfilled His promise both to discipline His people for their rebellion and to eventually bring them home. The homecoming reaffirmed His ancient promise to Abraham of a land and a people, and it reminded Israel that their God keeps His word even when His people fail to keep theirs.



ENGAGE

REFLECT TOGETHER

1. The returning exiles got distracted, finishing their own comfortable homes while God's house sat unfinished. What "paneled houses" (material things that crowd out devotion to God) most easily distract you? What would it look like this week to "consider your ways" (Haggai 1:5-7)?

2. God's people had to keep trusting Him through disappointment and through 400 years of silence, holding on to the word He had already given. How do you respond when reality falls short of what you hoped, or when God seems silent? What helps you keep trusting His promises while you wait?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for one another to trust God's faithfulness even when His timing and His ways are not what we expected.

Pray for one another to treasure and obey God's Word and to worship Him wholeheartedly while we wait for Him to act.

ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

LOOK TO JESUS

The true and lasting end of humanity's exile from God comes through Jesus, who is Himself the greater temple (John 2:19–21) and the long-awaited Son of David (Luke 1:32–33).

Malachi's promised messenger, "Elijah," was fulfilled at least in part through John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:13-14; Mark 1:1-4).

After four hundred years of silence, God spoke again, first through John, and then fully through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Jesus is the “sun of righteousness” who rises “with healing in its wings” (Malachi 4:2). He is the Messiah Israel had waited for through the long years of silence.



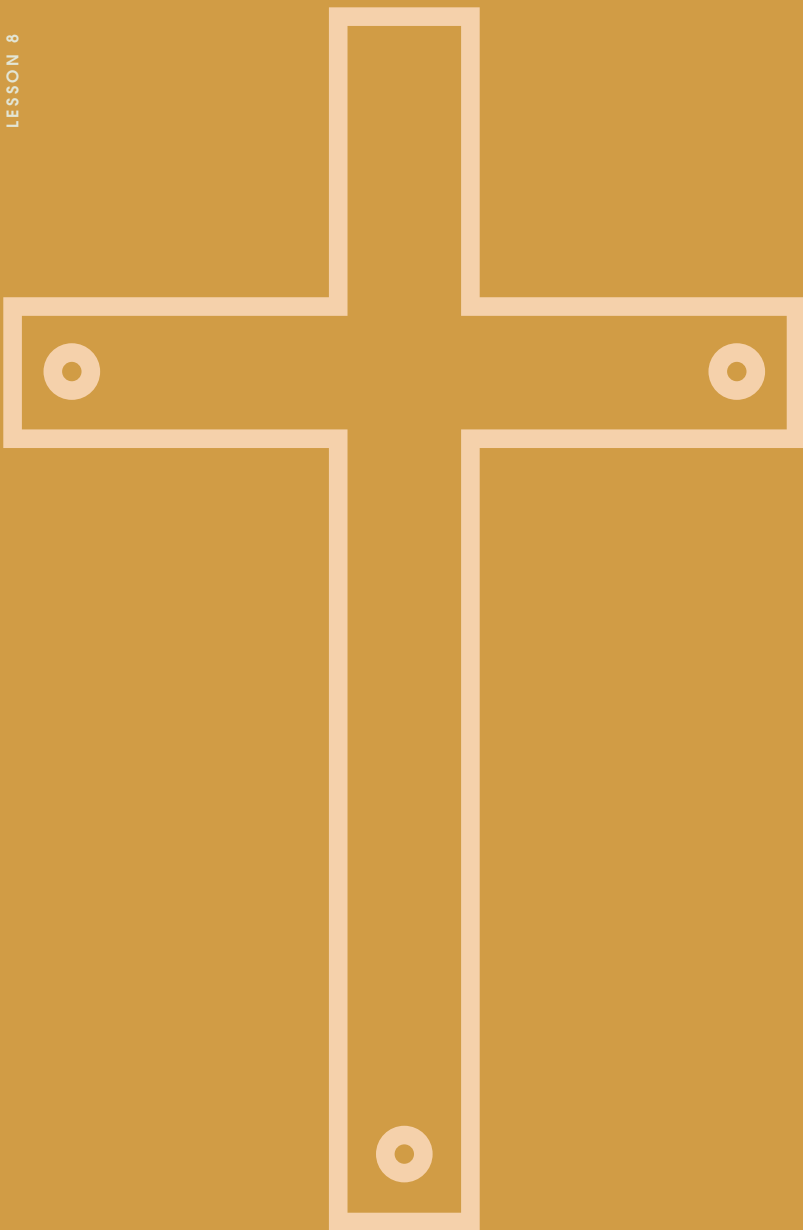
REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. The Old Testament ends in silence. How do you respond when God seems silent in your life?
2. Why do you think God chose to be “silent” for four hundred years before sending His Son? What might He have been cultivating in His people? See Galatians 4:1-7. What could He be cultivating in you also?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. Rejoice that God has brought you out of exile and into His family. Then ask the Holy Spirit to point out specific sins to confess and turn from this week.
2. Read Nehemiah 9, the great prayer that retells Israel’s entire story. As you read, write down each thing it says God did for His people. Then write a short prayer of your own that retells God’s faithfulness in your life.





LESSON 8

MESSIAH



OVERVIEW

After returning from exile, a remnant of Jewish families returned to the land and rebuilt the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. **Prophets before, during and after the exile began to reveal specific information about the Messiah (literally “anointed one”) who would some day lead Israel and fulfill the promises made to Abraham, the promises made to David, and the promises given in the New Covenant.**

After the final prophet, Malachi, spoke from God to the people around 430 BC, there was a long period of silence and of waiting. Then, as the Lord predicted through Malachi, another prophet showed up in the spirit and power of Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6). His name was John the Baptist. His role was to prepare the people of Israel to receive their Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God.

CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from Lesson 7: Return?
2. Think about a life event that created in you a sense of excitement and anticipation – going on vacation, buying a new car, starting a new job. Why did this life event get you excited? Were your expectations fulfilled, or did it fall short?
3. What are you hoping for or expecting from God? Are your expectations consistent with what God has actually promised us? Do you think that He is able to meet these expectations?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Just over 2000 years ago, the eternal Son of God became a man. He was born into the family of a young woman and a carpenter in the tiny town of Bethlehem. In this event, known as the “incarnation” (literally “in flesh” or “in a body”), the Son of God, who was always fully God, also became fully human.

And although He shared fully in our humanity, He never sinned.

No event in all of human history can rival the significance of the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God. Because of its importance, God chose to reveal it in four parallel accounts, the four Gospels (the word “gospel” means “good news”) written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each Gospel account focuses on key aspects of Jesus’ identity, life and ministry.

Jesus became the one and only human being to completely fulfill God’s purpose for humanity: to live in an unbroken relationship with the Father and to represent God’s kingdom on earth by reflecting God’s glorious image (His love, holiness, goodness, etc.) to the world.

Jesus also became the one and only person to qualify to fulfill all of God’s covenant promises.

Jesus’ death and resurrection ratified the New Covenant and provided the foundation for both the present and future promises of that covenant to be fulfilled for Jews and Gentiles.



DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What insights or observations from the teaching video were most important to you? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. **Read John 1:1-3, 14, 17-18** and **Hebrews 1:1-3** and **Colossians 1:13-20** and answer the following questions:

What do you learn about the work of the Son of God?

What do you learn about His personhood and nature?

3. How did Jesus fulfill the expectations and promises of each of the biblical covenants?
The Abrahamic Covenant (Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:8, 14, 16, 29)

The Mosaic Covenant (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:24-25; Hebrews 8:6-7, 13; 9:11-15)

The Davidic Covenant (Luke 1:31-33, 68-75; Revelation 22:16)

The New Covenant (Luke 22:19-20; Hebrews 10:11-22)

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

Fully God and fully man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for the sins of every person, was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now intercedes on our behalf. As the perfect sacrifice that took our place, He redeems us from sin and reconciles to God every person who believes in Him.



ENGAGE

REFLECT TOGETHER

1. Why do you think many people find Jesus compelling or admirable? What about Jesus is offensive or hard to explain in our culture today?
2. We have promises from God that have already been accomplished, or will in the future be accomplished through Jesus through the Spirit who lives in us (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14). What promises do we have from God? What difference does it make in your life that God guarantees His promises?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for one another to place our hope in Jesus and not in the false promises of this world.

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ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

LOOK TO JESUS

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham (Genesis 3:15; 12:3; Galatians 3:8, 14, 16, 29). Jesus is the seed/descendant of Abraham, through whom all nations will be blessed.

Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:24-25; Hebrews 8:6-7, 13; 9:11-15). He lived sinlessly under the righteous requirements of the Law. He also paid the penalty for all sins committed by others under the Law (Hebrews 9:15). As a result, He earned the right to establish a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

Jesus is the longed-for descendant of David who will fulfill the promises given to David (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Luke 1:31-33, 68-75; Romans 1:1-4; Revelation 22:16). Jesus is the true Davidic King who will return to reign forever on the earth, establishing peace and righteousness for Israel and for all nations.

Jesus ratified the New Covenant through His death and resurrection (Luke 22:19-20).

Jesus' death and resurrection paid the price for the sins of all mankind (1 Timothy 2:3-6; 1 John 2:2; Hebrews 2:9), offering forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit to everyone who believes (Galatians 3:13-14).

The promised Holy Spirit restores God's image in us and empowers us to live holy lives (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

The physical promises given to the nation of Israel in the context of the Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenants, including Jesus reigning on the Davidic throne, are yet to be fulfilled. When these promises are fulfilled, Israel and all nations will share in those blessings through the Messiah, Jesus.



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. Why is the resurrection of Jesus significant (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)? What did He accomplish by being raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 42-44)?

2. According to Romans 8:31-39, where is Jesus now? What is he doing?

What does it mean to “intercede” on behalf of someone else?

3. How does knowing that Jesus intercedes on your behalf change the way you pray?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. What is God’s invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you have learned?

2. Have you trusted in Christ’s death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins? If not, what is holding you back?

3. What is a specific area of your life (family, friends, work, health, finances, time) that is out of alignment with the values and practices of Jesus’ kingdom? Talk to Jesus about this. Ask Him to show you one specific way to realign with Him and begin to do this.

4. Pick one person with whom you can share what Jesus means to you this week. Begin praying for that person.





LESSON 9

CHURCH



OVERVIEW

When the leaders of Israel rejected Jesus, their rightful Messiah and king, He began to prepare His followers for a new form of God's kingdom that would be very different from the Davidic kingdom they were expecting. **Instead of immediately ruling politically and militarily on earth, this new "mystery" form of the kingdom that Jesus called His "Church" would start small and grow invisibly and quietly in the hearts of men and women.**

Yet even though this form of the kingdom would be new, different and unexpected, it would continue to advance God's desire to glorify Himself on earth through human representation. **This new community of faith, following Jesus as their founder, would be transformed, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What stood out to you from Lesson 8: Messiah?
2. Describe the best “communities” of which you were a member or participant (for example, sports teams, clubs, dinner groups, etc.). What made those groups enjoyable and rewarding?
3. What would you most like to experience in the community of faith, the Church?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Church was and is a “mystery” form of God’s Kingdom. Although the Church was a “mystery” and not anticipated by Jesus’ followers, the Church was not a surprise or afterthought for God. The Church was and is a part of His eternal plan.

The Church began on the Day of Pentecost. That day was marked by the powerful presence of God’s Holy Spirit who enabled Jesus’ followers to boldly proclaim the gospel.

Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and making disciples is the primary mission of the Church.

The Church is also called, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to worship God, to love one another and to reflect God through our good works.

The Holy Spirit not only empowers Jesus’ followers to declare the gospel, He also transforms our character so that we become more and more like Jesus Himself. This transformation marks a renewal of the image of God in men and women. In this respect, the Church becomes a representation of what God had originally intended for humanity.

FLOW OF CHURCH HISTORY

Pentecost



DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What insights or observations from the teaching video were most important to you? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. **Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–13; and Ephesians 1:22–23; 2:8–22; 3:6–12** to answer these questions:
What exactly is the Church?

How does a person become a part of the Church?

How do the metaphors of the “one new man” and the “temple of the Holy Spirit” inform our identity and practices as the Church?

3. **Read Matthew 28:18–20 and Acts 1:6–8.** What purpose(s) does the church fulfill in God's plan? What mission did Jesus Christ give to His apostles and subsequent generations of His followers?

4. **Read Exodus 19:5–6 and 1 Peter 2:9.** How is the Church different from the nation of Israel in its identity and mission? How is it similar?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

The Church, which includes all believers in Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) since the Day of Pentecost, is described by several metaphors, including the “temple” of the Holy Spirit and one “new man.” The “temple” metaphor instructs us that in the Church God is fulfilling His original intention to dwell in and with His people. The “new man” metaphor instructs us that in the Church God is restoring His image-bearers so that individually and together we can represent Him on earth. These truths provide God's people with identity, belonging and purpose.



ENGAGE

REFLECT TOGETHER

1. Read Acts 2:42-47.

What do these verses tell us about the priorities of the early Church? Do these priorities still apply to the Church today?

How can your group practice regular “fellowship” together? In what ways does gathering together with other believers benefit your life?

2. **Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.** Every person in the “body of Christ,” the Church, has been given gifts from the Spirit. We each also have other talents and abilities through which we can honor God and serve other people.

What are some of your spiritual gifts, talents and abilities?
If you are unsure of your gifts, then take this Spiritual Gifts
Survey by scanning this QR code.



What are some specific ways you can use these gifts to honor God and serve others?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for your Church to remain healthy and focused on the mission God has given us.

Pray for one another to discover and use his/her gifts and talents for the benefit of other followers of Jesus and for the mission of the Church.

ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

LOOK TO JESUS

Read Ephesians 1:18-23. Jesus is the head of the Church. This means that He is the ultimate authority that we look to and follow in all matters. He is the source of life for the Church and provides the example that we are to follow as His representatives on Earth.



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. **Read Matthew 4:23; Matthew 16:20; Luke 24:45–47 and 1 Corinthians 15:3–4.** What gospel (“good news”) message did the disciples preach after the resurrection of Jesus? Is this the same gospel that Jesus and John the Baptist proclaimed before His crucifixion and resurrection? If not, what is different about it?

2. **Read John 14:26, Romans 8:11, 8:26–27 and Galatians 5:22–23.** What are some of the roles of the Spirit in the life of a believer? How do you depend on the Spirit in your daily life?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. What is God’s invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you have learned?

2. In what ways can you more fully engage in the mission of the Church this week?

3. In what ways can you depend on the Spirit as you use your gifts, talents and resources to honor God and serve others?





LESSON 10

NEW CREATION



OVERVIEW

In the previous lesson we studied the identity, mission and ministries of the Church. After Christ ascended to the Father's presence, His followers received the Holy Spirit and became witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. **As many Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles responded to this new gospel of forgiveness of sins through faith alone, the Church grew and it has continued to grow until this very day.** However, the journey of the Church has been challenging – persecution from the outside and sin on the inside. As we live out our faith in a still broken creation marked by disease, death, war and natural disasters (and the list could go on!), we long for something better.

The good news? There is much more to God's restoration program! **Jesus Christ will return to earth and make all things new and perfect, things seen and things unseen, physical and spiritual, for both creation and for humanity.** This truth gives meaning and purpose to our present and hope for our future.



CONNECT

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER

1. What's the first thing in our present human experience that you would remove right now if you could?
2. Are you excited about the future, dreading the future or indifferent? Why?

As a group, read through the lesson overview on the previous page.

GROW

WATCH THIS TEACHING VIDEO TOGETHER



Scan the QR code for a short teaching video!

HIGHLIGHTS

The natural world is subject to decay and corruption. And humanity is broken physically, relationally, and spiritually. We need to be restored to God's original design for us as creatures made in His image.

God keeps all of His promises. Those promises, contained in the three "grant covenants" – Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenants – form the basis for what the future will look like.

The New Testament provides greater clarity for the ways in which those covenant promises, first introduced to us in the Old Testament, will be fulfilled.

The Apostles Paul, Peter and especially John wrote about the future. John's book of Revelation, the final book in the New Testament is the most detailed of the Apostles' writings about the future.

While many of the specifics regarding the timing and sequencing of future events remain somewhat mysterious, we believe that the next event will be a surprise "rapture," or removal, of the Church from the earth.

God's people will receive glorified, resurrection bodies that cannot experience temptation and cannot grow old or undergo decay, being perfected both physically and spiritually.

The rapture will be followed by a seven year period of "tribulation."

At the end of the "tribulation," Jesus will return and establish His kingdom on earth for 1000 years in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. Satan will be bound, and righteousness will cover the earth. At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released for a short time, and then he and his followers will be forever removed from the earth.

Jesus will then establish a new heavens and a new earth and His kingdom will rule forever.

As His restored image-bearers, we will rule and reign with Jesus forever.

See page 73 for more on the eschatological timeline.



DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING TOGETHER

1. What insights or observations from the teaching video were most important to you? Was anything said that was new to you, encouraging, challenging, or confusing?

2. Based upon the biblical covenants we've studied, what promises from the Old Testament covenants are yet to be fulfilled?

3. What do you learn about what God has planned for the future from each of these passages?

Rapture (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

Tribulation (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 6:12-17)

Millennial Kingdom & Future Judgments (see Revelation 20:1-15)

New heavens/earth (see Revelation 21:1-6 and Revelation 22:1-5)

4. What will we be like in Jesus Christ's future kingdom (see Romans 8:20-23, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2)?

5. As we studied last week, the Church is now receiving some of the most significant promises of the New Covenant – specifically, the forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Does this imply that the Church has replaced Israel as God's people, or does God still have a distinct plan for the Jewish nation in the future (see Acts 1:6-8; Romans 9:1-5 and 11:1-29)?

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

What we are experiencing now is not the end of God's restoration program. The Church age will come to an end with the rapture/removal of the Church from the earth followed by seven years of tribulation on the earth. And then Jesus Christ will return to earth. With Christ's Second Coming, the sovereign rule of God in the heavens will finally extend throughout all of the earth over all human and even angelic authorities and powers. His return will bring a complete and climactic fulfillment of all of God's covenant promises. Jewish and Gentile believers alike will finally experience all that God intended for us as His earthly kingdom representatives. Sin, suffering, temptation and death will be eradicated in a new heaven and new earth where we will dwell together with God for all of eternity.



ENGAGE

REFLECT TOGETHER

1. What are you most looking forward to when Jesus returns? What are you most excited for Him to restore?
2. How does knowing the end of the story – Jesus will return and set all things right – impact your life now and provide hope for you today?
3. Who in your life needs the hope that is promised by God in Revelation 21 & 22?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for one another to experience hope in Jesus Christ's return and peace in the midst of struggles and suffering in this fallen world.

A large grid of dotted lines for writing, consisting of 10 rows and 40 columns of dots.

ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK

Spend some intentional time with Jesus praying, reflecting, and responding to what He has shown you in this chapter of God's grand story.

LOOK TO JESUS

Jesus is the only one with the power to defeat sin and death. One day, Jesus will return, defeat all of His enemies, and bring about a new heaven and new earth.

This new heaven and new earth will be characterized by "shalom," meaning that it will be completely whole, perfect, and holy – free from scarcity, pain and suffering, free from conflict, free from temptation, sin and death.

Jesus Christ is the one who will sit on the eternal throne promised to David and rule for all of eternity.

The resurrection body of Jesus Christ serves as a model for what our resurrection experience will be like.



REFLECT WITH JESUS

1. **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18** again. Why did Paul write about the future “Rapture” of the church for the Thessalonian believers?

2. Both God’s people and those who reject God will experience a future judgment or evaluation. Those who reject God will stand before the Great White throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11–15.

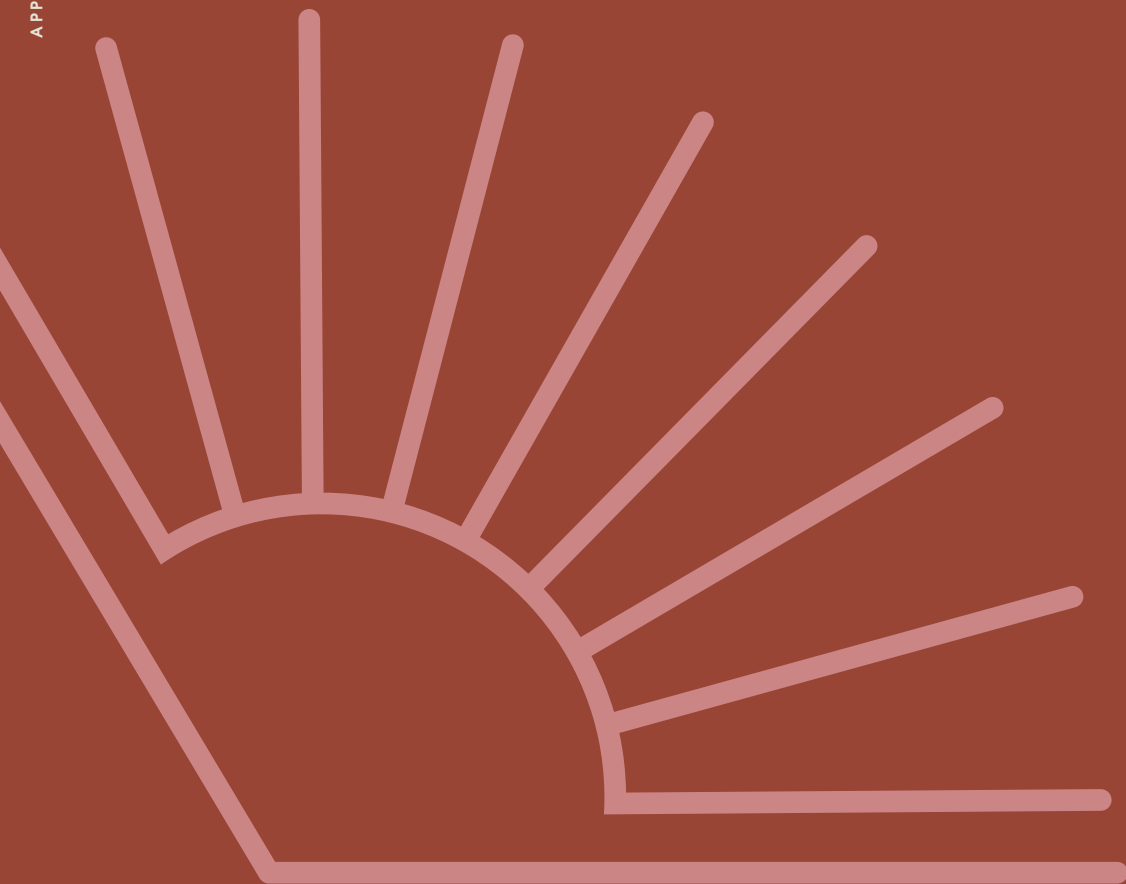
3. Believers will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. **Read 1 Corinthians 3:9–15** and **2 Corinthians 5:10**. What is the basis of this judgment and what rewards can be gained or lost at the judgment seat of Christ?

RESPOND TO JESUS

1. What is God’s invitation to you this week as you seek to apply what you have learned?

2. Share the entire story of the Bible with someone this week using the 10 words we have covered in this study.



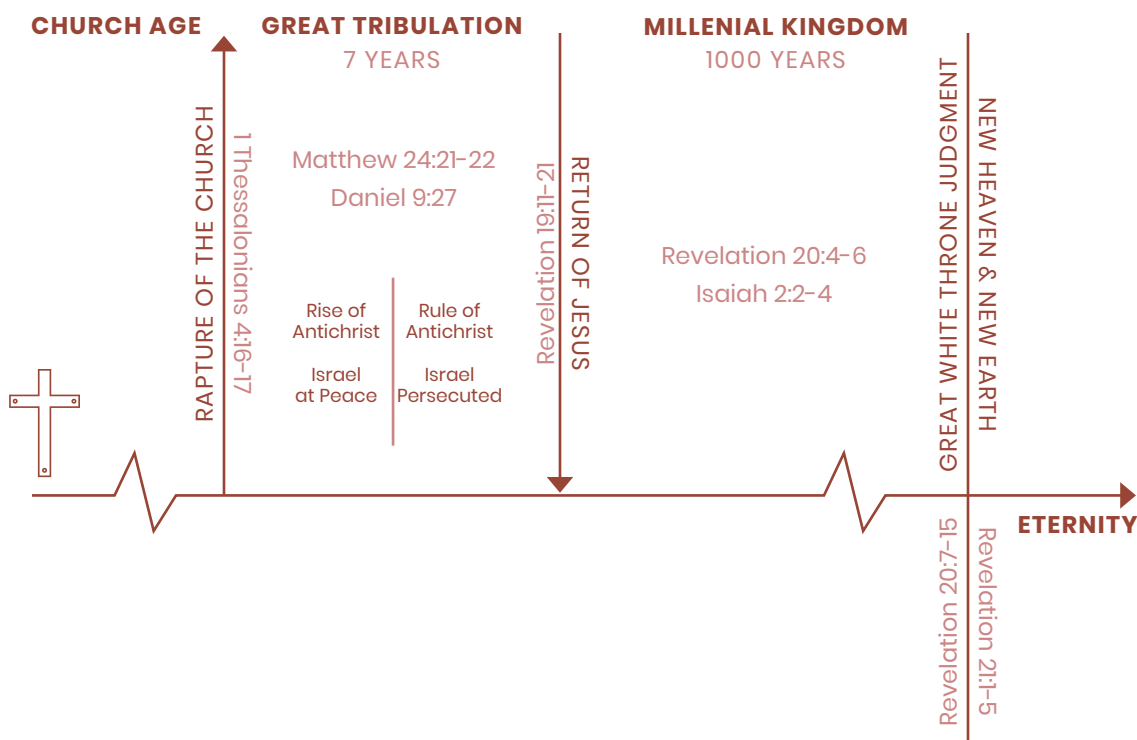


APPENDIX

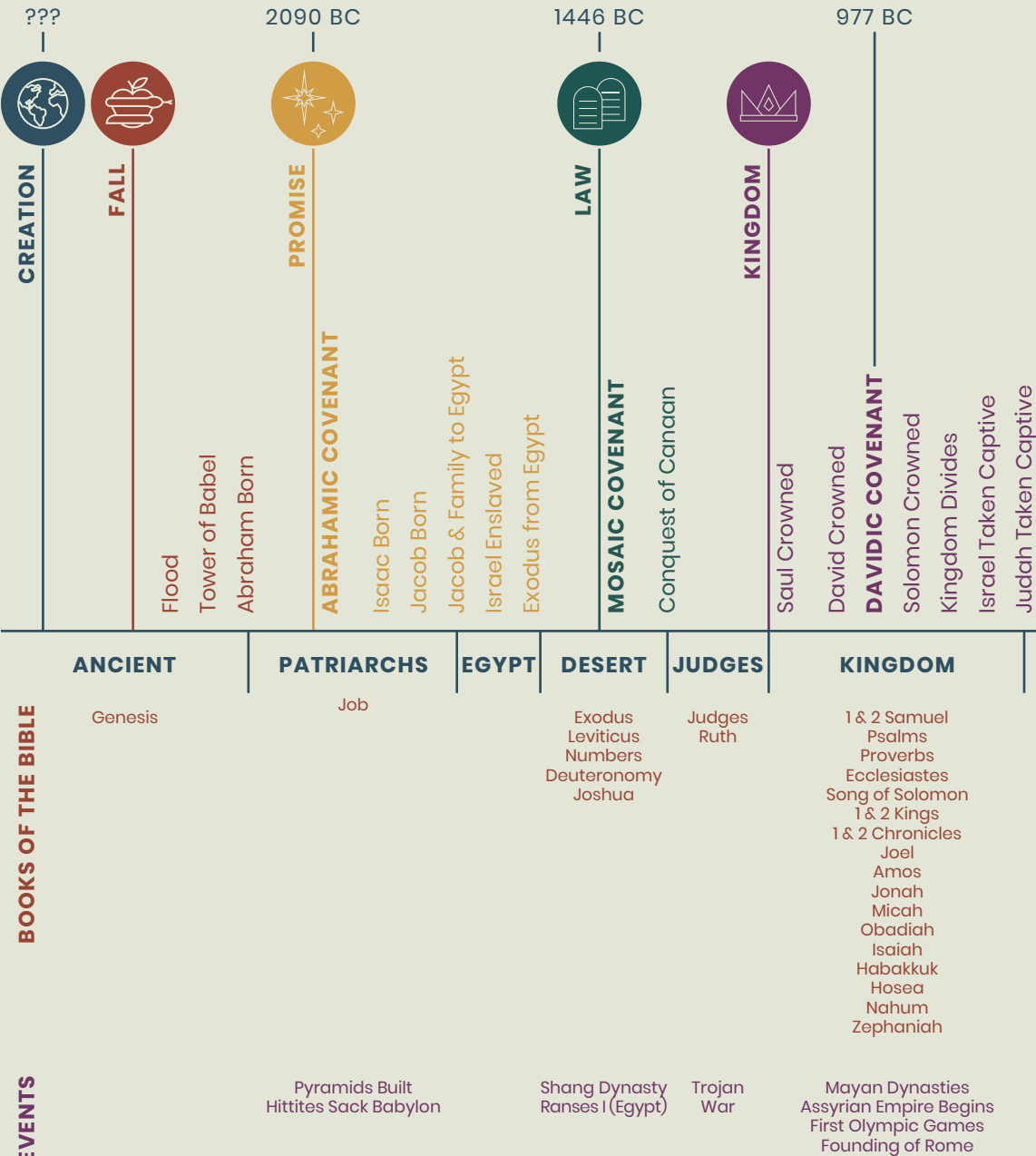
ESCHATOLOGY

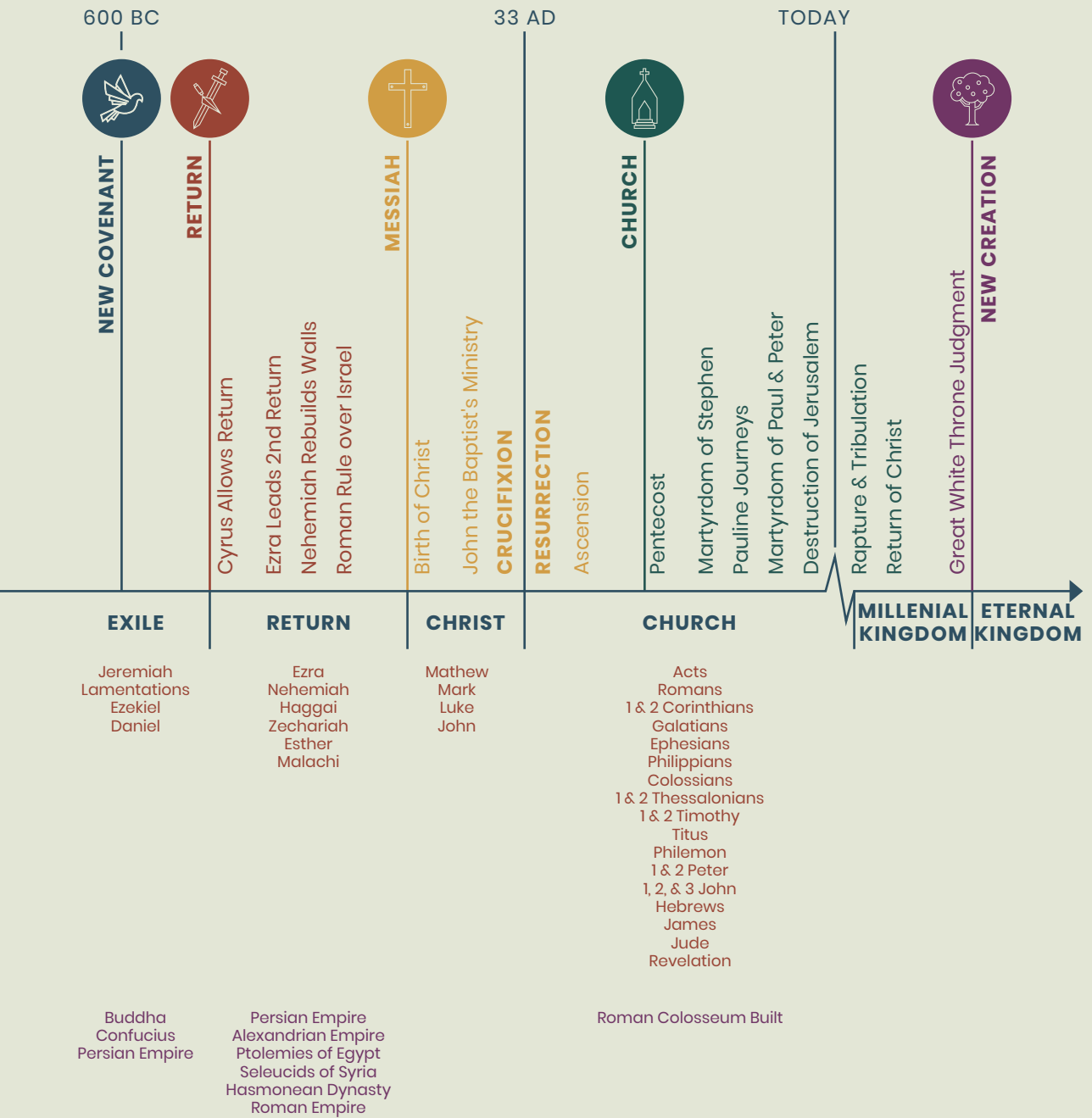
Daniel 9, written about 539 BC, provides a fascinating glimpse into God's plan for the nation of Israel in both the past and the future. Note that Daniel's "weeks" are references to groupings of seven years. So "seventy weeks" is actually a reference to $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. In Daniel 9:25, God's messenger mentions a decree to rebuild Jerusalem, which occurred historically on March 5, 444 BC. The verse goes on to say that after 69 "weeks" ($7 + 62$), the Messiah would be "cut off." This occurred on March 30, 33 AD (483 years to the day from the messenger's prediction, using the Jewish calendar of 360 days per lunar year). Just as Daniel had recorded, in March of 33 AD, Jesus Christ, the Messiah-King, was "cut off," or crucified. While all of the events mentioned in the first 69 "weeks" have already occurred, the events of the 70th week have not. That gap in time is filled by the "mystery" form of God's kingdom known as the Church (see Ephesians 3:4-10). The events of the 70th year unfold in more detail in the Apostle John's book of Revelation.

ESCHATOLOGY TIMELINE



TIMELINE OF BIBLICAL HISTORY





Having established what the Bible claims about itself, that it is the authoritative Word of God without error or contradiction, a skeptical reader may wonder, “Is it reasonable to believe these claims?” The short answer is, “Absolutely!” Unbiased literary analysis, historical research, and archeology all provide strong evidence in favor of the reliability of scripture. We don’t have room to list all the evidence, but here are three strong arguments in favor of the reliability of scripture:

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

For a book written over many centuries by many authors in many places, the Bible demonstrates remarkable unity in theme and theology. Notice how the enemy introduced in Genesis 3 becomes the enemy vanquished in Revelation 12:9. Also, it includes an astounding amount of historically fulfilled prophecy (Psalm 22:14-18 fulfilled in Matthew 27:35; Isaiah 53 fulfilled perfectly in the life of Christ; Micah 5:2 fulfilled in Matthew 2:1-6). Finally, contrary to almost all other ancient works of literature, the Bible is shocking in its faithfulness to record embarrassing truths and events without distortion, such as disorder in the churches (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) and sins of the apostles (Romans 7; Gal 2:11).

MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we read the New Testament today, are we reading a book that has been heavily distorted over the last 2000 years or a reliable witness to the original text? Ancient manuscripts clearly demonstrate that the latter is true – our text today is over 99% accurate and the minor discrepancies affect no major doctrinal issues. Evidence for all other ancient literature pales in comparison to the overwhelming body of ancient manuscript evidence for the New Testament, as the following chart demonstrates:

WORK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY FRAGMENT	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY OF THE COPIES
Plato	427-347BC	900AD	1200 years	7	---
Aristotle	384-322BC	1100AD	1400 years	49	---
Sophocles	496-406BC	1000AD	1400 years	193	---
Homer (Iliad)	9th Cent. BC	400BC	500 years	643	95%
New Testament	40-100AD	125AD	*25 years	**24,000+	99+%

*to earliest manuscript fragment of book of John; ~ 100 years to large NT texts; 250 years to single; complete NT (Codex Sinaiticus)
**5,300 Greek texts, 10,000 Latin Vulgate translations, 9,300 other early translations

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

As a last line of evidence, we can compare the people, places, and events recorded in the Bible with historical and archeological evidence from the same periods. What do we find? As the prominent Australian archeologist Clifford Wilson wrote,

“Those who know the facts now recognize that the New Testament must be accepted as a remarkably accurate source book.”
Rocks, Relics and Biblical Reliability, 120

Take Luke for example, the careful historian who wrote Luke and Acts (see Luke 1:1–4). In Luke 3:1, he refers to Lysanias as tetrarch of Abilene in 27 AD, which seemed to contradict historical evidence until the discovery of an inscription written between 14 and 37 AD that confirmed Luke’s statement. Acts 17:6 refers to “politarchs” in Thessalonica, thought for years to be a historical mistake until confirmed by numerous inscriptions found in the excavation of Thessalonica and dating from the first century. In fact, not a single archeological discovery contradicts Luke’s references to 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands! Such data should not surprise us because the biblical authors were typically very near in time, place, and participation to the events they recorded. Even secular historians note that the nearer an author was to the events he recorded, the more reliable his account would be.

HOW CAN I GET THE MOST OUT OF READING MY BIBLE?

Many Christians believe that spending time in God's Word is essential, yet they rarely read their Bibles because they don't know how. Here are three basic strategies for digging into God's Word in a meaningful way.

READ GOD'S WORD

Start and end with prayer, since understanding God's Word requires His guidance (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). Ask God to speak directly to you through His Word.

Start with the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and the Psalms.

Sign up for a reading plan with a friend, and talk about what you are reading once a week. For example, YouVersion has hundreds of reading plans that provide structure and accountability for your reading. You can also go to biblereadingplangenerator.com to create a personalized reading plan of your own.

Alternate between different types of scripture. Perhaps spend one day in Psalms and another in the gospel of John. When you finish one book, choose a different type of book to keep you fresh and engaged.

MEMORIZE GOD'S WORD

Memorizing scripture is immeasurably helpful in our battle against sin. Read Matthew 4:1-11 and note how Jesus used scripture that he had memorized to defend Himself against Satan's lies. You can memorize verses from any translation of scripture, but it's helpful to stick with one. Work on your memory verses regularly and review those you've completed. You will find verses referenced in Essentials at the back of the study. You can cut these out and carry them around for easy reference. Finally, it's often helpful to ask a friend to check your progress and hold you accountable.

STUDY GOD'S WORD

In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul encourages Timothy to, "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." We are all called to follow Timothy's example by becoming competent students of God's Word.

Here is a method for digging deeper into the verses you are reading and memorizing. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What does this passage teach about God?
2. What does this passage teach about people or myself?
3. What stands out most in this passage?
4. Since God's word is true, how should I change as a result? What will I do in response to this passage?

Consider the following:

Is there an example for me to follow? Is there a sin for me to avoid?

Is there a command for me to obey? Is there a promise for me to claim?

Is there a challenge for me to face?

5. Who can I tell about this passage and what God is teaching me?

If you would like to learn more about studying your Bible, check out our Grace Bible Church studies on 2 Timothy or Philippians found here: www.grace-bible.org/resources.

Living by the Book by Howard G. Hendricks is also a great resource.

