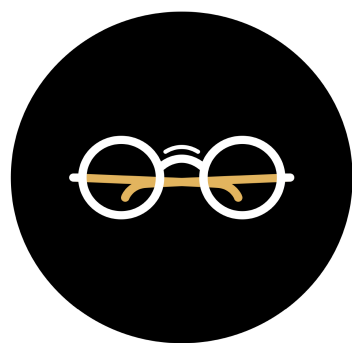




a better lens MASTERCLASS

Master Tool #1 — A DAILY ATTITUDE OF REPENTANCE

An attitude of repentance is perhaps the greatest tool in your spiritual tool belt. Why? Because repentance requires humility, and humility releases God's grace (James 4:6,10).

Repent (*metanoia*)- means “to change the way you think. To align with God’s way of thinking. To think differently afterwards.”

Repentance was at the core of Jesus’ message:

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near.

***Repent** and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)*

Review Peter’s story in Acts 10. Repentance is seldom easy. Especially when you’ve believed a certain way all your life!

OBSERVATIONS

- Don’t let your tradition, intellect, or prejudice become an obstacle that causes you to resist what God wants to do in your life by His Spirit.
- God cannot be hemmed in or contained. Expect Him to speak in “unusual ways” and through “unusual means”.
(He will do things you don’t expect, like including all people as His people).
- God works on both sides of His initiative to bring revolutionary change. *We usually wrestle and argue with God when He commands radical change.*
- A THRESHOLD experience will require *active faith* “to cross over” and “step into” the new revelation God is offering.
- God is offering us a **new and better lens** through which to see Him and His Word.

GRACE REFLECTIONS

1. **What is God wanting to shift or change in your life?**
2. **What fears must be conquered in your life in order to join God in His activity in your life?**
3. **Are you willingly participating with or resisting God?**
4. **What does stepping over the “threshold” look like for you?**
5. **What first action step is the Holy Spirit impressing on your mind & heart?**

Make the master tool of repentance your daily, moment-by-moment response. Be quick to ***“take sides with God by renewing your mind.”***

When you think differently, you’ll live differently!

Master Tool #2— ***REGULARLY RECEIVING KINGDOM COMMUNION***

Because of the Cross we now live in a new kingdom that is governed by a new covenant! **We live in a New Covenant Kingdom!**

At the Last Passover Supper with his disciples (just hours from His crucifixion), Jesus said:

*“This cup is the **new covenant in my blood** which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins..... You have stood by me in my trials, and I **confer on you a Kingdom, just as my Father conferred the Kingdom on me!**” (Luke 22:7-30)*

Every time you participate in the Lord’s Supper (Kingdom Communion), it’s a reminder of who God is and who you are in Christ Jesus.

- Because of Jesus’ radically forgiving death on the Cross, you are “forever forgiven” and a **partaker in His new covenant**.
- Because of Jesus’ powerful resurrection, you are a **new creation with Kingdom authority and power!**

MEDITATE ON THIS SUMMARY OF KINGDOM COMMUNION (See Luke 22)

1. **Kingdom Communion is coming to the Lord’s Table with deep revelation of the King.**
2. **Kingdom Communion is moving from a death focused ritual to a celebration of Jesus’ resurrection power that lives inside of us as new covenant children.**
3. **Kingdom Communion invites all to partake of the real presence of Jesus, which is uniquely experienced at His table.**
4. **Kingdom Communion is the reviewing of the new covenant.**
5. **Kingdom Communion is a means of grace, Jesus strengthening and nourishing His church.**
6. **Kingdom Communion is receiving the “cup of blessing” God has for his family.**
7. **Kingdom Communion celebrates the coming of the Kingdom of God.**
8. **Kingdom Communion is drinking the “fourth cup” with Jesus in celebration of our union in marriage.**
9. **Kingdom Communion is one of the means God uses to bring healing and health to His people.**
10. **Kingdom Communion is the heart of worship.**

— Dr. Stan Newton, *Kingdom Communion*

REGULARLY RECEIVE KINGDOM COMMUNION!

Master Tool #3 READING THE BIBLE THROUGH A JESUS LENS

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is found in Luke 24:13-35. It is the story of the two disciples of Jesus on the road to Emmaus on the evening of the resurrection. **(Take time to read the story).**

Notice verse 27? It reads, *“Then he carefully unveiled to them the revelation of himself throughout the Scripture. He started from the beginning and explained the writings of Moses and all the prophets, showing how they wrote of him and revealed the truth about himself.”*

Jesus is declaring that He is the fulfillment of everything that Scripture is. He is the Word made flesh!

Look at verses 31-32: *“All at once their eyes were opened and they realized it was Jesus! Then suddenly, in a flash, Jesus vanished from before their eyes! Stunned, they looked at each other and said, ‘Why didn’t we recognize it was him? Didn’t our hearts burn with the flames of holy passion while we walked beside him? He unveiled for us such profound revelation from the Scriptures!’”*

Jesus reveals that He is the culmination of the Bible. He is the final, fullest revelation of God!

Paul gets the necessity of seeing through a Jesus Lens

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (*pre-eminent*) over all creation . . . **God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him** (Jesus), and through him reconcile to himself all things . . . by making peace through his blood shed on a cross” (Colossians 1:15,19-20)

John gets the necessity of seeing through a Jesus Lens

In John 5:39-40 Jesus turns the impotent religious world of that day upside-down with this declaration: *“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. **These are the very Scriptures that testify about me (Jesus), yet you refuse to come to me to have life.**”*

- Once you finally see Jesus unveiled in the (OT) Scriptures, **everything changes.**
- Once you see Jesus revealed as the Word made flesh, **everything shifts.**
- Once you see that Jesus is the culmination and resolution of the OLD COVENANT, **you’ll never read the Bible the same!**
- **Perhaps for the first time in your life you will be able to make sense of the Bible.** Greater yet, *you will never be the same!*

Are reading & living as Jesus prescribed—through a Jesus Lens?

MASTER TOOL #4 PROGRESSIVE REVELATION MAKES SENSE OF THE BIBLE

Divine accommodation simply means that “*God meets people where they are, not where He wishes they were.*” **Why?** Because He is a loving Father. His love is patient and kind. He is not easily angered but rather *quick to forgive*. He rejoices when we discover the truth. Our heavenly Father always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Our Father’s love for us never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Progressive revelation means that “*God did not unfold His entire plan to humanity in the Old Testament, rather He progressively unveils His purposes as people are ready to receive them.*”

The Old Testament revelation, *though accurate, is incomplete*. The fullness of certain teachings cannot be found in the Old Testament alone. They are fulfilled in the New Testament in Jesus and His teachings.

What is *true* becomes *more true* and then finally *the fullest revelation of God*, unveiled as Mr. Truth Himself, Jesus. Jesus and the ways of His Kingdom are the ultimate revelation of God.

Examples of progressive revelation:

1. **Slaves to Heirs (Galatians 4:1-7)**. Like an underage heir, mankind was a slave to Law>> Son of God comes to world to redeem mankind from the Law and sin management>> God sent the Spirit of Jesus into our hearts>> We are no longer slaves of the Law>> **As God’s children we are heirs of everything God possesses.**
2. **Treatment of women/slavery/war (Deuteronomy 21:10-14, 1450 BC)**. The progressive revelation of the NC and KOG makes life in 1450 BC seem quite barbaric. In actuality, the laws of the old covenant were progressive compared to those of other nations and cultures. **Jesus** would ultimately reveal the values of *peace, women’s equality and freedom for all!*
3. **Blood sacrifices**. If I were to ask the question, “Does God require ritual blood sacrifices? I might receive (three or four) different answers—all based on Scripture.
 - **The priests and Levites** say ‘yes,’ and that’s what we find in the **Law of Moses** (1450 BC).
 - But eventually **the psalmists and prophets** begin to challenge this. **David** (1000 BC) says, “*Sacrifice and offering You do not desire . . . Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required*” (Psalm 40:6). **In this psalm David contradicts the Torah’s unambiguous laws requiring animal sacrifice.**
 - Later, **Hosea** (710 BC) and **Isaiah** (700 BC) claim that God doesn’t want sacrifice but mercy (Hosea 6:6; Isaiah 1:11).

- Eventually, **Jesus** weighs in to affirm the Hosea's position (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). Jesus always unveils the fullest revelation!

4. Generational Curses. Exodus 20:5 says God punishes children for the sins of their parents (Mosaic Law, 1450 BC). Yet, 875 years later Ezekiel declares, “a son shall not share in the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son (Ezekiel 18:2-4, 19-20, 575 BC). **Jesus** said, “...whoever believes... (John 3:16).

If one reads the Bible in a “flat” manner, it will seem contradictory. Why? Because the *Old Testament Scriptures themselves are on a journey to discover Jesus. They don't stand above the story they tell but are rather immersed in the story they tell.*

Why where the things God has revealed to humanity about Himself, His purposes and His ways, not given all at once?

Because the Bible is first a book written by **real people, in real places at real times.** (That's got to be the starting point of our questions).

“Too often our questions start with ‘Why did God or why didn't God . . . ?’

- Why didn't God just skip the whole sacrificial system?
- Why didn't you skip elementary school and go directly into high school?

The Bible is a larger picture of you—your growth, your development, your progress. (You cannot shortcut the steps in the process).

So, a better question would be—

- **Why did the people of that day find this story meaningful?**
- **Why did people write down that story? Why did they see need to include that poem or event?**

Start at the human and you'll find yourself at the divine!”

God's revelation unfolded in stages as humans were ready to receive it. The ultimate revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 2:9-10). **Divine accommodation** and **progressive revelation** in the Bible remind us that **our** heavenly Father always meets us where we are, no matter how immature or even deceived, and patiently leads us forward.

Jesus is the supreme example of divine accommodation and progressive revelation in the Gospels (Read Mt. 5:21-48 for a taste of progressive revelation on steroids).

Are you reading the Bible as the “*the written record of God's covenant journey with humanity?*”

MASTER TOOL #5 WHAT TYPE OF COVENANT? (It makes all the difference)

GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

Perhaps the most important element in clarifying why God acts as He does in the Old Testament is understanding the reality that *God is the same yesterday, today and forever—He doesn't change. However, His actions and interactions do change, because He is always faithful to the covenant in which He is engaged.*

There are three different types of Bible covenants: Grant, Kinship and Vassal. The only type of covenant we ever find God “initiating” is the grant covenant. The only time we find the kinship and vassal covenants in scripture is within His engagement with Israel. Unfortunately, the bulk of the Old Testament covers Israel's story under these covenants, giving the appearance that this represents the heart and nature of God. **It does not!**

1. **Grant Covenant**— When a “greater” and “lesser” person came into covenant, and the greater one took on all of the obligations. The lesser one only needed to receive the covenant. This is truly a grace covenant. **(Edenic Covenant (with Adam), Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, New Covenant...**
“grace, grace, grace!”)
2. **Kinship Covenant**— When “two equal parties” came together, as in marriage. Each party took on a small list of obligations in the covenant. This type of covenant had a small set of obligations and was evenly divided between the two parties. **(Initial Mosaic Covenant in Exodus 20:1-17 was a Kinship Covenant because God's original “grant” covenant offer was rejected by Israel—Exodus 19:3-8, 16-19; Deuteronomy 5:23-27; Exodus 20:18-21.**
3. **Vassal Covenant**— When a “greater” and “lesser” person came into covenant based on the greater's ability to destroy the lesser one. Instead of destruction, the greater one offered the lesser one safety in exchange for the ability to collect taxes, tribute, take slaves, and so forth. Typically, this happened when a king conquered a nation and offered the people of that nation their lives in exchange for a level of servitude to his harsh rule. As a result, in this covenant, the greater person had all the power, and the lesser person had to fulfill a large number of obligations. A vassal covenant was also referred to as a **suzerain covenant. (The Mosaic “kinship” covenant of Ex. 20 was renewed when Joshua replaced Moses as God's covenant partner. Because of Israel's 40 years of continual disobedience, God downgraded their covenant in Deut. to a vassal covenant).**

Why is it important to read the Bible through a lens of God's covenant faithfulness?

MASTER TOOL #7 HEBREWS: The New Covenant Transition

I. JESUS IS BETTER: (Hebrews 1-7)

- Hebrews 1-2: Jesus “the God-man” is greater than angels.
 - * Ponder Hebrews 1:1-4: Journal your thoughts
- Hebrews 3-4:13: Jesus “the Apostle” is greater than Moses.
 - * What stuck out to you? Journal your thoughts
- Hebrews 4:14-6:12: Jesus “the high priest” is better than Aaron.
 - * What did Hebrews 6:4-6 mean to the original readers? Other passage(s) that struck you?
- Hebrews 6:13-7:28: Jesus is better than Melchizedek.
 - * Two Unchangeable Things (6:18): 1. The Superior Priesthood of Jesus (Ch. 1-7)
2. The New Covenant (Ch. 8-10)
 - * Why is Melchizedek’s priesthood favored over Aaron’s? How did original readers read this?

II. THE NEW COVENANT IS BETTER: (Hebrews 8-10)

- Hebrews 8:1-13 The New Covenant is based on better promises.
 - *Meditate on the NC in vv. 6-13; What did v.13 mean to original readers? Journal your thoughts
- Hebrews 9:1-10: The New Covenant has a better sanctuary.
 - * What stuck out to you? Journal your thoughts
- Hebrews 9:11-28: The New Covenant has a better sacrifice.
 - * What did vv. 24-28 mean to the original readers? to you?
- Hebrews 10:1-18: The New Covenant has better results.
 - * What are the major differences between the law (OC) and the New Covenant?

III. FAITH IS OUR RESPONSE: (Hebrews 11-13)

- Hebrews 10:19-39: Faith is the natural response to the “better things” of the New Covenant. *What did this mean to the original readers? You?
- Hebrews 11: Adam, Noah, Enoch, and many others give us examples of connecting by faith.
 - *Which “hero of faith” sticks out to you as an example you can look up to?
- Hebrews 12: Faith is the basis of a better relationship.
 - *What did Hebrews 12:1-3 & Hebrews 12:25-29 mean to its original readers? You today?
- Hebrews 13: Faith is a better manner of life.
 - * What stuck out to you? Journal your thoughts

MASTER TOOL #8 PRESENT AGE OR AGE TO COME?

Commentator William Barclay writes, “Time was divided by Jews into two great periods: **this present age** and **the age to come**. Two ages were at hand—One was *ending* and one was *emerging*!

KINGDOM TRANSITION

Jesus introduced the message of the **Coming Age (the Kingdom of God)**.

“The time has now come, the kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe the good news! (Mk 1:15)

Paul writes about two ages:

*“That resurrection power (in us as believers) is the same as the mighty strength God exerted when He raised Christ from the dead...far above all rule...not only in the **present age**, but also in the **age to come**.” (Ephesians 1:19-21)*

What’s Paul talking about? (Present Age and Age to Come)

THIS PRESENT AGE, as read by Old Testament and New Testament audiences, was the **Temple Age or Old Covenant Age**. The **old covenant ways** of worship and guide for living included—reading the Torah, sacrificing/worshiping at the Temple, and living as Yahweh’s chosen, exclusive people for nearly 1500 years.

The NT writers (AD 48-70) were caught in the “overlap” between two ages—one was *ending* and one was *emerging*!

New Covenant followers of Jesus—broke form traditional Jewish understanding of temple worship. Jesus became their King. They were indwelt with the Spirit. Paul called their bodies “the temples of the HS.” They were inclusive—the gospel was for ALL! They saw themselves as part of the Kingdom Age OR THE AGE TO COME!

Major transitions usually happen gradually over time. There is typically a period of “overlap” between periods or ages, then a “crossing over completely” to a new way of doing life.

Paul writes in Gal. 4:4-7: But when the **set time had fully come**, God sent his Son, born of a woman, **born under the law**, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God **sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts**, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” So you are **no longer a slave, but God’s child**; and since you are his child, God has made you also **an heir**.

When Jesus came to planet earth His message was—the Kingdom of God has come!

The arrival of the Kingdom of God through Jesus IS THE AGE TO COME. In other words, we are NOW currently in the Age to Come (The Kingdom Age)!

The problem with reading scripture that was written nearly 2000 years ago is that we often read it as if it was originally written for us today. We see phrases like “the end” and “the last days” and we totally miss what the original writer meant (and his original audience understood it to mean).

Three Greek words are key to understanding Kingdom/New Covenant transition:

4. Aion = *age (present/age to come)*;
5. Telos = *end (of the age)*
6. Eschatos= *last (days)*

Inauguration of the New Covenant/Kingdom Age

During the last hours of His life, Jesus introduced the long awaited New Covenant in His blood. At the last Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus introduced **Kingdom Communion**, which combined the **forgiven identity of the New Covenant** with the **empowered authority of the conferred Kingdom of God**

...After the supper Jesus took the cup, saying, “This cup is the **new covenant in my blood**, which is poured out for the forgiveness of your sins...I **confer on you a kingdom**, just as my Father conferred one on me...(Luke 22).

- The next days would literally change “everything!”
- Jesus’ death on the Cross provided our new covenant forgiveness.
- His resurrection provided our new life in Christ.
- Because of Jesus’ ascension, there is now a true representative of man in the Trinity.
- Jesus’ enthronement has given Jesus people delegated authority to advance His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.
- The pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost gave birth to the Church as the empowered embodiment of Christ on planet earth.

Take time to read Matthew 24 and write down what the Spirit shows you the destruction of the Jewish Temple, that literally occurred 40 years later as Jesus prophesied (AD 70).

What would vv. 34-35 meant to the original audience?

Today, there is no longer an overlap with the Temple/Old Covenant Age. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70, the Old Covenant ended (Hebrews 8:13).

The “age to come,” that was prophesied, is now here! It is the Jesus is Lord Age! The Kingdom of God Age! The question—**Is Jesus your Lord and King?**

Master Tool # 9 FOUR MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD'S ADVANCING KINGDOM

Reading through the first few chapters of Acts, one gets a sense of what Jesus expected normal KINGDOM OF GOD living to be like. In Acts 1 Jesus says,

“ . . . wait (in Jerusalem) for the gift my Father promised . . . you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit . . . 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” (Acts 1:4-5, 8—parenthesis is mine).

I want you to notice the four manifestations that occur continuously in the newborn church (Acts 2) that are a natural part of the KINGDOM OF GOD and normal Christianity.

UNIFIED PRAYER

The first thing the disciples did after gathering in an Upper Room to wait for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit was to **pray**. This was uncharted territory for them. No one had ever been baptized in the Holy Spirit before, with the promise of being indwelt permanently.

“They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers . . . a group numbering about a hundred and twenty” (Acts 1:14-15).

Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and enthronement is His finished work. Unified prayer is our partnering work with the purposes of the KINGDOM! (See Acts 3:1, 6-10 and Acts 4:23-31 for further examples of the dependence on and influence of prayer in the early church.)

SUPERNATURAL DEMONSTRATION

After ten days of constant prayer while waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit in life-transforming power, the prayer of those 120 faithful was finally realized.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place (in Jerusalem, in constant prayer). Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house . . . They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4).

Even metaphorically, when your head catches on fire and your tongue is sanctified with a new language, that qualifies as a supernatural demonstration. (See Acts 3:6-10 and Acts 4:13-20 for further examples of the supernatural demonstration of normal Christianity.)

BOLD PROCLAMATION

The coming of the Holy Spirit in power has corresponding purpose and responsibility. But, as you might guess, the onlooking crowd had various opinions:

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: Aren't all these who are

speaking Galileans? (They don't speak my language) . . . Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine" (Acts 2:6-7, 12-13).

This was the perfect set up for Peter's bold proclamation of the GOSPEL message.

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this (what you have experienced today) is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons & daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams . . . everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved! (Acts 2:15-21).

CITY TRANSFORMATION Acts 1:8

The result of Peter's Pentecost message is found in Acts 2:37-41.

When the people heard this message, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

In time, this group of spiritual revolutionaries would be known as those who turned the world upside-down with the message of Jesus and the KINGDOM OF GOD (Acts 17:6). (See Acts 4:1-20 and Acts 5:12-42 for further examples of city transformation through the power of the GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM and NEW COVENANT.)

Tragically, today what we call "revival" is actually what Jesus expected the new normal of Christ-following to look like. We are NEW COVENANT ambassadors of the KINGDOM OF GOD, the manifestation of God's ruling presence.

So, is the KINGDOM advancing today? Contrary to what doomsday prophets and pessimistic defeatists say, the church is not being defeated. She is not at the mercy of the devil or fallen society. The truth is, the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is expanding, advancing, and growing like never before in the history of mankind. We simply need a "better lens" to see what our Father is up to.

Be reminded that Jesus said the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like a **mustard seed** that starts out extremely small (almost invisible— only 25,000 believers in AD 100). it becomes a bush (20 million believers by AD 310), then a tree, and then the largest tree of the garden (Over 2.3 billion believers today).

- The KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like **yeast** that starts out as a small ratio but works its way into the dough until it has great effect.
- The KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like **hidden treasure** and a **pearl of great price**: worth selling everything in order to obtain it.
- The KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like **a net with all kinds of fish!** All are welcome into the KINGDOM OF GOD.
- We have been made competent as ministers of the new covenant— will you advance the Kingdom in your sphere of influence today?

MASTER TOOL #8 FIVE C'S OF UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

The Bible is the written record of God's covenant journey with humanity!

If we understand this, the Scripture narrative will take on a whole new meaning and significance. The following *five C's* will change the way you read the Bible.

COVENANT

*A covenant is an agreement between two (or more) parties for the purpose of **oneness**.* God's love and purpose for humanity is expressed through His covenants.

The primary Bible covenants include God's covenant with **Adam (humanity) in Eden** (Genesis 1:26-28); **Noah** (Genesis 6:18; 9:8-17); **Abraham** (Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 15); **Moses** (Exodus 19:5-6: God offers to Moses and Israel a *grant covenant* in the same way He initiated *grant covenants* with Adam, Noah and Abraham before). Israel, however, rejects God's *grant covenant* (Deut. 5:25, 27 and Exodus 20:18-19) and God bends to the people's request, and He makes a *kinship covenant* with them, which laid out the Ten Commandments.

In the forty years that followed, the Israelites try to keep their end of the covenant but fail miserably. (God twice considers destroying the nation and starting over with Moses. The covenant was, after all, punishable by death). But in the end, God determines to continue on with His faithless people (see Exodus 32:9-14; Numbers 14:11-19).

When it comes time for Moses to die and the Israelites to finally enter the Promised Land, God "renegotiates" the covenant with Joshua, and Israel is downgraded into a *vassal covenant* with God. (In ancient near east culture, a kinship covenant was for life, but when one partner of the covenant died, the covenant could be renegotiated with the new partner). Israel is now no longer partners with God but *servants*. The rules for a vassal covenant are laid out in Deuteronomy. This is the old covenant law that the New Testament refers to.

In 2 Samuel 7 God makes another *grant covenant* with **David**. God promises that someday a descendant of David's will *establish the throne of his kingdom. I (God) will be his father, and he will be my (God's) son.*

When **Jesus** came to earth as the Messiah, He came into a specific context, defined by humanity's covenants with God. In particular Jesus came to answer the promises contained in God's covenants with Abraham and David (See Acts 2 & 3) and to offer a better covenant than Moses had (See Hebrews 8). Jesus announced His covenant with His Father to redeem and restore all of humanity at the Last Supper where he declared "*This cup is the **new covenant in my blood**, which is poured out for you.*" (Luke 22:20-30).

CANON

A canon is the historical record of how the two (or more) parties in covenant walked out that covenant together. In the Bible a canon is the biblical text surrounding the

covenant. The Bible is a diverse library of 66 books, written over the course of 1500 years by over 40 authors, and in various genres. Therefore, its canon's consist of wisdom literature, poetry, stories, music, art, culture, history, prophecies, pastoral and apostolic letters, eyewitness accounts, etc.

A canon provides the *context* and *culture* needed to explain and make sense of the covenant. The canon surrounding God's covenant with **Adam** is Genesis 1-5. The canon surrounding God's covenant with **Noah** is Genesis 1-11. The canon surrounding God's covenant with **Abraham** is Genesis 12-50. The canon surrounding God's covenant with **Moses** is Exodus -Malachi. The canon surrounding God's covenant with **David** is 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Proverbs, some of the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. The canon surrounding God's **new covenant** with **Jesus** to redeem and restore humanity is the entire New Testament.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Learning how to read the Bible in chronological order is the key to understanding the flow of God's grand story. It allows us to read Scripture with the same sense of revelation and understanding that the people who originally received it had.

Because the Bible was arranged in *categories*—history and law books, poetry, prophetic books, and so forth—it hinders our opportunity to know the big story from a natural flowing narrative. Without clear instruction on the layout of the Bible, everything will feel “out of order”— because it is out of chronological order.

CONTEXT

Understanding the Bible requires understanding its **historical context**. Historical context is basically asking the right questions of the text to determine what's going on!

- **Who** is the original writer? Recipient?
- **When** was it written? (Date?) **Where** was it written from?
- **Who** was the ruling empire (ruler) when this was written?
- **Why** was it written? Purpose?
- **What** would this have meant to the author? Original audience?
- **What** was the meaning of the language/idioms during the time it was written? (i.e. “heaven and earth,” “the end of the age,” the last times,” ...)
- **How** am I reading this text? Am I reading through a Western or Hebraic lens?
- Am I “pulling from” what the Bible says (*exegesis*), or am I “inserting what I think is there” (*eisegesis*)? (i.e. Interpreting Matthew 24 Olivet prophecy of Jesus).
- Am I reading with *progressive revelation* in mind? Am I reading through a *Jesus lens*?

CHRISTOLOGY

Christology is simply reading the Bible through a “Jesus Lens.” Read the following passages that emphasize that Jesus is the center of all theology and most fully represents what God is like (Hebrews 1:1-3; Luke 24:13-35; Colossians 1:15-20; John 5:39-40 . Jesus Christ is perfect theology!

The Bible in Chronological Order

New Testament

James (AD 48—James; 5 chapters). Faith that works! *Jewish audience*.

Galatians (AD 49—Paul; 6 chapters). New Covenant living by grace, not reverting to the law. Jesus our liberator!

1 Thessalonians (AD 51—Paul; 5 chapters). Answers questions & encourages pure & peaceful lives as wrath of God approaches in AD 70.

2 Thessalonians (AD 51—Paul; 3 chapters). Clarity on the man of lawlessness and coming day of the Lord in destruction.

1 Corinthians (AD 55-56—Paul; 16 chapters). Resolving doctrinal & practical church problems (sex, marriage, spiritual gifts, the resurrection, etc.)

2 Corinthians (AD 57—Paul; 13 chapters). New Covenant ministry manual!

Romans (AD 57—Paul; 16 chapters). How to become right with God. Most complete teaching in Bible on salvation, spirit-led life, growth, etc.

Mark's Gospel (Late 50s—early 60s; 16 chapter). To the *Romans*. Jesus the *servant of Yahweh*. Fast-moving and packed with action.

Matthew's Gospel (Late 50s—early 60s; 28 chapters). To the *Jews*. Jesus the Hebrew *Messiah/King* who came to establish the Kingdom of Heaven.

Luke's Gospel (AD 60-61; 24 chapters). To the *Greeks*. Jesus the Son of Man, *Savior of the world (all inclusive)*! Many parables & stories.

Acts (AD 63—Luke; 28 chapters). Luke's 2nd volume. Focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church and Paul's church planting journeys—spreading the gospel of the kingdom.

Colossians (AD 61—Paul; 4 chapters). The supremacy of Jesus! The mystery of God is Christ Jesus! Our identity in Christ!

***Ephesians** (AD 61—Paul; 6 chapters). A great starting place for New Covenant and Kingdom living discipleship: Our identity and authority in Christ as one new man; Practical teaching on unity, maturity, family, and spiritual warfare.

Philemon (AD 61—Paul; 1 chapter). The Theme is brotherly love & forgiveness between wealthy house church host & his runaway slave.

Philippians (AD 61 — Paul; 4 chapters). Joy in Christ! An intimate diary of Paul's own spiritual experiences.

1 Timothy (AD 63 — Paul; 6 chapters). Apostolic letter to Timothy in Ephesus. Removal of false doctrine; Preservation of public worship; Proper leadership in the church.

Titus (AD 65 — Paul; 3 chapters). Apostolic letter to Titus in Crete. Setting the church in order.

1 John (AD 65 — John; 5 chapters). Themes of *love, light, and life!*

2 John (AD 65; 1 ch). Warning about false teachers; Love one another in truth.

3 John (AD 65; 1 ch). Practicing hospitality toward genuine Christian teachers.

Revelation (AD 65-70; 22 ch). The “revealing” of Jesus & new covenant through the prophesied soon coming judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70. The Lamb (Jesus) overcomes the Beast (Rome).

Hebrews (AD 65-68; 13 chapters). Jesus is superior! The New Covenant is superior! Faith is our response! Masterpiece on the New Covenant transition.

1 Peter (AD 65 — Peter; 5 chapters). Living humbly as God's chosen people in a pagan society. Suffering as follower of Jesus.

2 Peter (AD 67 — Peter; 3 chapters). Warning against false teachers; The day of the Lord, and preparation for upcoming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

2 Timothy (AD 67 — Paul; 4 chapters). Paul's last letter before he and Peter were martyred by Nero. Commitment to ministry: Faithfully preserve and pass on the Scriptures to others; Endure persecution; Avoid foolish arguments; Beware of coming apostasy.

Jude (AD 68 — Jesus' half brother Jude; 1 ch). Contending for the faith against false teachers

John's Gospel (The apostle John's last writing; 21 chapters). Jesus the *Son of God* for all! Seven signs & seven I AM statements so we might believe Jesus is *Son of God*. This gospel was completed near the end of John's long, full life in Christ. His overarching theme is our oneness with the Father through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Old Testament

Beginnings:

Genesis—Job—Exodus—Leviticus—Numbers—Deuteronomy—Joshua—Judges—Ruth

United Kingdom:

1 & 2 Samuel—1 & 2 Kings—1 & 2 Chronicles

Wisdom Books:

Psalms—Proverbs—Song of Songs—Ecclesiastes

Divided Kingdom:

- **1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings 1-17; 2 Chronicles 10-36:**

(10) Northern tribes of Israel (capital in Samaria) conquered by Assyrians in 722 BC;

- **(2) Southern tribes of Judah & Simeon (capital in Jerusalem) conquered by Babylon in 586 BC**

Prophets:

Amos—Hosea—Jonah—Isaiah—Zephaniah—Micah—Habakkuk—Joel

Exile Prophets:

Jeremiah—Lamentations—Obadiah—Nahum—Ezekiel—Daniel

Return to Israel:

Haggai—Zechariah—Malachi—Ezra—Nehemiah—Esther