

# The Story of the Bible



The Story of the Bible, 2000  
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# Preface

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*The Story of the Bible* is an 8-week course looking at the major people and events in the Bible and how they fit together. The course is designed for people who have already begun to read their Bibles.

Many Bible readers have difficulty fitting everything together. Did Moses or David come first? What was the “captivity” all about? When did Jesus say he would return to earth?

This course is for people who have begun to read their Bibles, and are trying to fit the major people and events into the overall Bible story. The Bible message is heard more loudly and clearly if we understand the overall story of the Bible. When you understand the historical and geographical context of Bible events, they become more powerful and more meaningful to us today.

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## Session 1

# God, creation and the first sin

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God reveals himself to us in the Bible. In this chapter we will look at what he says about himself: his mercy, love, holiness and judgement. We will look at what he says about his creation. Finally we shall consider the sad story of how sin came into the world.

### 1.1. God's character

God shows different characteristics at different times, just as we do. At times he shows his power, at other times his gentleness. In the flood he showed his punishment and in sending his son, his love. He deals with mankind in many different ways and describes himself to us because he loves us and wants us all to love him. The Bible shows that God is kind and merciful, but that he demands obedience and punishes rebellion.

God is also holy. Holiness is being separated from evil. God wants us to be holy (1 Peter 1:15–16) as he is holy. He sent Jesus to show us what that meant; what being God-like meant in human life. Jesus shows the character of God as it should be seen in our lives.

God never changes (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). He is still the same today as he showed himself to be in the Bible. Some people have suggested that the God of the New Testament is different from the God of the Old Testament. But as the table below shows, each of the attributes of God is found in the Old and the New Testament.

**Question:** In the Lord's prayer Jesus tells us to call God our father. What similarities (and differences) are there between the character of God and the character shown by a human father?

The Bible also reveals that God is everywhere by his Spirit, that he is actively at work in the world and in our lives, and all our actions, words and thoughts are known to him.

### Exodus 34: What is God like?

In Exodus 34, God described himself to Moses as having all of the following characteristics:

- compassionate (v6);
- gracious (v6);
- slow to anger (v6);
- abounding in love and faithfulness (v6);
- forgiving (v7);
- punishing the guilty (v7);
- jealous (v14).

How do we know which characteristics of God we should copy and which are to be left for him alone to exercise?

### A few characteristics of God

Characteristic	Old Testament	New Testament
creator and sustainer	Genesis 1; Psalm 104:5–31	Acts 17:24–28
father	Deuteronomy 32:6	1 Corinthians 8:6
holy	Exodus 15:11	1 Peter 1:15–16
loving	Exodus 34:6	John 3:16
sinless	Deuteronomy 32:4	James 1:13
lawgiver and judge	Isaiah 33:22	James 4:12; Hebrews 12:23
supreme	Isaiah 43:10	1 Timothy 2:5
eternal	Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 40:28	1 Timothy 6:15–16
angered by sin	2 Chronicles 24:18	Romans 1:18
forgiving/justifying	Exodus 34:7; Isaiah 43:25	Romans 8:33
jealous	Exodus 20:5	1 Corinthians 10:21–22
all knowing	Isaiah 44:6–8; 46:10	1 John 3:20
present everywhere	Psalm 139:7–12	Acts 17:24–28
hears prayer	Psalm 65:2	Matthew 6:6
gives and keeps promises	Joshua 21:45; 23:15–16	Acts 13:32–33
all powerful	Isaiah 44:24–28; Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17,27	Luke 1:37

## God is one

In opposition to the polytheistic nations around them, the Israelites expressed their belief in the unity of God. God's word explains that he is the Father of all.

... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:5–6)

Jesus is described as the mediator between God and man, specifically referring to Jesus as a man.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

(1 Timothy 2:5)

The Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God, is his invisible power or energy. It is by this spirit that heaven and earth have been made and preserved. God and his Spirit cannot be separated.

## God's purpose

God's purpose is expressed in its simplest form:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

(Habakkuk 2:14)

This means the world filled with people reflecting God's character. This will happen during the kingdom of God on earth.

God is calling men and women now for this purpose—to reflect his character. Later we shall see how Jesus' purpose on earth was to reflect God's character and by doing this, set an example for people to follow.

## 1.2. The creation

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

With these majestic words, Genesis begins the account of the creation. We are told in simple language that God created the universe and all kinds of plants and animals in an orderly way, with the last of his creations being human beings.

### Genesis 1: six days of creation

Read Genesis 1. Then, without using your Bibles, answer the following questions.

1. What was the earth like before the first day of creation?
2. Is it said concerning every day that “God saw that it was good”?
3. What is the earth said to have first brought forth?
4. How could the sun, moon and stars be created on the fourth day, yet there be evenings and mornings from the first day?
5. Is Eve mentioned?
6. What food was assigned to man?
7. Over what part of creation did man have dominion?

Check the answers in your Bibles.

### Some passages supporting creation

Genesis	1:1,7,16,21,25, 27,31; 2:1–4,9, 22; 3:1; 5:1–2; 6:7; 7:4; 9:6	Proverbs	104:2,30; 136:5; 148:5 3:19; 8:27	Mark	13:19
Exodus	20:11; 31:17	Ecclesiastes	3:11	John	1:3,10
Deuteronomy	4:32	Isaiah	40:26; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1,7; 45:8,12,18; 48:13; 65:17	Acts	4:24
2 Kings	19:15	Jeremiah	10:12	Romans	1:20,25
1 Chronicles	16:26	Jonah	1:9	1 Corinthians	11:9
2 Chronicles	2:12	Malachi	2:10	Ephesians	3:9
Nehemiah	9:6	Matthew	19:4	Colossians	1:16
Job	9:8; 26:13			1 Timothy	4:3
Psalms	8:3; 33:6; 96:5; 102:25;			Hebrews	1:2,10
				2 Peter	3:5
				Revelation	4:11; 10:6

### What about evolution?

The current scientific explanation for the various forms of life is gradual evolution through random mutations and natural selection. In contrast, the Bible reveals that God created each kind of animal and plant—he did not just let them happen through natural processes which he had set in place.

There are not only biblical objections to evolution—there are also many scientific objections to the theory.

- Many parts of living things are so complex, they could not have come about through a process of gradual change. They



must have been designed to function as they do. The eye is an example of something which could not work without all of its parts interacting with each other. In his wisdom, God has designed a marvellous organ by which we can see.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.  
(Psalm 139:14)

- If evolution was true, there would have been many intermediate species, whereas the fossil record shows no such gradual changes between species. In other words, there are many “missing links”.

These scientific objections have led some scientists to reject evolution and believe the Bible account. However, many stick to a belief in evolution because the alternative of creation is unacceptable to them. British scientist Sir Arthur Keith said:

“Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it only because the only alternative is special creation and that is unthinkable.”

### What Jesus believed

Jesus believed that Old Testament events actually happened and that they were not myths or folk tales.

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| • God made Adam and Eve.                                      | Matthew 19:3–4; Mark 13:19 |
| • Adam was a literal man, not a myth.                         | Luke 3:38                  |
| • Noah and the flood.   | Matthew 24:37–39           |
| • The first murder (Cain murdered Abel).                      | Matthew 23:35              |
| • Lot and his wife.   | Luke 17:28–29              |
| • The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.                      | Luke 17:32                 |
| • Marriage was a God given institution which started in Eden. | Matthew 19:5               |

## **The witness of creation**

God's creation is magnificent. We only have to look at some of the natural beauty in the world to see his handiwork.

How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. (Psalm 104:24–25)

The heavens are described as “speaking” to us of God's glory:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1–4)

God's power is so clearly seen in his creation, that Paul described it as sufficient evidence for people to believe in him:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

## **When did creation occur?**

When God said “In the beginning . . .”, he did not tell us when this beginning was, nor are we told what there was before this beginning. However, there is sufficient information in the rest of Scripture for us to calculate (very approximately) the date Adam was created. Using the genealogies listed in Genesis chapters 5 and 11, we can work out how many years there were between Adam and Abraham—approximately 2000. Abraham is normally dated at about 2000 BC, which places Adam at about 4000 BC.

On the other hand, scientists looking at the age of the earth and the fossils it contains believe the earth is about 4.5 billion years old and that life in some form has existed on the earth for several hundred million years. One of the difficulties we have in understanding Genesis 1 is the need to reconcile these ages with the time the Bible suggests Adam was created (see the box below).

Interpreting Genesis 1

There have been many attempts to reconcile Genesis 1 with scientific evidence for life on earth for millions of years. Some of the explanations are listed below.

1. **Scientists are wrong.**  
Those who hold this view argue that scientists incorrectly interpret the evidence for an old earth. Instead, they say that the universe is only about 6000 years old.

2. **Days covered a long period of time**  
This view is that the days were longer than 24 hours or were interspersed with long periods of time.

3. **The appearance of age**  
It is sometimes argued that, just as Adam was created a mature man, the universe was made to look old when it was formed.

4. **A recreation**  
It is suggested that the universe was created long ago (Gen 1:1), but that God wiped the slate clean so the earth was "without form and void" (Gen 1:2) and began afresh with the creation described in Gen 1:3–31.

5. **Days of revelation**  
This interpretation holds that Genesis 1 describes a seven day vision seen by Moses or some earlier prophet and that creation itself took place over a much longer period.

6. **Days of divine command**  
The days, according to this interpretation, are literal consecutive days on which God said what would be created. Then, over the ensuing hundreds of millions of years, what God had decreed was slowly created.

7. **A drama**  
Some people hold that Genesis 1 is a dramatic presentation of what actually took place. Genesis takes a complex series of events and presents them as a drama in the compressed time period of six days.

The Seventh Day

God completed his work of creating in six days and on the seventh day he “rested”. The Hebrew word translated *rested* is *shabat*, from which the word “Sabbath” comes. God set apart the seventh day and blessed it.

1.3. Adam and Eve

God made Adam of the “dust of the ground” and he made Eve from a rib he took out of Adam. There are several points worth noting about this creation of Adam and Eve:

Genesis 2:7

Genesis 2:21–22

1. Adam was made from the earth. Because of his later sin, he was condemned to die, and in death, returned to the ground.

Genesis 3:19

2. God breathed into Adam the “breath of life”. It is this breath

Genesis 2:7

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of life which keeps us all alive, including animals and birds..

e.g., Job 33:4, Genesis 7:15,22, Psalm 104:29

3. Eve was made from Adam, not from the earth, and she was presented by God to Adam as a companion and wife.

Genesis 2:23

### **The Garden of Eden and God's law**

God creates people, he provides for them, he blesses them, he guides them—just as we do for our own children. But there is one thing he will not do, and that is to force people to love and obey him. He gives every man and woman the freedom of choice to obey him, or not to obey him.

Adam and Eve were the first to experience this freedom of choice. God wanted to see how they would respond to that choice and told them,

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die. (Genesis 2:16–17).

The choice was theirs—to obey God or not. They chose to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thus disobeying God, and, as God had warned them, the penalty was death. From the day of their sin, they became dying persons. This event of disobedience and its consequences is given in detail in Genesis 3:1–24.

#### **Genesis 2–3: The Garden of Eden**

Read Genesis 2:4–3:24.

1. Can you identify the location of Eden from the details given?
2. What does “the knowledge of good and evil” mean?
3. What steps led to the first sin? Do our own temptations follow a similar pattern?
4. Why do you think God gave the rule to Adam? Do any verses support your answer?
5. Was there only one rule given to Adam and Eve?
6. Did God forgive Adam and Eve? Do any verses tell us?
7. God said that Adam and Eve would die when they ate the fruit (2:17). Yet they didn't die until many years later. How can you explain this?

It should be noted that Eve was tempted by a snake, who spoke to her and told her she would not die if she ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1–5). Eve believed the snake and ate of the fruit of the tree. She went further. She gave some to Adam, and he ate (Genesis 3:6). So Adam also sinned. Both, therefore, disobeyed God when they were tempted.

<p><b>Question:</b> Was the serpent a normal snake? Did it sin?</p>
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The moment they had eaten, they knew they were different. For the first time, they were conscious of their nakedness. They tried to overcome their feelings of guilt by sewing leaves together to cover up their nakedness (Genesis 3:7).

God found them hiding from him in the garden and he asked them what they had done, and they confessed that they had eaten of the forbidden fruit. God had warned them that if they chose to eat of the fruit they would be punished. Adam and Eve and the snake were all punished.

## 1.4. Judgement, punishment and hope

The snake was cursed “above all the livestock and all the wild animals” and sentenced to crawl on its belly and eat dust for the rest of its life.

Genesis 3:14

Eve was punished: “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

Genesis 3:16

Adam was punished: “Cursed is the ground because of you”. He was told that he must work and toil for the rest of his life to produce food for his family. God told him he would work and eat bread “until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Genesis 3:17–19

### A new covering

God provided “garments of skins” to clothe Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). To do this, animals had to be killed to obtain the skins. Sin therefore resulted in innocent animals being put to death so their skins could be used to cover man’s nakedness, born of sin. This

foreshadowed the death of Jesus as “the slain lamb” (Revelation 13:8) to provide a covering for all men and women.

### **The effects of the first sin**

Adam was sent out of the Garden of Eden, to “till the ground” from which he was taken (Genesis 3:23). He and Eve were to struggle with suffering and toil for the rest of their lives and much trouble for their family lay ahead.

The sin of Adam and Eve has had direct and far reaching repercussions right up to today. Four thousand years after Adam, the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to Rome:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned... (Romans 5:12).

### **The promise of hope**

God did not leave Adam and Eve without hope of ever escaping the position they had put themselves into. He made a remarkable promise concerning the snake and Eve:

And I will put enmity between you [the snake] and the woman [Eve], and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

The antagonism between people and snakes is used to symbolise the struggle between Jesus and sin. This verse is a prophecy of Jesus Christ who was to be the seed of a woman (Mary) and his victory against sin (represented by the snake). He delivered a fatal blow to sin when he died, but he had his own “heel” bruised.

## Homework

1. The basis of God's purpose is his promise to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory. What does this mean?
2. How can God be both "severe" and "merciful"?
3. Adam and Eve became conscious of something immediately after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit? What was it and what did they do about this new awareness?
4. Who was "the seed of the woman"? (Genesis 3:15)
5. What was the punishment of Adam and Eve because of their sin?
6. What was the difference between coverings of leaves and covering of skins for Adam and Eve?
7. How does a covering of skins point forward to Jesus?

## Session 2

# Abraham: the man who was promised the world

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Abraham was chosen by God to be the father of his special people—Israel. He took him from the luxury of ancient Ur to become a nomad in Canaan. He made great promises to him, many of which are yet to be fulfilled. The promises to Abraham are important in understanding the gospel.

### 2.1. Abram

Abram (as his name then was) was a native of Ur in Mesopotamia, not far from where the Garden of Eden was established about two thousand years before Abram was born. When he was over seventy years old God appeared to him and made some remarkable promises.

The promises to Abram were given such a long time ago—about four thousand years ago—that we may wonder whether they have any relevance to us at all. But as we shall see, these promises affect us directly and can have a vital effect on our future.



### Genesis 12: the first promises

Read Genesis 12:1–8. Abram was promised that his descendants would become a great nation and all people would be blessed through him.

1. What nationality was Abram?
2. Why did he do what God asked him to do?
3. What do you think the promise “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” means?
4. What land did God promise him?
5. Who are the descendants of Abraham?
6. Have these promises been fulfilled?

## 2.2. Further promises

- **Genesis 13:14–17.**

God promised a land to Abram and his descendants forever.

- **Genesis 15:5–6.**

Abram was promised a great number of descendants.

Why did God see Abram as righteous? See Rom 4:1–5

- **Genesis 15:17–21.**

The land promised is defined.

Find this area on a map.

- **Genesis 17:3–8,15–22.**

The son Isaac, promised to Abraham and Sarah, would be the true heir of Abraham. God would establish his promises through this son.

Does this have implications for whether modern Israel should give land back to the Arabs in the name of peace?

- **Genesis 22:15–18.**

Abraham’s descendants would take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through his offspring all nations on earth would be blessed.

How has this been fulfilled?

In summary, Abraham was promised:

1. a large number of descendants;
2. that God would bless those who blessed him, and curse those who cursed him;
3. that all nations would be blessed through him;
4. that he and his descendants would enjoy victory over enemies;
5. that he and his descendants would be given land forever.

Abraham was 100 years old when his promised son, Isaac, was born to Sarah who was aged 90. Thirty seven years later Sarah died and was buried at Hebron, on land that Abraham purchased from the Hittites (even though this land was promised to him by the Lord). Abraham died later (at the age of 175) and was buried by his sons in the cave with Sarah. Abraham and Sarah did not get the land promised to them in their lifetime.

Genesis 17:17; 21:5

Genesis 23:1,19–20

The promises to Abraham were passed on to Isaac, then Isaac's son Jacob (Israel), then Jacob's twelve sons and eventually, around 1000 years later, to King David.

Genesis 26:3–4

Genesis 28:13–14

2 Samuel 7:4–16

### 2.3. Have these promises been fulfilled?

Although the promises were given specifically to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they never received the fulfilment of the promises in their lifetime. Even when Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel, nearly five hundred years later (after having been living as slaves in Egypt for many years), the promises were not fulfilled because the people of Israel were to lose the land again to their enemies. The promises clearly stated that the land would be given to Abraham and his descendants for an everlasting possession.

The letter to the Hebrews makes it clear that the promises were not fulfilled at that time:

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39–40)

## 2.4. The promises and us

### Galatians 3: the promises explained

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he explained how the promises to Abraham were relevant to the work of Jesus and were not for Jews only. Read Galatians 3:6–29.

1. Who are the children of Abraham? (see v7,26)
2. How do we become children of Abraham? (see v26–29)
3. In verse 16, Paul is quoting from Genesis 22:15–18. What descendants are spoken of in this promise?
4. Jews are Abraham's literal descendants. Should they expect to receive what was promised?

There is one person who was and is the special offspring of Abraham—Jesus Christ. This is why Paul stressed that when we become associated with Jesus Christ through baptism, we become Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise. The promise to Abraham is therefore the promise to us as well, through Jesus Christ.

## 2.5. When will the promises be fulfilled?

For Abraham and his descendants to receive the promises, those who have died, including Abraham, must be resurrected from the dead. One of the fundamental teachings of the Bible is that when Jesus returns to the earth he will resurrect those who have died. Here are two quotations—one from the Old Testament and one from the New which tell us this:

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake:  
some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.  
(Daniel 12:2)

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

(1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

The promises will therefore be fulfilled at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he will raise from the sleep of death all those who have died in faith, and establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth. This will be considered further in Session 8.

## 2.6. Summary

The promises to Abraham were given about four thousand years ago. They involve Jesus Christ as the central factor in the promises and they tell us clearly what God has planned for the earth and its people. The promises especially involve the land of Israel. They also include us, if we have been baptised into Christ, as 'heirs' of the promise.

There are several references in the New Testament to the fact that we can be heirs to the promise. Paul wrote,

... so that, having been justified by his [Jesus'] grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

(Titus 3:7)

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

(Galatians 3:29)

So, we can see that the promises to Abraham are unique, in that they tell us that God will bless the land of Israel and give it to Abraham and his descendants. Through Abraham, God will also bless all nations who turn to God and worship him. On an individual basis, those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour and have been baptised into his name, will become heirs to the promise. Thus, the promises to Abraham are about God's plan for the world and its people.

## Homework

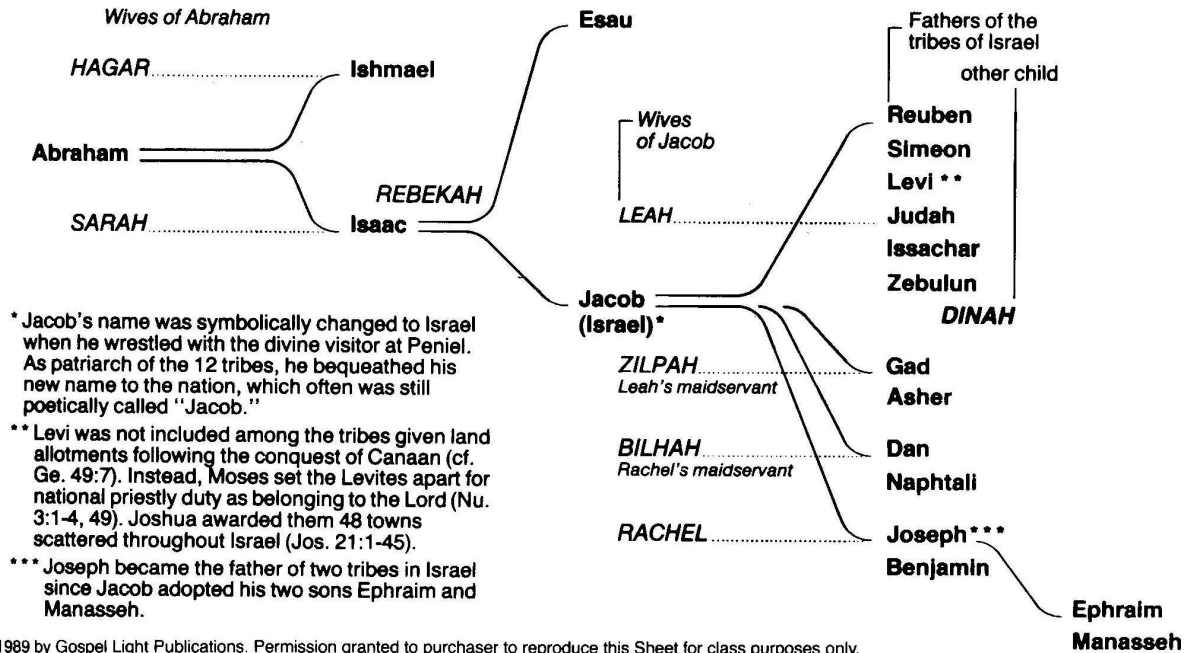
1. What is the country especially mentioned in the promises to Abraham known as today?
2. Who were Abraham's son and grandson?
3. Who is the special seed of Abraham?
4. Is the seed of Abraham confined to his natural descendants—that is, the Jews and Arabs.
5. Who else can be regarded as the seed of Abraham?
6. How can we be included as heirs of the promise to Abraham?
7. When will the promises to Abraham be fulfilled?
8. What special event must occur for Abraham to share in the promises?
9. Abraham sinned—we know he lied. So why does God consider him righteous?

## Session 3

# Moses and the law of Israel

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, had 12 sons who became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. They went to live in Egypt and subsequently became slaves of the Egyptians. Moses led them out of Egypt into the wilderness where they received the Law from God. This was the national Law of Israel for 1500 years.

### 3.1. The tribes of Israel



Abraham's grandson Jacob had 12 sons who became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. Abraham's other descendants became part of the Arab nations.

Jacob and his family left the land of Canaan and moved to Egypt because of a severe famine around 1650 B.C. There were about 75 of them in total. In a little more than two centuries, they had grown to about 2 million and had become slaves to the Egyptians.

### 3.2. The exodus from Egypt

At the age of 80, Moses delivered a message from God to the Pharaoh of Egypt, "Let my people go!". Not only did God want to deliver his nation from slavery, but his purpose was also to display his power over Egypt, the most powerful nation of the day.

Exodus 9:16

Only after a catastrophic succession of plagues, culminating in the death of the firstborn of all in Egypt, did the Egyptian ruler relent long enough for Israel to escape through the Red Sea.

The Ten Plagues		
1.	Blood	Exodus 7:14–25
2.	Frogs	Exodus 7:25 – 8:15
3.	Gnats	Exodus 8:16–19
4.	Flies	Exodus 8:20–32
5.	Livestock	Exodus 9:1–7
6.	Boils	Exodus 9:8–12
7.	Hail	Exodus 9:13–35
8.	Locusts	Exodus 10:1–20
9.	Darkness	Exodus 10:21–29
10.	Death of first-born	Exodus 11:1–10; 12:29–30.

The wonderful miracles God performed for his people at this time and his continued deliverance of them were constantly brought before Israel in later years to remind them that they owed their existence to him. The most dramatic of these was the opening of the Red Sea which provided an escape for Israel and doom for the Egyptians.

The word *Exodus* simply means "going out". But to leave Egypt behind truly, God's people had to learn to turn away from "self" and depend on their Maker. It was to teach them this lesson that God brought them into the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2).

### 3.3. The law of Moses

With their enemies destroyed, and themselves delivered by demonstrations of miraculous power, Israel could never doubt that God had made them and preserved them. Israel's privileges depended on their faithfulness to their God. In order to develop this loyalty, the Law of Moses was given, the tabernacle was set up, priests and Levites were appointed and a sacrificial code instituted.

#### Exodus 20: The ten commandments

Read Exodus 20:1–21.

1. Is there any difference between the first and second commandments (v3–4)?
2. God said he punishes “to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me”? What does this mean?
3. What does God mean by “showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me”?
4. How is it possible to misuse the name of God?
5. Why do you think God wanted the Israelites to keep the Sabbath day? How could they “keep it holy”?
6. Do people really live longer if they honour their parents? (v12)
7. Why were the people afraid? Why wasn't Moses afraid?

#### The 10 Commandments

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol ... you shall not bow down to them or worship them.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
4. Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet ... anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Exodus 20:1–17  
Deuteronomy 5:6–21



All ten commandments clearly show man's obligations and responsibilities to others. First to God, second to family, third to all humanity. Note that there is no commandment which draws attention to self. Selflessness is therefore one of the dominating features taught by the ten commandments. In every commandment there is the call to deny self, and live only to serve others.

While the commands given to Moses were meant for the nation of Israel, the principles behind them apply with equal force today. Jesus showed that the essence of the Law is to

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... Love your neighbor as yourself.  
(Matthew 22:37–40)

Jesus reaffirmed 9 of the 10 commandments giving them an even greater meaning. The only commandment not restated in the New Testament concerns keeping the Sabbath. In fact, we are told to keep God in our lives every day, and that there is no need to hold one day as special above others.

Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:10

In addition to the 10 commandments, further statutes and judgments were given. These expressed God's will on a variety of matters, and provided laws which regulated the attitude of the Israelites to God and his worship, to each other, and to the nations among which they dwelt. These various laws and ordinances together came to be known as the Law of Moses. Obedience to the Law would have guaranteed Israel continued occupation of the Land of Promise until Messiah appeared.

#### Laws of social justice

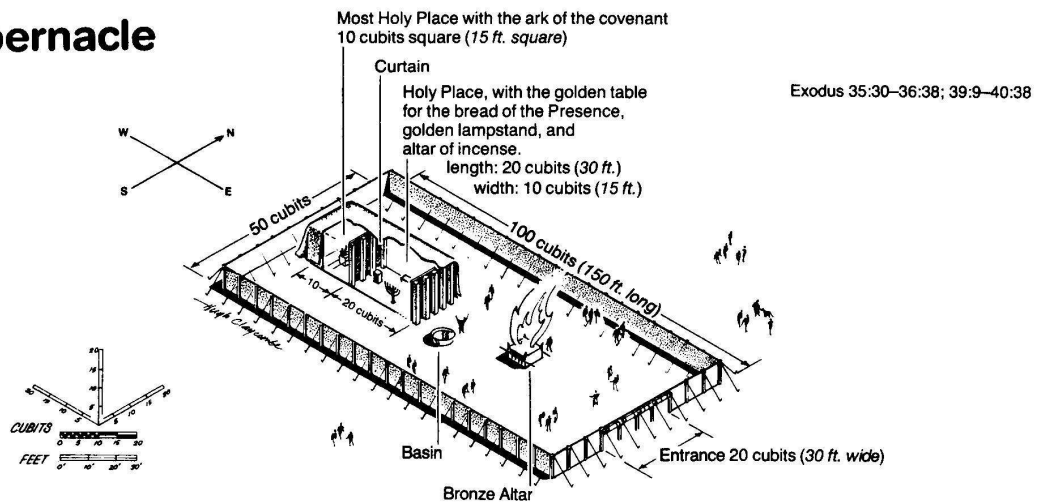
If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.  
(Exodus 22:26–27)

Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.  
(Leviticus 19:15)

When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them?  
(Deuteronomy 20:19)

Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.  
(Deuteronomy 25:4)

## The Tabernacle



The new religious observances taught by Moses in the desert centered on rituals connected with the tabernacle, and amplified Israel's sense of separateness, purity and oneness under the Lordship of Yahweh.

A few desert shrines have been found in Sinai, notably at Serabit el-Khadem and at Timnah in the Negev, and show marked Egyptian influence.

Specific cultural antecedents to portable shrines carried on poles and covered with thin sheets of gold can be found in

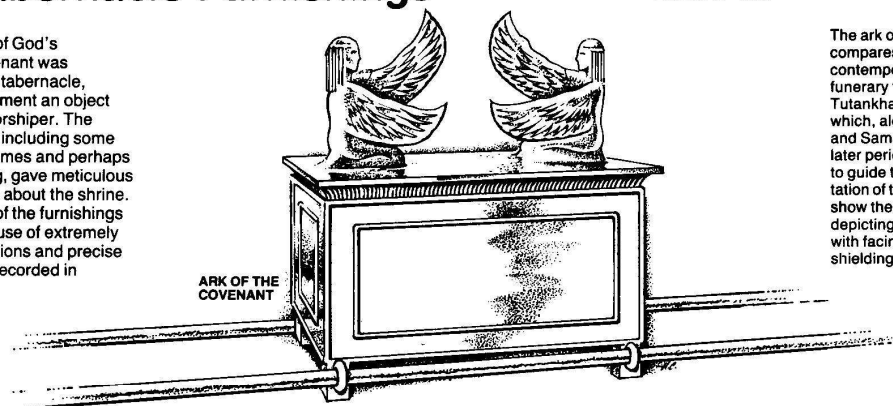
ancient Egypt as early as the Old Kingdom (2800-2250 B.C.), but were especially prominent in the 18th and 19th dynasties (1570-1180). The best examples come from the fabulous tomb of Tutankhamun, c. 1350.

Comparisons of construction details in the text of Ex 25-40 with the frames, shrines, poles, sheathing, draped fabric covers, gilt rosettes, and winged protective figures from the shrine of Tutankhamun are instructive. The period, the Late Bronze Age, is equivalent in all dating systems to the era of Moses and the exodus. © Hugh Claycombe 1981

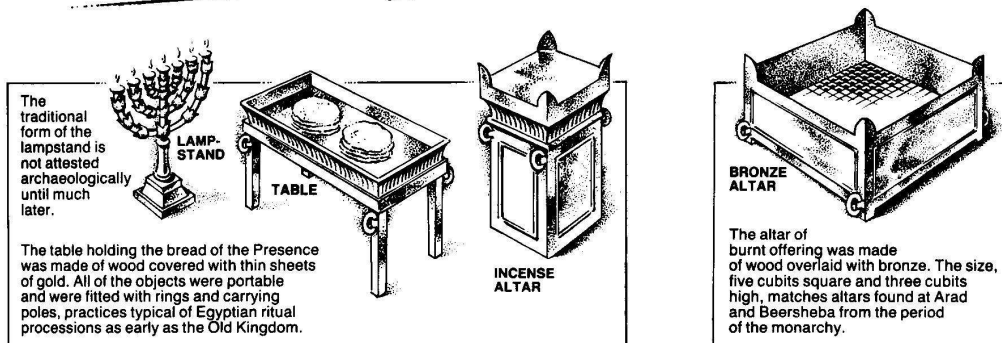
## The Tabernacle Furnishings

Exodus 37-38:8

The symbolism of God's redemptive covenant was preserved in the tabernacle, making each element an object lesson for the worshiper. The Levitical priests, including some with Egyptian names and perhaps Egyptian training, gave meticulous attention to facts about the shrine. Reconstruction of the furnishings is possible because of extremely detailed descriptions and precise measurements recorded in Ex 25-40.



The ark of the Testimony compares with the roughly contemporary shrine and funerary furniture of King Tutankhamun (c. 1350 B.C.), which, along with the Nimrud and Samaria ivories from a later period, have been used to guide the graphic interpretation of the text. Both sources show the conventional way of depicting extreme reverence, with facing winged guardians shielding a sacred place.



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## The purpose of the Law

One reason why God gave the Law was to establish Israel as a unique people, directing their minds towards his thoughts and ways, so that other nations would admire them, fear them, and follow them. This Law disciplined the people in divine thinking. It brought God to the mind of the people in every way—in the home, in their education, in the field, in the workshop, and in their daily (not just weekly) worship.

Deuteronomy 4:6–8;  
28:9–10

The Law very effectively revealed that human beings were sinners before God and in need of redemption. There was no hope of life apart from the promised Messiah, for no man was able to live a life without committing sin.

Romans 5:20; Galatians  
3:19  
Romans 3:21–23

But above all, the Law was designed to direct the nation to Christ, the promised redeemer. It was this one great offering that God had promised in the covenants made in Eden, and to Abraham, and which was fulfilled in Christ.

Galatians 3:24  
Genesis 3:15; 22  
Colossians 2:16–17

## 3.4. In the wilderness

It was a scene of glory when Israel left Mt Sinai after a stay of about twelve months. A journey of only a week or two separated them from the Promised Land, but within a few days the people had become dispirited by the hard, tiring walk through the barren and desolate wilderness.

Exodus 19:1; Numbers  
10:11

### Numbers 13: The twelve spies

Read Numbers 13:1–14:10

1. What was it that worried the 10 spies?
2. Who were the Nephilim?
3. How could Joshua and Caleb have such a different report from the other 10 spies?
4. Why do you think the people believed the 10 spies rather than Joshua and Caleb?
5. What can we learn from this incident?

As a result of the people's disbelief, God made them wander in the wilderness for 40 years. All of the people of that time died in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb. It was their descendants who entered the Promised Land.

### 3.5. Conquering Canaan

Moses never led the people into the Promised Land. He died at the end of the long period in the wilderness and Joshua took over as leader of Israel. It was Joshua who led the people of Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan (now Israel).

Perhaps the most famous incident from this period is the conquering of Jericho. The people marched around the wall for seven days. Then, when they shouted, God caused the walls of the city to collapse and Israel captured the city. This was part of the initial, central campaign to conquer Canaan.

Following this central campaign, two further campaigns were conducted by Joshua against the confederate forces of the Canaanites in the south and also in the north. The strong nations were subdued and it remained for the individual tribes to move to their allocated territories and to wipe out the remaining pockets of resistance. God had thus honoured his promise to take Israel out of Egypt and bring them into Canaan.

This section of history closes with Joshua's last words to the nation he had served so faithfully. He reminded them of the indisputable blessings showered on them as a nation from the call of Abraham onwards. God had guided the course of their national life, saving and delivering them in times of peril. This realization is made the basis of his final plea to the people to serve God in spirit and in truth.

## Homework

1. Read Deuteronomy 14. What do we learn here about what our attitudes should be to:
  - (a) death and bereavement; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13
  - (b) food and bodily indulgence; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:23,31
  - (c) money and possessions cf. 1 Corinthians 16:2
2. Read Deuteronomy 7:1–5. In what ways were the Israelites to deal with the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan? What does this illustrate about a Christian's duty of separation from sin and the world?
3. In Deuteronomy 7:6–11, what reasons does God give the people for this drastic attitude? What New Testament principles correspond to this? (See 1 Peter 1:15–16; 2:9–12).

## Session 4

# The judges and kings of Israel

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The periods of the Judges and Kings lasted from about 1400 B.C. until 600 B.C. Much of the Old Testament is concerned with this period. Judges such as Samson and Gideon and kings such as David and Solomon led Israel through this period.

### 4.1. The period of the Judges

This section covers a period of about 350 years of Israel's history. In this time Israel was not an organised and united nation as in the period of the Kings which followed. For this reason, chaos often prevailed as everyone went their separate ways.

In his mercy God raised up men and women of faith who delivered the nation from their oppressors, including Deborah, Gideon and Samson. In each case of deliverance we find that God's strength was made perfect in weakness; he used insignificant means to bring about the deliverance in case Israel should claim victory for themselves. He was impressing the lesson upon them that he alone can overcome their enemies and provide salvation.

This era drew to its conclusion in the days of Samuel who faithfully administered the law and endeavoured to direct the people in God's ways.

## 4.2. Saul, the first king of Israel

Samuel was the last judge. Near the end of his life, the people demanded a king. In effect, they rejected God as their king and demanded a human king. God gave them King Saul—a tall and handsome leader.

The early part of Saul's reign was full of promise. So long as he was humble and placed his confidence in the strength of God, success followed. After his first military victory, he praised God as the one who had really obtained victory for Israel, "... for this day the LORD has rescued Israel." (1 Samuel 11:13).

It seemed as though the people's desire for visible leadership was to be realised in Saul. But the story of his decline and ultimate rejection as king is one of the most tragic recorded in Scripture. The character that had developed in Saul throughout his rule erupted into presumption and disobedience. For this reason he was rejected as king of Israel.

### 1 Samuel 13: Saul rejected as king

The prophet Samuel had told King Saul to go to Gilgal and wait there seven days. Then Samuel would come to offer the sacrifices on behalf of Israel. Read 1 Samuel 13:1–14.

1. What should Saul have done?
2. What would you have done in Saul's position?
3. Was Samuel being fair to Saul?

Saul continued to disobey God (1 Samuel 15:16–23). The new king God had sought out (v14) was David.

## 4.3. David becomes king of Israel

God considered the new king, David, "a man after my own heart". David's early life as a shepherd fitted him for the time when he became king of Israel and conqueror of God's enemies.

Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 13:14

But David's life was not without difficulty. Much time would elapse in the wisdom of God before the promised throne would be his. In



this there are lessons for ourselves—"we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). David's experiences in his exile and sufferings provide us with lessons in courage, faith, justice. His innermost thoughts are recorded in many of the Psalms.

Under David's reign, Israel moved into the most glorious period of its history.

### Jerusalem chosen as the national capital

David needed to secure his defences knowing the Philistines would soon attack. Jerusalem was a natural fortress and David wanted to acquire it quickly. He also wanted Jerusalem as his capital because it was the city which God had selected to "place his name there" and was the place God had chosen for all tribes to assemble for worship and spiritual instruction.

Deuteronomy 12:5; Psalm 78:68-70; 132:11-14

The Jebusites (inhabitants of Jerusalem) boasted that David would

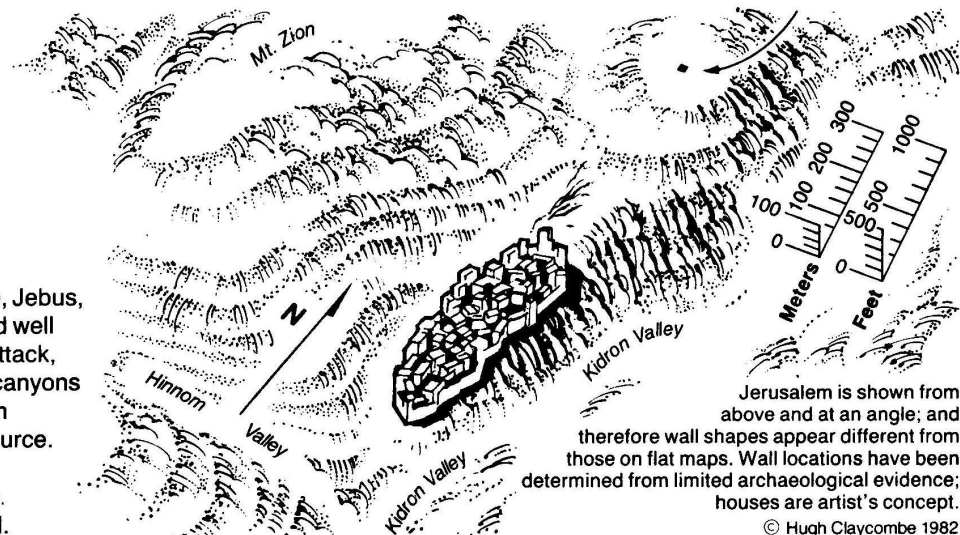
## 1. The City of the Jebusites and 2. David's Jerusalem

Substantial historical evidence, both Biblical and extra-Biblical, places the temple of Herod (and before it the temples of Zerubbabel and of Solomon) on the holy spot where King David built an altar to the Lord. David had purchased the land from Araunah the Jebusite, who was using the exposed

bedrock as a threshing floor (2Sa 24:18-25). Tradition claims a much older sanctity for the site, associating it with the altar of Abraham on Mount Moriah (Ge 22:1-19). The writer of Genesis equates Moriah with "the Mountain of the LORD," and other OT shrines originated in altars erected by Abraham.

#### c. 1000 B.C.

Barely 12 acres in size, Jebus, a Canaanite city, could well defend itself against attack, with walls atop steep canyons and shafts reaching an underground water source. David captured the stronghold, c. 1000 B.C. and made it his capital.





not be able to take the city but David overthrew them and secured the city.

David also defeated the Philistines with God's assistance and at long last brought peace to the land of Israel

### Political and religious reform

David organised the nation of Israel on a political and religious basis and reinstituted the priesthood so a service to God could be carried out correctly. In keeping with his plans for national reformation and out of a desire to honour God, David wanted to build a temple for the ark. This was rejected by God because of the amount of blood that he had shed.

### God's promise to David

We now come to another of the great covenants of promise. God had guided David's life with the intention of "establishing a great name for him". David's interest in God brought a promise of a dynasty that would last forever.

#### Covenants of promise:

God also made promises to Eve in Genesis 3:15, and to Abraham in Genesis 12–22.

#### 2 Samuel 7: God's promise to David

At this time, Israel had no temple. They still worshipped at the tent (or tabernacle) which was made when they were in the wilderness. David decided he wanted to build a more permanent temple for God. Read 2 Samuel 7.

1. Why did God not want David to build him a temple?
2. Did God want a temple built?
3. David's son Solomon succeeded him as king. Is it Solomon who is prophesied in verses 12–16?
4. One thousand years later, Jesus was born to be king of the Jews and heir to the throne of David (see Luke 1:31–33). His mother Mary was a descendant of David. Is it Jesus who is prophesied in verses 12–16.
5. What does David's prayer reveal about his character?

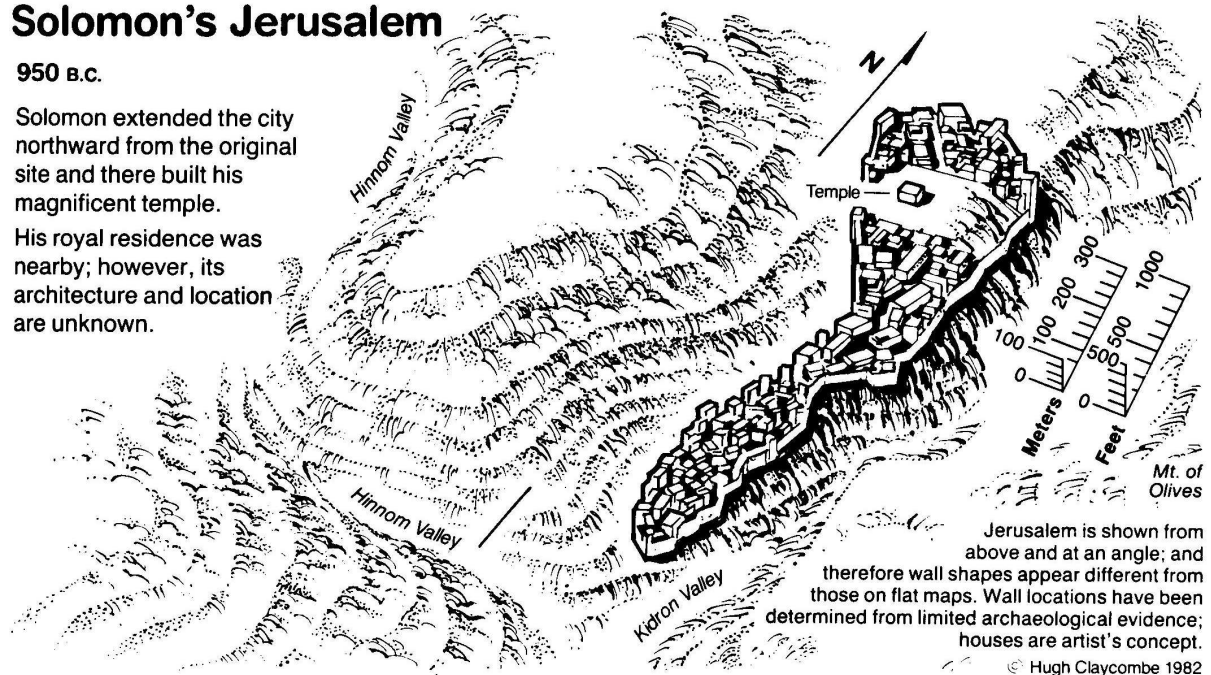
The promise to David means that one of his descendants would be the promised Messiah who would rule the world from Jerusalem forever.

## Solomon's Jerusalem

950 B.C.

Solomon extended the city northward from the original site and there built his magnificent temple.

His royal residence was nearby; however, its architecture and location are unknown.



### 4.4. The reign of Solomon

Solomon followed his father David to the throne and his coronation is recorded in 1 Chronicles 29. God gave Solomon wisdom, riches and honour (2 Chronicles 1:10).

The reign of this great king lasted 40 years. It was a period in the nation's history noted for widespread peace and prosperity. It was also marked by tremendous building activity. The most glorious and significant of which was the Temple of God at Jerusalem. In this way the plans of David were realised in his son.

Solomon is responsible for writing the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.

### 4.5. The divided kingdom: Israel and Judah

At the end of the reign of Solomon, his son Rehoboam succeeded to the throne of Israel. The heavy taxation levied during the reign of Solomon led to civil unrest in Israel, leading to a division in the nation of Israel. The ten tribes of the north separated to form the kingdom of Israel, and the two southern tribes remaining loyal to Rehoboam, formed the kingdom of Judah.

The people of the northern kingdom proclaimed Jeroboam to be their king. Jeroboam was determined to consolidate his position of power, and actively sought to widen the gap between the northern and southern kingdoms. The city of Jerusalem was still the centre of worship for all the land, and Jeroboam saw this as a danger. His solution was to set up his own form of worship, and he had idols placed in the cities of Dan and Bethel in the northern kingdom. These, he said would be worshipped by the kingdom of Israel, removing the need for them to travel to Jerusalem.

This action was in direct opposition to the commandments of God and for this reason Jeroboam is referred to thereafter in the Bible as “Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin”.

Throughout its history, Israel has always suffered when they ignored the laws of their God. The northern kingdom of Israel was to be no exception—it was a nation in decline almost from the outset. Throughout the 250 year history of Israel all of its 19 kings followed the ways of Jeroboam, and ignored the ways of their God. Eight of these monarchs were assassinated during their reign, and finally the destruction God had warned them of became a reality.

Threatened by Assyria, Israel’s last king, Hoshea, tried to form an alliance with Egypt. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians invaded the land of Israel and the northern kingdom came to an end.

### **2 Kings 17: The end of the kingdom of Israel**

Read 2 Kings 17:1–23.

1. What reasons are given for Israel's demise?
2. In what pagan religious practices did they participate?
3. How did God seek to stop them from pursuing idolatry?
4. What parallels are there between this event and our own society today?

### **The prophets of Israel**

While Israel as a nation was lawless in the eyes of their God, there was always a minority in the kingdom who remained faithful. The

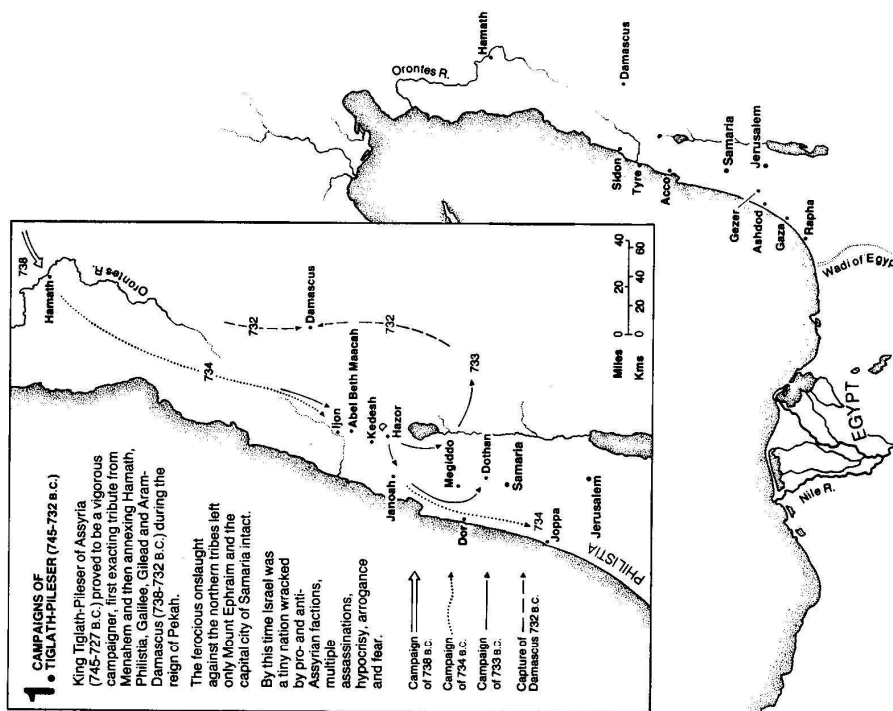
# Assyrian Campaigns against Israel and Judah

The Assyrian invasions of the eighth century B.C. were the most traumatic political events in the entire history of Israel.

The brutal Assyrian style of warfare relied on massive armies, superbly equipped with the world's first great siege machines manipulated by an efficient corps of engineers.

Psychological terror, however, was Assyria's most effective weapon. It was ruthlessly applied, with

corpses impaled on stakes, severed heads stacked in heaps, and captives skinned alive. The shock of bloody military sieges on both Israel and Judah was profound. The prophets did not fail to scream out against their horror, while at the same time pleading with the people to see God's hand in history, to recognize spiritual causes in the present punishment.



Bible teaches that God preserved this group despite the sins of the general population. To assist in this he provided the prophets. These were faithful men who were at times inspired by God to speak and write messages of encouragement to the faithful and warning to the unfaithful. In this can be seen the mercy of God towards Israel.

The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees."  
(2 Kings 17:13)

The words and actions of these men preserved the faithful and condemned those who ignored them. Some of the prophets sent to Israel were:

<b>Elijah</b>	875 – 850	BC
<b>Elisha</b>	850 – 790	BC
<b>Jonah</b>	775 – 760	BC
<b>Amos</b>	765 – 750	BC
<b>Hosea</b>	755 – 710	BC
<b>Micah</b>	735 – 700	BC

### **The kingdom of Judah**

Following the division of the nation of Israel, the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. They formed the southern kingdom of Judah. This nation lasted over 340 years, from 930 BC to 586 BC, although the last three kings were vassals controlled by foreign invaders. The capital city was Jerusalem, the site of the Temple, and in total 20 kings occupied the throne of Judah.

The history of Judah was a mixture of prosperity and poverty. They experienced the truth of the words spoken to king Asa early in their history,

The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.  
(2 Chronicles 15:2)

The material state of the nation was mirrored by the moral state of its people, who were in turn greatly influenced by their king.

These monarchs ranged from great kings like Hezekiah, to others

who were no better than their neighbours to the north.

Finally the nation refused to heed the laws of their God and following a succession of evil kings toward the end of their history, Judah suffered the same fate as had befallen Israel before them. The fact that they had turned to God at times in their history had enabled Judah to survive over 130 years more than Israel, but their refusal to listen to the warnings of God through the prophets resulted in their defeat. In 609 BC the Babylonian army, led by Nebuchadnezzar, invaded Judah. The end result of this invasion was that the people of Judah were taken into captivity into a foreign land; the land of Babylon.

### **The prophets of Judah**

Throughout the highs and lows of Judah's history, a minority always remained faithful to their God. As was seen in Israel, God inspired prophets to preserve this minority through their words and actions, while at the same time warning the nation of the consequences of disobedience.

Some of the prophets of Judah were:

Micah	735 – 700	BC
Isaiah	740 – 681	BC
Nahum	620	BC
Zephaniah	635 – 615	BC
Jeremiah	626 – 585	BC
Habakkuk	620 – 605	BC



## Homework

1. Read Judges 4.
  - (a) Why do you think Barak was unwilling to undertake the campaign without Deborah?
  - (b) Does this reveal a defect in his faith?
  - (c) What insight does this give into God's willingness to bear with our human frailty?
  
2. David was a man who had become very close to God through prayer. Read his prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10–19.
  - (a) What does he say about God?
  - (b) What does he say about humans and of his own attitude
  - (c) What did he pray for?

Seek to learn how to enrich and enlarge your own praying by considering David's prayers.

# Nebuchadnezzar's Campaign against Judah

605-586 B.C.

Events in Judah moved swiftly following the death of Josiah. Pharaoh Neco pressed his advantage by deposing the new ruler and appointing a second son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, as king.

The Persian conquest of Lydia in 546 B.C. brought the Greeks into conflict with Persia, a series of wars concluded in great detail by Herodotus.

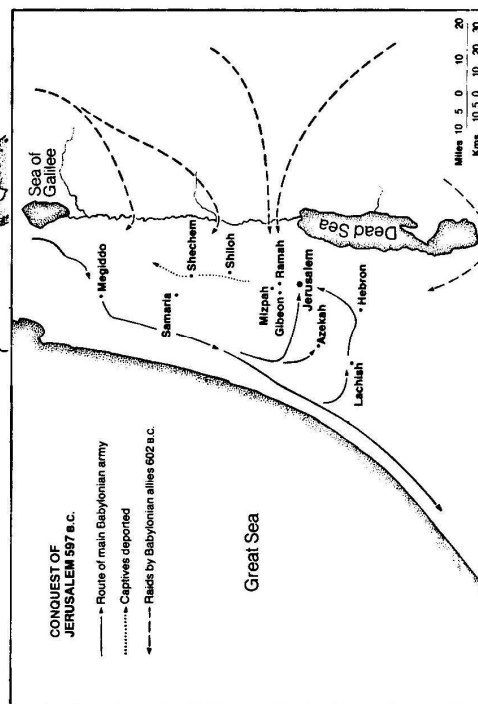
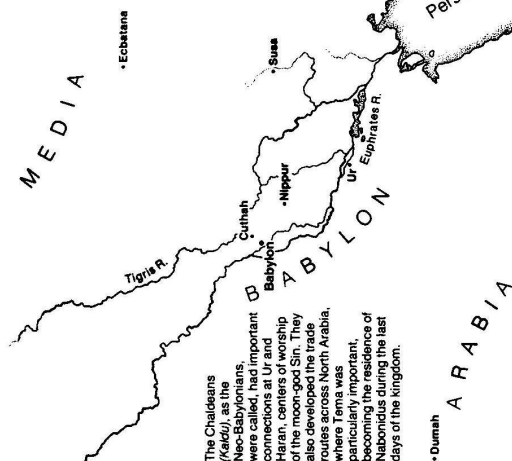
The prophet Jeremiah was taken to Egypt by Judahite refugees fleeing from Babylonian controlled territory. They brought him to Tahpanhes, where he continued his prophecies.

(c. 602 B.C.) Finally, Nebuchadnezzar's forces controlled all of the coastal territory north of the Wadi of Egypt.

When 18-year old Jehoiachin had ruled just three months (597 B.C.), the main Babylonian army struck, capturing Jerusalem and exiling the king as a captive in Babylon. Ten thousand persons were deported.

Miles 0 100 200 300 400  
Kms 0 100 200 300 400

The Medes yielded to the Persian conqueror Cyrus by 549 B.C., a decade later the Neo-Babylonian empire fell to the Persians as well. Cyrus initiated a major policy shift, creating an enlightened and humane government that allowed Aramaic-speaking people, including Jews, to hold official posts.



## DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM 586 B.C.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, but he also rebelled. Jerusalem was attacked and besieged for two years. Facing starvation, the desperate king with his army fled by night. They dug the grave between the two walls (2K 25:4) and fled the city, but both were overtaken in the plains of Jericho.

Zedekiah was captured and was dragged off in chains to Riblah, where he saw his sons slaughtered before he was blinded and taken to Babylon. One month later (in 586 B.C.) the Holy City of Jerusalem was ransacked and burned. Numerous high officials were executed, the temple furnishings were broken up and carried off, and the people were exiled.

Lured by a feint of Pharaoh's army, the Babylonians withdrew temporarily. When the Egyptians retreated, however, the Babylonians returned with a vengeance to Jerusalem.



## Session 5

# Captivity in Babylon and return to Jerusalem

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The books of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi all concern the period during which the Jews went into captivity in Babylon, and later returned to re-establish their nation and worship. It was a period of great upheaval and change in the Bible story.

### 5.1. The captivity

#### 2 Chronicles 36: The last days of Judah

The last four kings of Judah were Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. The two superpowers of the day were Egypt and Babylon and they were battling each other for control of Judah.

Read 2 Chronicles 36.

1. On what sin does the emphasis lie (verses 12–16)? How would you describe the cause of Judah's downfall? Compare 2 Chronicles 7:19–22.
2. In what particular matters did Zedekiah fail?
3. What does this chapter reveal about the character of God?

Following invasion by the armies of Babylon, the people of Judah were taken captive into the land of Babylon (part of modern day Iraq). There were those who remained faithful during their exile,

and God again provided prophets to preserve them while in captivity. Some of the prophets during this period were:

<b>Jeremiah</b>	626 – 585	BC
<b>Ezekiel</b>	593 – 571	BC
<b>Daniel</b>	605 – 536	BC

During this time the faithful were not left without hope of deliverance, for the captivity of Judah was the subject of some very specific Bible prophecy. The prophet Jeremiah wrote

This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.  
(Jeremiah 25:11)

Faithful men like Daniel looked forward with confidence to the fulfilment of this prophecy.

Daniel 9:2

In 539 BC, Babylon was invaded by the Persian leader, Cyrus. He issued a proclamation:

This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you—may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.” (2 Chronicles 36:23)

This invasion was itself the subject of Bible prophecy in Jeremiah 50–51.

So the prophecy of Jeremiah was remarkably fulfilled.

The Bible does not teach that the ten northern tribes of Israel were “lost” while in captivity. In fact the area of their exile was the same as that of Judah 130 years later, and the people who returned to the land in 539 BC were the offspring of both Judah and Israel.

## 5.2. The return to Israel

The Jews returned from captivity following the decree from Cyrus, King of Persia, so that they might build their temple. Initially, 42,360 people returned, plus servants and animals. They rebuilt their own family houses and re-established farms. Zerubbabel (their governor) and Joshua (the high priest) built an altar and laid the foundations to the temple.

Ezra 2

However, the building of the temple was interrupted for 17 years,

partly through opposition from neighbouring people. The temple was finally finished in 516 BC, exactly 70 years after its destruction as God had promised. The prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah** were instrumental in encouraging the Jews to rebuild the temple. The Persian king also blessed the work.

The throne of Israel was not re-established upon their return. In fact there were no more kings in Israel after their exile.

### **Ezra**

In about 458 BC, Ezra came to Jerusalem with more Jews from captivity. He commenced a reform in Jerusalem dissolving and preventing marriages with the foreign (and pagan) people in neighbouring countries.

### **Esther**

This is a story which probably falls between Ezra chapters 6 and 7. It is set in Persia and tells of God's care for his people who were still in dispersion, and how he saved them from destruction when their enemies wished to destroy them utterly!

### **Nehemiah**

Along with Ezra (who had returned again from Babylon), Nehemiah re-dedicated the people to God and reformed their behaviour. During this time, **Malachi** prophesied. He criticized the people for wrong worship, the priests for being bribed and not keeping the law properly and warned them all of God's judgements to come. He spoke of Jesus' first coming to the Jews and his second coming for judgement.

### **Nehemiah 1–2: rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem**

Nehemiah was the cupbearer of the Persian king, an extremely important official in the Persian government. When he heard of Jerusalem's lack of walls, he sought to go to Jerusalem to help them. The king made him governor of Jerusalem and he quickly began to encourage the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Read Nehemiah 1–2.

1. How long did Nehemiah brood over the news about Jerusalem before he took action? (Kislev corresponds to our November-December and Nisan to our March-April.) He had probably broken court etiquette in letting his grief be seen in the king's presence. There were four months between Kislev and Nisan.
2. What can we learn from the example of Nehemiah's prayer in 1:8–11? Note his attitude, his knowledge of the Scriptures and his grounds for expecting prayer to be answered.
3. What is the order of events following Nehemiah's prayer in 2:4? What difficulty did he have to face at each stage?
4. How was this prayer different from the prayer in 1:8–11?
5. On what grounds was he confident that God would prosper him in his work? Do you have such confidence?

### **Malachi 1: Corruption after the exile**

Read Malachi 1:6–2:9.

1. Of what particular sins were the priests guilty? How would God punish them if they remain unrepentant?
2. What are some modern parallels to these sins?
3. What do we learn should be the quality and objectives of our service?

## **5.3. From Malachi to Matthew**

The Old Testament is largely the story of the failure of Israel to achieve the heights to which they were called. But it is also the story of a faithful minority who kept the laws of God against all opposition, and of the mercy of God in providing for these people. It is also a story of hope. Throughout the Old Testament, there is an underlying theme of the Kingdom of God when the Messiah would sit on David's throne on earth. We now know this is to be Jesus.

God's direct revelation to Israel ceased after Malachi, and would

not return until the days just prior to the birth of his son. For about 400 years, there was no revelation from God—no prophet, no angels revealed. This was a period of intense change in the culture of Israel.

During this period, the Greeks dominated the region, first under the leadership of Alexander the Great. In three great battles, Alexander destroyed the Persian power and incorporated Israel and many other countries into the Greek empire. After Alexander's premature death, his empire was split into four regions ruled over by four generals. Two of these four generals established dynasties: the Seleucids based in Syria and the Ptolemies based in Egypt. They held a tug-of-war over Israel and surrounding areas.

One of the Seleucid rulers was Antiochus Epiphanes who sought to destroy all copies of the Jewish Bible (our Old Testament) and killed anyone discovered in possession of it. He also suppressed all observances of Jewish law; he required offerings to the Greek god Zeus; he erected a statue of Zeus and sacrificed a pig in the Jewish temple. Naturally the Jews were outraged. In 167 BC, they revolted, led by Judas the Maccabee, and reconquered Jerusalem and rededicated the temple. He founded the Hasmonean dynasty which lasted until 63 BC when the area became part of the Roman empire.

Herod of Idumea was made king over Judea by the Romans in 37 BC. He was responsible for an enormous building program in Jerusalem and other Jewish cities, including the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple on a much grander scale. Herod died in 4 BC, but his legacy is felt throughout the New Testament period.

This then was the situation at the beginning of the New Testament:

- Herod a non-Jew on the throne;
- Rome in control;
- Greek language (as well as Aramaic) spoken by people;
- many Greek beliefs and customs accepted by the Jews;
- a corrupt priesthood bent on political intrigue.

## Homework

1. Jeremiah was a prophet in Jerusalem at the time the people of Judah were being taken captive to Babylon. He told the people they should not resist the Babylonians. Read Jeremiah 38.
  - (a) Why was Jeremiah treated so badly?
  - (b) Is it significant that Ebed-Melech was a foreigner? (The region of Cush is part of modern-day Sudan in northern Africa.)
  - (c) Why did king Zedekiah want to keep his meeting with Jeremiah a secret? What does this tell us about him as a king?
  - (d) In the end, Zedekiah did resist the Babylonians. His sons were killed before him, then his eyes were gouged out and he was led captive to Babylon. Why did he not listen to Jeremiah? Do you think he believed Jeremiah?
2. Read Nehemiah 13:23–31.
  - (a) Why was Nehemiah so concerned about marriage with foreigners?
  - (b) Compare Nehemiah's response to the problem of foreign wives with that of Ezra in Ezra 9:1–4; 10:9–12. Which of them did the right thing?
  - (c) Nehemiah repeatedly prayed "remember me with favour, O my God". Is it right to do this? Should you do it?

## Session 6

# Jesus Christ

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Apart from God himself, Jesus is the central character of the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. The story of his life and death is found in the four gospels. In this chapter, we consider his teaching and the meaning of his death for us.

God's plan from the beginning was to fill the earth with his honour and glory. Because of the introduction of sin in the garden of Eden, God set in place a plan to destroy sin and death and provided mankind with a saviour—Jesus Christ. Jesus means 'Saviour'. He is also called Christ or Messiah both of which mean 'Anointed One'. So Jesus Christ means 'Anointed Saviour'.

### 6.1. Son of God

Jesus was conceived by God's power and was therefore the Son of God. Jesus, as God's only begotten and beloved son was his most treasured possession, and yet he was prepared to give him as a sacrifice for the sin of mankind. The apostle John wrote,

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

The Old Testament also speaks of God's Son:

You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of  
me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of  
the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron  
scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.  
(Psalm 2:7–9)

### **Luke 1:26–38**

God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Mary that she would have a child. She became pregnant with Jesus without having had intercourse with a man. The child was conceived in her womb by God's power, the Holy Spirit, and so the child was the son of God and Mary.

1. Why was it important that Mary was a virgin?
2. How would Mary have felt as she explained to her friends and family that she was pregnant? Do you think they would have believed her?
3. Find an Old Testament prophecy about the birth of a son to a virgin.
4. What was the throne of David (v32)? To which Old Testament promise was Gabriel referring?
5. Many people think that Jesus existed in some way before he was conceived. How would you answer this claim?

## **6.2. Prophecies of Jesus**

### **Psalms 22: Jesus' crucifixion**

This psalm was a prayer of David as he suffered from the continual attacks of his enemies. It is also prophetic of the circumstances of Jesus at his crucifixion, and is quoted several times in the gospels.

1. Find the places where this Psalm is directly quoted in the New Testament.
2. Find the places where this Psalm refers to the crucifixion, but is not directly quoted.
3. Are there any verses that could not refer to the circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion?

There are many other prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament. Here are some of them.

- He would come from the tribe of Judah.

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

(Genesis 49:10)

Fulfilled: Luke 3:33



- He would be a descendant of David.

When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

(2 Samuel 7:12–13)

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:6,16

- He would be born in Bethlehem.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

(Micah 5:2)

Fulfilled: Matthew 2:4–6

- He would be born of a virgin.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:14)

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:18

- He would live in Galilee.

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

(Isaiah 9:1–2)

Fulfilled: Matthew 4:12–16

- He would be rejected.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

(Isaiah 53:3)

Fulfilled: John 1:11

- He would enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

(Zechariah 9:9)

Fulfilled: John 12:13–15

- He would be executed.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:12–14

And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. (Isaiah 53:7–8)

- He would be crucified.

Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.  
(Psalm 22:16)

Fulfilled: Matthew 27:38

- People would cast lots for his clothes.

They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.  
(Psalm 22:18)

Fulfilled: John 19:23–24

- He would be raised from the dead.

... because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. (Psalm 16:10)

Fulfilled: Matthew 28:5–9

### 6.3. His childhood

The story of his birth in a stable in Bethlehem is well known (Luke 2) and celebrated each year at Christmas time although it is almost certain that he was not born on December 25. Nor was he born in the year 0. Although our calendar is supposed to date from his birth, some mistakes were made when it was devised. Consequently, the birth of Jesus is now placed about 6 BC.

Shortly after his birth, Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled to Egypt in response to God's warnings. On Joseph's return from Egypt he went to dwell in Nazareth. The only other description we are given of Jesus' youth appears in Luke 2:40–52 when, at the age of 12, he amazed the teachers in the Jerusalem temple.

Matthew 2:13

Apart from these brief incidents, the four gospels concentrate entirely on the three years of his public ministry. In fact, much of the gospels describe the events in the last week of his life.

Very little is said of Jesus after this time until his appearance on the banks of the Jordan River at 30 years of age. We do know that Jesus followed in Joseph's footsteps and became a carpenter.

During this time Joseph probably died and Jesus, being the eldest in the family, would then have had to provide for his mother, four

brothers and at least three sisters. During this time he would have learnt a great deal about human nature, including judgement and mercy.

Matthew 13:55–56

## 6.4. His baptism

Jesus at the age of 30, had completed his personal preparation in Nazareth and was ready to be revealed publicly to Israel. The nation of Israel was also being prepared for Jesus' appearing by the preaching of his cousin, John the Baptist. John's message was simple: he called on men and women to renounce their waywardness, confess their sins and be baptised. John's preaching was effective and widespread, and even the leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees and Sadducees came to hear him. Jesus came to John to be baptised, and despite John's protests, was baptised in the river Jordan.

Immediately Jesus came out of the water the Spirit of God descended on him. John had previously been told that this would be the sign identifying the Messiah. At the same time a voice from heaven proclaimed "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

John 1:32–33

Matthew 3:17

## 6.5. His temptations

With Mary as his mother, Jesus was a human being and called himself the "Son of Man". He possessed the same human nature we all have and experienced all the temptations to sin that we all experience.

We are told in Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus was tempted in all the ways we are tempted yet he did not sin. After his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness and after 40 days and nights without food, was tempted to sin.

**1st temptation:** to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread. Jesus' response was simple: "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4).

**2nd temptation:** to demonstrate he was the Son of God by jump-

ing off a pinnacle of the temple and be rescued by angels. Jesus responds: “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Matthew 4:7).

**3rd temptation:** to become king of the world immediately. Jesus knew he would become king of the world, but he also knew that first he must suffer. His response: “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (Matthew 4:10).

The Scriptures make it clear that, although he was the Son of God, Jesus was a mortal man and understands our temptations:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity ... he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:14–18)

## 6.6. His disciples

As Jesus’ ministry progressed he was followed by huge crowds of people. Among them were people who were generally impressed by his teachings. These became Jesus’ disciples and from them he chose 12 who would accompany him in his ministry. After his death and resurrection his 12 disciples would be the ones to continue the work of preaching the gospel. To expand his teachings, Jesus regularly took these 12 aside and taught them.

The 12 disciples	
Simon Peter	Matthew
Andrew (Peter’s brother)	Nathanael/Bartholomew
John	James
James (John’s brother)	Judas (also called Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus)
Philip	Simon Zealot
Thomas	Judas Iscariot.

## 6.7. His miracles

When Jesus was baptised, he was given the power of the Holy Spirit by God. This enabled Jesus to perform many miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the 5000 and so on. These miracles were not performed as a gimmick to attract the people to him but that the people might believe that he was the Son of God, their Messiah, and that he had been sent by God.

## 6.8. His teaching

### Matthew 5: the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5–7 contains Jesus' most famous speech, the "sermon on the mount". He begins with a list of those who will be blessed. (This section is often called "the beatitudes" which comes from the Latin word for "happy" or "blessed".) Notice that those who are blessed are often the people who are not well-off or successful by the world's standards. To live this way demands strong purpose and a clear aim in life. But those who live a godly life will be blessed with peace of mind and the joy of being part of God's family and taking a part in God's kingdom.

Read Matthew 5:1–16.

1. What does it mean to be "poor in spirit"?
2. What does it mean to be "meek"? How is this different from weak? What Bible characters were known for their meekness?
3. For each blessing, why does the reward fit?
4. Which of these qualities do you find it most difficult to show? What can you do to help develop it?

Jesus spent much time telling the people the various characteristics they had to develop and put into practice if they were to be followers of him. To assist in his teachings he often used parables. A parable is a story with a hidden meaning. Jesus compared natural things with spiritual things in stories about every day events to which the people could relate.

## Miracles of Jesus

Healing	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Man with leprosy	8:2-4	1:40-42	5:12-13	
Roman centurion's servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:30-31	4:38-39	
Two men from Gadara	8:28-34	5:1-15	8:27-35	
Paralyzed man	9:2-7	2:3-12	5:18-25	
Woman with bleeding	9:20-22	5:25-29	8:43-48	
Two blind men	9:27-31			
Man mute and possessed	9:32-33			
Man with a shriveled hand	12:10-13	3:1-5	6:6-10	
Man blind, mute and possessed	12:22		11:14	
Canaanite woman's daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Boy with a demon	17:14-18	9:17-29	9:38-43	
Two blind men (one named)	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Deaf mute		7:31-37		
Man possessed, synagogue		1:23-26	4:33-35	
Blind man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
Crippled woman			13:11-13	
Man with dropsy			14:1-4	
Ten men with leprosy			17:11-19	
The high priest's servant			22:50-51	
Official's son at Capernaum				4:46-54
Sick man, pool of Bethesda				5:1-9
Man born blind				9:1-7
<b>Command over the forces of nature</b>				
Calming the storm	8:23-27	4:37-41	8:22-25	
Walking on the water	14:25	6:48-51		6:19-21
5,000 people fed	14:15-21	6:35-44	9:12-17	6:5-13
4,000 people fed	15:32-38	8:1-9		
Coin in the fish's mouth	17:24-27			
Fig tree withered	21:18-22	11:12-14, 20-25		
Catch of fish			5:4-11	
Water turned into wine				2:1-11
Another catch of fish				21:1-11
<b>Bringing the dead back to life</b>				
Jairus's daughter	9:18-19, 23-25	5:22-24, 38-42	8:41-42, 49-56	
Widow's son at Nain			7:11-15	
Lazarus				11:1-44

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## Parables of Jesus

	<b>MATTHEW</b>	<b>MARK</b>	<b>LUKE</b>
Lamp under a bowl	5:14-15	4:21-22	8:16; 11:33
Wise and foolish builders	7:24-27		6:47-49
New cloth on an old coat	9:16	2:21	5:36
New wine in old wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-38
Sower and the soils	13:3-8, 18-23	4:3-8, 14-20	8:5-8, 11-15
Weeds	13:24-30, 36-43		
Mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
Yeast	13:33		13:20-21
Hidden treasure	13:44		
Valuable pearl	13:45-46		
Net	13:47-50		
Owner of a house	13:52		
Lost sheep	18:12-14		15:4-7
Unmerciful servant	18:23-34		
Workers in the vineyard	20:1-16		
Two sons	21:28-32		
Tenants	21:33-44	12:1-11	20:9-18
Wedding banquet	22:2-14		
Fig tree	24:32-35	13:28-29	21:29-31
Faithful and wise servant	24:45-51		12:42-48
Ten virgins	25:1-13		
Talents (minas)	25:14-30		19:12-27
Sheep and goats	25:31-46		
Growing seed		4:26-29	
Watchful servants		13:35-37	12:35-40
Moneylender			7:41-43
Good Samaritan			10:30-37
Friend in need			11:5-8
Rich fool			12:16-21
Unfruitful fig tree			13:6-9
Lowest seat at the feast			14:7-14
Great banquet			14:16-24
Cost of discipleship			14:28-33
Lost coin			15:8-10
Lost (prodigal) son			15:11-32
Shrewd manager			16:1-8
Rich man and Lazarus			16:19-31
Master and his servant			17:7-10
Persistent widow			18:2-8
Pharisee and tax collector			18:10-14

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## Jewish Sects

### PHARISEES

Their roots can be traced to the second century B.C.—to the Hasidim.

1. Along with the Torah, they accepted as equally inspired and authoritative, all material contained within the oral tradition.
2. On free will and determination, they held to a mediating view that made it impossible for either free will or the sovereignty of God to cancel out the other.
3. They accepted a rather developed hierarchy of angels and demons.
4. They taught that there was a future for the dead.
5. They believed in the immortality of the soul and in reward and retribution after death.
6. They were champions of human equality.
7. The emphasis of their teaching was ethical rather than theological.

### SADDUCEES

They probably had their beginning during the Hasmonean period (166-63 B.C.). Their demise occurred c. A.D. 70 with the fall of Jerusalem.

1. They denied that the oral law was authoritative and binding.
2. They interpreted Mosaic law more literally than did the Pharisees.
3. They were very exacting in Levitical purity.
4. They attributed all to free will.
5. They argued there is neither resurrection of the dead nor a future life.
6. They rejected a belief in angels and demons.
7. They rejected the idea of a spiritual world.
8. Only the books of Moses were canonical Scripture.

### ESSENES

They probably originated among the Hasidim, along with the Pharisees, from whom they later separated (I Maccabees 2:42; 7:13). They were a group of very strict and zealous Jews who took part with the Maccabees in a revolt against the Syrians, c. 165-155 B.C.

1. They followed a strict observance of the purity laws of the Torah.
2. They were notable for their communal ownership of property.
3. They had a strong sense of mutual responsibility.
4. Daily worship was an important feature along with a daily study of their sacred scriptures.
5. Solemn oaths of piety and obedience had to be taken.
6. Sacrifices were offered on holy days and during sacred seasons.
7. Marriage was not condemned in principle but was avoided.
8. They attributed all that happened to fate.

### ZEALOTS

They originated during the reign of Herod the Great c. 6 B.C. and ceased to exist in A.D. 73 at Masada.

1. They opposed payment of tribute for taxes to a pagan emperor, saying that allegiance was due only to God.
2. They held a fierce loyalty to the Jewish traditions.
3. They were opposed to the use of the Greek language in Palestine.
4. They prophesied the coming of the time of salvation.

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## 6.9. Opposition

Opposition to Jesus' teaching began to grow as the people, and especially their leaders, refused to accept him as the 'Messiah'. Also, Jesus' opposition to the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees became more obvious as both groups looked for signs and tried to trip him up on points of law.

Matthew 15-17

e.g., Matthew 17:24-27

The raising of Lazarus finally prompted the chief priests and Pharisees to try to put him to death. When Jesus finally set out for Jerusalem, the leaders of the Jews had decided to kill him. God's purpose was about to be fulfilled, that through the blood of Jesus all who would follow him could live.

John 11:53

Luke 18:31



### **Luke 22: The Last Supper**

Just before his death, Jesus held a last meal with his disciples. He gave a familiar table ritual new meaning by using the bread and wine as symbols: his body was about to be broken on their behalf, and his blood about to be shed sacrificially to ratify God's new covenant with men.

Read Luke 22:14–23.

1. What did the bread and wine represent?
2. What did Jesus mean by the “new covenant in my blood”?
3. Jesus said to repeat the ceremony “in remembrance of me”. How often do you think he meant?

## **6.10. His death**

Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught his disciples that he must die, so fulfilling the role of the servant of the Lord who suffers humiliation and death, spoken of by the prophet Isaiah (52:13–53:12). He had been constantly involved in conflict with the religious authorities, mainly because of his scorching criticisms of their man-made traditions which diverted men from the real purpose of God's law.

After the meal he went out to pray—and to meet his enemies. He was arrested and put through a trial which appears to have broken the appropriate legal rules.

When the witnesses failed to produce sufficient evidence to condemn him, he was forced to make what his judges regarded as the blasphemous statement that he was the Messiah. He was condemned to death. The Jews handed him over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, as a political rebel against Rome, and although Pilate was privately convinced of his innocence he ordered him to be put to death by the Roman punishment of crucifixion.

### **Why did Jesus have to die?**

We have already seen (in Session 1) that sin and death were introduced to the world by Adam and Eve. Paul's letter to the Romans states that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). So unless our

Genesis 2:16–17; 3:6

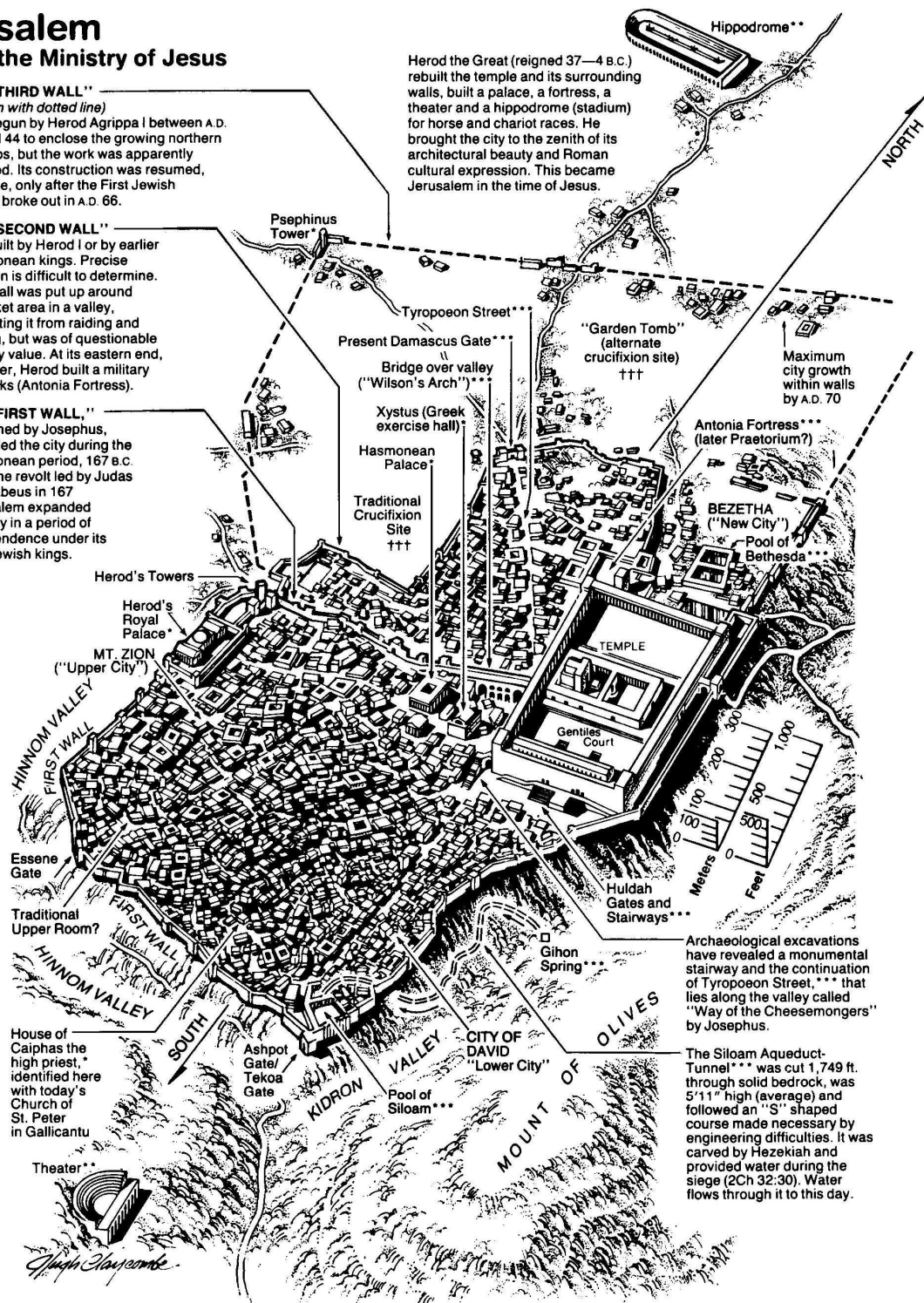
# Jerusalem During the Ministry of Jesus

The **"THIRD WALL"** (shown with dotted line) was begun by Herod Agrippa I between A.D. 41 and 44 to enclose the growing northern suburbs, but the work was apparently stopped. Its construction was resumed, in haste, only after the First Jewish Revolt broke out in A.D. 66.

The **"SECOND WALL"** was built by Herod I or by earlier Hasmonean kings. Precise location is difficult to determine. This wall was put up around a market area in a valley, protecting it from raiding and looting, but was of questionable military value. At its eastern end, however, Herod built a military barracks (Antonia Fortress).

The **"FIRST WALL,"** so named by Josephus, encircled the city during the Hasmonean period, 167 B.C. After the revolt led by Judas Maccabeus in 167 Jerusalem expanded steadily in a period of independence under its own Jewish kings.

Herod the Great (reigned 37—4 B.C.) rebuilt the temple and its surrounding walls, built a palace, a fortress, a theater and a hippodrome (stadium) for horse and chariot races. He brought the city to the zenith of its architectural beauty and Roman cultural expression. This became Jerusalem in the time of Jesus.



\* Location generally known, but style of architecture is unknown; artist's concept only, and Roman architecture is assumed.

\*\* Location and architecture unknown, but referred to in written history; shown here for illustrative purposes.

\*\*\* Ancient feature has remained, or appearance has been determined from evidence.

Buildings, streets and roads shown here are artist's concept only unless otherwise named and located. Wall heights remain generally unknown, except for those surrounding the Temple Mount.

DEEP VALLEYS on the east, south and west permitted urban expansion only to the north.

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sins are forgiven, we must die. People must recognize that sin is hated by God and must be overcome if he is to be pleased.

Under the Law of Moses, animals needed to be sacrificed for sins to be forgiven. This principle was also seen when Adam and Eve sinned and God provided animal skins to cover them.

Hebrews 9:22

Genesis 3:21

Similarly, the death of Jesus was a sacrifice which provides a way in which sins can be forgiven. There never again needs to be another sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jesus was made once and for all and never needs to be repeated.

Hebrews 10:11–14

Jesus has opened the way to life. Through his death we can gain forgiveness and be given eternal life when Jesus returns to earth. So Jesus is a saviour in that he saves us from our sins and certain death.

Romans 5:18–19; 6:6–7,23

### 6.11. His resurrection

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.  
(1 Corinthians 15:17)

All of the Bible's teaching about salvation and hope for the faithful revolves around the resurrection of Christ.

The Son of God died soon after 3.00pm. He was laid in a tomb at around 6.00pm that evening. The tomb into which Jesus' body was placed was sealed with a large circular stone.

The rulers in Israel who had plotted the death of Christ then sought to ensure that the resurrection he had spoken of could not be faked by his disciples. They approached the Roman governor Pilate, and requested soldiers to guard the tomb until the third day. This request was granted and the tomb was sealed under their supervision. As far as they were concerned, that was the end of the matter.

Mary Magdalene and several other Galilean women who were followers of Jesus, having observed his burial, resolved to return later to the tomb to complete properly the embalming of his body. This they did early on the morning of the Sunday, the first day of the week. But instead of finding the tomb as they expected, they were shocked to discover the stone had been rolled away and the tomb

was empty. As they stared at the scene in amazement, two angels appeared before them and announced the stunning news: “Why seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!”

The disciples of Christ had been sadly depressed following his death, for even though he had warned them of what was to happen to him, they had not expected it. The women therefore went to them straight away to tell them what they had seen. Peter and John immediately went to the tomb to confirm for themselves that the body of their Master was no longer there. At this point the disciples thought that Jesus’ corpse had been taken by the authorities and disposed of elsewhere. They became disillusioned, because all their hopes in this Messiah had been dashed. How wrong they were!

Having been disillusioned there was only one thing that would convince the disciples that Jesus had risen: they had to see him with their own eyes. This they were permitted to do, and the change in these men was complete after they saw that their master had risen from the grave.

Jesus was amongst his disciples for forty days following his resurrection. In spite of all the efforts of the Pharisees and other rulers of the day, the truth could not be covered up: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had been raised from the dead

#### **Eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ**

1. Mary Magdalene wept outside of the empty tomb, thinking the body had been taken. In a very moving scene (John 20:16), Jesus appeared to her and all doubt was removed.
2. Two of his disciples who were leaving Jerusalem to travel to the town of Emmaus.
3. At the end of that same day, the disciples, who did not believe he had risen, were together in hiding, fearing the authorities may come after them next. Jesus miraculously appeared amongst them and showed by his scars the proof of who he was. They rejoiced in seeing what they hadn’t believed was possible.
4. One of the disciples, Thomas, was not present on this occasion. He did not accept the disciples’ account and not until 8 days later did Jesus finally appear to him also. Only then did he believe.
5. Many others also. In fact Paul records that on one occasion he appeared to five hundred people at once (1 Corinthians 15:6).

## 6.12. After the resurrection

In the record of his last conversation with them in Acts 1, Jesus left them with a marvellous promise. They thought that he would re-establish the kingdom of God immediately, but he pointed out that this was not to be. Instead the disciples were to carry on the work he had begun.

They were to be the apostles, or messengers of the gospel of his resurrection, to the people of Israel first and afterward to the whole earth. To assist them in this great mission, the Holy Spirit, the very power of God, would be with them to help them to speak clearly and courageously of the things they had seen. They would be able to perform miracles to show the people that the power they had was from God.

Jesus was now ready to depart. Throughout his life he had constantly relied on close association with his Father to enable him to overcome the sin prone nature he possessed.

Jesus was taken up from them into heaven. This dramatic occasion was used to make what is probably the clearest statement in the Bible concerning the eventual return of Christ to the earth. An angel standing there, said to the disciples

Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?  
This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven,  
will come back in the same way you have seen him go into  
heaven. (Acts 1:11)

The personal, physical, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth is an important teaching of the Bible.

## 6.13. Belonging to Christ

How are you personally affected by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

The Scriptures make it clear that to belong to Jesus we must repent of our sins and be baptised. Scriptural baptism is of a faithful believer by total immersion. Jesus himself was baptised in the river Jordan as an example for us.



In addition Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”. Peter also said, “Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”. Mark 16:16  
Acts 2:38

## Homework

1. Was Jesus tempted to sin? Did he ever sin?
2. What is the effect (penalty) of sin? (Romans 6:23)
3. In what way did the Law of Moses point forward to Jesus?
4. The Law contained sacrifices for sin. Why then was it necessary for Jesus to die as a sacrifice?
5. Why did God raise Jesus from death to life?
6. What does Jesus’ resurrection mean for us when we die?
7. The Bible (in Romans 6) teaches that to identify ourselves with Christ’s death and resurrection, we must do something. What is it we must do?

## Session 7

# The early church

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The first believers met together to share in fellowship with one another. The Acts of the Apostles and the letters of the New Testament tell us of the growth of the early church, from a handful of frightened people to a movement involving thousands throughout the Roman empire. A key person in this rapid growth was the Apostle Paul who wrote most of the letters in the New Testament.

### 7.1. The preaching of the apostles

#### Acts 2: Pentecost

After Jesus had ascended to heaven, the apostles were meeting together on the day of Pentecost, one of the feasts in the Law of Moses. They received gifts of the Holy Spirit to assist them in preaching the gospel. Read Acts 2.

1. What did the apostles see and hear when the Spirit came upon them? Why do you think Jesus caused these phenomena to occur?
2. What gifts did the apostles show after receiving the Holy Spirit?
3. Were they speaking in other known languages, or some new language?
4. What was Peter's message to the people?
5. Why were the people "cut to the heart" (v37)?
6. What did Peter tell them to do?
7. What were the four things to which they each devoted themselves?
8. What lessons are there for us in these events?

The book of Acts is the record of the work of the apostles after Jesus went to heaven. It is the record of men who had been transformed from frightened, disillusioned people to a group who fearlessly proclaimed what they knew to be true—the resurrection of their Lord.

For many of them it would eventually cost them their lives, but perhaps their attitude is best summed up in the words Peter spoke to the Jewish rulers who demanded they stop their preaching. He said simply “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”.

Acts 4:20

Jesus’ physical resurrection from the grave was the focus of the apostles’ preaching. They and other believers were witnesses of the miracle of his resurrection. This became the witnesses’ message of hope—they preached the Gospel, the good news concerning the name of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

Acts 2:22–32; 3:15; 4:10;  
1 Corinthians 15:3–6,12–26

Acts 8:5,12,14,25

Many people believed, repented of their sins and were baptised into Jesus Christ. Believers identified with Christ’s sacrifice by being completely immersed in water. They rose from the water to begin a new life in Christ.

Acts 8:30–38

Romans 6:1–8

The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of their preaching efforts, the establishment of the groups of believers and the difficulties these believers faced.

### **Holy Spirit gifts**

God gave the early believers the Holy Spirit gifts. These were for:

1. the writing of the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16);
2. the testing of writings to see if they were inspired of God (1 John 4:1);
3. establishing the believers in sound doctrine and practices (John 16:13);
4. opposing error (Ephesians 4:7–14).

The Holy Spirit gifts appear to have ceased with the death of the apostles. The completion of the New Testament writings brought to an end the necessity of these gifts.



## 7.2. Saul the Pharisee

### Acts 9: On the road to Damascus

Saul was a Pharisee and a violent enemy of the first believers. He strongly opposed the new Christian movement because he saw it as a threat to the Jewish faith which he upheld vigorously. Read Acts 9:1–31.

1. How was Saul persecuting Jesus?
2. How would Ananias feel going to see Saul?
3. Why do you think Jesus wanted Saul to be his apostle?
4. How was Saul able to start preaching immediately that Jesus was the Son of God and the Christ?
5. How would you have reacted if you were a believer in Jerusalem and Saul was claiming to be converted (v26)?
6. Why did the Jews want to kill Saul (v23,29)?
7. What does it mean to “live in the fear of the Lord” (v31)?

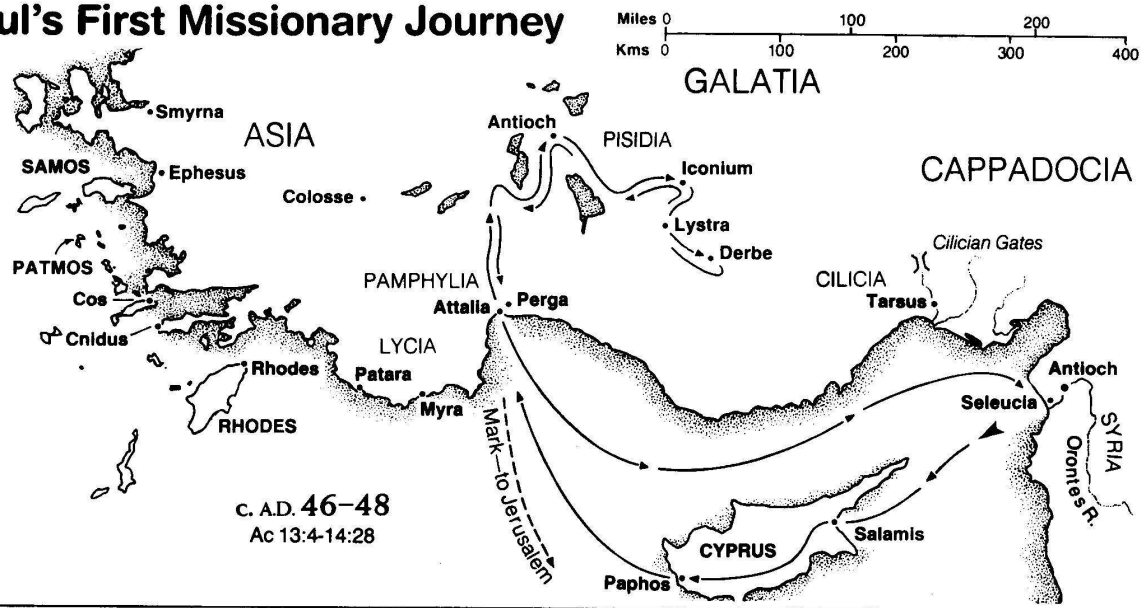
Saul became a leader in the early church. Later, his name was changed to Paul. He is known as the “apostle to the gentiles” and is famous as writer of the majority of the New Testament letters.

Paul spent much of his later life travelling around the Roman empire preaching the gospel and establishing new churches. He made at least three major missionary journeys which are recorded in Acts. These are shown on the maps on the following pages.

Many of Paul’s letters were written to churches he had established and were intended to educate, encourage and when necessary, to correct, when he wasn’t able to be there in person. His letters to churches are listed below.

Letter	Church
Romans	Rome
1&2 Corinthians	Corinth
Galatians	Various in Galatia
Ephesians	Ephesus
Philippians	Philippi
Colossians	Colosse
1&2 Thessalonians	Thessalonica

## Paul's First Missionary Journey

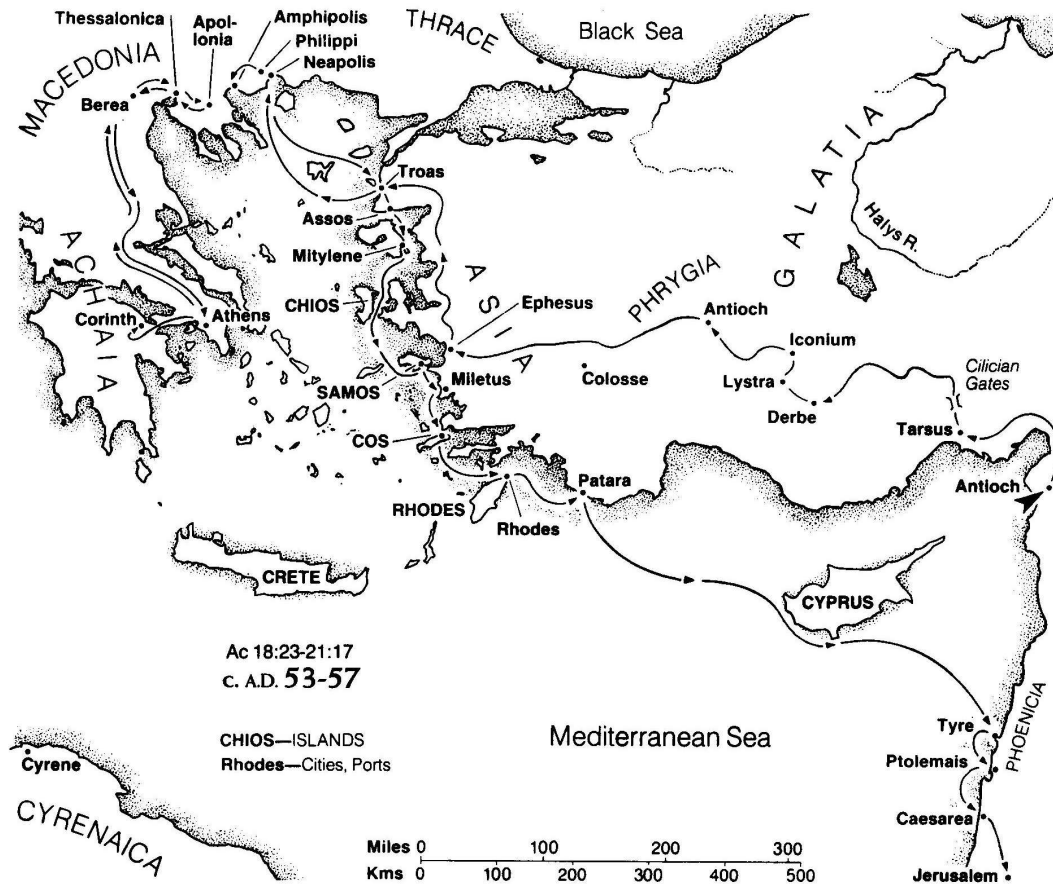


## Paul's Second Missionary Journey

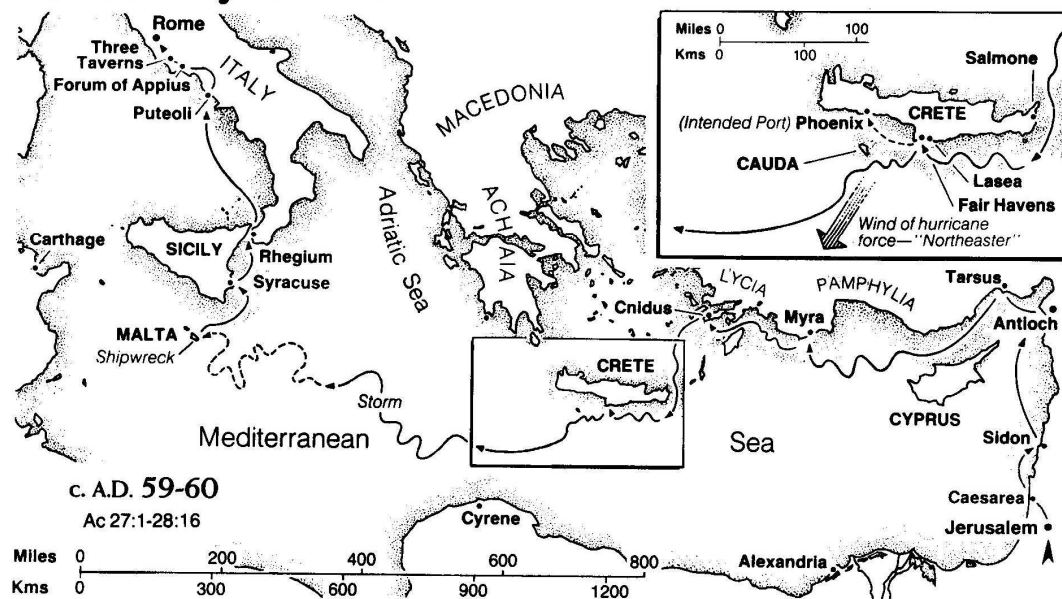


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## Paul's Third Missionary Journey



## Paul's Journey to Rome



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### 1 Corinthians 13: essay on love

This is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible, written by Paul to the church in Corinth (Greece). He is arguing that spiritual gifts are of no benefit unless exercised in love. Read 1 Corinthians 13.

1. What did Paul mean by “the tongues of angels” (v1)?
2. Why is love so all-important? How is it greater than all other gifts?
3. In verses 4–7, there are fifteen ways of describing love. Find a single word summarizing each of them. How can you show each of these attributes of love in your own life?
4. In verses 8–10, Paul implies that the spirit gifts would disappear when “perfection comes”. What time does he mean?

He also wrote letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon to advise and assist them in their Christian life.

Eventually Paul was arrested for his preaching and taken to Rome where he stayed in prison for two years (Acts 28). It appears he was then released and was able to further his missionary work before he was arrested again. There is a tradition that he was beheaded, on command of the emperor Nero, just outside Rome in AD 67.

## 7.3. The first century church

The early believers faced stiff and sometimes violent opposition from the Jewish leaders. Later, the Romans also strongly opposed the new movement. Many people were killed. The most notorious slaughter of Christians was at the hand of Nero in AD 66. They became scapegoats for the fire of Rome and many were killed fighting wild animals.

Wrong ideas from within the groups of believers was also a problem. People found it difficult to totally give up their old Jewish and pagan beliefs. They therefore tried to blend these ideas with their new beliefs in Christ Jesus. The most difficult problem came from Jews who insisted that all believers, Jew or Gentile, had to keep certain parts of the law. In particular, circumcision became a contentious issue.

## Homework

1. Read Acts 1:1–11.
  - (a) What did Jesus teach his apostles about their future work before he ascended to heaven. Does this still apply today?
  - (b) What do the verses teach about the return of Jesus?
  
2. Read Acts 4:32 – 5:16.
  - (a) What essentials of fellowship are demonstrated in 4:32–37? See one result of them in v33.
  - (b) What made the sin of Ananias and Sapphira so grave and what led to it? Why was such a divine judgement necessary? What result did it produce?
  - (c) What example can you follow from the action of Barnabas and what danger can you avoid from the attitude of Ananias and Sapphira?
  
3. Read Colossians 3–4
  - (a) What results, positive and negative, should follow from being “raised with Christ”. In other words, what should the experience make us (i) do and (ii) stop doing?
  - (b) Make a list from 3:12–17 of the divinely intended characteristics of active Christian living. Prayerfully examine your own living in the light of these standards.
  - (c) In 4:7–18, several people are mentioned. Find out where else these people are mentioned in the New Testament. What do we know about each of them?

## Session 8

# The kingdom of God

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Throughout the Bible, believers were hoping for the Kingdom of God to come soon. This was a major theme for the prophets of the Old Testament and a major part of the gospel explained in the New Testament. In this chapter, we review what the Bible says about the Kingdom of God.

### 8.1. The return of Jesus

#### Mark 13: The Olivet prophecy

This prophecy of Jesus was given just before he was killed. It is called the “Olivet prophecy” because he was sitting on the Mt of Olives near Jerusalem while speaking to his disciples. Read Mark 13.

1. What signs did Jesus say would precede his return?
2. What events are we *not* to interpret as signs of his return?
3. What is the “abomination that causes desolation” (v14)?
4. Have you heard of any false Christs?
5. What do you think verses 24–25 mean?
6. Who are the “elect” (v27)? Where will the angels take them?
7. What did Jesus mean in v30?
8. What are we to watch (v37)?



The Bible contains over 200 references to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. It is a major biblical theme that the Kingdom of God will be established upon the earth, ruled over by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here are some more Bible passages about his return which you may like to look at:

Matthew	16:27; 25:31	Colossians	3:4
Luke	21:27	1 Thessalonians	2:19; 3:13; 4:15
Acts	1:11; 3:20–21	2 Thessalonians	1:7–8
1 Corinthians	1:7; 15:50–51	2 Peter	3:1–10
Philippians	3:20–21	1 John	2:28
		Revelation	1:7

## 8.2. Resurrection

Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead, never to die again. When he returns, his followers who have died will also be raised never to die again.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.  
(1 Corinthians 15: 21–23)

The Bible never teaches that the dead go to heaven. See, for example, John 3:13 and Acts 2:34. Instead, it consistently teaches a resurrection of the dead when Jesus returns.

Both Old and New Testaments contain many passages telling of the resurrection of the dead which will occur at Jesus' return. For example:

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.  
(1 Thessalonians 4:16)

Here are some more passages for you to look up:

Old Testament	New Testament
Daniel 12:2–3	1 Corinthians 15:51–55
Isaiah 26:19	Luke 14:12–14
Job 19:25–27	John 5:28–29; 11:23–24
Psalms 17:15	Acts 24:14–15
	Revelation 20:4–6, 11–12

### 8.3. Judgement

The Bible tells us there is to be a judgement at the return of the Christ. For example, Paul wrote to the believers in Rome:

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat...So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:10,12)

He also wrote to Timothy:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead... (2 Timothy 4:1)

We can see from Paul's words to Timothy that Jesus himself will be the judge on behalf of his father. Here are two more quotations which confirm this:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son. (John 5:22)

#### **Matthew 25: Are you a sheep or a goat?**

Read Matthew 25:31–46.

1. On what grounds are people judged?
2. Why didn't the righteous realize they had done what was required of them?
3. What is the reward for the righteous?
4. What is the punishment of the wicked?
5. How can we ensure we feed, clothe and visit Christ's brethren?



## 8.4. The battle of Armageddon

The return of Jesus to the earth will be associated with a mighty battle in Israel, centred on Jerusalem. There are many references to this great battle in the Scriptures. The prophet Zechariah wrote:

I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. ...  
(Zechariah 14:2–3)

The book of Revelation also refers to a great battle at the time of the end:

... they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. ... they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.  
(Revelation 16:14,16)

Armageddon means “Mount of Megiddo” and is probably one of the mountains near the city of Megiddo in northern Israel, not far from Nazareth.

## 8.5. Jesus will be king

The battle over the city of Jerusalem will be the event which will finally bring God’s wrath on those Gentiles who seek to control Israel and Jerusalem. Jerusalem has long been described as God’s special possession, his “holy hill”, and he has made it clear that Jerusalem will, at Jesus’ return, be established as the seat of government in the Kingdom of God.

Psalms 2:6

From Jerusalem, Jesus will reign as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”. We will then see all the promises and prophecies fulfilled which have been foretold in the Bible:

Revelation 19:16

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.  
(Luke 1:32–33)

He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth... All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him.  
(Psalm 72:8,11)

## 8.6. A new world order

The Kingdom of God will introduce a completely new system of government upon the whole earth.

### **Zechariah 14: Conditions in the Kingdom of God**

Zechariah was a prophet in Judah in about 520 BC. In this last chapter, he described the return of Jesus and the conditions in the Kingdom of God. Read Zechariah 14.

1. What geographical changes in Israel are prophesied?
2. What are the eastern and western seas (v8)?
3. Who will be king of the whole world?
4. What must all the survivors do annually?
5. What will happen if they refuse to do this?

### **Isaiah 2: Worship in Jerusalem**

Isaiah was also a prophet in Judah. He lived about 700 BC. In chapter 2 he described the nations of the world worshipping at Jerusalem. Read Isaiah 2:1–4.

1. Which mountain is “the mountain of the Lord’s temple”?
2. Will it really be the highest mountain in the area, or is Isaiah speaking figuratively?
3. What will the people do in Jerusalem?
4. What are the conditions of the kingdom which are described here?

Here are some other descriptions of the conditions which will exist in the Kingdom of God:

#### HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Luke 1:31–33   | Jesus to reign on David’s throne. His kingdom will never end. |
| Isaiah 9:6–7   | He will reign on David’s throne forever.                      |
| Zechariah 14:9 | The Lord will be king over all the earth.                     |

SEAT OF GOVERNMENT:

Micah 4:2	Law to go out from Zion; the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
Matthew 5:35	Jerusalem, the city of the great king.
Zechariah 8:3	The Lord will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem.
Zechariah 8:22–23	Many nations shall come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord.

DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENTS:

Daniel 7:27	All power and kingdoms to be handed over to the saints
Revelation 5:10	The saints to be a kingdom and priests
Luke 19:17	The faithful believers to rule over cities

RELIGION:

Zephaniah 3:9	All people to call on the Lord and serve him
Zechariah 14:16	People will go annually to Jerusalem to worship
Isaiah 2:3	People will go to learn in Jerusalem

DEFENCE:

Psalms 46:9	The Lord will make wars to cease
Isaiah 2:4	Swords into ploughshares. No more war.
Zechariah 9:10	Jesus will proclaim peace to the nations
Isaiah 60:12	Nations will serve or perish

EDUCATION:

Isaiah 26:9	The people of the world will learn righteousness
Isaiah 2:3	Jesus will teach us his ways
Isaiah 30:20–21	Teachers shall show the right way

JUSTICE AND JUDGEMENT:

Isaiah 11:4	Jesus to judge with righteousness
Isaiah 60:18	No more violence in the land

HEALTH:

Isaiah 35:5–6      Blind, deaf, dumb and lame healed

Isaiah 33:24      People shall not be sick

TEMPLE TO BE BUILT:

Micah 4:1–2      The house of God will be on a mountain  
in Jerusalem

Isaiah 56:7      A house of prayer for all nations

DESERTS PRODUCTIVE:

Isaiah 35:1,7      Deserts will blossom as a rose

Isaiah 43:19      Pools in the desert

Isaiah 41:17–18      Springs of water in dry land

AGRICULTURE:

Amos 9:13–14      Ploughman overtakes reaper; planting  
vineyards

Psalms 72:16      Corn on mountains

Isaiah 55:13      No thorns and thistles

Isaiah 65:21–22      People shall live on the land

SOCIAL SERVICES:

Psalms 72:12      Jesus will deliver the poor and needy

Psalms 72:4      He will save the children of the needy

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS:

Isaiah 35:8–10      Highways of holiness for ransomed

Isaiah 19:23      Highway from Egypt to Assyria

Isaiah 11:16      Highway for remnant of God's people

PERIOD OF GOVERNMENT:

1 Corinthians 15:25      Jesus will reign until all enemies de-  
feated

Revelation 20:4      Jesus will reign 1000 years

1 Corinthians 15:24      Jesus to hand kingdom over to God his  
Father

This new world order will therefore see a world in which peace,  
justice and righteousness will prevail. With the immortal Son of

God as king, the world will be totally different from what it is today, with its wars, violence, corruption and suffering.

In the Kingdom of God, those who have chosen to follow Jesus will play a part—whether they are alive at his coming or resurrected by him. As Paul wrote, “Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s”. (Romans 14:8)

Those who have obeyed the call of the gospel and lived a life of faithfulness to God will be granted immortality:

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. (John 17:2)

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

Those to whom Jesus will grant immortality will work with him, in the Kingdom of God:

if we endure, we will also reign with him. (2 Timothy 2:12)

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth. (Revelation 5:10)

The earth will therefore be restored to a place of beauty—both moral and physical. All people will worship God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

## 8.7. The millennium

We are told in Revelation 20:6 that Jesus will rule for 1,000 years. At the end of that time, there will be a second resurrection (of those of the mortal population who have died during the 1,000 years), and sin and death will be done away with.

At that time, when all things have been subjected to Jesus, ruling from Jerusalem, he will hand back the kingdom to his Father. Paul put it this way:

When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:28)

## Homework

1. Compare Matthew 24:30–31 with 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Write down the common factors in both of these passages.
2. Read John 3:13 and Acts 2:34. What do these suggest about the popular doctrine that people go to heaven when they die?
3. What does immortality mean? What will the role be in the kingdom for those granted immortality?