

# The Bible Course



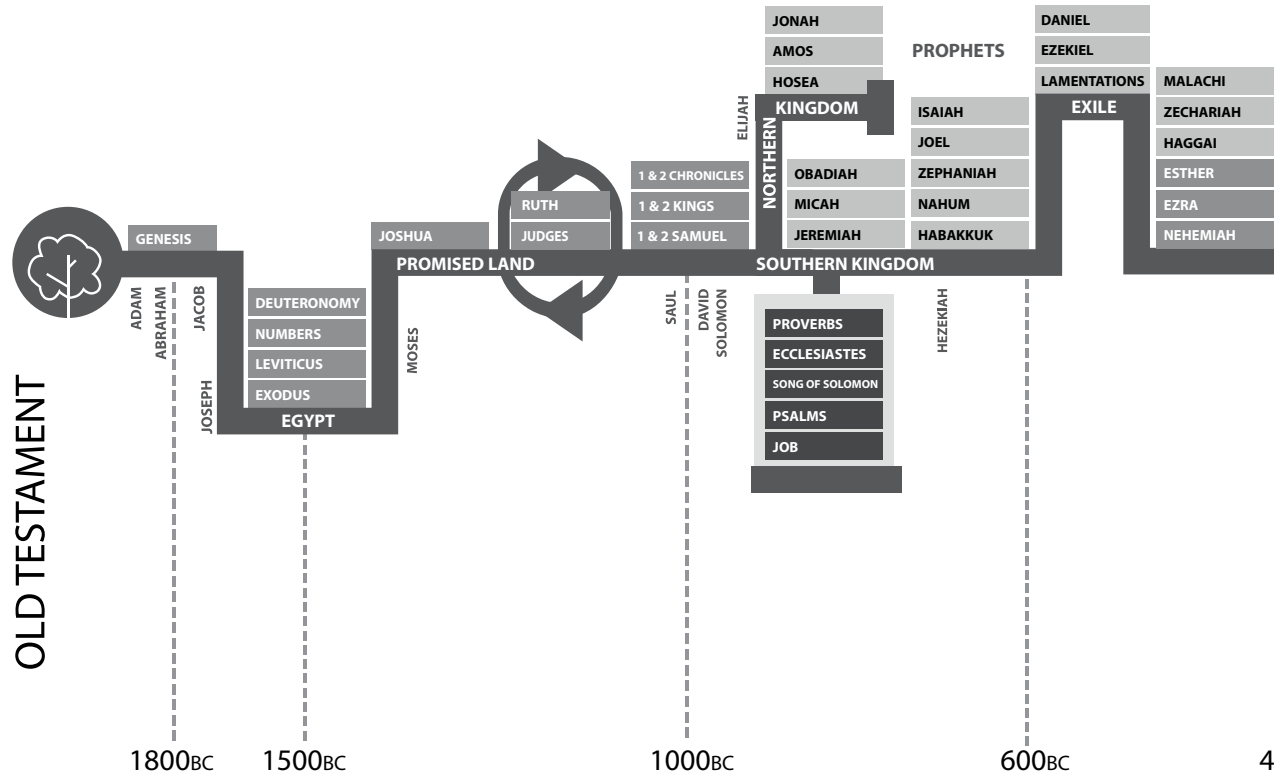
Explore the BIG story

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- Be sure to select Landscape orientation before printing.
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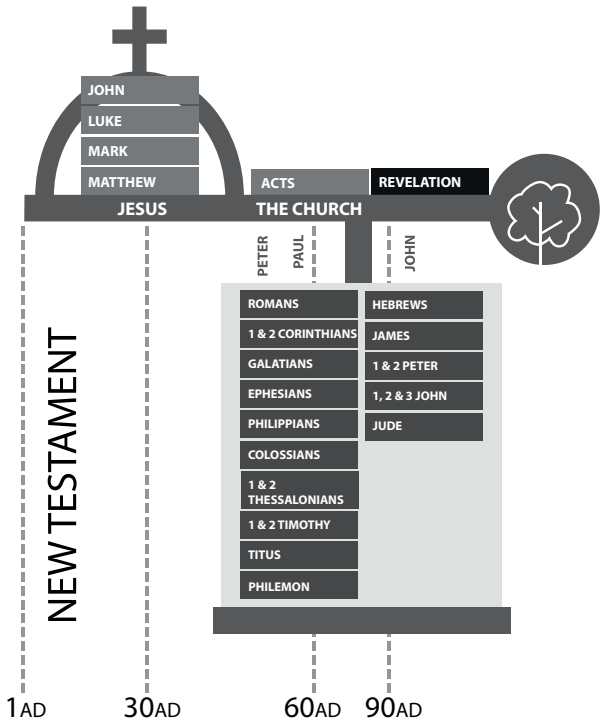
3rd  
Edition

# OLD TESTAMENT



## INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

# NEW TESTAMENT



Bible Society  
Stonehill Green  
Westlea  
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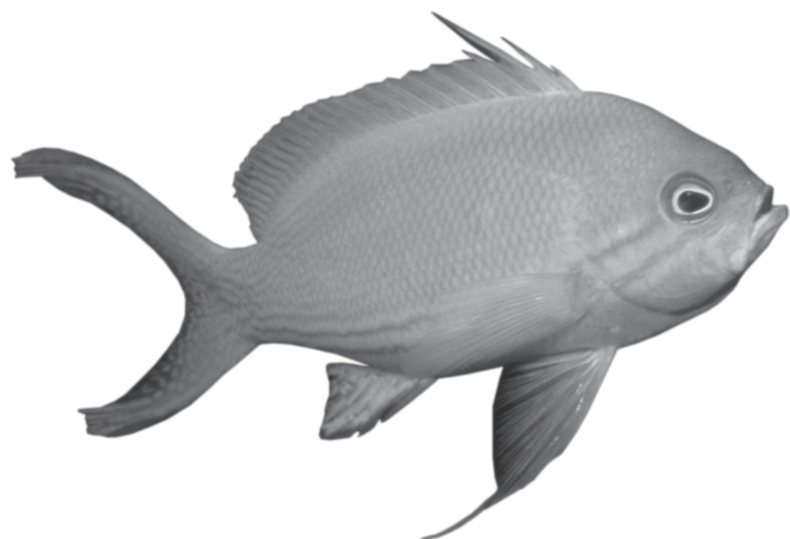
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PDF Digital edition 2020

# Welcome to the Bible Course

The Bible Course will help you understand the Bible for yourself. Over eight sessions you will see the big picture of the Bible storyline – from Genesis to Revelation. Along the way you will pick up tools and skills to help you read it for yourself. Each session is interactive, with sections of teaching, discussion time and personal reflection. Between sessions there are daily readings to prepare for the following week. By the end of the course you will have confidence to pick up the Bible, read it for yourself and apply it to your life.



Enjoy the course.  
*Dr Andrew Ollerton*



*If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day.  
If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for life.*

## Contents

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# Getting started

Finding your way around the Bible can feel complicated initially. Use the 'Table of Contents' page near the beginning to find the title of the book you are looking for and the page number.

Once you have found the book, you then need to look for the chapter and verse number. See the example below to see how this works. This is Genesis (chapter) 1. (verse) 3 – usually written as Genesis 1.3.

[illegible]

# Getting the most out of the daily Bible readings

- Find a quiet and comfortable place that fits within your daily routine.
- Say a quick prayer like: 'God, help me understand this passage, and speak to me through it.'
- Read the passage a couple of times in a modern translation.
- Consider these two questions:

**WHAT?** What did this passage mean in its context?

**NOW WHAT?** Now what does this passage mean for my life today?

- Jot down some answers to help process your thinking.
- Look for a verse or phrase that stands out to you. Write it out and reflect on its significance for your life.
- Pray and ask God to help you apply these truths to your life.
- If there is something you don't understand, don't get stuck on it. Keep moving through the reading and use a Study Bible to get help.



# Introducing the Bible

The Bible is a library of books, divided into two Testaments – Old and New. Together they form one story that centres on Jesus Christ.

## Session 1

# The impact of the Bible

MY NOTES 



# The popularity of the Bible

## The Bible is the world's bestseller year on year

- Over 400 million copies sold or distributed each year
- Plus millions of downloads
- Translated into over 2,500 languages

MY NOTES 



## Holy

Means 'sacred'  
or 'other'

## Bible

From Greek  
biblia, meaning  
'books'

# The Bible is inspired

The Bible was written by more than 40 human authors, over a period of 1,500 years. But God was the architect. He inspired it.

*'All Scripture is inspired [breathed out] by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.'*

2 Timothy 3.16–17

MY NOTES 



St Paul's Cathedral  
London

# The books of the Bible

## History (Red)

GENESIS  
EXODUS  
LEVITICUS  
NUMBERS  
DEUTERONOMY  
JOSHUA  
JUDGES  
RUTH  
1 & 2 SAMUEL  
1 & 2 KINGS  
1 & 2 CHRONICLES  
EZRA  
NEHEMIAH  
ESTHER

## Wisdom (Blue)

JOB  
PSALMS  
PROVERBS  
ECCLESIASTES  
SONG OF SOLOMON

## Prophecy (Green)

ISAIAH  
JEREMIAH  
LAMENTATIONS  
EZEKIEL  
DANIEL  
HOSEA  
JOEL  
AMOS  
OBADIAH  
JONAH  
MICAH  
NAHUM  
HABAKKUK  
ZEPHANIAH  
HAGGAI  
ZECHARIAH  
MALACHI

## Gospels (Purple)

MATTHEW  
MARK  
LUKE  
JOHN  
ACTS

## Letters (Blue)

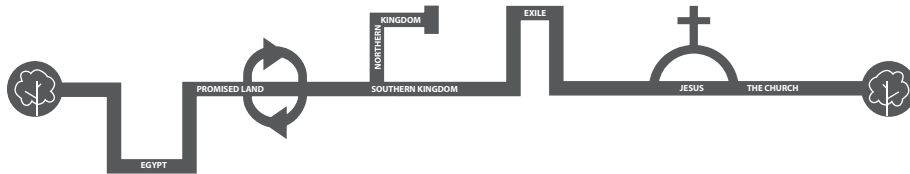
ROMANS  
1 & 2 CORINTHIANS  
GALATIANS  
EPHESIANS  
PHILIPPIANS  
COLOSSIANS  
1 & 2 THESSALONIANS  
1 & 2 TIMOTHY  
TITUS  
PHILEMON  
HEBREWS  
JAMES  
1 & 2 PETER  
1 & 2 & 3 JOHN  
JUDE  
REVELATION

The books are grouped together by style or genre of writing.

In the teaching videos, colour coding on the spine of each book indicates the genre.

# The Bible is a story

The Bible is BIG – so we need to see the big picture.



- The Bible is a unique collection of books written over a period of 1500 years by various authors including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen and scholars.
- It includes three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) and covers hundreds of controversial subjects. Yet it has a harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation.
- The God of the Bible is not a remote, unknowable divine force, but a loving God with whom ordinary people develop personal relationships.

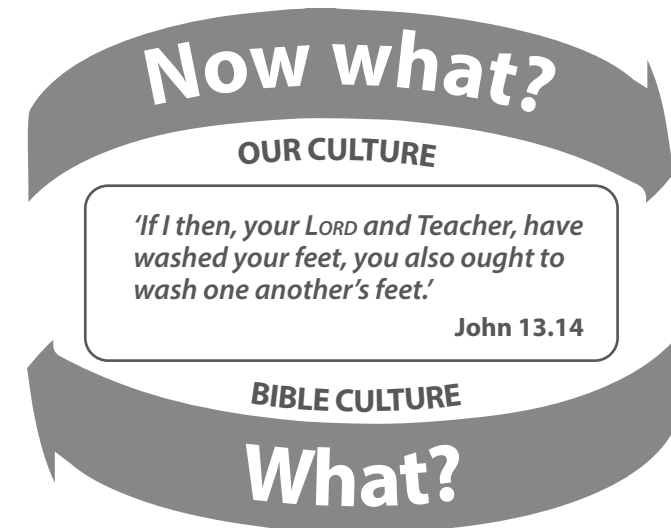
# The Bible needs interpreting

The Bible is OLD – so we need some coaching to apply it.

*Take a text out of context,  
and we're left with a con.*

Ask two questions:

- **WHAT** – What did it mean in its original context?
- **NOW WHAT** – Now what does this passage mean for my life today?



## Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

- What surprised or impressed you about the influence of the Bible on our world?
- Have you ever tried reading the Bible? How did you find it?
- What are you hoping to get out of The Bible Course?
- What do you make of the claim that the Bible is 'inspired by God'?



**Restart the video and move on to PART 2.**

## PART 2

# Frequently Asked Questions

How was the Bible formed?

Are the Bible texts reliable?

Why so many translations?

Why believe the Bible is God's book?



*'Scripture is like a lion. Who ever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose; it will defend itself.'*

Charles Spurgeon  
(London preacher, 1834–92)

## Canon

*A Greek word meaning 'rule' or 'standard'. It refers to the books included in the Bible which are considered to be uniquely authoritative.*

MY NOTES 



# How was the Bible formed?

## The formation of the New Testament

- Phase 1** The historic life of Jesus – birth, death and resurrection
- Phase 2** Eyewitness evidence for the Gospels, published in the lifetime of Jesus' contemporaries
- Phase 3** Other books and letters (epistles) were written or endorsed by foundational church leaders (Apostles)
- Phase 4** New Testament finalised – the early church recognised that these writings had a unique authority. Other later writings lacked credibility

# Are the Bible texts reliable?

## Old Testament

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed its reliability.

## New Testament

Thousands of manuscripts survive as proof that the texts are reliable.

MY NOTES 



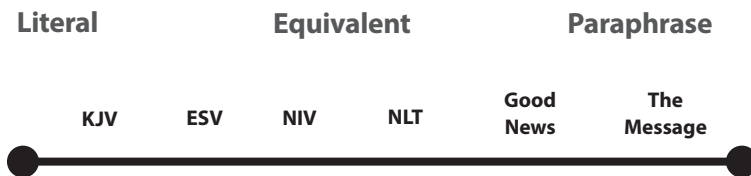
Dead Sea Scrolls Qumran Caves



4th-century fragment of John's Gospel

# Why so many translations?

- Old Testament – Ancient Hebrew
- New Testament – Koine Greek



## Mark 6.37

ESV	NIV	The Message
Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread?	That would take more than half a year's wages!	Are you serious? You want us to go spend a fortune on food?



*'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that drives the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou does.'*

**William Tyndale (1494–1536):**  
to a clergyman who opposed his translation

# Why believe the Bible is God's book?

## The Bible was endorsed by Jesus

- When tempted: 'It is written ...' (Matthew 4)
- When teaching: 'I have not come to abolish [the law and prophets] but to fulfil them' (Matthew 5.17)

## The Bible has miraculous harmony

- Many authors over several centuries, unaware of each other's writings
- Prophecies fulfilled – Jesus' birth, betrayal, death, burial
- The writers were blind to the future but guided by the Holy Spirit

## The Bible transforms people today

MY NOTES 





## Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on this verse:

*All Scripture is inspired [or breathed out] by God.*

**2 Timothy 3.16**

Write down something from this verse or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.

## Daily Bible Readings: Week 1

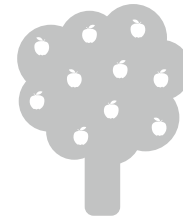
**Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:**

**WHAT?** *What did this passage mean in its context?*

**NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live this truth today.

- Day 1** Genesis 1.1–31  
Creation, beauty and humanity – the origins of everything
- Day 2** Genesis 3.1–24  
Temptation, the fall and evil – where it all went wrong
- Day 3** Genesis 8.1–22 and Genesis 9.1–17  
The flood, the ark and the rainbow – time for a new start
- Day 4** Genesis 11.1–9 and Genesis 12.1–9  
The tower, the promise and Abraham – God’s got a plan
- Day 5** Genesis 22.1–19  
Isaac, the sacrifice and the substitute – a big test of faith
- Day 6** Genesis 37.1–36  
Joseph, the coat and the dreams – down to Egypt



# Creation & Covenant

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. As an ancient text, it still provides the best explanation of all the beauty and tragedy in our world.

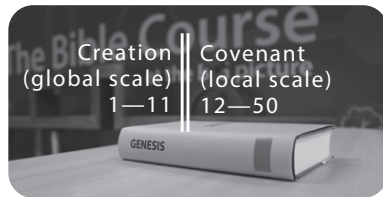
## Session 2

# Introducing Genesis

## Genesis

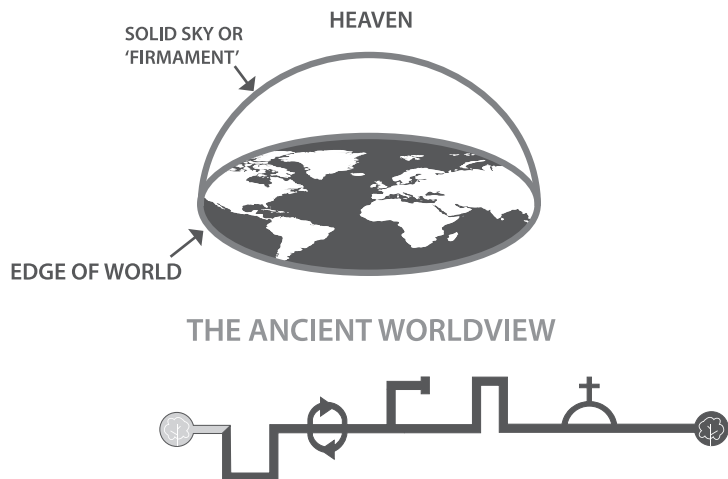
Means  
'beginnings'  
or 'origins.'

### Genesis is a book of two halves



MY NOTES 

### Genesis is an ancient text



# Is Genesis compatible with modern science?

## Christians have been at the forefront of scientific progress



*'The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome. He can be worshipped in the cathedral and in the laboratory. His creation is majestic, awesome, intricate and beautiful.'*

**Francis Collins**  
Former head of the Human Genome Project

Modern science focuses on HOW questions:

- *How old is the universe? How has life developed?*

The Bible focuses on WHY questions:

- *Why am I here? Why is there good and evil?*

# Creation

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep ... And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light.*

**Genesis 1.1–3, NIV**

## Days of creation

God brings form	God brings fullness
Day 1 Separation of light and darkness	Day 4 The creation of the lights to fill the day and night
Day 2 Separation of the waters to form the sky and the sea	Day 5 The creation of the birds and fish to fill the sky and sea
Day 3 Separation of the sea from the dry land and creation of plants	Day 6 The creation of the animals and humans to fill the land
Day 7 The heavens and the earth were finished and God rested	

MY NOTES 

# Humanity

## Human beings are the climax of creation

*God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God ... said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'*

**Genesis 1.26–28**

## What does it mean to be made in the ‘image of God’?

- For relationship with each other
- For a relationship with God
- To be God’s representatives and co-workers

*‘You made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts will always be restless until they find their rest in thee.’*

**Saint Augustine (354–430 AD)**

**Ruach**

*A Hebrew word meaning ‘breath’, ‘wind’ or ‘spirit’. In Greek the word is pneuma – the root of words like ‘pneumatic’.*

# The Fall

## The forbidden fruit

*The serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.'*

Genesis 3.4–5

## Temptation and doubt

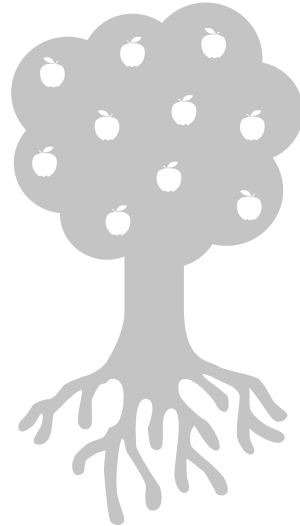
- Is God a kill-joy, keeping us from fulfilment?

## Judgement and mercy

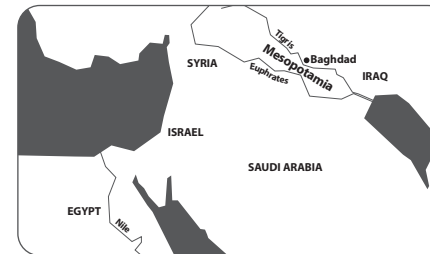
- **God is just**, so he banishes humanity from paradise
- **God is merciful**, so he promises a saviour to restore all things

*The LORD God said to the serpent ... 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He shall crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'*

Genesis 3.14–15



# The Flood



Rough location of garden of Eden in Mesopotamia

*And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'*

Genesis 9.1

## Adam and Eve leave Eden

- Humanity spreads across the known world ('the cradle of civilisation')
- Humanity descends further into evil

## Noah and the ark

- God sent a flood of judgement
- God saves Noah's family
- God sends a rainbow of promise
- The flood gives the world a fresh start
- Noah is like a new Adam
- See Genesis 5—10

MY NOTES 

# The Tower of Babel

## Babel

*Means  
'confusion' and  
resembles our  
word 'babble.'*

*Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves...' And the LORD said, '... Let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.'*

**Genesis 11.4, 6–7**

- The Tower of Babel – inspired by a ziggurat, an ancient terraced structure built for protection and pagan worship
- God has to go down, even to see this 'great tower'
- Humanity fragments into competing groups – the origin of racism, wars and multiple languages



The Tower of Babel

# Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

## Read Genesis 1.26–27

- What do these verses reveal about the original status and purpose of human beings?
- In the video, Andrew said: *'We are made for a relationship with God and to represent God in the world.'* How should this shape the way we live our lives?

## Read Genesis 11.1–9

- What does verse 4 reveal about the fallen nature of the human heart? How does this same attitude surface in our society and our own hearts today?



**Restart the video and move on to PART 2.**

## PART 2

# The call of Abraham

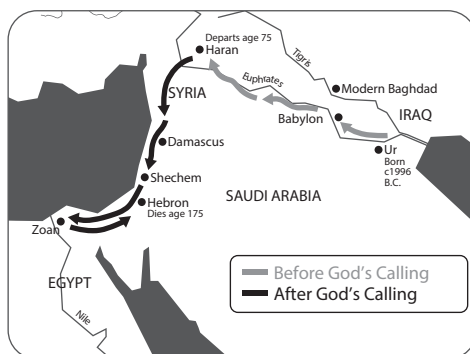
*Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.'*

Genesis 12.1–2

### God's promises to Abraham

- **Great nation:** Abraham means 'Father of many'
- **Promised land:** Canaan, modern-day Israel, the Holy Land
- **Global blessing:** all families on earth will be blessed

MY NOTES 



Abraham's journey:  
Ur to Canaan

## Abraham

### Key References

Genesis 12—22; Romans 4; Hebrews 11

### Context

- Born c. 1800 BC in Ur of the Chaldees (Iraq)
- Nomadic existence living in tents and tending flocks

### Bio

- Originally known as Abram
- Called to the land of Canaan
- God made a covenant with him
- God blessed him so that his family could bring blessing to the whole world
- 'Abraham' means 'father of many nations'
- Married Sarah. Sons called Ishmael and Isaac

*[God said to Abraham] 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them ... So shall your offspring be.' And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

Genesis 15.5–6



## Covenant

*A formal agreement between two parties. The Bible is structured by the two covenants or testaments – Old and New.*

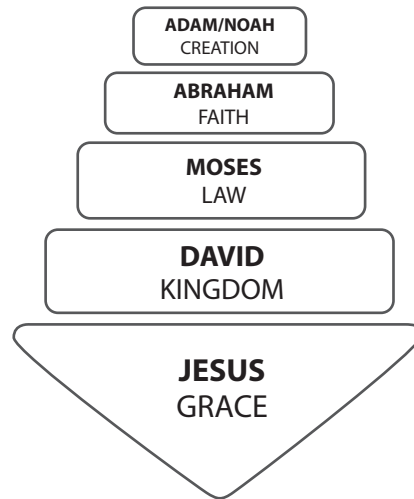
## Genesis 15

- **Seal:** Formal relationship between two parties
- **Sacrifice:** The blood-path ceremony
- **Sign:** Outward mark of being in covenant relationship

*In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'*

1 Corinthians 11.25

# The covenant with Abraham



# Abraham's family

## Abraham and Hagar – Ishmael (Genesis 16)

Abraham is significant in world religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

## Abraham and Sarah – Isaac (Genesis 21)

- Isaac means 'laughter'
- Isaac was the promised child

## Abraham – Isaac – Jesus

- In Genesis 22, Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac on Mount Moriah
- But a substitute ram was offered instead
- Near that spot, also known as Golgotha, Jesus was crucified

*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.*

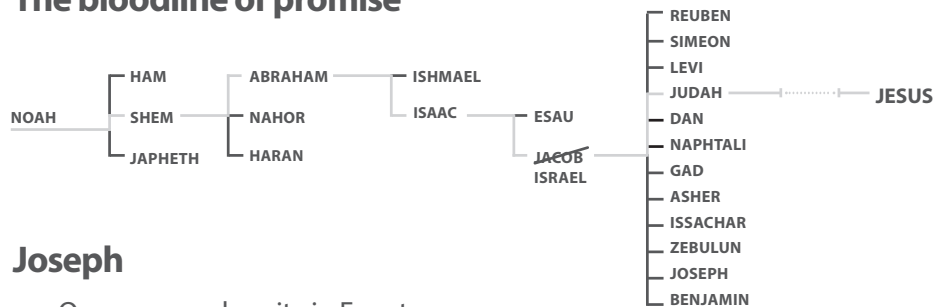
John 3.16, NIV





# Abraham's family tree

## The bloodline of promise



## Joseph

- Overcomes adversity in Egypt
- Becomes a saviour figure in a global crisis

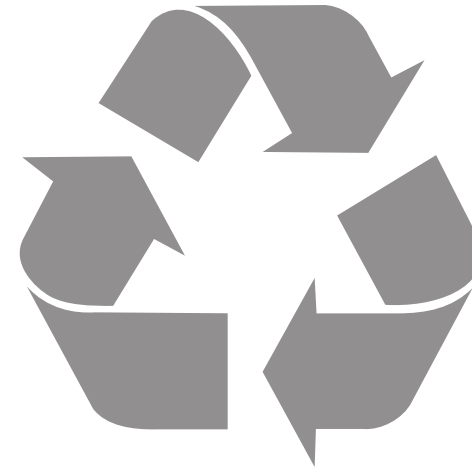
*When the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe.*

**Genesis 41.56–57**

## Judah

- Screws up and gets things wrong (Genesis 38)
- But Judah became the chosen tribe from which the Messiah would come

*The God of the Bible  
is into recycling.*



## Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on this verse:

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away;  
behold, the new has come.*

**2 Corinthians 5.17**

Write down something from this verse or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.

## Daily Bible Readings: Week 2

**Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:**

**WHAT?** *What did this passage mean in its context?*

**NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live in this truth.

**Day 1** Exodus 1.1–22 and Exodus 2.1–10  
Egypt and slavery – God’s people in trouble

**Day 2** Exodus 2.11–25 and Exodus 3.1–15  
Wilderness, the bush and the name – the call of Moses

**Day 3** Exodus 12.1–50  
Final plague, Passover and exodus – the way of freedom

**Day 4** Exodus 19.1–25  
Mountain and covenant – God meets his people

**Day 5** Exodus 20.1–21  
Commandments and lightning – God lays down the law

**Day 6** Numbers 13.1–33 and Numbers 14.1–9  
Grapes, giants, decisions – brink of the Promised Land



# Exodus & Promised Land

Through a mass Exodus, God delivered Israel from slavery, into the Promised Land. Today, we can experience true liberation through Jesus Christ.

## Session 3

# Introducing Exodus

## Exodus

*Literally, 'exit'  
– the way out,  
liberation*

The Exodus story has inspired freedom movements ever since:

- William Wilberforce and the Abolitionist movement: slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833
- Martin Luther King and human rights movements



*'The Bible tells the thrilling story of how Moses stood in Pharaoh's court and cried, "Let my people go."'*

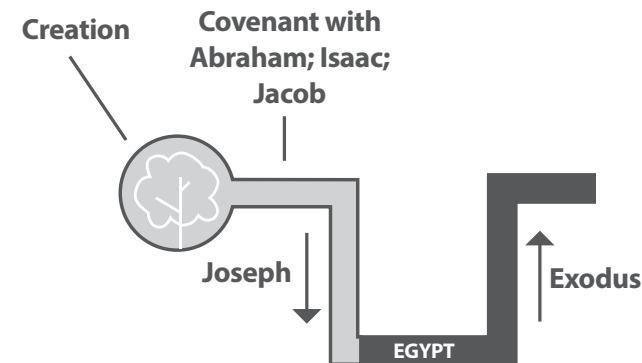
**Martin Luther King (1929–1968)**

Yet modern-day slavery still affects over 27 million people who are bought, sold and trafficked around the globe.



# The story so far

MY NOTES



*Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help ... God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel – and God knew.*

**Exodus 2.23–25**

*The Exodus reminds us – God knows;  
God remembers; God cares!*

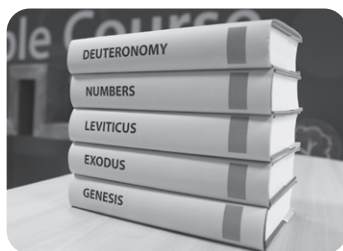
## Torah

*Means law,  
instruction,  
guidance*

# The Torah

## The first five books of the Old Testament

- Often referred to as the Torah, or Pentateuch (meaning 'five books')
- Foundational to the rest of the Bible
- Tradition has it that Moses was the primary author of these books



MY NOTES 

## Moses

### Key References

Exodus 2—19; Deuteronomy 27—34;  
2 Corinthians 3

### Context

- Egypt c. 1400 BC
- Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites and committed genocide against them

### Bio

- Circumcised Hebrew baby, adopted as Prince of Egypt
- Fugitive in wilderness of Horeb
- Called to rescue Israel from slavery
- Led mass Exodus out of Egypt
- Received the law on Mount Sinai
- Died on the brink of the Promised Land

*There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt.*

**Deuteronomy 34.10–11**



# The burning bush

*Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'*

Exodus 3.3–5

## God's name

- At the burning bush, God reveals his name: 'I AM' (Exodus 3.14)
- In Hebrew, 'I AM' roughly equates to YAHWEH
- This sacred name was replaced with 'LORD'
- When the early Christians said, 'Jesus is Lord!' they were claiming that the God who appeared to Moses in the bush had now come in the flesh!



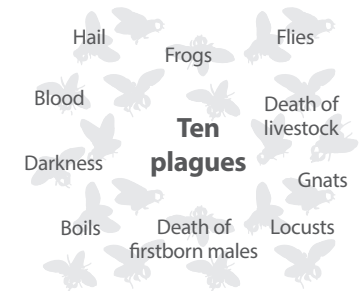
*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Romans 10.9

# The great escape

## Moses returns to Egypt on a liberation mission

- A showdown with Pharaoh and ten plagues
- The issue at stake: 'Who is the real God?'
- Pharaoh finally lets Israel go



## God split the sea

- Pharaoh changes his mind and traps Israel
- God makes a way through the Red Sea
- Israel crosses over to safety and freedom



## Songs of salvation

- Singing is a powerful way to express freedom

*'I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.'*

Exodus 15.1–2

# The Passover meal

Exodus was celebrated with a symbolic meal

Bitter herbs and salt water – pain and tears of slavery

Four cups of wine – with readings and prayers



Lamb – the sacrifice that enables salvation

Flat bread or Matzoh – no time for dough to rise

*'The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.'*

Exodus 12.13

## Jesus Christ: the ultimate Exodus

- Bread and wine symbolise Jesus' body and blood
- Through him, we experience forgiveness and freedom

*Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

1 Corinthians 5.7

## Mount Sinai

*A key site in the Bible – also known as Mount Horeb, or the 'Mountain of God'. Here God first met Moses at the burning bush. Moses then brought the nation of Israel back to this same mountain to meet God (see Exodus 19).*

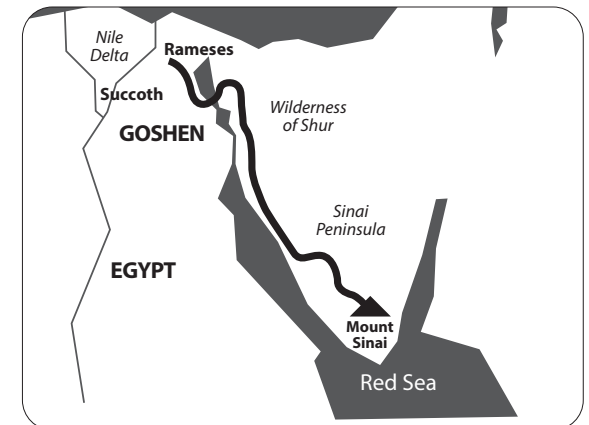
MY NOTES 

# From Egypt to Mount Sinai

## Israel sets off into the wilderness

- A pilgrim people, led by cloud and fire
- They ate miracle food called manna
- And finally arrived at Mount Sinai

Part 1 of mission impossible – completed!



Map of the Exodus:  
traditional route from Egypt to Mt Sinai

## Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

### Read Exodus 3.1–12

- Consider the context in verse 1. Why might Moses have been tempted to think, 'God could never use me'? What can make us feel like that?
- What do verses 7–9 reveal about God's heart for his people and for the broken and oppressed?
- Despite his limitations, in verses 10–12 Moses got called into the action. In what ways do we sense that God is calling us into the action? What part can we play in God's mission to help those in need?



*Restart the video and move on to PART 2.*

### PART 2

## The Law: 'I care about you'

At Sinai, God gives Israel three gifts that form the basis of his relationship with them – Law, Tabernacle and Sacrifices.

### Ten Commandments

- God first rescued Israel from slavery and then gave them the law
- Salvation is not by works but by faith
- God lays down the law out of love
- A basic moral code for the good of all humanity

1. No other gods	6. Do not murder
2. No idols	7. Do not commit adultery
3. No misuse of God's name	8. Do not steal
4. Remember the Sabbath day	9. Do not bear false witness
5. Honour your parents	10. Do not covet

See Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5

MY NOTES 



# Interpreting Old Testament laws



Israel, as a nation of ex-slaves, needed laws and guidance for life in the wilderness.

Civil laws	Ceremonial laws	Moral laws
e.g. Deuteronomy 19—26	e.g. Leviticus 11—15	e.g. Deuteronomy 5—11
Given to Israel as a nation	Food laws and cleansing rituals	Summarised in the Ten Commandments
Not binding today but contain transferable wisdom (1 Tim. 5.17–18)	Fulfilled through Jesus who makes us clean on the inside (Heb. 9.13–14)	The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life of love that fulfils the law (Rom. 13.9–10)

*'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart.'*

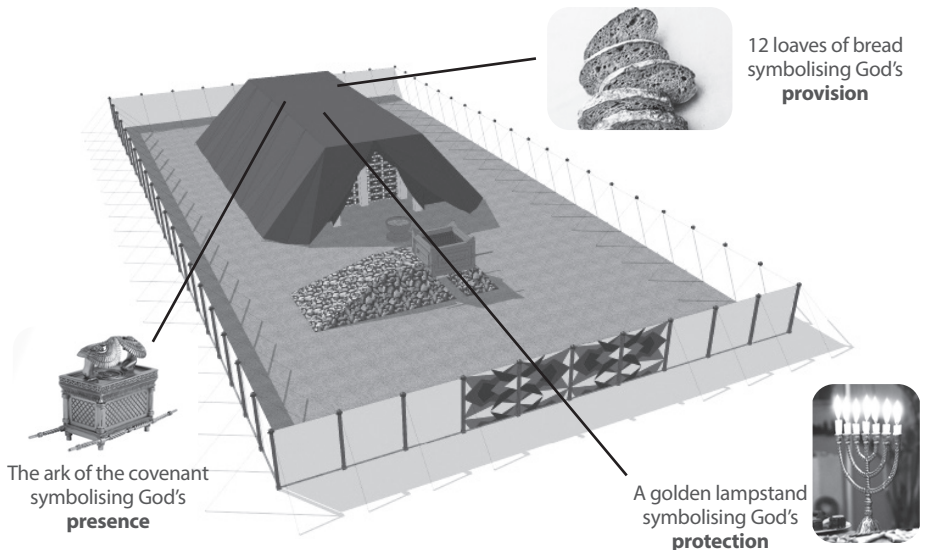
**Matthew 5.27–28**

## Tabernacle

*The word means 'place of residence' and is a reminder of God's presence with his people.*

# The Tabernacle: 'I am with you'

The people of Israel were a nomadic people, living in tents. God tells Moses, 'Build me a tent! I will camp with you.'



For more information about the design of the Tabernacle see Exodus 25—27.

## The Day of Atonement

*In Hebrew, Yom Kippur. The sacrifice of two goats on the annual Day of Atonement summed up the way God provided forgiveness for Israel.*

# The sacrifices: 'I forgive you!'

## The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)

- A goat was sacrificed by a priest. Blood was sprinkled over the people as a sign of forgiveness
- Another goat was released into the wilderness – the scapegoat that takes away sin

## Atonement in the New Testament

- Jesus is the final sacrifice for sins – our scapegoat

*'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'*

John 1.29



*'Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus ... let us draw near ... in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.'*

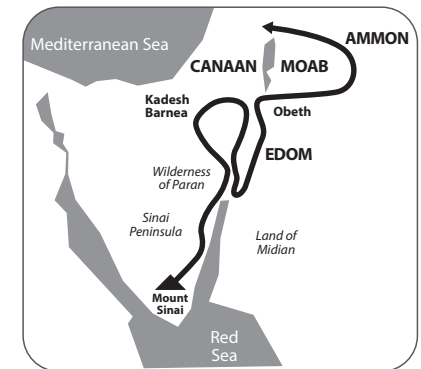
Hebrews 10.19,22

# Entering the Promised Land

## Mount Sinai to Canaan

An 11-day journey took 40 years!

- On the brink of Canaan, 12 spies are sent in
- They bring a mixed report – big grapes and big giants
- Joshua and Caleb are full of faith, the rest full of fear
- The Israelites turn back and spend 40 years wandering in the wilderness



## Fear and faith

*Me < Life's Challenges*

*Me + God > Life's Challenges*

*Do the Maths*

## Joshua

- Israel finally succeeds in entering the Promised Land, led by Joshua
- Joshua (pronounced 'Yeshua') is the Hebrew equivalent of the name 'Jesus'

# Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on this verse:

*'Everyone who sins is a slave to sin ... [But] if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'*

**John 8.34,36 NIV**

Write down something from this verse or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.



# Daily Bible Readings: Week 3

**Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:**

**WHAT?** *What did this passage mean in its context?*

**NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live in this truth.

**Day 1** Joshua 1.1–18

Joshua, the call and the promise – be strong and courageous

**Day 2** Judges 2.1–23

The Judges, the cycles and the warning – Israel stuck in a loop

**Day 3** Ruth 1.1–22 and Ruth 4.13–22

Ruth, Boaz and Bethlehem – there is a redeemer

**Day 4** 1 Samuel 3.1–21

Samuel, the voice and the vision – hear the word of the LORD

**Day 5** 1 Samuel 17.1–58

David, the giant and the stones – God's servant brings victory

**Day 6** 1 Kings 3.1–28

The king, the dream and the baby – the wisdom of Solomon



# Judges & Kings

God raised up judges and kings to lead Israel. They were anointed with the Holy Spirit and foreshadowed the coming Messiah.

## Session 4

# The Bible is precious

*'We present you with this book, the most valuable thing the world affords.'*

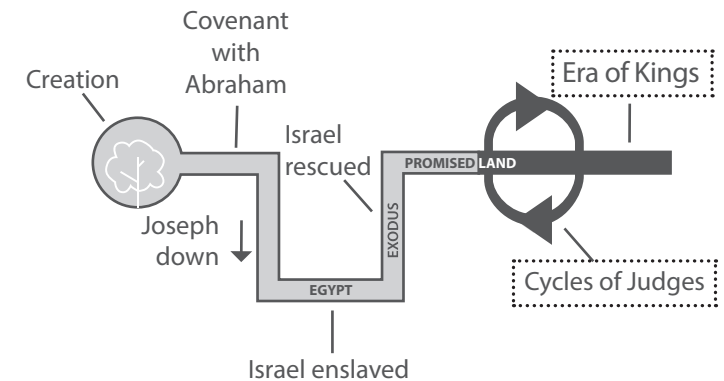
Words spoken to the Queen when presented with a Bible at her coronation in 1953

*'For me the teachings of Christ ... provide a framework in which I try to lead my life.'*



MY NOTES 

# The story so far



## Promised Land

Israel enters the Promised Land of Canaan and conquers cities like Jericho.

Israel compromises with surrounding nations.

- Canaanite religions – El, Asherah, Baal
- Philistine armies – fierce fighters, including Goliath

# The era of the Judges

- The Judges were not law-court officials but charismatic leaders who defended Israel
- They included Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Samuel

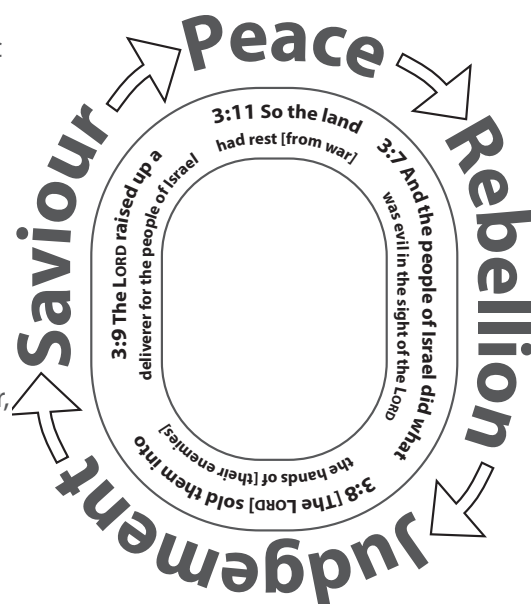
## Cycle of the judges

- Repeat offending leads to a downward spiral
- Jesus can deliver us from the negative cycles of guilt, anger, fear, and lust

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

**Romans 8.1**

MY NOTES 



# What about all the violence in the Old Testament?

## Sinful violence

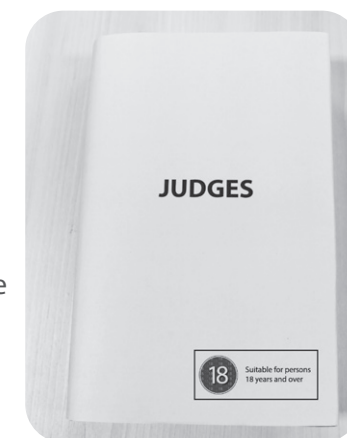
- Much violence resulted from Israel's disobedience and immorality
- Not everything in the Bible is biblical!

## Sanctioned use of force

- Remember: Cities in the Bible were not like ours today
- Remember: God was establishing Israel to be a blessing to all nations
- Remember: Physical actions in the Old Testament often have a spiritual meaning in the New Testament

*For our fight is not against flesh and blood but ... against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that you may be able to stand firm.*

**Ephesians 6.12-13**



# Ruth

## Key references

Ruth 1—4; Matthew 1.1–17

## Context

- During the era of the Judges, c. 1300 BC

## Bio

- Ruth was a Moabitess (not Jewish)
- She accompanied her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem during a famine
- A Jewish relative called Boaz acted as kinsman-redeemer (Leviticus 25.47–55)
- He rescued Naomi and Ruth from destitution
- Ruth married Boaz. Their son Obed was the grandfather of King David
- So Ruth became part of the Messiah's family tree

ABRAHAM — JUDAH — **BOAZ  
RUTH** ] — DAVID — ..... — JESUS

*Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife ... and she bore a son. Then the women [of Bethlehem] said to Naomi: 'Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer!'*

Ruth 4.13–14



# Israel's first kings

## Judge Samuel

- As the last Judge, Samuel anointed the first of the kings of Israel
- 1 & 2 Samuel tell the story from Samuel to the end of King David's reign

*In those days there was no king in Israel.  
Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

Judges 21.25

## King Saul

- Externally: the biggest man in Israel
- Internally: a dark side of insecurity, pride and anger

## King David

- God told Samuel to anoint David to replace Saul
- As the youngest of eight brothers David was only a shepherd boy
- But he was 'a man after God's own heart' (Acts 13.22)

*'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.'*

1 Samuel 16.7



# Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

## Read 1 Samuel 16.1–13

In this passage, outward appearance is contrasted with inner character.

- In what ways does our culture focus on image, status and superficial comparisons? What pressures do we face as a result?
- Look at verse 7. What did Samuel learn about the way God assesses people? How should this affect the way we view other people and ourselves?
- The New Testament describes David as 'a man after God's own heart' (Acts 13.22). What might this mean on a daily basis for us?



**Restart the video and move on to PART 2.**

## PART 2

# Anointing the Messiah

## Kings were anointed with oil

'Christ' is the Greek word for Messiah, meaning 'anointed one.'

Christ is not Jesus' surname! It is the Greek equivalent of Messiah, meaning anointed one or King.

*'The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.'*

**Luke 4.18**



*'I wish to be alive when Jesus Christ returns, that I might be the first monarch to take off my crown and lay it at his feet.'*

**Queen Victoria (1819-1901)**

## Messiah

*From the Hebrew word masiach, which means 'anointed one'. It became a way of referring to Israel's King.*



## David

### Key References

1 Samuel 16 to 2 Samuel 24; 1 Kings 1—2

### Context

- After the Judges, Saul became the first king of Israel c.1050 BC

### Bio

- Born in Bethlehem; from tribe of Judah
- Youngest son in household of Jesse
- Killed the giant Philistine, Goliath
- Attacked by Saul and hid in wilderness
- Anointed king over all Israel c. 1000 BC
- Established Jerusalem as the royal capital city
- Committed adultery with Bathsheba
- Author of numerous Psalms

*God raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus.*

Acts 13.22–23



## The city of Jerusalem

David established Jerusalem as a new capital city to unite the 12 tribes. It is also referred to as 'Mount Zion' and the 'City of David' in the Bible.

- Jerusalem means 'city of peace' and symbolises God's people
- Conquered in Bible times by King Nebuchadnezzar (sixth century BC), Antiochus IV (second century BC) and the Romans (AD 70)
- Fought over by Greeks, Romans, Turks and Crusaders
- Now a divided city and referred to as Al-Quds in Arabic

The Bible finishes with a vision of a 'new Jerusalem' (Revelation 21—22).



Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives

# King David's reign

## A reign of two halves

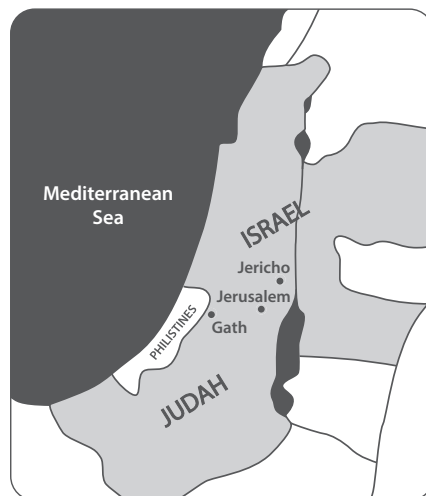
**First half:** David unites the tribes into one nation and establishes the borders of Israel.

**Second half:** David and Bathsheba – a tale of adultery and murder.

Solomon was born from this relationship and succeeded David as king.

*Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast  
love; according to your  
abundant mercy blot out my  
transgressions ... Create in  
me a clean heart, O God, and  
renew a right spirit within me.*

**David's psalm of repentance**  
**Psalm 51.1,10**



Israel's territory in David's reign

# King Solomon

## Solomon's reign was Israel's glory days

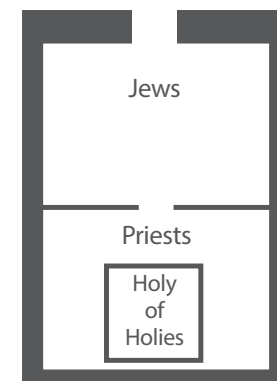
- Wisdom – the 'wisdom of Solomon'
- Wealth – an era of prosperity
- Worship – the temple is built

## Solomon's temple

This vast campus included the national bank, law courts, teaching spaces and priests ministering in the holy place.

The epicentre of the temple was the Holy of Holies, or Most Holy Place – God's dwelling place on earth.

MY NOTES



**Restrictions within  
Solomon's Temple**

# Temple in the New Testament

## Relocated from bricks to 'living stones'

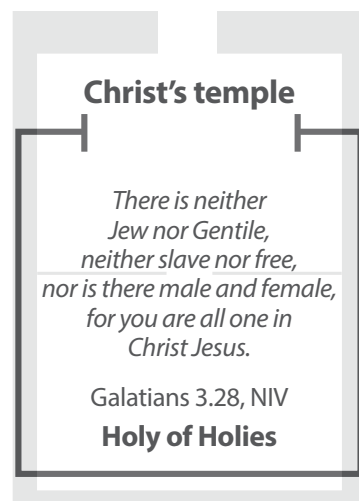
In the Old Testament, the Temple was a building in Jerusalem.  
In the New Testament, the church becomes God's dwelling place or Temple.

*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

**1 Corinthians 3.16**

Two radical changes:

- Open planned – a temple without walls and restrictions
- Open access – unlimited access to God's presence



# Wisdom literature in the Bible

This collection of writings was inspired by the wisdom of Solomon who contributed to several of these books.

## Genres

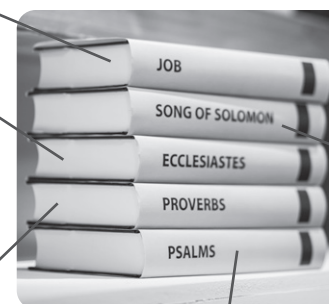
*A word meaning different communication styles, such as newspapers, websites and social media feeds.*

- Job – teaches us to trust God through tough times

- Ecclesiastes – reflections on the meaning of life

- Proverbs – practical wisdom for life

## Wisdom books in the Bible



- Psalms – Israel's songbook

- Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) – celebrates the gift of sex and marriage

## Styles of writing in the Bible

There are different genres of communication in the Bible – stories, laws, prophecies, parables, songs, wise sayings. With a bit of coaching we can learn to interpret each style.

# How to interpret wisdom literature

Wisdom in the Bible is practical and involves making good choices.

*'Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. But Wisdom is not putting it in the fruit salad'*

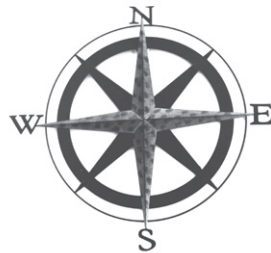
Miles Kington, Journalist

## Reading Proverbs

- Proverbs gives general principles but they are not absolute promises
- Proverbs needs to be balanced by other wisdom writings
- To be wise is to centre life on God and to follow his word

*'For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.'*

Proverbs 2.6



MY NOTES 

# Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on these verses:

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

Proverbs 3.5–6

Write down something from these verses or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.

## Daily Bible Readings: Week 4

**Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:**

**WHAT?** *What did this passage mean in its context?*

**NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live in this truth.

**Day 1** 1 Kings 18.1–39

Elijah, King Ahab and the fire – it's decision time

**Day 2** Hosea 1.1–11 and Hosea 3.1–5

The prophet, adultery and reunion – the faithfulness of God

**Day 3** 2 Chronicles 29.1–11 and 2 Chronicles 32.1–23

Hezekiah, Isaiah and the siege – God delivers his people

**Day 4** 2 Chronicles 36.1–23 and Psalm 137.1–9

Defeat, exile and Babylon – when darkness falls

**Day 5** Isaiah 52.1–15 and 53.1–12

The servant, suffering and hope – the Messiah is coming

**Day 6** Nehemiah 1.1–11 and Nehemiah 2.1–20

Return, rebuild and wait – the best is yet to come

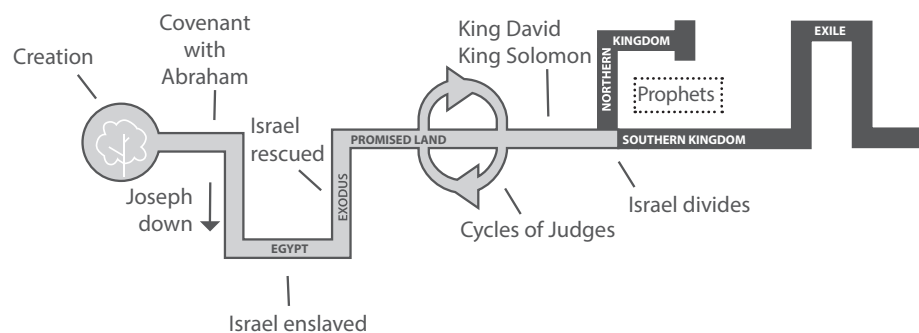


# Exile & Prophets

Israel experienced a dark period of division, defeat and exile. However, God raised up prophets who promised that the best was yet to come.

## Session 5

## The story so far



MY NOTES

## The divided kingdom

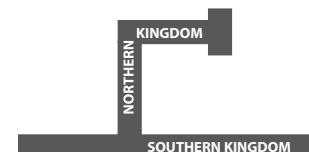
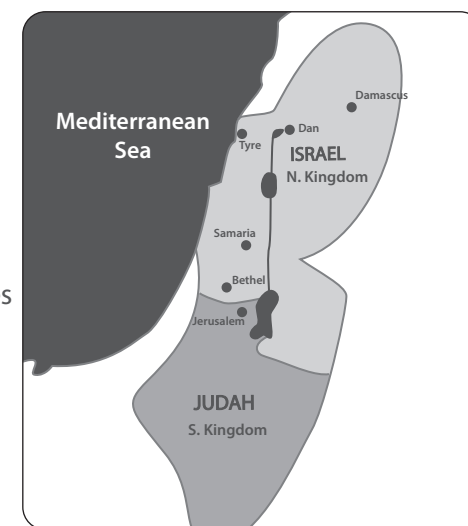
After Solomon died, his son, King Rehoboam, caused a division in Israel (930 BC)

### Northern Kingdom (Israel)

- Ten most northerly tribes in the region later known as Samaria
- They set up alternative worship sites at Dan and Bethel

### Southern Kingdom (Judah)

- Southerly tribes of Judah and Benjamin
- Retained Jerusalem as capital city and the promise of the Messiah through David's bloodline



The Northern and Southern kingdoms appointed their own kings. God also raised up prophets in each kingdom.

# The Northern Kingdom

## Hosea

- Called to marry a promiscuous woman called Gomer. Her unfaithfulness mirrors Israel's unfaithfulness to God
- But God's love remains faithful to his people

*'Go again and love the adulterous woman who is loved by another man. Love her even as the LORD has loved Israel.'*

**Hosea 3.1 (paraphrase)**



## Amos

- Israel becomes a place of exploitation and slavery
- God calls Amos, a shepherd from the Southern Kingdom, to speak up for justice in Israel

*'I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies ... But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'*

**Amos 5.21,24**

Martin Luther King quoted Amos in his famous 'I have a dream' speech.



## Elijah

### Key References

1 Kings 17—19; 2 Kings 1—2

### Context

- Northern Kingdom c. 850 BC
- King Ahab and Queen Jezebel turned Israel to Baal worship

### Bio

- Elijah means 'my God is Yahweh'
- He declared a drought in Israel
- Showdown on Mount Carmel as Elijah's God sent fire
- Elijah had a breakdown and ran away
- Succeeded by Elisha, then he rode to heaven in a chariot
- Old Testament promised one like Elijah would return to herald the arrival of God himself (Malachi 4.5)
- Elijah makes a final appearance at the transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9. 28–36)

*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.*

**James 5.17**

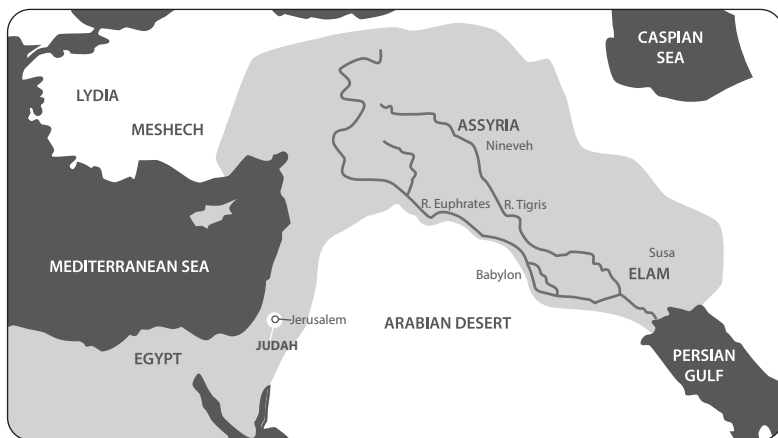
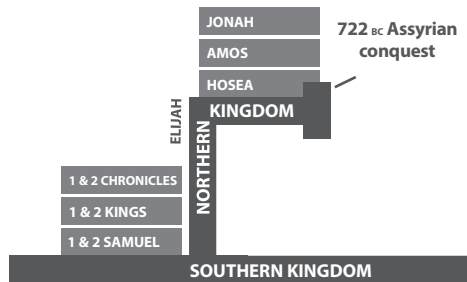




# Northern Kingdom defeated

After warnings from the prophets, the Assyrians conquered the Northern tribes in 722 BC.

The Assyrians were brutal and merged ethnic groups they conquered. The Northern tribes were therefore mixed up with other peoples and their identity was dissolved.



The Assyrian Empire c.700 BC

# Put the text in context

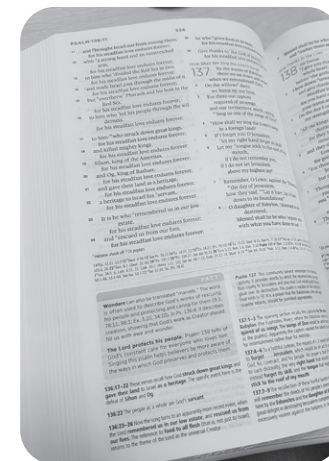
Asking questions can help us to dig deeper:

- When was this passage written?
- What was the historical context?
- Who were the intended audience?
- Why was this message important?

## Study Bibles and commentaries

These offer background information and explanation that help us dig deeper and appreciate the historical and cultural context of the Bible.

See page 150 for recommended reading.



MY NOTES

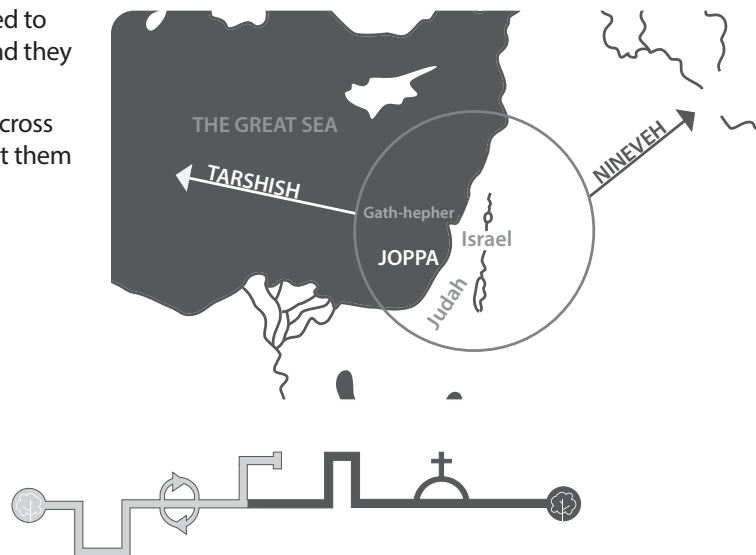
# Jonah

## Context

- Prophet in the Northern Kingdom c. 750 BC
- Israel under threat from the brutal Assyrian empire.
- The capital city of Assyria was Nineveh

## Bio

- Called to preach to Nineveh
- Jonah fled on a ship bound for Tarshish
- In a storm, Jonah was thrown overboard
- A large fish returned him to land
- He preached to Nineveh and they repented
- Jonah was cross that God let them off!



# Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

## Read Jonah 1.1–3 and then Jonah 3.1–5

- So, why did Jonah turn and run away from the call to Nineveh?
- What can make us feel like running away from God's call to share his message?

Consider the symmetry between God's first call to Jonah (1.2) and his second call after Jonah had run away and been restored (3.2).

- What might this reveal about how God handles our failures? How can this encourage us to get up and go again for God?



*Restart the video and move on to PART 2.*

## Exile

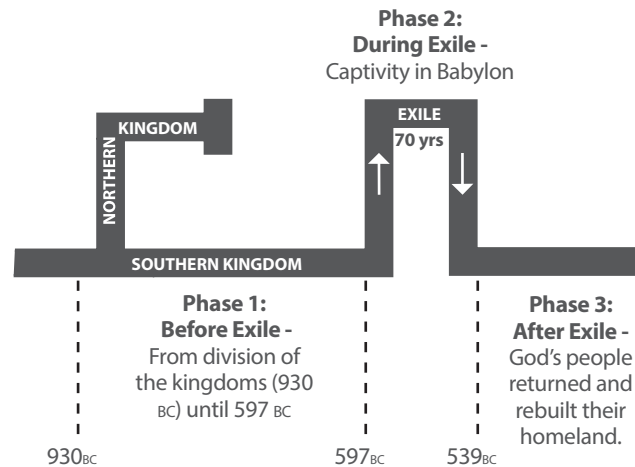
*The enforced deportation of Jews to Babylon for 70 years. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, ordered two waves of deportation (597 and 586 BC).*

### PART 2

## The Southern Kingdom

The Southern Kingdom survived the attack of the Assyrians, but later experienced defeat and exile.

This final section of the Old Testament comes in three phases:



## Phase 1: Before Exile

### Surviving the Assyrian siege

- The Assyrians besiege Jerusalem (c.701 BC)
- The prophet Isaiah urges King Hezekiah not to surrender
- Discovery of a water tunnel enables the city to survive the siege

*This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.*

**2 Chronicles 32.30**



- Archaeologists discovered Hezekiah's tunnel in 1838

Historical events in the Bible are supported by archaeological evidence.

# Isaiah

## Key References

Isaiah 1—66; 2 Kings 18—20

## Context

- Southern Kingdom (Judah) c. 750 BC
- The Assyrians conquered the Northern kingdom and then threatened Jerusalem (Isaiah 36—37)

## Bio

- The prophet Isaiah spanned the reign of Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah
- Experienced a vision of God's glory (Isaiah 6)
- Spoke oracles of judgement on God's people and their enemies
- Prophesied about the coming Messiah (Isaiah 9; 53) and global restoration (Isaiah 2; 11; 66)

*They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

Isaiah 2.4



# Interpreting Old Testament Prophets

- Understand the prophets in their context:  
There are 16 books named after prophets. They are in order of size, not date.
- Understand the prophets as God's mouthpieces:  
Prophets declared, 'Thus says the LORD ...' They also used drama to convey their message.
- Understand the prophets in the light of Jesus:  
Remarkable prophecies anticipate the arrival of the Messiah.



*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9.6

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

Isaiah 53.5

## Phase 2: During the Exile

In 597 BC the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem.

- After a failed rebellion, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, smashing the city walls and Temple
- All able-bodied Jews had to make a 500-mile journey to Babylon (modern-day Iraq)



*By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion ... If I forget you, O Jerusalem ... let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth.*

**Psalms 137.1,5–6**

### Ezekiel's visions

In Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel experienced amazing visions.

- God was still on the throne (Ezekiel 1)
- He would still use Israel to fulfil his global purpose (Ezekiel 47)

## Daniel

### Key References

Daniel 1—12

### Context

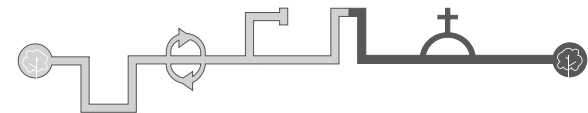
- The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 597 BC

### Bio

- An elite Jewish young man exiled to Babylon
- The Babylonians renamed him Belteshazzar
- Daniel refused to eat Babylonian foods
- Became the king's senior advisor
- Thrown into den of lions for praying to Yahweh
- Daniel is a model for Christians today – living faithfully as exiles in a foreign culture

*Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile ... I urge you as exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

**1 Peter 1.17; 2.11**





## Phase 3: After Exile

The Persians defeated the Babylonians and, in 538 BC, allowed the exiles to return home.

### Rebuilding the Temple

- The first wave began to rebuild the Temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel
- They were encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah

### Rebuilding the city walls

*'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts...' The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it.*

**Zechariah 4.6,9**

- Nehemiah brought fresh resources to rebuild Jerusalem
- Along with Ezra, Nehemiah reformed the nation's spiritual life

## The close of the Old Testament

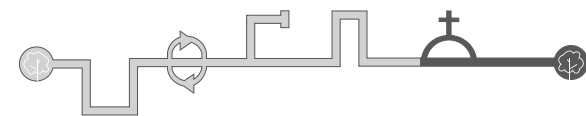
- Israel is back in the Promised Land, with Jerusalem and the Temple rebuilt
- Many prophecies and promises remain unfulfilled
- The last Old Testament prophet, Malachi, declares the greatest promise:

*'I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the LORD you are seeking will come to his temple.'*

**Malachi 3.1**

*God is about to write himself into the story and walk on to the stage of human history.*

MY NOTES 



## Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on this verse:

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ... and his name shall be: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

**Isaiah 9.6**

Write down something from this verse or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.

## Daily Bible Readings: Week 5

**Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:**

**WHAT?** *What did this passage mean in its context?*

**NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live in this truth.

**Day 1** Luke 1.1–56

Angels, a virgin and a song – the coming of Jesus

**Day 2** Luke 4.1–44

Temptation, healing and preaching – the ministry of Jesus

**Day 3** Luke 9.1–36

Calling, confession and transfiguration – the identity of Jesus

**Day 4** Luke 18.1–43

Parables, miracles and the cost – the call of Jesus

**Day 5** Luke 23.1–56

The trial, the cross and the tomb – the death of Jesus

**Day 6** Luke 24.1–52

Resurrection and ascension – the victory of Jesus



# Jesus & the Gospels

The Gospels capture the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ – Messiah, Saviour and LORD. Now this same Jesus calls to us: 'Come, follow me!'

## Session 6



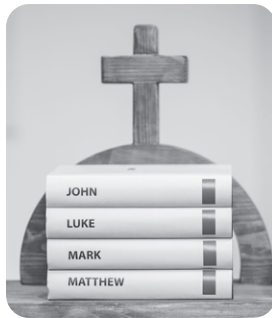
## Gospel

*A two-part Old English word, 'godspel', meaning 'good news', which translates the Greek word 'euangelion'*

*These [things] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**John 20.31**

# Introducing the Gospels



- The four Gospels give different portraits of Jesus Christ
- They focus on his public ministry and especially his final weeks
- They were intended for different audiences

MY NOTES 

## MATTHEW

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

**Matthew 1.1**

- Written for a Jewish audience
- Quotes the Old Testament over 100 times
- Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah
- As a descendant of Abraham, Jesus fulfils Old Testament promises

- Authored by John (Jewish) Mark (Roman) – friend of apostle Peter
- The shortest and probably the earliest Gospel (c. AD 64)
- Mark presents Jesus to the Roman Empire

## MARK

*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

**Mark 1.1**

## LUKE

*It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account ... that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

Luke 1.3-4

- Luke was a medical doctor who researched eyewitness evidence
- The only non-Jewish writer in the New Testament
- Traces Jesus' lineage right back to Adam
- A Gospel for the marginalised – children, women, Gentiles and the poor

## JOHN

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.*

John 1.1-2, NIV

- John echoes the opening line of Genesis
- In Jesus, God has come to bring new creation
- Jesus is God incarnate (literally 'in-the-flesh') – John 1.14
- Jesus used God's signature name, I AM (John 8.58)

# Are the Gospels reliable?

## The Gospels relied on eyewitness evidence

- Written within the lifetime of Jesus' contemporaries
- They include specific details – names, dates, locations

## What about differences between the Gospels?

- Differences indicate that the writers did not falsely collude on their stories
- The variety is a sign of authenticity



4th-century fragment of John's Gospel

## Are the Gospel manuscripts reliable?

Author	When written	Earliest copy	Time span	No of copies
Caesar	100–44 BC	AD 900	1000 years	10
Plato	427–347 BC	AD 900	1200 years	7
Aristotle	384–322 BC	AD 1100	1400 years	49
Gospels	AD 55–95	AD 130	35–70 years	5200*

\* manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts

# How to interpret the Gospels

Try reading a Gospel in one sitting

*'The best way to experience a field of flowers is on horse back.'*

Chinese proverb

Appreciate the richness of four Gospels

The four different portraits give a fuller picture.



## Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

Consider Matthew and Luke's versions of the Beatitudes:

<b>Matthew 5.3–4,6</b>	<b>Luke 6.20–21</b>
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.	Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.	Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

- What differences can you spot? How might these reflect the different emphases and concerns of Matthew and Luke?
- Which one of these beatitudes seems most relevant to your life right now? And why?
- How should these beatitudes shape our attitude on a daily basis?

*Restart the video and move on to PART 2.*

## PART 2

# Jesus' birth and childhood

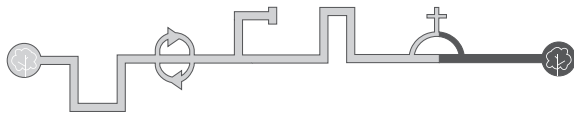
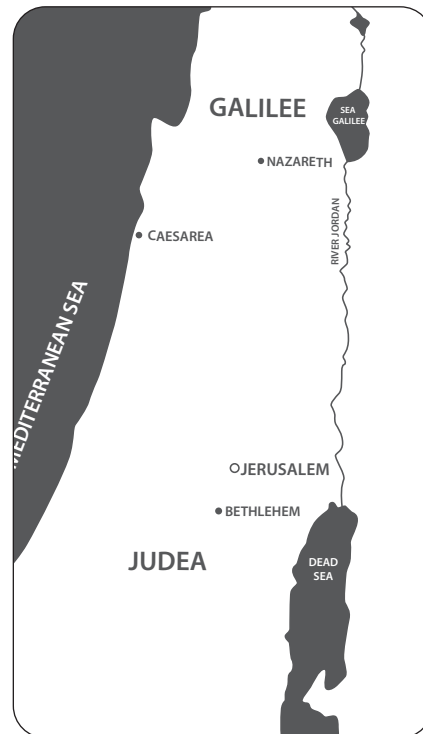
- An imperial census means Joseph and Mary return to Bethlehem - the birth place of King David.
- Shepherds (poor Jews) and Magi (rich Gentiles) worship Jesus
- Jesus grows up in Nazareth with several siblings, working as a carpenter

*But you, O Bethlehem ... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

**Micah 5.2**

*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.*

**Luke 2.52**



# Jesus' public ministry

## The baptism of Jesus

- John the Baptist heralds the arrival of Jesus
- The Holy Spirit anoints Jesus at his baptism

*The Holy Spirit descended on him ... like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'*

**Luke 3.22**

## The temptation of Jesus

- Satan tempts Jesus to eat in disobedience, like Adam and Eve
- But Jesus is the new Adam who overcomes evil

*The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone."'*

**Luke 4.3-4**

MY NOTES 

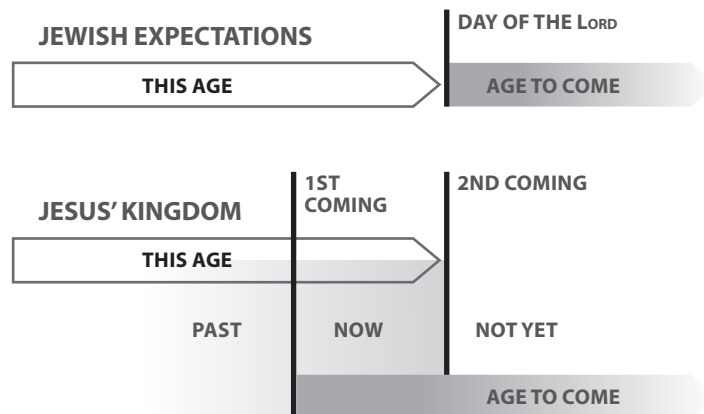
# Jesus and the Kingdom

*Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming ... 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'*

Mark 1.14–15

- The kingdom of God is not a region but a realm where God is king
- Jesus healed the sick, cast out evil, fed the poor and raised the dead to demonstrate God's kingdom

## The Kingdom is *now* and *not yet*



# Jesus' identity and mission

*Jesus said to his disciples, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'*

Matthew 16.15–16

- The disciples finally realise who Jesus is
- But Jesus shocks them. His mission is to suffer and die

## The Mount of Transfiguration

- Jesus is lit up with the glory of God
- Moses (law) and Elijah (prophets) represent the Old Testament
- Jesus will bring salvation through his exodus

*And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who ... spoke of his exodus, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

Luke 9.30–31

# Jesus' death and resurrection

## The crucifixion

*And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him.*

**Luke 23.33**

- After false trials, Jesus was mocked and flogged
- Then he hung on the cross in agony from 9am to 3pm
- But here he spoke his most powerful words

## The resurrection

*'He is not here, for he has risen.'*

**Matthew 28.6**

- The claim: bodily resurrection that is the start of a new creation
- The evidence: the empty tomb, the eyewitnesses, numerous appearances

*'The best attested fact in ancient history.'*

**Richard Swinburne, Prof. Emeritus Oxford University**

### JESUS' FINAL WEEK (April c.30 AD)

SUNDAY: *Triumphal entry into Jerusalem*

MONDAY: *Cleansing the Temple*

TUESDAY: *Teaching in the Temple*

THURSDAY: *Passover meal, then arrest and trials*

FRIDAY: *Crucifixion*

SUNDAY: *Resurrection!*



*'Christianity, if false, is of no importance.*

*But if true, it is of infinite importance.*

*The one thing it cannot be is  
moderately important'*

*Mere Christianity*

– CS Lewis

## Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on this verse:

*These [things] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**John 20.31**

Write down something from this verse or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.

## Daily Bible Readings: Week 6

**Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:**

**WHAT?** *What did this passage mean in its context?*

**NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live in this truth.

**Day 1** Acts 2:1-47

The fire, the tongues and a new community – Pentecost

**Day 2** Acts 7:1-60

Stephen, the speech and the stoning – persecution

**Day 3** Acts 9:1-31

Paul, conversion and calling – Damascus road experience

**Day 4** Acts 15:1-35

Controversy, the council and the conclusion – simply grace

**Day 5** Acts 16:1-40

Philippi, Lydia and a jailer – church planting in Greece

**Day 6** Acts 28:1-31

The viper, the gospel and Rome – ends of the earth



# **Acts & the Church**

Acts tells the story of the explosive growth of early Christianity. This story continues today as we share the good news of Jesus with our world.

## **Session 7**

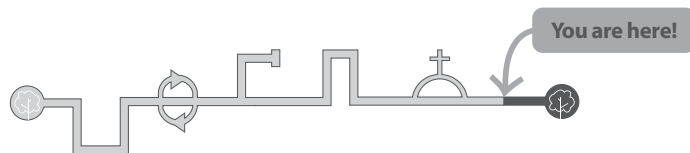
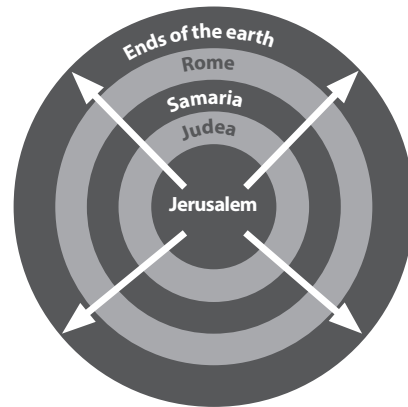
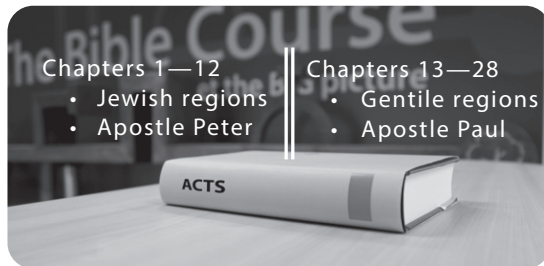


# Introducing Acts

- Acts records the spread of early Christianity: c. AD 30–63
- Written by Dr Luke as a sequel to his Gospel
- Luke's Gospel = all that Jesus did in the power of the Holy Spirit
- Acts = all that Jesus' followers did in the power of the Holy Spirit

*'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'*

Acts 1.8



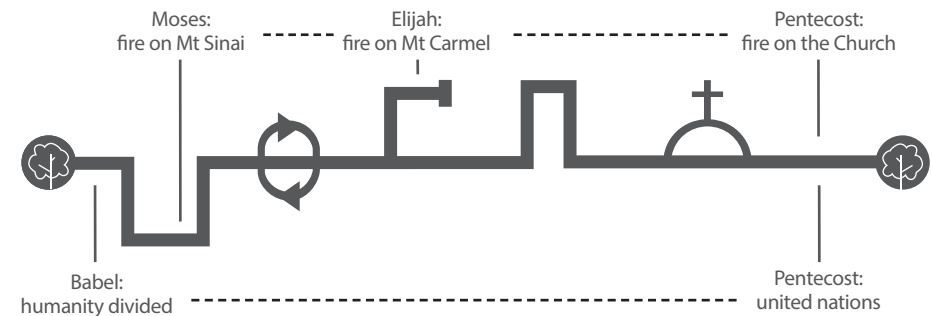
# The Day of Pentecost

- Jewish festival celebrating the beginning of harvest
- 120 of Jesus' followers were meeting to pray

*Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire ... rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Acts 2.2–4

## Tongues of fire: the Holy Spirit fills all God's people



## Foreign tongues: the Holy Spirit reunites all nations

## Peter

### Key References

Luke 5.1-11; John 21; Acts 2—5; Acts 10—12

### Context

- Lake Galilee – 60 miles north of Jerusalem
- Under Roman occupation c. 30 AD

### Bio

- Fisherman with his brother Andrew and business partners James and John
- Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter or Cephas
- (Linked to *petra*, meaning 'rock')
- One of 12 apostles
- Denied knowing Jesus (three times)
- Key figure in early Church
- Author of 1 & 2 Peter
- Died a martyr's death

*Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed the crowd ... 'Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.'*

**Acts 2.14, 36**

## The Holy Spirit transforms us

### New courage

- Peter preached boldly in the same city where he denied Jesus
- The Holy Spirit frees us from fear and gives boldness

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers ... All who believed were together and had all things in common.*

**Acts 2.42,44**

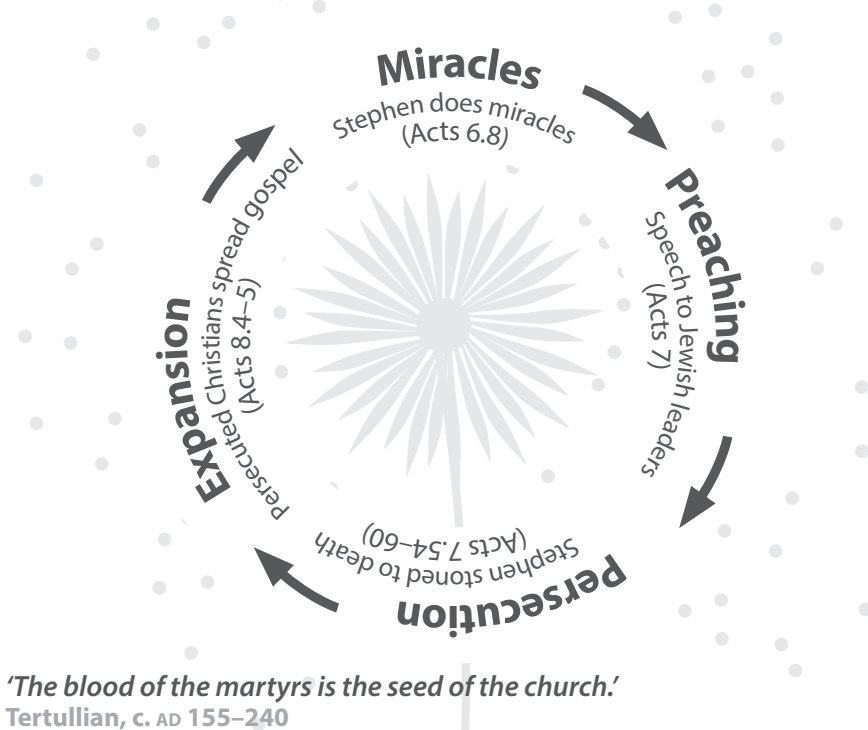
### New community

- Three thousand were baptised on one day
- Pentecost was the birthday of the Christian Church
- Christianity is all about community

MY NOTES 

# Cycles of expansion

The early growth of Christianity occurred in cycles with similar features (see Acts 3—4, Acts 5—6, Acts 7—8):



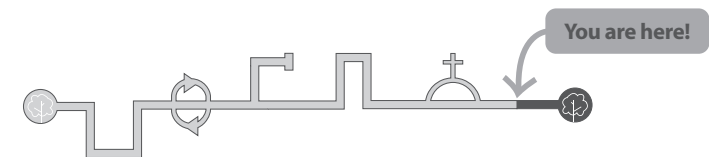
# Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

Acts chapter 7 records Stephen's speech and the moment he was stoned to death. We then see what happened next.

## Read Acts 8.1-8

- Given the context in verses 1-3, what impresses you about the response of these persecuted Christians in verse 4?
- Philip shared the good news in Samaria. Why was this a radical thing for a Jew to do? How can we step out of our comfort zones and share the message of Jesus?
- How did God work through Philip? What experiences have we had of God's power accompanying the good news of Jesus?



**Restart the video and move on to PART 2.**

## PART 2

# The Apostle Paul

## Paul's background



*Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews ... a Pharisee... a persecutor of the church'*

**Philippians 3.5–6**

## Paul's conversion

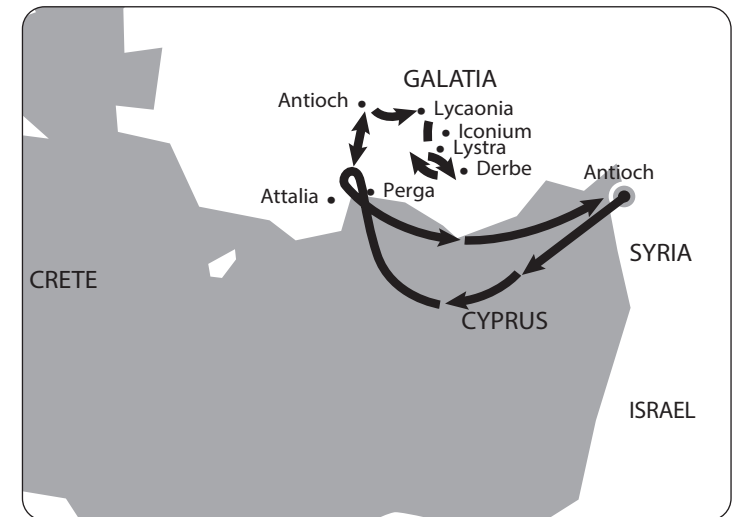
- Saul hated Christians and believed Jesus was a blasphemer
- On the road to Damascus, he met the risen Jesus (Acts 9)
- Jesus called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles
- He became known as Paul (Roman), not Saul (Jewish)

# Mission to Gentile regions

## Acts 13—14

- Paul and Barnabas set off from Antioch on a mission trip c. AD 46
- Travelled to cities in region of Galatia (Turkey)
- Preached the gospel, faced persecution and planted churches
- Paul later wrote the letter 'Galatians' to these churches

MY NOTES



Paul's first mission trip:  
Acts 13—14

# The Council of Jerusalem

The controversy: *Do Gentile Christians need to observe Jewish laws?*

Jesus + Jewish laws (e.g. circumcision) = Salvation

OR

Jesus = Salvation

- The apostles gathered in Jerusalem to decide
- They wrote a letter to all churches with their conclusion (Acts 15.28–29)

*It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.*

*Farewell.*

# Paul's mission trips



Cities where Paul and his team planted churches (🏛️)

## Paul's approach to mission

- Strategic cities: urban centres reached whole regions
- Creative preaching: the gospel is versatile to reach any culture
- Church planting: Christians formed radical new communities of faith

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

**Galatians 3.28**

# How to read the epistles

- Twenty-one letters in the New Testament
- Written to churches or individuals
- Thirteen written by Paul are arranged in size order

**WHAT?** What was the original context of the letter?

- Background information explains issues raised
- E.g. Corinth: wealthy cosmopolitan city notorious for immorality

*Flee from sexual immorality ... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit ...? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

**1 Corinthians 6.18–20**

**NOW WHAT?** Now what do these letters mean for us?

- Cultural practices change but the principles remain
- New Testament letters are God-breathed and authoritative

MY NOTES 

# Romans: A letter that changes lives



**St Augustine (4th century)**

After reading Romans 13.13–14:

*'Relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled.'*



**Martin Luther (16th century)**

As a monk, he tried to please God by good works. Through Romans, he grasped the gospel and sparked a Reformation:

*'This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.'*



**John Wesley (18th century)**

In 1738 at a meeting in London he heard someone reading Luther's Preface to Romans:

*'I felt my heart strangely warmed. And an assurance was given that he had died for my sins, even mine.'*



**Danny (21st century)**

A former drug addict who studied Romans and concluded:

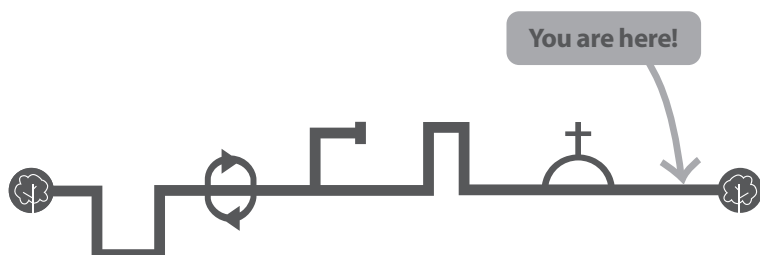
*'I've taken a lot of medicine in my time but now the Bible is like my medicine, fixing me up on the inside.'*

## The story continues ...

- Acts finishes with Paul under house arrest in Rome
- The end of Acts is not the end. The mission continues.

*Paul lived in Rome for two years, 'teaching about the LORD Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.'*

### Acts 28.31



*Now it's our turn to share the good news of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

## Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on this verse:

*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth.*

## Acts 1.8

Write down something from this verse or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.

## Daily Bible Readings: Week 7

**Read each passage through carefully. Then consider:**

**WHAT?** *What did this passage mean in its context?*

**NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Write down a key verse or phrase that stands out.
- Pray it through, asking God to help you live in this truth.

**Day 1** Revelation 1.1–20

John, the Alpha and Omega – a vision of Jesus Christ

**Day 2** Revelation 3.1–22

Trials, commendation and challenge – a vision of the church

**Day 3** Revelation 4.1–11

The door, the elders and the throne – a vision of heaven

**Day 4** Revelation 7.1–17

Tribes, the throne and the lamb – a vision of God's people

**Day 5** Revelation 20.11–15 and 21.1–27

Judgment, the city and the glory – a vision of new creation

**Day 6** Revelation 22.1–21

The river, the tree and the LORD – a vision of the end





# Revelation & Review

The Bible finishes with visions of a new creation. Paradise lost will be regained. Inspired by this hope, let's make the Bible our priority until we get there!

## Session 8

# Introducing Revelation

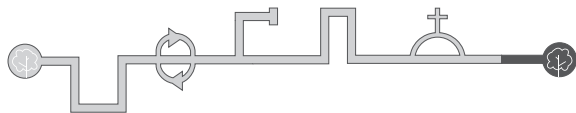
- The last book of the Bible
- 'Revelation' from Greek *apokalypsis* meaning 'unveiling'
- Visions given to the apostle John while exiled on the island of Patmos (c. AD 90)

## The setting: persecution and martyrdom

- Christians were targeted by Roman emperors (e.g. Domitian)
- Revelation shows that Jesus is on the throne of heaven, no matter what is happening on earth.

*I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'*

Revelation 7.9–10



# Interpreting Revelation and apocalyptic writings

- Apocalyptic writings engage with realities out of this world
- See also Old Testament books like Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah

## Symbolic numbers

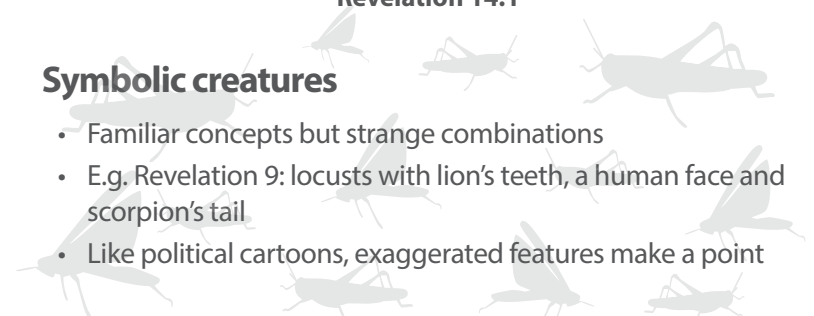
7	The number of perfection or completion	The number of Old Testament tribes and the original New Testament apostles	12	144,000
				12 (Old Testament) x 12 (New Testament) x 1000 = all God's people

*Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*

Revelation 14.1

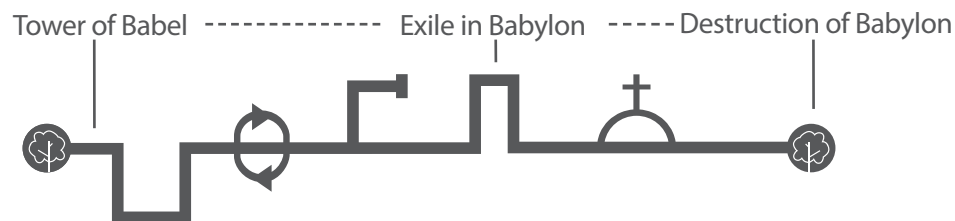
## Symbolic creatures

- Familiar concepts but strange combinations
- E.g. Revelation 9: locusts with lion's teeth, a human face and scorpion's tail
- Like political cartoons, exaggerated features make a point



# Judgement: out with the old

Babylon symbolises worldly pride and rebellion



*Woe! Woe, O great city [of Babylon]. Clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold ... For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.*

Revelation 18.16–17 (paraphrase)

*Living for money and possessions is like building sandcastles by the seashore. Soon it will all be gone.*

# Restoration: in with the new

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man!'*

Revelation 21.1–3



## New creation: 'A new heaven and a new earth'

- An Eden-like paradise is restored
- Resurrection bodies will enjoy a perfect new world



## New Jerusalem: 'The holy city coming down'

- The people of God are like a new Jerusalem
- A true united nations



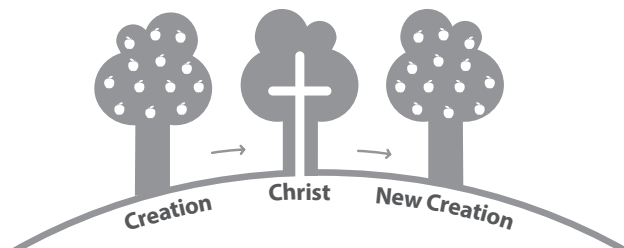
## New temple: 'God will dwell with them'

- The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube
- Now the whole world is a temple of God's presence

# The Bible: a tale of three trees

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal... also, on either side of the river, the tree of life ... The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Revelation 22.1–2



*The Bible turns full circle. Through Jesus we are brought back to Eden and the tree of life. Paradise lost is regained!*

*'All their life in this world ... had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before.'*

**CS Lewis**, *The Last Battle*

## Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

Remember, John is describing something beyond our imagination. It's more like an artist's impression than a photo.

### Read Revelation 21.1–5 and Revelation 22.1–5

- Which feature of these visions of new creation are you most looking forward to, and why?
- How will the way we relate to God in the new creation surpass our experience of him to date?
- How can this eternal hope motivate us through life's challenges?



*Restart the video and move on to PART 2.*

### PART 2

## Get the BIG picture

Try drawing the Bible storyline for yourself and label the key features.



# How to interpret the Bible

## **WHAT?** *What did this passage mean back then?*

Put the text in its context:

- When was the passage written?
- Who were the original readers?
- What did it mean to them?

## **SO WHAT?** *So what does this passage mean in the light of Jesus?*

- The New Testament is our chapter of the story
- Jesus was foreshadowed in key characters (e.g. David), key events (e.g. the Exodus) and key prophecies (e.g. Isaiah)

*Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself ... They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us ... while he opened to us the Scriptures?'*

**Luke 24.27,32**

## **NOW WHAT?** *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Our goal is to apply the Bible so that we are transformed.

*Be doers of the word, and not hearers only... For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.*

**James 1.22–23**



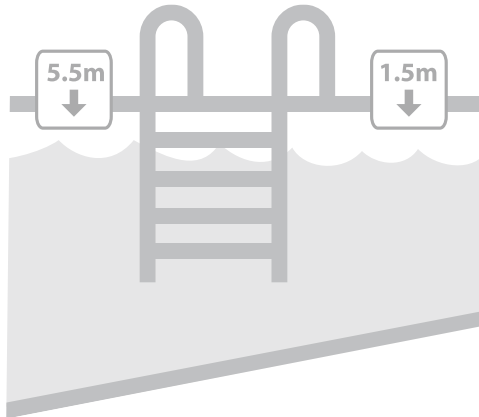
MY NOTES 

## Next steps with the Bible

### What's your next step?

- Read the Bible in one year
- Study a book in detail
- Memorise key verses
- Start a Bible book club
- Run The Bible Course again

See page 150 for recommended reading.



*'In the Bible a child can paddle and an elephant can swim.'*

William Temple (1881–1944)

## Make the Bible a priority

*'I read the Bible almost every day.*

*Almost on Monday, almost on Tuesday, almost on Wednesday...'*



*Put the Bible in first and the rest of life will fit in around it.*

## First things first



*Life was always too busy and God got pushed to the back of the queue. I fell asleep reading my Bible so many times it might as well have been a pillow. But through The Bible Course, I took action and reordered my priorities. I put the Bible and prayer in first place and the results are beautiful and profound. On a daily basis I gain a sense of perspective and peace by seeing life through God's eyes.*

Neil works in the media industry



*I've always known the Bible was important and wanted to be someone who read it regularly. But I found it really difficult to actually get motivated, to open the pages and make a start. The Bible Course has been an incredible tool for me. The manual is something I still treasure; I call it my 'Bible sat nav'! It stays beside my Bible and I refer to it when I'm feeling lost. Now I have the confidence to read the Bible every day.*

Jane is a primary school teacher

## Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on these verses:

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

**Psalms 1.1–3 NIV**

Write down something from these verses or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.



# Recommended Reading

## Bible Versions

Good News Bible (GNB)  
English Standard Version (ESV)  
Contemporary English Version (CEV)  
The Message Version (MSG)  
New International Version (NIV)

## Study Bibles

ESV Study Bible (Crossway)  
GNB – The Youth Edition (Bible Society)

## Audio Bibles

The New Testament Contemporary English Version (CEV)  
ESV Hear the Word Audio Bible  
*The Bible* TV mini-series (2013, available on Netflix)

## Online Bible Resources

Bible Society: [www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible)  
The Bible Project: [www.thebibleproject.com](http://www.thebibleproject.com)  
New Testament Gateway: [www.ntgateway.com](http://www.ntgateway.com)

## Bible Apps

YouVersion  
Bible in one Year (BioY)  
Olive Tree Bible

## Bible Commentaries & Dictionaries

DA Carson et al (eds), *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (IVP, 1994)  
The Bible Speaks Today series (IVP)  
Tom Wright, The New Testament for Everyone series (SPCK)  
IH Marshal et al (eds), *New Bible Dictionary* (IVP, 1996)

## Books on understanding the Bible

GD Fee & D Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Zondervan, 2014)  
GD Fee & D Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* (Zondervan, 2014)  
P Gooder, *The Bible – A Beginner's Guide* (Oneworld 2013)  
V Roberts, *God's Big Picture* (IVP, 2009)  
W Cordeiro, *The Divine Mentor* (Bethany House, 2008)  
G Guthrie, *Read the Bible for Life* (Broadman & Holman, 2011)

# Glossary

- Apocalyptic** The Greek word *apokalypsis* means unveiling or revelation and it is a genre of writing in the Bible. It is when God draws back the curtains to reveal what could not otherwise be seen. Sometimes this is revelation of what will happen in the future; other times it is of what can be seen in the heavenly realm in the present.
- Apocrypha** The 66 books of the Bible have been recognised, from the earliest times, by all Christians as having God's authority and given canonical status. (See Canon.) Some Christian traditions (such as Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches) regard additional books as having equal canonical status. These are known variously as Apocrypha, Deutero-Canonical or Inter-testamental, and are printed in some Bibles.
- Authority** Ultimately God is the final source of everything and what he says is the final authority. The Bible is God's word, given by him, and is the final authority for faith and practice. It gives trustworthy information and reliable truth about God and his world. We honour the Bible by believing what it asserts and doing what it commands.

**Bible** Literally means 'books'.

**Canon, Canonical** 'Canon' is a Greek word meaning 'rule' or 'standard' and it is the church's standard for faith and practice. In the first century the canon was largely recognised, and in the following centuries it settled. The church recognised the canon of the authoritative books.

**Commentary** A commentary is a book which explains the meaning of the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Commentaries range from the very scholarly to the popular and easy to read.

**Concordance** A concordance lists all the places a particular word is used in the Bible. Many concordances are available on the internet, making looking up particular Bible verses very easy. An analytical concordance shows all the different Hebrew or Greek words which may be translated by the same English word.

<b>Covenant</b>	The word 'covenant' signifies an agreement between two parties. In the Bible there are many covenants between God and his people. None of these are a contract between equals, but more like a covenant between a king and his subjects. The word 'testament' is equivalent to covenant, explaining why the Bible is divided into two – the Old Testament (God's covenant based on the Law given through Moses) and the New Testament (God's covenant based on Jesus Christ).
<b>Epistle</b>	Epistle means 'letter'. In the NT 21 of the books are letters either to churches or individuals. They are written by the apostles – Paul, John, Peter, James and Jude. We do not know who wrote Hebrews.
<b>Exegesis</b>	Usually 'exegesis' refers to the work of making clear the meaning of a Bible text. This includes knowing the meaning of the original words and the historical and cultural context in which they were given. 'Exposition' is similar but also focuses on how this text applies to our contemporary lives.
<b>Exile</b>	The 'exile' refers to the forcible deportation of most of the Jewish people to Babylon for 70 years. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, ordered two waves of deportation (597 and 586 BC) and Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed many Jews to return in

539BC. The Exile was part of God's judgement on his people and the restoration a fulfilment of his promises of mercy.

<b>Exodus</b>	'Exodus' is the name of the second book of the Bible and also the name of the greatest event in Old Testament times: the escape of the Israelites, under Moses, from Egypt and their journey through the desert to Mt Sinai where they received God's laws.
<b>Genre</b>	Genre refers to a category or style of literature. In the Bible there are many kinds of writing including narrative, poetry, teaching, wisdom, prophecy, and history. Good interpretation of the Bible needs to take into account the type of genre.
<b>Gnosticism</b>	Gnosticism is a heresy started in the first centuries of the church. Its central teaching is that the spirit is good and the material world is bad. Therefore salvation for a gnostic is to escape from the earthly body, through a special 'gnosis' (Greek for 'knowledge'), rather than through faith in Jesus.
<b>Gospel</b>	The Greek word <i>euangelion</i> means 'good news, joyful tidings.' The 'gospel' refers to the good news preached by Jesus, and later about Jesus. The gospel was preached and spoken before it was written. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) are different perspectives, all based on eyewitness evidence. They record the historic life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Hermeneutics** Hermeneutics refers to the rules and principles which govern the interpretation of texts. This includes the correct establishment of the original meaning, relating specific texts to their wider context in the whole Bible and applying the text to our lives and cultures now.

**Inspiration** The inspiration of the Bible (2 Tim 3:16) does not mean that it makes us 'feel inspired' – like a great painting, holiday or piece of music. Paul taught that the words of the Bible, in addition to being freely chosen by Bible writers, were breathed out by God, and therefore have unique authority.

**New Testament (NT)** The universal church recognises 27 books in the NT, beginning with Matthew and ending with Revelation. There have been a few arguments about certain specific books, e.g. Hebrews, because of uncertain authorship; and Luther didn't like James. The word 'testament' refers to the special relationship or covenant which God has made with his people.

**Old Testament (OT)** The OT refers to the 39 books in the first section of the Bible. Jews call these 39 books 'The Hebrew Bible' but they are arranged in a different order. These are the same Jewish scriptures that Jesus used and he recognised them as God's word.

**Prophets** Prophets were men who spoke or wrote God's word to the people. Often the phrase 'the word of the Lord came to...' is used to indicate that God is the author of the words spoken by the prophets. The words of many OT prophets are recorded in 16 books from Isaiah to Malachi. Sometimes they foretold events which happened years later. The fulfilment of dozens of OT prophecies in the life, death and resurrection of Christ is remarkable and authenticates the continuity between the OT and the NT.

**Pentateuch** Pentateuch refers to the first five books of the Bible, which have the authority of Moses behind them.

**Septuagint** The Septuagint is a translation of the Jewish scriptures (OT) into Greek. The OT was originally written in Hebrew (with a little Aramaic) and translated, for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews, in the centuries before Christ. Many quotations of the OT in the NT are taken from this Greek version.

**Wisdom literature** In the Bible, wisdom literature includes Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job and a few passages from other books. They contain practical wisdom, dealing with everyday conduct and morality in business, family and social relations.

# Acknowledgements

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Queen Elizabeth II wearing the Vladimir Tiara, the Queen Victoria  
Jubilee Necklace, the blue Garter Riband, Badge and Garter Star  
and the Royal Family Orders of King George V and King George  
VI, helpfully provided by the Library and Archives Canada.

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# Notes