

A Simple Explanation of the Bible

Jonathan Gibson

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For my international friends

*“...that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing you may
have life in His name.”*

John 20:31

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Preface

Nearly four years ago some Chinese friends asked me to explain the Bible to them. They had never held a Bible in their hands, and I had never been confronted with such a task. Little did I know that what would unfold would be the production of *The Story of a Kingdom* (SOK) material: Book, Study Guide, PowerPoint, and in progress, a Children's Version. For more details on each of these visit www.sok.org.uk.

The Story of a Kingdom is primarily for people who want to understand the story of the Bible. I follow the theme of God's Kingdom through the Bible, using the definition: God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing; seeking to show how God's Kingdom in the Old Testament builds up to prepare us for Jesus and His Kingdom in the New Testament.

There are numerous people I wish to thank for contributing to this work over the last four years. My thanks start with Peter Bovill who has been a good friend and brother in Gospel work for some years now. Peter first led the international Bible study with me and typed up very early drafts of my notes. Lee Campbell was involved in the initial design and formatting process and must take the credit for what I think is a great looking cover. He has also helped in sharpening my understanding of some parts of this work. Gareth Gamble has performed most of the design and formatting for what you now see; constantly having to adapt things as the work grew, and patiently putting up with my endless changes. He has worked so diligently behind the scenes, and I am grateful to him for the hours (in fact, days!) that he has spent in front of a computer. Send me the bill from the optician! Keri McGregor, Joanne Kilpatrick, and Philip Saunders have been involved in the editing process at some stage, and if it were not for them, it would read a whole lot worse than it does. Any mistakes that do remain are really their fault as much as mine, but I'm not supposed to say that in the preface to a book. Tim and Lynn Anderson, David Gibson and Melvin Tinker have all provided clear and helpful feedback on the material at different stages, and I am indebted to them. I wish to thank Kaman Ng and Jana Ovcarikova who have translated the SOK Book into Chinese (simplified and traditional), and Slovak respectively. Lynn Tok has kindly translated the SOK PowerPoint into simplified Chinese, and Gokhan Kaya has translated it into Turkish. These materials are available from www.sok.org.uk. My thanks also go to Hilton McGregor who has been extremely kind to print this material at cost price, without which this book would not be in your hands.

If this book goes some way in providing the reader with a framework in which to understand the story of the Bible then I will be extremely grateful.

Jonathan Gibson
Belfast, 2005

For God's glory alone

GOD'S KINGDOM IN HISTORY

Jesus and the Whole Bible

The Bible is a book about a person called Jesus Christ. Let Jesus Himself convince us of this point:

‘These are the Scriptures that testify about me...’ (John 5:39b).

He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms’ (Luke 24:44).

The Bible has 66 parts; and we must remember that as we read through these, they connect to tell one story – the story of Jesus and His Kingdom. Jesus is the glue that holds the 66 parts together. The name ‘Jesus’ should be written on the spine of every Bible to symbolise the fact that He is the one who unites all the pages together. But how do all these parts relate to Jesus?

In order to understand the Bible we must understand the beginning, for that is where the plot is established. The Bible begins and ends with similar language of God’s people living in His presence, under His loving rule. This must therefore be our control for understanding the other parts of the Bible. It is all about God’s Kingdom – God’s people, living in God’s place, under God’s rule and blessing. The Bible follows this simple plotline:

Creation (Kingdom) \Rightarrow Ruin \Rightarrow New Creation (New Kingdom)

The Bible begins with God establishing His Kingdom at the creation of the world. But His Kingdom is soon ruined. God then makes many promises throughout the Old Testament to rebuild His Kingdom. In the New Testament Jesus fulfils those promises.

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20a).

The Bible can therefore also be understood like this:

Promise \Rightarrow Jesus \Rightarrow Fulfilment

Some of Jesus’ first recorded words are,

‘The time has come... The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’ (Mark 1:15).

When Jesus says, ‘The time has come... The Kingdom of God is near’, He is announcing the good news that God’s Kingdom will be established through Him. Through Jesus, God will re-establish His Kingdom that was ruined at the beginning of creation.

This means the first part of the Bible (called the Old Testament, 39 books) is about God’s promised Kingdom; and the second part of the Bible (called the New Testament, 27 books) is about how Jesus establishes God’s Kingdom and brings it to completion in a new creation.

The pattern of God’s Kingdom can be understood from the diagram on page 11.

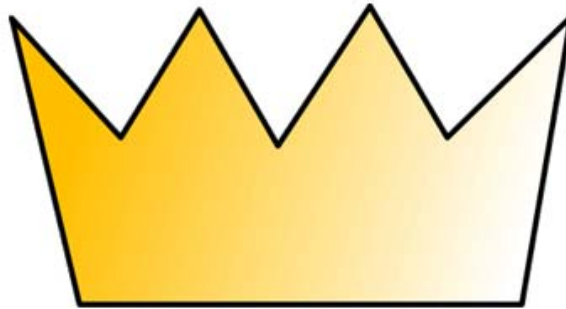
1. What is the Old Testament about?

2. What is the New Testament about?

3. Summarise the story of the Bible in one sentence.

God's Kingdom				
Constitution: <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam&Eve	God's word	Adam
God's Kingdom ruined				
Abraham	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promises	Kings from Abraham's family
Israel in desert	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah
Israel in Canaan	Temple in Canaan	Israel nation	God's rules	David, Solomon
God's Kingdom ruined...again!				
Israel in exile	Return to new temple in Canaan	Remnant	New covenant	A perfect King is promised
Jesus	JESUS The fulfilment of God's promises			
The church	God's people are a living temple	People who have faith in Jesus	The Gospel	King Jesus
New creation	New heaven and new earth	Perfect people from every nation	God's everlasting rule & blessing	King Jesus

God is King



In the beginning God... (Genesis 1:1a)

The Bible begins by stating God's existence. It does not try to prove God exists; it assumes that He does. God is not like us; He has no beginning and no end. Before time was, God was; and after time will be, God will be.

In the Bible God is described as the great King of all the earth. Genesis chapter one highlights this by showing God to be the one who rules over His creation, separating light from dark, land from water, dividing creatures into species, and commanding action from them. All the nations of the earth have gods, but this God is the great King of all gods, for He alone made the world. Throughout the Bible God constantly reminds us about this truth.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God (Psalm 90:2).

The LORD reigns... Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity (Psalm 93:1-2).

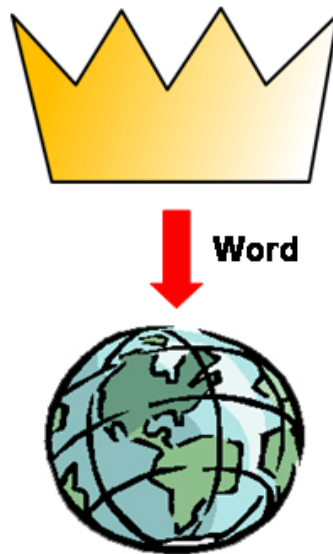
For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods (Psalm 95:3).



Think it through & discuss

1. What do the first four words of the Bible tell us?
2. What features of Genesis 1 highlight that God is King?

God is Creator



'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being' (Revelation 4:11).

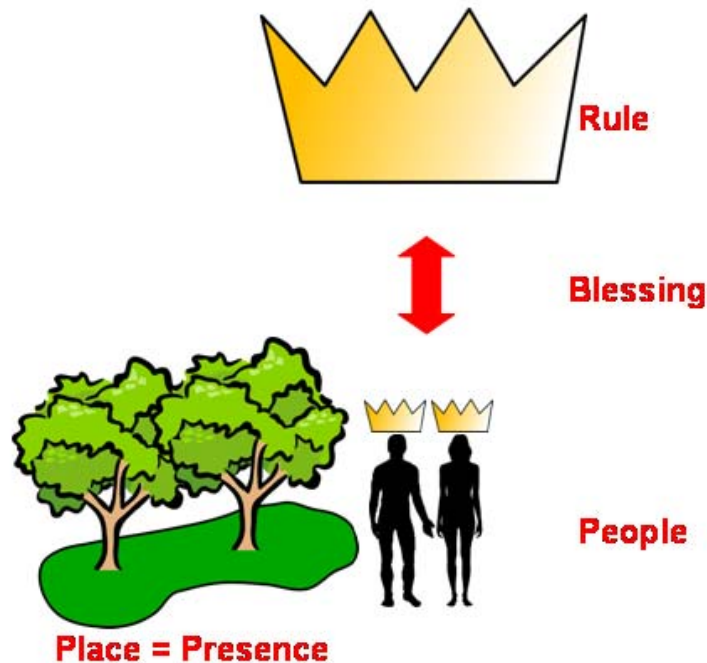
Genesis chapter one explains that God created the world and everything in it. In the Bible the word 'create' is only ever attributed to God. It means 'to make from nothing'. God's spoken words are very powerful; He speaks and the whole universe is formed from nothing. This is why the Bible explains that because God is Creator, He alone is the one who deserves our worship.



Think it through & discuss

1. Why is the word 'create' very unique in the Bible? (see Genesis 1:1, 21, 27, Psalm 148:5, Isaiah 42:5)
2. Why is the Lord worthy to receive glory and honour and power?

God's Kingdom



Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them... (Genesis 1:26-28).

In the beginning God creates human beings to be like Himself. They are made in a loving relationship with God, and are to rule the world under His rule. God is their God and they are His people, and God blesses them.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15).

God places the first man Adam in a special garden with the instruction to take care of it. A similar instruction is given later on in the Bible to the priests who are to guard the tabernacle – the place where God lives. When we read the story of the Garden of Eden in the context of the whole Bible we realise that the garden symbolises the place where God lives with His people. This means that Adam is the priest-King of Eden. God would both bless and rule the world through Adam.

And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘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).

In the beginning God’s people live in His presence in Eden. But they must learn that God is the ultimate King of Eden and the world. They can not live in Eden any way they want; it is God who will decide what is right and wrong, good and evil. This is what the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents – God’s Kingship.

God tells Adam and Eve that everything in Eden is theirs to enjoy. God’s Kingdom is a Kingdom of beauty, truth and goodness, and everything in it is good (Genesis 1:31); even the rule that they are not to eat from one specified tree. To eat from this tree would mean to make themselves rulers of their own lives, deciding for themselves what is right and wrong. Such an action would be rebellion against the King, and would result in death and the removal of God’s blessing.

And so, in the beginning of the world God establishes a Kingdom – God’s people, living in God’s place, under God’s rule and blessing.

God’s Kingdom				
<i>Constitution:</i> <i>‘I will be their God, they will be my people’</i>				
God’s promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam & Eve	God’s word	Adam



Think it through & discuss

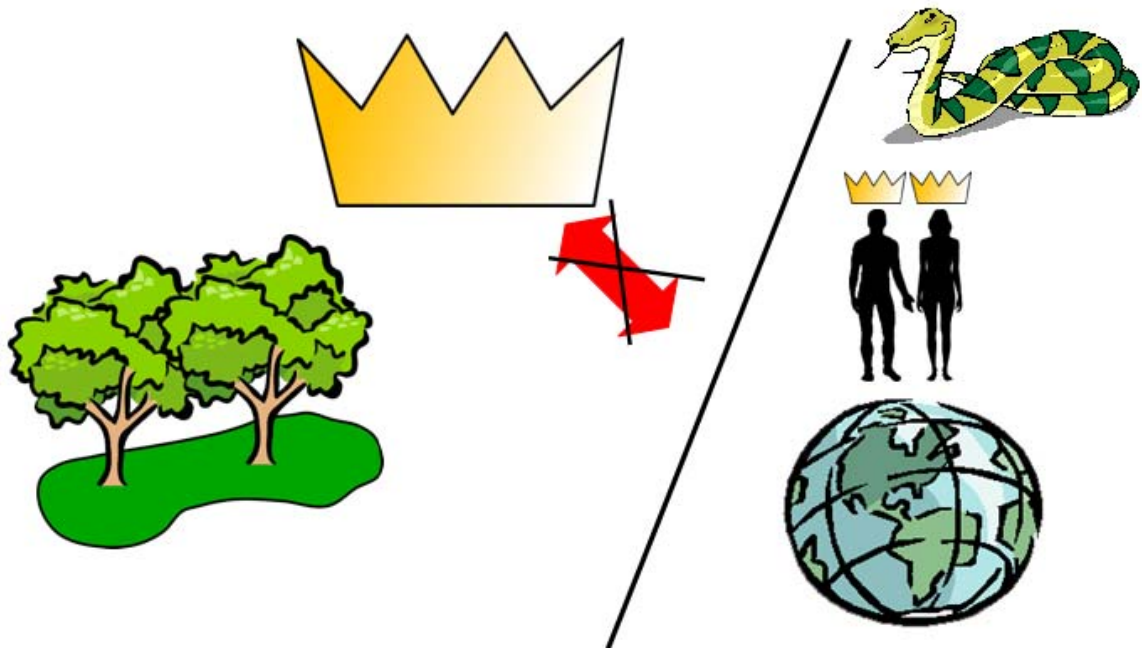
1. In what way are human beings like God? In what way are we not like God?

2. In what way is Adam like a priest? In what way is Adam like a King? (see Psalm 8)

3. What does the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represent?

4. Define God's Kingdom in your own words.

God's Kingdom Ruined



When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (Genesis 3:6-7).

God's Kingdom is soon ruined. It happens when Satan, who is God's enemy in the Bible, challenges God's rule and authority by questioning His words. Satan enters the garden in the form of a serpent. The man and the woman choose to follow Satan and reject the blessings God has given them. They decide for themselves what is right and wrong, and therefore give God the message that they want to rule their own lives, independent from Him. They choose to join Satan's kingdom.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?' (Genesis 3:8-9).

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden...(Genesis 3:23).

The loving relationship they have with God is broken and they are removed from God's presence. Life is now outside the Garden of Eden,

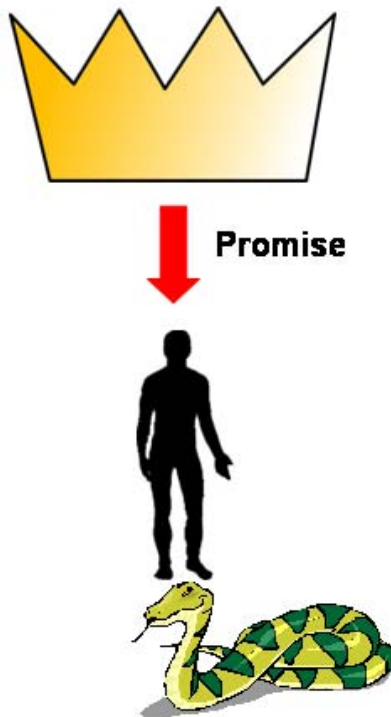
and therefore away from the eternal blessings that God had given to them.

God's Kingdom				
<i>Constitution:</i> <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam & Eve	God's word	Adam
God's Kingdom ruined				

1. By eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, what are the man and woman saying to God?

2. What is the result of disobeying God's words?
3. Who can be trusted – Satan or God? Justify your answer from Genesis 2-3.

God's Promise of War



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

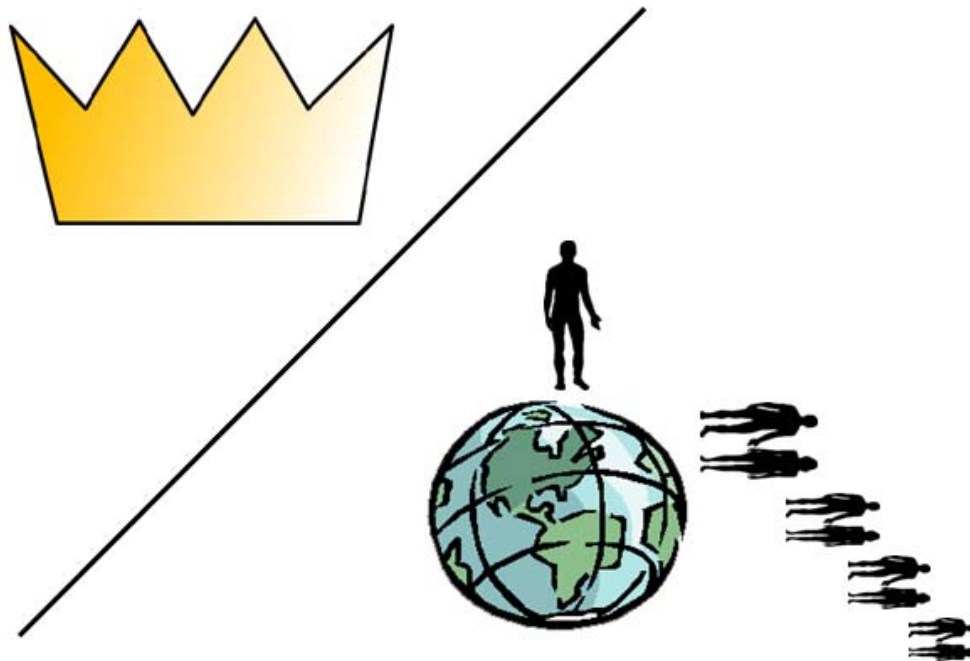
However, God is still King and, like any good king does when his rule is challenged by evil, He chooses to make war with Satan. The promise God makes is not to the woman, but to Satan. God promises there will come a man, from the family line of the woman, who will fight Satan, and though He will be injured in the fight, He will defeat Satan. We'll see later on that a man called Jesus fulfils this promise. This promise is the beginning of what we call the Gospel – the good news about Jesus Christ. It is a promise to defeat Satan and his evil rule over humans, and therefore re-establish God's rule over the world again.



Think it through & discuss

1. What does God's war-promise to Satan involve?
2. How is this promise connected to God's Kingdom?

Human Rebellion and Death Advances



Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked down with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favour. So Cain was angry...And while there were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him (Genesis 4:2b-5b, 8b).

It is not long before we see the effects of human rebellion against God. Adam's sons Cain and Abel highlight this well. Cain becomes jealous of Abel when God accepts Abel's sacrifice and not his. Cain's jealousy is so bad that he murders his brother Abel. The interesting note about this story is that the serpent (Satan) is not present. Evil and disobedience are now coming from inside the human heart, not from outside temptation.

...and then he died...and then he died...and then he died... (Genesis 5:5b, 7b, 11).

Genesis chapter five highlights that God's punishment of death for rebellion is taking effect in the human race. Death is reigning.

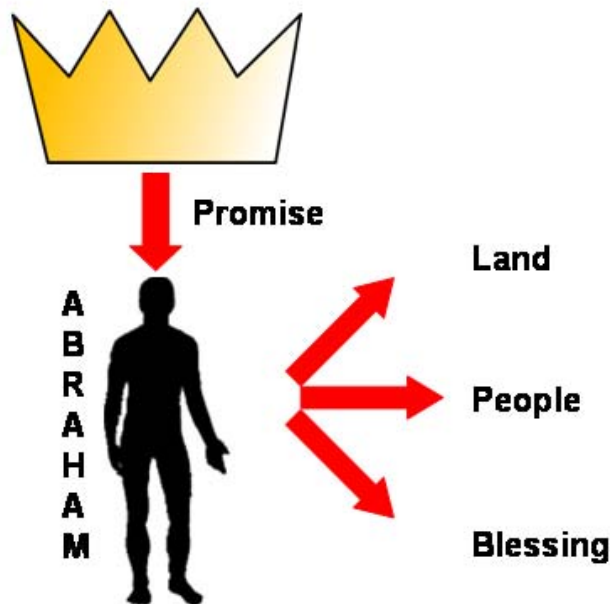
Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

Later on in the Bible we see that rebellion is not only connected to death, but is also inherent within all human beings. We all die because we have all sinned.



3. What do you think God is saying to us in Genesis 5?

The Promised Kingdom



The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you' (Genesis 12:1-3).

The Tower of Babel highlights the continuation of human rebellion (Genesis 11:1-11). God's rule over the world seems to be losing grip. But then He chooses a man called Abraham, and promises him three things: a land, a people, and a blessing.

In these promises to Abraham, God is reclaiming what is rightfully His - the human race, but the first step is with a family. God is obviously planning to rebuild His Kingdom - where His people will live with Him in a special place, under His rule and blessing. The controlling theme of God's promises to Abraham is: **'I will establish my covenant...to be your God and the God of your descendants after you'** (Genesis 17:7).

God is promising to have a loving relationship with human beings again. This promise is made in the context of a covenant – a loving bond between God and Abraham's family. The covenant defines and establishes God's Kingdom. If you like, it is the constitution of the Kingdom.

In many ways this reflects the beginning of the Bible - where Adam and Eve were God's people, and He was their God.

God's Kingdom				
<i>Constitution: 'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam & Eve	God's word	Adam
God's Kingdom ruined				
Abraham	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promise	Kings from Abraham's family

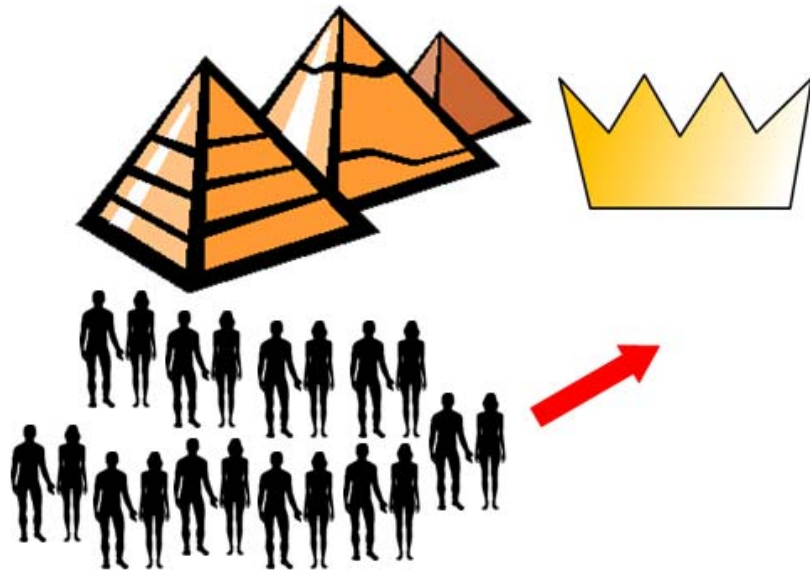


Think it through & discuss

1. How do the promises to Abraham relate to God's Kingdom?

2. How can God's promises to Abraham be summarised?

From Slavery to Paradise



Then the LORD said to him, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated four hundred years...In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here' (Genesis 15:13-16).

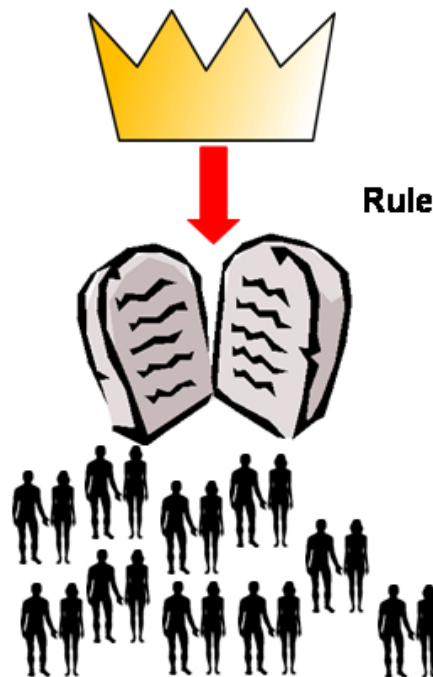
However, before Abraham's children receive the promise of their own land God takes them to a foreign land where they become slaves. This occurs when Jacob's sons (all under God's control and plan) sell their brother Joseph as a slave to Egypt. Years later the whole family goes to live in Egypt due to a severe famine. Jacob's children grow in number and become known as 'Israel'. Pharaoh the King of Egypt eventually makes them slaves in Egypt.

'So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey' (Exodus 3:8).

After four hundred years of slavery God rescues His people out of Egypt in order to take them to the land He promised to Abraham. The Promised Land of Canaan is described in similar terms to Eden - a place of abundant goodness.

The main theme of God's promise is spoken again to the people – *'I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God' (Exodus 6:7)*. God is reclaiming Israel as His own treasured possession (see Exodus 19:3-6). He is taking back what is rightfully His.

The Rules of the King



Interestingly enough God does not lead His people directly northeast to Canaan, but southeast to Mount Sinai in the desert. Geographically this is a long way round to get to Canaan and therefore what takes place at Mount Sinai must be very important.

Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites" (Exodus 19:3-6).

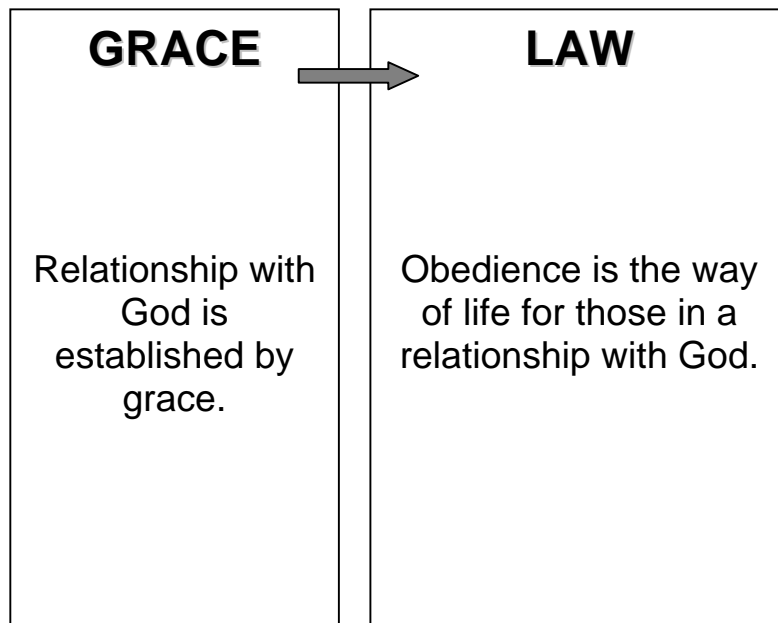
At Mount Sinai God gives Israel their mission and identity by providing them with His law. They are called to be priests, which means that through them God would bring His blessing to the world. They are identified as a holy nation, which means that they are to be different from all the other nations. Israel is now in the same position Adam was in – through obedience the world will be blessed; through disobedience the world will be cursed.

It will be God's law that makes Israel a distinct people from all the peoples of the earth, because their lifestyle will be unique. As a holy priest Israel is to bless the world by being different from the world.

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me... (Exodus 20:1-3).

God is the triumphant King who has defeated Pharaoh – the enemy of His people. He has redeemed and rescued His people out of Egypt, establishing His loving relationship with them. However, sons of fathers cannot live any way they want. They must become like their father, and uphold the family name in their lives and conduct. God is teaching His people that, just as with Adam, there are conditions to being in a relationship based on love. The relationship has been established by grace (favour, like receiving a gift you do not deserve), but obedience is the way of life for those in such a relationship. God is re-establishing His Kingdom – He will rule and bless His people in a loving relationship.

There is a pattern to God's loving covenants:



'I will be their God, they will be my people'

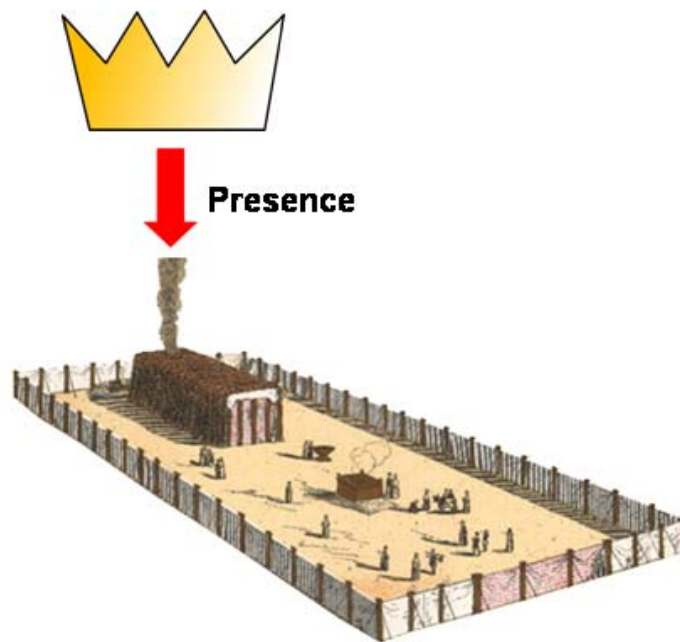
1. What has God done for Israel?

2. What is Israel to do for God?

3. What is Israel's mission and identity?

4. How are God's rules connected to His Kingdom?

A Return to Eden



'You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance – the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established. The LORD will reign for ever and ever' (Exodus 15:17-18).

The pictures of Eden keep returning to the Bible's story. Following the defeat of God's enemy Pharaoh, Moses' song of victory pictures God as the warrior-King who leads His people to the land in which He lives.

'Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God' (Exodus 29:45-46).

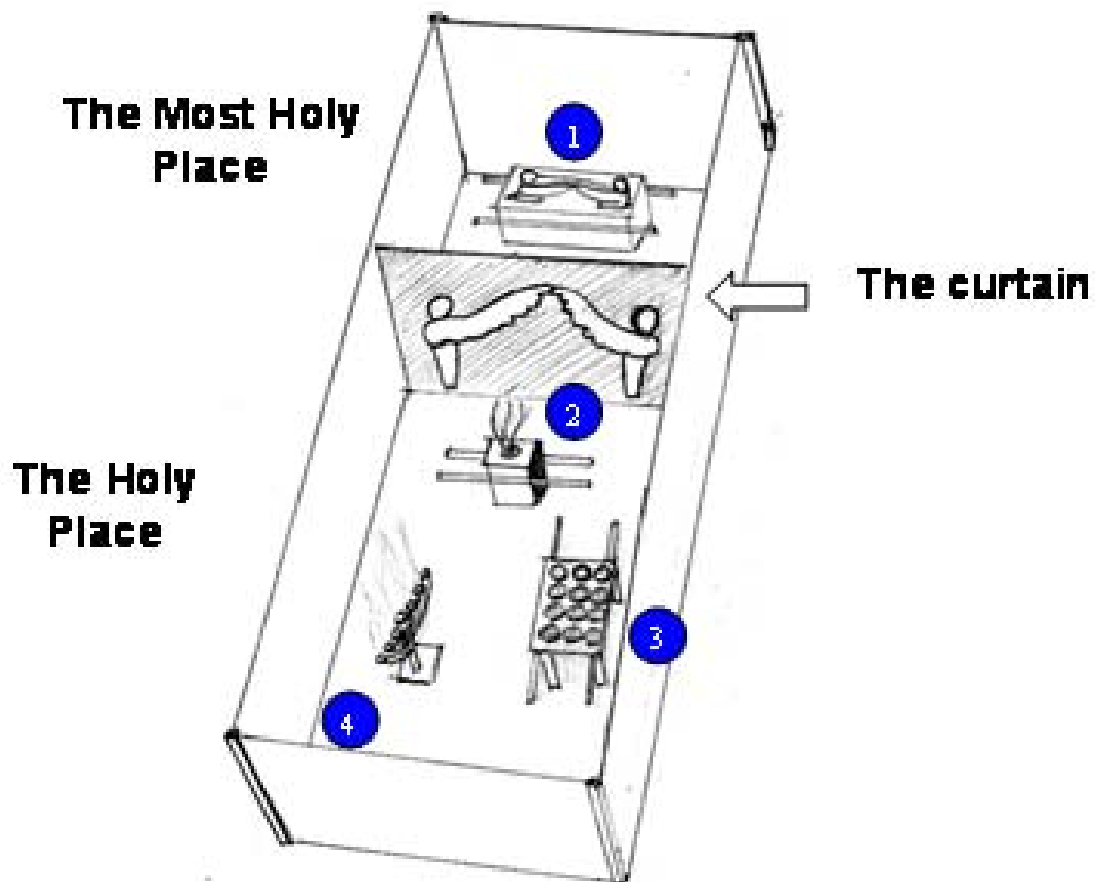
It becomes clear that the plagues in Egypt were the battles between God and Pharaoh for the possession of Israel. God has won His people back in order to live with them; not just in the Promised Land, but He will also travel with them in the tabernacle (tent) on their journey. This is why God has rescued His people – in order to live with them again. He is rebuilding the Kingdom ruined in Eden.

God's Kingdom				
Constitution: <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam & Eve	God's word	Adam
God's Kingdom ruined				
Abraham	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promise	Kings from Abraham's family
Israel in desert	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah



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A Just and Forgiving King



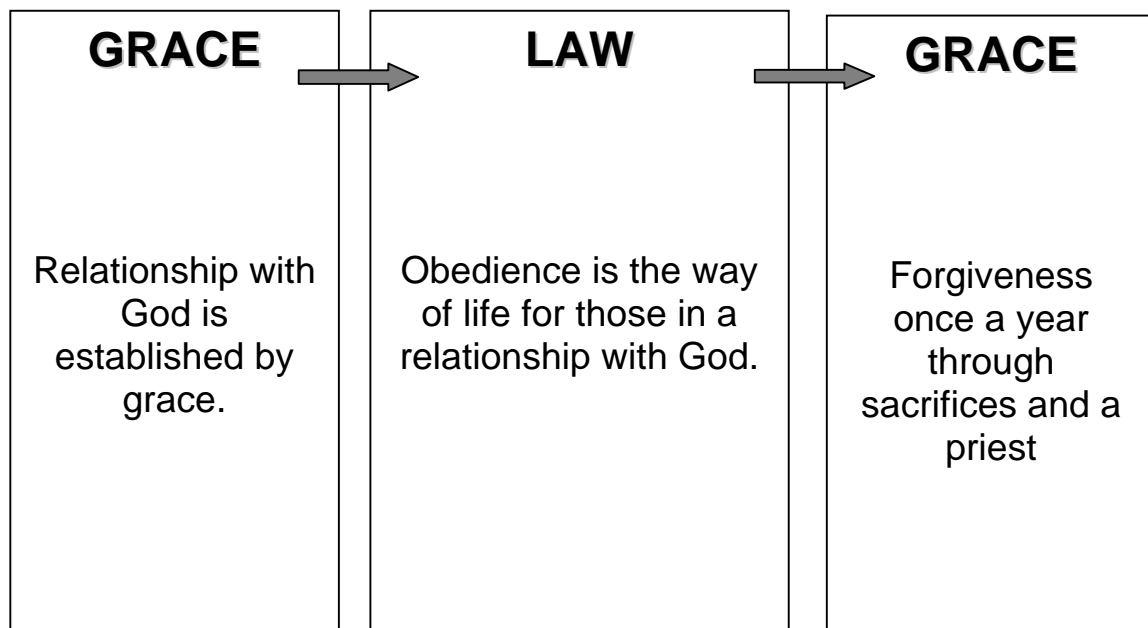
The LORD said to Moses: 'Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the Ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover' (Leviticus 16:2).

God's presence in the tabernacle is a return to Eden in the sense that God is living with people again. However, it is just not as good as Eden. God is with His people but He is separate from His people. God lives in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle, but His people cannot just enter it whenever they want. The curtain that separates the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place has pictures of angels on it, a reminder of the angel that guarded the entrance to Eden. When Adam sinned and was banished from Eden, he could not go back into God's presence whenever he wanted; it's the same with God's Most Holy Place. This teaches us that sin is serious because it separates us from God.

But God also uses the tabernacle to teach the people that He is a just and forgiving King. God reviews the people's sins once a year. They

deserve to die if they are found guilty, but they do not have to. God provides a way for them to be forgiven through a priest and a sacrifice. An animal is sacrificed as a substitute for the people's sins, and the priest presents the blood in God's Most Holy Place. God remains just in that the sin is punished with death, and at the same time He can forgive the people's sin for the past year. This all occurs on a special day called 'The Day of Atonement'. 'Atonement' means 'to cover a debt'. The debt of the people's sin is covered through the payment of a dead animal. The innocent animal dies in the place of the guilty. This pattern will continue right through the Bible. The lesson of needing a priest and a sacrifice to enter God's presence is a key feature when we come to Jesus.

How can a good and holy God continue to live in a loving relationship with people who are bad and disobedient? The priest and the sacrifice system solve this problem. Providing this system is a further act of grace on God's part, and at the same time He remains just in punishing sin. God's loving covenant with His people can continue.



'I will be their God, they will be my people'

1. Why can people not enter God's Most Holy Place?

2. What has God done so that people can enter His presence?

3. How do the priest and sacrifices relate to God's covenant?

The Time of the Judges



God's people finally arrive at the Promised Land, but strangely enough they are too frightened to go in and take possession of it. God punishes them with forty years of wandering in the desert. It will be their children who will inherit the promises of living in the land under God's rule and blessing. Forty years later, after Moses himself is dead, Joshua leads the people into the land and wins possession over most of it. At the end of his life Joshua says, '*...You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed*' (Joshua 23:14).

Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, He was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshipping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways (Judges 2:18-19).

During the first 350 years in the land of Canaan the Israelites go through a cycle of rebellion, oppression, cry for help, and deliverance. When they

rebel against God He makes them enslaved to enemies in the land. When they cry for help He delivers them through judges (rescuer-rulers).

In those days Israel had no King; everyone did as he saw fit (Judges 21:25).

The problem is that once the judge dies the people return to their old ways of disobedience. And the judges themselves are not perfect. Even the good ones rebel and lead the people astray. The system of judges is just not working; Israel needs a King.



- ### 3. What is proposed as the solution?

A King for God's Kingdom



God's people are living in God's place under His rule. His blessings are coming and going because the people continue to disobey. The solution appears to be a king who would rule God's people in God's land. When the system of judges is replaced by a system of kings, God does not stop ruling His people. The medium has simply changed. God had in fact prepared His people to be ruled by a king.

'When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, 'Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,' be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses...When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law...It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of his law and these decrees' (Deuteronomy 17:14-15, 18-20).

God's king is to be His representative to the people. By obeying God's law, the king is to be as much like God as possible. In many ways the king is also to be as much like a true Israelite as well. Therefore, what Israel now needs is an excellent king.

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “....the LORD said to you, ‘You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall become their ruler.’ ...and they anointed David king over Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-3).

Israel’s first king, Saul, is a failure and is replaced by a man called 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).

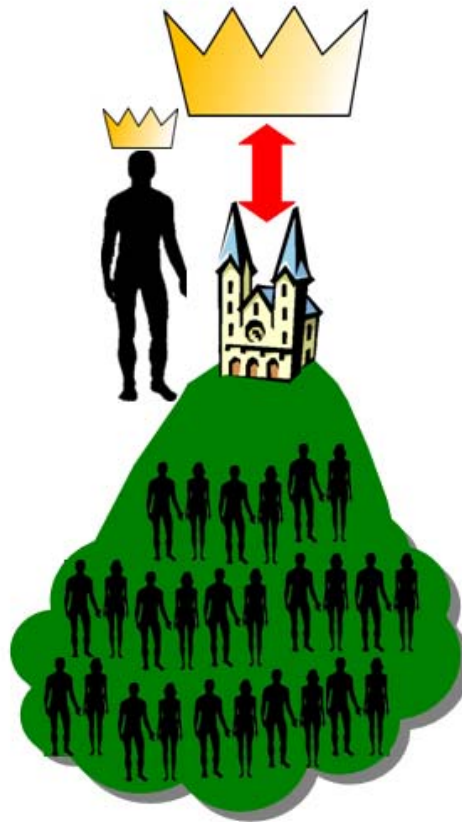
God promises David that a King is coming from his family whose Kingdom He will establish forever. The King is the promised Rescuer-Ruler of Genesis 3:15 – the one who will defeat Satan.



Think it through & discuss

1. What is God's king to be like?
2. What is God's promise to David?

The Kingdom Nearly Established



'You have established your people Israel as your very own for ever, and you, O LORD, have become their God...for you, O Sovereign LORD, have spoken, and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever' (2 Samuel 7:24, 29b).

During David's reign God gives the people rest from all their enemies and the main theme of God's promise has come true.

'The LORD has kept the promise He made: I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. I have provided a place there for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that He made with our fathers when He brought them out of Egypt' (1 Kings 8:20-21).

David, however, is not the perfect King. He takes another man's wife and sleeps with her, breaking one of God's rules. David is replaced by his son Solomon, and our hopes for the perfect King naturally move to him.

Solomon builds a permanent house for God to live in. This is known as the temple and it replaces the tabernacle.

The temple in Jerusalem becomes the centre point of worship for God's people. It represents three important things:

1. Presence – God lives in the Most Holy Place
2. Rule – God's throne is represented by the Ark of the Covenant which contains the ten rules
3. Relationship - God's meets with His people at the temple through the priest and the sacrifices

God's presence is now permanently set on the hill in Jerusalem. God has indeed led His people out of Egypt and to His dwelling place. The Kingdom is nearly established – God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. God now lives and rules from Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. When the king lives by God's rules, God is ruling His people through the king. Solomon is the wisest king of Israel. Will he be the one through whom God will establish His Kingdom forever?

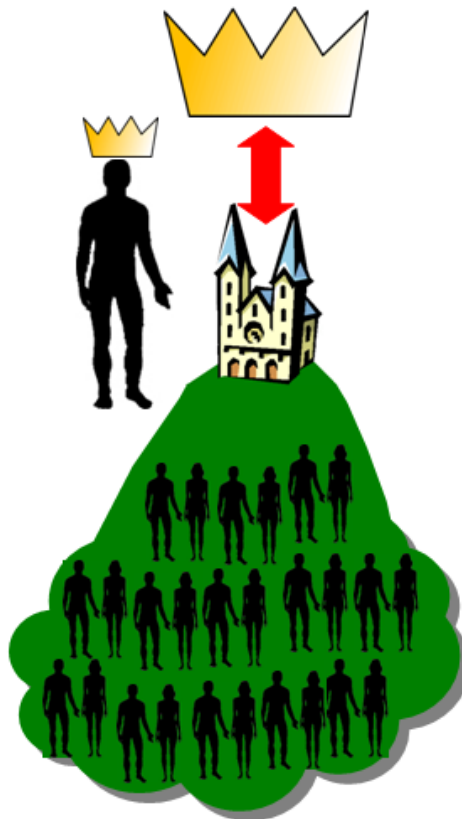


- ### 1. Why is David not the king that Israel needs?

2. How is this part of the Bible connected to God's Kingdom?

- ### 3. What does the temple represent?

God's Kingdom has Come...



The blessings promised to Abraham seem to become a reality under Solomon's reign.

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore (1 Kings 4:20).

God's people have greatly increased in number.

Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21).

God's people are living in God's place, under God's rule, through Solomon the king.

God is blessing His people in His place. The rest and paradise of Eden have been restored in some form. Each man (representing his family) lives in safety and plenty in God's land.

During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig-tree (1 Kings 4:25).

Things seem to be going so well that at the dedication of the temple Solomon says, *'Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel just as He promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises He gave through His servant Moses'* (1 Kings 8:56).

God has been faithful. He has re-established His Kingdom. He is reclaiming His rule and blessing over the earth.

King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country (1 Kings 10:13).

The nations of the world are being blessed. Even the Queen of Sheba comes to receive wisdom and blessing from Solomon.

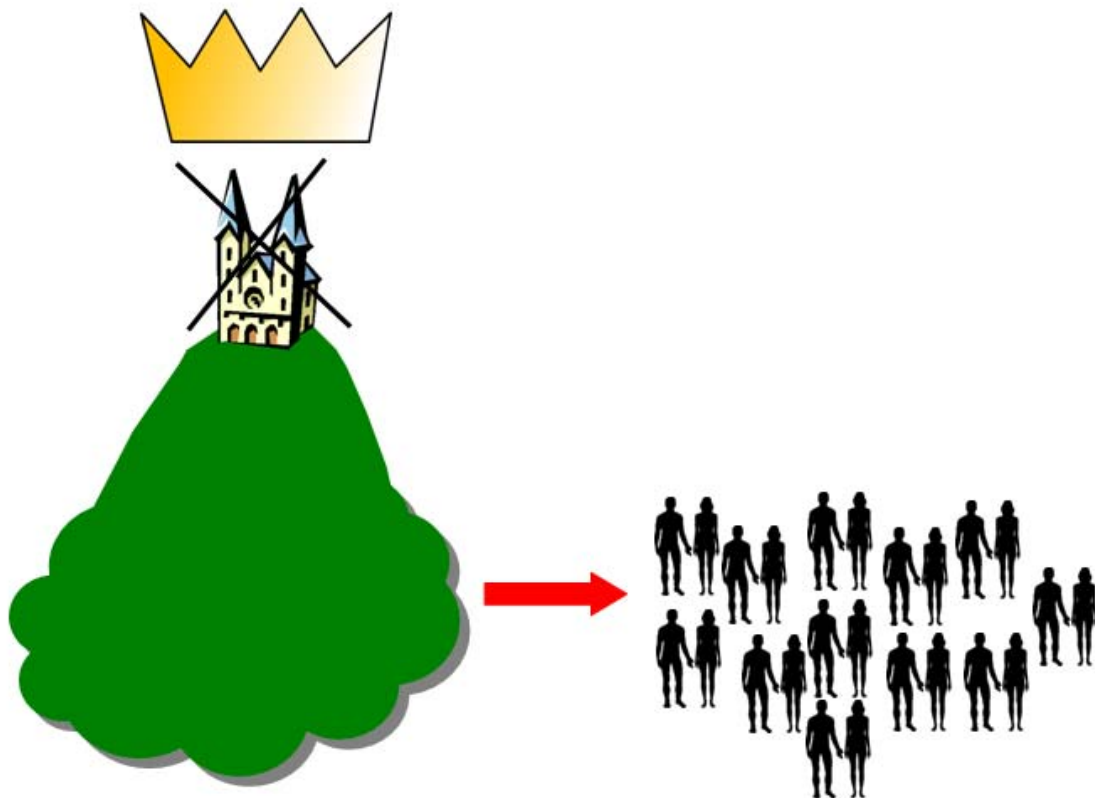
God's promises to Abraham are being fulfilled.

'I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you' (Genesis 12:3).

God's Kingdom				
<i>Constitution: 'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam & Eve	God's word	Adam
God's Kingdom ruined				
Abraham	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promise	Kings from Abraham's family
Israel in desert	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah
Israel in Canaan	Temple in Canaan	Israel nation	God's rules	David, Solomon

1. What evidence is there that during Solomon's time God's Kingdom was at its best?
2. How is God fulfilling the promises to Abraham?
3. Do you think all the promises are fulfilled? Justify your answer.

The Kingdom Declines



King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women... They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless Solomon held fast to them in love... As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been (1 Kings 11:1-4).

Unfortunately King Solomon is like the rest of us - inclined to sin. His weakness is foreign women, who lead him to worship other gods. Things go from bad to worse after Solomon's reign. After his son Rehoboam, there is a split in the kingdom, and two separate nations are formed - Israel in the north, Judah in the south. The search for God's perfect King continues, but He is not to be found in the north or the south.

The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the LORD removed them from His presence, as He had warned through all His servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there (2 Kings 17:22-23).

It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end He thrust them from His presence (2 Kings 24:20).

The rebellion of God's people just gets worse and worse; such that in the end God decides to bring on them the curses He promised through Moses. Remember, sons of fathers cannot live any way they like. Disobedience leads to punishment. So God removes them from the land. Israel is removed by the Assyrians, and Judah by the Babylonians; but the result is the same – they are both removed from God's presence.

In the Bible God's land represents His presence. It is the place where His people enjoy a loving relationship with Him. The temple is the centre point of His presence, rule, and relationship with His people. The temple is destroyed and an enemy occupies the land. The people, like Adam and Eve before them, are thrust from God's presence into exile. It will take a new exodus to bring them back into God's presence and under His rule again.

We must understand the significance of what is happening. Like Adam, Israel has failed in their mission to bring blessing to the world as God's priest. In order for God's Kingdom to be established and blessing to come to the world, there will have to be a priest who is faithful to his mission. So far, both Adam and Israel have failed.

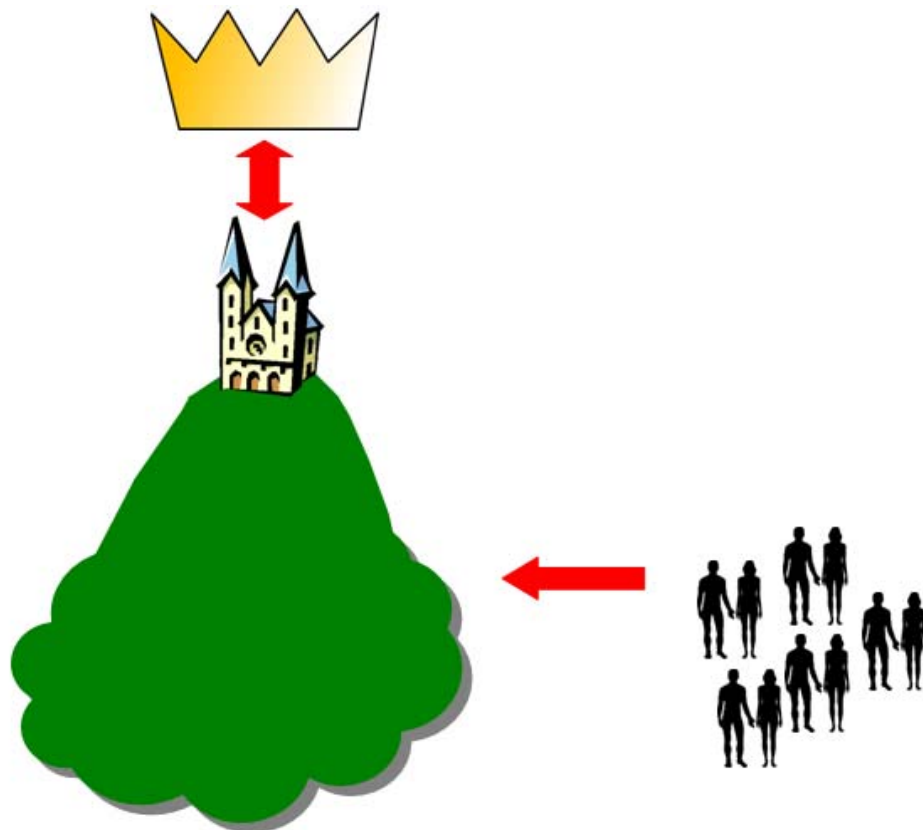
God's Kingdom				
<i>Constitution:</i> <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
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Israel in desert	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah
Israel in Canaan	Temple in Canaan	Israel nation	God's rules	David, Solomon
God's Kingdom ruined...again!				



Think it through & discuss

1. What is Solomon's sin?
2. What happens to Israel after Solomon's reign?
3. Through disobedience God's people are removed from the land. What does this remind you of?

A New Promise

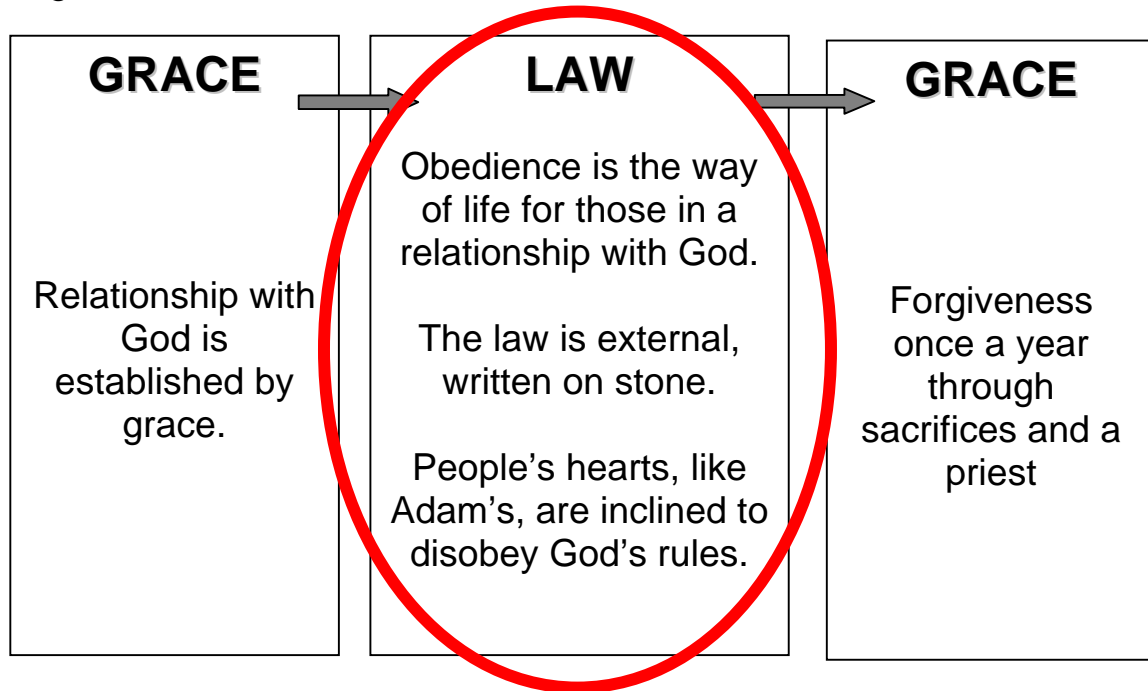


*'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; **you will be my people, and I will be your God**' (Ezekiel 36:24-28).*

Whilst God's people are in exile He speaks to them through prophets. A prophet is someone who speaks God's words to His people. Although they do not deserve it, God promises to keep His contract with Abraham and bring a remnant of people back into the land. 'Remnant' means 'a small remainder of God's people'. The only question is: Will it work? After all, the problem with the first covenant at Mount Sinai was that the people kept disobeying the law.

The problem is in the human heart, and unless this is dealt with there will just be a continuous cycle of exodus, re-entry, and exile. So God promises not only to bring about a return to the land, but also a change

of heart. A new exodus is needed that will change the human heart and bring into effect God's new covenant.



'I will be their God, they will be my people'

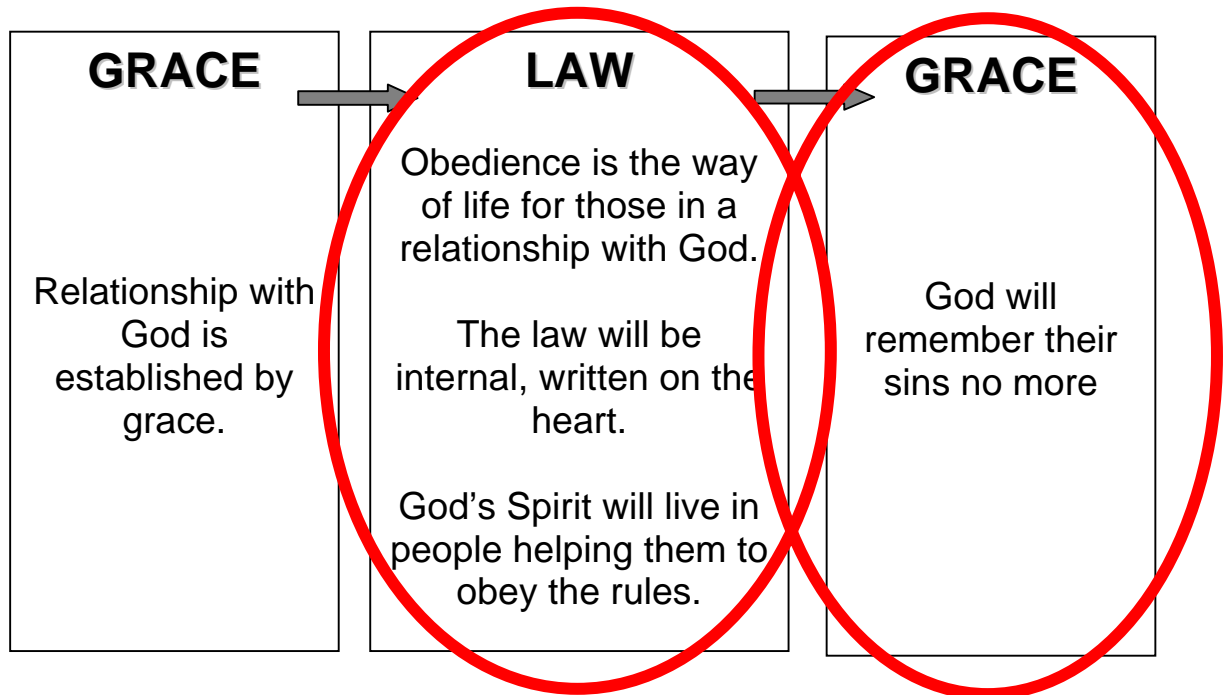
Through the prophet Jeremiah, God says:

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

At the time of this new exodus God will not only return the people to the land, but He will change their heart. The key to knowing when the new exodus comes is seeing a change in human hearts, and not just a return to the land.

Note the continuing theme of God's promise - **I will be their God and they will be my people**. God has not given up reclaiming the human race and taking possession of them for Himself. He will not let Satan

spoil His original plan. God will have His people, and He will be their God. In this new covenant God is going to provide a way to forgive His people's sins forever. He will also ensure that they obey Him from their hearts.



'I will be their God, they will be my people'

God's Kingdom				
<i>Constitution:</i> <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam&Eve	God's word	Adam
God's Kingdom ruined				
Abraham	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promises	Kings from Abraham's family
Israel in desert	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah
Israel in Canaan	Temple in Canaan	Israel nation	God's rules	David, Solomon
God's Kingdom ruined...again!				
Israel in exile	Return to new temple in Canaan	Remnant	New covenant	A perfect King is promised



- ## 1. What is a prophet?

2. What was wrong with the first covenant?

3. State two ways in which the new covenant is better than the old covenant.

4. Is this new covenant connected to the old covenant? Justify your answer.

Still Waiting...



In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put in writing:

“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 his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem’” (Ezra 1:1-3).

After 70 years of exile a small remnant of God’s people return to the Promised Land. They rebuild the temple and the city walls of Jerusalem (see Ezra and Nehemiah). Is God rebuilding His Kingdom? The young people seem to think so and celebrate at the dedication of the foundation for the new temple, whilst the old people (who had seen the first temple) weep, because the new temple is not as big as the old one (Ezra 3:10-13).

Once the people are back in the land their hearts have not been changed. This is illustrated to us in the book of Nehemiah. When the people return to the land they renew their commitment to God by making

three main promises to God: not to intermarry, to observe the Sabbath (a religious day), and to maintain worship at the temple (see Nehemiah 10:28-39). However, by the end of the book of Nehemiah the people have failed in each of their promises (see Nehemiah 13:6-28). They have disobeyed God again, and are abusing the sacrifice system and the new temple. The new covenant has obviously not yet arrived. The people's hearts remain disobedient to God's rules.

God speaks to His people through the prophet Malachi and promises a coming judgment. He Himself is coming to visit His people. To be more exact, He is coming to His temple.

'See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty (Malachi 3:1).

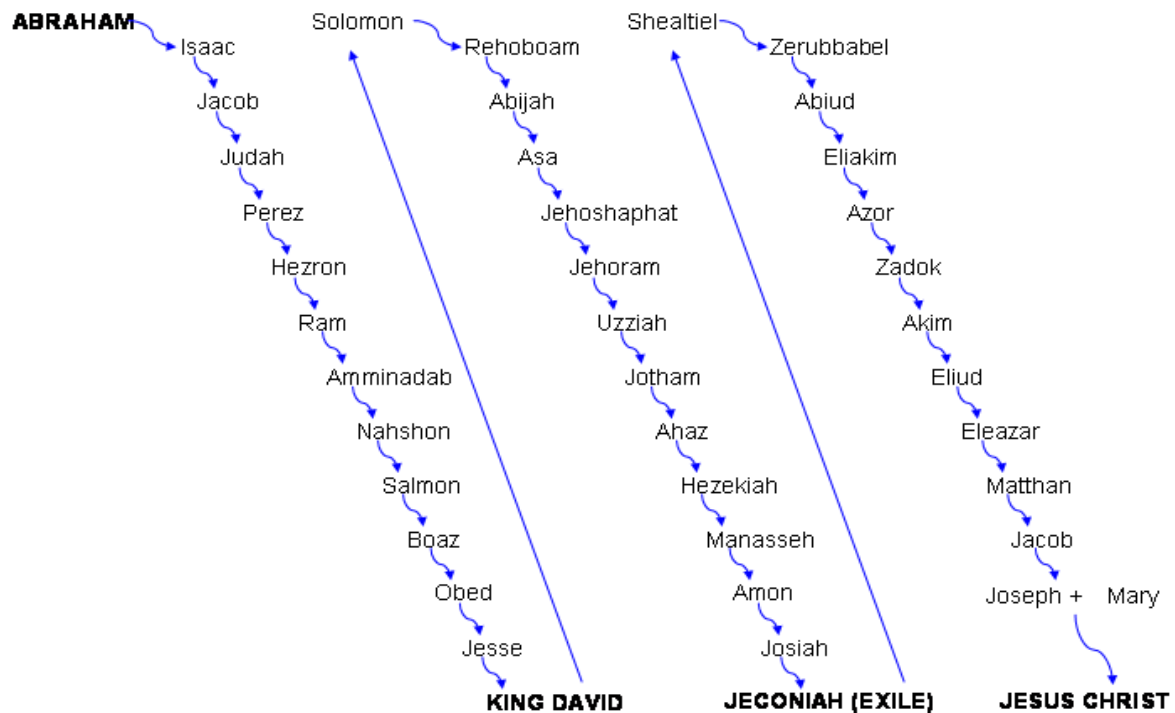
The new promise God made through Jeremiah and Ezekiel has not yet arrived. It is only partially fulfilled. We are left waiting for a new exodus, a better temple, and a change of heart. For 400 years there is silence, and God's people still wait...



- 65

GOD'S KINGDOM IN JESUS

The King is Here!



The Bible has two main parts – the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament deals with God’s Kingdom in History – its beginning, ruin, and the promise to rebuild it through Abraham and Israel. But the Old Testament ends without those promises being fully completed. It is only when we come to the New Testament that we see how God’s Kingdom is established in the historical person of Jesus. Remember this diagram:

Promise ➡ **Jesus** ➡ **Fulfilment**

The first book in the New Testament is written by a follower of Jesus called Matthew. He starts by explaining the family line of Jesus Christ (the chosen King), a man born from a woman called Mary. He summarises the relevance of this family tree with these words:

Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ (Matthew 1:17).

Matthew is showing that through the family of Abraham and David, God’s promised King has arrived. Jesus is the King of God’s Kingdom through whom there will be a new exodus for God’s people. It is through King

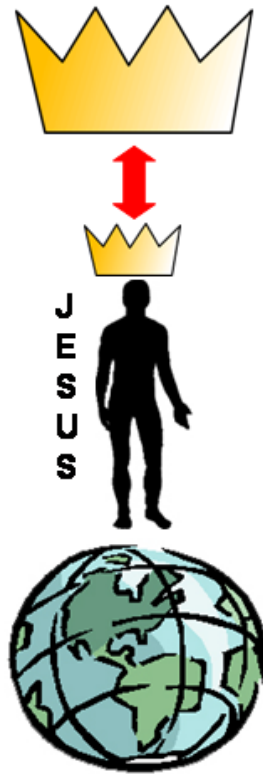
Jesus that God will defeat Satan, reclaim human beings, and lead them back into God's presence, under His rule and blessing.



Think it through & discuss

1. Summarise the plotline of the Bible.
2. What is the New Testament about?
3. What does the summary of Jesus' family line mean?

God's Presence



All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'- which means, 'God with us' (Matthew 1:22-23).

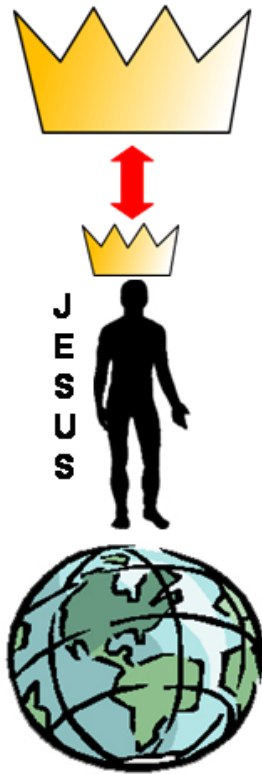
When Jesus is born He is given many names, one of which is 'Immanuel,' which means 'God with us.' God has now come to live with His people, not in a building but as a man. There is now therefore no longer any need for a land, or a temple – God's presence exists in Jesus. This has significance for where God will meet with His people and how He will rule them.



Think it through & discuss

1. What does 'Immanuel' mean?
2. Why do you think this is significant?

God's Rule



'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel' (Matthew 2:6).

God's plan has always been to rule the world through one man. However, Adam failed by obeying Satan; after which God promised a ruler who would defeat Satan (Genesis 3:15). Then He promised that kings would come from Abraham's family (Genesis 17:6), and that a ruler would arise from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). God promised David that a son of his would be King over God's people forever (2 Samuel 7:16). When Jesus is born He is identified as God's King, and the one through whom God will re-establish His rule over His people.

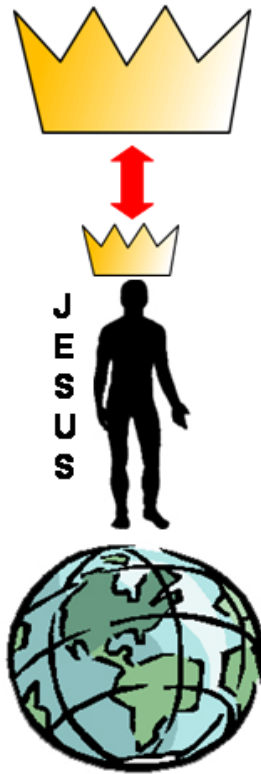
God's appointed rulers have always had to live in obedience to God's rule. Adam failed; the question is: Will Jesus?



Think it through & discuss

1. Highlight the important names in the family line of Jesus.
2. Why are these names significant?

God's People



Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son’” (Exodus 4:22-23).

In one part of the Bible, Adam is described as the son of God (Luke 3:39). In Egypt, Israel is described as God's son.

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Matthew 2:14-15).

When Jesus is born, His father Joseph must take Him to Egypt to escape Herod's slaughter of all the babies in Judea. However, when He comes out of Egypt Matthew says that the words of an Old Testament prophet Hosea are fulfilled (Hosea 11:1).

Interestingly, Hosea's words are not pointing forward to Jesus; they are pointing back to Israel. Yet Matthew states that when Jesus comes out of Egypt as a little boy these words are fulfilled, which means that Israel was a picture of Jesus in some ways. Jesus fulfils the shadow of God's son that Adam and Israel pointed towards. In fact, not only is Jesus

God's Son, but He can also be said to be the fulfilment of the people of God.

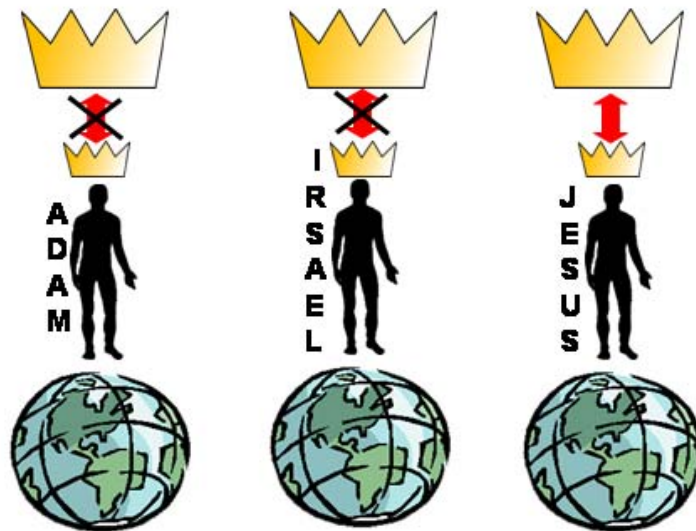


Think it through & discuss

1. What is the connection between Adam, Israel and Jesus?

2. In what way is Jesus different to Adam and Israel?

Last Adam, True Israel



'Like Adam, they have broken the covenant – they were unfaithful to me there' (Hosea 6:7).

And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased' (Matthew 3:17).

Adam and Israel were to be like priestly sons bringing God's blessing to the world, but they failed by being unfaithful to God's covenant. The plan to bring blessing to the world through Israel failed, like it did with Adam. Blessing will have to come through Jesus, God's Son; the only Son with whom God is well pleased.

After God speaks these words Satan tests Jesus in the desert, but Jesus resists the devil and overcomes the temptations (see Matthew 4:1-11). Through suffering such things as a man, Jesus qualifies Himself to be the perfect priest.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest... (Hebrews 5:8-10).

Adam and Israel were sons of God who were to live in obedience to God, but they failed. However, throughout His life Jesus obeys His Father perfectly, and therefore is the true and final, obedient Son of God. The Bible presents Jesus as the last Adam and the true Israel. God's

Kingdom can now finally come. He is the true man who perfectly reflects God's image.

He is the image of the invisible God... (Colossians 1:15).

God's Kingdom comes to fulfilment in Jesus. All the promises in the Old Testament: God's place, God's people, God's rule and blessing, and God's King, are all fulfilled in Jesus.

God's Kingdom				
<i>Constitution:</i> <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
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God's Kingdom ruined...again!				
Israel in exile	Return to new temple in Canaan	Remnant	New covenant	A perfect King is promised
Jesus	JESUS The fulfilment of God's promises			



Think it through & discuss

1. In what way is Jesus the last Adam?

2. In what way is Jesus the true Israel?

The Death of God's King



'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45).

Buddha died peacefully at the age of eighty years old, with many of his followers present and ready to continue on his religion. Confucius died at the age of seventy-two years old. He returned to his hometown and had a great many people there to continue on his work. Mohammed died at the age of sixty-eight years old. In the final years of his life he was the political leader of a United Arabia. He died in the arms of his favourite wife in Mecca.

All these religious and philosophical leaders died as popular people, at an old age, and with many followers to continue on their religions and philosophies. They spent all their lives teaching what they believed.

Jesus dies at the age of thirty-three years old, and spends only three years teaching what He believes. He is rejected by His own people, betrayed and denied by His own followers, mocked by His opponents, put on trial and wrongfully found guilty.

Jesus is taken by His own people and crucified. He is put on trial and found innocent, and yet in the end the people demand His death. When Jesus dies it is more than just the death of another famous religious leader. Jesus Himself said that He would give His life as payment to God for the rebellion of human beings.

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God... (1 Peter 3:18).

Justice says the innocent should live and the guilty must die. Yet Jesus is the innocent King who dies and is punished by God the Father for guilty people. The reason for this is because God's King has come to rescue human beings back to God. The only way this can be accomplished is if Jesus dies in the place of guilty people and receives their punishment instead. This is the good news message of Christianity. God has demonstrated His undeserved love to us - while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). When Jesus dies God's justice is maintained and His love is expressed.

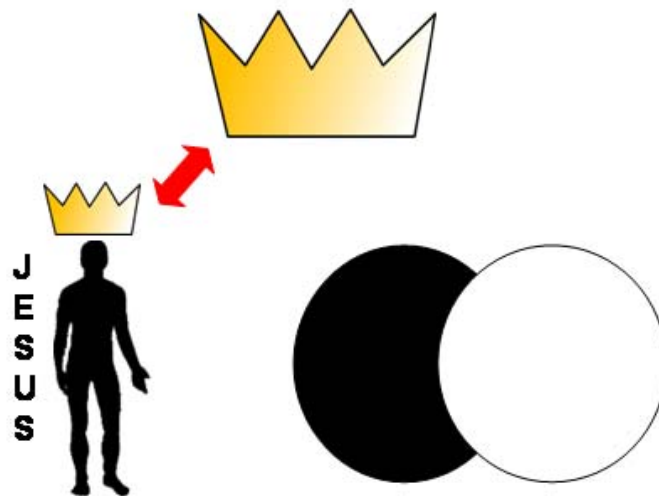


Think it through & discuss

1. Why is Jesus' death different to that of other religious leaders?

2. Why did Jesus die?

Victory for the Kingdom



'God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact' (Acts 2:32).

The resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact and if disproved would destroy the very foundations of Christianity. If Jesus is not raised, then He is a liar, the Bible is not true, and there is no hope for the human race to be restored back into God's presence. However, when you read the historical documents about Jesus' resurrection there can be no doubt that He did rise from the dead. Many people witnessed it on different occasions (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Romans 4:25).

In order to prove to us that Jesus' death has satisfied His Father's just demands for sin, God raises Him from the dead.

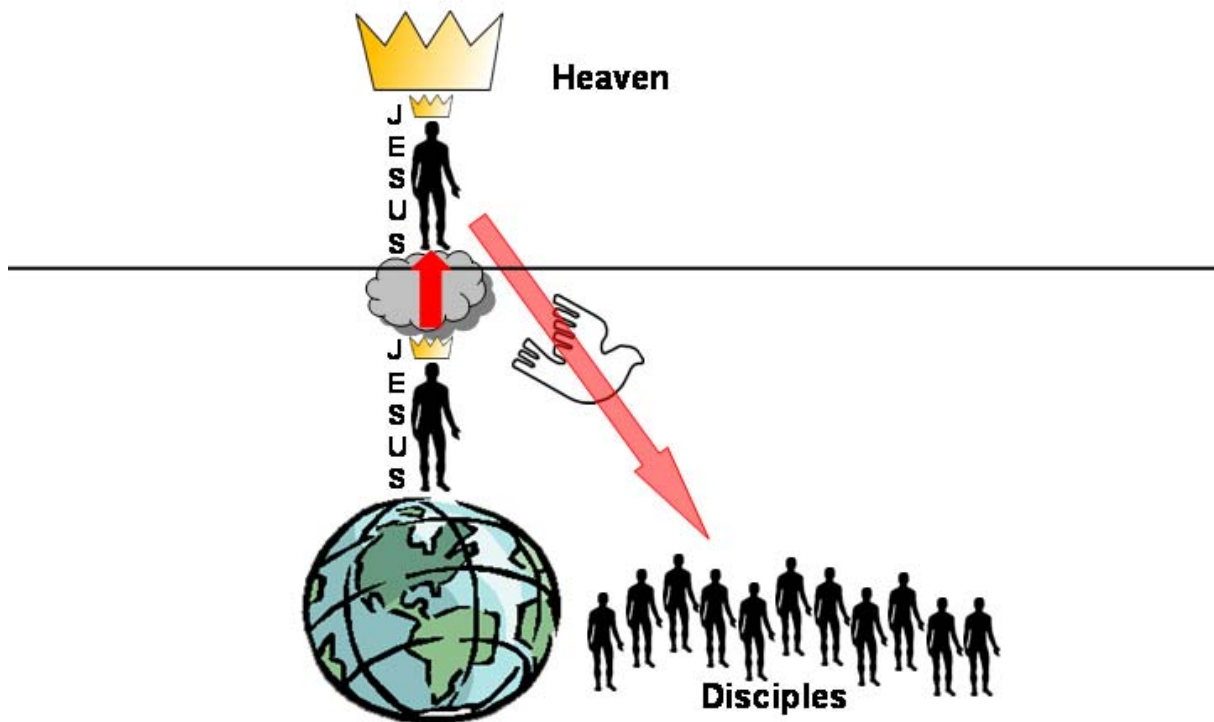
God raises His Son Jesus from the dead to be the King of all the earth. By doing this, Jesus conquers death and therefore destroys Satan's kingdom. It is through Jesus that God will rule His world, because during His life on earth He qualified Himself by being a perfect man. Through Jesus, God can now bring to completion His plan to rule and bless human beings. Jesus will be the King of a new human race. God's Kingdom can now come.

1. What evidence is there that Jesus rose from the dead?

2. What is God telling us through Jesus' resurrection?

3. Why is Jesus' resurrection a victory for God's Kingdom?

God's Exalted King



'And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives in you and will be in you' (John 14:16-17).

There is only one God, but in God there are three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is known as the 'Trinity'. The Holy Spirit is God Himself, and is equal to the Father and the Son. This is a very difficult concept to understand, but just because we cannot fully understand it, doesn't mean it isn't true! When Jesus was on earth He promised His followers that He would not leave them alone, but that He would send the Holy Spirit to live in them.

'Exalted to the right hand of God, he (Jesus) has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2:33, 36).

Forty days after Jesus is raised from the dead He is taken back to heaven and enthroned as God's exalted King. The disciples are told to wait in Jerusalem. After ten days Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit on the disciples. They speak in other languages and visitors from many

different countries hear the disciples speak in their mother languages, and they are all amazed. Some think the disciples are drunk, but Peter explains that what they see and hear is evidence that Jesus is indeed God's chosen King, and that He has sent the Holy Spirit upon His people. Peter therefore calls on them to repent and believe the good news – the Jesus who had been crucified is the risen Lord, seated at the highest place in heaven. That day three thousand people are converted and become followers of Jesus.

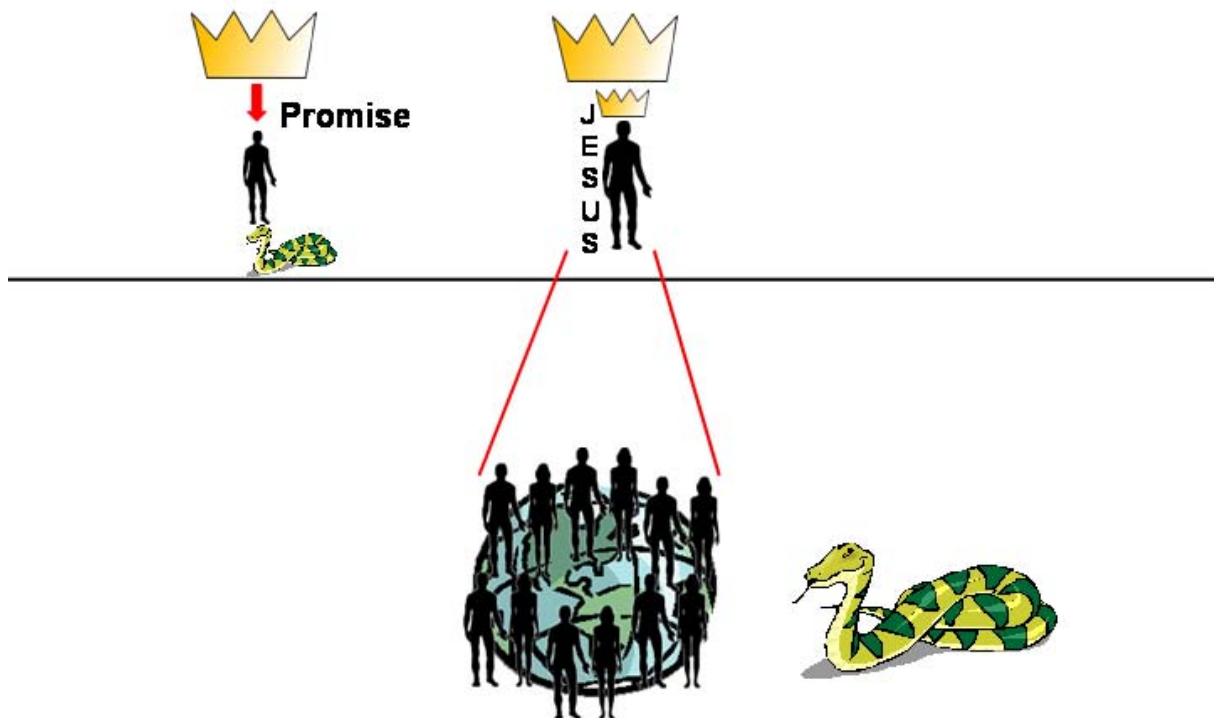
The promises to Abraham are being fulfilled - people from many countries become Christians. God is blessing the nations through Jesus.



Think it through & discuss

1. Explain how God is three in one, and one in three.
2. What happens when Jesus sends the Holy Spirit?
3. Why has Jesus sent the Holy Spirit?

Jesus' Kingdom Has Come



So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; and he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel' (Genesis 3:14-15).

When Adam and Eve obeyed Satan God promised to make war with him. He promised a warrior who would defeat him, but be injured in the fight. This person was obviously Jesus who came and died (was injured), but rose again from the dead, defeating death and Satan. No longer could Satan maintain his power over human beings. Jesus the perfect man had overcome him.

Then I heard a voice in Heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down...' (Revelation 12:10-11).

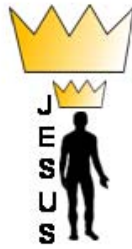
However, though defeated, Satan has not been finally destroyed yet. He fights on, knowing his end is near, but wanting to do as much damage to God's people as he can before it arrives. The Bible however, makes it clear; Satan has been thrown down and defeated. Jesus is establishing His Kingdom.



Think it through & discuss

1. In what way does Jesus fulfil the promise of Genesis 3:15?
2. Jesus has defeated Satan, but what is Satan doing now? (see Revelation 12:17)

The New Covenant Established



Through Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension the new covenant has come. We see this in three main ways:

1. There is unlimited access to God's presence through Jesus

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself... But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God... Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near to God... (Hebrews 9:24-26; 10:12, 19-22a).

Jesus has entered God's presence on our behalf as our high priest. Because he is the perfect priest and offers the perfect sacrifice he is able to enter God's presence and sit down. He remains in God's presence, and because we are connected to him through the Holy Spirit we now

have unlimited access to God. Human beings have not enjoyed this since Adam rebelled in the garden.

1. God's law is written on his people's hearts

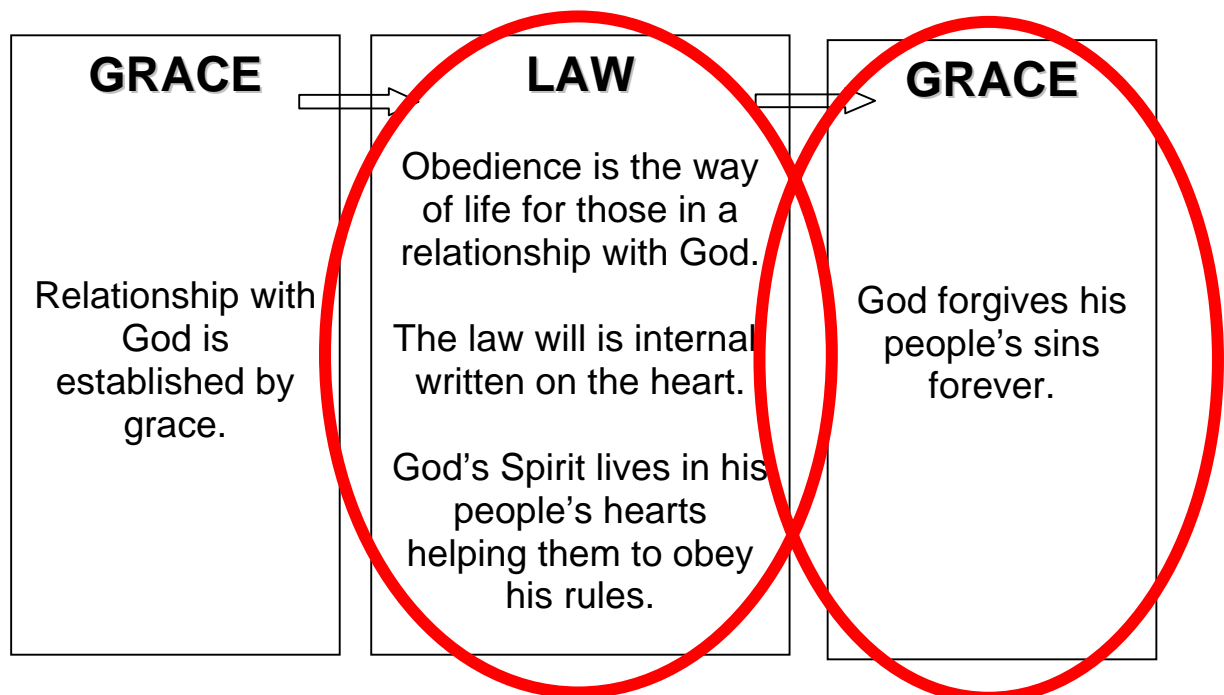
The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds" (Hebrews 10:15-16).

Through the coming of God's Spirit we have been given new hearts that are now able to obey his law.

2. God forgives our sins forever

And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...Then he adds: "Their sins and their lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:10, 17-18).

Jesus' death is a once-for-all sacrifice that ensures God has forgiven all our sins. There is no more payment necessary for us to be forgiven. Jesus' death has paid for it all.



'I will be their God, they will be my people'

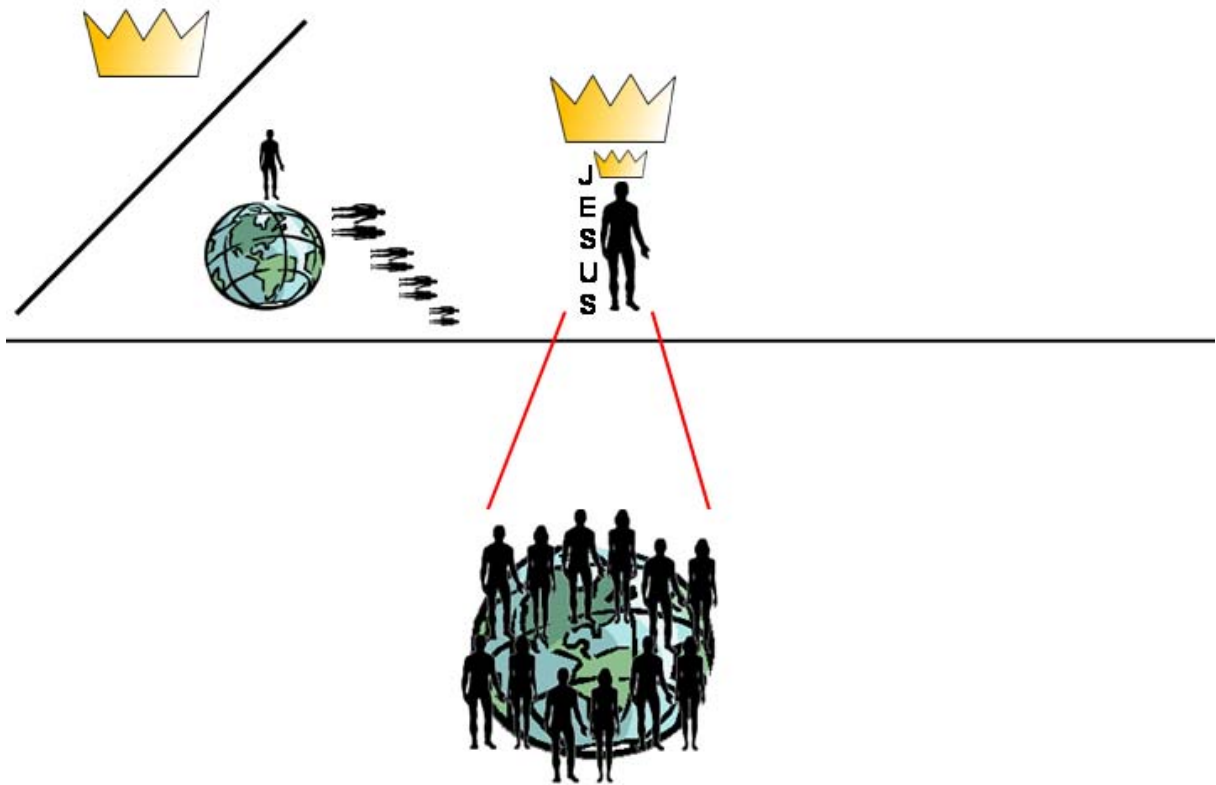
God established his kingdom with Adam, the priest-king; but he rebelled and the kingdom was ruined. God then promised his kingdom to Abraham, a new priest-king. Abraham's children, Israel, were given the role of being a priest-king to the world – God would rule and bless the world through them. But they disobeyed God and he removed them from his presence.

Jesus came announcing that the kingdom was near because he is God's king. Through his death and resurrection he defeated Satan and therefore brought in God's kingdom – the new age when God's people live in God's presence, under his rule and blessing. The constitution of God's kingdom is – "I will be their God, they will be my people." When Jesus ascends to heaven he sends his promised Holy Spirit, which is a fulfilment of God's kingdom promise to live among his people and be their God. He now lives with his people through the Holy Spirit living in people's hearts. God's people live in God's presence, under his rule and blessing because of what Jesus has done for them. A new way has been opened through Jesus so that people can live with God again. Jesus is now the new priest-king who rules God's world from heaven waiting to defeat all his enemies. The new covenant has come. God's kingdom is now here, and can be entered by any one who trusts in Jesus.



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God's Blessing



For if, by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

Through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, He has won back the blessings that Adam lost. In fact, Paul, a great Christian teacher and writer, says that Jesus has won back *more* than Adam lost.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Jesus becomes the mediator through whom God blesses His people again. Through Adam people have sinned and died – through Jesus people are declared to be perfect and live forever. The blessings are only available through Jesus Christ, and God has not held back any blessings from His people.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! (1 John 3:1).

By nature humans are born children of the devil and deserve God's anger. By grace God adopts people into His family because of what Jesus has done for them. When Christians consider how many blessings we lost in Adam but have gained in Jesus Christ, we are reminded just how great God's love is. Through Adam we became children of Satan – through Jesus we become children of God!



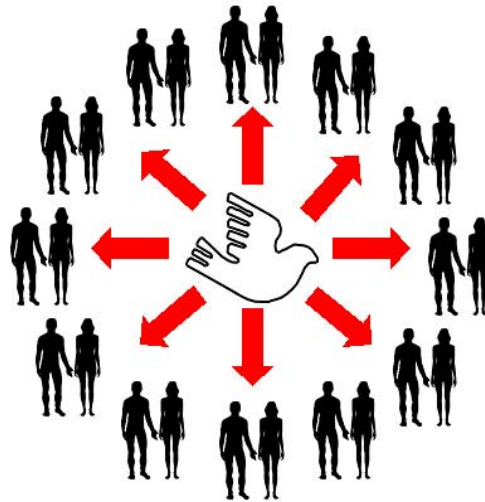
Think it through & discuss

1. What do we receive because of Adam?

2. What do we receive because of Jesus?

3. Why is God's love so great?

The Promise of the Kingdom



And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

It has always been God's plan to live with human beings. In the beginning God lived with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In the desert God lived with His people in a tent, and then in a temple in Canaan. Through the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, God promised to come and live in His people's hearts. Now, because of the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, God lives with human beings through the Holy Spirit. The new covenant has been established – God is living in His people's hearts through the Holy Spirit. When people become Christians through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit enables them to obey God's rules and to live as God intended.

For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people' (2 Corinthians 6:16b).

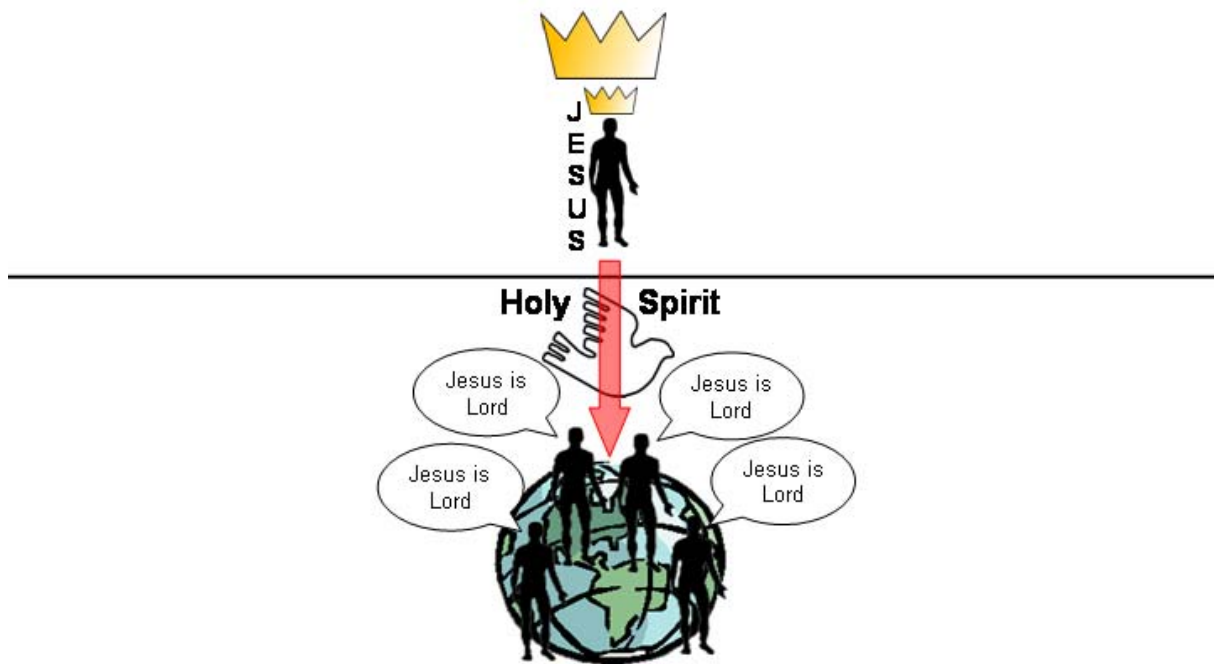
The church is a gathering of Christians, and the Bible refers to them as 'the temple of God'. Through the Holy Spirit living in God's people the covenant promise is fulfilled – 'I will be their God, they will be my people.' God's Kingdom is present in Christians.

God's Kingdom				
<i>Constitution:</i> <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
God's promises				
	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam&Eve	God's word	Adam
God's Kingdom ruined				
Abraham	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promises	Kings from Abraham's family
Israel in desert	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah
Israel in Canaan	Temple in Canaan	Israel nation	God's rules	David, Solomon
God's Kingdom ruined...again!				
Israel in exile	Return to new temple in Canaan	Remnant	New covenant	A perfect King is promised
Jesus	JESUS The fulfilment of God's promises			
The church	God's people are a living temple	People who have faith in Jesus	The Gospel	King Jesus

1. Highlight the main points of God's presence with His people in the Bible plotline.

2. How is the Holy Spirit related to God's Kingdom?

Announcing God's Kingdom



Before Jesus left the earth He gave His disciples a mission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus is God's risen, exalted King and so all authority on earth is now His. A man is ruling the world as God had always intended. Jesus commands His followers to spread the message that He is Lord.

'Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

The book of Acts explains the advancement of God's Kingdom. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit the disciples tell people about Jesus and His Kingdom. Their message is a very exclusive one – there is no other way to be rescued from God's punishment except through Jesus.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves... (Colossians 1:13).

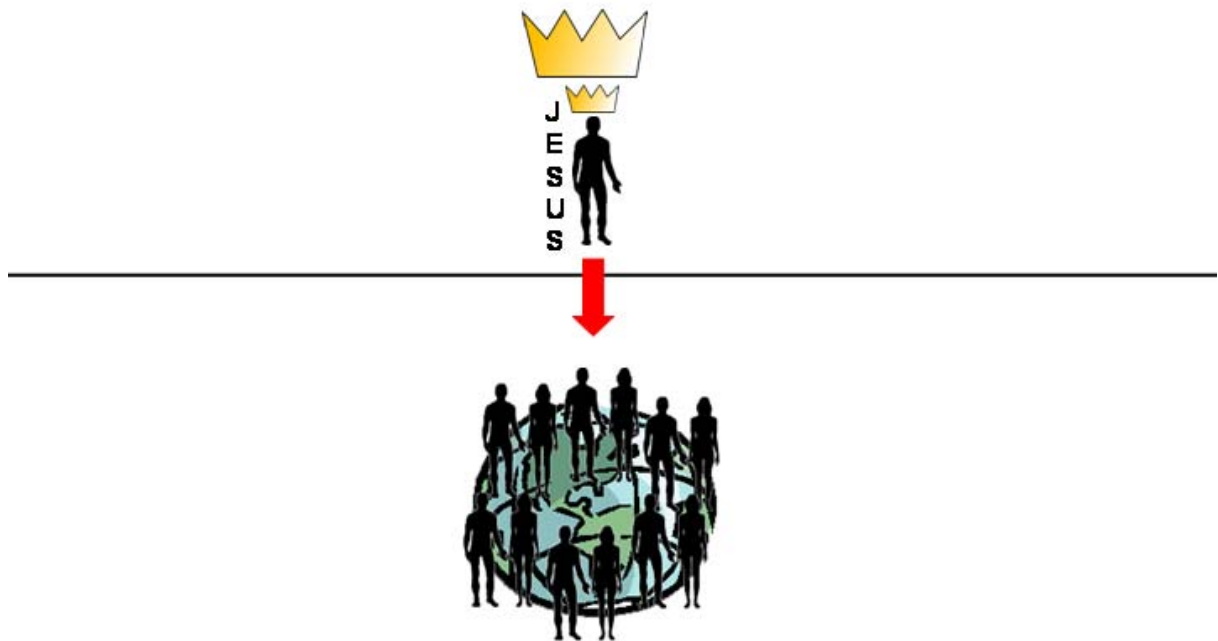
As people hear the news, repent and believe the message, they are brought into God's Kingdom.

God's Kingdom is spreading today throughout the world as people respond to the message that 'Jesus is Lord.' God is still bringing people under His rule and blessing.



- ### 3. What are Jesus' followers to do?

The Return of the King



‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am’ (John 14:3).

Just before Jesus died He promised His followers that after He went to Heaven He would return again. He explained that only God knew when that would be. The Bible encourages Christians to look forward to the day when Jesus will return. We have every reason to believe that He will, because He always told the truth. His resurrection proves to us that He is not a liar, and will keep His promise.

‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘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).

After Jesus left the earth, some angels appeared to the disciples and promised His return.

When He was on earth Jesus established God’s Kingdom. He is God’s chosen King, and is going to return again to complete God’s Kingdom.

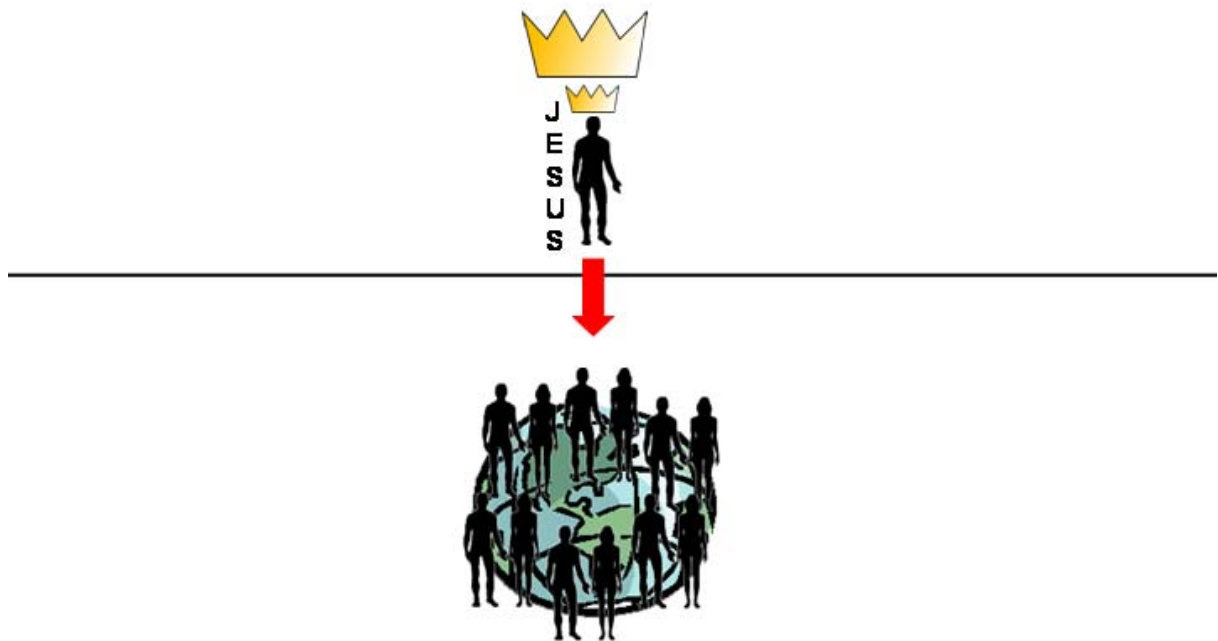


Think it through & discuss

1. What are Christians looking forward to in the future?

2. How can we be sure Jesus is going to return?

God's Appointed Judge



‘For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead’ (Acts 17:31).

Jesus’ return is not good news for everyone. Human beings are still rebelling against God. Justice was most certainly accomplished at the cross when Jesus died, but unfortunately injustice remains. People still live, rebel, and die without apparently receiving any punishment for their sin or the injustices they cause, whether they are great or small. The Bible says that God has appointed a day of judgment to punish all the wrongs committed by every person on earth. This coming day is as certain as the day Jesus rose from the dead.

This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares (Romans 2:16).

On Judgment Day, even the secrets of people’s hearts will be exposed. Nothing will be hidden from God’s sight.

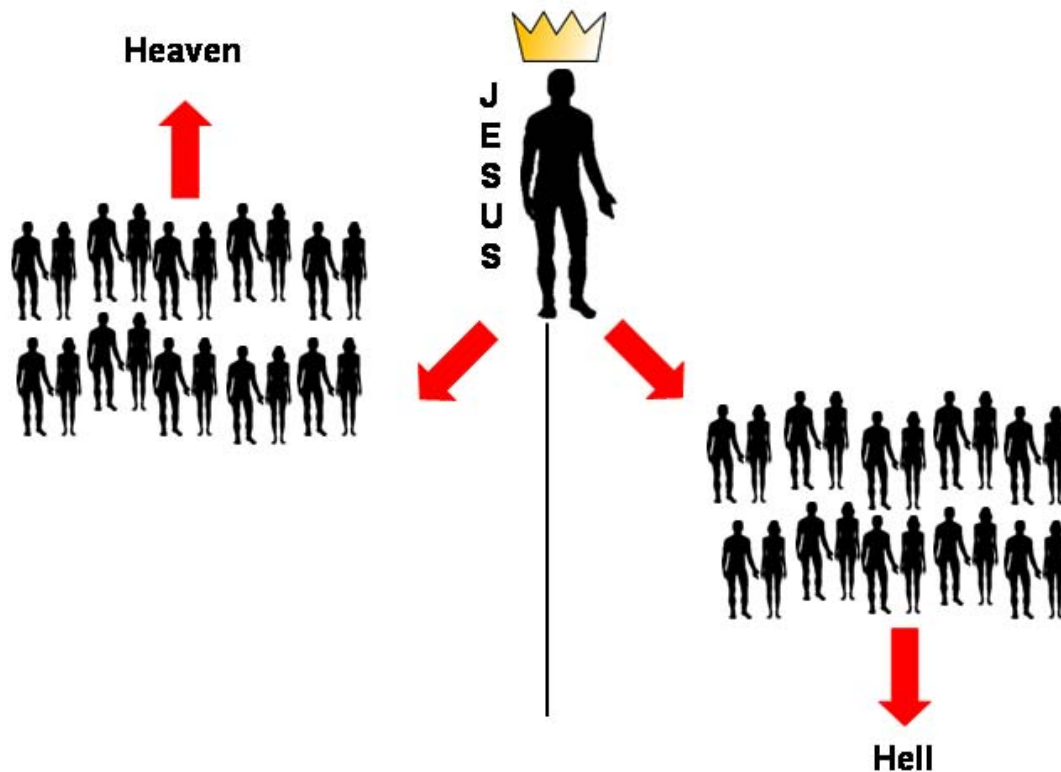


Think it through & discuss

1. Why is Jesus' return not good news for everyone?

2. What proof has God given to us that Judgment Day will happen?

The Day of Judgment



'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left' (Matthew 25:31-33).

On this future day Jesus will divide the human race into two groups – sheep and goats. These are just descriptive ways of talking about believers and unbelievers. Sheep are people who follow Jesus; goats are those who do not.

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

Everlasting punishment awaits those who have lived their lives ignoring God in His world, and who have not responded in faith to the good news message of Jesus.

Since we have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Romans 5:9-10).

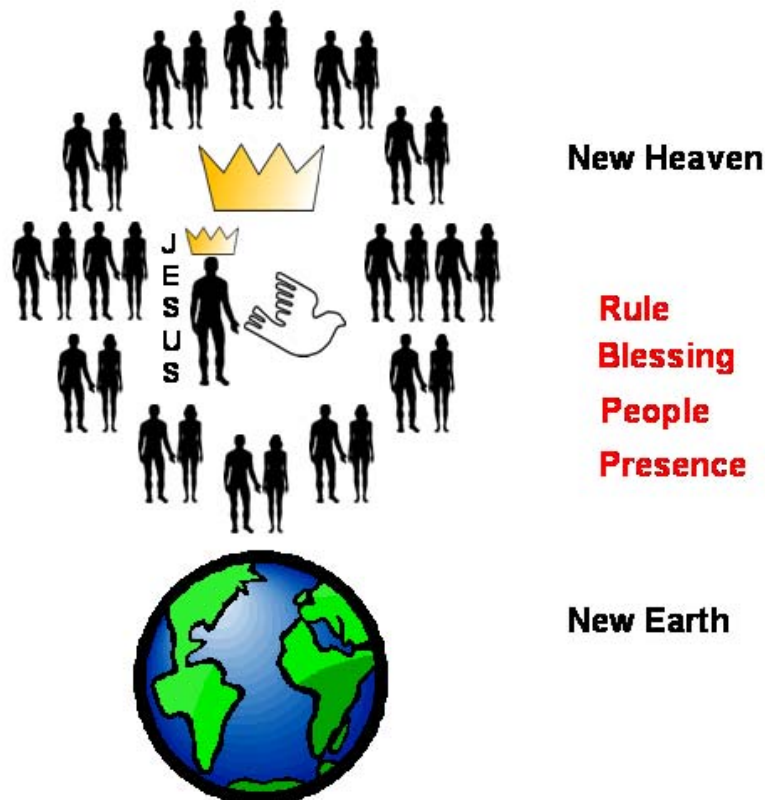
On the Day of Judgment will Christians also receive a punishment from God for what they have done wrong? The Bible's answer is 'no.' When Jesus died, He was punished in the place of people from every nation who believe in Him. Christians do not fear Jesus' return. His return is their bright future that they look forward to, but only because the Judgment Day for their sins is in the past. Two thousand years ago, just outside the city of Jerusalem Jesus received their punishment, so that on the day of His coming there is only blessing to look forward to.



Think it through & discuss

1. What will happen when Jesus returns?
2. What is going to happen to people who are not Christians?
3. What is going to happen to people who are Christians?

God's Kingdom Completed



*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, **and they will be his people, and he will live with them and be their God**' (Revelation 21:1-3).*

The Bible ends as it started. There are similar themes and pictures at both ends of the Bible: God's rule, God's presence with His people, God's blessing, and a heaven and an earth.

In the beginning God established a Kingdom – God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. However, human beings rebelled against God's loving rule and chose to live life their own way. God then initiated a rescue plan to win back human beings from Satan. He promised to rebuild His Kingdom through Abraham and the nation of Israel. However, only when Jesus came was Satan defeated and God's Kingdom really established. Jesus is now God's exalted King and through Him God can live with His people again. When Jesus finally returns and brings in the new creation then God's Kingdom will be

completed. God will rule from His throne; He will live among His people; He will be their God; and they, forever, will be His people.

'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down for these words are trustworthy and true' (Revelation 21:4-5).

The curses that Satan brought into the world will be permanently removed. The sea (which symbolises all opposition to God) will be no more. All things are made new...forever! God's loving covenant – made with Adam, ruined by Adam, re-promised to Abraham and Israel, and established by Jesus - will be completed. God's perfect Kingdom will finally have come, and the constitution will never again be broken, for it is secured by the death of the King, who now lives and reigns forever.

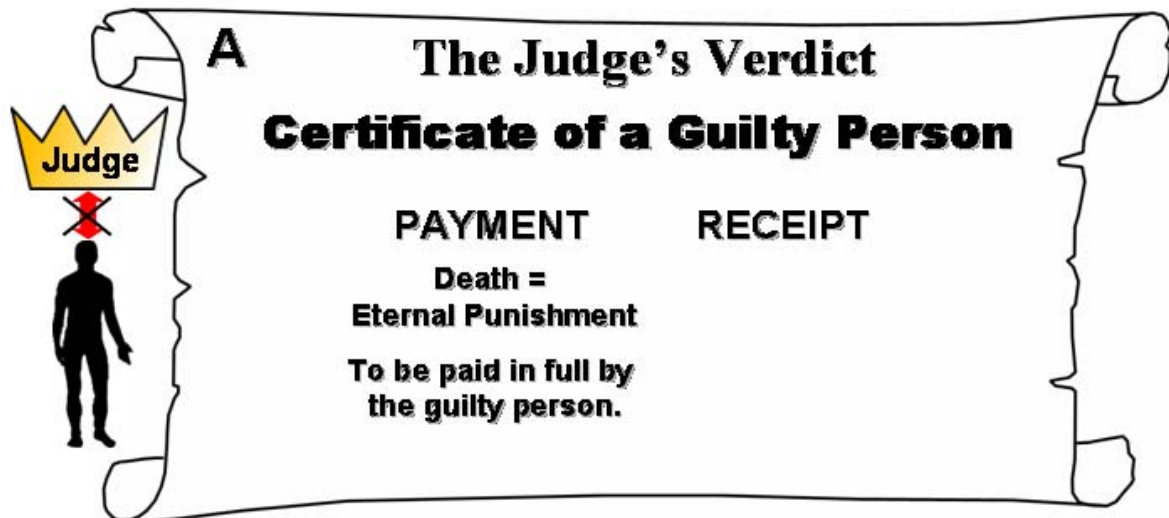
God's Kingdom				
Constitution: <i>'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
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	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
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Israel in exile	Return to new temple in Canaan	Remnant	New covenant	A perfect King is promised
Jesus	JESUS The fulfilment of God's promises			
The church	God's people are a living temple	People who have faith in Jesus	The Gospel	King Jesus
New creation	New heaven and new earth	Perfect people from every nation	God's everlasting rule & blessing	King Jesus

1. What will be at the centre of the new creation?
2. In what way will God's Kingdom be completed?
3. There will be some things missing in the new creation. Name them.
4. How long will this new creation last? Justify your answer.

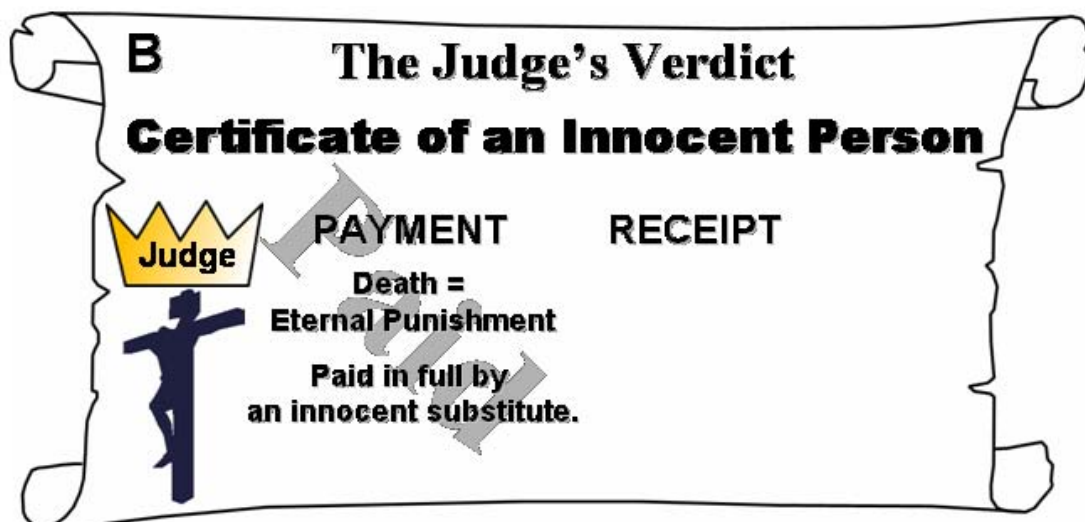
GOD'S KINGDOM AND US

A Right Relationship with God

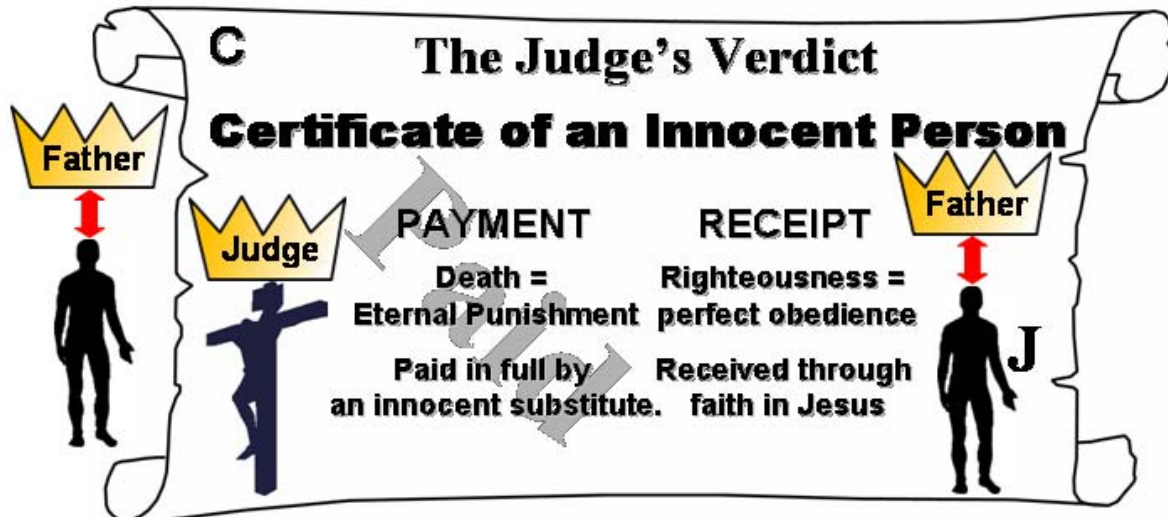
In the beginning human beings had a perfect relationship with God. He was their Father and they were His children. But when Adam disobeyed God, the relationship was broken and we all inherited a guilty position before God. He became our Judge, and passed the verdict that we are guilty. The payment for our rebellion is everlasting punishment.



Human beings deserve to die and receive God's eternal punishment. This is just. The question is: Can a person ever be put right with God? The problem was solved when Jesus died in the place of guilty people and received the eternal punishment from God. On the cross God the Father was Jesus' Judge. So justice is accomplished. Payment has been made. A punishment has been received for the wrong life of human beings.



But it is only half the solution. Human beings are still not in a right relationship with God. They have no righteousness of their own. Justification consists of both pardon and the receiving of righteousness. Justification is more than forgiveness; it is also about being put right with God. The good news of justification is that not only does Jesus receive the punishment for our sins, but we also receive His perfect life into our account. When we believe in Jesus we receive a right relationship with God – Jesus' right relationship with God is credited to us. God is no longer our Judge; He is now our Father.



God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26).

This is why the Bible says that God is both just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. When God declares guilty people innocent He remains just because Jesus paid the punishment for them, and He can justify guilty people because Jesus lived a perfect life for them. It is the great exchange. Jesus receives our death; we receive His life. He receives our punishment; we receive His righteousness.

God is now satisfied. His just demands have been met by the death of Jesus. To have a right relationship with God we trust Jesus as the one who receives our punishment, and who provides the perfect life we need. When we do this we have peace with God.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

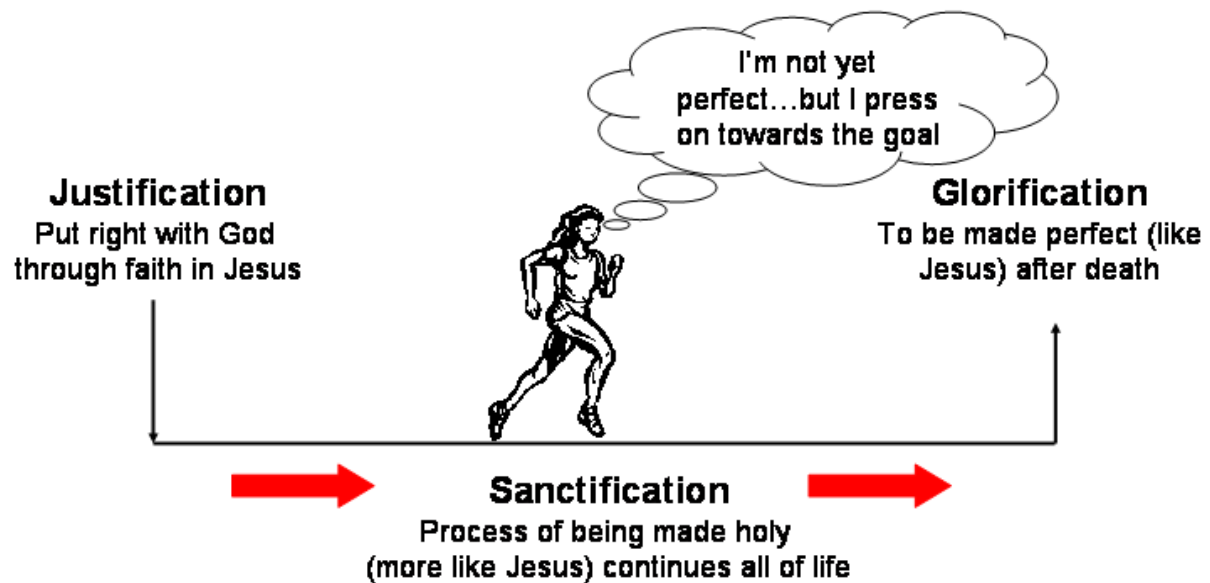


- ## 1. Why do we have a wrong relationship with God?

2. What has Jesus done to enable us to have a right relationship with God?

- ### 3. How do we receive a right relationship with God?

The Christian Life



I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:10-12, 14).

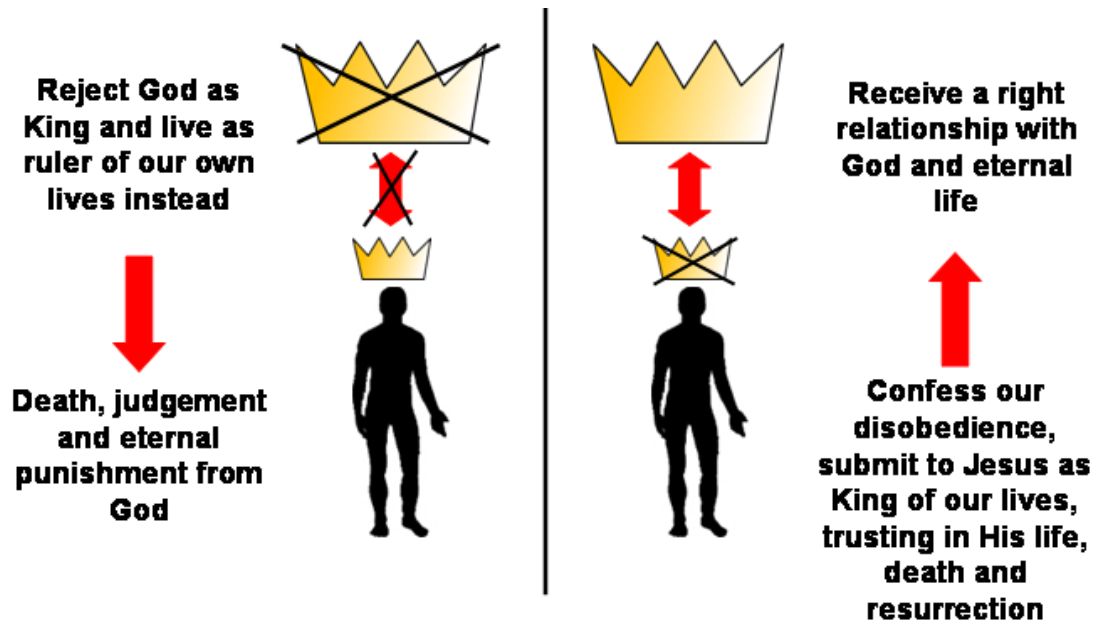
The Christian life has a beginning, middle and end. The beginning is when we are put right with God (justification). The end is when we become into perfect human beings – body and spirit (glorification). In between we are in a process of being made more like Jesus, the perfect human being (sanctification). We will never attain perfection in this life, but it is our goal.

The Christian life is like a race. It begins by God's grace, we must continue to run it by faith in God's grace until we die, and at the end we will receive the prize of being like Jesus. God gives us the Holy Spirit who lives in us to help us become more holy during our life. Christians long for the day when we will know Jesus perfectly.



- ### 3. When will the Christian become perfect?

The Choice we all Face



...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

Having read this booklet, you will hopefully have understood the story of the Bible. It is important to now understand its challenge and impact on our lives. Christianity is not one religion among many. Jesus is God's King of the whole earth. This means that truth is not relative and all religions cannot be equally true. There is one God who made the world; Jesus is God's King, and therefore all people on earth are accountable to King Jesus. This is true whether people believe it or not. Oxygen continues to exist and keep one alive whether one believes in it or not. Only because of God do we live and breathe, and have our existence. God is not going to stop existing because some people don't believe in Him! And the same is true with Jesus as God's King. Whether one believes it or not, we will all stand before Jesus one day and give an account as to how we lived in His Father's world. Ignoring this fact about the future doesn't change the future – we will all meet King Jesus.

And so we all face a choice. Will we live in God's world like Adam in rebellion and independence from God, or will we live with Jesus as our Lord? If we choose to continue in our rebellion, then we must understand that we will face Jesus as our Judge one day. It will be a terrible judgment of eternal punishment. The Bible describes this as "hell".

However, the good news of the Bible is that if we choose God's way through faith in Jesus, we receive forgiveness and acceptance with God. From then on we have a right relationship with God and live in His Kingdom, under His loving rule and blessing. We become His children and followers of His Son Jesus.

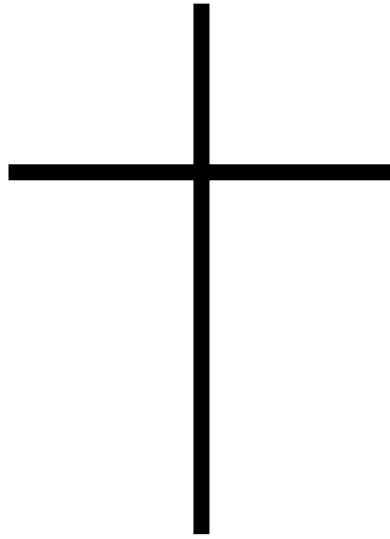
We will all meet King Jesus one day. The Bible presents it as an unavoidable fact. The question is: Will it be as Judge, or as Saviour and King? The choice is ours.



Think it through & discuss

1. Why do Christians believe that truth is not relative, and that all religions are not equally valid?
2. Why should we listen to the message that Jesus is God's King of His world?
3. Do you agree that we will all meet King Jesus one day? Justify your answer.

Considering the Cost



Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, He must deny Himself and take up His cross and follow me' (Matthew 16:24).

Jesus said that the Christian life is difficult. He described it in terms of self-denial and suffering. To deny ourselves means that we surrender our own goals, ambitions and desires to King Jesus. Our plans and purposes in life are now centred on God and His Kingdom. This does not mean, we do not pursue jobs or the studies that we would like, but we do so with the purpose of helping to build God's Kingdom. We are no longer living for ourselves, but we now live for Jesus. We are citizens of His Kingdom.

Jesus' life led to the cross, which was a very offensive symbol in His culture. It represented shame and suffering. To follow Jesus is to live the same life He did, with opposition for what we believe. Christians will suffer. There is no option. But this does not necessarily mean physical sufferings like cancer, or blindness, or a difficult boss at work. All people on earth can suffer these things; whether they are Christian or not. Rather, Christians suffer for the good news message about Jesus. We suffer as we try to live good and upright lives in this evil world, and we face opposition as we try to tell others about Jesus.

The Christian life is also the best life we can live. In fact, in a strange way, the Christian life is both the most difficult life to live, and the best life to live. It is the best life because when we become Christians God accepts us and He becomes our Father. We live in our Father's world as He intended under His loving rule and blessing. We enjoy the blessings of forgiveness, adoption into His family, a relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit living in us, and the hope of a perfect life in the future. Christians also enjoy the ordinary things in life: like food, drink, music, art, sport, family and friends because we acknowledge that they have come from God. We understand the reason for work and enjoy our rest. We do all these things to the glory of God. Christians have the most fun in life because we are learning how to live in our Father's world as He intended. People who live their lives outside God's rule are like children who choose to stay at home in the rain, and build sandcastles in the garden with mud, when what is offered to them is a day at the beach in the sun!



Think it through & discuss

1. What does it mean for followers of Jesus to deny themselves?
2. Why do Christians suffer?
3. Why is the Christian life the best life?

Want to Know More?

- **Story of a Kingdom (Study Guide)**

Useful for small group Bible Studies. Contains notes for leaders and students.

- **Story of a Kingdom (Translations)**

This book has been translated into both simplified and traditional Chinese, and Slovak.

- **Story of a Kingdom (PowerPoint)**

Helpful for explaining the whole Bible in picture form with key verses. This is available in simplified and traditional Chinese, Slovak, and Turkish.

- **Story of a Kingdom (Children's Edition)**

A simple explanation of the Bible for children.

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