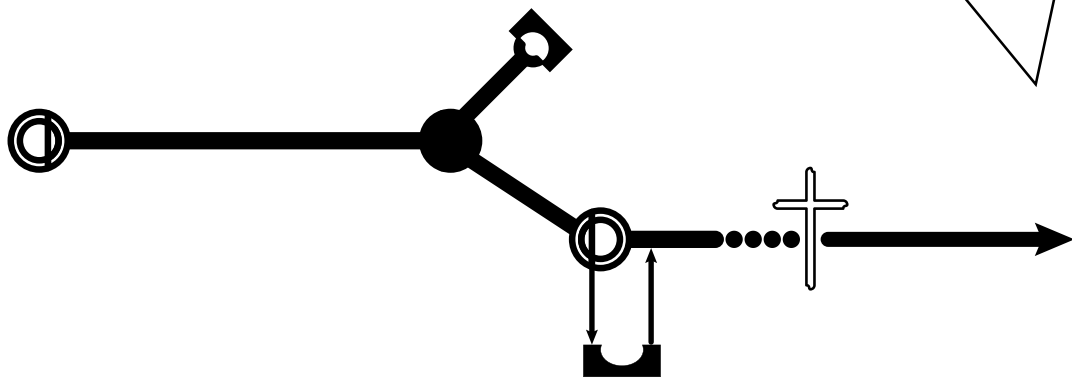


rockypc SERIES COMPANION

IN JUST A FEW WORDS THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY



TERM 1, 2023

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THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY

TERM 1, 2023

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT?

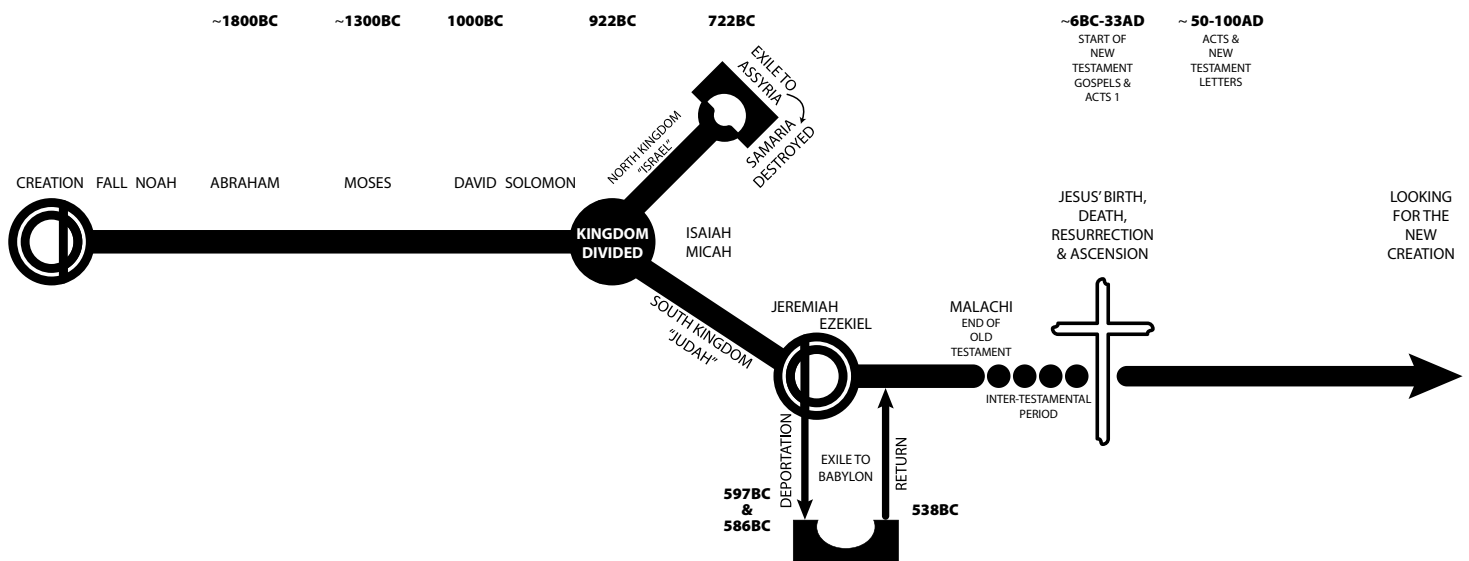
For lots of people the Bible is a strange book that is difficult to read and understand. That makes sense, after all, it's ONE BOOK made up of 66 books that were written by different people in different times and places, in different genres and original languages, covering thousands of years of human history, all many years before our own existence.

The Old Testament in particular can be difficult to read, understand and apply to modern life, so it often goes unread and undervalued. But ALL SCRIPTURE is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3v16-17). So, as we get DEEP IN THE WORD together and SEEK GOD, we want to make sure we don't miss what the Old Testament has to say to us. However, we want to make sure that we are equipped to understand it properly, so that we don't misunderstand or apply the Bible Story or our place in it.

Although, the Bible is 66 books, it's vital to realise that it tells ONE STORY and we are not the heroes, or main characters in that story. The Bible is a story ABOUT GOD and, in particular, what he has done for the world THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

During this series, we are going to spend 10 weeks we're going to see how the OLD TESTAMENT fits together and points straight at Jesus. We'll be encouraged to see how a bunch of themes fit together and how we fit into this story as people living thousands of years later.

To help keep track of where things are up to in the BIBLE STORY a timeline has been provided. Each week, it will be helpful to remind yourself of what you've already seen so that you've got your bearings before plowing ahead.



It will also be helpful to bear in mind a few principles of an approach to the Bible called BIBLICAL THEOLOGY. These principles will help avoid the tendency to misapply OLD TESTAMENT stories that were written first and foremost about and to the OLD TESTAMENT people of God, the nation of Israel.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

- The Bible is a story about God, NOT us. We read it so we can know him, not as a guidebook for life or a moral rulebook or a self-discovery manual.
- Therefore, we're not the centre of its stories. It's about God and what he's doing ie HE'S the hero. eg David and Goliath — we don't imagine ourselves as David — we need a Messiah who saves us.
- The Bible is a story of the Creator, who was rejected but determined to bless and restore through Abraham's family, Israel — ultimately it's through Jesus that the whole of creation can be reconciled to God (Colossians 1v19-20)
- The story always leads to Jesus (eg all God's promises are 'yes' in him —2 Corinthians 1v20; he's the awaited Saviour — Luke 2v27-32; he's the culmination of the law — Romans 10v4, all Scripture is about him — Luke 24v27) He shows us God's character and God's works best, he solves problems/tensions of the Old Testament, he fulfills prophecies, he's a better Saviour for the people, he does what no one else could do.
- We're Gentiles — not Israelites. As we read the Old Testament, we're looking for what to learn about God and how it points us to Jesus. And we also see Israel's hearts and actions — both good and evil — and see how we're like them, as they represent humanity. But we're not part of the Old Testament covenant people (with circumcision and the law). Instead, we're joined to Jesus by faith, in the new covenant of the Spirit (Romans 4; 2 Corinthians 3v3). We're forgiven for our sinfulness, our desires are changed and we're enabled to please God. So what we learn from Israel's story is seen through the lens of the cross and the work of the Spirit in us.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS SERIES COMPANION

ON YOUR OWN—Take your time reading through each of the passages and consider where you are up to on the Bible Timeline. If you have time, work through the questions before your GROWTH GROUP so that you've started thinking about the topic before you arrive.

WITH YOUR GROWTH GROUP—Don't be afraid to stop and talk about things that grab your attention or raise questions for you. Above all, try to enjoy digging into the OLD TESTAMENT.

ON SUNDAY—Make sure you bring your SERIES COMPANION along with you, so that you can keep track of any questions you have and record the way that God's Spirit is helping you to understand His Word and grow in your love for Jesus.

These series companions are designed to be used as either a print version, or interactively on a device. Use whichever method is most helpful for you.

IN THE BEGINNING

GENESIS 1 - 2

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

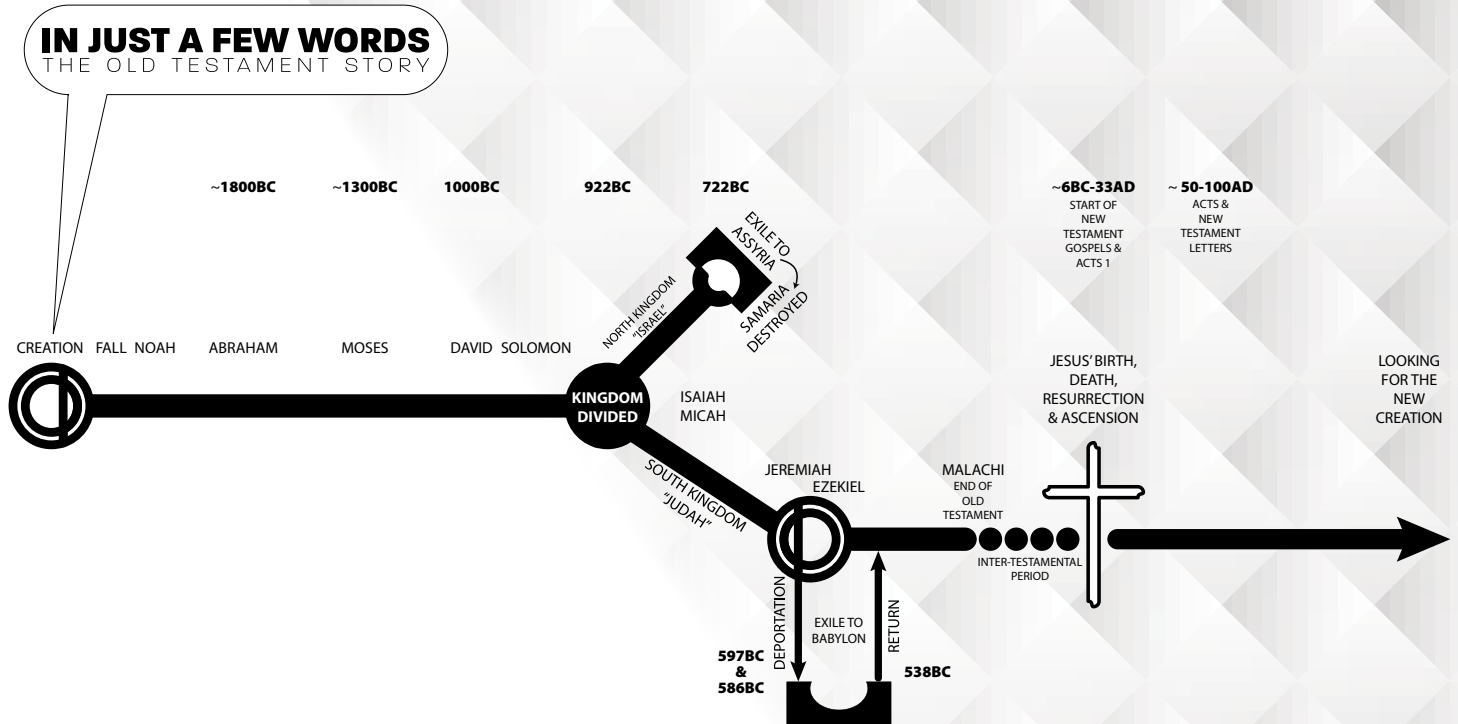
A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

What is your favourite origin story? (your own? a Marvel character? a biography?)

We're starting our series at the very beginning of the Old Testament, with the origin of ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING!



READ GENESIS 1v1-25

1. Describe the God who made us.

READ GENESIS 1v26-2v3

2. How does God create humanity differently from the other creatures?

3. What does this show us about him?

READ GENESIS 2v4-17

4. The wide angle lens is on in chapter 1. But the focus zooms in on the creation of humanity in chapter 2. What is the relationship between God and the first man?

READ GENESIS 2v18-25

5. How is the creation of the woman different?

6. From chapters 1-2, what do you notice about humanity's relationships with each other?
(See the excerpt over the page for more about the creating of the woman)

The first words of the Bible show the God who made us and the honoured role he gives us in being his image together. But our reality seems removed for the very good beginning as we doubt God and are in conflict with each other (more on that next week). But the good news of the Bible is that God acts to make himself known and restore relationships.

READ COLOSSIANS 1v13-20

7. What is so great about God's Son?

The Bible's story leads us to Jesus, the one who images God and rules all of heaven and earth. And it's Jesus who transforms those he has rescued.

READ COLOSSIANS 3v8-14

8. How can we image God now?

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are **DEEP IN THE WORD**, **SEEKING GOD**, on **MISSION**, as we **SERVE** in **COMMUNITY** together.

What comfort and hope do you have in knowing our origin?

How does knowing Jesus enhance this?

SEEKING GOD



How does the creation story help us value others?
How is God renewing you in the image of your Creator?



If a friend asked you, 'What is the meaning of life?' how can Genesis 1-2 and Colossians 1-3 help you answer them?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise the eternal, creator God for all he has made. Praise him for making us in his image to rule under him together. Praise him for his Son, the eternal God become human, so that we can know him, being restored and renewed.
- Pray that we'd display God's image to the world, as we become more and more like him — compassionate, kind, humble, gentle and patient. And that we'd value one another as fellow image-bearers.
- Ask that we'd find our meaning and purpose in the God who made us and saves us — to be in loving relationship with him and others.

'Married for God: Making your marriage the best it can be' Christopher Ash p34-37

HOW GENESIS 2v18 IS WRONGLY UNDERSTOOD

It is very common to take 'alone' to mean 'lonely'. 'Ah,' we say, 'poor Adam was lonely. There he is in the garden surrounded by animals. But a pet dog, cat, ox, budgerigar or goldfish does not meet his relational needs. God will give him a wife so that he will not be lonely any more.'

It is very common to read it like this. One writer says that God is simply filling Adam's 'personal need'; another that 'the reason for marriage is to solve the problem of loneliness.' This is how twenty-first-century people understand it: that unless I am married I will not be loved, and unless I am married I am bound to be lonely.

The motto for this misunderstanding might be sex for the fulfilment of me or sex in the service of us. My concern is my fulfilment, sex to meet my needs. However it is a mistake to think that Genesis 2v18 ('It is not good for the man to be alone') means that marriage is created to meet my needs. There are two reasons why this is wrong, and a further two why it is disastrous in its results.

WHY MARRIAGE IS NOT THE ANSWER TO LONELINESS

Reason 1: Genesis 2v18 must be read in its context

First, it is false because it takes the verse out of its context in the story of Genesis 2. Verse 18 does not come out of the blue, but is part of a drama that begins in verse 4. Right at the start of this second telling of the creation story, there is a problem: that there is no man to work the ground, to farm it (verse 5).

So naturally, God makes a man to do just that, to care for his world (verse 7). This is what human beings are for, as we learned in Genesis 1v26-28. So he puts the man in the garden and gives him his orders (verse 15), which are to work [the garden] and keep [or guard it]'. That is, Adam is to be the gardener or park-keeper, with the enormous responsibility and dignity of being entrusted with God's garden.

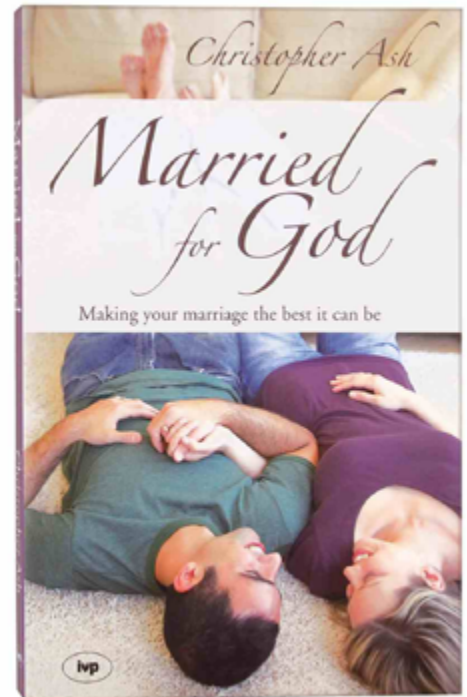
In this context God takes a good look at the garden and at little Adam standing bemused in the middle of it and says, 'I can see that it is not good, not because he is lonely (he may or may not be!), but quite simply because the job is too big for him to do on his own. This is why he is given 'a helper' rather than 'a companion'. If he was lonely, then a companion would be what he needed, to sit with him on the garden bench, to hold hands, and so on. But although no doubt Eve would have been a splendid companion (and a wife is called a 'companion' in Malachi 2v14), she is given him here as his 'helper', which simply means one who works alongside so that both together can do the task. It is worth asking why, when Adam needed a helper, God chose to make the woman, rather than another man. For, at risk of seeing either trivial or politically incorrect, we would have to admit that purely in terms of averages another male might have been stronger! So why the woman?

Genesis 1 and 2 suggest two reasons. Genesis 1 suggests that it is do with having children (1v28). This makes perfect sense. For if one gardener is not enough for such a great garden, nor will two be. They need to start a whole family of gardeners!

But Genesis 2 adds another reason, which is the delight of sexual intimacy. In verse 23, Adam responds to seeing Eve with a rapturous cry of delight: 'This at last ...!' At last here is the one who is the answer to his longing for a helper suitable for him, to work alongside him in delightful fellowship in the privilege of serving God in the garden.

Adam's cry of delight in Genesis 2v23 has been echoed by bridegrooms down the ages. There is here (as in verse 25) a natural 'Yes!' to sexual desire and delight untouched by shame. But even here, the context makes us remember that the final goal is not the delight of sexual intimacy. For this is delight with a shared purpose, intimacy with a common goal, and companionship in a task that stretches beyond the boundaries of the couple themselves. As we rejoice with the lovers in the garden, we must not forget that there is work to be done. The garden needs gardening. God's world needs watchful care and careful work. Those who are single will serve in many fruitful ways possible only for the unattached. But for those who are married, this work will be done together as a couple. So the motto for Carrie in Genesis 2 is the same as the motto in Genesis 1: sex in the service of God.*

*Sex is shorthand for the marriage relationship in all its fullness: in intimacy, friendship, partnership, fun and faithfulness. The motto is to remind us that the whole business of marriage in all its fullness is to be lived in the loving joyful service of God, as we look outwards from our marriages and as couples seek to care for God's world together. (p33)



WHERE ARE YOU?

GENESIS 3, 6-9

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

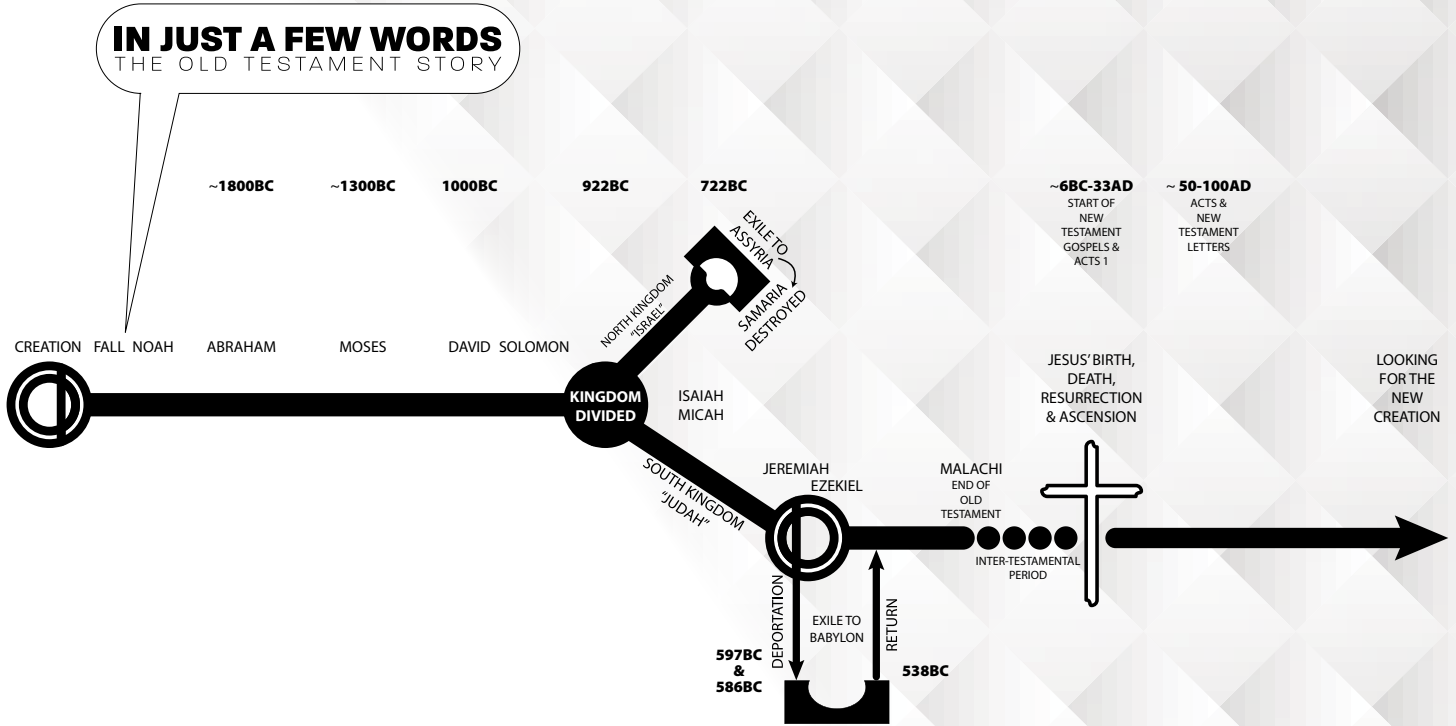
A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

Share an embarrassing story with the group, if you're brave (it's ok to pass if you need to).

Last week we saw the origin story of the universe — with a powerful, good God — and his careful forming of humanity in his image, blessing them to rule his world together. But it only takes 1 page in the Bible's story before things go horribly wrong.



READ GENESIS 3v1-10

1. What tempts Eve about this fruit?

2. What are the immediate results of eating the fruit?

3. Why are Adam and Eve's attempts to hide from God understandable, but ultimately futile?

READ GENESIS 3v11-24

4. What areas of life are affected by the first humans' actions?

What actions does God take in response?

The influence of this decision by Adam and Eve grows with the human population. Just a few pages later there's a grim description of the state of our hearts.

READ GENESIS 6v5-7v10

5. What does God see in human hearts and actions?

6. How is he affected?

READ GENESIS 8v13-9v5

God acted to judge human evil, but he also saved one family to start afresh.

7. Has the human heart changed?

The story of the Old Testament is one that cries out for someone who will deal with the human heart — its inclination to evil and our shame that drives us away from our Maker.

READ TITUS 3v3-8

8. What stands out to you about the description of what we were once like?

9. How does our Saviour seek us out, when we were far from him?

10. How does he deal with our evil hearts and our shame?

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

How do you react to the idea that God sees your heart and what you're really like?

Does your shame cause you to want to hide from God? How can you have confidence in these moments?



SEEKING GOD

From what we've read today, what can you praise God for, ?



SEEKING GOD

Take 1-2 minutes to write down your answers to the following questions:

Who is one person you know that is overwhelmed with shame and thinks they're too bad to be saved?

Who is someone you know who doesn't think they need saving

Without sharing lots of details, pray for these people now — that they would know the kindness and love of God who saves us in his mercy.



MISSION

PRAYER IDEAS

- Acknowledge before God the way that your heart has been inclined toward evil. Acknowledge your shame that drives you away from him.
- Rejoice in his loving kindness that sent a Saviour for us. Praise his mercy to save us, wash us clean and restore us. Thank him for bringing us honour in place of our shame — that we are heirs of the hope of eternal life.
- Pray for those you love who don't think they need saving as well as those who fear that they're too shameful to be saved. Pray they'd know the rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he generously pours out through Jesus.

I WILL BLESS

GENESIS 12

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

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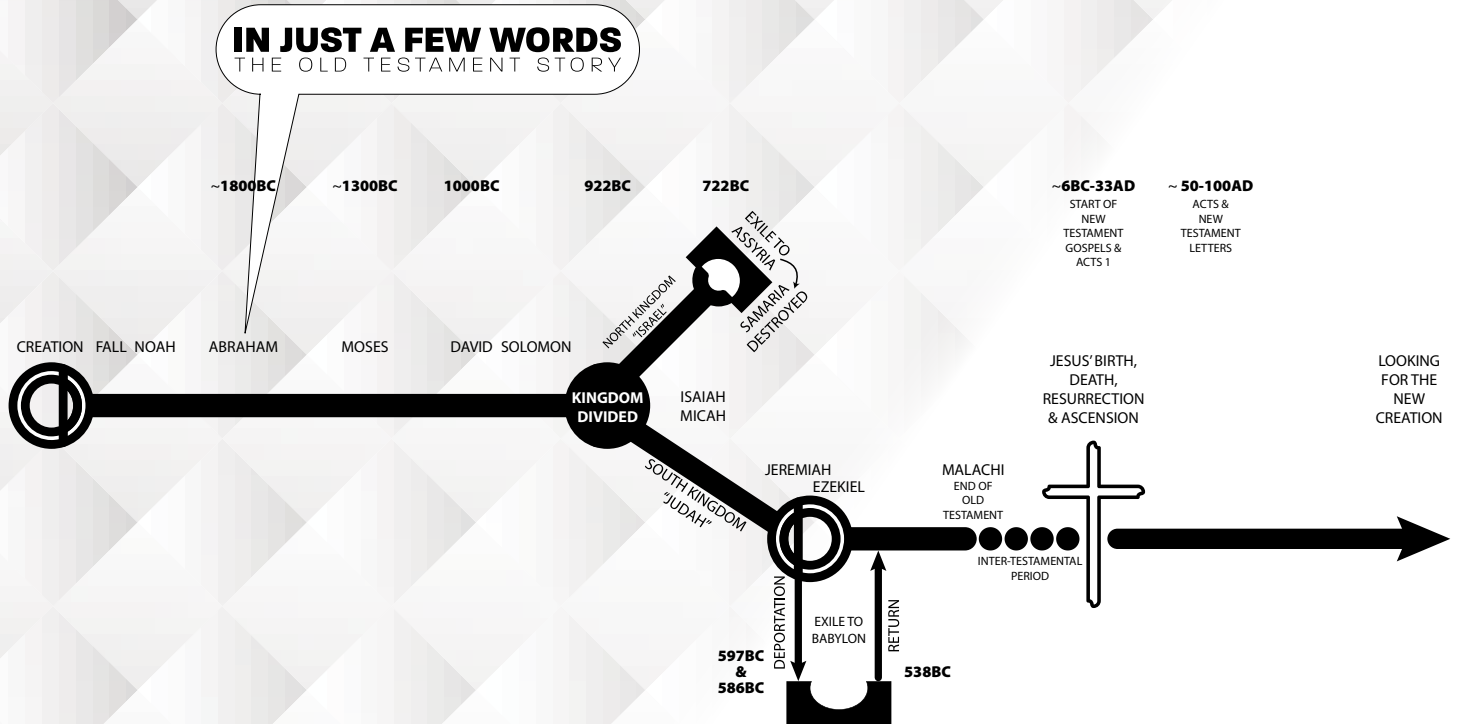
A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

Where is your favourite city in all the world (other than Rockhampton!)? What do you love about it?

Over the last two weeks we've seen the good Creator broken-hearted by humanity's rejection of him. In Genesis 9, God started again with Noah and we're left wondering how he will deal with humanity now. Ten generations later, we meet Abram (or Abraham).



READ GENESIS 12v1-3

1. What is God determined to do for Abram and through him?

2. What does this show about the LORD?

READ GENESIS 12v4-8

3. How does Abram respond to God's command and promises?

READ GENESIS 15v1-6

4. What is Abram's concern?

5. What leads him to believe God?

READ GENESIS 15v7-16

6. What else is Abram worried about?

7. How can Abram be certain that God will keep this promise?

The rest of the Bible could be described as the playing out of these promises. God doesn't abandon his reckless creation, but works through this one family, later known as Israel, to bless the whole world. There are many twists and turns in the story, which is characterised by God's faithfulness to a disobedient people. But it leads us all the way to Jesus, as we keep asking how will God bring the promised blessing?

READ MATTHEW 1v1&17

8. What do you think Matthew's purpose is in telling us Jesus' family tree?

READ HEBREWS 11v8-16; 39-12v3

9. What land and blessing was Abraham looking for?

10. How are we included in the Old Testament story of God's promises?

growing disciples

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How is the Old Testament relevant for 21st century Christians living in Rocky and Gracemere, from what we've seen today?

DEEP IN THE WORD



What do we need to know about God in order to believe that he will keep his promises?

What does it look like for you to run the race with faith and endurance, waiting for the heavenly city?



From Abraham to Jesus, what is our message to the world about God's character and plans?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that he is trustworthy and always keeps his promises. Praise him that we have a heavenly city to look forward to. Pray that we would keep running towards this goal with endurance and eyes fixed on Jesus, by faith.
- Thank God for not abandoning his creation despite our rebellion, but that his blessing overflows to the whole world through Jesus.
- Pray that we'd share the hope we have in Jesus with our friends and family so that they may know his blessing too.

COMPASSIONATE & GRACIOUS

EXODUS 3, 34

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

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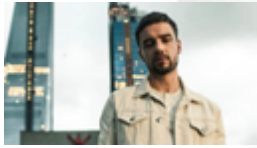

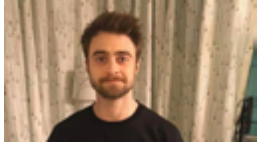



Something I Can Share:

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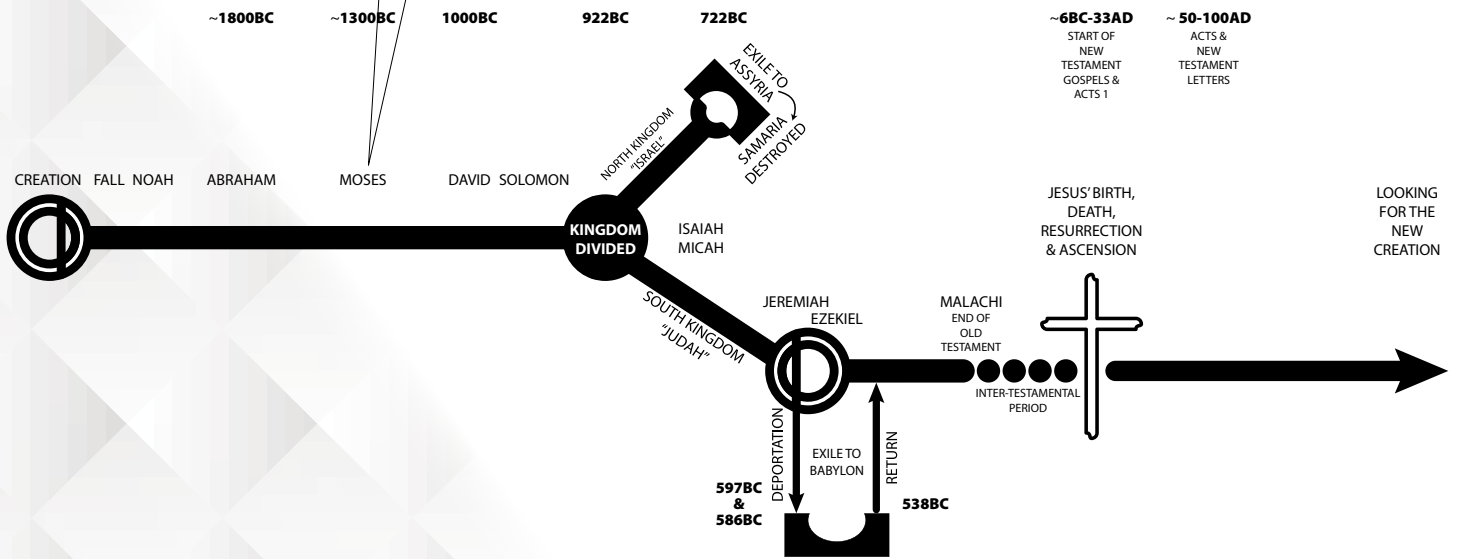
GETTING STARTED

If you're preparing ahead of time, skip this question and do it when you're together in your group. Set a one minute timer. Everyone circles an answer for this celebrity nickname quiz. Someone then goes to www.beano.com/posts/guess-the-celeb-from-their-nickname to check your answers. Who had the most correct answers?

<p>1. What did Prince Harry used to call the Queen?</p> <p>A. Colin B. Fred C. Gary D. Ian</p> 	<p>6. Mariah Carey is best known for her Christmas songs. But her nickname isn't very Christmassy! What is it?</p> <p>A. Mirage B. Mist C. Foggy D. Oasis</p> 
<p>2. Hugh Jackman starred in the Greatest Showman. But what nickname did he once have because of his skinny legs?</p> <p>A. Clubs B. Sticks C. Stilts D. Twigs</p> 	<p>7. Everybody has a nickname, even Ariana Grande! She got this one from her grandpa - but what was it?</p> <p>A. Belladonna B. Belle C. Bluebell D. Belissim</p> 
<p>3. Liam Payne's sister came up with this nickname because he loved scoffing crisps! But what was it?</p> <p>A. Crispy Pants B. Cheesy Head C. Salty Peter D. Snack Pack</p> 	<p>8. Selena Gomez's pals didn't get too creative with this nickname! What do you think it could be?</p> <p>A. Gomez B. Sel C. Lena D. Sel-Gom</p> 
<p>4. Daniel Radcliffe is known to millions as Harry Potter. But what was his nickname when he was little?</p> <p>A. Titch B. Mini Muggle C. Shrimpy D. Tiny Stev</p> 	<p>9. Here's another pal of Selena — it's Justin Bieber! And what was his nickname?</p> <p>A. Terry B. Cherry C. Jerry D. Mary Berr</p> 
<p>5. Cristiano Ronaldo doesn't like losing footie matches so what nickname did his teammates give him?</p> <p>A. Cry Baby B. Sore Loser C. Mr Losey Pants D. Senor No Goals</p> 	<p>10. Finally, it's Oliver Phelps, better known as one half of the Weasley twins from Harry Potter. But which nickname was he given to tell him apart from his real life brother?</p> <p>A. Rofl B. Lool C. Looooooooooooooooooooo D. Lo</p> 

Last week, we saw that God didn't abandon humanity in their sinfulness. He made promises to one man, Abraham, and his family, through whom he would bless the whole world. Abraham had traveled to the bountiful land of Canaan that God promised, but a few generations later, his family are enslaved and oppressed in another place, Egypt. We pick up their story with an Israelite named Moses.

IN JUST A FEW WORDS
THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY



READ EXODUS 3v1-10

1. What do we find out about Abraham's God?

READ EXODUS 3v11-14

2. Moses is concerned that he's not a leader, he's a no-name. But God's name should be enough to convince the people. What does his name 'the LORD' or 'YHWH', show about him?

As the Exodus story goes on, in line with his character, God does act to save Israel. After 10 plagues, the Passover and the parted Red Sea, Israel receive laws from God to mark them out as his holy, saved people. But they're immediately unfaithful, like a bride committing adultery on her honeymoon. Against this backdrop, God appears to Moses again.

READ EXODUS 34v4-7

3. What stands out to you in God's description of himself and his name?

God has named himself as the compassionate, loving, rescuing, forgiving and just God. He demonstrates it in the Exodus story, but he goes on to do it again and again in the Old Testament story. Let's read one example from the time after the Exodus, as Israel wander in the desert.

READ NUMBERS 21v4-9

4. What would be lost if God weren't just towards the people?

5. What would be lost if he weren't merciful?

This pattern is repeated throughout the Old Testament where God shows the power of his justice and his rich mercy as Israel are persistently unfaithful and disobedient.

READ LEVITICUS 16v6-22, 34

6. How are God's justice and mercy built into the rhythms of Israel's society?

READ ROMANS 3v21-26; 5v6-11

7. How does God demonstrate the fullness of his righteousness and justice now?

8. How does this also demonstrate the beauty of his love and grace?

growing disciples

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Sometimes people say that God is angry and vengeful in the Old Testament, and Jesus is loving and merciful in the New Testament. How should we think about God's character across the whole story of the Bible?

DEEP IN THE WORD

What confidence can we have to cry out to God in our suffering? How do we know he is trustworthy?



SEEKING GOD

What aspect of God's character has shone out to you today? Spend a couple of minutes writing down 2-3 sentences that you would like to say to him in response. If you're comfortable, take turns praying these out loud.



SEEKING GOD

PRAYER IDEAS

- Thank God that his loving, kind and just character shines through the whole story of the Bible. Praise him for the way he demonstrates it at the cross as his Son bears our sin and brings us righteousness, reconciliation and salvation to anyone who believes in him.
- Pray that we'd be confident to cry out to him in our suffering, because he hears and cares for us.

NOW CHOOSE LIFE

DEUTERONOMY 30

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

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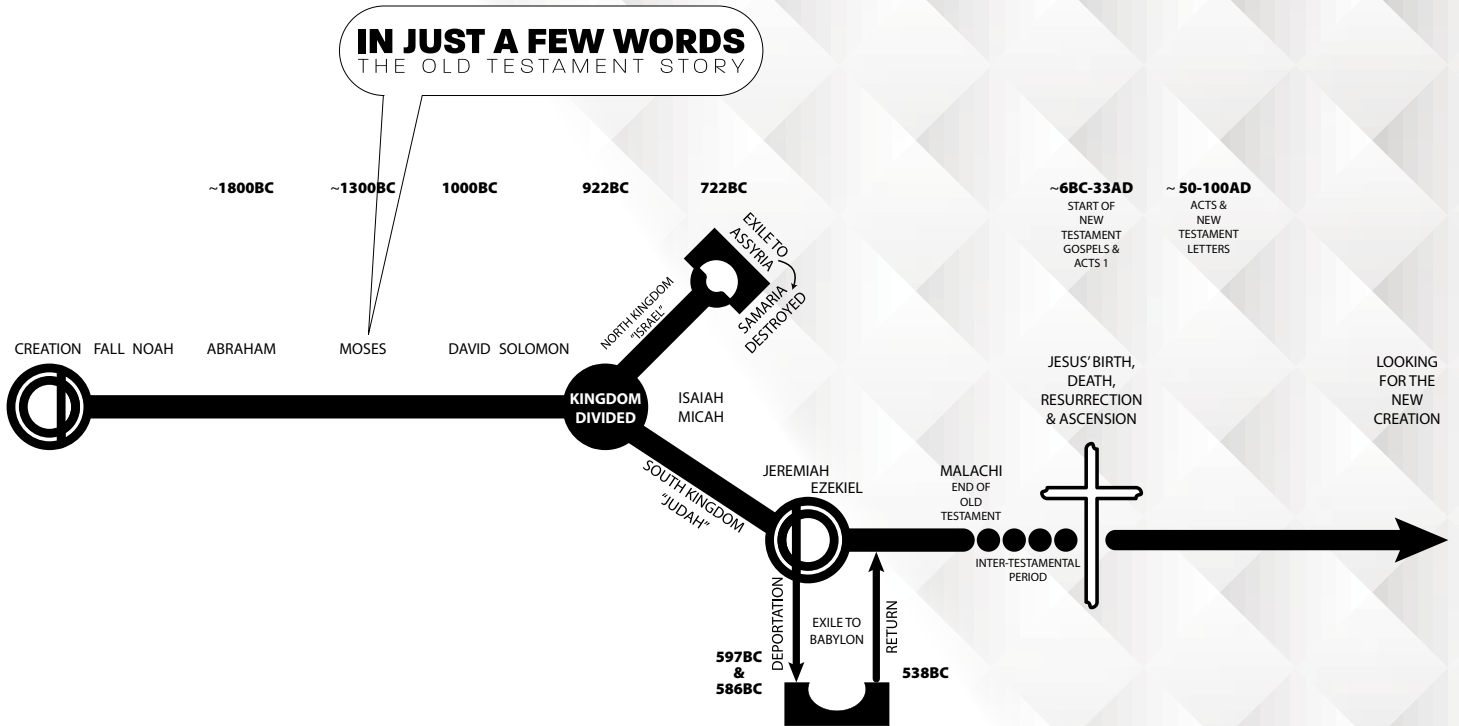
GROWTH GROUP STUDY

GETTING STARTED

Where are you on this scale of decisiveness? What decisions do you find hardest?



As the story of the Bible has progressed, we've seen God's determination to bless the world through one family, Israel. He demonstrated his loving, merciful and just character in rescuing them and showing them faithfulness despite their wayward hearts. Having left Egypt in the Exodus, Israel wandered through the desert for 40 years before finally arriving at the outskirts of the land God had promised them long before. The book of Deuteronomy records the pep talk that Moses gave them on the cusp of Israel entering the land of blessing. He recounts their story so far and the God-given laws that marked them out as God's special people.



READ DEUTERONOMY 6v1-9

1. Describe the kind of obedience that God's after, and what will result?

READ DEUTERONOMY 6v10-15

2. What warnings does Moses give?

READ DEUTERONOMY 30v11-14

3. Is God asking the impossible of Israel? Why/why not?

READ DEUTERONOMY 30v15-20

4. What choice do Israel face as they step into the Promised Land?

5. How is this similar to the first choice of humanity? (see Genesis 2v15-17)

Thousands of years later, Paul reflects on the choices that generations of Israelites made.

READ ROMANS 9v30-10v3

6. Did Israel choose obedience, life and blessing? What is Paul's diagnosis of their problem?

7. What clues do we get here about the word that is near to us (as Gentiles)?

8. How is it in our hearts and mouths?

9. What is the way of righteousness, life and blessing? (See also Romans 6v20-23)

READ ROMANS 10v14-17

10. If the word about Christ has come near to us, how can we bring it near to others?

growing disciples

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We can easily be tempted to read ourselves into Israel's story and think that we need to obey Old Testament laws. How do you think Paul would answer this kind of thinking (from what we've read in Romans)?



DEEP IN THE WORD

In pairs, spend 2 minutes each sharing the moment that you chose life by believing that Jesus is Lord.



SEEKING GOD

Still in your pairs, share a recent moment that your feet have been beautiful to bring the word about Christ to someone else.



MISSION

Then pray for one another, thanking him for bringing you to faith and for those you're passing the gospel message on to.

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that His Word has come near to us — into our hearts and our mouths. Thank Him that it's a word that gives life, blessing and righteousness as we put our faith in Christ.
- Praise God that Christ is the culmination of the law and that He frees us from sin and death.
- Pray for one another, thanking God for bringing you to faith and for those you're passing the gospel message on to.

AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

1 S A M U E L 1 6 - 1 7

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

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A Key Verse:

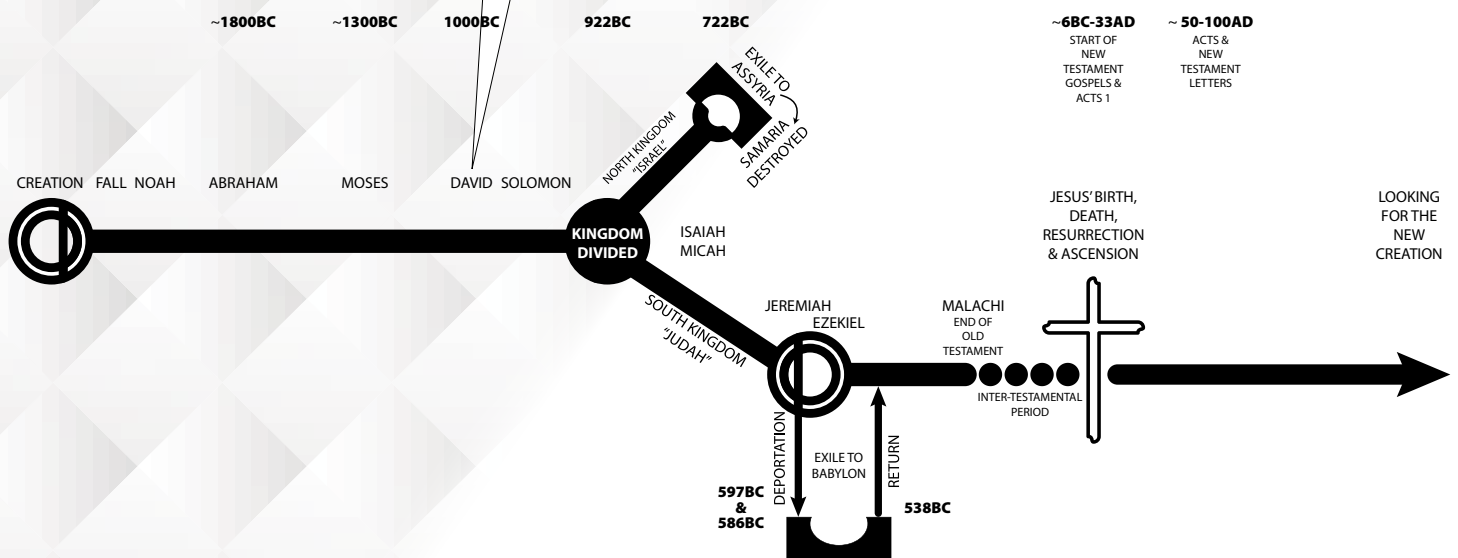
My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

As a group, come up with the top 5 characteristics of a great leader/ruler.

Last week, we left Israel at the edge of the Promised Land with an appeal to choose life by obeying God's commands. They did enter the land and spent centuries in conflict with the peoples living there. You can read these stories in Joshua, Judges and Ruth. Judges tells of the darkness and disobedience of Israel's hearts and the ensuing chaos with this summary ending the book: 'In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit' Judges 21v25. Samuel is the final judge and in 1 Samuel 8, the people demand that God give them 'a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have' (v5). God agrees to their demand. But Saul, the first king, disobeys God and is rejected. Instead, God says he has sought out 'a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people'. (13v14)

IN JUST A FEW WORDS
THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY



READ 1 SAMUEL 16v1-13

1. What task is Samuel given?

2. What is surprising about the description of David in v12?

3. With which two things is David anointed?

As we read a famous story in the next chapter, we're looking for what God sees in David's heart.

READ 1 SAMUEL 17v1-1

4. What is the effect of Goliath's appearance and threats?

READ 1 SAMUEL 17v12-31

5. How is David's approach different from the rest of the Israelites'?

READ 1 SAMUEL 17v32-40

6. What gives David confidence despite his youth, inexperience and inferior weapons?

READ 1 SAMUEL 17v41-50

7. What motivates David to fight?

8. In summary, what is in David's heart that means he is the king God is looking for?

READ 2 SAMUEL 7v8-13

9. How will God's promises to Abraham come through David?

READ JOHN 1v29-34; 5v19-24

10. How is Jesus' heart like his ancestor David's?

growing disciples

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There are a number of different characters in the David/Goliath story. And our tendency is to place ourselves at the centre of the story, ie we imagine we're in David's shoes, the hero of the story who needs to slay our Goliaths. What is wrong with this approach to reading the Bible? Hint: think about where the tension is in the plot, how God saves, where the story is heading and who we are.



DEEP IN THE WORD

How should we respond to King Jesus?



SEEKING GOD

How important is God's honour and reputation to you? How can you live to honour him, even when others defy him?



SEEKING GOD

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that in Jesus he's given us a leader who is filled with his Spirit, has faith in him and who wants to see him honoured. Pray that we'd follow him, knowing his goodness and power.
- Pray that our hearts would desire God's honour in our lives and in our world. Pray that we'd live to honour him in a world that defies him.

WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE?

MICAH 6

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A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

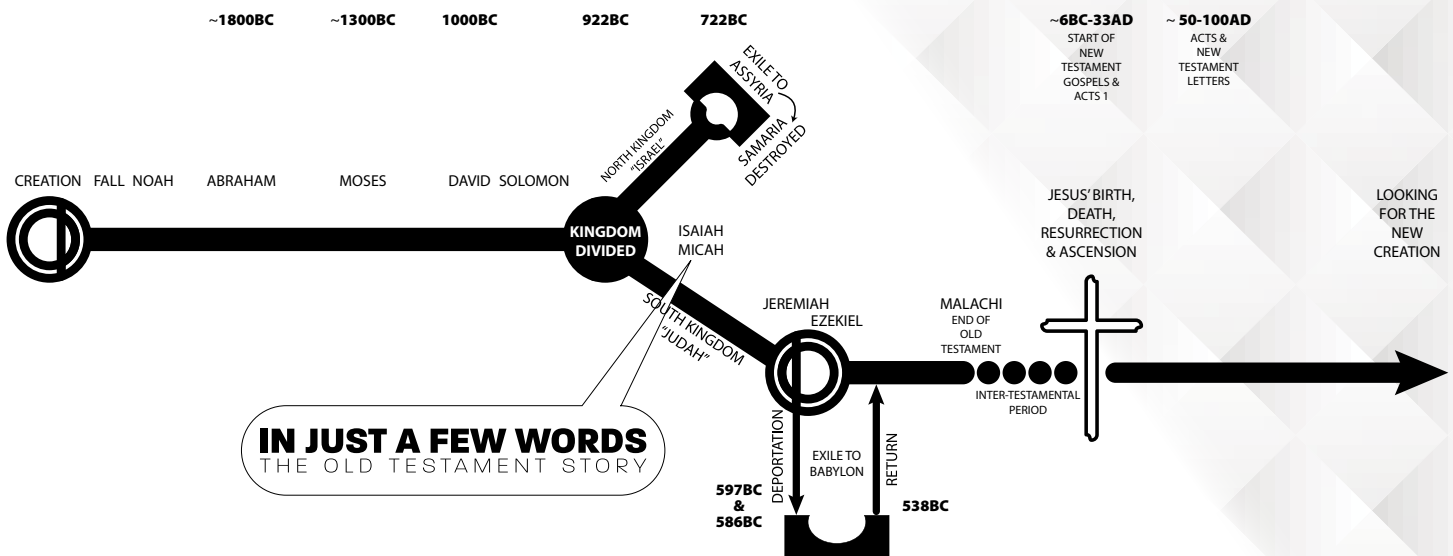
www.developmental.org says that the world's biggest problems and solutions are:

1. Climate Change — reducing greenhouse gases
2. War — preventing with diplomacy and demilitarising
3. Water contamination — treating waterways
4. Human rights violations — speaking up
5. Global health issues — educating and empowering the marginalised
6. Poverty — educating, ensuring equality and representation
7. Children's health and safety — educating and improving healthcare
8. Food access and hunger — humanitarian aid, reinforcing food environments, increasing economic resilience
9. Migration — collaborating and responsibility sharing
10. Weapons accessibility — making treaties to disarm and restricting armament

On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate their assessment of the problems and solutions?



We saw last week that God chose David to rule over Israel by his Spirit, with faith in God and a desire for him to be honoured. Solomon, David's son, begins to reign with wisdom and is richly blessed by God (1 Kings 4). But the final assessment of his rule is that he lacked devotion to the LORD by following foreign gods (1 Kings 11). The kingdom is then ripped apart with Solomon's son ruling 2 tribes in the southern region, known as Judah, with the capital of Jerusalem. And the northern 10 tribes form a breakaway but are known as Israel, with the capital of Samaria (1 Kings 12). The story of God's people follows these two nations throughout the rest of the Old Testament. God sends prophets to them across the generations to deliver his verdict on their attitudes and actions. Micah is one of those prophets, who speaks to several southern kings of Judah.



READ MICAH 1v3-7

1. What rouses the LORD from his dwelling place?

2. What is the consequence for the northern kingdom of Israel/Samaria?

This is no surprise to us, they were warned that turning away from the LORD would mean exile from the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 30. The northern kingdom is captured and exiled by Assyria in 732 BC. They integrate with the local peoples and have a half-hearted religion from then on (see John 4).

Micah then shares God's assessment of the remaining southern kingdom and Jerusalem.

READ MICAH 3

3. Who does God say is at fault?

4. What are their hearts hating and loving?

Micah says that the biggest problem of Judah's people, prophets, priests and kings is failing to love what he loves. And they can't pretend it's all fine and they can't just offer a sacrifice to appease God. Destruction and exile are coming to the southern kingdom too (in 586 BC). But in a word of hope, the LORD explains what the people really need.

READ MICAH 6v6-8

5. What does the LORD want from his people's hearts'?

6. Can the people solve this problem with more sacrifices (or pretending there's no problem)?

READ MICAH 7v14-20

7. What kind of ruler will deal with the problem of his people's hearts?

READ JOHN 10v11-18

8. What makes Jesus the promised shepherd Israel need (and we need)?

9. How will listening to his voice help our wayward hearts?

growing disciples

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Is your heart reflected in Israel's story? Are there times you fail to love justice and mercy? How do you want to grow in honesty, holiness, concern for the vulnerable and humble love for God?



SERVE

When you're confronted with your failures, how do you try to solve the problem? Bargaining with God? Offering to sacrifice things? Trying harder? Brushing it off? Something else?

What's wrong with all of these solutions?



SEEKING GOD

How has following Jesus changed your heart in the time you've been following him? His mercy? His sacrifice? His tender care?



SEEKING GOD

PRAYER IDEAS

- Confess your failures to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Acknowledge when you've tried to solve this yourself.
- Praise him for his mercy in sending Jesus to shepherd us — the one who gave his life for us.
- Pray that we'd listen to his voice. Praise him for the way he's been changing our hearts. And pray that he would continue to do this so that we'd love him and others.

FOR HOW LONG, LORD?

ISAIAH 6

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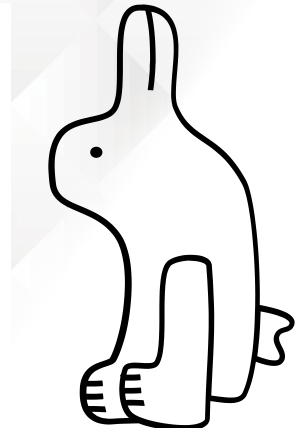
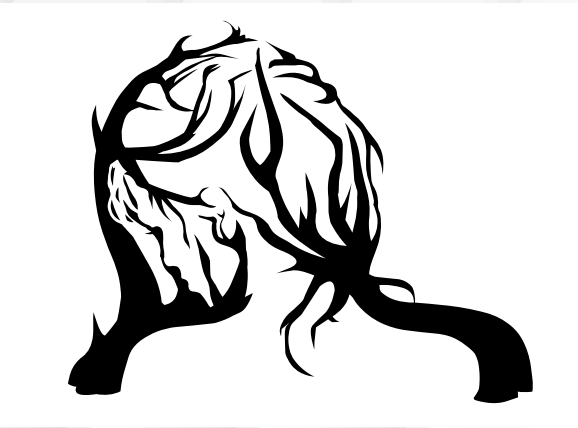
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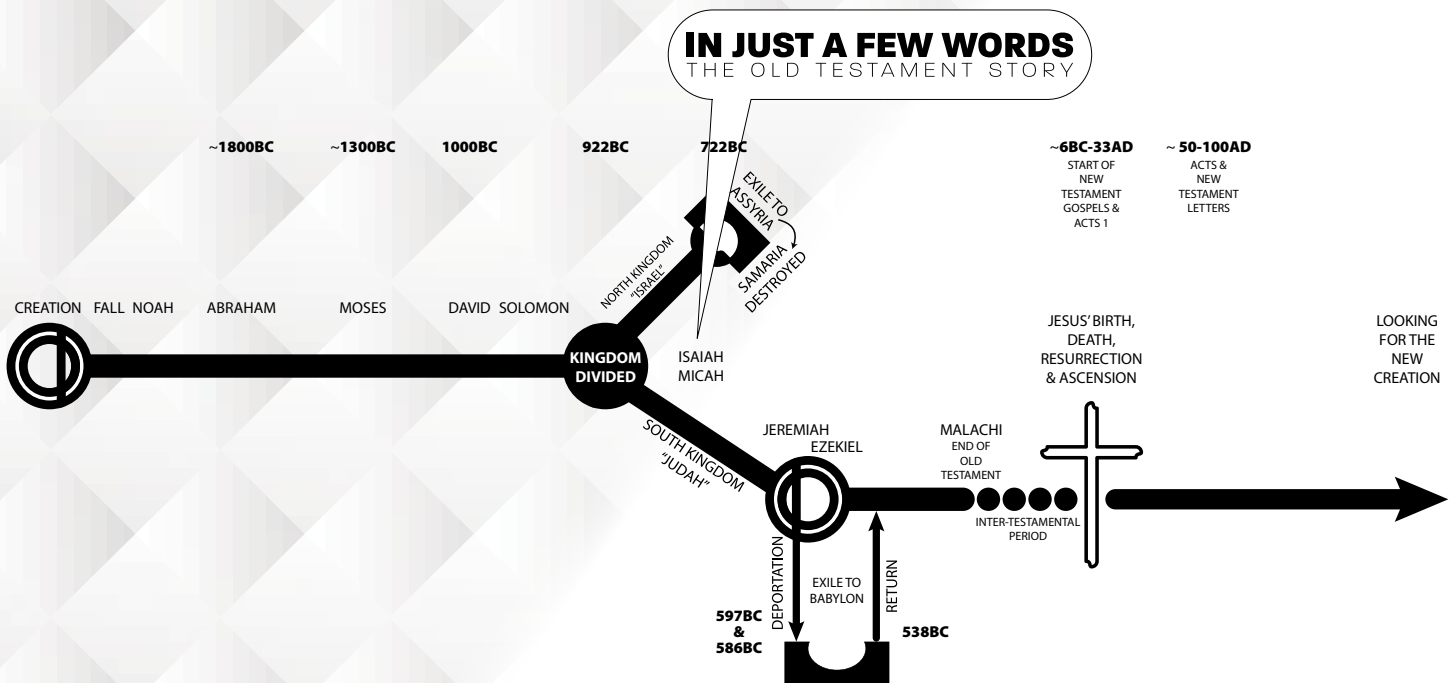
My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

What do you see? There are 2 images in each picture.



Last week, we heard the prophet Micah's warning to the southern kingdom of Judah that their injustice and lack of mercy would lead to exile. Isaiah was a contemporary of Micah. Chapter 6 records his commissioning as a prophet of the most holy LORD. He speaks about what the people see and hear.



READ ISAIAH 6v8-10

1. How does Isaiah's message reinforce the people's heart attitudes towards the God who cares for them? (cf Isaiah 5v1-7)

READ ISAIAH 6v9-13?

2. How does the Lord's answer to the cry of 'How long?' contain both judgement and hope?

Isaiah goes on to explain more about the seed that will sprout from the broken stump.

READ ISAIAH 11v1-5

3. What will characterise this fresh shoot?

READ ISAIAH 11v6-12

4. What will his reign achieve?

5. How does this echo the promises God made to Abraham (Genesis 12v1-3)?

Isaiah is sent to a hard-hearted people with a warning of exile, which comes to pass about 120 years later. All of God's promises seem broken — they are not in the land, their people are killed or enslaved and they're under God's curse rather than blessing. The people spend around 70 years in exile before they return to the land during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. But this is a largely disappointing time as Israel doesn't have its former glory and the people's hearts are still far from God — the exile changed nothing for them. (see Ezra 3v11-13; 9v1-4)

How long Lord? When would the curse of the exile be over? When would they see the one who rules with God's Spirit, righteousness, peace and restoration?

We fast-forward hundreds of years in the story to a lake in Galilee, when the words of Isaiah are on Jesus' lips.

READ MATTHEW 13v1-23

6. What are the four different responses to God's word, as Jesus explains to the disciples?

We are familiar with the parable and its explanation, but we often skip over the middle section. (v10-17)

7. How do Jesus' parables fulfill Isaiah's message?

The end of the exile means that Jesus is bringing the long awaited restoration, justice and peace that Isaiah foresaw. While some are still hardened by hearing the word, others will respond with faith, bearing abundant fruit of righteousness. And this is the moment that the doors are opened wide to gather in Gentiles like us too. We can hear and understand God's word too.

8. How can it be fair that those who have more are given more, while those without have their little taken away? (v11-12)

9. How can we know that Jesus is the longed-for king who ends the exile? (v16-17, 23) What is different in some people's hearts (compared with Isaiah's day)?

growing disciples

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How do you respond to God's word? Does it slide off you, making no impact? Do you disagree and dismiss it (or parts of it)? Is your response choked out by worries? Or have you received it, turning to Jesus to be healed?

What do you want to ask God to change in your heart to be soft and receptive to his word?



DEEP IN THE WORD

Have you found Jesus to be the place of healing, peace and a fruitful life? Tell us about it.



SEEKING GOD

What impact does it have on you when your friends and family have a hard-hearted response to the word about Jesus? How does today's passage help you in this?

Imagine you had a colleague or friend or family member who responded to hearing the word with faith and repentance? How can this spur you on to keep speaking and praying?



MISSION

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus has brought an end to Israel's exile — he is the Spirit-filled king of justice, peace and restoration. Thank him that Jesus' arrival means we can be part of his kingdom too.
- Confess when we've been hard-hearted towards God's word . Pray that we would respond to his word with understanding, turning to be healed. And that we would produce abundant fruit of righteousness.
- Pray for friends and family who are calloused to Jesus, that his word would do its work in them. Pray that we would keep speaking, and that they might have ears to hear and softened hearts to turn to him.

A NEW HEART

JEREMIAH 31 / EZEKIEL 36

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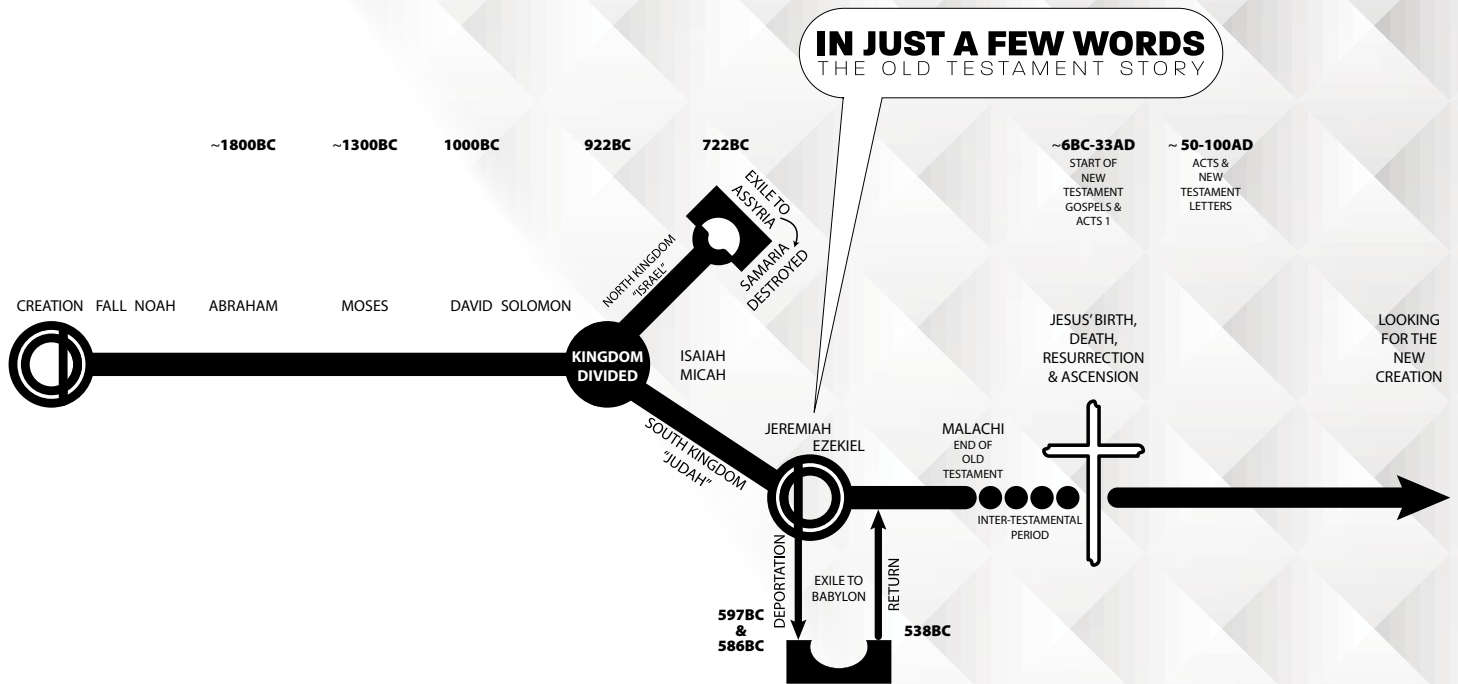
A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

What do you like that everyone else seems to dislike?

Over the last two weeks, we heard words of warning from the prophets Micah and Isaiah. God said judgement was coming for his people and they would be exiled from their homeland because of their unfaithfulness. Numerous books in the Bible describe the trauma of this time (such as Lamentations, Daniel and Esther). Jeremiah and Ezekiel lived through this tumultuous period — Jeremiah largely remaining in Jerusalem and Ezekiel taken to Babylon. They give the same critiques of Israel’s unfaithful hearts. But also offer hope of something new.



READ JEREMIAH 31v27-34

1. What will be 'no longer'?

2. What will be new?

3. Why is this what they need?

Ezekiel also describes a momentous time that is coming.

READ EZEKIEL 36:18-28

4. What motivates the Sovereign LORD to take action for those in exile?

5. What will he do for them?

6. Why is this what they need?

Throughout the whole story of the Old Testament, we have seen Israel's (and humanity's) hearts far from God. But he promises to change hearts to want to obey him, by cleansing them, filling them with his Spirit and forgiving their sin forever. These are new hearts of flesh with a renewed promise of belonging to their God.

As we saw last week, even though the exiles return physically between 538-481 BC, it was not until Jesus came that the spiritual exile was over. He is the one who brings changed hearts to the people of God (now both Jew and Gentile, see Isaiah 11).

READ HEBREWS 10:10-22

7. How does Jesus bring the promises of Jeremiah to pass?

READ GALATIANS 5:13-25

8. How does the Spirit work in those who belong to Christ Jesus?

9. The Spirit works in us, but we also have a role in fruitful living. What does Paul exhort us to do?

growing disciples

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Do you ever feel like your sin is winning? Or that Jesus' forgiveness isn't enough to cleanse you? How do God's promises and his enabling help you to trust him and persevere in living by the Spirit?

SEEKING GOD

How is your life demonstrating a heart changed by Jesus? How can you grow in fruitful, Spirit-filled living?

SERVE

What would you like to thank God for from what we've seen today?

SEEKING GOD

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God for his promises to give us new hearts through Jesus. And for his forgiveness that wipes away our sin forever, cleansing us. Pray that we'd believe him and trust that he has done everything we need to be made holy.
- Thank him that he works in us to change our desires, by his Spirit. Pray that he would continue to do this. Ask that we'd keep in step with his Spirit, growing in fruitfulness.

WHO CAN ENDURE?

MALACHI 3

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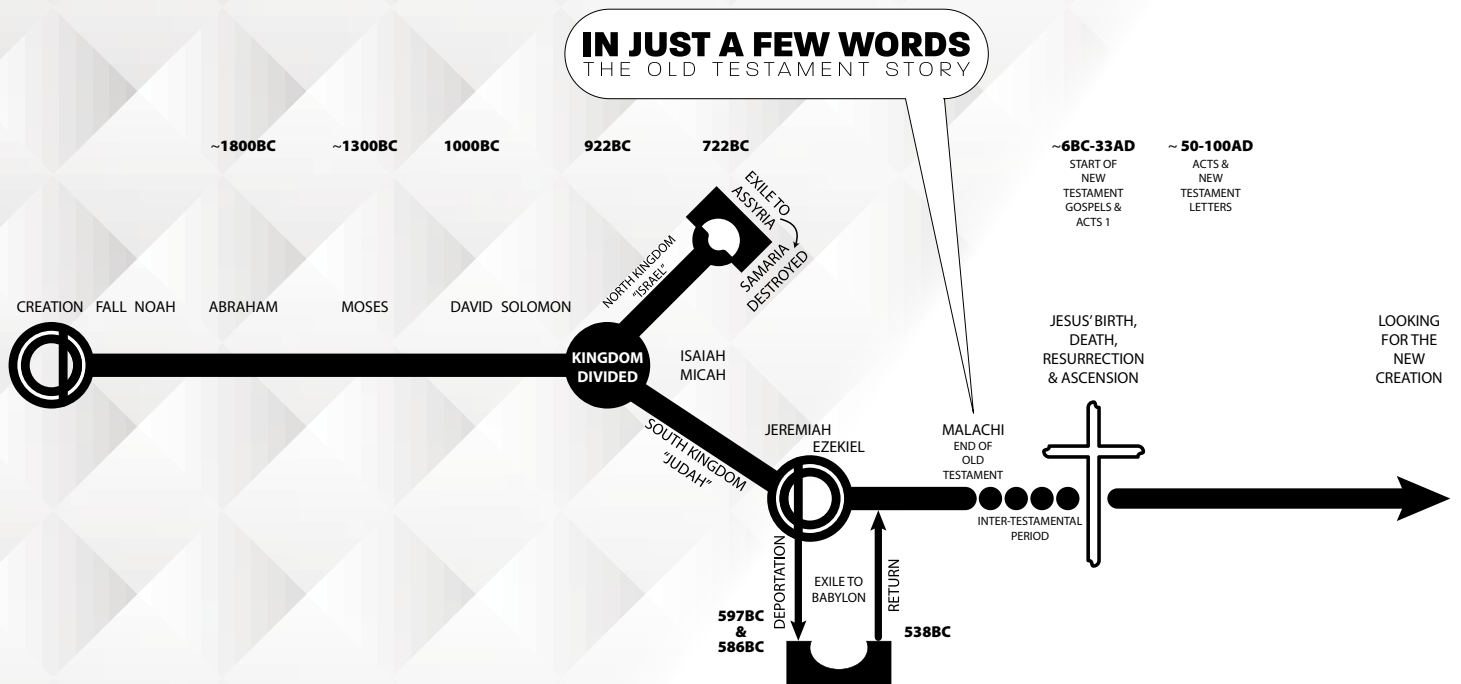
A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GETTING STARTED

What is something that you're waiting for at the moment? How hard is the waiting?

Today we arrive at the end of the Old Testament, with the final prophet, Malachi. Malachi contains a series of disputes between the LORD and the returned exiles. The LORD charges them with the same unfaithfulness that plagued them before the exile.



READ MALACHI 2v17-3v5

1. What is Israel's accusation against God?

2. What will God do to demonstrate his justice?

3. How will they know that the LORD himself is coming and has arrived?

4. How should Israel should respond to this fearsome warning?

READ MALACHI 3v17-4v6

5. What will be the two groups on that day? What will be the different outcomes?

6. What else do we learn about the one who is coming before the dreadful day of the LORD?

READ 1 KINGS 21v20-22; 2 KINGS 1v8

7. How is Elijah described? What will the people be looking for?

This message about a coming day of judgement forms the last words of the Old Testament. They are followed by 400 years of silence from God. 400 years of waiting. 400 years until another prophet came to call the people to repentance.

READ MATTHEW 3v1-17

8. What's familiar about this prophet?

9. How is the one coming after him described?

The LORD comes to his temple in Matthew 21, and turns over tables in judgement of the injustice he finds there. He goes on to pronounce curses on Israel's religious and political leaders who haven't led the people to faithfulness to their God (Chapter 23). But in a surprising twist, the only judgement we see carried out is on the cross, where Jesus is forsaken by his father as he dies, disgraced and rejected (Chapter 27). But the story doesn't end there. In triumph and glory, Jesus rises from the grave (Chapter 28).

READ 2 PETER 3v3-15

10. How do we know that there will be a final judgment on corrupt and rebellious hearts?

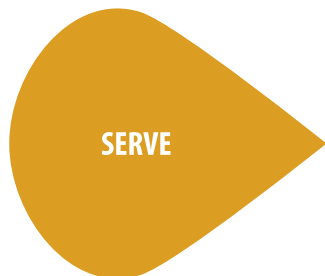
11. Who can endure it?

growing disciples

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How are you effected by thinking about a future day of judgement? Does it stir hope? Fear? Despair? Something else?



Does the certainty and gravity of a future judgement and the promise of a new home impact your life now? How should it?



Who is on your heart as you've listened to God's word today? Who are you praying for to know God's salvation? How does this encourage you to persist in speaking to them about Jesus?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that his judgement is certain. That there will come a day of final justice and truth, where evil is burned up.
- Praise him for Jesus who was judged in our place, so that we can endure that judgement. Praise him that his death and resurrection mean we can look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.
- Pray that looking forward to this day would lead us to live holy and godly lives, making every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with God.
- Praise God that he is patient in delaying that day until more people come to repentance. Pray for the people dear to you, for whom you long to receive salvation.