

The Full S.P.

This series of free downloadable Bible studies aims to take you right through the Bible from beginning to end. You will find twenty main studies (numbered and in a distinctive font) and quite a bit of supplementary material too. The name, spelt out, is "The Full Salvation Plan" because in the Bible, that's exactly what you get: the blow by blow account of God's great rescue mission. It starts right at the beginning with the origins of the Universe and of human life. Then it explains how it all went wrong between God and Man. Its masterstroke is the coming of God Himself as a Man to die a criminal's death, thus taking man's guilt and God's own deep displeasure and anger with man.

READ:

1 Peter 3:18

THINK:

- Why did Christ need to die? How effective was his death? What limits are there in its scope?
- What kind of man was he?
- What kind of people did He die for? Does this include you?
- What is the planned end-result?
- Are you now at peace with God through Jesus and His death?

RESPOND: YES
NO
NOT SURE

If "NO" or "NOT SURE", you need to pray to Him. Try using the words of Mark 9:24 or Mark 10:47. Then find a mature Bible-believing Christian who can help you.

The full fruits of this sin-bearing death are accepted only by faith in this world, and then by sight in the world to come.

But between the "Alpha" of Creation and the "Omega" of the Cross and the New Creation, there lies the whole of the Old Testament. These studies will focus on the story of God's words and works before the coming of Christ. It will then see how the New Testament handles some of the key themes of the Old Testament, before ending with the New Creation.

READ:

John 5:39-40

THINK:

- What attitude did the people of Jesus' day have to the Old Testament? Why?
- What, according to Jesus, is the message of the Old Testament?
- What is the right way to respond?

PRAY:

For yourself (and for your Bible Study group if you are in one) that God will use this course to deepen your faith in Christ and to strengthen your hold on the life that only He can give.

Introduction to Genesis

According to my Dictionary, the word "Genesis" means "generation, creation or production" and that's exactly what this first book of the Bible describes - the "generation, creation or production" of our world, of ourselves as human beings, of sin, death and the judgement of God on the human race (all this in just the first eleven chapters!) and then the first moves in God's initiative to rescue mankind - His Full Salvation Plan. It looks like this:

- The beginning of the known universe in chapters 1-2;
- The beginning of human pride against God in chapters 3-11;
- The beginning of God's plans to save in chapters 12-50.

Remarkably, given the scale of the problem, God's initiative centres on just one family, a father, his son, his grandson and his twelve great-grandsons. Here they are:

- In chapters 12-23, the story of Abraham;
- In chapters 24-26, the story of Isaac;
- In chapters 27-36 the story of Jacob;
- In chapters 37-50 the story of Joseph and his brothers.

It all starts here. This book gives us the key to understand our world today, with all its problems, and then it starts to show us just what God has done and will do about those problems.

In fact, God is very much the subject of Genesis. Do not read it as if it were a science textbook, but as a book of theology. (The word literally means "The study of God".) Try not to be too put off by the big scientific questions raised by the creation accounts, and the stories of the Fall and the Flood. These are important issues, of course, but the danger is that we get so hung up on them that we miss the big picture. In other words we spend so much time trying to square the Bible with our agenda that we completely miss God's agenda for us. Take Genesis on its own terms. Keep your focus on questions like these: what does this tell me about God? What can I learn here about human nature? What does this say about God's plans for His world? And: if all this is true, just what should I be doing about it?

Genesis 1-2: In The Beginning, God ...

Text Work

Chapter 1:

- Look through this chapter - do you notice any patterns? How 'organised' was the world originally?
- What do each of the days in this chapter have in common?
- How powerful is this God? Can you learn anything else about Him (e.g. His wisdom, His goodness?)
- What is our relationship to God as human beings? What is our relationship to the world we live in? What does it mean to be "in the image of God"?

Chapter 2:

- As the focus narrows to Eden, what new things do we see about
 - God (e.g. Genesis 2:9,16,18)?
 - us (e.g. Genesis 2:7,15,18-20,21-26-24)?
- Was there any death at all at this point? (Think about the Tree of Life, also Genesis 1:31, 3:17)
- Why was there this Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden? (Think: what could they have shown God by not eating from it?)

Research

- How does Jesus come into all this? (Look up Colossians 1:16).

So What?

- Anything here to praise God for?!? How often do we give our great Creator God the thanks and appreciation He deserves?

- Any lessons here about:
 - caring for the world (Genesis 1:28, 31)?
 - marriage and sex (Genesis 2:18, 21-24)?
 - the meaning of life?!

Study No. 2

Genesis 3: The Rebellion

Text Work

Genesis 3:1-13:

- What impression of God do you get from the serpent? Is this the impression you got from Chapters 1 & 2?!
- What does the serpent do to God's words (Genesis 3:1,4-5)? How well does the woman remember them now (Genesis 3:2-3)?
- Adam and Eve already knew the difference between right and wrong. What will change if they eat the fruit? (Think: they were meant to "know good and evil" as God's will for their lives and live under it. How is this different from being "like God, knowing good and evil"?)
- Did the serpent make the woman eat? Did the woman make the man eat? Who's in the wrong? How good are they at saying 'sorry'? (Genesis 3:12-13)
- What has happened to Adam and Eve's relationship?

Genesis 3:14-24:

- Remember what God said would happen if they ate the fruit? Was He right?! (Check Genesis 3:8-10, 22-24)
- God won't pretend that nothing's wrong - He always punishes sin. What hard things does He now promise to men? to women? about the world He made?
- Why can't they live in the garden any more?
- Is it all bad news, then? If the serpent stands for Satan, what is God saying in Genesis 3:15?

Research

- Problem: the human race has tried to stage a revolution against God. The answer is what? Check 2 Corinthians 5:21

So What?

- Just why is our world in the mess that its in?
- Adam and Eve wanted to run their lives without God telling them what to do. Do you know anyone else like that?! (Hint: don't look too far away ...) What can you do about it?
- Of all the things that went wrong for Adam and Eve after they turned from God which do you think was the worst? Does anything like it happen now? (See 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

Study No. 3

Genesis 6-9: The Pain Of God

Hot Potato

"The God I believe in would never condemn anyone"
"I like to think that we all go to heaven anyway"
"I thought that God was a God of love - and love means no anger."

Have you ever thought anything like this? Maybe that's because you've never read the story of Noah's ark. Or maybe when you did read it, you got a little bit carried away with the cute animals, going in two by two ... Time to take a closer look, at one of the most frightening things that ever happened.

Text Work

- Genesis 6:1-12: What is the state of the world? What is the heart of the problem? How does God feel about this? What does He do?
- Genesis 6:8-9: What is unusual about Noah? Why does God rescue him?
- Genesis 6:13-7:5: How much of a hero is Noah? Did he save himself - or what?
- Genesis 8:18-9:29: With the flood, God almost returned His beautiful world to the way it was before creation. (Check Genesis 1:2) With this fresh start, you might think that the problem of human sin would be sorted. But look carefully at Genesis 8:21; 9:21-23; 29.
- After the flood, did the human race become sin-free?
- Assuming that men and women still fill God's heart with pain today, why has He promised not to flood the world again?
- Can you see any signs of God's love in this story?

Research

- Will anything like this destruction ever happen again? (Don't guess! Check out what Jesus said at Luke 17:26-28)

So What?

- What difference does it make to you to know that one day God will definitely destroy our entire world because of human evil?

- What has God shown you about Himself in this incident?

Genesis 12: Father Abraham

Text Work

- Genesis 12:1-9 Abraham's journey was massive - and risky. Who's idea was it? Was it a sensible thing for Abraham to do?
- What did God promise to Abraham? to his children?
- How does God fill in the details of His promises at Genesis 15:5? at Genesis 15:18-21? at Genesis 16:10? at Genesis 17:1-8?
- What is the big 'hidden agenda' behind these promises? (Think: do they remind you of anything that man used to have and then lost?! See study 2)
- From now on, the rest of the Old Testament is almost totally about Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel. Does this mean that He has lost interest in the rest of the world (Genesis 12:3)?
- Why does God find Abraham acceptable? (Genesis 15:6) How good a person is he? (Genesis 12:10-20)
- Why was it easy to disbelieve God when He promised the land to Abraham? (Genesis 12:6) When He promised to make His children a great nation? (Genesis 15:2-3; 17:17)
- A covenant is an arrangement between God and man. It can be with conditions ("If you do this ... then I will ..."); then it is a "deal". It can also be without conditions ("I will ... "); then it is a "promise". But in every case it is God who sets the terms: no negotiating! There are various covenants in the Bible and we have already met two of them, with Noah and with Abraham.
- How are these covenants like each other? How not like?

So What?

- In God's eyes, who are the true children of Abraham today? (See Romans 4:16-24) Are you one of them!?
- What can we learn from Abraham's example? (See Hebrews 11:8-16) Are you ready to wait patiently, like he did? In what ways do you find yourself impatiently wanting heaven now?

Pressing On ...

God's promise to Abraham was that his descendants would be God's great people, in God's beautiful land under God's tender and intimate rule. The rest of the book of Genesis tells how God begins to fulfil the first part of the promise, in spite of the continuing presence of sin.

Read:

Genesis 27:1-46

Think:

- What sort of person was Jacob?
- Does his sin hinder God's plan (compare Genesis 25:23)?
- What does this say about God?

Respond:

By thanking God that selfish human beings cannot thwart his perfect plans.

God later challenged Jacob and brought him to repentance (READ Genesis 32:1-32). The story of Genesis ends where Exodus begins. with Abraham's descendants a great people, but in the wrong place and under the wrong ruler. (READ Exodus 1: 6-10).

Introduction to Exodus

"Exodus" literally means something like 'going out'. That's not a bad name for the first part of the book because it tells the story of Israel's rescue from the cruel power of Egypt. But in fact there's a bit more to it than that. But don't take my word for it! Instead, why don't you ...

READ Exodus for yourself?! Go on - block out an hour in your diary, take the phone off the hook and go for it!

Finished? Well done! Now ...

- What do you think Exodus is about? What would you call it?

Here is one way of dividing up the book:

- God Came Down - to Rescue His People (Chapters 1-19)
- God Came Down - to Teach His People (Chapters 20-31)
- God Came Down - to Be With His People (Chapters 32-40)

Here is another, more detailed:

- Chapters 1-4: tell us the bad situation of the people and what God said He would do about it as He remembers His promises
- 5-15: the clash of the false god-king Pharaoh with the irresistible power of the LORD.
- 16-18: God leads them into the desert and gives them all they need
- 19-24: God makes a "Deal" (covenant) with them: "Live by these laws and I will be your God for ever".
- 25-31: God outlines detailed arrangements for a tent-like structure (the 'Tabernacle') into which He will come visibly.
- 32-34: the people make a gold sculpture of a calf, openly defying God. Moses saves them by praying for them
- 35-40: they make the tent for God. The book ends with His glory filling the tent.

There are a lot of things God wants to teach us from Exodus. Here are some: man still hates God and won't serve Him (Pharaoh, the Israelites); here is the life that pleases God (The Ten Commandments); God is strong to keep His promises; it's dangerous to get close to God! (the Tabernacle - but this changes with Jesus, as we shall see).

Most of all we learn about God Himself from Exodus. He tells Moses - and us - His name (Exodus 3:15 - probably YAHWEH originally). He also explains what it means: *I am who I am*. This is slightly tricky, but probably is God's way of saying, "You can't control me! Nobody pushes me around, or tells me what to do. I am completely free to make my own plans and carry them out as I think best." This, of course, is exactly the kind of God He shows Himself to be in this book. Wonderfully, He also calls Himself, "*the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness and sin*" (Exodus 35:6-7)

Exodus 12: Remember The Blood

Text Work

- Have a go at dividing the passage into sections and giving each one a title.
- Exodus 12:1-6 A lamb must die - whose idea is this?
- Exodus 12:7-13
 - What will happen to the flesh? Why?
 - What will happen to the Egyptian firstborn? Why?
 - What will happen to the blood? Why?
- Exodus 12:14-20 A new feast every year! - but with some unusual details. What are they and what do they mean?
- Exodus 12:21-23 What will change when the Lord sees the blood?
- Exodus 12:24-28 How will the yearly Passover help the people in years to come?
- Exodus 12:29-30 A tragic night for the Egyptians. Remind you of anything we have seen before?
- Exodus 12:31-42 A great night for the Israelites. There's something about it they mustn't forget - what?

Research

A good word here is **substitute**: in each Israelite family, the lamb dies in place of the son.

- Look up John 1:29. Why do you think Jesus is called "the Lamb of God"?
- Check out your answer against 1 Corinthians 5:7

SO WHAT?

- They had to remember the Passover and remind each other too. How can you remember the cross?

Exodus 19-20: Law and Awe

Text Work

- Exodus 19:1-8 See if you can fill this in: "God has already
Now if the people will..... then God will
..... .
- Exodus 19:9-25 What do these elaborate preparations say about:
 - God?
 - the people?
- Exodus 20:1-17 God's "Ten Words". Can you put each one into your own words?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
 - 8.
 - 9.
 - 10.

Which one do you think is the hardest to keep?!

- Exodus 20:18-23 How serious do you think God is about people keeping these laws? From what you have seen already, how well do you think the people will do?

Research

- Psalm 19:7 - Is God's law good or bad?
- Deuteronomy 27:26 - How does God regard those who do not keep His law ?
- Acts 13:37-38 - Then what hope is there for any of us?
- Romans 13:8-10 - How do Christians today fulfil God's law?

So What?

How has this study changed your views of God? Of your life?

Study No. 7

Exodus 32-34: Party! God Not Welcome

God has rescued Israel to be a holy nation. If they obey, they will be His people and He will be their God.

Text Work

- Exodus 32:1-6 How is this rebellion against God? Did everyone see it as anti-God? Which commandment has been broken? How could it be broken today?
- Exodus 32:7-16 What does God say He will do? How does Moses try to prevent this disaster? What seems to be his chief concern in his prayer?
- Exodus 32:17-30 What things does Moses do when he returns to the camp? Why?
- Exodus 32:31-35 Moses goes back to Yahweh to make atonement. What does he offer? How does God respond?
- Exodus 33:1-11 How close is God's fellowship with the people at this time? Why can't it be closer?
- Exodus 33:12-34:9 How does God display Himself? What does He say about Himself? Why now?
- Exodus 34:10-28 God renews the covenant. Why do you think He says these things ?

Research

- How is Moses like Christ? How not? (Hint: think about Exodus 32:32-33)
- Rom. 3:21-26 How can God be just and yet justify sinners?

So What?

- What matters more to you, God's glory or your own happiness?

Study No. 8

Exodus 40: Glory!

As the people bring offerings and the skilled craftsmen begin their work, the extraordinary Tabernacle is built. There are some very precise requirements laid down - God even told the priests what kind of clothes to wear.

Text Work

- Have a stab at dividing the passage into sections and sum each up.

- What was the purpose of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:2, 4-38)? Whose idea was it? (Exodus 40:1, 16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32)

- The ark of the Testimony (Exodus 40:3) contained the stone tablets of the 10 Commandments. What does its particular place inside the Tabernacle say about the way God relates with His people?

- If you were an ordinary Israelite, what would all the curtains and coverings (Exodus 40:3, 8, 19, 21, 22, 26, 28, 33) say to you about your relationship with God?

- How successful was the Tabernacle in its aim (Exodus 40:34-35)?

Research

The basic design of the Tabernacle was the same as that of the later Temple.

- Read Mark 15:38 - what did the Temple curtain stand for? Who tore it? Why could it only be torn then? What does the torn curtain say about the Christian's relationship with God?

So What?

Christian believer, what do you have today that the Israelites didn't have then?

Looking Back ...

At the end of the book of Exodus, we see God's promises a step nearer to fulfilment: His great people are now under his rule (though we have so seen several defects in their obedience and limitations on the intimacy in their relationship with God).

- How have the themes mentioned in the introduction to Exodus been developed?

- How has this book-changed your understanding:
 - of God?

 - of Jesus?

 - of the rescue he won on the Cross?

Introduction to Leviticus

The Book of Leviticus contains detailed teaching from God to Moses. This teaching stresses:

- The types of sacrifices (Leviticus 1:1-6:38)
- The special setting apart of the priests (Leviticus 8:1-10:20)
- Impurity and defilement in God's sight and how to deal with it (Leviticus 11:1-15:33)
- The Annual Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-34)
- Living to Please God (Leviticus 17:1-25:55; 27:1-34)
- Reward and Punishment (Leviticus 26:1-46)

All these regulations still stand. However, before you start having qualms of conscience over your black pudding at Breakfast:

Read:

Colossians 2:16-17

Think:

- What aspects of the Old Testament Law does Paul mention?
- How does he describe them?
- Why do we no longer have to keep them as they stand?
- What should we learn from them?

Respond:

By resolving to follow Christ more closely. How can the book of Leviticus help you to do this?

Study No. 9
LEVITICUS 16: TO MAKE ATONEMENT

Text Work

- The word "atonement" means "that which averts anger". Why might God be angry with people? What happens to people as a result (Leviticus 16:1-2)? Do people need atonement today?

- How could Aaron deal with the offence his and the people's sins caused to God? Whose idea was it that he do these things? Why did it have to involve animal death? Why did he need to turn away God's anger even from the "Tent and its furniture" (Leviticus 16:16)?

- What lessons does the scapegoat teach about sin and the way to deal with it (Leviticus 16:20-22)?

- How important was this day to the people (Leviticus 16:29-34)? What was their role in it? What does this say about our role in atoning for our sins today?

Research

- Read through Hebrews 9:1-10:25. How is Christ's sacrifice like the sacrifices of Leviticus 16? How is it different? What has it made possible for us?

So What

What have I learnt in this study about:

- God?

- myself?

- the Cross?

Pressing On ...

Numbers

The Book of Numbers tells the story of Israel's move from Sinai to the Promised Land. The story is one of repeated Israelite rebellion against God and His repeated anger and hostility to the people's unbelief and sin. This is why the journey from Egypt to Canaan actually takes 40 years, despite not being very far.

Read:

Numbers 13:1-14:45

Think:

- What is the people's attitude to God and His promises?
- How does God propose to respond (Numbers 14:10-12)? What is Moses' role - compare him to Christ?

Respond:

Are there lessons here about our attitude to God and His promises?

Deuteronomy

This book contains the three great sermons which Moses gave to the people just before he died. He recalls the past and underlines God's laws to them. He urges them to live lives of wholehearted worship and obedience to God in the land they are about to enter.

Read:

Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Think:

What choice lay before the Israelites?

What in particular would they lose if they rejected God?

From what you have seen in earlier studies, how highly do you rate their prospects?

How reasonable are God's demands?

Respond:

What is your choice: obey God, or go your own way?

Joshua

The story is told of Israel's partial conquest of the land they have been promised. Again and again God shows that he is more than able to defeat their enemies. By the end of the book (Joshua 24:1-33), it seems that God's promises are nearing fulfilment. He now has a great people, in His beautiful land, living under His own rule.

Study No. 10
Judges

Judges 2:6-23: Anger and Tenderness.

Text Work

- What was the basic failure of the Israelites at this time?
- How did God deal with this problem? Why didn't He simply leave them to choose their own gods?
- When the people cried to God for mercy, how did He answer? Seen this before anywhere?
- Why was it only a temporary rescue (Judges 2:19)?
- Why did God not allow them to enjoy His Promised Land in peace?

Research

- Read through Judges 17-21 for a depressing picture of "normal life" - among the people of God! Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25 suggest an answer. What is it?

So What?

- In what ways are we like the Israelites?
- In what ways are the "judges" like Jesus? Unlike Jesus?

1 & 2 Samuel

1 Samuel 8, 15: Great Idea But ...

Text Work

1 Samuel 8

- In 1 Samuel 8:1-5, what is the problem in Israel? Who takes the lead in sorting it? What is good about the people's request for a king? Why is it wrong for them to want to be "like other nations"?

- In 1 Samuel 8:6-9 what does their demand for a king say about them?

- 1 Samuel 8:10-18. In demanding a king, the people disdained their destiny of being under Gods rule. How will this affect the other blessings He has promised them?

1 Samuel 15

- To whom does Saul owe his crown? Who gets his loyalty in the heat of the moment? How deep is Saul's sense of having failed God afterwards?

- Saul's failure highlights a general principle (1 Samuel 5:22-23). Relevant today?

Research

- Read Acts 5:31 Do we have a king now? Compare him with Saul.

So What?

- Why is it important for us (as Christians) to have a king?

Pressing On ...

The rest of 1 Samuel tells of God's choice of David as king and its consequences.

Read:

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Think:

- What are the differences between David and Saul?
- How in choosing David is God moving towards fulfilling His promises? (Remember God's great people in God's bountiful land, under God's tender and intimate rule.)
- What are the similarities between David and Jesus?

Respond:

By thanking God for His perfect King.

So What?

- Where will you figure in this kingdom - as Jesus' loyal friend and follower or as His enemy, finally crushed and humbled before Him?

Pressing On ...

1 & 2 Kings

God has now announced that He will full His promises (people, place rule) through a descendant of David who will rule forever in Jerusalem,

Read:

1 Kings 11:1-11

Think:

- What signs are there here of the splendour of Solomon's kingdom?
- What is the problem?
- Is Solomon the everlasting King promised in 2 Sam. 7?

Respond:

By asking God to keep you loyal to Him.

In terms of earthly glory, Solomon's reign was the high point of Israel's history. Indeed, on one level, God has now fulfilled all His promises to Abraham. Yet, as we have seen, God's people are still inclined to reject Him. The rest of the history of Israel and Judah shows that their Kings (the very ones meant to embody God's rule) fail again and again at this fundamental point of loyalty to God. As it draws to a close, we are left with an increasing sense of dread that sin may, after all, succeed in thwarting God's purposes.

2 Kings 17: Because They Sinned

Text Work

- Divide the passage into sections and give a title to each.
- 2 Kings 17:7 How did Israel show their hostile attitude to God? Who took the lead in this? How different were they from the nations around them?
- 2 Kings 17:11,17 What effect did their evil have on the Lord ? How had He tried to restrain it?
- 2 Kings 17:3 - what was the job of the prophet? How new was their message? What would you expect to be the main content of modern prophecies (compare Revelation 19:10)?
- 2 Kings 17:21 Because of His anger, how did God treat Israel in the beginning?
- 2 Kings 17:18, 22-23 (compare 2 Kings 17:1-6). How did He treat them in the end?
- 2 Kings 17:19-20. From what the writer says of the one remaining tribe of Judah, how bright are their prospects?
- 2 Kings 17:24-41 Did God's use of Assyria to bring judgment on Israel resolve the issue of sin ?

Research

- Do you think that people today are like the people of Israel and Judah? How might God feel about this? What will He do about it, and when (2 Thes. 1:8-9)?

So What?

- Thank God for the provision He has made in Christ for human guilt.

Pressing On ...

After the time of Solomon, the people of Israel had split into two separate kingdoms. The southern, smaller Kingdom ("Judah") remained loyal to David's descendants, while the Northern Kingdom ("Israel") had a variety of rulers. After Israel's destruction, described in 2 Kings 17, they disappear from the pages of history, while Judah survived for another century or so.

Read:

2 Kings 25:1-30

Think:

- What is happening to Judah? Why?
- Why are 2 Kings 25:27-30 a sign of hope?

Respond:

By thanking God that, though He condemns human evil, it cannot thwart his plans.

It looked as though every promise of God (remember, God's great people, in God's beautiful land, under God's tender and intimate rule) has now failed. But in fact at just this time, the prophets of God were repeating those same promises, in terms far greater than anything previously heard.

Introduction to Ezekiel

In 597 B.C the Babylonian armies of Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, leading 10,000 or so Jews into Exile in Babylon. One of these was a priest named Ezekiel.

Ezekiel's prophetic ministry begins with a mighty vision of "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1:1-3:18). This awe-inspiring glimpse sustained him through the hard years to come. Ezekiel had this message of hopelessness and judgment: your Temple will be destroyed! The people had failed to live under God's rule and had worshipped other gods; so Jerusalem and the temple are finished. Ch 8-10 contain a vision of God's glory leaving the Temple and the city. God no longer lives there. Ezekiel's message is also one of:

- human responsibility (Ezekiel 18:19-20, 30-32), requiring a change of heart.
- a God who reveals himself in his actions, so that the calamities not only judged but also brought the people into a greater knowledge of their God (Ezekiel 38:16).
- a God who rules over every nation of the world.

Ezekiel proclaimed this message in symbols and actions, as well as in words. He was called to be a Watchman over the House of Israel and to warn of the coming wrath, since the people were held accountable for their own responses to his warnings.

In chapter 34, the message becomes one of hope, as the shepherds of Israel are judged for their failure, and a true Shepherd-leader is promised from the House of David. God will subdue all who oppose Him, before He fully establishes His kingdom. Ch 40-48 concern the promise of a New Temple, and a New City - one far greater than that which was destroyed - a perfect city with the river of life flowing from it. It will contain both Jew and Gentile (Ezekiel 47:22). It is all summed up in Ezekiel 48:35: "*The name of the city is THE LORD IS THERE*".

Ezekiel 36: New Heart, New Spirit!

Text Work

- From Ezekiel 36:16-21, what had the people done to anger God?
- Why is the land important? Why is exile a punishment for them? Why is the end of punishment bound up with returning to the Land?
- What is God's overall concern in his dealings with the people of Israel? (Compare Ezekiel 36:22-23 with e.g. Exodus 32:12).
- Do you find your answer to the previous question surprising? How does it affect your understanding of who God is?
- The people of Israel have constantly failed to live right. What are the problems dealt with in Ezekiel 36:24-23?
- List the things God promises here.

Consequences

- Am I concerned for what God is concerned about? Is it visible in my life?

Ezekiel 37: Life For The Deadeast Of The Dead

Text Work

Verses 1-14

- What do the bones represent? What does their 'deadness' mean?
- What does Ezekiel's reply in 37:3 say about him?
- The promises in vv.5-6 are then fulfilled and explained. What is the explanation?

Verses 15-28

- What more do vv.15-23 teach us about the promised restoration? How is this possible?
- God's previous unconditional covenants were made to Abraham (Gen. 12-17) and to David (2 Sam. 7). How do vv.24-28 full those promises? What are the important elements that are followed through?
- How will God be able to dwell with His people? Why will this covenant succeed where the covenant with Moses failed?

So What?

- How does Ezekiel's message help when I am tempted to doubt God's promises?

Introduction to Haggai

Israel Before The Exile

The law and the prophets warned that Israel could only continue in the land God had given them if they remained faithful to Him. In due course, as we have seen, the sin of the nation did lead her into captivity: Jerusalem was finally sacked, and Judah was deported to exile in Babylon. The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.

Israel during the Exile

The prophets active in the period leading up to the exile (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) had been preparing the people of Israel for captivity, explaining that it was a result of their sin, and that God would in due time rescue and restore his people to a greater glory. This hope kept Israel going during the Exile.

Israel returns to Jerusalem

When in 538 B. C., King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4), to rebuild the city and the temple, we would have expected a massive return by people longing to join the restored nation and see God's promises fulfilled. In the end, only about 50,000 returned, and they met with disappointment: the land was hard to farm, and the neighbouring peoples were hostile. Optimism soon gave way to despondency, and by 520 B.C., the rebuilding of the Temple had stopped altogether.

Bible books written after the return from the Exile:

I&II Chronicles is another presentation of Israel's history written to show post-Exilic readers that Solomon's kingdom was a pattern for (new) Israel's kingdom, towards which the returned exiles should work.

Ezra and Nehemiah (which form a sort of "3 Chronicles") continue the history for about 100 years after the return from Exile, and describe the restoration of the temple (under Zerubbabel), the law (Ezra) and the city wall (Nehemiah).

Esther provides some hints as to how those who stayed behind in Babylon fared. Without ever mentioning God (the only Bible book to do so), Esther points to the providence and sovereignty of God.

Zechariah (contemporary with **Haggai**) also centred on Jerusalem and the Temple. This book contains some enigmatic visions, yet is very important because of its extensive use of earlier OT themes, and considerable use in the NT.

Malachi placed his message within the framework of the great events and truths of Yahweh's heritage, upholding the covenants, and prosecuting their failures. The Lord will bring both judgment and purification. This was not a fixation with buildings, but the recognition that the Temple was the focus of the new people and their restored relationship with God. As we have seen, to begin with, God's Name symbolically dwelt in the Tabernacle. When the Temple in Jerusalem was built, the Glory of the Lord filled the new building - as it had the tent. According to Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 8), the Temple was where God would hear and answer all prayers, forgive the sin of those who repent, and forgive the sin of the nation when her sin led to her captivity (vv 46-53). That is why the Temple was vital.

Haggai also spoke in God's Name at this time with the aim of getting Israel to complete the Temple.

BACKGROUND

Is it a big deal to have a temple?

Read:

1 Kings 8:22-53

Think:

- Did God live in this Temple?
- How did it help them with their prayers?
- Do we have a Temple/"place of prayer" today? Compare your guess with John 2:21.

Respond:

By resorting to this "house of prayer" more often. What a privilege!

Haggai: Divine Building Project

The book consists of four prophecies, which can be dated with unusual precision from the information we have. We know little else about the prophet himself

Text Work

Haggai 1 (29th Aug, 520 B.C.)

- Why has the building of the Temple stopped (vv.6, 9-11)?
- Why should building of the Temple be re-started?

Haggai 2:1-9 (17th Oct, 520 B.C.)

- Why are the builders despondent now (vv.3,8)?
- What is the clue that God's original plans have not failed at all (2:5)?
- What is the promise regarding the new Temple?

Haggai 2:10-19 & 2:20-23 (both 18th Dec, 520 B.C.)

- Why is all they offer or do defiled (v.14)? Here are two possible explanations: either they have come into contact with the unclean (dead) temple, or they have failed to repent, so that their hearts are unclean before God. Which do you think is more likely?
- What is the point when blight is turned to blessing (see esp. 2:18)?
- What amazing promise does God give to Zerubbabel?

Research

- 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19-20 Has God kept the promise regarding the new Temple?
- Matt. 1:11-13 How was God's promise to Zerubbabel fulfilled?
- Luke 4:16-21 When did the Exile really end?

So What?

- How, then, should we give priority to building the Temple of today?

Luke's Gospel

Luke 1-2: Right Here, Right Now!

Luke begins his account of the life of Jesus with the theme of fulfilment: Two births are predicted in the 1st chapter. The first baby, John the Baptist, will be the one who: *“will go before the Lord ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* The second will be Jesus - *“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of His father David, and he will reign over the House of Jacob for ever: his kingdom will never end.”* The One through whom God will realise all his promises is on the way.

Text Work

Luke 1:67-79

- What Old Testament references can you find in Zechariah's song?

- What does Zechariah say God has promised and now delivered?

- What does he say is the ultimate purpose of salvation? What does this mean? In the light of that, who are our enemies? Why do we need rescuing?

- Why is John the Baptist's work important?

- Zechariah refers to God's "tender mercy". In what way is he merciful?

Luke 2:1-20

- What is unusual about the announcement of the birth of Jesus? Why?

- What is the twofold praise of the angels in response to the news of the birth of a Saviour? How does the gospel bring about these two things? Had you thought about the gospel in both these terms before?

Luke 2:25-35

- How does Simeon describe God's salvation? Who is included? In what sense will it bring glory to your people Israel"?

- What does Simeon say that Jesus will do? What does this tell us about His mission?

Luke 2:36-38

- Looking at all four responses to Jesus (Zechariah, angels, Simeon and Anna) what is the common theme throughout?

So What?

- How has Luke 1-2 changed your response to the coming of the One who fulfils God's promises?

Introduction to **Galatians**

Paul is a man who is passionate about the gospel - he knows it is the only way to get right with God. He wrote **Galatians** to some Christians who seemed to be losing it: *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all."* Serious? You'd better believe it! *"Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"* There really is no alternative to the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ - and anyone who suggests otherwise is a wicked man. Paul could see clearly that on this there are no half measures - *"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"*

In Galatians, we meet one so-called "alternative". The false teachers did not deny Jesus Christ but rather said that He had not done enough. It seems the message was something like this: "If you want to be sure you are right with God you must believe in Jesus - and get circumcised." See what's going on? That's right, they actually reckoned that the death of Jesus was by itself insufficient to rescue us from sin and guilt. Incredible? People believed it then - maybe they still do ...

Galatians 3: Cross Purpose

Text Work

Galatians 3:1-5

- What question does Paul ask the Galatians? What reply does he expect?

- What did they hear? What is so foolish about what they are doing?

- Is this a risk you and I run today? How?

Galatians 3:6-9

- Who does Paul say are the true children of Abraham? Why?

- What do we learn about the messages of the Old and New Testaments here?

Galatians 3:10-14

- What three points does Paul make to show that we are not saved by the law?

- What problem does the law leave us with?

- How is this problem dealt with? What is the result?

- Where does this leave our human effort?

Galatians 3:15-25

- What is the main point of Paul's example? How does this back up his argument?

- Why is the law necessary?

- What does this tell us about the nature of the law?

Galatians 3:26-29

- What is our status now?

- What areas of life does v.28 cover? What implications does that have for us?

So What?

- What does v.29 mean for the Galatians? And for us?

- What difference should this passage make to the way we read the Old Testament?

- What difference does it make that we depend on promise not law? How can you live this out better?

But:

It is clear now that salvation does not come from what we do, but from faith in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. So it's OK to do what we want because God will forgive us anyway, right? **Wrong! "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free... But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. " There is no license in Galatians to live as we please!** Instead, two new realities shape our lives: our everlasting security in Christ and His death; our changed nature which is always becoming more like Him. We do not live to earn our salvation, but to live up to it.

Introducing ... The End Of The World

As we have seen, the Old Testament looks forward to a Day when God will finally do everything He said, beginning a long time before, with Abraham. The New Testament announces that all God's promises have been fulfilled now that Christ has died on the cross ... and are being fulfilled as people come to trust Him and so cross from death to life... and will be fulfilled when Christ returns.

Read:

- Mark 13:32-37

Think:

- How predictable is the time of Jesus' return?
- What attitude does He expect His followers to have to it?
- What do you think He means by "sleeping" in 13:36?

Respond:

By taking Jesus at His word and believing that He will return. Work out the implications for your own life here and now.

This attitude of eagerly expecting Christ to come again is elsewhere called **hope**. According to the New Testament, it is a fundamental part of being a Christian. Lord Shaftesbury, the famous social reformer, said this: "For the past 40 years, I do not think that I have had one waking hour wherein I have not thought upon our blessed future hope, the return of Christ. "

Introduction to **Revelation**

Revelation is a book which sets present Christian existence firmly within the future context. In vivid picture language it describes events which are typical of life between the two comings of Christ. Its aim is to strengthen Christians, particularly those suffering for their faith. "The book envisages terrific opposition to God and the people of God, but that in the end, God will triumph over every evil thing". (Leon Morris)

It is structured around a series of "sevens". In this diagram, note that sometimes the seventh of a series comes after an interlude - e.g. 6 Seals (Rev. 6) interlude (Rev. 7) 7th Seal (Rev. 8:1). Chapter numbers are in brackets.

Prologue (1)	7 Letters (2-3)
Interlude (4-5)	7 Seals (6)
Interlude (7)	7 Trumpets (8-9)
Interlude (10)	7 Beast (12-14)
Interlude (15)	7 Plagues (16)
Interlude (17-18)	7 Visions (19-20)
No Interlude	Final Fulfilment (21-22)

THINK

- Where in the Bible does the number "seven" first appear?
- What message is there in this sevenfold structure to the book of Revelation?

Revelation 5: The Lamb Slaughtered

Text Work

- Read through Revelation 6 to see what John discovers as the scroll is opened. What do the words on it describe? How would it have helped John and other suffering Christians to have this scroll opened to them?
- Who alone can open the scroll? Why is He the only one who can? So what is the key to understanding our world?
- What descriptions are given of Jesus in this chapter? What is odd about them? Why is He called "the Root of David"?
- According to the creatures and the elders, what has Christ's death achieved? When did God first announce His purpose of achieving these things? Why could they only be achieved through the death of Christ?
- What is significant about the Lamb's location?
- What different groups praise Him?
- List different ways in which this chapter would help a Christian suffering opposition and persecution.

So What?

- Do you understand why Jesus had to die on the cross? Has His death made any difference to you personally? If so, use some of the praises in this chapter to thank Him.

Revelation 21-22: It Is Done

Text Work

- Divide the two chapters into sections and give a title to each.
- Remember God's great purpose: to have His great people living in His bountiful land under His tender and intimate rule. Pick out the verses which show the fulfilment of these purposes.
- In what ways is the End like the original Garden of Eden? In what ways is it different?
- What sort of people are excluded from the final glory? Who are included? Are there any hints that the original problem of sin will no longer be an issue for them?
- Which verses tell us how this great vision of the End should effect our lives now?
- What is your favourite verse in these 2 chapters? Why?

Well done for persevering to the end of the "The Full S.P. ". It is my prayer that you will also persevere to the end of the Christian life and so finally come to share in the great realities we have been considering, for:

**"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be
His God and He will be my Son."**

Revelation 21:7

The Full S.P. was originally prepared for use with student Bible Study groups by Rachel Carr, Tom Forryan, Mark Meynell and Ed Moll. This revision is by Tom Forryan, Pastor of Derby Road Baptist Church, Watford. You have permission to copy it freely and use it for the Lord's work in any way you see fit provided only that you 1/ don't sell it commercially and 2/ don't alter it without checking first. Any comments, questions or suggestions will be gratefully received & can be emailed to me at: tforryan@drbchurch.org.uk. In particular, I'd like to hear about any of the questions which you found obscure or hard to understand. I will do my best to answer all emails promptly.