

# The Story of God and His World

Understanding the Bible's Great Story



## The Story of God and His World

© Volker Glissmann and Ruth Guinness

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# The Story of God and His World: Understanding the Bible's Great Story

## Table of Contents

Welcome .....	1
Introduction.....	2
Lesson 1 - Creation .....	3
Lesson 2 - Rebellion .....	7
Lesson 3 - God's Promise .....	12
Lesson 4 - Christ .....	18
Lesson 5 - God's Mission .....	23
Lesson 6 - New Creation.....	29
Conclusion .....	35
Glossary .....	36

# Welcome

Welcome to *The Story of God and His World* course! We are glad that you have chosen to study this course.

What can you expect in this course? You will see how the Bible is one story, God's story. We have chosen (like some other authors) to divide the story into six parts. This is just an overview: in a short course we cannot include all the details. You will see how God works in his story, how everything fits together, and where we fit into God's story. Remember that Jesus taught people using stories! We all relate to stories and can learn deep things.

At the end of this course you should be able to:

- Tell *The story of God and His World* using the six building blocks of Creation, Rebellion, God's Promise, Christ, God's Mission and New Creation
- Understand how the six building blocks form the whole Story of God and His World
- Explain how God is at work in each of the six building blocks to fulfil God's Mission
- Explain where we are in the story and our role in God's Mission
- Love God more and respond to him in practical ways following reflection on each lesson.

You will notice that this book has been put together in a particular way. We hope this will help you to learn more easily:

- The title of each lesson is the title of one part of the overall story.
- There is a summary sentence underneath each title, summarising that part of the story. Put together, all the summary sentences tell *The Story of God and His World*.
- Next there is a short story, like a parable, helping you to relate to that part of God's story.
- We have then re-told the Bible story in our own words. This is a summary and shows some of the main points of action in *The Story of God and His World*.
- "Exploring the Story" is a section of the lesson which asks you questions and gives some short explanations. You can answer the questions by thinking about what you have read in the lesson, and by looking up any Bible references that are suggested.
- "Did you know?" boxes in the lesson give you some information that will help you to reflect further on related themes. Remember that this course is not meant to explain everything in the Bible!
- Personal reflection questions are a very important part of each lesson. As you reflect personally, you allow God to help you see how the lessons relate to your life and start to think about how you can respond to him, showing him your love.
- The lesson ends with a summary, repeating the summary sentence from the beginning of the lesson, and adding a sentence which shows that the story (in parts 1 – 5) is unfinished.
- Throughout the book you will see text boxes explaining key words. They are also listed in the glossary at the end of the book.

There is one lesson in this book for each part of the story. You will learn most if you study each lesson on your own, writing down your answers, and then meet with a group to discuss what you are learning.

We pray that you will find this course helpful and that you will tell the story to others.

Volker Glissmann and Ruth Guinness

# Introduction

Many people know the way the Bible begins: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Have you ever thought of these words as the beginning, not just of the story of creation, but of the story of the whole Bible? From beginning to end, the Bible tells the story of God and the world which he created. This is the great story, the true story that God tells and that we live in.

All stories have characters living in a particular place and time. We see a conflict that they go through, and how this is resolved. When we come to the end, the whole story makes sense, and we understand the significance of different parts of the story. The Bible story is no different!

We know that there are many different books in the Bible (66 in all!). And they are divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. Put together they give one story, following God’s intention for his world at creation, what happened when evil entered into the world, God’s plan to redeem all the relationships broken when people rebelled against him, and the final renewal of all things.

This is God’s story. In it, we are introduced to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Above all, the Bible focuses on God the Son, Jesus Christ. Peter says, “He was chosen before the creation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20). In Colossians 1:16, talking of Jesus, it says, “all things have been created through him and for him.” The story ends when Jesus is acknowledged as Lord of all. As Ephesians 1:10 says, God’s purpose is “to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.”

Jesus himself explained to his disciples that the Old Testament pointed to him. After his resurrection, he walked with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus.

1) Read Luke 24:25-27. Why did Jesus say that they were foolish?

.....

2) Read Luke 24:44-49. From verses 44-46, what had to be fulfilled?

.....

3) At the time Jesus rose from the dead, the New Testament hadn’t been written, but Jesus told the disciples what would happen next. From Luke 24:47-49, what was to happen next?

.....

At the end of God’s story, Jesus returns to earth and his people will then be with him forever. As Revelation 21:3 says, “God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”

*The Story of God and His World* can be simply divided into six building blocks which help us to remember and understand the Biblical story. They are shown by the pictures below. The lessons follow the story through the building blocks and see how they fit together.



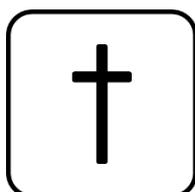
Creation



Rebellion



God's Promise



Christ



God's Mission



New Creation

# Lesson 1 - Creation

*God created the heavens and the earth and made people in his image to be like kings under him, that all would live in peace under his blessing and worship him.*

Mai Banda has planted flowers in pots on her khonde. Life is busy, but on Sunday afternoon she sits there with some of her friends, enjoying the conversation and watching the children happily playing. She smiles as she sees the bright flowers in the warm glow of the afternoon sun. She senses God's peace and is thankful.

What is your favourite place? Why?

.....  
.....

## The story of Creation



In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth. He made the vastness of space, and he made earth with its high mountains, deep valleys, rivers and seas. And then he filled them with wonderful things! Sun, moon and stars, birds to fill the air, fish to fill the sea, trees, flowers, fruit and crops, animals both large and small, and finally, people. God was delighted with his creation! It was good. Through creation God provided for every living thing. And he made it so that all creation was under his blessing and would glorify God.

God had a special role for the people he had made in his own image. He honoured them by giving them instructions to rule over creation and to work the land and care for it. They were like kings, under God himself as the great King. Adam and Eve, and indeed all living creatures, were blessed to be fruitful and increase.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. In the garden were two special trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God wanted a relationship with the people he had made, because he loved them. He spent time with them in the garden. As he walked with them, it was as if heaven and earth met. The relationships between Adam and Eve and God, and the rest of creation, were all good.

On the seventh day, God rested. And everything was good. God, God's people, and all living creatures, lived together in peace in the land that God had created.

**Heaven and earth**  
*When you read this phrase in this course, we are referring to heaven as the dwelling place of God, and earth as the dwelling place of people. When they meet, God and his people are united.*

[For more detail, see Genesis 1 & 2]

**Reflect on the story**

1) What relationships do you see in this story?

.....  
.....

2) How would you describe the relationships in the beginning of God’s story?

.....

**Exploring the story**

Let’s explore some important ideas that we see in the story.

**GOD**

Romans 1:20 tells us that creation reveals God’s character. Other parts of the Bible, especially in the Psalms, help us to learn about God in relation to creation. Look at Psalm 145, especially verses 1, 7-9, 11-13.

3) From these verses in Psalm 145, what do you learn about God’s character?

.....  
.....  
.....

4) What does God’s relationship with creation show about the way God rules?

.....

5) How is God’s kingdom described?

.....

6) What should all creation do because God is King?

.....

God is a good king who loves all that he has made (not just people) and is worthy of worship. He wants all people to know him. His Kingdom is his rule, and at the beginning, all creation, including people, gladly submitted to his good rule.

**Love**  
*God is love; and his love is good, unfailing and faithful.*

**US IN THE STORY OF GOD**

God so loved the world that he made men and women. Let’s see what purpose God had for people.

7) Look at Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:15. What verbs are used in these verses to describe what God wants people to do in his creation?

.....

8) Remember what we have learned about God’s character. Since men and women are made in God’s image, in what way do you think men and women are to rule?

.....

9) In many of the psalms, the psalmists reflected on God’s creation. Earlier you looked at Psalm 145. From this psalm, how should we respond to God?

.....

We fit in the story of God! We are created in his image, given a purpose to serve and rule under him, and to worship him. In Psalm 8, the psalmist worships God, seeing his glory reflected in creation, and is amazed that God has made people to rule over God’s creation. Being made in God’s image is not about being proud about a position we have been given but about following God’s character in our relationships with God and all he has made: this is worship.

**Worship**  
*True worship is the giving of our lives, all we are and all we do, to God. It is an acknowledgment that he alone is worthy and that we want to live for him alone.*

**FLOURISHING LIFE**

Other places in the Bible describe the wonderful relationships that God intended. Psalm 104 is celebration of the whole of creation. Have a look at verses 10-23.

10) Describe in your own words the kind of world pictured in Psalm 104:10-23.

.....

.....

God intended people and all his creation to flourish – to have a good life, being fruitful and living in peace with God and each other.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In Genesis 2:18, God decided to “make a helper” for Adam. He then made Eve. The word used for “helper” is a word that is used in the Bible to describe God himself, for example in Psalm 115:9-11. Adam and Eve are both made in the image of God, and both given the commands to be fruitful and to rule.

11) Look back at this lesson. What key points do you see?

.....

.....

.....

The beginning of the story is about God creating all things, both visible and invisible. He created it all with a purpose, that all should flourish in good relationships and worship him. Adam and Eve knew God and cared for all he had made. This is God's intention for all people.

### **Personal reflection**

- a) Think of the good you enjoy from creation and give thanks.
- b) Reflect on how you might live in peace with God, people and creation.
- c) Practice retelling the story so far in your own words, remembering the key points.

*God created the heavens and the earth and made people in his image to be like kings under him, that all would live in peace under his blessing and worship him. So, what went wrong?*

# Lesson 2 - Rebellion

*God created the heavens and the earth and made people in his image to be like kings under him, that all would live in peace under his blessing and worship him.  
But people rebelled against God, making themselves kings in his place, and broke all the relationships of blessing God had made.*

“I didn’t do anything!”, Mavuto shouted as Yohane started to cry. A few minutes earlier they had been happily playing football. Now the scene turned to chaos as a fight started over just who it was who had broken the window in the house. Some of the boys ran away before an adult arrived, cutting across the vegetable garden and trampling the plants.

Think about this simple example – you have probably seen something like it! List the different relationships which are at least temporarily broken in the above scene.

.....  
.....

## The story so far



➤ Try re-telling the story so far.

## The story of Rebellion



Adam and Eve lived in peace in Eden and enjoyed their relationship with God and the rest of creation. God gave them the freedom to eat from any tree in the garden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

One day, Adam and Eve were together when Eve was approached by the serpent. It tempted Eve to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve believed the serpent’s words and doubted God’s word, and so she decided to eat the fruit which God had told them not to eat. Adam did the same. So, they both rebelled against God, making themselves their own rulers by following their desires instead of God’s commands.

In shame, they hid from God, but he came to look for them. Both Adam and Eve blamed others for their actions. But God knew their rebellion and showed them the results. The serpent was cursed, and both Adam and Eve were told of the pain they would now suffer and the death they would die. The land was cursed because of their sin. The image of God in them was now spoiled, and their hearts were turned towards evil. The good relationships between them, God, and the rest of creation, had been broken. Yet

God still loved them and promised that one day a descendant of Eve's would be victorious over the serpent.

Then God cast Adam and Eve out of Eden so that they could not eat from the tree of life and live forever in an evil state. They were cut off from God's presence: heaven and earth were no longer united. Their son, Cain, also rebelled against God and killed his brother Abel. All of Adam and Eve's descendants had rebellious hearts. Many years passed, and people multiplied. So did their sin against God and each other and the rest of creation. God brought punishment with a flood, but graciously saved Noah and his family, and representatives from all living creatures, in the Ark that he told Noah to build. After the flood there was a new beginning. God promised never to destroy the whole earth in a flood.

Many years passed, and people multiplied. So did their sin. When they tried to build a tower to reach to heaven, to make a name for themselves and be like God, God scattered them over the whole earth and confused their languages. Would restoration of right relationships ever be possible?

[For more detail, see Genesis 3 - 11]

### **Reflect on the story**

1) What broken relationships do you see in this story?

.....

.....

2) How does this compare with the relationships at creation?

.....

### **Exploring the story**

Let's explore some important ideas that we see in the story.

#### **US IN THE STORY OF GOD**

People had been given a role by God to rule under him. In this part of the story, we see that they rebelled against God. Sin can be defined as rebellion against God, and it affects all our relationships (with God, self, other people and creation) and causes brokenness. Adam and Eve listened to the serpent's words instead of God's. They gave themselves the power to decide what was right or wrong in order to exalt themselves. Let's look at how this developed in the story.

3) Compare what God said in Genesis 2:16-17 and what the serpent says in Genesis 3:4-5.

.....

.....

4) How does God show his goodness in Genesis 2:16-17? What was his intention?

.....

.....

5) The serpent's words throw doubt on God's good intentions. Why do you think that Eve followed the serpent's words?

.....

.....

Since Adam and Eve, all of us have rebelled in the same way. We don't believe God's good intentions for us to flourish in all our relationships. We think that we can decide for ourselves what is good for ourselves without taking all the relationships with God, others and the earth, into account. We think we can rule by ourselves rather than under God.

6) Cain and his brother Abel both offered sacrifices to God. When Cain was very angry because God did not look with favour on his sacrifice, God spoke with him. Look at Genesis 4:6-7. What does God want Cain – and us – to do?

.....

God has made us in his image, and so we are able to do good, for he is good. He made us able to "rule over" sin and not rebel against God.

7) Look at Genesis 6:5, 11-12. By this time, people had multiplied and so had their sin. Here we see what God saw in all people. From Genesis 6:5, what is the source of people's wickedness?

.....

In rebelling against God, people's hearts had turned from God. They had made themselves like kings in his place instead of kings under him. Their worship was no longer directed towards God but towards themselves. They wanted to be in control. After the flood, people again multiplied and so did their sin.

**Heart**  
*In the Bible, the heart is the essence of the person, the centre of a person's thoughts, decisions and will.*

8) Have a look at Genesis 11:4. What do you think the motivation of these people was?

.....

Still today people live in rebellion against God, wanting to make a name for themselves.

**GOD**

God is the King over all his creation. As King, he has authority and through creation showed what is good. He judges justly between good and evil, punishing all evil and bringing restoration. Those who do good have no fear of punishment.

**Justice**  
*To say that God is just is to say that all he does is right and true. He works for justice – for evil to be dealt with and all things to be set right.*

9) What is the result of sin and rebellion? (Genesis 2:17, 3:19, Romans 6:23)

.....

**Mercy**  
*Mercy is when God does not give us the punishment we deserve.*

The first to receive God’s judgement is the serpent, which is cursed. God told Adam and Eve that they would suffer. Death is the end result of people’s rebellion. God had mercy, not bringing this immediately.

Although God punished people, God acted with amazing grace!

10) What did God do for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21)?

.....

11) What did God do for Cain (Genesis 4:15)?

.....

12) What did God do for Noah (Genesis 6:18)?

.....

God acts in grace when people do not deserve it. This reminds us that God loves us and is working for good, to restore relationships. Ultimately all restoration comes from God, by grace.

**Grace**  
*God shows grace when he gives us the good that we do not deserve.*

Remember that God intended people and all his creation to flourish – to have a good life, being fruitful and living in peace with God and each other. He values his whole creation, and his promise after the flood covered all creation. God’s intention did not change because of people’s rebellion.

13) Look at Genesis 3:15. What does this promise look forward to?

.....

One day the serpent will be crushed by a descendant of Eve.

**BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS**

We have seen how the relationship between people and God and other people was broken. People’s rebellion also affected the land which was cursed because of them. The prophet Hosea, who lived later, clearly describes all these broken relationships in Hosea 4:1-3.

14) What are the reasons Hosea gives for the land mourning?

.....

.....

.....

### DID YOU KNOW?

We are all like Adam and Eve! We try to blame other people, or the devil, or circumstances, for our sin. The Bible makes it clear that this is simply rebellion against God. Paul explains it clearly in Romans 1:18-20. No one has an excuse. God reveals himself to everyone through creation. Like Adam and Eve ignoring the truth of God's words, we "suppress the truth" because our hearts are turned away from God.

15) Look back at this lesson. What key points do you see? How does this connect with the key points from last lesson?

.....

.....

.....

We have seen that the good relationships God intended were broken when people decided to rebel against God. In their hearts they wanted to rule and be like God, but not under God. We can still see the results of sin in the broken world today. Suffering now is due to the rebellion of people, including ourselves, and often we suffer because we live in a broken world.

### **Personal reflection**

- a) Take time to reflect on your life: your relationship with God, yourself, others, and creation. What do you see?
- b) Look at what is going on around you and in the world. List some of the broken relationships you see.
- c) Practice retelling the story so far in your own words, remembering the key points.

*People rebelled against God, making themselves kings in his place, and broke all the relationships of blessing God had made. Is there any hope?*

# Lesson 3 - God's Promise

*People rebelled against God, making themselves kings in his place,  
and broke all the relationships of blessing God had made.*

*Then God promised restored relationships for all through Israel, but they were unfaithful.*

Chikondi looked back with sadness. He remembered his wedding day, and the promises he and Mphatso had said to one another. It had all been so good at the beginning! He loved her, and they had set up a good home. But then Mphatso had started to come back from work late. Chikondi realised she was spending time with her boss. He had tried to speak with her, but she wouldn't listen. Now, she had just told him that she was going to go and live with her boss. Yet he still loved her!

What does a marriage covenant signify? What should faithfulness look like?

.....

## The story so far



➤ Try re-telling the story so far.

## The story of God's promise



Everything seemed to be hopeless. But God never forgot his intention for people to live under his blessing on the good earth, glorifying him. So God spoke to one man, Abraham, and gave him an amazing promise of a good land, a great nation, and the blessing of a relationship with God. And what's more, God said that through Abraham's family, all other nations on earth would be blessed. Out of his love and grace, God was planning to restore all the broken relationships.

God continued his promise through Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob. In Jacob's time, the family moved to Egypt because of famine. Over hundreds of years, this family grew and became slaves of the king of Egypt. They cried out to God for help. God loved them as his children, and he chose Moses to lead them to the land promised to Abraham. The Egyptians rebelled against God by not letting them go, so God sent ten plagues on Egypt. In the final plague, the firstborn sons of the Egyptians were killed, but God made a way for the firstborn sons of his people to be saved. Each family was told to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on the doorframe of their home. God then passed over their homes and did not bring death to them. God then rescued them from the Egyptians.

They went to Mount Sinai, where God made a covenant with them as the nation of Israel. He said that they would be his people, and that he would be their God. He gave them his law to show them how to

live as his people. The law pointed them to the right relationships they should have with God, others, and with the land.

God told them to build a Tabernacle, a tent where they would worship God, which would represent his presence with them. God also made a way for the people to approach him by offering sacrifices each day to remove their sins and bring forgiveness. He said that Israel would be like priests for other nations, so that other nations would come to know God through them.

God gave the people of Israel the land he had promised to Abraham. Later, they asked to be ruled by a king like other nations, again rebelling against God's reign. God graciously gave them kings to lead them. The greatest king was David, who was fully devoted to God, never worshipping other gods, though like all people he had his failures. At first, he was a shepherd. David saw God as the true Shepherd leader of Israel. God made a covenant with David, saying

that the kingdom of his son would last forever. Instead of the Tabernacle, David's son Solomon built a Temple for God, representing God's presence. This was in Jerusalem, which became known as the holy city where God dwelt. But Solomon wasn't the promised king. From then on, people were waiting for God to send the promised King, the true shepherd, a descendant of David.

**Covenant**  
*A covenant is an agreement between two groups/people, in which each agrees to behave in a certain way to maintain the relationship. The covenant in Exodus is the covenant between God and his people Israel. God promised to be their God. The people agreed to the covenant and therefore to live in love and faithfulness as his people.*

**Messiah or Christ**  
*This is the title for the Saviour that God promised: one anointed to be King, who will bring victory and will reign forever.*

There were many more kings, but most of them rebelled against God. They worshipped idols and broke their covenant with God. God sent many prophets, condemning Israel's idolatry and social injustice, and calling them to return to him rather than facing judgement. Through the prophets God reminded the people of his plan to restore all relationships, and spoke of David's descendant, the anointed Servant-King to come, the Messiah.

The Israelites repeatedly rejected the warnings of the prophets. After many years, God punished his rebellious people by casting them out of the land. God used their enemies to defeat them and take them into exile. The Temple was destroyed and the land was devastated. The prophet Jeremiah had promised a new covenant, where once again God would be their God and they would be his people. This gave hope, and God enabled some exiles to return to the land. They rebuilt the Temple. But they did not have their own king. Where was the new covenant and the promised King? When would God keep his promise to bless all nations through Israel?

[For more detail, see Genesis 12 – Malachi]

**Reflect on the story**

1) In what ways is God restoring relationships in this story?

.....  
.....

2) How do you see people responding to God in this section of the story?

.....  
.....

## **Exploring the story**

Let's explore some important ideas that we see in the story.

### **PROMISE AND COVENANT**

From the hopeless situation after the tower of Babel, God chose one man, Abraham, so that through him God could restore all the broken relationships in his world.

- 3) Look at God's promise in Genesis 12:1-3. Remembering the story of creation and rebellion, what do you think God's blessing means when he says that "all peoples on earth will be blessed"?

.....  
.....

- 4) Remember: what was God's intention for his world? (See Lesson 1)

.....

- 5) God says to Abraham, "you will be a blessing". Remembering the story so far, what does it mean to be a blessing?

.....  
.....

Abraham became the father of the nation of Israel. God always intended to work through them so that all peoples would have restored relationships with God, self, each other and creation.

God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai saying he would be their God and they would be his people. To keep the covenant, Israel was meant to live in God's ways by obeying his law. But they were unfaithful and broke this covenant. In his love and faithfulness God promised a new covenant.

- 6) Look at Jeremiah 31:31-34. Describe the relationship between God and people in the new covenant.

.....  
.....

God's promise shows his intention for the whole world. In Isaiah 65:17-25 he promises to restore everything in the new heavens and new earth. The word translated as "new" here can mean "renewed". This reminds us that God's plan for the world at the beginning will be fulfilled.

- 7) How would you describe the relationships that Isaiah writes about in Isaiah 65:21-25?

.....  
.....

The promise in this section of God's story is that God will do something new to restore relationships.

### **TABERNACLE AND SACRIFICE**

When God passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt because of the blood of the lamb, he showed that he accepted the sacrifice of the lamb instead of the lives of the first-born Israelites. This event is called the Passover. The people remembered this sacrifice every year.

At creation, God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve. When people rebelled against him, God no longer lived amongst people. Yet God’s covenant with Israel meant that he wanted to live with them. He instructed them to build a Tabernacle. This was a tent that travelled with them on their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land. It was the place where heaven and earth would meet. How could God live in their midst when they were still rebellious? Let’s look at some passages to think about this more.

8) What is revealed about God in Exodus 40:34-38?

.....

9) What was Israel told to do so that they could approach God in Leviticus 1:3-4?

.....

By God’s mercy, sacrificial animals died in the place of people, taking the punishment for sin that people deserved. God saw the blood of the sacrifice and knew that a life had paid the price for sin. Then God could restore people to a right relationship with him. Sacrifices had to be offered daily, as no animal sacrifice could completely remove all people’s sin.

### **US IN THE STORY OF GOD**

When God made his promise to Abraham, he made it clear that Abraham had a role. By following God, Abraham would be used by God to bless all peoples. Later, after God had rescued the Israelites from Egypt, God gave them a land. Like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, the people of Israel in the land of Israel were to model good relationships between themselves and God and the land. God told Israel how they were to live so that other peoples would also know God and enjoy restored relationships. Here are some reflections on how God’s people are to live:

10) God loved his people! He saved them from Egypt, gave them a good land, and blessed them. Look at Deuteronomy 6:4-6. What response did God expect from his people?

.....

Deuteronomy 6:4-6 was key to the Jewish faith and were prayed by the Jews twice every day. Did you notice that the first response is love? Obedience to God’s commands comes out of our love for God. The people of Israel were redeemed before they were given the law. God loved them before they knew a law to obey. Once under his covenant blessing they could choose to stay there through loving God and living in obedience to his ways, or choose to rebel against his ways, which would lead to judgement.

Look at Exodus 19:3-6. Within the nation of Israel, God chose people to be priests. They were to mediate between God and the people of Israel.

11) What do you think it means for Israel to be a kingdom of priests? Who do they as a people mediate between?

.....

.....

Isaiah 49:1-6 is one of several passages in the book of Isaiah that are called “servant songs”, as they are about God’s servant. Israel as a nation was called to be God’s servant (Isaiah 49:3) but they failed in their role.

12) What is the role of the Servant in Isaiah 49:5-6?

.....

This is not a new idea! God’s plan had always been to bless all peoples, as we saw in his promise to Abraham in Genesis 12.

Israel had the privilege of being God’s people. Yet, through the prophets, God condemned them.

13) Read Amos 5:21-24. Why do you think God would not accept their sacrifices?

.....

.....

14) If you do not love others by being just and righteous, can you say that you love God fully? Explain.

.....

.....

God’s people have a role to play in God’s story as God works out his promise to restore relationships, but they are often unfaithful and fail.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Jeremiah was not the only prophet to write about God’s promise of a new covenant. Ezekiel describes it in Ezekiel 36:25-29. In this wonderful passage, God promises to cleanse his people. Knowing their hearts are hard, stubborn, and turned towards evil, God promises to give his people a new heart, and to give them his Holy Spirit who will enable them to follow him. His promise includes the land, people, and God – all the relationships that God made in the beginning.

15) Look back at this lesson. What key points do you see? How do these link with the rest of the story so far?

.....

.....

.....

God promised to restore all relationships specifically through his servant Israel. Israel experienced God’s presence with them and had access to restored relationships through daily sacrifice. However, they rebelled against God and failed to represent him to the nations.

## **Personal reflection**

- a) How do you express your love for God and people and the rest of creation?
- b) Are there areas in which you are being unfaithful?
- c) Give thanks for God's faithfulness to his promise.
- d) Practice retelling the story so far in your own words, remembering the key points.

*God promised restored relationships for all through Israel, but they were unfaithful.  
How would God's promise be fulfilled?*

# Lesson 4 - Christ

*God promised restored relationships for all through Israel, but they were unfaithful.  
God sent his Son Jesus as the faithful and true Israel  
to restore all relationships on heaven and on earth.*

Bambo Phiri was scared. He knew that he had done wrong by stealing the maize sacks. But he had been found out, and today would have to go before the court. The owner of the maize was demanding money. Bambo Phiri had had no harvest, and had nothing at home. How could he bear a punishment? When the time came for his case to be considered, he kept his eyes down, too ashamed to look up. Then he heard astonishing words. The judge graciously said that he himself would pay the owner for the maize, and that Bambo Phiri could go free.

How would you have felt if you were in Bambo Phiri's place? Did he deserve to be helped in this way?

.....

## The story so far



➤ Try re-telling the story so far.

## The story of Christ



For over 400 years after the prophets had spoken, people wondered how God would keep his promise. Then God sent an angel to Mary, a young woman living in Nazareth. He announced that she would give birth to the son of God, who would also be the son of David. He would be the anointed King that people had been waiting for, the Messiah or Christ. His name would be Jesus, which means "The LORD saves". God was keeping his promise.

God raised up a prophet called John who called people to repentance. One day John baptised Jesus. People heard God's voice proclaiming, "You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased", and saw the Holy Spirit descend on him. Jesus, as God's son, was the true image of God, and he never sinned to mar that image. John pointed to Jesus, and said, "Look, the Lamb of God."

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, where Satan tempted him, but Jesus did not give in to the temptation. After this Jesus began his public ministry. He had come to put right everything that was broken. He was the true, faithful Israel, full of grace and truth. Jesus taught God's word and demonstrated God's Kingdom. He called himself the Good Shepherd, pointing to himself as being God and King, loving and caring for his people. When he healed ten men with leprosy, he was also restoring relationships with outcasts and a foreigner. Jesus often spoke of God's creation, and creation obeyed

him. He brought peace to creation when he calmed the storm. He demonstrated God’s righteousness and God’s invitation to all to approach him, when he rebuked salesmen in the Temple. Jesus was like a living Temple, where heaven and earth met, and in whom people met God.

Jesus called people to follow him by becoming his disciples. The 12 disciples spent time with him, to become like him and to do what he did. The religious leaders felt threatened by Jesus. They plotted against him, wanting to get rid of him.

Jesus’ disciples began to recognise that he was God’s promised King. But Jesus surprised them by saying that he was going to suffer and die. They could not understand this! One day Jesus took three of them, Peter, James and John, up a mountain. There, Jesus was changed (“transfigured”) and they saw his glory. God the Father spoke, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

At Passover, the celebration of Israel’s rescue from Egypt, Jesus and his disciples arrived in Jerusalem. At the Passover meal, Jesus spoke of his coming death by taking bread and saying, “This is my body, given for you”. He took the wine, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” He was going to be the true Passover lamb.

That night, Jesus encouraged his disciples and promised that he would send them a helper, the Holy Spirit. They went to a garden, where Jesus prayed in agony. He knew that he was about to die. But he showed his love by continuing to follow God’s plan.

One of his disciples, Judas, betrayed him, and Jesus was arrested. The disciples ran away, but Jesus was taken to trial, by the High Priest and then by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. He was sentenced to death. On Friday morning he was nailed to a cross. Jesus prayed that his Father would forgive the soldiers who had crucified him. Finally, he cried, “It is finished”, and he died. Jesus’ body was placed in a tomb.

Early on Sunday morning, women who loved Jesus went to the tomb. To their surprise, the tomb was empty! But where was Jesus? Suddenly, angels appeared and said, “He is not here; he has risen!” Jesus was alive!

After that, Jesus appeared several times to his disciples. He told them that he would soon return to his Father. Yet again, the disciples wondered. What was going to happen? When would God’s Kingdom be fully revealed?

[For more detail, see Matthew, Mark, Luke and John]

**Reflect on the story**

1) During his life, what did Jesus do to restore different kinds of relationships?

.....

.....

.....

## **Exploring the story**

Let's explore some important ideas that we see in the story.

### **JESUS**

One of the key questions when Jesus lived on earth was who he was. Was he the promised Messiah?

- 2) Read Luke 9:28-36, the story of Jesus' transfiguration. What do you learn about Jesus from this passage?

.....

God affirms that Jesus is his Son. In the Old Testament God called Israel his son. We know that Israel was not faithful to God, but Jesus represents the faithful and true Israel. He is the glorious King.

- 3) In Luke 9:31, Jesus, Moses and Elijah are talking about Jesus' departure which will be fulfilled in Jerusalem. In the story above, Jesus went to Jerusalem after the transfiguration. What do you think they meant by Jesus' departure?

.....

In talking about something that was to be fulfilled, Jesus, Moses and Elijah were referring to God's promise. He had promised to save his people. The only way for people to be restored to God would be through the sacrifice of his Son on the cross. His Son would take the sin, guilt and shame of people and bear God's judgement in their place (Isaiah 53). The people, however, did not expect or understand that the Messiah would have to die.

Jesus rose from the dead! In his resurrection body we are assured of our own bodily resurrection. Paul highlights the importance of the resurrection.

- 4) Look at 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. What can we be sure of because Christ has been raised from the dead?

.....

Jesus was the promised Messiah. He lived a flourishing life in his relationships with God, himself, others and creation. He died to bring restoration and rose to life, bringing us hope of the end of the story.

### **THE CROSS AND THE NEW COVENANT**

When God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, he told them to sacrifice a perfect lamb and put the blood on the doorposts of their houses. See Exodus 12:1-13. Remember that all relationships were broken after creation, and all people rebelled against God.

- 5) What was God's judgement on all who lived in Egypt, including the Egyptian gods in Exodus 12:12?

- 6) What did God provide so that the Israelites were saved from this judgement in Exodus 12:13?

.....

When God saw the blood, he passed over the Israelite households – the blood protected them from God's judgement. Jesus died at Passover, showing that he is the perfect Passover sacrificial lamb whose blood saves us from God's judgement. This shows God's great mercy towards us.

When God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai, the blood of sacrifices established the covenant. You can read the story in Exodus 24:4-8. That was the “old” covenant that the Israelites broke. Remember that Jeremiah wrote about the New Covenant.

7) Look at Jesus’ words in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. How was the new covenant established?

.....

8) According to 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, what do we remember when we take part in the Lord’s supper?

.....

Jesus’ death on the cross was the sacrifice for our sin, and it also established the new covenant. Under the new covenant God promises to restore all the relationships which were broken by people’s rebellion. The sacrifice of Jesus, the son of God, was the final sacrifice. Only his sacrifice could, once and for all, completely pay the price for sin and bring forgiveness.

A passage which helps us to understand the cross is Colossians 1:15-20. Remember that God’s intention is for good relationships between himself, his people, and all his creation.

9) From this passage, what is reconciled to God through the cross of Christ?

.....

God created all things, and his intention has always been for good relationships between all things. This was made possible through the death of Jesus on the cross. By grace he freely forgives us, even though we do not deserve it. By faith we accept this forgiveness and are given new hearts and the Holy Spirit.

**Faith**  
*Faith is trusting in the promises of God.*

### **US IN THE STORY OF GOD**

**Repentance**

*Repentance is about turning. Turning away from our old way of life and turning to God to walk in his ways. It comes from genuine sorrow about our sinful state, and a recognition of how our sin hurts God.*

Both John the Baptist and Jesus called people to repentance.

10) John the Baptist said, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Luke 3:8). What does this mean?

.....

.....

Jesus taught about God’s Kingdom and demonstrated God’s Kingdom by the way he lived. He summed up the values of God’s Kingdom in Mark 12:28-34.

11) The second greatest commandment is to love our neighbour. What does this involve?

.....

12) The greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul mind and strength. In the light of your first answer, what does it mean to love God?

.....

In one of Jesus' parables about the time of his return, the King says, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). We show our love for God by loving others. God is the one who first loves us. He restored our relationship with him through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. So, our love for God is a response to who he is and what he has done for us.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Jesus was fully God and fully man. Philippians 2:5-11 is an amazing passage describing Jesus' attitude. As God, he did not hold on to his glory, but was born as a helpless baby. He did not demand his rights, but lived as a servant. He was obedient to His Father's will even to the point of dying a terrible death which he did not deserve. Why? Because he loves you and me! Because he loves the world he made! Because he loves His Father and knew His Father's purpose to restore all relationships. So, God has exalted Jesus to the highest place, and ultimately all "in heaven and on earth and under the earth" will acknowledge him as Lord.

13) Look back at this lesson. What key points do you see? How do these link with the rest of the story so far?

.....

.....

.....

God was faithful to his promise by sending his Son Jesus, who established the new covenant through his sacrifice on the cross. His resurrection showed his victory over sin, death and the devil, and looks forward to our own resurrection. He was the promised Messiah, who brought God's Kingdom on earth. In God's Kingdom, everything submits to God's rule and relationships are as God intended at the beginning.

**Personal reflection**

- a) Reflect on God's love for us through the cross, and worship him.
- b) In the light of this, how will you express your love for God?
- c) Practice retelling the story so far in your own words, remembering the key points.

*God sent his Son Jesus as the faithful and true Israel  
to restore all relationships on heaven and on earth.  
But how would all the earth know?*

# Lesson 5 - God's Mission

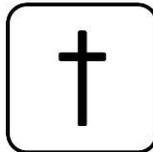
*God sent his Son Jesus as the faithful and true Israel  
to restore all relationships on heaven and on earth.  
And God sent his Church on his mission in his power  
to share the good news of restoration to the whole world and to worship him.*

Madalitso had waited a long time for this. Finally, she was a grandmother! Her daughter had just given birth to a healthy son. She couldn't wait to tell all her friends, and even told the market sellers when she went to buy some extra food. She wanted others to share her joy!

Good news is worth sharing! What kind of good news do you share with your friends?

.....

## The story so far



➤ Try re-telling the story so far.

## The story of God's Mission



Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was with his disciples. He told them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who would help them to be his witnesses locally, regionally and throughout the world. They were to be on God's mission, making disciples of people from every nation, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham. Then, as they watched, a cloud covered Jesus and he was taken into heaven. Angels told them that one day Jesus would return.

The disciples waited, and ten days later, the Holy Spirit came with signs of wind and fire. He enabled them to speak about God's amazing works in other languages. People began to gather, wondering at the noise! These people were from many nations and had come to worship in Jerusalem at the Jewish feast of Pentecost. Peter, one of the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, preached to the crowd. He told them that God was fulfilling his promise. He spoke of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit. To be saved and have their relationship with God made right, people had to repent. About 3,000 repented on that day!

The number of disciples grew. They met regularly and praised God as they kept telling others about Jesus. They knew that Jesus had died for them, to restore all relationships. The religious leaders were, again, upset. They didn't want to hear any more about Jesus! They began to arrest Jesus' disciples. One day, they arrested Stephen. As Stephen talked about how God was fulfilling his purpose in Jesus, the religious leaders became very angry. They stoned Stephen to death.

This started much persecution against the disciples in Jerusalem. Many of them moved away. As they went, they told others about Jesus. One, Philip, met an Ethiopian who was reading part of the Bible. However, he didn't understand who the passage was pointing to. Philip told him about Jesus, and the Ethiopian gladly accepted the message and was baptised. The Ethiopian took this message to Africa and the good news about Jesus spread further.

God guided Peter to a Roman soldier named Cornelius. As Peter spoke to him about Jesus, God poured out his Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household. This proved that God accepts all people, including Gentiles (non-Israelites). Jesus appeared to Paul, a Jew who was zealous in persecuting Christians. Paul's life was turned around! God sent him to share the good news with Gentiles. Paul travelled with teams of others, preaching, teaching, and encouraging new believers who started church groups.

It was not easy for Jesus' disciples. The church leaders recognised that the Kingdom of God had come in Jesus, and yet that it would only fully come in the future when Jesus returns as King. They still lived in a broken world. They saw that disciples of Jesus were not yet perfect! They realised that following Jesus, becoming like Jesus and being on God's mission was a lifelong process. The Holy Spirit worked to transform disciples, giving them gifts to enable them to serve, and producing his fruit in their changed lives.

Years passed. The church continued to grow. The first disciples died, but God continued his mission through the church. And their story became our story, as we too follow Jesus, go on his mission to all nations, and wait for his promised return. But the world is still broken. When will God's mission end and everything finally be set right?

[For more detail, see Acts – Jude]

### **Reflect on the story**

1) What happened in this story for people to hear the good news?

.....  
.....

2) How do you see people responding to God in this section of the story?

.....  
.....

### **Exploring the story**

Let's explore some important ideas that we see in the story.

#### **GOD'S MISSION**

From the beginning we have seen God's intention for good relationships between himself, people and the rest of creation. People rebelled against him, breaking all the relationships. God sent Jesus to restore relationships through his death on the cross. Those who repent of their sin and accept his sacrifice for them enter his Kingdom and are sent on his mission so that others can also worship him.

3) Incredibly, we are described as temples of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Why are we described as temples of the Holy Spirit?

.....  
Remember that the Tabernacle, and then the Temple, represented the place where heaven and earth met. If God is dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit, heaven and earth have met in us.

The good news that relationships can be restored through Christ and that we can know the peace God intended needs to be told to everyone. In Acts 1:8, just before he ascended into heaven, Jesus told his disciples that they would be his witnesses.

4) From Acts 1:8, what is essential for the disciples to be able to witness for Jesus?

.....  
They had to wait for this gift, given at Pentecost. In Acts 2, Peter was empowered by the Holy Spirit and witnessed to people from many nations. All Christians, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are also to witness to Jesus to those around them, and to be part of God’s mission to all peoples.

**GOD’S KINGDOM**

Jesus brought God’s Kingdom to earth and enabled us to enter through the new covenant established by his blood. Those who are in God’s Kingdom are under God’s rule and have repented from their efforts to rule themselves.

In the time of the New Testament, the people of Israel were known as Jews. A group of disciples who used to be Pharisees (people who took the Jewish law seriously) demanded that disciples who were not Jews should follow the whole law given to Israel in the Old Testament. Obeying the law was a condition of the covenant made between God and the people at Mount Sinai.

5) Look at the response of Peter to this in Acts 15:5-11. What was the heavy yoke that the people of Israel couldn’t bear from Acts 15:5 and 10?

.....  
6) How can we tell that Gentiles are accepted by God without following his law?

.....  
7) How are we saved?

.....  
8) Thinking about our effort, and failure, to obey God’s law, what is the significance of your answer to question 7?

.....  
.....

We are no longer under the “heavy yoke” of a law we cannot keep. Our salvation does not depend on our ability to keep the law, but on Christ who gives us his righteousness and takes our sinfulness. We are now under the new covenant, where God’s law is written in our hearts. The Holy Spirit within us teaches us how to live by God’s kingdom values.

We are wonderfully saved by God's grace. As we receive his love we will love him and respond as servants of the King, freely serving and worshipping him and working towards the relationships he intends.

9) Look at James 2:14-17. What kind of actions are tied to our faith and show our love of God?

.....

We are to demonstrate the values of God's Kingdom not just by what we say, but by what we do and in all our relationships.

10) Although God's Kingdom has come in Jesus, Jesus himself taught us how to pray with the words of the Lord's prayer. See Matthew 6:9-13. What does it say about God's Kingdom?

.....

There is a sense in which God's Kingdom has come on earth, in the hearts of those who serve the King. And yet, it is also still to come. We still pray for God's Kingdom to come, and work for it as we witness to him.

We are living in a period of time the Bible calls the last days. The Bible speaks about the Day of the Lord which will end this time. It is when Jesus will come again as King and God's Kingdom will be fully revealed.

11) Look at 2 Peter 3:8-9. Why is it that God's Kingdom has not yet fully come?

.....

God's intention is to fulfil his mission so that all nations can live in his kingdom. He is waiting for the church to witness to everyone so that the nations can respond to him and be saved.

### **US IN THE STORY OF GOD**

Those who have entered God's Kingdom have been given God's Spirit and a new heart. However, we are not immediately like God. We need to live a life of daily repentance and faith. God continues his work in us to transform us into his image (2 Corinthians 3:18). Then it will be as God intended at the beginning.

The Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts, works in us to transform us, so that we grow into the image of Christ. Paul tells us to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). Then we will demonstrate the fruit of the Kingdom of God.

12) From Galatians 5:22-23, what is the fruit of the Kingdom of God?

.....

.....

Our transformation is an on-going process but will produce God's character in us. God is at work in us, and we also need to work, as Paul describes in Philipians 2:12-13.

We have a role: Look at 1 Peter 2:9-10. Peter summarises our role as Christians by using the way Israel was described in the Old Testament.

13) What do you think it means for us to be a royal priesthood? (You might want to look at your answer to Lesson 3 question 9).

.....

14) What is our purpose according to 1 Peter 2:9-10?

.....

15) From 1 Peter 2:9-10, who do you think hears the praises of God's people?

.....

We witness to Jesus as we tell others about him and as we praise him in front of other people. Remember that in Lesson 1 we saw that we were made to worship God.

As God's people in God's story, we need to remember God's intention from the beginning, and play our part in building good relationships with other people and with all his creation.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8 is one of the first which shows Jesus' disciples moving out of Jerusalem with the good news of Jesus. Yet God had enabled people from Africa and elsewhere to hear the good news even before this, on the day of Pentecost! The visitors in Jerusalem that day included people from Egypt and Cyrene in North Africa. The rest of the book of Acts shows more deliberate mission as people such as Paul travelled with the good news to other places. God wants people from every nation to hear about the story of God and his world, and to know his action to bring restoration through Jesus. Today in main cities we can find people from many nations, and we need to show them God's love. Our churches also need to send missionaries to other places where people do not know about Jesus.

16) Look back at this lesson. What key points do you see? How do these link with the rest of the story so far?

.....

.....

.....

After Jesus ascended to heaven, God the Father sent his Holy Spirit to empower his people to continue his mission. As more people hear, they enter his Kingdom and start being transformed by the Holy Spirit. Yet God's Kingdom is not yet fully seen.

## **Personal reflection**

- a) Give thanks for the good news which is for all people! Thank God for the Holy Spirit who empowers us for his mission.
- b) In what ways can you share the good news?
- c) Where could you act to help restore people and God's creation to healthy relationships?
- d) Practice retelling the story so far in your own words, remembering the key points.

*God sent his Church on his mission in his power  
to share the good news of restoration to the whole world and to worship him.  
But the earth is still broken. How will it all be set right?*

# Lesson 6 - New Creation

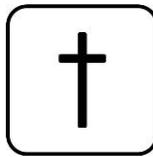
*God sent his Church on his mission in his power  
to share the good news of restoration to the whole world and to worship him.  
God's Son Jesus will return as King to judge and set all things right, by finally punishing all evil.  
God will live on the restored earth with all his redeemed people,  
with all living in peace under his blessing and worshipping him.*

Chimwemwe was excited! Her father would be coming back from South Africa soon. She didn't know exactly when, but she was really looking forward to seeing him and hugging him! She also didn't realise just how excited he was to come back and be with his family, because he loved them. Whilst she waited, Chimwemwe was determined to help her mother by looking after her little brother, just as her father had told her to. She wanted him to be pleased when he returned.

Why was Chimwemwe excited? Why did she want to be prepared for his arrival?

.....

## The story so far



➤ Try re-telling the story so far.

## The story of New Creation



God has been continuing his work of restoration in and through the Church. Those who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour have already entered His Kingdom. Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. But we are waiting for his Kingdom to be fully revealed when Jesus comes again. Jesus taught about this time by using parables. In one he describes himself as a shepherd who will separate the sheep from the goats. He will speak to the chosen sheep by saying, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."

One day – we cannot know when – the time for God to judge the living and the dead will come. Jesus will return in glory as the victorious King of Kings. No other power or authority matches his. Satan, whose power was defeated by the cross, will be finally destroyed along with all evil. Jesus' resurrection showed that he was victorious over death, and now death itself will die. Both the living and the dead will be brought before the throne of judgement. All those who have rejected the offer of salvation and life in Jesus will be punished because of their rebellion, and cast out from God's presence.

God will look at all those who have been saved by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, and pass over them with his judgement. However, Jesus will see how we have responded to his grace and mercy in the way we have lived, and will reward us according to what we have done.

God will renew the whole of creation. This is the time that all creation has been waiting for, as it is liberated from decay! All creation will rejoice to see God’s righteous judgement and to see all sin and evil destroyed.

God himself will come down and live in the renewed creation with his redeemed people. He will be their God and they will be his people. There will be a New Jerusalem. Heaven and earth will meet and be joined forever. His Kingdom will be established on earth for evermore. There will be no need for a temple building, as God will be present among his people. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain! All people will live as God intended right at the beginning, reigning under him and serving him. With all sin and rebellion gone, people will be like Christ, reflecting his image as they see him face to face.

The whole world will be full of worship as people from every nation, and all creation, glorify God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All will live in peace, with relationships just as God intended at the beginning. At the beginning of the story, people were cast out of God’s presence and away from the tree of life. At the end, the tree of life will be there, so that we might live forever with God. and the curse that came about from people’s rebellion will have gone. The story has a new beginning – and it will never end!

[For more detail, see Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 3:21; Romans 8:18-23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; and Revelation, especially ch.5, 20 – 22]

### **Reflect on the story**

1) What relationships do you see in this story?

.....  
.....

### **Exploring the story**

Let’s explore some important ideas that we see in the story.

#### **CHRIST’S VICTORY**

The end of the story brings together everything we have seen in the rest of the story. God’s intention from the beginning, and his mission throughout, is fulfilled. His Kingdom will be established on earth.

2) In Romans 8:18-25, Paul wrote of our hope, and this will be reality! What will happen to creation from Romans 8:21?

.....

3) What will happen to us, from Romans 8:18, 21, 23?

.....

Our resurrection, the redemption of our bodies, is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus.

4) In Acts 3:21 Peter taught about God’s promise through the prophets in Old Testament. According to this verse, what will happen when Jesus returns?

.....  
This will fulfil the words of, for example, Isaiah in Isaiah 65:17-25. Jesus himself says, “I am making everything new” in Revelation 21:5.

In Revelation 5:11-14, John saw a wonderful vision of worship taking place in God’s presence.

5) List the worshippers in this passage.

.....  
.....

6) Who are they worshipping?

.....  
Jesus’ victory is evident in the restored relationships we see between God, people and all creation as all gather round his throne to worship. At last heaven and earth will meet and be joined forever as God lives with his people, with no need for a Temple.

**US IN THE STORY OF GOD**

The Bible teaches us how we should live now in the light of the whole story of God. We know that we were made to serve and rule under God. And we know the end of the story!

We know that we are saved by grace because Jesus died in our place (see Romans 8:1-2). So, we know that we will not be judged for sin. However, he has given us what we need to serve him, and we are accountable to him for how we live.

Remember that God created people to be kings under him. So, Christians are to live for him, serving and worshipping him. In the parable of the ten minas in Luke 19:11-27, a master gives his servants money before he goes away to be made king. He says, “Put this money to work ... until I come back” (Luke 19:13). On his return as king, he met with each servant, “in order to find out what they had gained with it” (Luke 19:15).

7) What was the result for the two faithful servants who had used the money wisely (see Luke 19:16-19)?

.....  
8) What was the result for the servant who had not put the money to work (Luke 19:20-24)?

.....  
In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 Paul describes Christians building on the foundation of salvation given by Jesus. We build by working for, or serving, Jesus. This passage tells us that this work will be evaluated on judgement day. Faithful work or service will be rewarded. There are no rewards for those who do not work. As Paul says, “the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved, even though only as one escaping through the flames” (1 Corinthians 3:15).

9) From 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, in the end what is the difference between a builder who does quality work and one who does not?

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From the beginning, God longed for a good relationship with people who he had made to reign under him.

10) Look at Revelation 5:9-10. This is another song worshipping the Lamb, Jesus, who was slain on the cross. What result of his sacrifice is shown in verse 9?

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11) What roles are people from all nations given in Revelation 5:10?

.....  
This goes back to the beginning of the story and God's first command to Adam and Eve when they were told to rule. Being priests is the role that both Israel and the Church were given. At the end of the story, we will finally be able to fulfil our God-given roles.

**GOD'S JUDGEMENT**

Remember that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and everything was good. Then, the serpent in the garden tempted Adam and Eve and they decided to rebel against God. Evil spread throughout the world, and the good relationships God had made were broken. But God is just, and he will set all things right in his final judgment, finally bringing restoration and dealing with all evil. As God warned at the beginning, the punishment for rebellion against him is death. Jesus bore this punishment, so that all those who know Jesus as their Saviour will live, for he died in their place.

The Bible is clear that the serpent, or the deceiver, Satan or the devil, is destroyed by Christ's victory.

12) Read 1 John 3:7-8. How does John summarise Jesus' purpose?

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All who stand against God, will be destroyed. There will be no more suffering, sickness, injustice or death.

13) How does this purpose fit in with the story we have been learning?

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14) Read 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. What does it mean to be shut out of the presence of the Lord?

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Some of the psalms look forward to God's judgement with rejoicing.

15) Look at Psalm 96:10-13. What is pictured as rejoicing here, and why?

.....  
.....

Jesus came to restore all the relationships that were broken when evil entered the world and to make everything right again. Those who reject him will receive God’s just punishment.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul argues that Jesus really did rise from the dead, and that this guarantees our own resurrection. Christ is victorious over death. As we look forward to the end of the story with Paul, we should remember his words in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.” All that we do now as God’s servants in His Kingdom, on his mission, is worthwhile! It all has value to God and is important in his Kingdom: telling people the good news, living out Kingdom values, and working for restored relationships with God, people and creation.

16) Look back at this lesson. What key points do you see? How do these link with the rest of the story?

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*The Story of God and His World* comes to a wonderful end – and yet, it is not an end! God’s intention from the beginning, that he be worshipped and glorified by all his creation, with people reigning under his rule and serving him, will be fulfilled. And the story will continue for ever!

**Personal reflection**

- a) Give thanks that God is going to bring his story to completion and spend time worshipping the King of kings!
- b) How does the knowledge that you are accountable for how you serve King Jesus affect how you live today?
- c) In what way can looking forward to the renewal of all things give you hope today?
- d) How might this hope change how you live today?

## The Story of God and His World



### **Creation**

God created the heavens and the earth and made people in his image to be like kings under him, that all would live in peace under his blessing and worship him.



### **Rebellion**

People rebelled against God, making themselves kings in his place, and broke all the relationships of blessing God had made.



### **God's Promise**

God promised restored relationships through Israel, but they were unfaithful.



### **Christ**

God sent his Son Jesus as the faithful and true Israel to restore all relationships on heaven and on earth.



### **God's Mission**

God sent his Church on his mission in his power to share the good news of restoration to the whole world and to worship him.



### **New Creation**

God's Son Jesus will return as King to judge and set all things right, by finally punishing all evil. God will live on the restored earth with all his redeemed people, with all living in peace under his blessing and worshipping him.

➤ Try re-telling the whole story now!

# Conclusion

We have looked at *The Story of God and His World*. The main character is God himself, and then everyone and everything he has created. The conflict in the story begins with rebellion against God as King. God's mission throughout the Bible is to resolve this by re-establishing his kingdom through the cross of Christ. We have now come to the end, and the whole story makes sense. Looking back, we can understand the significance of different parts of the story.

- List here important themes that run through the whole story. These are things that are mentioned in several of the sections of the story.

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- Why don't you think about the whole story next time you read the Bible? Can you see how the passage you are reading fits into the story?

# Glossary

Christ	<i>This is the title for the One God promised: one anointed to be King, who will bring victory and will reign forever.</i>
Covenant	<i>A covenant is an agreement between two groups, in which each agrees to behave in a certain way to maintain the relationship. The covenant in Exodus is the covenant between God and his people Israel. God promised to be their God. The people agreed to the covenant and therefore to live in love and faithfulness as his people.</i>
Faith	<i>Faith is trusting in the promises of God.</i>
Grace	<i>God shows grace when he gives us the good that we do not deserve.</i>
Heart	<i>In the Bible, the heart is the essence of the person, the centre of a person's thoughts, decisions and will.</i>
Heaven and earth	<i>When you read this phrase in this course, we are referring to heaven as the dwelling place of God, and earth as the dwelling place of people. When they meet, God and his people are united.</i>
Justice	<i>To say that God is just is to say that all he does is right and true. He works for justice – for evil to be dealt with and all things to be set right.</i>
Love	<i>God is love; and his love is good, unfailing and faithful.</i>
Mercy	<i>Mercy is when God does not give us the punishment we deserve.</i>
Messiah	<i>This is the title for the One God promised: one anointed to be King, who will bring victory and will reign forever.</i>
Repentance	<i>Repentance is about turning. Turning away from our old way of life and turning to God to walk in his ways. It comes from genuine sorrow about our sinful state, and a recognition of how our sin hurts God.</i>
Worship	<i>True worship is the giving of our lives, all we are and all we do, to God. It is an acknowledgment that he alone is worthy and that we want to live for him alone.</i>